



Anti-Hungarian atrocities

by Margaret M. Botos M.A.

After the Tartar (Mongol) invasion, in the thirteenth century, King Béla IV. (1235-1270) encouraged the settlement of foreigners into Hungary. In the fifteenth century, the Turks invaded Hungary and devastated the country, killing many people and taking hundreds of thousands into slavery. Their occupation lasted 150 years. In 1686, the Hapsburgs liberated Buda from the Turks and, because they feared a resurgence of a strong Hungary, they refused to allow Hungarians to resettle in the territories freed from the Turks. Instead, they settled people from all the European nationalities, primarily Serbs, Slavs and Germans.

Hungary gave asylum to the Vlachs (Wallachians) and Serbs fleeing from the Turks and allowed them to use their mother-tongue and practice their culture. In the course of time, these peoples developed a nationalistic feeling and wished to take over the land they were occupying within the territory of Hungary.

The Hapsburg Emperor Joseph, King Joseph II. (1780-1790), who was the son of Empress Maria Teresa, encouraged these nationalistic feelings and instigated the Vlach peasants to revolt against the Hungarian nobility, in October 1784. Led by Horea and Closka, they massacred the entire Hungarian population in 389 villages and destroyed the villages. The Hapsburgs successfully used the Vlachs against the Hungarians who were never again able to regain their strength.

The Hapsburgs ruled Hungary for 400 years, during which time there were many revolts and uprisings against the Emperor. During World War I., a total of 661,000 Hungarian soldiers died a heroic death. At the end of the war, the liberal Social Democrat "National Council" ordered the returning Hungarian army to lay down their arms and the soldiers were dismissed. Thus the country had no more armed forces to defend herself from the attacking Slovak, Czech, Rumanian and Serb units, which occupied the border territories of Hungary.

As a result of being forced into the War as part of the Dual Monarchy, on the side of the Germans, Hungary found herself on the losing side. On June 4, 1920, the Versailles Dictated Peace Treaty was signed, also known as the Treaty of Trianon. Out of all those who were on the losing side, this treaty imposed on Hungary the most severe and unjust conditions. The territory of Hungary was reduced from 283,000 km² to 93,000 km². The population was reduced from 18.2 million to 7.6 million. The Hungarian-speaking populace, which was given to Austria, was 26,000. Czechoslovakia received 1,072,000. Yugoslavia received 465,000. Rumania received 1,664,000.

David Lloyd-George concluded: „Some of the proofs which our allies provided were lies and distortions. We made decisions on false claims.” He was referring to the evidence presented by Masaryk and Benes. Hungary was carved up and the Successor States received the territories in which their peoples had received asylum in the Hungarian Kingdom. Since that time, Hungarians have been persecuted in the Successor States and the atrocities continue to this day.

At the end of World War II., the Soviets "liberated" Hungary from the Germans. Thousands of Russian soldiers marched through the country raping the women and ravaging the villages. The extent of their brutality is hardly ever mentioned but the consequences of

their actions were devastating to the Hungarian women. 47,000 of them contracted syphilis or died during the brutal attacks.

SLOVAKIA

The Republic of Czechoslovakia, which was formed in 1918, used the so-called „land reform” as its most effective means of political and economic oppression against the Hungarians of Slovakia. The application of this „agrarian reform” was partly aimed at breaking the economic power of the Hungarian landowners and partly at rearranging the ethnic groups in the Hungarian areas of Slovakia and the Carpathian Ukraine. This rearrangement was started at the beginning of 1920, with the resettlement of Czech, Moravian and Slovak citizens in new villages in the Hungarian areas, on land which belonged to the Hungarians. This “land reform” paved the way for the Benes Decrees of 1945.

This is the collective name for all those presidential orders which Dr. Edward Benes, the President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, made during World War II., and also between May and October, 1945. These decrees were reinforced by the temporary National Assembly on October 28, 1945 and incorporated into the Constitution on March 28, 1946.

According to paragraph 1 of the Governmental Decree No. 33, dated Aug. 2, 1945, all Czechoslovak citizens of German and Hungarian origin were to lose their Czechoslovak citizenship on Aug. 10, 1945. 98% of the Hungarians thereby became displaced persons. Every Hungarian, who was in state employment, lost his job. The Hungarian Cultural organizations and Sport Clubs could no longer operate. The Hungarian and German schools were closed by the continuously published decrees, and the celebration of the Mass in Hungarian and German was forbidden. The most severe of the Benes Decrees branded all the Hungarian and German minorities collectively as war criminals. Based on this, the Czechoslovak government gave itself the right to confiscate all the property of the Hungarians and Germans and the confiscated possessions were distributed to Czech, Slovak and other Slavic citizens.

