

## Atrocities against Hungarians

A historical review

*(Anti-Hungarian sentiment, which was recently displayed by some main European media and at the latest session of the European Parliament is somehow just a continuation of a long historical trend as can be seen in the following article).*

It may be traced back to the Mongol-Tartar invasion of 1241-1242, led by Batu Khan, which decimated the population of the Kingdom of Hungary. In response, King Béla IV (1235-1270) developed the policy of bringing in settlers (immigrants) from neighboring countries thereby breaking down the homogeneous ethnic Hungarian character of the kingdom. This situation further deteriorated, when central Hungary was freed from 150 years of Ottoman Turkish occupation (1526-1686) that seriously reduced the Hungarian population within the Carpathian Basin. The Habsburg rulers, for fear of a strong Hungary, resettled the decimated central and southern areas of the country, not with Hungarians from other parts of the kingdom, but by bringing in Germans, Serbs and Vlachs (Romanians). This multi-ethnic situation sowed the seeds of future ethnic clashes that have become increasingly serious in more recent times and have become exacerbated by the political situation brought about by the peace treaties following World Wars I and II. The resulting atrocities against Hungarians are presented here region by region.

(1) *Northern Hungary* (former Hungarian *Felvidék*, now Slovakia). Slovaks sparsely populated the forest areas of the Northern Carpathian Mountains at the time of the Hungarian settlement period (895). A Turkish traveler reported in the 16th century that Hungarian was spoken as far north as the town of Nyitra (now Nitra, Slovakia). While the Hungarians fought the Turks and later the Germans, their numbers decreased, but those of the Slovaks multiplied, and they moved into areas formerly inhabited by Hungarians, waiting for the opportunity to claim the entire region. (It was a similar situation with the Vlachs in Transylvania and the Serbs in the Southern Hungary). In the meantime, awakening Slovak nationalism in the 19th century was enthusiastically voiced in the press and in Parliament. Czech émigrés in France and England conducted effective propaganda against Austria-Hungary. *Eduard Benes* (1884-1948) and *Tomáš G. Masaryk* (1850-1937), living in exile in Paris during the War, formed the Czecho-Slovak National Council that was recognized by the Allies in 1915, and was officially sanctioned as the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. The situation deteriorated further in the post-war years following the Treaty of Versailles-Trianon (1920). At the Peace Treaty the government of the state of Czechoslovakia by then in existence, was one of the signatories. Czechoslovakia came into being as one of the “successor states” of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy created after the War and was one of the major players in the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Later D. Lloyd-George, Prime Minister of England, complained: “Some of the proofs which our allies provided were lies and distortions. We made decisions on false claims” – referring to the evidence presented for the Peace Treaty by Benes and Masaryk. This Peace Treaty resulted in the dismemberment of the thousand-year old Hungarian Kingdom and the ceding of northern Hungary (*Felvidék*) to the newly created state of Czechoslovakia that did not respect the rights of its newly acquired national minorities, including more than one

million ethnic Hungarians, mostly in one block along the artificially created northern border of truncated Hungary, despite the stipulations of the Peace Treaty.

The new masters inflicted discriminatory regulations upon the Hungarian minority. Under the guise of agrarian reform, lands were expropriated from Hungarian owners and given to newly settled Czechs and Slovaks. The area also experienced the first ethnic cleansing when more than 100,000 were forced to flee to a “truncated” Hungary, reduced to one-third of its former size. Hungarians in the new state were unable to obtain, or had great difficulty in securing passports. Czech became the official language everywhere. In the Ruthenian region twice as many votes were needed to elect a representative to the Parliament in Prague than in other regions of the country. Procurement of Czech citizenship for the Hungarian minority presented an opportunity for serious discrimination with the creation of many obstacles and the charging of exorbitant fees. Some 45,000 Hungarians were denied citizenship in the new state of Czechoslovakia. At the same time those who did not possess such a document lost their jobs and pensions. Hungarian teachers, who did not possess the required Czech citizenship papers, were dismissed by the hundreds. The Hungarian Press was censored and Hungarian newspapers were banned. The exchange rate for the new Czech currency was two to one in Bohemia, in Slovakia four to one, while in Ruthenia it was pegged at ten to one. Through such policies the Czechoslovak Government attempted to thin out the purely Hungarian regions. The Czechs successfully colonized both Northern Hungary (*Felvidék*) and Ruthenia or Sub-Carpathia (*Kárpátalja*).

