

# The First World War Cemeteries and Monuments in Subotica (1914–2021)

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## INTRODUCTION

The first public sculpture was erected in the centre of town in 1815. It was a representation of the Holy Trinity. The last battle that took place near Subotica was the one near Kaponja in the war of 1848/49. At the said place, 15 km away from Subotica, Hungarian troops won against the rebellious Serbs. A monument to this battle was erected in 1899 in the centre of Subotica, a grey marble obelisk 10 m high with a *Turul* (steppe falcon), a symbol from Hungarian mythology. Until 1918, the monuments to the victims in new conflict follow the same tradition. The government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes removed the Turul bird from the top of the obelisk and had the date November 13, 1918, carved above the Hungarian symbol. During the later remodelling of the square in 1927, all trace of the obelisk was lost. From the

auction an offer of the company “Industrija mramora d.d.” has been preserved, which includes all activities connected with its relocation (SR-IAS-47-SGS, IV 6933/1938).

After one hundred years a new obelisk near the site of the battle was erected, on which is it written: “Here, in Kaponya, there was a Battle for Subotica on March 5, 1849. The monument is erected on the occasion of 150th anniversary of the 1848–49 revolution by the city of Subotica”. With the end of the First World War and the fact that the border of the new Yugoslav state was only 7 km away from Subotica now, there was a constant feeling in the winners of potential danger from the nearby neighbouring country. This was shown in the relocation of symbols and monuments of the old regime, as well in the new manner of erecting up monuments that testify to conquests, affirmation, and conformation of the new government.

The wave of prevailing national ideology reflected in public monuments about the First World War, seems to continue and culminate in 2021, when was placed a monument of King Petar I in a considerable size. Only the base of the monument is 5,6 m high and on the top of is a 4,2 m high figure.

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR

There is a winning side and a losing side in every war. That significantly determines the way in which the remembrance is marked. The winners can use the memorials to glorify and demonstrate their own triumph, heroism, and righteousness, and to justify the victims. The losers can only complain and regret, limited by the impossibility and selective use of public space.<sup>1</sup> War always brings devastating destruction and many victims for both sides. Besides the material loss, there is always the indispensable human sacrifice in great number of deceased, handicapped, and sick.

During the major military operations, Subotica was far from the front, yet people from this region participated in the war and died all over Europe. It is very difficult to estimate the total loss of life in

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**1** Since 1944 there has been a memorial stone in a place near Senčansko Cemetery, plot no. 44, where the arrested were executed without trial towards the end of the war. At that time, in a very inaccessible and remote place, a name plaque was placed with the names of the deceased from 1941 to 1946. Next to the name board, the Turul bird was also placed. Since then, commemorative ceremonies have been held regularly at this place.

	a temek,	ideje.	
20. Alicia Orsien	1914.	Dec.	27.
Klug Guntáv	"	"	28.
Eckert Károly	"	"	27.
Sagei Eduárd	"	"	28.
Mijatov Mišován	"	"	29.
25. Choura Vencel	"	"	29.
Nieder József	"	"	29.
Uro Gábor	"	"	30.
Falk ödön	"	"	31.
Jansen Frigyes	"	"	31.
30. Brunellen Káma	"	"	31.
Breck Lajos	1915.	jan.	1.
Fürst János	"	"	2.
Pencz István	"	"	2.
Mlinarik Antal	"	"	3.
35. Livia Márton	"	"	5.
Platzer György	"	"	6.
Hajdu István	"	"	6.
Tóth István	"	"	7.
Bacum Alajos	"	"	8.
40. Heinrich Guntáv	"	"	9.
Trestler Henrik	"	"	10.
Jensen János	"	"	10.
Fell György	"	"	10.
István Antal	"	"	12.
45. Paveljak Ivaniló	"	"	12.

Fig. 1: List of the buried (SOURCE: F:2. II 184/1914).

Subotica. One of the most competent sources for researching the number of deaths are the death registers kept by the regional registry offices. The registry office in Subotica kept a register of dead soldiers as an official state agency. Tibor Molnár of the Senta Historical Archive provided us with this information, which shows that 1460 deceased soldiers are recorded in the registers for the period between 1914 and 1919 (Molnár 2018: 328).

Most of the soldiers from Subotica who fell in the battles of the First World War found their final resting place in cemeteries far away. The wounded and sick soldiers from many parts of Austria-Hungary who died in the military hospital in Subotica are buried in graves of the local cemeteries, which do not exist today. (Molnár 2018: 380).

Most of the soldiers (462) died on the fronts in Galicia, Italy and other places. It was very rare that these soldiers were buried in Subotica, they were buried on the spot, which was common in war conditions. Soldiers sent to Subotica for hospital treatment, prisoners of war, and other hospitalised persons were buried in Subotica in case of their death. Using the above list, we found 7 soldiers from Croatia whose remains are still in Subotica, and 14 soldiers from Subotica who were buried in cemeteries in Croatia. There is a list of soldiers from Croatia who died in the First World War and were buried in Subotica, probably in a military cemetery established as part of the cemetery in Senčanski Street (near the Paganini monument). These soldiers are: Leopold Kruškin (34 years old), Josip Kušler (23), Mihajlo Lovrić (36), Josip Sambolok (37), Jožef Nester (23), Josip Zaplalič (39) and Josip Žitomjerec (31) (Mačković, *Gdje su u Subotici pokapani*).

People were declared dead during the First World War and for a long time after the war. Those procedures often took place in appropriate courts up until the 1960s. There were victims in the first days of the war already.

In the later descriptions, not only the heroism of the Serbian army was emphasised, but also the following was emphasised: “The worst thing was that they fought against their brothers, whom they wanted to liberate. Our bloodthirsty oppressor forced us to fight against our own brothers, to come into conflict with those who wanted to liberate us, to pay with death for those who brought us life” (Protić 1930: 44). Their relationship after the war did not quite correspond to the above-mentioned ideas.

