

January 8, 1849 and the Genocide of the Hungarians of Nagyenyed

What was omitted from the history books.

The greatest loss of human life in Nagyenyed happened on January 8, 1849 during the Hungarian Freedom Uprising, when the town was burned more than 800 people died, when the Romanian territorial irregular forces overran the town.

It is still an open question today how a peaceful uprising that began in March of 1848 transformed into a bloody, murderous civil war. As is widely known, Law VII of 1848 proclaimed the union of Hungary and Transylvania. The problem arose from the meeting that the Romanians convened between May 15 and 17, 1848, in Balázsfalva (today Blaj, Romania) at which they compiled their own claims: demanded an independent national parliament and set up the Romanian National Committee, which they deemed to be a certain kind of Romanian government in Transylvania. The Transylvanian Romanians allied themselves with the enemy Austrian forces and began to arm against the Hungarians. On hearing this, a flood of Hungarians started out from a number of settlements in Alsó-Fehér County (Comitatul Alba de Jos) towards Nagyenyed (Aiud); the town was filled with refugees, around 4,000 people, of necessity mostly women, children, elderly and the sick crammed into Nagyenyed, since all the able bodied men were away fighting in the armed forces.

After losing at the Battle of Pákozd on September 29, 1848, it became clear to the Austrian government that it cannot count on the immediate suppression of the Hungarian uprising. The Vienna government attempted to force the Hungarians into a multi-front war by inciting the Serbs and Romanians.

In October of 1848, a campaign was begun by Avram Lancu, a Romanian lawyer, to instill fear into the Hungarian settlements found around the mountains of western Transylvania (Munții Apuseni). One of the bloodiest Romanian actions was the massacre of Zalatna (Zlatna) where 700 unarmed Hungarians were butchered on October 24, 1848. The men were serving in the army of the Hungarian Uprising, thus it was not a battle but simply a contemptible mass execution.

The savagery continued until the spring of 1849, the killings carried out with extraordinary cruelty: it was not a rarity to have limbs sawn off, be burned or buried alive, hitched in front of a plow, blinded, impaled on a stake, rape of girls and women before being tortured to death.

After the campaign of General Bem in Transylvania, which succeeded in clearing Transylvania of Austrian forces by March of 1849, Hungarian military command was able to put an end to the Romanian butchery with a relatively small redeployment of troops.

One exceptional act of butchery was the January 8 killing of Hungarians in Nagyenyed.

Thus, we arrive at the grim night of January 8, 1849. The rabble army camping at Csombord (Ciumbrod), five kilometers away, was sworn in by the Orthodox priests Axente Sever and Prodan Simion and began to move toward the town. Farkas Szilágyi, later a Reformed minister, lived through the horror as a child, and later recounted the night of January 8 in the town as: as

soon as the Romanian rabble broke into the town and set fire to the first houses, “then began the shootings, the breaking of windows and doors, the looting and shouting, the horrifying screams and wails of those attacked, a hellish din which froze the blood in the human body on hearing it.” The horrific shouts and the noises of the frenzied devastation could be heard in Mihálcfalva (Mihalța), 22 kilometers from Nagyenyed.

Those who were not beaten to death in their own houses or perished in the fires, ran out into the streets in whatever scant clothing they were wearing, in minus 24 degree weather, and made desperate attempts to escape.

The Romanian rabble, drunk on the sight of looting and bloodshed went on a rampage: beating some to death with cudgels, running some through with lances, crushing some to death underfoot, shooting some – the means of killing were extremely varied. The holy places and churches were not exempt from looting or burning, either. In the famous Reformed church, they broke the altar, the organ, the pews, the gallery – in a word, everything, even riding into the church building. The looting rabble destroyed the Reformed College, founded by Gábor Bethlen in 1622, including its famous library, as well as incinerating the archives of the Transylvanian Reformed Church’s bishopric. A large number of priceless incunabula (items printed before 1501) were reduced to ashes. The church and friary of the Catholic Franciscan Minorite order fared no better. The same gratuitous devastation was carried out by the Móc (mountain dwelling Romanian shepherds) as in the building of the Reformed Church.

The horrors that the prior of the Franciscans, Henrik Viskóczi, was forced to suffer was far beyond the imagination of any author of the most unbelievable horror novel. The most unbelievable part was that the prior lived through the horrors inflicted on him. He recalled his sufferings as: “I myself was the first victim of the killers who inflicted five deadly wounds to my head, cut off two of my fingers and stabbed my side twice with bayonets and then, having punctured me mortally, threw me to the ground and stripped me. Finally, they graciously shot me seven times.” His priests took the brave prior into the priory. However, the armed mob broke in, where more torture awaited Father Viskóczi: they continued to beat the half-dead man until, just to make sure, they shot him for the eighth time. Miraculously, the prior remained alive, was taken to Torda (Turda) where he recovered from his wounds.