The fate of the Hungarian minority further deteriorated markedly after World War II as a result of the earlier pre-war return of the Hungarian-populated southern strip of Northern Hungary to Hungary. By the *First Vienna Award* of 2 November 1938, a new border was drawn almost precisely between the Hungarian and the Slovakian populated areas. Understandably, the Hungarian population was glad to be reunited with the mother country after endless discrimination, oppression and persecution. However, the reunion of Hungarians lasted only six years. After World War II, in the reconstituted Czechoslovakia more repressive measures came into force in an atmosphere of revenge. The so-called *Beneš Decrees*, consisting of 143 declarations was conceptualized by the Czechoslovak President Eduard Benes. 15 of them severely affected the Hungarian (and German) minorities. The decree declared Hungarians and Germans to be “collective war criminals”. This meant that they were stripped of their civil rights and citizenship. In 1945 the Czechs planned the expulsion of 600,000 Hungarians native to the region for ten centuries. Of this number 60,000 were forcibly resettled in Silesia under inhuman conditions in the middle of the winter in an area vacated by the expelled 3.5 million Germans. Another 100,000 ethnic Hungarians were expelled to Hungary without compensation for their property. In exchange they brought a limited number of Slovaks from Hungary to Slovakia, although the majority Slovaks opted to stay in Hungary. Hatred for the Hungarians reached its zenith during the after-war trials for war crimes. In them, mostly Hungarians were condemned and executed. As many as 90 young men from a paramilitary unit, earlier evacuated but returning home from Germany through Slovak territory, were captured by Slovak police, taken to a forest and shot simply because they were Hungarians. Count János (John) Esterházy was the only Hungarian member in the Slovak Parliament of the Tiso era, and he alone protested against the anti-Jewish laws. After the War he was accused with war crimes, sentenced to death, commuted to life-imprisonment, and died in prison. In this period Hungarian civilians in Slovakia lost their employment, their homes; movable properties were expropriated including the tools of their trade.

After the *Prague Spring* of 1968, when the Soviet occupation came to an end, the anti-Hungarian policies still continued: two-hundred Hungarian-language schools remained closed and Hungarian-language education remained abolished. In the post 1990 era of political changes, in a separate non-communist Slovakian state, since 1993, aspiring to join the *European Union* (EU), the autochthon Hungarian population in the southern areas hoped to be given human and minority rights and offered partnership with the Slovakian population. They also expected reparations for their sufferings and humiliation; and restitution of, or compensation for the confiscated properties. However, what they have received so far is the continuation of their suppression, which culminated in the anti-Hungarian language law, introduced in 2009, which proposed to mete out heavy penalties to those Hungarians who spoke Hungarian in public, or in offices. In the 1991 census, 567,290 Slovakian citizens (10.8% of the total population) identified themselves as members of the autochthon Hungarian minority, while 608,221 (11.5% of Slovakia's population) declared Hungarian as their native language. Some Hungarian sources estimate the total number of Hungarians living in Slovakia to be as high as 750,000, whereas, before World War I, more than 1 million Hungarians had been living in the same area. This was a decline of more than a quarter of a million as a result of "ethnic cleansing" by persecution, oppression, discrimination and atrocities perpetrated against them during most of the 20th century. During the same period the Slovak population grew from 1.4 to 4.5 million. → **Trianon Peace Treaty; Vienna Award I; Paris Peace Treaty; Benes, Eduard; Benes Decrees.**

