



University Events

International Scientific Conference on the Soviet Deportations of Hungarians in the Period of 1944–1945

2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. According to this issue, the Hungarian Government declared in its Decision No. 1009/2015 of 20 January that this year, 2015, is to be the memorial year of the deportation of political and war prisoners to forced labour in the Soviet Union. The first scientific event organized by the government was held in the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest on 25 February 2015. This was the most important conference in this matter with the participation of famous Hungarian researchers from the country and abroad. The lecturers came from three European countries (Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine). There were invited only seven lecturers in all: those who had published the most important books and articles on this topic. From Romania, János Kristóf Murádin, PhD, historian, Assistant Professor and Chancellor of the Faculty of Sciences and Arts at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, presented his research work.

The conference entitled *Trauma és Tabu „Málenkij robot” – 1944/45–2014/15 Emlékkonferencia* (Trauma and Taboo ‘Malenkaya Rabota’ 1944/45–2014/15 – Conference of Remembrance) was organized under the high patronage of László Kövér, President of the Hungarian Parliament. The official language of the conference was Hungarian. The programme began with welcome speeches held by András Majorszki, President of the International Association of GULAG Researchers, Gergely Gulyás, Vice-President of the Hungarian Parliament, and Bence Rétvári, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Human Resources.

The plenary section of the conference incorporated three lectures under the chairmanship of Réka Földvárné Kiss PhD, President of the Committee of National Remembrance, a central forum created by the Hungarian Government. The section entitled *Forced Labour, Camps* was formed only by well-known researchers from Hungary. The first lecture entitled *Rabszolgasorsra kényszerítve* (Forced to Slavery) was held by Mária Schmidt, General Director of the famous House of Terror Museum in Budapest, who spoke about the general conditions of Soviet deportations in Hungary in 1944–1945, presenting the most important data

regarding the number of those taken to forced labour and of those who became victims of the regime.

The next lecture, held by Zalán Bognár, PhD, Associate Professor at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Faculty of Humanities, Institute of History, had the title: *GULAG, GUPVI, málenkij robot. Magyar állampolgárok kényszermunkán a Szovjetunióban* (GULAG, GUPVI, Malenkaya Rabota. Hungarian Citizens on Forced Labour in the Soviet Union). It deals with the interpretation problems related to the notion of ‘Malenkaya Rabota’ (forced labour in Soviet Union) and focuses on the presentation of the different types of forced-labour camps, offering a short but very interesting introduction to its origins and stages of development. During his presentation, Mr. Bognár explained with some details the different ways of becoming prisoner in the Soviet Union: by judgement of the Soviet Court of Justice or simply taken to forced labour by the troops of the Red Army or the special NKVD-groups, immediately after the ‘liberation’.

The last presentation in this section was made by Áron Máthé, PhD, historian–sociologist, member of the Committee of National Remembrance. The title of his lecture was *A „nulla év” emlékezete – megszállás, fogság* (The Remembrance of “Year Zero” – Occupation, Captivity). Áron Máthé deals with the issue of the social impact made by the Soviet invasion on Hungary in 1944–1945 and the different perceptions of a new beginning after the Second World War in Western and Eastern Europe.

The second section of the conference consisted of four lectures, under the chairmanship of József Ö. Kovács, Professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. In this section, entitled *Málenkij robot a Kárpát-medence régióiban* (Malenkaya Rabota in the Regions of Carpathian Basin), there were presented the Soviet deportations of Hungarian and German civilians from Hungary, Transylvania, and Transcarpathia. The first lecture was held by Tamás Stark, senior research fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History. His presentation with the title *Hadifoglyok vagy kényszermunkások? Magyarok szovjet fogságban* (War Prisoners or Forced Labourers? Hungarians in Soviet Captivity) embraced the different ways of capturing the Hungarians, soldiers and civilians all over the territories of Hungary occupied by the Red Army in 1944–1945. Tamás Stark presented the results of his two-decade research work on the total number of those Hungarians who had become prisoners in the Soviet Union, the locations of their captivity, the time spent in lagers, the different works made by them, and the number of victims. The aim of his lectures was to present the real dimensions of Soviet captivity and its consequences on the Hungarian society.

In what followed, János Kristóf Murádin, PhD, historian, Assistant Professor and Chancellor of Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, held his lecture about the Soviet deportations in Transylvania.

Murádin in his presentation entitled *Málenkij robot Erdélyben. Kollektív trauma hét évtized távlatából* (Malenkaya Rabota in Transylvania. Collective Trauma in the Perspective of Seven Decades) spoke about the two waves of taking prisoners by the Soviets in Transylvania: the capturing of about 20,000 Hungarian men in September–October 1944 and the deportation of approximately 90,000 German young men and women in January 1945, all civilians. Murádin analysed the circumstances of the two deportations, presented their particularities, the way in which the people were taken into slavery, the location of the prisoner camps where they spent their captivity, and finally the main characteristics of individual and collective memories of the Malenkaya Rabota in Transylvania.

The last two lectures deal with the massive Soviet deportations in Transcarpathia, which decimated the Hungarian and German minority of the region. The general presentation of the ethnic cleansing focused on the non-Slavic population of Transcarpathia was made by György Dupka, PhD, Secretary General of Svalyava Memorial Park. In his lecture entitled *Halottaink 1944–1959. Szovjet népirtás Kárpátalján* (Our Dead 1944–1959. Soviet Genocide in Transcarpathia) Mr. Dupka offered a very interesting overview of the situation of Transcarpathia at the end of the Second World War and of the integration process of this region to the Soviet Union. In this perspective, there were analysed the deportations of Hungarian and German civilians and their effect on the transformation of ethnic composition in Transcarpathia's population. György Dupka presented his research work on the archives in this field and offered the possibility for an old survivor from Transcarpathia to narrate his captivity.

At the end of the conference, a young researcher, Erzsébet Molnár D., teacher at Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, in her lecture entitled *Kárpátaljai magyarok GUPVI és GULAG táborokba kerülésének körülményei* (The Circumstances of Taking Hungarians from Transcarpathia into GUPVI and GULAG Camps) focused on the characteristics of the deportation of approximately 40,000 Hungarian civilians from this region after the Soviet occupation. She spoke about the timeline of the Malenkaya Rabota in Transcarpathia, the number of those taken away, the victims of captivity and about the survivors' return.

The conference ended with a very successful memorial programme which incorporated a commemoration speech held by Erzsébet Menczer, President of the Organization of Hungarian Political Prisoners and Forced Labourers Taken to Soviet Union, and a very interesting remembrance programme offered by Schwarzwald Traditionalist Association from Rátka.

Finally, after the conference, the approximately 500 participants went to the nearby Honvéd Square to wreath the central Malenkaya Rabota monument in Hungary. Here, after the celebration speech held by Mr. Antal Rogán, the parliamentary floor leader of FIDESZ, on behalf of the Hungarian Government, dozens of organizations placed their wreaths at the monument. On behalf of the

Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, János Kristóf Murádin along with Tibor-Csongor Teleki, student at the Department of Juridical Sciences and European Studies, placed a wreath at the monument.

The lectures presented during the conference will be published in form of a scientific book at the end of memorial year 2015.

János Kristóf MURÁDIN

Department for International Relations and European Studies

Sapientia University

Cluj-Napoca – Kolozsvár