



HOSPITAL IN THE ROCK HISTORY ACADEMY



AP1 - THE HISTORY OF THE HOSPITAL IN THE ROCK 1.
Life saving and military medicine during World War II and the 1956 Revolution

accredited adult education

SAMPLE TEACHING MATERIAL

6 / 3.
THE HOSPITAL IN THE ROCK IN THE WORLD WAR II
detail

2020

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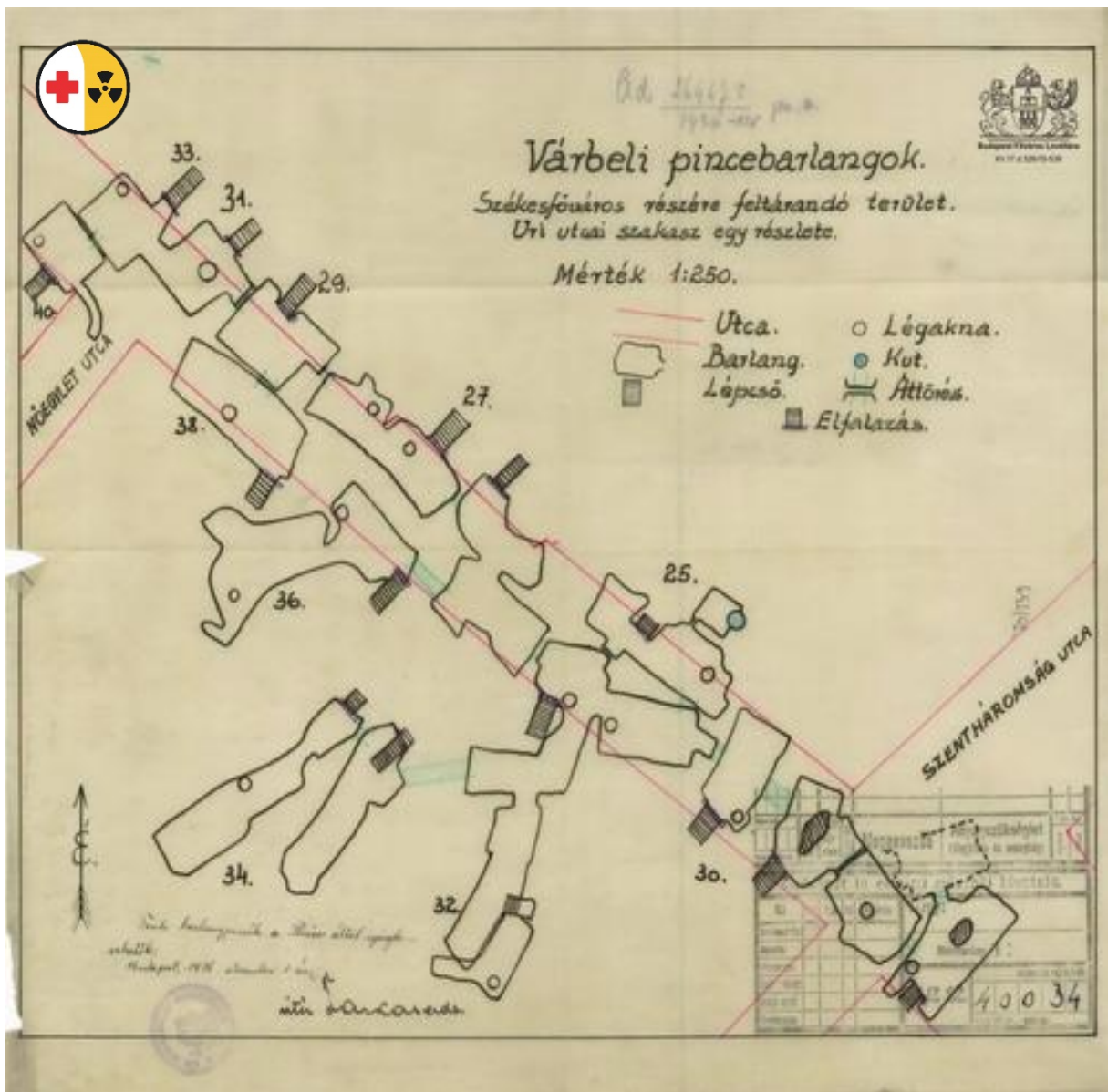