100,000 Hungarians, who had all their belongings confiscated, were involuntarily resettled into Hungary. The possessions, which they left behind in Slovakia, were given to the resettled Slovaks from Hungary. With reference to the Decree concerning forced labor, the dispossessed Hungarians were deported into the Czech Republic in the winter of 1945-1946. The designated families, including women, children and old people, were herded, by armed force, into railroad cars, and taken to perform so-called “public works” or to become servants for Czech and Moravian peasants.

According to the June 17, 1946 law, the more than 400,000 Hungarians who remained in Slovakia could choose to declare themselves to be Czechoslovaks, in which case they could regain their citizenship, or Hungarians and suffer continued persecution.

The persecution of Hungarians in Slovakia did not end with the “re-Slovakization”. It continued with relocation. The Slovaks wanted to get rid of the ancient Hungarian populace and, because the Trianon Peace Treaty did not allow deportation, they found a different solution to attain their chauvinist goal. They moved the Hungarians out of their own territory and scattered them all across Czechoslovakia and the depopulated Sudetenland. Vladimir Clementis, Deputy Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, on October 31, 1946, announced: “The Hungarians have to be forcefully deported to the former Sudetenland.”

In the Kassa government program, undertaken by Czechoslovakia, more than 68,000 Hungarians were uprooted from their homes in Slovakia and scattered throughout the territory of the Czech state. They were given no more than half an hour to pack their belongings. These people left behind 160,000 cadastral holds of land and 15,000 houses. Many Slovaks left Hungary of their own will and went to Slovakia, leaving 15,000 cadastral holds and 4,400 houses. Hungary never received recompense for all this, not even an apology for the many humiliations and personal injuries.

On February 27, 1947, the Populace Exchange Agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary was signed. As a result of this agreement, 60, 252 Slovaks were resettled from

Hungary into Slovakia and 76,613 Hungarians were taken from Slovakia to Hungary. However, this populace exchange was not 100% successful in making a pure Slovak state because many Hungarians remained in Slovakia. In order to break up this unity, the Slovak Settlement Office declared that the Hungarians remaining in Slovakia had to be redistributed.

The persecution has continued to this day. In fact the new law 503/2003. Z.z. declares, that as of January 1, 2004, the Hungarians and Germans are still collectively guilty, based on the still valid law 104/1945. They are enemies of the Slovak nation and they are traitors. The law establishes that any property of the Hungarians and Germans given to Slovak settlers before February 25, 1948 and nationalized by the communists after that date shall be given to the Slovak settlers, or their descendants. However, some 500,000 hectares of farmland, taken from Hungarians by Benes, can now be sold to westerners by the Slovak Government.

ROMANIA

The 1966 U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the government of the Socialist Republic of Rumania, states in Article 27:

„IN THOSE STATES IN WHICH ETHNIC RELIGIOUS OR LINGUISTIC MINORITIES EXIST, PERSONS BELONGING TO SUCH MINORITIES SHALL NOT BE DENIED THE RIGHT IN COMMUNITY WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THEIR GROUP TO ENJOY THEIR OWN CULTURE, TO PROFESS AND PRACTICE THEIR OWN RELIGION OR TO USE THEIR OWN LANGUAGE."

The United Nations Ad Hoc Committee in 1948 accepted the following definition as one of the ways by which the crime of cultural genocide may be committed:

"...systematic destruction of historical or religious monuments or their diversion to alien uses, destruction or dispersion of documents and objects of historical, artistic or religious value and of objects used in religious worship." (U.N. Doc. !I447)

In 1914, the Hungarians of Transylvania maintained museums, a University in Kolozsvár and several colleges and high-schools for Hungarian, German and Romanian students. As part of the Hungarian Kingdom, it was a free and prosperous land, with equal opportunity to all its citizens. After World War I, in 1920, all this changed. The Romanian Kingdom received Transylvania from the victorious Allied Forces as a reward for turning against its former ally, the AustroHungarian Monarchy. The descendants of the Vlach immigrants and migrant workers, the Romanians, took over the power and the persecution of the Hungarians began in earnest.

Within two years, all the cities, towns and villages in Transylvania were given Romanian names. A land reform law was passed, which took land from the Hungarians and handed it over to Romanians. More than 200,000 Hungarian families, those of state, district, city and township officials, clerks and other public workers were evacuated and sent across the new Hungarian border with only the possessions they could carry with them. The use of the Hungarian language was abolished from all public places. All Hungarian publications, including literary magazines and books were placed under rigid censorship. Hugh Seton-Watson wrote in his book "Eastern Europe Between the Wars" (Archon Books, 1962) on page 300301: "The Hungarians became second class citizens in Transylvania." The American Committee for the Rights of Religious Minorities reported: "The administrative oppression, the violent enforcing of the Romanian language, the aggressive hostility... all these are aimed for the total destruction of the established school system. The laws of 1925 serve as oppressive political and nationalistic tools against the minorities. " (Religious Minorities in Transylvania, The Bacon Press, Boston, 1925).