(2) *Carpatho-Ukraine* (Ruthenia, or Sub-Carpathia, former Hungarian *Kárpátalja*) – This part of the Carpathian Basin has never formed part of the Ukraine and only became part of the former Soviet Union in 1945. During the interwar years as a result of the Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty (1920), this area formed part of the newly created state of Czechoslovakia, despite the fact that the Slavic Ruthenes (or Rusyns) of the mountainous areas, not to mention the autochthon Hungarian population of the lowland, expressed their desire during the Peace Treaty negotiations in 1920 to remain in the historic Kingdom of Hungary. There was a short period of reunification with Hungary (1939-1944) as a sequel to the *First Vienna Award* of 1938. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine "inherited" Carpatho-Ukraine on 1 December 1991, although it had never historically been a part of Ukraine. In 1990 there were 200,000 Hungarians in the region. At the turn of the millennium there were 183,000 ethnic Hungarians in Carpatho-Ukraine. There was a great deal of suffering toward the end of World War II when, in October 1944, the Soviet army occupied the area. In November 1944 the Soviets began forcibly deporting all able-bodied members of the Hungarian population of this key part of the Carpathian Basin through the mountain passes. All Hungarian males between 18 and 50 were carried off to forced labor camps in the Ukraine and Belorussia simply because of their nationality. They had to work in inhuman conditions on the construction of railway lines, canals and tunnels. A total of 40,000 were deported including women. One-hundred-and-sixty members of the clergy were also deported and most of them perished in Soviet prisons. The Hungarians to be deported to the Soviet Union were first transported to the concentration camp of *Szolyva*, 20 km northeast of Munkács (now Mukacheve in Carpatho-Ukraine). Even from across the border in Hungary the men from 23 Hungarian villages under Soviet military occupation were also rounded up and sent to the Szolyva camp. In this concentration camp about 100 men perished every day. On 1 April 1945 the camp was closed down after an outbreak of exanthematic typhus.

Most of the 40,000 deported have never returned. → **Trianon Peace Treaty; Vienna Award I; Paris Peace Treaty.**

(3) *Transylvania* (Hungarian *Erdély* with *Partium* and a part of *Bánát*) – This region was also part of Historic Hungary and was ceded to Romania by the Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty on 4 June 1920. In the 14th century there were only 389 Vlach (now Romanian) villages in Transylvania. The number of Vlach immigrants grew considerably during the 17th century, when Vlach settlers were brought in to make up for the greatly reduced Hungarian population. The Vlach population in 1700 was only 250,000; by 1784 it had increased to 787,000. Their numbers grew in equal proportion to their claim to possess all of Transylvania. The basis of their claim was the so-called Daco-Roman theory.

Amongst the organized anti-Hungarian activities the first one recorded was the bloodbath of *Mádéfalva*, the so-called *Siculicidium*, (slaughter of the Szeklers), which occurred on 7 January 1764. It happened during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa (1740-1780), when Austrian troops fired into an unarmed assembly of village folk of *Szekler* Hungarians, killing several hundred villagers. The cause of this massacre was the refusal by the men folk to enlist for border-defense.

There was a Vlach (Romanian) peasant uprising led by *Horea* (Vasile Nicua), *Ion Closca* and *Gherorghe Crisan* (*Hóra*, *Kloska*, *Krisán*) in 1784-1785. On 7 November 1784 the Vlach freebooters of Horea and Closca massacred the Hungarian noble families, officials, priests and pastors and the innocent population of Verespatak (now Roşia Montană), Abrudbánya (now Ambrutus), Offenbánya (now Baia de Arieş), and many other places. The uprising, which lasted for 6 weeks, was directed exclusively against Hungarians, torturing and murdering them and pillaging their homes.

There was another Vlach uprising in Transylvania during the Hungarian War of Independence in 1848-1849 against Habsburg rule, led by *Avram Iancu* (1824-1872). The Vlachs of Transylvania rose against the Hungarian national state re-established under Lajos (Louis) Kossuth. This resulted in numerous massacres of Hungarian noble families and of the general population at the hands of Vlach nationalistic insurgents in Transylvania. For example, on 9 May 1849 Iancu's Vlachs ransacked and burned down the mining town of Abrudbánya and killed the Hungarian population. This time only a small part of the population survived. These uprisings exterminated the majority of Hungarians mostly in southern Transylvania.