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THE BEGINNINGS

Did you know? *There is a cave and cellar system under the Buda Castle.* The inhabitants used the caverns of the cave system as shelters for hundreds of years in case of fires, or when the city was under a siege. However, by the end of the 19th century, most of them were abandoned or ruined. On the one hand, after the vineyards at Buda perished, there was little need for the use of these caverns as cellars. On the other hand, at the time, the country had not seen any military action for half a century, so there was no need for shelters either.





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The experiences of the first World War pointed out that the cave system may be needed again. Moreover, the modern wars were fought with more powerful weapons than the ones before. On top of that, the air also became a battlefield thanks to the development of aviation, and European leaders feared that in a possible upcoming war their cities might become victims of air raids or gas attacks. At the end of the 1930s, partly as a result of the memories of the First World War, and partly because of the state of war preparation, an air-raid alarm control center was constructed on the territory of the present day Hospital in the Rock Nuclear Bunker Museum. The alarm control center marked "K" operated the air sirens of the Castle district between 1937 and 1945. The construction continued after the Second World War broke out. From 1939, they started the fortification of the caverns, in order to create a shelter.

What does this mean? Air defence/Air-raid precaution: *The nightmare of the air raids became a real peril during the Second World War. The air raids gave a reason to organize the air defense league, and the air-raid precaution league. While the air defense was responsible for the military defense of the country's airspace, the air-raid precaution league was responsible for the safety of civilians. In Hungary, the Royal Hungarian Interior Ministry supervised the air-raid drills which were organized by both the authorities and by civilian organizations. Moreover, air-raid precaution shelters were built and air-raid precaution systems were established. The air-raid precaution league held its first assembly on December 5, 1937, at the Vigadó.*





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THE SHELTER BECOMES A HOSPITAL

The first extension of the alarm control center marked “K” was a shelter. The Castle district was a governmental center at the time, so the extension was reasonable not just in order to ensure the safety of the inhabitants, but also because that way any official could have got fast medical treatment if needed. The shelter’s entrance opened from the first district's city hall. In 1942, Károly Szendy, the mayor of Budapest, together with the Minister of National Defense ordered the construction of an emergency hospital. Thanks to that, the construction of the Emergency Hospital of the Capital started. Time was limited, because the city did not have any other hospitals which could have functioned during air-raids. In ordinary hospitals, bringing the patients to the shelters had proved to be difficult.

The original capacity of the hospital was 60 people, but later on, in preparation for an upcoming emergency, they brought bunk beds to double that number. The hospital was one of the most modern institutions of its time in Hungary, due to the fact that it had its own generators, ventilation system, and x-ray machine. The official opening ceremony was on February 23, 1944. The whole institution was supervised by the Saint John's Hospital.



In the picture which was taken during the opening ceremony, we can see director Dr. István Kovács and Widow Mrs. István Horthy (born Ilona Edelsheim-Gyulai), who worked as a nurse in the hospital. Dr. Kovács was not only professionally prepared, but he also had significant military first-aid experience, as he had spent two times half a year on the Eastern-front. His deputy, Dr. András Seibriger had just returned from the front as well.

Mrs. István Horthy was the chief nurse of the First Home Guard Corps of the Red Cross. There were quite a few ladies from the aristocracy who worked



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in the hospital. The chief nurse was Countess Ilona Andrásy, but Countesses Alice Cziráky and Ilona Széchenyi were also members of the medical staff.



„The Hospital opened from the Tabán-side of the Castle hill, and it was built inside the hill. And that is why it was called the "polyclinic of those who were injured in a bombardment". The hospital had its own power sources and water supply system, which could function even when the area was being bombed. Unfortunately, the predictions came true. From April 1944, those who were injured during bombardments were carried down here. My job here helped me after the tragic death of my husband, there was no room for other thoughts, I had to do my duty..." (Mrs István Horthy Edelsheim-Gyulai Ilona: 2010: Honor and Duty.)

CONTINUED in AP1 Training Material