In 1940, the Axis powers ordered the return of Northern Transylvania to Hungary, reuniting 1,200,000 Hungarians with their Motherland, while still leaving about 600,000 under Romanian domination. About 100,000 of these Hungarians became the victims of the angry Romanian retaliation between 1940 and 1945. In the fall of 1944, when the Romanians

returned into Northern Transylvania behind the advancing Russian army, another 100,000 Hungarians were exterminated or deported into deathcamps.

During World War II., Antonescu massacred 400,000 Jews from Bukovina, Bessarabia and Romania. Many of the Romanian Jews claimed to be Hungarian. He ordered pregnant mothers to be tied up with barbed wire, children and adolescents, many of them still alive, to be tossed into mass graves, which they had been forced to dig for themselves.

Transylvania was returned to Romania in 1945 and the oppression continued. Hungarians were not allowed to use their own language or practice their customs. They continued to do so in secret but if they were discovered they were beaten or imprisoned. From 1967 on, under the dictatorship of Ceausescu, the Romanization intensified. Hungarian educators were persecuted and the Hungarian system of higher education abolished. The Hungarian University at Kolozsvár became Romanian and also the Hungarian High Schools. The History of Transylvania was deleted from the school text books and is gradually being re-introduced in a much altered Rumanian version.

The Hungarian citizens were forced to assimilate into the Romanian nation. The slightest attempt to preserve Hungarian cultural heritage was punishable by life imprisonment or even death. Ceausescu ordered the destruction of churches, even villages, to effect his ethnic cleansing. Cemeteries were destroyed, tombstones broken, Hungarian names erased. In 1988, he announced a plan to destroy 8000 villages. The eradication of Hungarian culture included the Romanization of the names of Hungarian heroes whom the Romanians claimed as their own and the destruction of their statues. The traditional Transylvanian carved gates were burned, as were the carved wooden headstones in the cemeteries, in order to destroy any trace of Hungarian culture.

As in Czechoslovakia, relocation of Hungarians was undertaken in order to change the demographics. Between twenty and thirty thousand Hungarian families were relocated from Kolozsvár to other areas of Romania. Similar resettlement programs were undertaken all over Romania. Historic districts of major cities in Transylvania were rased to make room for concrete skyscrapers to house Romanians. Between 1948 and 1956, a million Romanians were moved into Transylvania, deliberately diluting the ethnic Hungarian villages. In the early 1980's 30,000 Romanians were resettled into Kolozsvár. The mainly Hungarian population of Kolozsvár was reduced to 30% Hungarian. Today, only Covasna and Harghita counties are firmly ethnic Hungarian.

In 2000, the Orthodox Church, with the state's financial backing, proposed the construction of 65 Orthodox churches in these two counties, even though most ethnic Hungarians are Protestant or Roman Catholic. Many areas in which the new buildings are going up already have Orthodox churches with a shortage of parishioners. The church-building boom has renewed decades-old fears about attempts by the Romanian government to repress--or expel--the ethnic Hungarian population of Transylvania.

There are plans to level the Hungarian village of Verespatak in order to mine the gold deposits which lie beneath it. There are no plans to recompense the villagers for the loss of their homes. In 2000 a similar gold-mining project dumped cyanide into the Tisza and Szamos rivers, polluting them so that all the fish and livestock died and the Hungarians living on their banks could not drink the water from their wells.

Hungarians are excluded from taking positions in government and administration. The police, military and religious organizations are made up primarily of Romanians. The police force does not hire any Hungarians. In Transylvania the secret police keeps the people under strict surveillance and constantly harrasses them with scare tactics. The persecution continues.

SERBIA

At the outbreak of World War I, the Pan-Serb movement, encouraged and fully supported by Russia, openly declared that its goal was to destroy the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and to unite all the Southern Slavic nations living on its territory under Serbian rule. **Princip**, a half-official newspaper in Voivodina wrote the following on September 22,

1922: **"The eradication of the Hungarian race is the foremost task of the Slavs awakened after the war . . . Hungary must vanish from the map of Europe."** At the end of the war, the southern part of the thousand year old historical Hungary (Bácska and Bánát) was occupied by Serb troops and, under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, it was annexed to Yugoslavia and became known as VOJVODINA .

The destruction of Hungarian culture began with an effort to suppress the language. In schools, Hungarian children were forced to go to Serbian classes, the training of Hungarian teachers was suspended, and many Hungarian teachers were transferred to Southern Serbia, where there are no Hungarians. During the agricultural reforms, the Hungarian and German minorities were banned from claiming land. Hungarian minorities who were jobless were encouraged to emigrate. In the first two years, around 27 thousand Hungarian emigrants left their birthplace. In place of the expelled Hungarians, the new Yugoslav state settled more than 15 thousand families of civil servants and many thousands of Serb settlers among the remaining Hungarians.