Obtaining the “Slavic” majority in Vojvodina and, accordingly, in its northernmost point—Subotica—was the guiding principle of the government’s “nationalisation” policy. The local census of 1919 for the purpose of the Paris Peace Conference gives information about 101,286 inhabitants: Bunjevci – 65,135, Serbs – 8,737, Hungarians – 19,870, Germans – 4,251 and Jews – 3,293. One of the measures taken by the government to change the situation of the population, besides the possibility of leaving the city, was the immigration of all persons who had settled in Subotica after the beginning of the war. A strong lever for this demographic engineering was the agrarian reform, colonisation, and settlement of volunteers, which changed the ethnic appearance of this region.

After 1918, a strange mixture of existing Hungarian and new laws prevailed. This often led to complicated situations, not only in the field of law. Political life and its effects were very significant. Only a small part of the population of Subotica had full citizenship and possessed all civil rights. The non-Slavic minorities, Hungarians, and Germans, had a hard time and were not allowed to vote until 1923. They were also excluded from the possibility of acquiring land confiscated by the agrarian reform. Civil servants and officers had to take an oath to the king in order to keep their posts, and they had to fulfil all conditions for using the official state language. Even after the Treaty of Trianon, a sense of border insecurity and volatility prevailed to some degree, supporting (heated) Hungarian irredentism and revanchism and the ruling side’s harsh reactions to them.

In the creation of memorials or individual monuments, there was a need for a certain way of expressing significant ideas—the idea of glorifying the victims, heroising the individual and the nation. However, the modest financial possibilities of the state, the city, and the individual conditioned the construction of numerous monuments in simpler forms, so there were no monumental architectural or sculptural forms in Subotica until the twenty-first century.

The direction in which the culture of the First World War monuments in Subotica was going, is clear since the first modest memorial in urban surroundings from 1925, when a statue of an unknown soldier was erected, complemented with symbols of battle and victory, up until 2021, and instalment of enormous monument to a specific historical person, a prominent military leader which brought victory and freedom—King Petar I.

The series of change mentioned had a clear goal—strengthening of the new state and its ideology and removal, weakening, and obliteration of the old.

#### INITIAL PLANS FOR COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR AFTER THE TREATY OF TRIANON

At the ceremonial formal assembly of the city council – The Expanded Senate, on April 20, 1920, the signing of the Trianon Treaty was celebrated. The focus of the speeches held on that occasion was on the gratitude towards Serbian army and all the rest who sacrificed themselves for liberation. There were calls for forgiving our “non-Slavic” fellow residents and forgetting “all the things they did to us under their own rule”. King Petar I and his family were enthusiastically greeted and there was a suggestion that the park in front of the railway station be called “Park of his Royal Highness King Petar the First” in his honour. That was accepted with great enthusiasm, the dynasty was saluted as the ruling house of Karađorđević. Telegrams were sent out to the government. It was also decided for the main street which leads to the city square and The City Hall to be called the “Street of His Majesty Regent Aleksandar” instead of the previous name “Kossuth Street.” All the present parties were invited to participate in “formal thanksgiving in churches and temples.” Proposal for the naming of the park contained the following:

Expanded Senate, in order to perpetuate the historical meaning of today, determines the park in front of the railway station be named Park of his Royal Highness King Petar the First, as a memory to our liberation and merging with Mother Yugoslavia, and a monument be placed in this park as wakening warning to future generations of brotherly unity and love and unified work. Furthermore, previously named “Kossuth Street” shall be called “Street of His Majesty Regent Aleksandar.” For the instalment of the monument there shall be a public fund established that will acquire a necessary principal amount by donations, to bring this idea to life.

The city council is notified about the existing decision for further execution.

In Subotica, on June 20 1920, an assembly held Orčić Notary Public. (SR-IAS-47-SGS, kut. 1201. I 13/1920)

On the same day, “there was an extraordinary celebration in Subotica regarding the peace treaty signing with Hungary” (*Subotička Danica* 1921). Special church masses were held, the priest held a

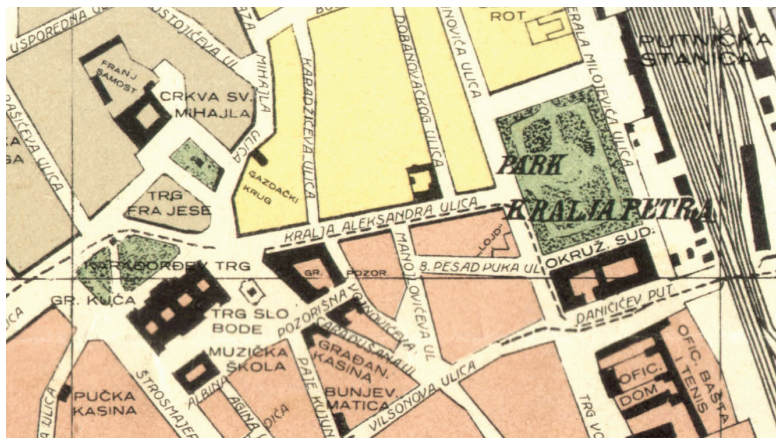


Fig. 2: Detail from a map of the city from 1928, King Petar Park

speech on the balcony of the City Hall that afternoon, there was a big celebration and a dancing party and a theatre show, an ox was roasted in the square.

The park was indeed named as it was suggested, but the monument was never built, warning of brotherly unity and love soon faded and turned into complete opposite. The process of removal of the symbols from the old state also commenced at that time. It is clear that the elements from Hungarian national history and culture did not suit the new ruling ideology and practice. At the end of 1918 already, the bust of Queen Elizabeth of Bavaria–Sisi disappeared, as did the one from the barracks. All the national symbols, art work, reliefs, signs etc. that were embedded in the City Hall, were supposed to be removed or replaced. The outer stained-glass windows were removed from the Great Assembly Room, and the plastic coat of arms ornaments on the outer parts and the signs were replaced. This process was taking a long time, and it was not yet completed in the second half of the 1920s.