The horrific series of events began on the night of January 8, became widespread the following day, peaked on the 10th but the looting and killings only ended on the 17th. The extermination of Hungarians had 800 to 1,000 victims but at least as many again froze to death in the bitter winter cold. No mercy was shown to children, women and the elderly. The earthly remains of those bludgeoned to death, murdered, or disemboweled were thrown into the moats in front of the town fortifications or the pits formerly used to burn lime. There, covered by bushes, a lonely plaque marks the spot, only recording the date and number of victims.

At the same time, the genocide of Hungarians was also taking place in the settlements of neighboring Alsó-Fehér and Torda counties. As a result, the ethnic ratio of the region was altered to the benefit of the Romanians.

There has yet to be an apology issued by Romania for the horrors committed by them, which barbaric acts historian Dragomir Silviu later admitted. In fact, in 1993 a statue was raised to chief henchman Axente Sever at the scene of the crime in Aiud (Nagyenyed). Not only were the butchers not punished but throughout Transylvania statues and street names commemorate their 'heroic deeds.'

Perhaps no comment is necessary. Let us, instead, remember those 800 Hungarians killed on that day 160 years ago.

The first massacre took place on October 19, 1848 in Kisenyed (Sângătin). Hungarians considered this settlement to be so secure that people came from all around for protection. The Romanians laid siege to the village but the Hungarians rebuffed them for several days. Finally, they put down their weapons, at which the Romanians massacred 140 people – men, women and children.

A few days later, a Romanian irregular force wiped out Székelykocsárd (Lunca Mureşului), killing 60 Hungarians in such a savage manner that the three survivors of the village, who hid from the Romanians, hung themselves after seeing the massacre.

Two hundred Hungarians were killed in Gerendkeresztúr (Grindeni). The mining settlements of Zalatna (Zlatna) and Abrudbánya (Abrud) were torched and the fleeing population massacred in the outskirts of Ompolygyepü (Presaca Ampoiului). The number of Hungarian victims here was 1,700.

On October 23, the Hungarians of Boroskrakkó (Cricău) and surrounding settlements were executed. The number of victims: 200.

On the night of October 28 to 29, the 400 Hungarians of Borosbenedek (Benedic) were killed.

On October 29, the 200 Hungarians of Magyarigen (Ighiu) were killed.

About 40 Hungarians were killed in Borosbocsárd (Bucerdea Vinoasă).

Ninety Hungarian nobles were collected from around Marosújvár (Ocna Mureş) with the intention of carrying them off to Balázsfalva (Blaj). However, as they set off from Marosújvár, a Romanian Orthodox priest made them pray, then they killed them all and threw their bodies into the Maros River.

A force personally led by Avram Iancu laid waste to Felvinc (Unirea), where they killed 30 Hungarians and a further 170 of those fleeing died from starvation or froze to death in the harsh winter.

Following is a list of the 1848-1849 massacres in Transylvania's Hungarian settlements committed by the Romanian rebels: (Date / village name / number of Hungarian victims)

1848 October 12 - Kisenyed (Sângătin) – 140

1848 October - Magyarigen (Ighiu) - 176 families

1848 October - Asszonynépe (Asinip) - ?
 1848 October - Boklya (Bochia) – 30
 1848 October - Borosbocsárd (Bucerdea Vinoasa) – 73
 1848 October - Bugyfalva (Budesti) - ?
 1848 October - Csáklya (Cetea) - ?
 1848 October - Forrószeg (Forosig) - ?
 1848 October - Mikeszásza (Micasasa) - ? (nearly the entire village)
 1848 October - Zám (Zam) - ?
 1848 October 20 – area around Balázsfalva (Blaj) – 400
 1848 October - Alvinc (Vintu de Jos) - 2 peace emissaries
 1848 October - Sárd (Sard) and area – 300
 1848 October - Algyógy (Geoagiu) – 85
 1848 October - Székelykocsárd (Lunca Muresului) – 60
 1848 October - Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) - ?
 1848 October - Naszód (Nasaud) - ?
 1848 October - Borbánd (Bărăbanț) - ?
 1848 October - Radnót (Iernut) and surrounding - almost entire villages
 1848 October 24 - Ompolygyepü (Presaca Ampoiului) - 700 Hungarians from Zalatna
 1848 October 25 - between Kőrösbánya (Baia de Cris) and Cebe (Tebea) - entire Brády family
 1848 October 28 - Borosbenedek (Benic) - the entire village
 1848 November 13 - Felvinc (Unirea) – 200
 1848 December 9 - Köpec (Căpeni) – 51
 1848 December 14 - Kővárhosszúfalva (Satulung), Bácsfalva (Bacea), Türkös (now part of Négyfalva (Săcele)), Alsócsernáton (Cernat), Tatrang (Tarlungeni), Zajzon (Zizin), Pürkerec (Purcareni), Gerendkeresztúr (Grindeni) – 200
 1849 January 8 - Nagyenyed (Aiud) - 800
 1849 January 18 - Marosnagylak (Noslac), Hari (Heria), Marosdécse (Decea), Inakfalva (Inoc), Felvinc (Unirea) - 100?
 1849 January - Marosújvár (Ocna Mures) - 90
 1849 May - Abrudbánya (Abrud) - 1,000
 1849 May - Bucsesd (Buces) - 200

Source: History of Nagyenyed: magyartudat.com