During the Hungarian War of Independence (1848-1849) a part of the Vlach population of Transylvania sided with the Habsburgs and turned against the Hungarians. From November 1848 terrorist Romanian troops, led by Axente Sever, Avram Iancu and Prodán Probu went on a killing spree particularly in Nagyenyed (Now Aiud) and the Hungarian villages in County Torda, generally in Transylvania. On January 8, 1849 after they had forced the terrified Hungarian population to sign the statement of loyalty to the Habsburg throne, they tortured and massacred 1000 innocent Hungarian civilians, mainly women, children and clergymen. The Vlach attackers ousted the rest of the Hungarians to the ice-cold empty fields where an additional 1000 of them died of cold, and the Vlachs continued to devastate Nagyenyed until November 17. They looted and also burned the ancient Bethlen Reformed College and destroyed the valuable old documents containing the history of the Hungarians in Transylvania. *Though during the War of Independence part of the Vlach population in Transylvania sided with the Hungarian cause, the severe Vlach anti-Hungarian pogroms claimed altogether 8,500-10,500 Hungarian victims.* These massacres basically changed the proportions of Hungarians and Romanians slightly in the favor of Romanians.

On 1 December 1918 at *Gyulafehérvár* (now Alba Iulia) an irregular Romanian assembly unilaterally declared the unification of Transylvania with Romania. It was enshrined into the Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920. Thereafter the descendants of the Vlach immigrants and migrant workers took over the reins of power in Transylvania and the persecution of two million 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 that took land from the Hungarians and handed it over to Romanians. More than 200,000 Hungarian families, all 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. 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. Practically overnight Hungarians became second-class citizens in Transylvania. This period saw an administrative oppression, the violent enforcement of the Romanian language and hostility aimed at the total destruction of the established Hungarian school system, language and culture. The new Romanian laws served to act as oppressive political and nationalistic tools against the Hungarians and other minorities.

On 30 August 1940, the *Second Vienna Award* returned Northern Transylvania and a part of Partium to Hungary repatriating 1,200,000 Hungarians to their motherland while still leaving about 600,000 under Romanian domination in southern Transylvania. After the Second Vienna Award the Antonescu and the legionary systems were involved in persecution and atrocities against ethnic Hungarians, Jews and Gypsies in Southern Transylvania that remained under Romanian rule. Thousands of these Hungarians became the victims of angry Romanian retaliations between 1940 and 1945.

In the fall of 1944, the Romanians returned with a vengeance into Northern Transylvania behind the advancing Russian army, committing many atrocities against the Hungarian population. The Maniu Guards and some 50,000 Romanian volunteers turned on the Hungarians in Northern Transylvania. They took almost everything from Hungarian houses and homes, rounded up Hungarian men and handed them over as partisans to the Russian soldiers. They were sent to internment camps at *Focsany*, *Belényes*, *Temesvár*, *Kishalmagy*, *Lugos* and other locations. In the fall of 1944 some 40,000 Hungarian men were arrested and taken to internment camps. Most of them were never seen again. It was planned that they should perish there of malnutrition, cruel treatment and epidemics. The following atrocities against the Hungarian population stand out:

(a) On 26 September 1944 the vengeful Romanian Guardists staged a pogrom amongst the civilian population of *Szárzajta* (now Aita-Seacă) 50 km north of Brassó (now Braşov). (2) On 3 November 1944 the official Gazette of Romania published an order on setting up and operating concentration camps. These camps were filled with ethnic Hungarians and Germans. There was an internment camp at *Földvár* (now Feldioara), Brassó County, and a second one at *Targu Jiui* where Hungarian intellectuals and Hungarian juveniles under the age of 18 were interned. Thousands perished there. (3) On 8 October 1944 in *Csikszentdomokos* (now Sândominic) atrocities were committed by the Romanian terrorist Maniu Guardists when 16 *Szekler* Hungarian men were rounded up and decapitated. There were random mass executions of Hungarians without trial on the sole basis that they were Hungarians.

As a result of the Romanian atrocities the occupying Soviet authorities expelled the Guardists dissolving their organization and introducing Soviet military administration on 12 November 1944 for a period of six months in order to curb these crimes.