Before the placement of new monument to the mystic Jovan Nenad in the central part of the city square in 1927, the monument to the Battle at Kaponya was removed—the obelisk from which the Turul bird was already removed before.

## REGULATION

Considering that the Kingdom of Serbia endured a great burden in many crucial battles in the First World War, and had an enormous loss

of soldiers and civilians' lives, it was only logical that after the war the new government puts an effort into organising military cemeteries, building of ossuaries and memorials. For that purpose, a Regulation was passed in 1920 and two years later Law for Regulation of Military Cemeteries and Tombs in Fatherland and Outside (*Službene novine Kraljevine SHS* 1922: 87).

It is worth mentioning that the mentioned law made no distinction between the graves of enemy soldiers within the borders of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In Subotica there were two military cemeteries, one for Serbian soldiers and one for Austro-Hungarian soldiers. The Serbian military cemetery was established next to the existing Orthodox cemetery in Dudova šuma (Mulberry Forest), and the remains of Serbian soldiers brought from the battlefields, soldiers who died in Subotica after the invasion of the Serbian armies, and later colonists and volunteers who settled in Subotica were buried there. Next to the existing Catholic Senčansko Cemetery, a second military cemetery was established, where Austro-Hungarian soldiers of Roman Catholic and Protestant faith and later members of the French army who died in Subotica were buried.

## CEMETERIES

The dead had to be buried. Each religious community residing in the region used parts of the municipal cemeteries for the members of their faith. The local census of 1919 counted 87,655 Catholics (and 8,582 Orthodox, etc.), who were the most numerous (over 80% in the entire period between the two world wars) and used three cemeteries named after the city districts: Bajsko, Kersko, Senčansko. In these cemeteries, in addition to religious graves, there were also public graves. The Orthodox cemetery was separate and was located near Dudova šuma. There was also a Jewish cemetery and since 1921 a Muslim cemetery ("Mohammed's cemetery") (SR-IAS -47-SGS, kut. 1493. 1355/921).

These cemeteries had special burial places, marked plots, where soldiers were buried. Soldiers were also buried in other places, mostly family tombs. In the Senčansko Cemetery soldiers were buried in a separate military part of the cemetery. Since the beginning of war until September 1914, there were 72 soldiers buried there. Witness to that is Marija Kovačević, wife of the cemetery guard, who was called to army duty (II 184/924), so she had to organise the burials (SR-IAS-2-SGS,



Mern. 108/1917). The number of buried soldiers grew during the following years and an individual list of the buried was kept by the official priests from St George parish since the Senčansko Cemetery was on their territory.

This military part of the Senčansko Cemetery was located next to Senčanski Street (then called Put Oslobođenja) and was diagonally 134 m long and 34 m wide. The central part of this plot was occupied by a monument in a crypt dedicated to Captain Jožef Paganini, who tragically died in 1849, around which the „Heroes' Cemetery“ (Hósoek temető) was built. The crypt is still in this place today, it is properly maintained and wreath-laying ceremonies are held there. The first reference to it was already recorded on September 29, 1914, in a written request to the city administration (I 294/1914). One of the applicants from the letter of October 4, 1914 was the landowner Gyula Törlei (SR-IAS -2- GV, Mern. 108/1917). In 1917 the municipality organised an auction for the procurement of building materials (50 m<sup>3</sup>) for the construction and maintenance of the graves (SR-IAS -2- GV, Mern. 108/1917). It was planned to order 350 gravestones for the resting places of the fallen heroes. The number of “war graves” in this part in 1931 was 820, while in the Orthodox cemetery it was 296 (SR-IAS -47-SGS, V 3566/1934).

There was an initiative in 1916 by the Jewish Holy Association in Subotica *Chewra-Kadischa* to place a special monument for deceased Jewish soldiers—a memorial stone with their names engraved in their cemetery (SR-IAS-2-GV, Mern. 108/1917). There were invitations to make donations for the production of the board.

Military cemetery was regularly maintained until the change of the government. One of the bigger problems in maintenance in the entire between wars period (1918–1941) was a chronic lack of financial resources in the city budget. Even besides the examples of declaring the need for their regular maintenance and marking, there were no appropriate actions in that direction.

We find confirmation of this in a letter from 1933, in which the technical department of the city informs the Ministry of Culture: “The military cemetery in the Senčansko Cemetery is in a very sad state. The paths are no longer recognisable because they are overgrown with weeds. Except for some graves that are maintained, all other graves are deserted, many wooden crosses are rotten” (SR-IAS -275-ZP, 32.2. fol\_029).

However, plans to organise the cemetery were present in the war times already. There is a photograph saved of an arranged military cemetery model, with decorative fence and gate, tombstones and gravestone monuments.

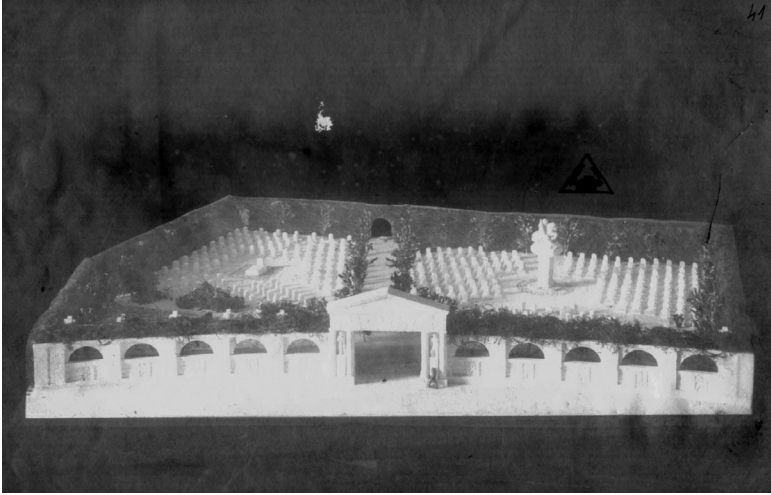


Fig. 3: Model of the military cemetery (SOURCE: F:2. mern. 108/1917)

With the new war in spring of 1941, the government was once again confronted with the question of realising the final resting place for the deceased soldiers. Thus, the previously used part of the old cemetery was designated for new “heroic victims.” This was the expression—heroically deceased and victims (“hősi halottai és áldozatai”)—used by the Hungarian government for the fallen soldiers of the First and Second World Wars (SR-IAS-275-ZP, 32.2).

