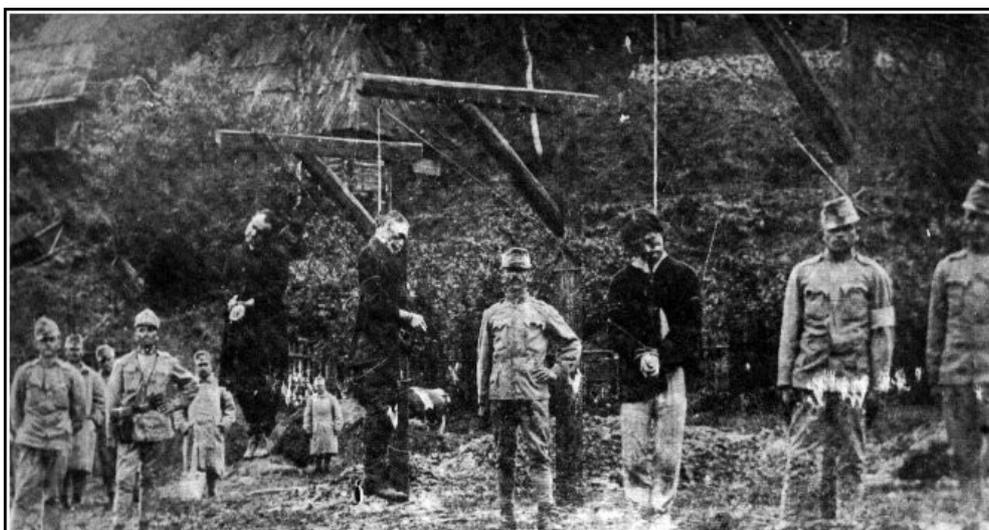


Talerhof: Eternal Memory!

'As they stumbled from the train into the sunlight, they found themselves surrounded by guards riding on horses. They were forced by whips to walk in their weakened condition to Talerhof, a concentration camp which was about a 20-minute walk away. The guards carried whips and did not hesitate to use them on those who lagged or fell behind. Those who tried to escape were shot dead and their bodies were pushed into any convenient ditch to join the bodies of those who had succumbed to the brutal conditions'.

For centuries Orthodox Carpatho-Russians and Galicians lived under Polish or Hungarian and then Austro-Hungarian oppression. This oppression included a superficial Uniatism enforced by starvation on this profoundly Orthodox people. Like so many other national groups, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats and Serbs among them, they waited patiently in their poverty-stricken homeland, waiting for the day of freedom from the Austro-Hungarian prison of the peoples. When Austria, backed by warmongering Prussianised Germany, declared war on Orthodox Serbia and Russia in August 1914, at last the Russian Army arrived to free them under the directions of the Orthodox Tsar Nicholas II.

However, at once the Austrian authorities began their policy of genocide. They declared that they would pay 300 Austrian crowns for every 'spy' (= Carpatho-Russian or Little Russian patriot) who was turned in to them. Traitors, especially pro-Polish and pro-Austrian 'Ukrainian' separatists, eager to make money, were found, and many innocent people perished. Victims were hung from scaffolds erected in densely populated areas or from trees along the roads. In this way tens of thousands of pro-Russian Galicians and Carpatho-Russians were victims of reprisals carried out by the Austro-Hungarian authorities in Galicia and Carpatho-Russia during World War I.



Roman Berezovskyj
, greek-cath. priest from Protesy,
county Zhydachiv, b. 9/26/1874
in Vaniatiche, widower, father of
three, no prior record.

Lev Kobyljanskyj
clerk from Senechol, c. Dolynsk
b. 1/27/1857 in Nadvorne
gr-cath., single, no prior record

Pantaleimon Zhabiak
peasant, b. 1867 in Senechol'
married, father of five, no
prior record

Victims of the Austrian Genocide

Not content with this, the Austrians also opened concentration camps for them. One was Terezin (in German, Theresienstadt), now in the Czech Republic. During World War I, this military fortress was used as a camp and many thousands of Galicians and Carpatho-Russians were placed there by Austro-Hungarian authorities. However, its best-known prisoner, the freemason Gavrilo Princip who had assassinated Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife in 1914, died there of tuberculosis in 1918. This camp became notorious under the Nazis in World War II and nearly one hundred thousand died there.

