THE LIBERATION PERIOD IN HUNGARY DURING 1938 - 1944

This exhibit examines the postal history of the recovered territories that were "liberated" by Hungary in the period just prior to and during World War II. There were four separate events that provided the basis for this story, and the material shown here provides examples of the postal material thus created. The events will be shown chronologically as chapters, with postmarks shown alphabetically or numerically as seems most appropriate.

Of the losing Central Powers in World War I, Hungary was dealt with the most harshly by the Allies in the ensuing peace agreements. Coerced to sign in 1920 the hated Trianon Treaty (named after a palace on the outskirts of Paris where the document was drawn up), the Hungarians had to give up 69% of the territory and 63% of the population of their historic kingdom. Vigorous protests were to no avail and, in the end, more than 3 million ethnic Magyars ended up in Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia and Romania.

During the interwar period, Hungarian foreign policy was devoted to attempts to recover lost territory, with the primary theme being "Justice for Hungary." As political events unfolded in the late 1930s, opportunities developed that permitted the Hungarians to realize some of their ambitions. The first chances came in connection with the break-up of Czechoslovakia in two installments in 1938 and 1939. Then in 1940, Romania agreed to the transfer of northern and eastern Transylvania, and in 1941 territory to the south was added as a result of the Axis invasion of Jugoslavia. These acquisitions are shown on the map below:



Naturally, all of this activity had considerable philatelic consequences. The Hungarians were especially attuned to the fact that commemorating the acquisition of new territories provided good internal propaganda after the earlier harsh times and served to enhance the country's standing internationally. Thus, there were new stamps commemorating the annexations and a large number of special postmarks were used in the liberated towns. However, Hungary ended up on the losing side again in World War II and was forced in 1945 to give up all of its territorial gains shown here.

THE LIBERATION PERIOD IN HUNGARY
1938 - 1944

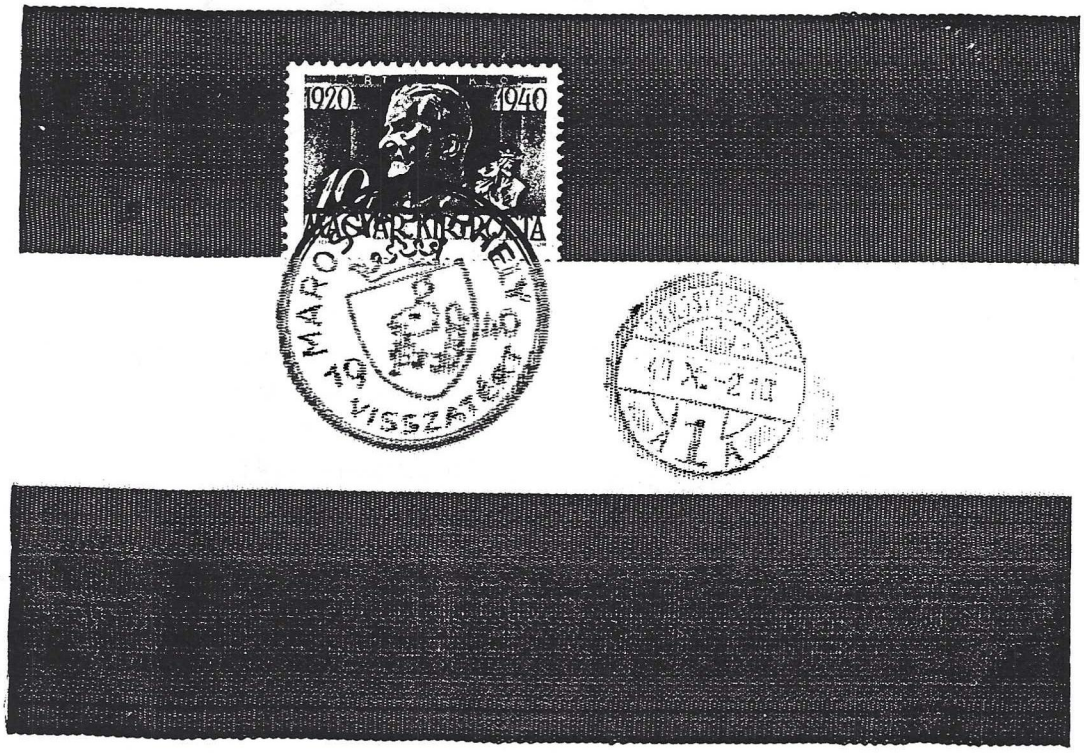
PLAN OF EXHIBIT

This exhibit is organized into four separate chapters covering the distinct events that resulted in territory being restored to Hungary in the period just prior to and during World War I. As a result of these acquisitions, the area of the country was nearly doubled and the population increased by 60% as shown in the following table:

Year	Territory	Hungarian Name	Area	Population
	Hungary	Magyarorszag	36,000 sq. mi.	8.7 mil.
1938	Upper Hungary	Felvidek	4,600	1.0
1939	Ruthenia	Karpatalja	4,700	0.7
1940	Transylvania	Erdely	16,600	2.6
1941	Bacska	Delvidek	4,100	1.0
	Total		66,000	14.0

Within the chapters, the general rule is that the material will be shown in the following sequence (as appropriate) for each event:

Commemorative Stamps on cover
Liberation Postmarks
Military Postmarks
Numbered Postmarks
Provisional Postmarks
Standard Postmarks
Commemorative Postmarks
Official & Postage Due Mail



Patriotic souvenir of Hungarian flag with commemorative stamp and liberation postmark for in Transylvania in 1940.

