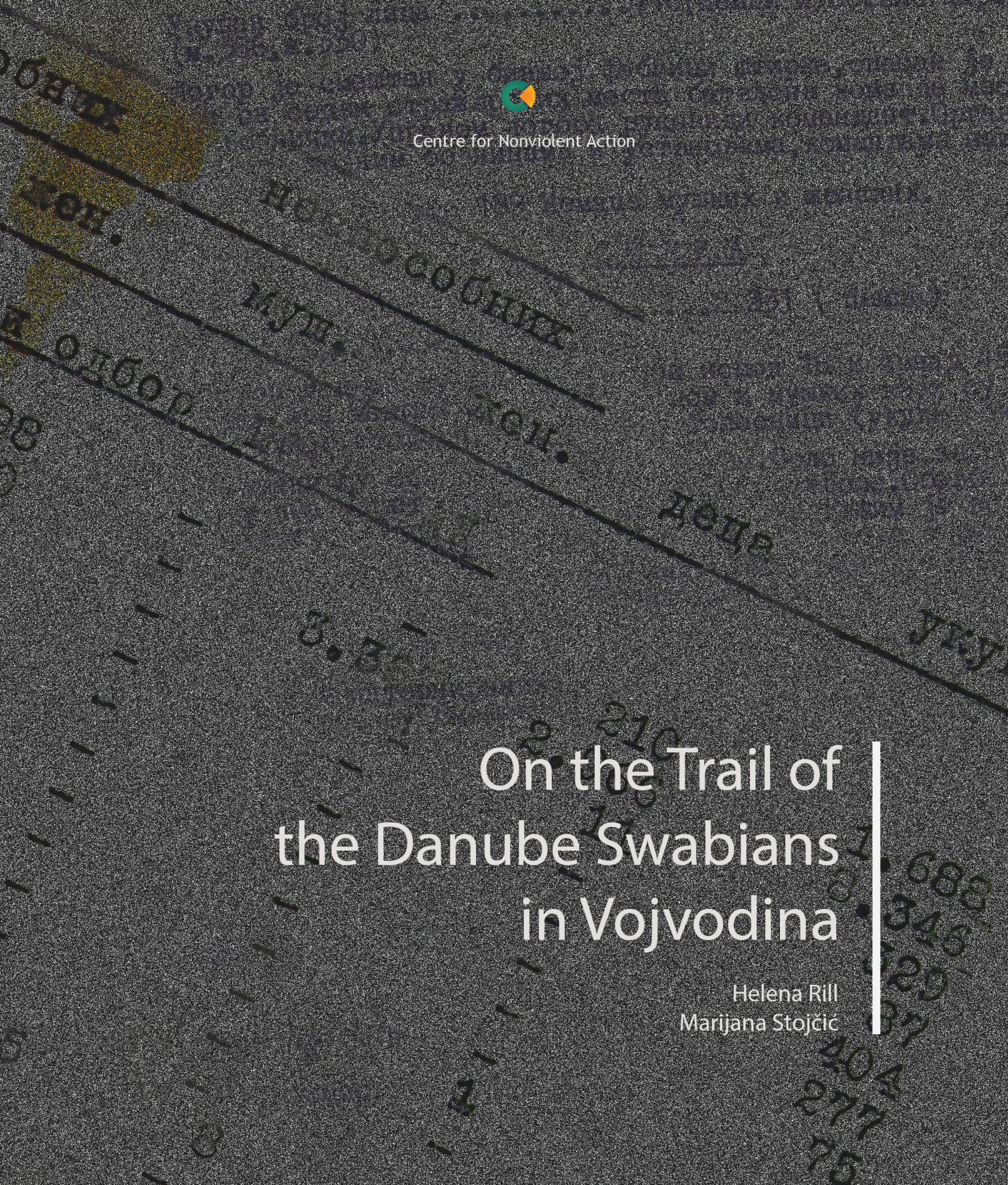

Centre for Nonviolent Action

On the Trail of the Danube Swabians in Vojvodina

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On the Trail of
the Danube Swabians in Vojvodina