(b) Although in 1950 Romania had to create the “Maros Hungarian Autonomous Region” on the insistence of Stalin, it existed only as a formality and it was terminated in 1968. From 1967, under communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu the oppression, dispersion and persecution of Hungarians accelerated. Hungarian schools and universities were closed. Only a few Hungarian newspapers were left chiefly for propaganda purposes. Intellectuals and church leaders were persecuted. The history of Transylvania was expunged from school textbooks and is gradually being re-introduced in a much-altered Romanian version. Ecclesiastical objects and registries were confiscated. Hungarian Bibles were sent to paper mills and from them toilet paper was manufactured. Hungarian cemeteries were closed and tombstones broken, Hungarian names erased. Hungarian speech was prohibited and penalized. While Hungarians could be employed only in Romanian regions, Romanians moving to Hungarian regions and cities were rewarded. Hungarian citizens were forced to assimilate into the Romanian nation. The aim of the plan for “systematization” and destruction of 8,000 mainly Hungarian villages was to force the Hungarian population into slum housing and “agricultural centers”. From this bleak situation more than 50,000 Hungarians fled to Hungary. Romanian border guards shot many of them. Dramatic changes took place when Romanian security forces attempted to arrest the Hungarian Reformed Minister of *Temesvár* (now Timisoara), the Rev. (later Bishop) László Tőkés, who bravely defended the rights of the oppressed Hungarian minority. His resistance triggered the events that resulted in the execution of dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu and his wife at Christmas 1989 and the political change in Romania. However, this did not do much to alter the anti-Hungarian Romanian policy. In fact, it even exacerbated it with the “new” Romania terming Hungarians “Bozgors” i.e. homeless people. In an anti-Hungarian pogrom in March 1990 at *Marosvásárhely* (now Targu Mureş, at that time with a majority Hungarian population), some worked-up Romanians seriously manhandled a number of Hungarians, amongst them András (Andrew) Sütő, the renowned writer.

(c) The latest atrocity against Hungarians occurred on 19-20 March 1990, again at *Marosvásárhely* in the first year of the new “democratic” political system in Romania. On 1 January 1990 Hungarian students of the Medical School of *Marosvásárhely* conducted a “sit in” strike demanding the restoration of the Hungarian language department at the Medical School. In February some 100,000 Hungarians with books and candles in their hands took part in protests demonstrating for the reinstatement of a Hungarian school and university. The *Vatra Romanesca* nationalist organization regarded this and the observation of Hungarian National Day on 15 March as a provocation against the Romanian state. On 19 March groups of Romanians from outer Romania (Moldova) poured in transported by buses, and laid siege to the main office of the Hungarian Democratic Alliance in Romania (*Romániai Magyarok Demokratikus Szövetsége – RMDSZ*) and seriously wounded its County President András (Andrew) Sütő. On the next day they rushed upon the protesting Hungarians on a square and beat them up with sticks, iron bars and stones, turning the city into a place of street clashes. The result of the “Black March” pogrom was 3 dead and 100 wounded. Not a single Romanian but many Hungarians were arrested, accused and sentenced to prison terms.

(d) The so-called *Csángó* Hungarians, who settled for various reasons outside the Carpathian Mountains in Moldavia and Bukovina in past centuries have so far been

unsuccessful in obtaining official approval for Hungarian-language education in Csángó villages. Once again the desire of the Romanian government is clear: forced Romanianization. Only recently (as a result of EU influence) the Hungarians were allowed to open a few Hungarian schools, but only of primary level. Due to inhuman treatment, some 200,000 Hungarians left Transylvania for the West in the 1990s. In the 20th century, the Hungarian population in Transylvania decreased from 31% to 18%, while at the same time Romanian population had doubled. In 2002 it reached 5,393,400 while Hungarians were only 1,416,844. Despite political changes and “democratization” in Romania, of all the 4000 Hungarian church properties, earlier confiscated by the Communist state, only 375 have been returned. These events also contributed to the acceleration of Hungarian emigration out of

Transylvania. → **Mádéfalva Bloodbath of; Daco-Roman Theory; Romanian Atrocities in Transylvania; Bukovina, Csángós in; Maros Hungarian Autonomous Province; Tókécs, László; Sütő, András.**