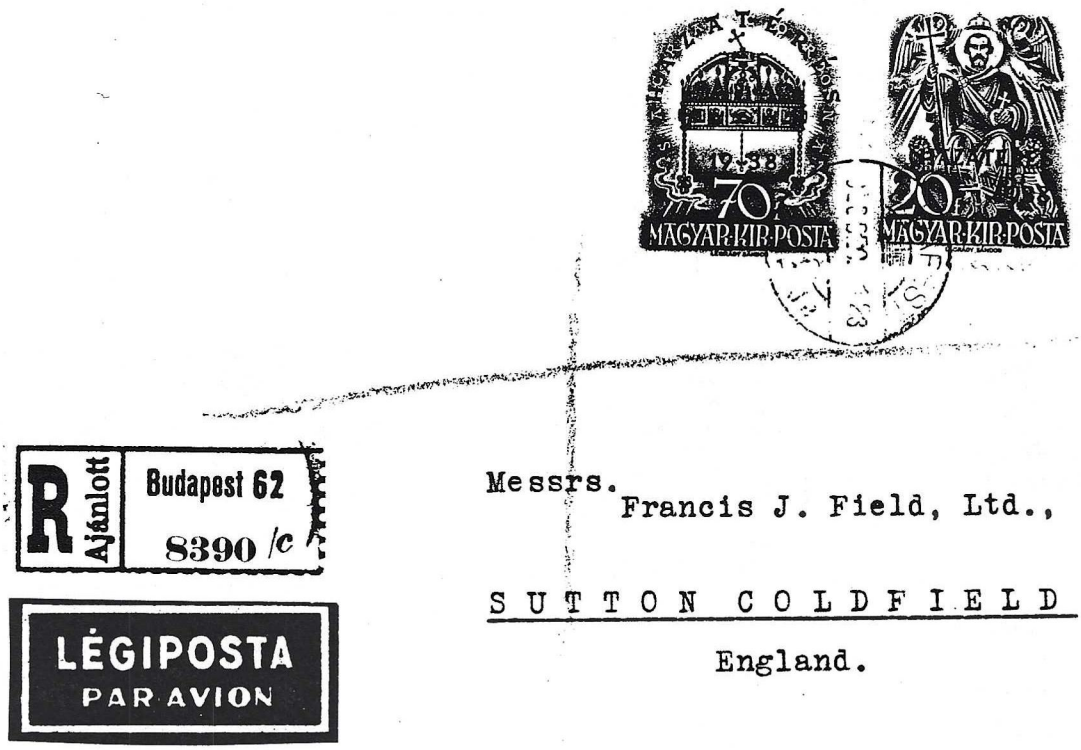
UPPER HUNGARY

Shortly following the awarding of the Sudetenland to Germany at the Munich Conference, the Hungarians presented their claims to the southern borderlands of Slovakia, which were heavily populated by ethnic Magyars. In its weakened condition, Czechoslovakia was in no position to resist and on 2 November 1938 at a conference in Vienna, Germany and Italy reached a decision to transfer 4,600 square miles containing approximately 1,050,000 inhabitants, which was then occupied by the Hungarian army. From the point of view of the Magyars, this was viewed as the liberation of the Felvidek or Upper Hungary.

Commemorative Stamps

Budapest
1 December 1938

FIRST DAY COVER

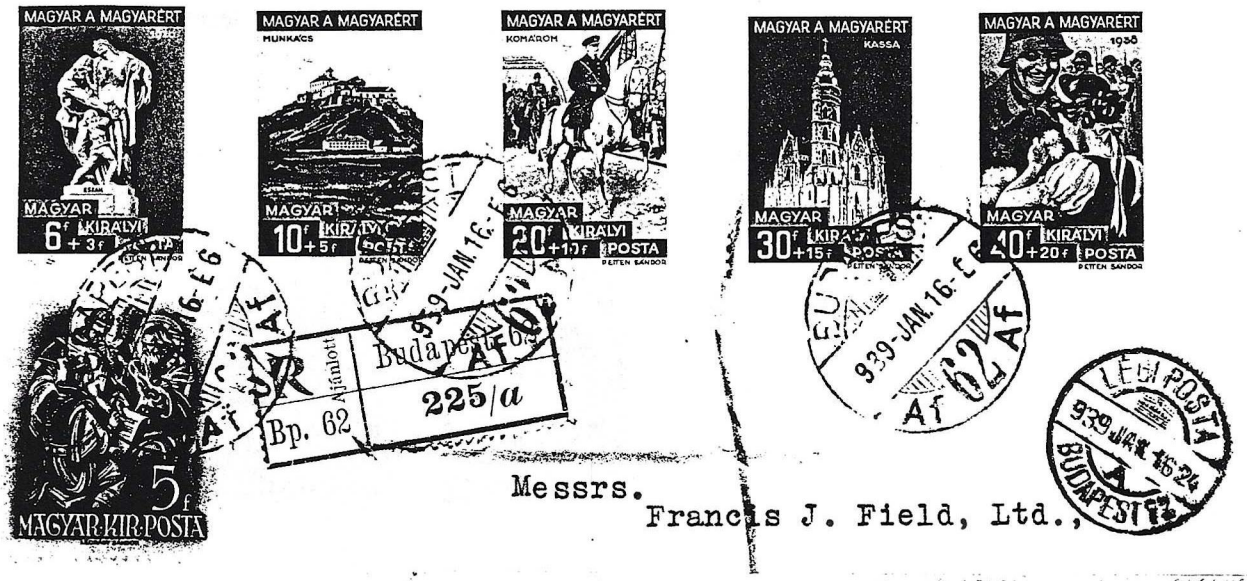


On 1 December 1938, Hungary issued 1.4 million sets of overprints reading "Hazateres (Returns Home)" on its 20 and 70 filler definitives (with the latter being reprinted in a different color for the purpose) to commemorate the annexation. They are shown here used on cover to England.