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Foreword – Such Were the Times

Early on 29 January 2010, following a conference on issues of world development and peace, I searched for a free table where I could have my breakfast quietly in the dining hall of a Berlin hotel. Not seeing a free table, I asked a man sitting alone if I could join him. Right away he asked me where I was from, and with the explanation of "the former Yugoslavia", I added, "from Belgrade". "I was born in Apatin," the man said. I looked up at him and only then did I notice that he was a Catholic priest. It was clear that the man was no longer living in Apatin, so I asked him what had happened. He was born in Apatin during the war; as a four-year-old, he and his family were placed in a camp for Germans and later expelled to Germany. A camp? What sort of camp, where they kept children? I was confused. A camp in Kruševlje, he replied (a village near Apatin I had never heard of, so I thought it must be the town of Kruševac in central Serbia). I asked him what brought him to the conference, and he said he worked for the Catholic organisation Misereor (he didn't say he was its director), that he spent a good portion of his life in Latin America, fighting for the rights of people threatened by dictatorships and repression. He left quite an impression on me.

Though I never got in touch with him again, still, for me the story of the Danube Swabians begins with Josef Sayer in 2010. I told my colleagues in the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA) about Josef from Apatin and we decided we wanted to do something to find out more and tell others about what had happened.

At the end of that year a preliminary study was done and there we stopped, before resuming three years later.

Support for continuing the research was not motivated by a desire to right a wrong committed against people almost seventy years ago, though several of my colleagues' personal stories are also marked by German ancestry. Our interest lay more in the need to make injustice visible and thereby recognised, and to honour the victims, thereby making our present better and drawing a parallel with injustices of more recent times that are still treated as recent even though they date back to the wars of the 1990s.

Just as the Swabians of Vojvodina are unpopular victims, generally believed to have gotten their just deserts (collectively), there are also unpopular victims in more recent history, hidden in the layers of narratives about just wars: our own innocent victims as opposed to their guilty ones.

Just as I recently heard from a respected historian and leftist that righting the hidden injustices from the time of communist rule amounts to "historical revisionism", as if a review (a check) could not conclude that everything was fine, and that the historical circumstances must be taken into account. "Such were the times" – the Stalinist phrase that haunted Borislav Pekić as he sought to explain why he was sent to a communist jail as a teenager – is a catch-all term that can serve as an excuse for everything if one allows it to be so.

History does not repeat itself. Instead, the righteous keep feeling entitled to making decisions about the fate of those they deem less worthy than themselves. The purpose of this research is for our societies to learn how to resist the call of "righteousness" and the "righteous" when violence is being prepared and perpetrated against other people. That is why it is important to clean underneath the rug, that is why the story of the Danube Swabians is still relevant today.

I grew up in the *Marija Bursać* neighbourhood in Zemun. I would often sit in a park called Kalvarija with my schoolmates, looking down at Zemun and Novi Beograd from the hilltop before descending the stairs to Jakuba Kuburovića Street leading to the Zemun Park. I had walked down those smoothed steps thousands of times, never noticing what the study on the Danube Swabians revealed: that tombstones taken from what used to be a German cemetery located nearby were broken up and built into those steps. You can still see them today. The whole of Gornji grad in Zemun was a German quarter called Franztal. A large Protestant church was demolished immediately at the end of the war and the residents were expelled. The quarter was replaced by newly built residential neighbourhoods for the working class. My sentimental childhood memories acquired a new dimension, as did my friend's story about his grandmother with German roots, who never talked about the time of the war and its immediate aftermath. It is up to me to re-arrange my fragments of memory.

But what is the use?

The benefits are not material, but they do present an opportunity for us to become better people, to diminish the pain of the humiliated and injured and to make our society more humane. And in the future to be more cautious, careful, fair and persistent in finding out everything, taking nothing for granted.