(4) *Southern Hungary* (Voivodina now in Serbia, the former *Délvidék* of Historic Hungary) – This is the southern portion of the Kingdom of Hungary that Serbs had been planning to take over as early as their three-centuries long Ottoman Turkish captivity. Hungarians have populated this region since their settlement of the Carpathian Basin in 896. Serbs appeared there in strength when the conquering Turks pushed them northward from the Balkans after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The Serbs began to move more and more into Hungarian territory from the 15th century on. In 1420 King Zsigmond (Sigismund of Luxembourg) gave permission for a Serbian group to settle in Hungary. After the Hungarian army’s defeat in the Battle of Mohács in 1526, the Turkish armies and their Serbo–Bosnian–Albanian auxiliary troops burned down this area enslaving or massacring those who could not flee. At the time of the first Turkish census in 1557–1558, the majority of the population was still Hungarian. In addition to Serb immigration, mass immigration of Vlachs (now Romanians) also began during the Turkish occupation. Only between 1641 and 1646, 10,000 families fleeing from Wallachia (Havasalföld) settled in the region and the Turks also began settling them on vacant Hungarian lands. In 1690 under the leadership of Arzenije Carnojevic III, the Orthodox Patriarch of Pae (Ipek), 35,000 families, *i.e.* 200,000 Serbs, settled in Southern Hungary. Empress Maria Theresa gave permission for temporary settlement to 20,000 Serbs who, in the end, stayed there permanently. Pan-Slav ambitions turned the Serbs against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy that resulted in the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo and the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918).

When the War seemed lost to the Central Powers the Serb General Misica proceeded out of hand to occupy Southern Hungary between the 8th and 21st of November 1918. The Versailles-Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920 awarded Croat-Slovenia and Southern Hungary to Serbia. Following the occupation of Hungarian territories the Serbs completely forgot that Hungary in the past had given asylum to a great number of fleeing Serbs. They mercilessly did everything to uproot all that was Hungarian. They massacred tens of thousands of Hungarians and many more were expelled. They closed down all Hungarian cultural and other institutions and gave the buildings and all their equipment to Serbian institutions. They expropriated Church lands, abbeys, schools and other properties. They also expropriated and closed down Hungarian rural elementary as well as secondary schools and prohibited the use of Hungarian educational books. The contents of Hungarian libraries had to be shipped to Belgrade. Hungarian historic monuments were destroyed. The Hungarian theater companies were expelled. Hungarian newspapers were banned, although later a few

were allowed to operate under strict censorship. All these anti-Hungarian measures were made in contravention of Article 19 of the Peace Treaty that guaranteed all ethnic minorities the right to their own schools, a term approved even by the Serbian National Assembly.

According to an American Presbyterian Mission's Report: "We have concluded that the occupation and administration of the territories ceded from Hungary to Serbia is characterized by grievous and brutal behavior and vengeful ethnic hatred that has evoked and tolerated the dirty politics of terror, abuse, brutality, plunder and coercion. They are imprisoning and beating members of the clergy and civil servants in large numbers and are threatening them with torture and death. They are holding people in jail for months without trial, or even charge. Appeals are disregarded, or held back, the appellants penalized."

Five days after the German forces attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, and following Serbia's collapse, Hungarian army units occupied the ceded areas of Bácska (Backa), the Baranya Triangle and the Mura confluence as part of the rightful reunification with the mother country. In fact the entire historic County of Bács-Bodrog became once again an integral part of Hungary. On 22 June 1941 in Nagybecskerek (now Petrovgrad) Chetnic (royalist) partisan leaders Marko Perecin, Pasco Romac and Jovan Veselinov decided on partisan terrorist action against the occupying Hungarian army, on instructions from Moscow, starting on 28 June 1941. The Serbians developed a 58-member partisan terrorist unit that operated from Sajkás (near Titel) as their central base (southeast corner of Bácska). From July to October of that year thirty-five sabotage actions took place in the Bácska area. From December 1941, a number of Hungarian country-policemen and border guards were killed including the gendarme-commander of Zsablya (Žabalj), northeast of Újvidék (Novi Sad). This partisan terrorist activity lasted for six months with brazen contempt for international Articles of War and ignoring martial law introduced by the Hungarian authorities. This activity included shooting Hungarian soldiers and police patrols from treetops, church towers and roof windows all over the Bácska area, especially in Újvidék (now Novi Sad), Csurog (Čurug), Zsablya and Zombor (Sombor). They also burned crops in the fields, carried out robbery, extortion of food, as well as killing and torturing the civilian population. This untenable situation was followed by severe but understandable reprisals on the part of the Hungarian authorities to maintain law and order in the Bácska area; consequently there were police-raids in the area. On 4 January 1942 mainly in and around Újvidék the Hungarian army and police units captured and executed 1049 of the terrorists. After that the partisan activity ceased. 3300 fell victims of the mopping-up operation including 2500 Serbians.