UPPER HUNGARY
Commemorative Stamps

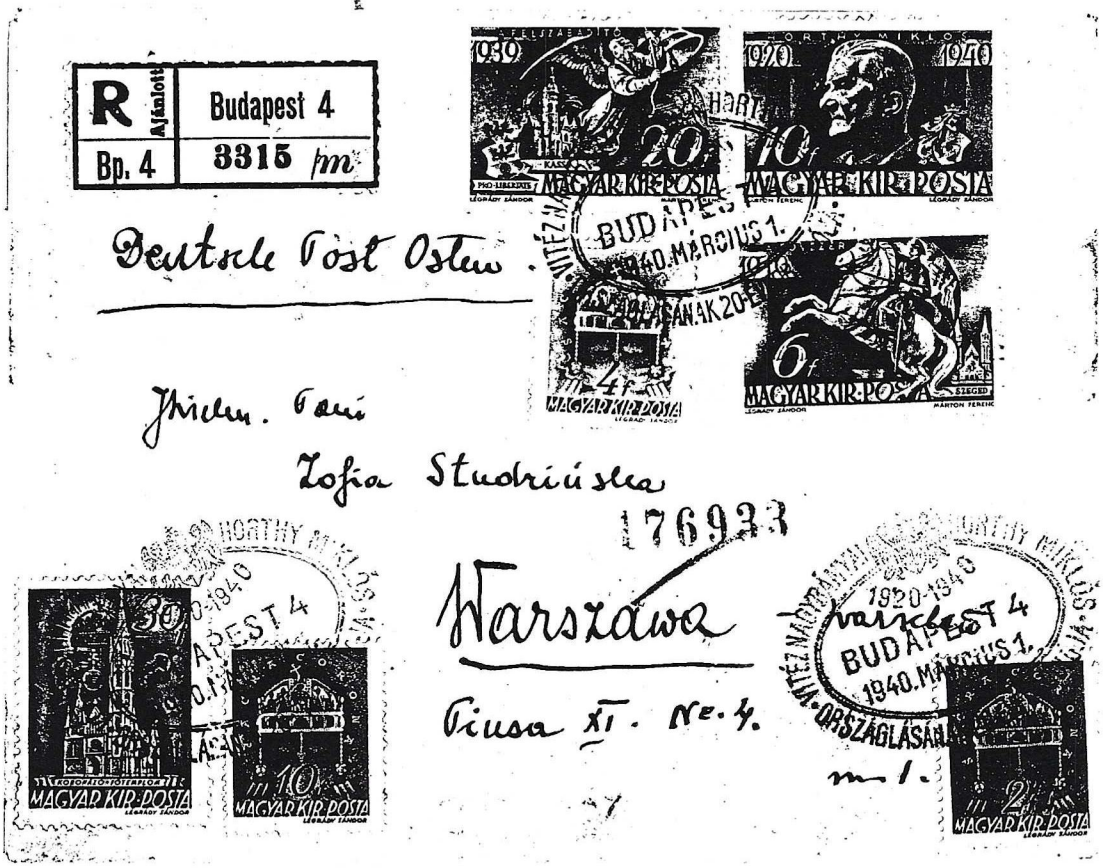
In addition to the Liberation overprints, there were two other issues that depicted scenes related to the recovery of Upper Hungary. The first was 178,000 sets of five semi-postals issued on 16 January 1939, which was valid for postage until 31 December 1939. The second was 6 million sets of three issued on 1 March 1940 and valid through 30 June 1941.

Budapest
16 Jan. 1939
1 Mar. 1940



First Day Cover of "Hungary for the Hungarians" set. Designs include Admiral Horthy crossing the Danube at Komarom, the Kassa cathedral and castle of Munkacs .





First Day Cover of the set commemorating the 20th anniversary of Admiral Horthy as Regent. The 20 filler shows the angel of peace flying over the cathedral at Kassa.

UPPER HUNGARY
Forerunner Postmarks of
Ipolysag and Satoraljaujhely

There are two towns in Southern Slovakia -- Ipolysag and Satoraljaujhely -- that represent anomalies in the situation. Shortly after Munich, the Hungarians met with the Czechoslovak authorities to discuss the Magyar-populated districts. To appease the Hungarians, the Czechs agreed to return these two villages, and on 11 October 1938 the transfer was made. However, nothing further could be accomplished, so the Hungarians decided to appeal to their friends in Germany and Italy.

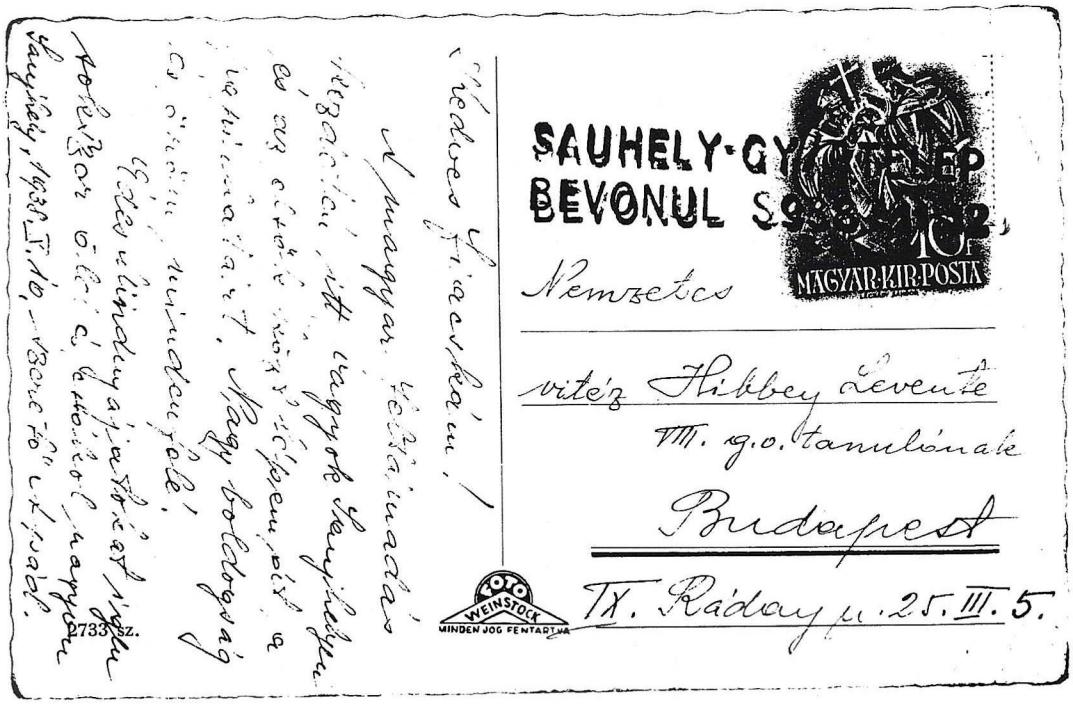
Ipolysag
11 October 1938

Satoraljaujhely
11 October 1938



An official commemorative postmark was used in Ipolysag . It was dated 11 October and inscribed "the first liberated Hungarian town." It is shown used on a postcard sent at the 2 filler printed matter rate.