That part of the cemetery today does not give an impression of war victims being buried there back in the First World War, it is disorganised and neglected and the dislocation of the remains of the buried has still not commenced for new burial or other purposes as it is done in some other parts of cemeteries in Subotica. Part of the Orthodox cemetery containing the graves of the First World War victims does not exist anymore and the gravestones are also destroyed.

#### MONUMENTS IN CEMETERIES

Families who had lost their sons in the war erected monuments in the cemeteries according to what they could afford. One of the most famous and best preserved monuments is the family monument at the entrance of the Bajsko cemetery. It was erected in memory of Dr. Gábor Regényi (1879–1914), who was killed at the very beginning of the war during war operations near Kupinovo. He was taken to Subotica

and buried there in the spring of 1926, when his body was found. He was a young and successful lawyer, son of Lajos Regényi, a lawyer, banker, and entrepreneur from Subotica. His mother was also very socially involved. It was his parents who erected a monument to their son, on which he is depicted in hussar uniform with sabre and horse, so that he would never be forgotten and would always be with them, at least symbolically. Gábor went to war to return glorious, instead he fell as one of the first victims. He was loved by a girl, and they waited to be together again after he left. After he died, she lost her will to live and died of grief, it is believed. The girl came from a wealthy and distinguished family who built her a magnificent tomb, which is directly across the street from Gábor's final resting place. Even in death they lie side by side forever. Regényi's tomb is now a cultural asset and is under the protection of the Institute for the Protection of Monuments in Subotica.



Fig. 4: The grave of Gábor Regényi, Subotica (photo B. Jezernik)

In the same battle near Kupinovo, Dr Beno Sudarević, a lawyer was killed. The date of his death, September 6, 1914 is recorded in the Register of Deaths, although the entry itself was made only on December 12, 1920 (SR-IAS-478-DMK, 1914. pag. 255, upis br. 2039). After his body was found, he was buried on September 27, 1914, in Kersko Cemetery in the family tomb. After the year 1918, one street in centre

of Subotica was named after him as it can be seen on a map of the city from 1921 (SR-IAS-3-KZ. 2.1.17). Family house Sudarević was located on the corner of the neighbouring street (after 1918 Jelačić Street).

A small detail from 1912 shows how the political struggle was conducted and how widespread it was. In that year after the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, Dr Vranje Sudarević, doctor of medicine and acting mayor, filed a lawsuit against unknown persons, drunken students who had destroyed the street name plaque on April 30 (Dr Beno Sudarević, *No 1 street*) of his brother dr Beno Sudarević (Mačković, *Dr Vranje Sudarević*). After being appointed Mayor and Great Župan by the central government, Sudarević does not turn on to the faculty of law, but files a lawsuit, and orders the city departments under him (engineering department and city police), to replace the damaged name plaque and to investigate who the perpetrators were.

#### GRAVES OF THE FALLEN GERMANS

German soldiers that died were buried in military cemeteries in Subotica. During the war in 1917, German military command from Košice took interest in maintaining their tombs and engraving information about those soldiers in German on the tombstones (SR-IAS-2-GV, Mern. 108/1917). A commemorative list of 8 German soldiers was delivered. It was ordered to Engineering Department to take care of that.

In May 1927, a German Association for Search of the Fallen Soldiers' Graves sent a letter to the "Magistrate of Subotica–Szabadka (Maria Theresiopol)," in which they inquire about the grave of a German soldier killed on August 14, 1917, and buried in Central Cemetery in Subotica No 378 by the name of Friedrich Herrmann, and his war comrade Karl Bücherl, killed October 16, 1918, also buried in Central Cemetery No 37 (Mačković, *Potraga*). They also asked for two photos of the grave. However, the search by the city and military government, which took a long time according to the date (June 30, 1928!), brought no results. The answer of the mayor's office stated: „[...] we inform you that all possible measures were taken with the government and unfortunately we could not recover any information about the deceased in question and their graves“ (SR-IAS-47-SGS, II 38/1928).

It turned out that local authorities did not maintain the graves of the deceased enemy soldiers in Senćansko Cemetery, nor did they have information how and where were the fallen soldiers buried.