In October 1944 the invading Soviet forces reached the Southern part of Hungary, accompanied by the Serbian partisan units filled with revenge, and immediately set about slaughtering the local unarmed and innocent Hungarian and German civilian population. The revenge by Tito's partisans took place in 130 Hungarian-inhabited towns and villages. They massacred thousands of civilians without any reason or trial, using cruel and sadistic methods and not even sparing women and children. Twelve Catholic priests also fell victim.

On 8 October 1944, Tito's partisans, in the wake of the advancing Soviet forces, executed 500 Hungarians at Péterréve (Petrovo Selo), south of Zenta (Senta). The Serbian ethnocide started in earnest on 18 October 1944, when the ethnic Hungarians and Germans were rounded up into forty-one concentration camps, where many of them perished. During this campaign of retaliation by the Serb partisans, 40,000 to



50,000 Hungarians, including women and children, were executed without any judicature simply because they were Hungarians. The mass execution of “collaborating” Hungarian leaders took place in Szabadka on 30 October 1944. Also in the fall of 1944 massacres occurred in Újvidék, Szenttamás, 30 km north of Újvidék when returning Serbian army units in a few days rounded up 3,000 Hungarian men and executed them. In the same month in the Zsablya region the Serbian partisans rounded up fifty Hungarians daily, killing them by machine-gun fire and tossing their bodies into mass graves. There has been not one Hungarian in Zsablya for some time while in 1941 there were 8,526. During the autumn of 1944 in the pogrom of Adorján, at a treacherously convoked civic meeting held in the village square, the assembled Hungarian men, women and children were massacred by the armed Serbian terrorists. Many of the Hungarian population of Temerin were killed in a mass-execution and buried in a mass grave and in Újvidék the partisan terrorists, in retaliation for the Hungarian razzia, brutally executed several hundred Hungarians. Massacres took place also at Ada, Apatin, Bácsföldvár, Bajmok, Bezdán Csurog, Hadikliget, Horgos, Kula, Magyarkanizsa, Martonos, Mozsoly, Óbecse, Pacsér, Péterréve, Verbász, Zenta and many other places.

The destruction of Hungarian culture in Southern Hungary began with the suppression of the language. Hungarian children were forced to go to Serbian classes and the training of Hungarian teachers was suspended. The jobless Hungarians were encouraged to emigrate. By means of the agricultural reforms newcomers were settled in these depopulated areas. Between 1944 and 1948, 385,000 hectares of land were distributed in Voivodina and Slavonia among 40,000 southern settler families (Serbs from Lika in Croatian Krajina, Bosnians, Montenegrins) numbering a total of 200,000 persons. One-tenth of the distributed land was given to 18,000 landless Hungarians. With the exception of the Germans no large-scale deportations or population exchanges took place. Yet about 30,000 Hungarians, mostly those who had served in the Hungarian army and members of their families, moved to Hungary. The influx of Serbian people into Voivodina continued with more than 500,000 newcomers settling in the province between 1953 and 1971. The influx continues to this day from the south with Serbian refugees coming from Kosovo. As a result the proportion of the Hungarian minority in the province has shrunk from the former one-third to one-sixth today, putting them in an even more desperate situation.

A new ordeal befell the Hungarians living in the former Southern Hungary (northern Yugoslavia) in the 1990s, during the Yugoslavian civil war. Far more Hungarian young men were conscripted into the army than from other ethnic groups and were sent to the most dangerous parts of the front-line. This resulted in a mass exodus of young Hungarians from Voivodina. They were followed by thousands of Hungarian families who escaped from the war zones or were forcibly evacuated from their homes that were given to Serb refugees from Kosovo. The new settlers do not generally tolerate the autochthonous Hungarian population and wish to see the latter chased out of Voivodina. To achieve this goal Serbs beat up Hungarians on the streets, in schools or in the bars, desecrating Hungarian cemeteries and threatening them on wall graffiti. There were hundreds of such cases in recent years. The European Union sent a committee to conduct an investigation into these issues. – B: 1273, 0954, 1272, 1062, 1357, T: 7456, 7103, 7690.→**Bezdán, Massacre of Hungarians.**

(Article from the Hungarian World Encyclopaedia)