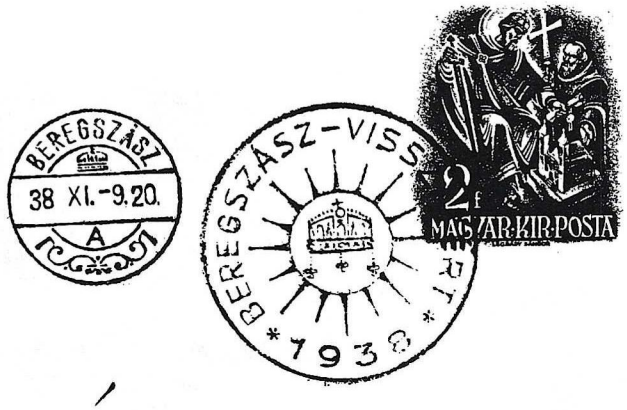
No official marking was issued by the Hungarian postal authorities for Satoraljaujhely. However, a private marking was made up and used on the day of liberation. Shown here used on a postcard sent to Budapest at the 10 filler rate.



UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

In connection with the recovery of Upper Hungary, the postal authorities provided special commemorative cancels for eleven of the most important towns in the territory. These were used for several weeks following the annexation by the Hungarians. There were four different designs, two of which were unique to Kassa and Munkacs, and the other two used in multiple locations. These will be shown in alphabetic order on the ensuing pages, in each case accompanied by a commercial cover cancelled with the normal steel cds.