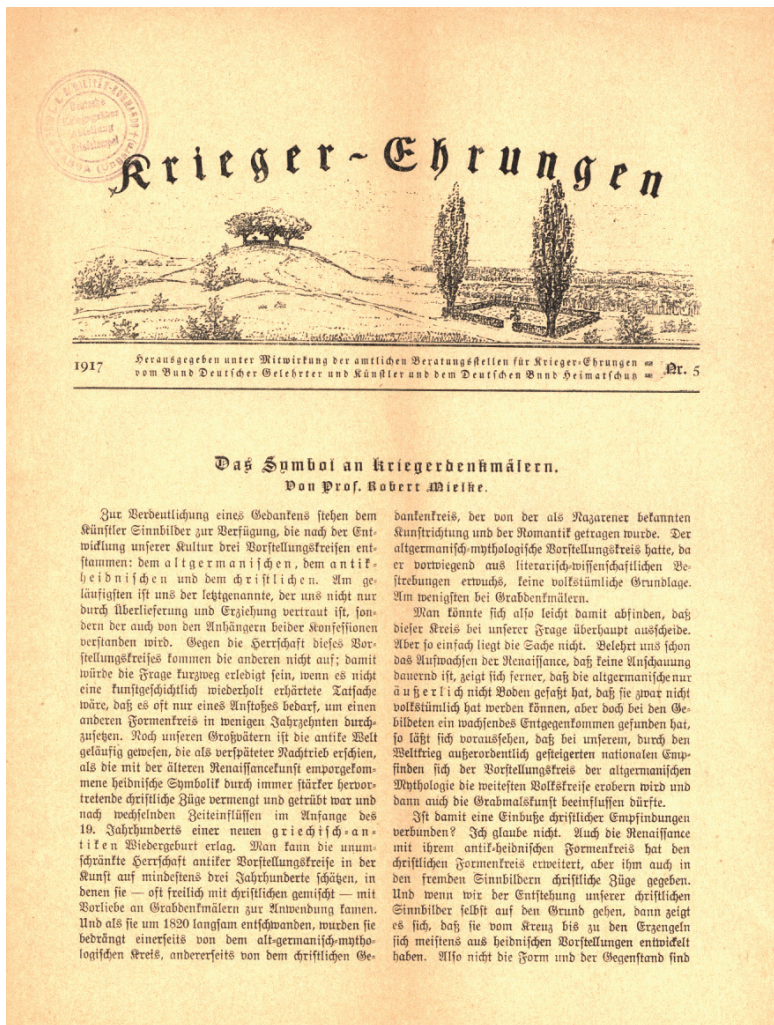


Fig. 5: Attachment form the letter in which German graves are looked for (SOURCE: F:47. II 38/1927).

## MEMORIALS

Besides maintenance of the military cemeteries, another way of remembrance in the following years will be achieved by building many memorials. The most common type of memorials were chapels or memorial churches with ossuaries. Next to those, there were memorial boards, memorial fountains, monuments in the shape of columns, obelisk or pyramid. One of the most important types of

memorials were of course the figure monuments, which had the purpose of remembering certain events or persons from the First World War. This is why so frequently the monuments to King Petar and Aleksandar were built, often in form of bust, and also of certain prominent military commanders, and figures of a Serbian soldier which have a general meaning and can be connected to Yugoslav ideas. These types of memorials are erected in urban surroundings, in squares or parks, and what is important is that every city in Serbia, including Subotica, will get this kind of monument by the end of the 1920s.

#### SAME MONUMENT-DIFFERENT COUNTRY

In 1915, National Committee for Perpetuating the Memory of Heroes (*Hősök Emlékét Megörökítő Országos Bizottság*) was formed. It was designated by the law from 1917 that every city must join the action of putting up monuments to fallen heroes, so Subotica (Szabadka) got the obligation to put up monuments to the victims of the war.

For the burial of soldiers who were born outside Subotica and had no relatives or family graves in the city, the government of the time designated a certain part of the Senčansko Cemetery as their final resting place. The city organised an auction for the production of the sculpture, in which a local company *Kőfaragó és márványipar* (Marble and Stonemasonry Industry) won the bid (SR-IAS -2- GV, Mern. 108/1917). The sculptor János Matuska (Mačković, *Braća Franjo Matuska i Janoš*), who designed a figure composition and modelled it in plaster, chose the already known motif of the Merciful Jesus caressing the head of a wounded Austro-Hungarian soldier. This motif, in the form of the Good Shepherd with a stick in his right hand touching the head of a wounded soldier with his left hand, was already known in the Western European art of the early Middle Ages. I found the description of the sculpture in a local newspaper of February 1917 (*Bácskai Hírlap* 1917: 3). The monument consists of pyramid shaped composition of Jesus who is bent over the wounded soldier. It is carved in limestone and positioned on a high granite base with three steps around the entire monument. It is obvious that the artist wanted to preserve the memory of the horrors of the war exactly like shown—with a universal theme which would present a contrast to horrible battles and suffering of the war.

The monument did not see the intended place for its installation, the war ended and it was set aside to await its further fate. It was expected that this monument to the fallen soldiers of the defeated Austro-Hungarian army would not see the light of day and be presented to the public in a country that emerged from the war with a pathos for the victor, but the opposite was the case. When the need arose in the newly established Subotica County for the erection of monuments commemorating the war, the choice, unexpectedly, fell on this monument. It underwent a small metamorphosis; the soldier of the losing side was transformed into a soldier of the winning side—Serbian soldier as the hero. Thus, it became the “Monument to Fallen Heroes for Liberation and Unification 1912–1918.”

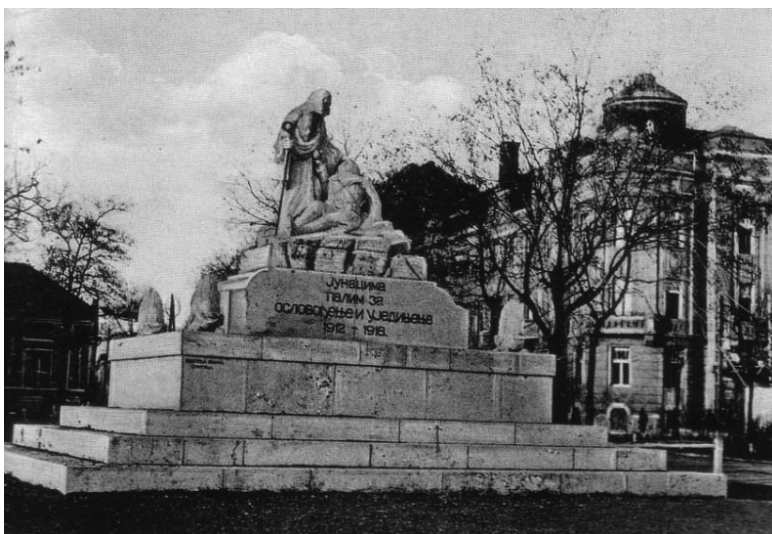


Fig. 6: Monument to the fallen heroes of liberation and unification 1912–1918, Subotica, private collection of B. Jezernik.

With small interventions in the carving, the Austro-Hungarian soldier is transformed into a Serbian soldier, while the figure of Jesus remains intact in specific Western iconography. This transformation of the soldier was done with minimal intervention, by carving the familiar curls around the legs of the wounded soldier. With these changes, this monument became the first large public monument dedicated to the memory of the First World War in Subotica. For the erection of the monument a special committee, the Festive Committee for the Unveiling of the Monument to the Fallen Heroes of the Liberation and Unification 1912–1918, which developed the flag of the Yugoslav Sokol Association in Subotica.