During World War II, in 1941, Germany occupied Yugoslavia. At the same time, Hungary took possession of and re-annexed Bácska from divided Yugoslavia. At the end of 1944, the Serbs reoccupied Bácska, which has belonged to Serbia ever since.

During the German occupation, a strong Serbian partisan movement developed with Communist leadership, which also spread over to Bácska, reannexed to Hungary at the time. The Hungarian military leadership organized anti-partisan raids and summary courts-martial against the participants in the partisan movement. The biggest anti-partisan campaign took place in and around Újvidék (now Novi Sad), where several hundred individuals, suspected of being partisans, were arrested and executed in the course of a three-day raid in January 1942. In 1944, in revenge for the execution of 3,000 suspected Serbian partisans, the Serbs brutally massacred about 40,000 Hungarian civilians.

The commander-in-chief of the partisan army, Marshal Tito, as far as we know, did not give any expressed written command to butcher the Hungarians in Bácska. He did condone and apparently orally directed his partisans in the whole territory of Yugoslavia - including Vojvodina - to revenge all "injustices" suffered by partisans and Serbians during the four years of the war.

While the Hungarian military justice executed the condemned one by one, the Serb partisans bound ten or fifteen people with wire and killed them with a round of firearms. They lined them up in front of the previously dug common graves so that they would only have to bury them with the earth that they themselves had dug from the pit. Whereas the sentence of Hungarian summary courts was hanging or shooting, the Serb partisans killed their victims after torturing them. Sometimes they bound together ten or more men in a circle around a straw or hay stack, then set fire to the stack. The victims dragged each other into the flames, they all burned alive. Elsewhere, the captives were made to walk barefoot over a carpet of glowing embers several meters long, before they were executed. The partisans often tore off the nails of the victims with pliers. They often enjoyed burning their victims alive.

The persecution of Hungarians in Serbia diminished in the post-war years but has recently intensified. The atrocities against the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia began on September 30, 1987. On this date, at the Central Committee meeting of the Serb Communist Association the nationalistic faction led by Slobodan Milosevic came into power. He was elected President of the Serb Socialist Republic on March 28, 1989. In 1992, the Serbs continuously attacked Bosnia, which had declared its independence.

The Serb government, led by Radoman Bozovic, gave an order which forced the Hungarian villages in Bácska to accept a designated number of Serb refugees from Bosnia. The intention was to change the demographics of the Vajdaság.

The Serb army and the Chetniks threatened the populace of the Hungarian villages by destroying the Hungarian churches. They set fire to the church of the village of Darázs in 1999. The Hungarians of the village of Szent László, already in 1991, were prevented from burying their dead in the cemetery of Szent László. The Serb snipers shot at the funeral procession as they approached the cemetery. After that, Serbia attacked Croatia and until

January 1992, they shot at every Catholic and Protestant church with cannons. The Hungarian priests were chased away. The church in Kórogy suffered the same fate and the bell-tower was also destroyed. The Protestant minister was chased away.

The name of the village of Szent László was mentioned in a document of 1404, as a pure Hungarian village. Today, in the village of 458 houses and a populace of 1600, there is not a single Hungarian. The church is in ruins and the priest has fled. The village of Haraszti dates back to the time of the Hungarian Homecoming in AD 896. The houses of the village have been left in ruins by the Serbs. The Protestant church was attacked several times by cannons. The Protestant ministers of Kopács and Csuzsa were forced to flee. Not a single Roman Catholic priest was able to remain in the territory between the Drava and the Danube.

TRANSCARPATHIA (Kárpátalja)

Between 1939 and 1941, many Hungarians emigrated from Transcarpathia to the Soviet Union. There, under special decrees, they were convicted from 5 to 7 years of incarceration for illegal border crossing. In 1944, all Hungarian males between 18 and 50 years of age were carried off to forced labor camps in the Ukraine and Belorussia. 183,395 people were incarcerated or deported; of these, 115,000 were tortured to death, hanged, or shot.

The Hungarians in the Successor States have suffered persecution ever since the Treaty of Trianon made them minorities under foreign rule. The anti-Hungarian policies of the Successor States amount to ethnic genocide, which has been ignored by the United Nations.

Margaret M. Botos, M.A.

Bibliography

Kosztin, Árpád: *Chronicle of Cruelties: Romanian Mistreatment of the Hungarian Minority in Transylvania*,

Corvinus Library Website, Hungarian History

Cseres, Tibor: *Serbian Vendetta in Bácska*, Corvinus Library Website, Hungarian History

Dupka, György: *The Tragedy of the Hungarians in Transcarpathia*, Corvinus Library Website, Hungarian History

Botos, László: *The Road to the Dictated Peace*, Cleveland, 1999