Beregszasz
9 November 1938
9 March 1940



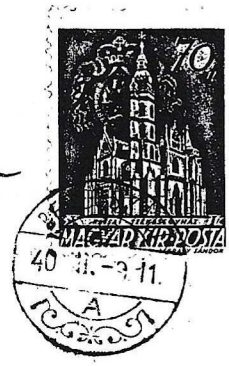
Kovács Lóike wikány

Országos Társadalombiztosító
Intézet Ungvári Kerületi Pénztára



Ajánlott

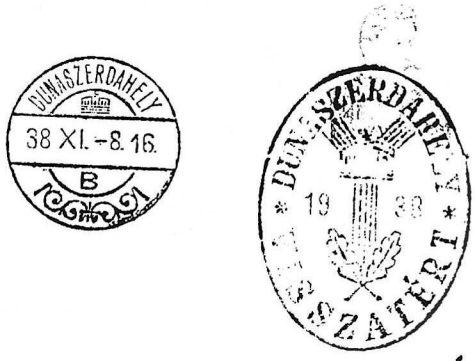
Ungvár

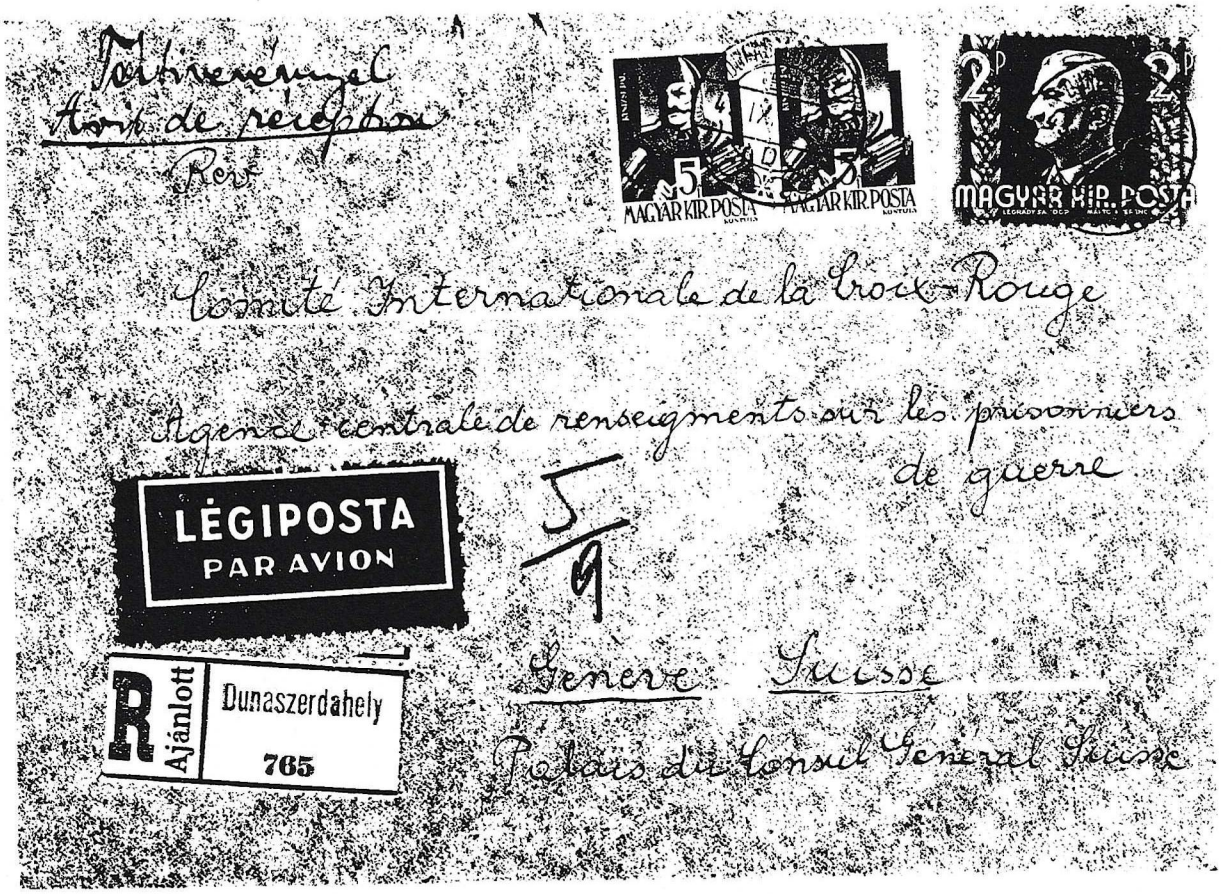


The Liberation cancels used in Beregszasz (Berehova during the Czechoslovak period) and Ersekujvar (Nove Zamky) were circular and showed the crown of St. Stephen in the center. They included the name of the town and Visszatert (Liberated). The observed period of usage in Beregszasz was 9 November to 20 December 1938. First day of usage shown above on printed matter cover.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

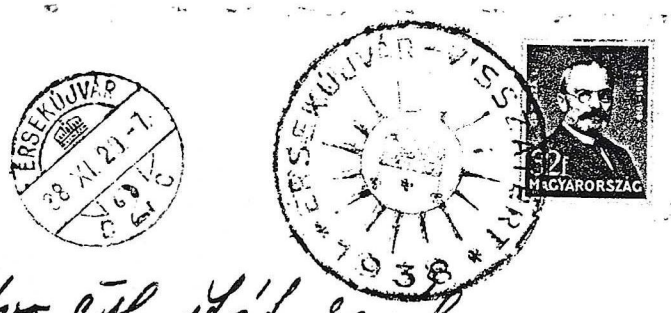
Dunaszerdahely
8 November 1938
1 September 1943





The commemorative cancels used in Dunaszerdahely (Dunajska Strada during the Czechoslovak period) and seven other towns were oval and showed a small crown of St. Stephen in the upper portion. The period of usage in Dunaszerdahely was 8 November to 10 December 1938. First day of usage shown on printed matter cover.

Ersekujvar
29 November 1938
6 September 1940

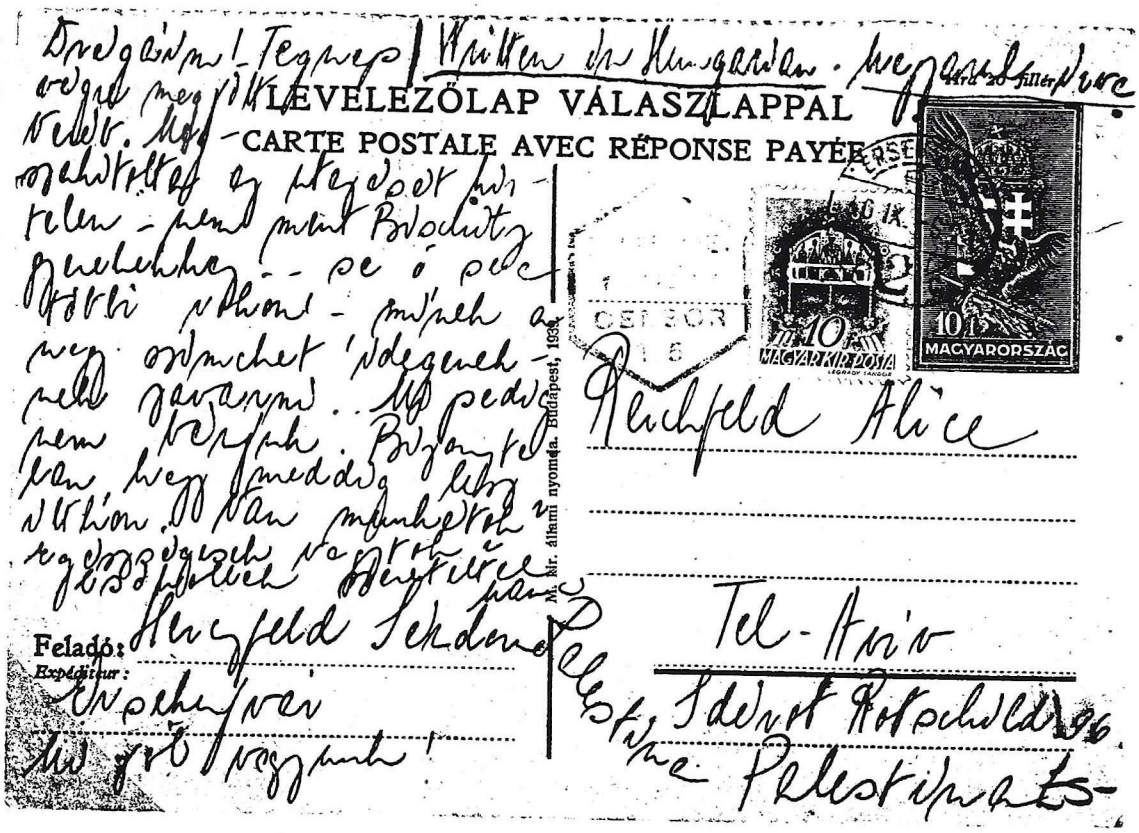


P.t.