In addition to the importance of the monument to the fallen heroes themselves and the idea associated with it, the manner in which it was first presented to the public was also significant. The solemn unveiling of the monument took place on Sunday, May 31,

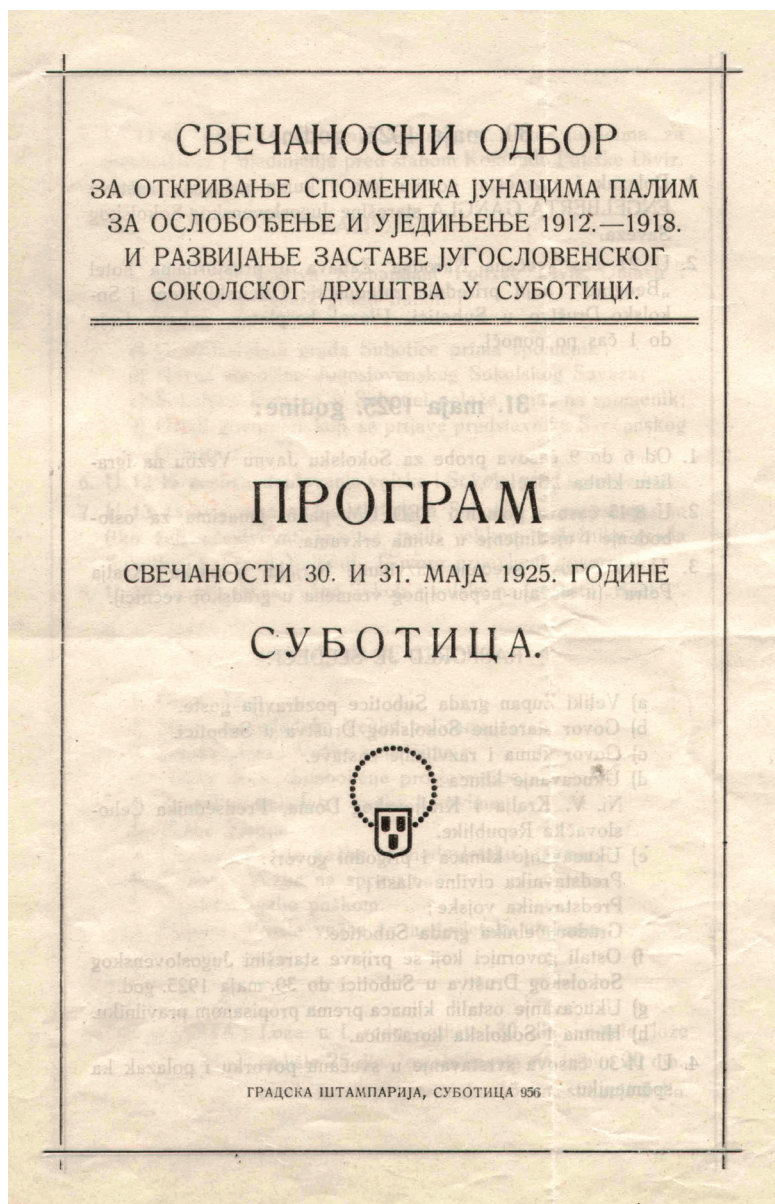


Fig. 7: Ceremony program from 1925 (SOURCE: F:47. II 66/1925).



1925, on Vojvode Putnik Square in front of the building of Potiska divizija, a square that was not in the centre of the city, but 600 metres away from the City Hall. The programme included the solemn consecration of the flag of the Sokol Association. The army stationed in Subotica actively participated, Sokols from other cities, guests, important personalities and many citizens of Subotica were present. The unveiling was a kind of spectacular event, a public event of great importance, attended by both important personalities from the central government and a significant local public. The idea of erecting the monument, which existed before, was led and implemented by the local Sokols.

The programme of the celebration was scheduled for two days, Saturday and Sunday, May 30 and 31. On Saturday the guests arrived and were accommodated together with the flag's godfather from the Sokol movement, Engelbert Gangl from Ljubljana, the head of the Yugoslav Sokol Association. In the evening, a festive party was held at the Beograd Hotel, admission was free.

There were a lot of guest from all over the country. Admiral Dragutin Pric was present in the name of King Aleksandar Karađorđević, also Minister of Traffic Ante Radojević, and representative of Czechoslovak president Tomáš Masaryk, Jan Šeba. Thanksgiving was served in all churches in Subotica on that day. The procession moved from the park through crowds of people through street of Subotica to Vojvode Putnika Square, where patriotic speeches preceded the revealing, first by general Miroslav Damjanović, chief of staff of the Šumadijska division, and then by Admiral Pric and mayor of Subotica Albe Malagurski, who commenced his speech with the following words:

He who has not been a slave does not know what freedom is, and does not appreciate it. But we, the people of Vojvodina, the Serbs and Bunjevci, who lived for centuries in national slavery under the oppression of Austria-Hungary, just as the Serbs lived under the Turkish oppression, appreciate it. We will preserve the heritage of our Great Martyr as strong and reliable frontiersmen of our united Fatherland and beware of those who try to touch it. (Šokčić 1934: 293)

The last speaker was minister Radojević, after which a wreath laying ceremony<sup>2</sup> and ceremonial revealing of the monument took place. After the wreath laying the army took a ceremonial step, which was the end of the ceremony and this spectacular revealing event. It

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**2** 16 wreaths laid on the monument on that occasion are kept in the City Museum.

was an extraordinary experience for Subotica and a public event that was spoken about for a long time after.

