

CONCLUDING DECLARATION

On October 24th and 25th the Hungarian Scientific Society of Vojvodina held an international conference on the development of the research into the unveiling of the atrocities committed against the Hungarian population on the territory of Délvidék (the Southern parts of Historic Hungary) at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945. The participants of the Conference, which had attracted an exceptionally great interest, discussed a submitted draft proposal for a concluding statement and complemented it with several motions. We, Béla Csorba, Márton Matuska and Dr Béla Ribár, Academician, entrusted to formulate the final version of the text, sum up our work as follows:

1. On basis of the submitted studies and our former knowledge, we put on record that during the above mentioned period, on the directives of the party and administrative organs in authority, and carried out with their participation and the active assistance of a section of the local population, came to mass executions of Hungarians and, also, charged by communal guilt, they were inflicted collective punishment. The wanton executions turned into mass lynching in many communities. The official bodies treated this act, both then and during the following decades as if those Hungarians had been indicted for war crimes and found guilty in regular court proceedings, although this was true only in very rare cases. In addition to the civil victims, Hungarian, soldiers, POWs, were also executed in large numbers. The number of the executed can still only be estimated, but it can certainly be put to tens of thousands. The victims' names, possible guilt, the circumstances of their executions, and their resting places have never been made public. They were all subsequently declared to have been war criminals, their properties were confiscated, their families were stigmatized. The whole population of three villages: Csurog, Zsablya and Mozsor, that is, those who survived the massacre, had all their belongings taken away, and were expelled from their homes and villages for good. Neither the victims nor their families have yet been acquitted of their unfounded crime, been materially compensated, or rehabilitated; the competent authorities have never dealt with the matter at all. We trust that Serbia and Montenegro will adopt before long the proposals put forward by UNESCO in its annual report for the year 2000 (Summary on security archives of previous oppressive regimes), including for the victims suffering from the violations of the law the right to compensation and satisfaction, the right to restitution of confiscated goods and the right to identify those who were responsible for the violation of human rights.

2. The Hungarian State was informed about the mass slaughter right at its beginning. Nevertheless, it did not make the case internationally public. It did not make mention of it at the peace conference in Paris; consequently, it missed the opportunity to bring the matter up under favourable circumstances for negotiations. At the time of the disintegration of the second Yugoslav State, and after the constitution of the Serbia and Montenegro State, Hungary failed again to bring the issue up. The motherland as a sovereign state has, therefore, never made an official statement concerning the issue of the massacre in Délvidék. We deem it necessary that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences should stimulate and encourage researches into the matter, as well as the publication of the studies. Furthermore, it is our expectations that the Serbian Academy of Sciences and the Vojvodinean Academy of Sciences now in the process of constitution will do the same. In order that our work gains momentum, young researches should be awarded scholarships.

The importance of the responsibility that falls upon the motherland and the scientific institutions is even greater because the one-sided, repeated and emphatic assertion of similar misdeeds committed by the Hungarian authorities before the events under discussion has a deleterious effect on the Hungarian nation as a whole, and especially on the Hungarians living in Délvidék.

3. It was in the interest of the second Yugoslavia not to speak about the massacre, to handle the issue the way the Hungarian State has done it up to the present. Scientific research has approached the matter from the view point of the state policy and has given it a false interpretation. The State under the Milošević regime took hardly any notice of the fact that the event had taken place, nor of the fact that the historic VMDK, the first political organization of Hungarians in Délvidék, had presented the issue to both the Serbian and Hungarian Academies of Sciences; yet, in the same way as the Tito regime had done it, it gave no support but rather obstructed the researches into trying to unveil the facts, and showed no willingness to hear about the claims of the Hungarian population for the nullification of the sentence passed on the strength of the communal guilt principle at the time of the military government, and for the removal of its consequences. The issue has already been discussed in the Parliament of Vojvodina, nevertheless, due to the fact that the events under discussion happened under the directives of the central organs in authority – or rather, the military government they had set up – it is, also, up to the organs of the central government to remove the consequences.

4. About thirty Hungarian clergymen, among them a bishop, too, were executed during the time of the bloodshed, yet the churches have not yet made a statement concerning their case.

5. Considering that archival material, which has been inaccessible for the most part until quite recently, is becoming more and more available for research, we regard the following tasks as of primary importance for our future work:

a) The setting up and institutional management of a central data store with the material compiled on the subject has become a major requisite for future work. The list of the documented memorial places set up so far should be added to the material.

b) It is necessary to describe and record the events from place to place, give the number of the victims in total, and draw up lists as complete as possible with the names of the local victims. The recording of events and the lists of the victims in the Banat region have so far proved to be exceptionally wanting. The fact that no paper was submitted to the conference from the Banat region is the most telling. Monographs written on the subject and the studies presented at the conference give a sound foundation for further research.

c) It is necessary to compile and publish a bibliography of articles, publications, and manuscripts dealing with the topic of the 1944/45 events.

d) It would be useful to have the results of the research achieved so far – including the monographs in book form – processed electronically, and made available on-line.

6. We feel the need to implant in the minds of our descendants the fact that these events had happened.

7. It is the duty of the Hungarian parties in Vojvodina to present the issue to the Serbian government as a threshold that cannot be crossed over unnoticed.

8. The body entrusted to finalise the text of the Conclusion is of the opinion that Hungarian political parties in Vojvodina, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and the Vojvodinean Academy of Sciences now in the process of constitution should be informed about the issue described above.

Novi Sad – Újvidék, 27th October 2003.

Béla Csorba m. p.

Márton Matuska m. p.

Dr Béla Ribár, Academician m. p.