However, the second camp was by the village of Talerhof (in German Thalerhof) near Graz in the province of Styria. (It is now under Graz Airport, constructed by the former Nazi President of Austria, Kurt Waldheim). This camp was operated by the Austro-Hungarian imperial government for three years from 1914 to 1917 and was mainly intended for patriots from Galicia. Among them were at least 1,915 Carpatho-Russians (some sources place this figure as high as 5,000) from 151 different villages.

The first group of 2,000 prisoners arrived, escorted by soldiers of the Austrian Regiment of Graz on 4 September 1914. That month virtually the entire Russophile Carpatho-Russian intelligentsia was arrested by the Austrian authorities. Among them were many priests, including Fathers Havryil Hnatyshak, Teofil Kachmarchyk, Dymytrii Khyliak, Vasyl'ii Kuryllo, Mykolai Malyniak, Vasyl'ii Mastsiukh, Tit Myshkovskii, Ioann Polianskii, Olympii Polianskii, Roman Pryslopskii. On 9 November 1914, according to the official report of Field Marshal Schleer, there were 5,700 Galicians and Carpatho-Russians in the camp. By December the number had climbed to 8,000, over 70 percent being Galician. Until the winter of 1915 there were not even any barracks and prisoners slept in the open air on the ground.



Talerhof

Between 1914 and 1917, anywhere from 14,000 to 30,000 prisoners (many think about 20,000) passed through the camp. They suffered brutality, starvation rations, filth and epidemics of typhus and other contagious diseases, which contributed to a very high mortality rate. Of the Carpatho-Russians incarcerated, it is certain that 168 died and numerous others had their health destroyed. While 1,747 deaths were registered by the Austrian authorities who ran the camp, this is almost certainly far too low a figure to be considered accurate. Generally it is considered that some 10,000 Carpatho-Russians and pro-Russian Galicians were victims in the two concentration camps of Talerhof and Terezin.

During the initial phase of the anti-Orthodox War, the Parliament in Vienna could not function for two years. By the time the young Emperor Karl I (ruled 1916-1918) convened it, the truth about the sadistic tyranny of the Austro-Hungarian military had become well-known. Therefore, in May 1917 the camp was closed by order of the Emperor. However, the barracks were not dismantled until 1936, at which time 1,767 corpses were exhumed and reburied in a common grave in the nearby Austrian village of Feldkirchen.



The Barracks at Talerhof

In many Carpatho-Russian villages in Poland (Lemkovshchyna) during the period between the two World Wars, memorial crosses were erected to commemorate the victims of Talerhof. On the tenth and twentieth anniversaries, in 1924 and 1934, Talerhof Memorial Days were held in L'viv, now in the Ukraine, though then in Poland. Four volumes of a memorial book were published, *Talergofskii Al'manakh* (1924-32, reprinted 1964) and a Talerhof Museum was established in 1928 in L'viv, containing physical artefacts of the camp's inmates and also archives.

The victims of the racist mentality of the Austrian genocide in Talerhof were among the many in First World War Europe. However, their particularity is that so many of them died in concentration camps. The same concentration camp racist mentality of another Austrian, Adolf Hitler, was later to outrage the world. What a pity that the world had not been outraged by the patriots of Orthodoxy, the victims of the first concentration camps in Europe. Had it been outraged by their fate, instead of despising and ignoring it, perhaps the later outrage would never have taken place.

The best book on the subject, printed in the USA and over 700 pages in length, is probably 'The War Crimes of the Hapsburg Monarchy 1914-1917', in Russian, 'Voennye Prestupleniia Gabsburgskoi Monarkhii 1914-1917', also 'Galitskaia Golgofa', 'The Galician Golgotha' (Trumbull, Conn., 1964). For further information, see the Russian Television report on Talerhof: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJmWym68FGk>. Even if you do not understand Russian, this is still well worthwhile watching for the pictures alone.