The comments in the local newspapers, such as *Hrvatske novine*, described the event but had some critics as well. It says at the beginning of the article: "A beautiful monument to fallen heroes is placed in Subotica. That monument was unveiled and given to the public on the Pentecost, May 31, 1925. It shows a dying soldier over which Jesus Christ, God and man, is bent, accepting his head, to bring him to eternal life over death." It further states: "If the idea is right, and man dies for it, Christ makes him a part of his glory, part of the apotheosis, part of the deity." Then it states an objection: "There was only one mistake, but so great that we must draw attention to it of all concerned. It was a great tactlessness to connect the unveiling of this great monument with unfurling the flag of the Sokol Association. It was a gesture which had to achieve this: You who want to bow to the shadows of the fallen heroes, must also bow to Sokols. This was a capital mistake of the organisers of this ceremony. The idea of the Sokol movement became crystal clear and gained the shape of materialistic understanding of life, and so became not only disgusting to 7 million Yugoslavs and 300 million other Catholics, but is considered a bitter enemy to Catholic faith. They can thank that gesture for 10,000 Catholics not coming to the ceremony, Catholic associations and their leaders. We suggest to the organisers of future events to take this into consideration" (*Hrvatske Novine* 1925: 2).

The following year, the dust over the event has already settled, but minor problems have arisen with the monument. An organisation of Serbian National Youth "Dušan Silni" from Subotica, during the flag consecration on June 28, 1926, requested permission to place a two-headed white eagle on the monument with the following inscription: "The two-headed white eagle was placed by the Serbian National Youth as a sign of the victorious entry of the Serbian army." The Senate approved the placement of the symbol, but not the sign (Mačković, *Dvoglavi beli orao*).

Organisation "Udruženje ratnika i oficira" from Subotica is addressing the government on May 31, 1926, and they say that "the golden lettering on monument in front of the Potiska divizija building are fading, parts of the structure are falling away," and they are asking who is in charge of maintenance (SR-IAS-47-SGS. IV 4130/1934).

Only two years after the unveiling, there was discontent over the location and the impression the monument gave. Some demanded that the government invest more financial resources in the monument. "A unity monument should be a worthy representation of this historic act in the life of our people and one of the most beautiful

decorations of our city, not a rag we inherited from outsiders” (SR-*IAS -47-SGS. II 23/1927*).

There were plans considering the monument in 1938. The Board for the 20th Anniversary of the Liberation of Subotica Celebration suggested, which was accepted by the City Council on assembly on December 1, 1938, that a monument ossuary be installed on Obilićev Venac near the Liberation monument. It is stated in the proposition: “The World War is far greater in number of life sacrifices than other wars, the most precious thing that people have. Statistician working day and night still cannot determine the correct number of deaths even after 20 years [...] every war so far gave a hero [...] but World War being so vast, we apprehend how many heroes it gave. Heroism was always the most sublime, because its results are eternal. Every life lost hides a heroic act in itself. As many lives are cut by the war, so are many heroes dead. We can only imagine the number of the ones we know nothing about.” They intended 300,000 dinars for that purpose. The plan was to “carry over the bones of dead soldiers from Orthodox and Senčansko Cemetery and bury them by religious affiliation.” All of it ended with just plans. The unification in victims and heroism and “putting up ossuary and monument to fallen warriors” waited for better more suitable times (SR-*IAS-47-SGS, IV 6933/1938*).

## OTHER MONUMENTS AND OBJECTS

The monument to Emperor Jovan Nenad on the other hand, the national Serbian (Slavic) symbol, was ceremonially revealed on November 27, 1927. The monument is the work of sculptor Petar Palavičini (1886–1958). Prince Pavle was present at its detailed planned and organised revealing event, next to many other officers and important persons. It was clearly stated in the entire event that the purpose and goal of its instalment is the conformation of the fact that his territory always was and always will be Serbian.

Memorial board in honour of Serbian army arriving was set up on November 12, 1938 as part of four-days celebration of the 20th anniversary of liberation of Subotica (from November 10 to 13), on the wall of the railway station building, at the entrance from the track.

In 1931, construction of the Sokol House (Sokolski Dom) in Subotica commenced. The building was ceremonially opened in 1936 under the name “Yugoslav National House of King Aleksandar I” (SR-*IAS-275-SGS, 68.2. fol-17*).

## PROGRAM PROSLAVE

10 NOVEMBRA

- 1 U 8<sup>30</sup> časova parastos u pravoslavnoj crkvi.
- 2 U 9 časova zadušnica u crkvi Svete Terezije.
- 3 U 9<sup>45</sup> časova otkrivanje spomen-ploče na zgradi bioskopa „Avale“.  
Govori g. Dr. Mirko Ioković Ivandebić.
- 4 U 10<sup>15</sup> časova otkrivanje spomen-ploče u svečanoj sali Državnog matičarskog zvanja. Govori g. Mijo Mandić.
- 5 U 10<sup>30</sup> časova obnavljanje događaja iz 1918 g. isticanjem državne i plemenskih zastava na toranj Gradske kuće.

12 NOVEMBRA

- 1 U 18 časova sakupljanje svih ustanova, udruženja, korporacija, društava i škola pred željezničkom stanicom, u Đenerala Milojevića ulici i Parku Kralja Petra.
- 2 U 18<sup>20</sup> čas. doček počasnih građana i vojske na stanici. Govore: gg. Dr. Jovan Manojlović pozdravljajući vojsku i Pretsednik gradske opštine pozdravljajući počasne građane.

- 3 Otkrivanje spomen-ploče na želj. stanici. Govori g. Dr. Dragomir Dimitrijević.
- 4 Polazak vojske i povorke sa bakljadom pred Diviziju kod spomenika „Palim junacima“. Povorka ide ovim ulicama: Park Kr. Petra, Kralja Aleksandra, Kara-dordev trg, Štrosmajerova, Vilsonova, Trg Vojvode Putnika. Pred spomenikom Pretsednik gradske opštine pozdravlja vojsku.
- 5 U 21 čas sokolska akademija - Sokolskog društva „Stadion I“.