Riaditelstvo čsl. štát. real.
gymnázia

Nitra

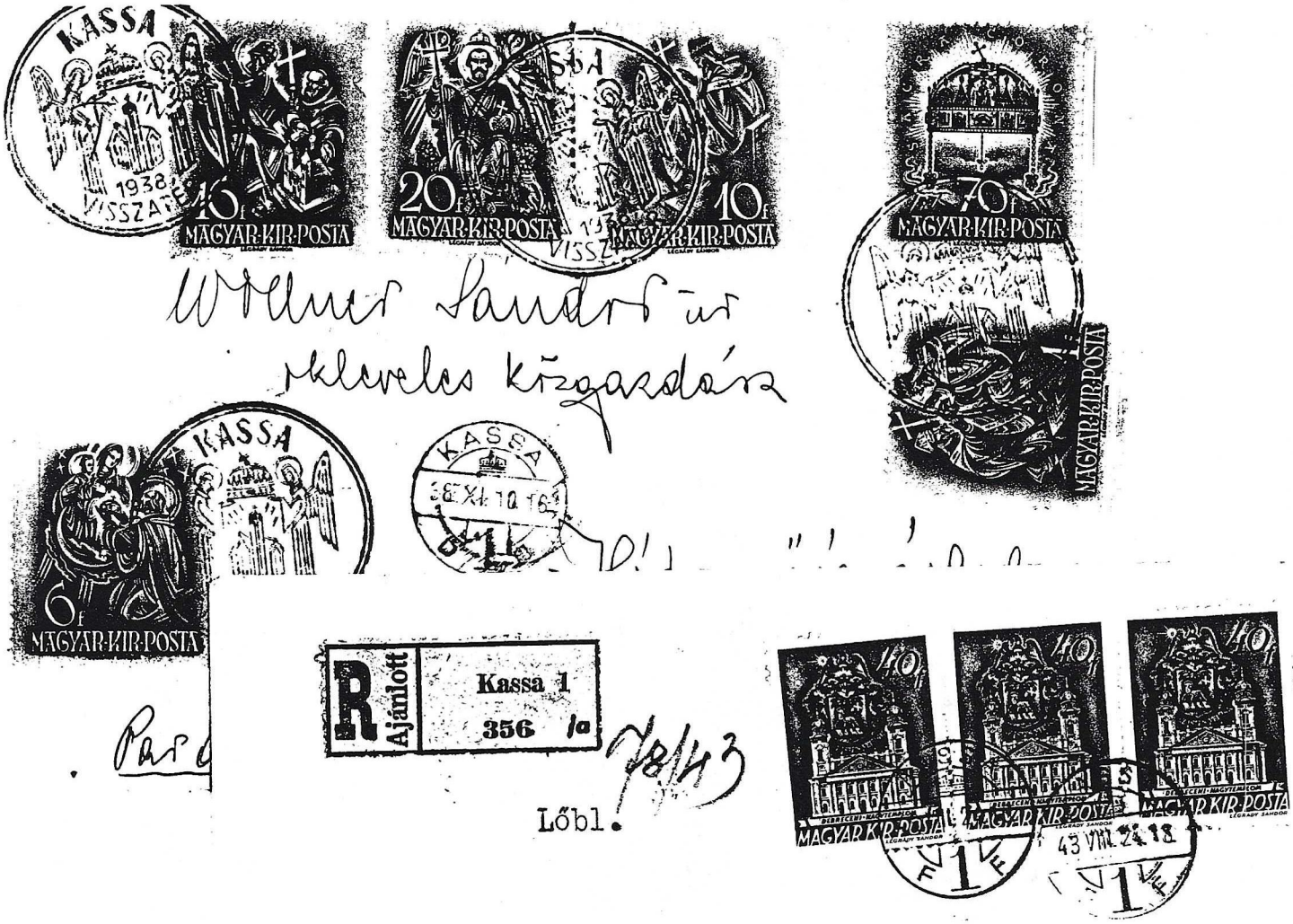
Slovensko.



The special circular commemorative cancel was used at Ersekujvar (Nove Zamke) between 8 November and 10 December 1938.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Kassa
10 November 1938
24 August 1943



Kassa (Kosice), the most important town in Upper Hungary, was liberated on 10 November 1938, with the official ceremony held the following day. A special commemorative cancel for Kassa showed angels holding the crown of St. Stephen over the cathedral was used between 10 November and 6 December 1938. Upper cover shows the first day of use.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Kassa
11 November 1938
11 November 1938



Because of the large quantity of mail processed at Kassa, a second commemorative cancel was supplied. It has a similar design depicting angels holding the crown of St. Stephen over the cathedral but has a single outer circle instead of a double one as on that shown on the previous page. They were apparently used contemporaneously. (Old Czechoslovak stamps were accepted for postage until 19 November.)

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Komarom
6 November 1938
22 March 1941



Komarom (Komarno) used the oval form of commemorative postmark. Its version was the first of the special cancels to be placed in use in Upper Hungary on 6 November 1938, so the card shown above represents the first day. It was used until 5 December.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Leva
10 November 1938
20 July 1943



The oval version of the special cancel was used at Leva (Levice) from 10 November to 6 December. Printed matter envelope shown above was mailed on the first day of use.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Losonc
10 November 1938
28 June 1941