13 NOVEMBRA

- 1 U 10 čas. svečana sednica gradskog veća sa ovim dnevnim redom:
  - a) Pozdravna reč Pretsednika grada Subotice;
  - b) Pozdradni telegram Njegovom Veličanstvu Kralju Petru II;
  - c) Državna himna;
  - d) Značaj 10 i 13 novembra - govori g. Jašo Mačković, gradski većnik;
  - e) Predaja diploma počasnim građanima: Miji Mandiću i Mihajlu Nediću;
  - f) Sveslovenska himna;
  - g) Donošenje odluke o podizanju spomenika biskupu Ivanu Antunoviću;
  - h) Donošenje odluke o promeni naziva ulica: Pozorišne, Gimnazijske i Zmaj Jovinov trga.
- 2 Odlazak na pukovsku slavu 34 peš. puka.
- 3 U 13 časova svečani banket u čast počasnih građana i vojske.
- 4 U 21 čas svečani bal u koncertnoj sali Gradskog pozorišta.

Fig. 8: Program for 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Liberation celebration (SOURCE: F:47. IV 835/1939).

## WAR PERIOD 1941–1944

Monuments put up after 1918 did not last for long. Hungarian government was back in rule in this region after 23 years. Just like when the government changed back in 1918, Hungarian returning government

demanded reckoning with memorials built after they left. Monument to liberation was damaged and taken down, so was the memorial board in the railway station. Monument to Jovan Nenad in the square was damaged in way that the head from the statue was knock down, so the unfortunate so-called Black Man was beheaded in death as he was in life (Papp 2013: 32).

Hungarian government organised in 1941 a special Committee for Instalment of Monuments in Remembrance of the Soldiers from 8th Hussar Regiment that have died a heroic death in the First World War, and so a new monument was indeed eradiated on September 8, 1942. It was a monument to a hussar soldier in uniform holding a rifle, about 3 m high. It was put up in front of the old barracks on Miklós Horthy Road, Senčanski Road today (SR-IAS-60-GN, XX 13464/1943). That part of the city underwent the bombardment by the alliance at the end of the war, when military objects were heavily damaged, as well as the monument.



Fig. 9: Photograph of the monument to hussar soldier (SOURCE: F:60. XX 13464/1943).

Monuments that were removed were being restored and new ones were also built by the Hungarian government between 1941 and 1944.

Jovan Nenad monument was additionally damaged in bombardment of Subotica in September 1944. It was moved in the 1950s to the yard of the Museum where it waited for 4 decades to be restored and put back in its place, even though that did not happen quickly either. After the Second World War ended, the social system changed and in such political conditions, memorials of the former war were forgotten completely. They were replaced by new ones without any follow-up. Only with the break of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the return of the Serbian government, the awareness of the First World War victims' significance has returned.

In the Square in front of the city Hall, almost at the exact same place as before, president of Executive Council of Vojvodina dr Radoman Božović and president of Matica Srpska academician Boško Petrović revealed on September 9, 1991, the monument to Emperor Jovan Nenad the Black Man. All the signs were in Cyrillic.

In 1992, the memorial board from the railway station was restored. The writing on it is in Cyrillic and it says: "Arrival of the Serbian army on November 13 Liberation". The original board was destroyed by the Hungarian occupiers in 1941 (*a Pričam ti priču*).

The monument to the liberators which was damaged by Hungarian government during the war only to be additionally damaged in the bombardment of Subotica by the alliance, was removed in 1955. Thirty-eight years later it was returned and the sculptures restored. However, it was not possible to return it to its former place because in the meantime, the former Vojvode Putnika Square became occupied by a new apartment building and road. Monument was ceremonially installed in the nearby Lazara Nešića Square on November 13, 1993, where it still stands today. On the same day, a wreath laying ceremony is held every year.

On the occasion of centenary since the First World War, in 2014, repair and reconstruction work were carried out. The missing grey granite slab in the base was replaced, joints in the base were filled, the monument itself was cleaned, the lettering was repainted, and new light poles with narrow-beam reflectors were installed. A granite walkway to the monuments was constructed for the laying of wreaths. On this occasion, an exhibition was organised next to the monument, under the title the Memorials of the First World War in Northern Bačka and Banat, which was to show all the memorials in Subotica and other

8 municipalities: Bačka Topola, Mali Idoš, Senta, Ada, Novi Kneževac, Čoka, and Kikinda, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of The Intermunicipal Institution for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Subotica.

On private initiative, in 2002, a life-size bust of King Petar I, the Liberator, was erected near the Teachers' College (Preparandija) in Vodice, a place located 5 km from the centre of Subotica on the south-western bank of the Palić River. It is a sacred place for two religions, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox.

Assembly the city of Subotica declared in May 2020, that King Petar I Karađorđević, former mayor of Subotica Karolj Biro, and Bishop Ivan Antunović should have a monument in their honour in Subotica. A monument dominating by its size in the main street was unveiled on November 30, 2012, by Minister Darija Kisić Tepavčević with the following words: "Under the rule of King Petar, Serbia had its finest moments. Generations remember glorious victories in Balkan Wars and the First World War, and liberation of the Old Serbia from Ottoman rule, and the result of his rule was the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in which all Serbs were united in one state" (*Subotica.com*, November 30, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

After more than one century since the ending of the First World War, official institutionalised remembrance of it in the form of memorials and monuments is still in focus of the public and is only getting stronger. On the other hand, unofficial, spontaneous, family remembrance and their way of marking it naturally and understandably is fading. Victims of the war and their final resting places in cemeteries were more witnesses to new burials than permanent maintenance and remembrance,

What is the situation today? Part of Senčansko Cemetery where local and foreign soldiers deceased in the First World War were buried is neglected and unmarked. The situation is pretty much the same in Orthodox Cemetery in Mulberry Forest.

It went from the monument of universal character—merciful Jesus and apotheosis of dying soldier, to glorification of specific historical person King Petar I with a clear goal of expressing symbolic domination of strong national idealistic connotation, which only needs to reflect, mark, form and direct the real situation in Subotica in the present and project it into the future.

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