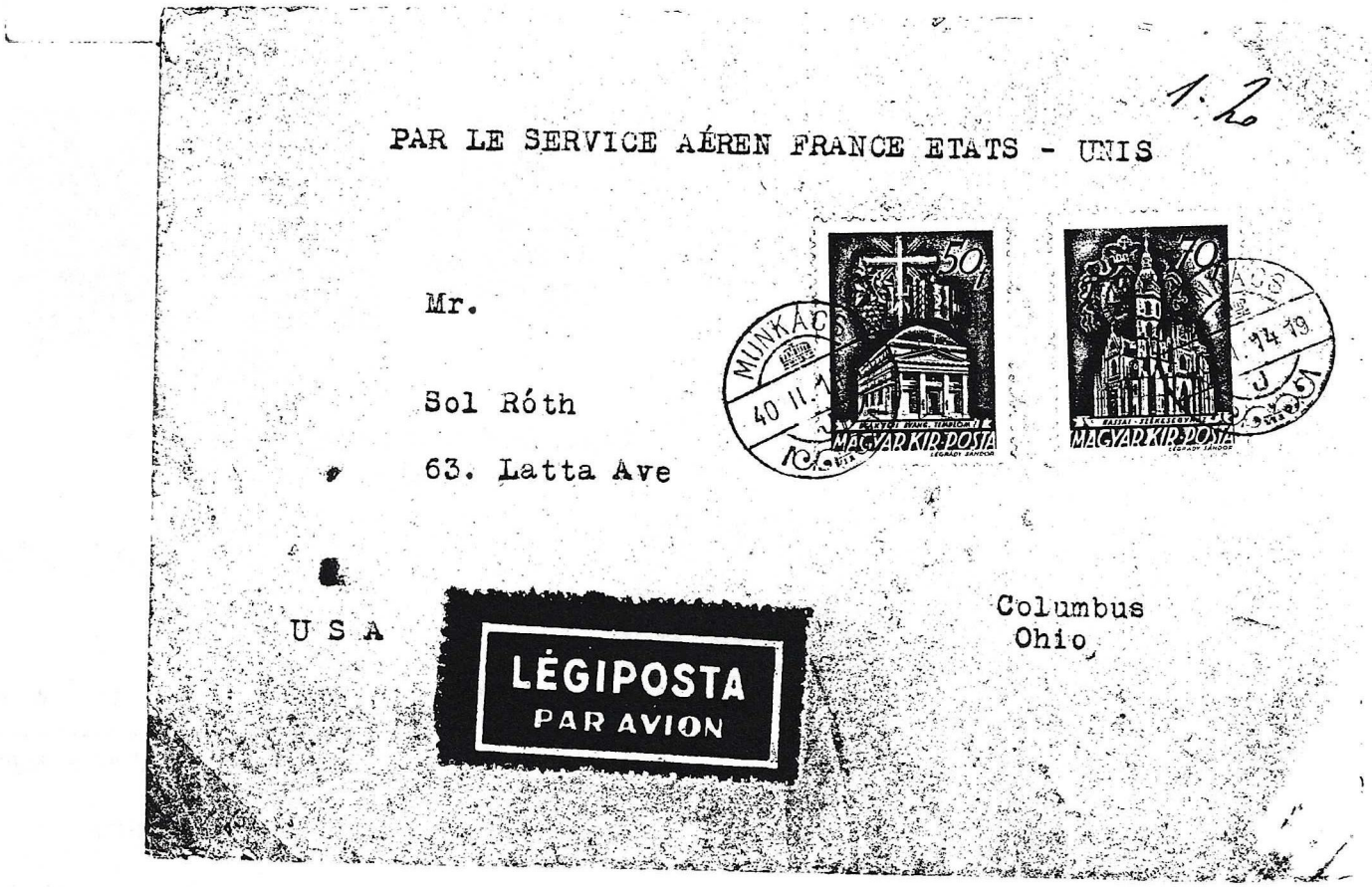
Another town using the oval version of the special cancel was Losonc (Lucenec) from 10 November to 10 December. Lower cover sent registered airmail to Uruguay accounts for the high postage charged.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Munkacs
10 November 1938
14 February 1940



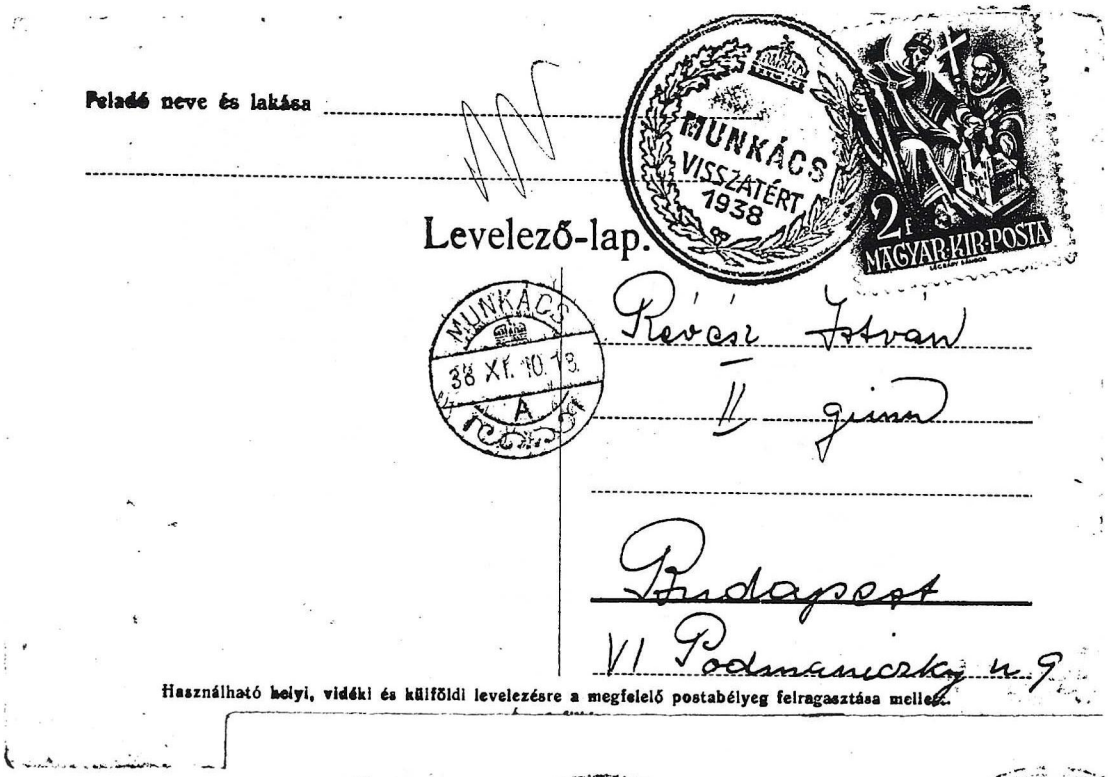
Tek.
Horváth József
gimn. VIII. oszt. tan.
Zalaegerszeg.
Kiniczi Pál u. 2.



Munkacs (Mukachevo) was actually in the southern part of Ruthenia in the extreme eastern part of Czechoslovakia. It used a special cancel that was different than that of any of the other towns from 10 November to 10 December.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Munkacs
10 November 1938
23 November 1938



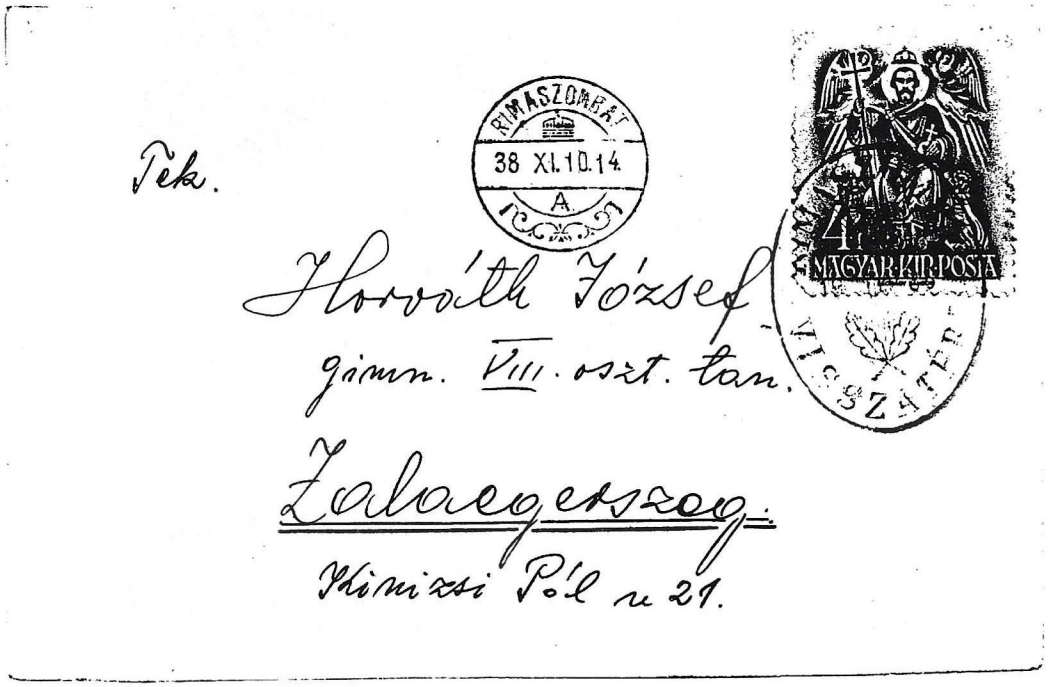


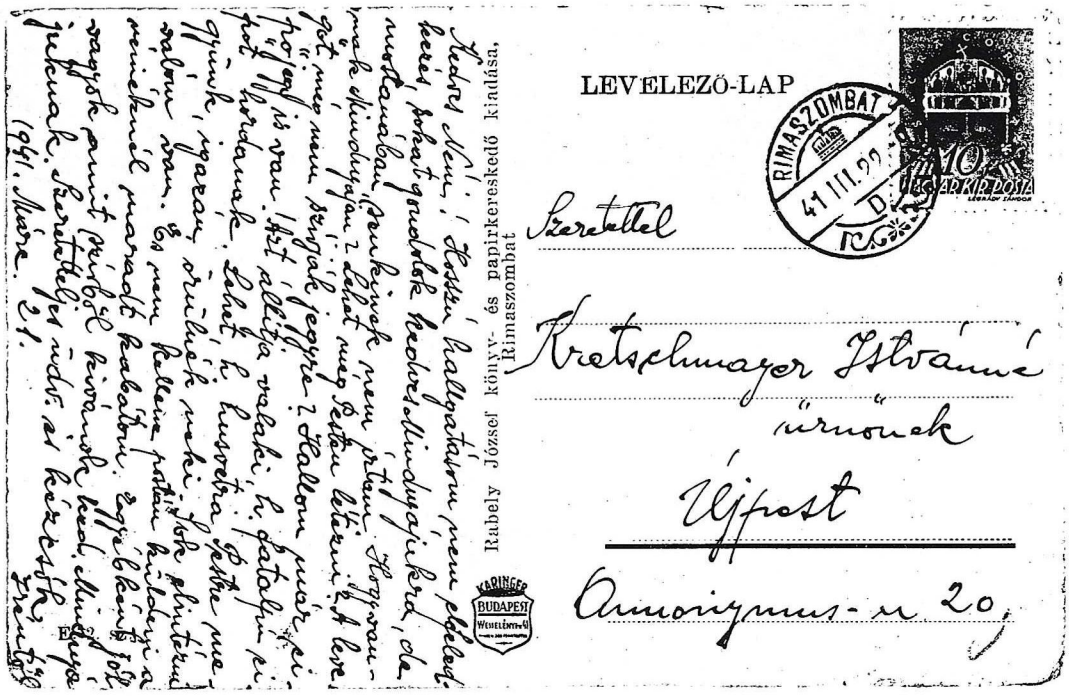
Horváth József
gimn. VIII. oszt. tan
Zalaegerszeg.
Kinizsi Pál u 21.

Apparently the quantity of mail processed at Munkacs was considered sufficiently heavy thata second commemorative cancel was supplied. It has a similar design depicting oak and laurel leaves holding the crown of St. Stephen but has a the name of the town in thicker but shorter letters. They were apparently used contemporaneously.

UPPER HUNGARY
Liberation Postmarks

Rimaszombat
10 November 1938
22 March 1941





Rimaszombat (Rimska Sobota) was also issued the oval form of special cancel. It was used from 10 November (first day of use shown above) until 10 December 1938.