I will send this book to Josef Sayer. Though I read that he has retired, I think he will be pleased with the study inspired by our chance encounter.

Nenad Vukosavljević, Belgrade, 2015

Introduction

There was never any doubt, where I grew up, who our enemies were. There was the Soviet Union, of course, but that, from a Dutch schoolboy's perspective in the 1950s, was rather remote. No, the enemies were the Germans. When I say Germans, I mean just that—not Nazis, but Germans. The occupation between 1940 and the animosity that followed were seen in national, not political terms. The Germans had conquered our country.

Thus begins the book by Jan Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*.[1] Despite the time and geographic distance, this text could start in the same vein. Narratives about the heroic struggle of the partisans against the German occupation and the resistance of our peoples and nationalities, these form part of the memories of all of us who did at least part of our growing up in socialist Yugoslavia. There was very little to connect those Germans with the husband of a cousin or neighbour who had gone to "work in Germany" in the 1970s (except in-jokes during holiday dinners, a few times a year), or with the German tourists we encountered during the summer. No, they were nothing like Major Krieger, the archetypal villain from the *Otpisani* [The Written-off] series, or the Nazi officer who stands on a hilltop above Sarajevo and speaks the sentence that has since acquired cult status: "*Sehen Sie diese Stadt? Das ist Walter!*"

1 Jan Buruma, *Plata za krivicu – Uspomene na rat u Nemačkoj i Japanu* [The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan] (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2002), p. 9

There was even less room in collective memory for the Vojvodina Swabians – they were practically non-existent. Even today, 70 years later, their fate (except in narrow academic circles and/or as part of some group initiative) is not only unknown, but rarely brought up at all – least of all in public spaces. Even those who know that up until the end of the Second World War, the area we now term the former Yugoslavia was home to about half a million Germans or Swabians, and that today only a few thousand of them remain,[2] rarely ask themselves what happened, and on what scale. Even where memory exists, it is limited to generational memory of those who have lived through it and/or to family histories passed on to the next generation, but even so, they are difficult to communicate, arduous and fragmented. For others, those who were eye-witnesses or who still live in the area, the presence of local Germans in the region exists only in traces (material and symbolic) that are increasingly fading, and the history of their disappearance often takes the form of emptiness and absence, a persistent silence and/or a rarely uttered discomfort. It is still rarely a public topic, except sporadically in the media, and most often in the context of restitution of properties confiscated following the Second World War.

Our inspiration for this research came not only out of a desire to open a space for talking about the extensive injustice committed against a large number of people simply because they were of German origin (which has remained unspoken and invisible outside historiographical circles), but also the desire to speak about how this region has been impoverished by the removal of exchanges, not only material and technological, but also cultural, by being deprived of the possibility for creative exchange that was enriching for all the people who lived together and created something of value. Memory of the Danube Swabians[3] is fading, their heritage merging with the new social context as an echo, a Grassian "hidden history": fragments, shadows and traces from another time. The heritage is everywhere to be found – in language, architecture, agricultural techniques, cuisine and lifestyle. But that heritage also includes persecution, sites of suffering, camps and mass graves.

While conducting this research, there were moments when the need to approach this topic impartially presented a challenge. Each of us faced their own dilemmas in this process, which often entailed 'translating' powerful emotional reactions into rational terms in an attempt to shed light on the 'dark stains' of history and understand how something like this could have happened. One of us was an individual endeavouring, among other things, to process part of her family heritage, and even her prior ignorance of that context; another was someone with a very positive view of socialist Yugoslavia as a great emancipatory project. Both carried the experience of living in a country and a region where ethno-nationalism and the ideology of self-victimisation formed the dominant political matrix. And where views of the world, history and others were predominantly based on the idea of superiority and martyrdom of one's own collective, its historical righteousness and the historical culpability of the other.[4]

The questions we started with and the dilemmas we encountered were diverse. What is the legacy of the Danube Swabians? Why is it important to remember them when they are almost entirely absent from this

2 According to the 2011 census, there are 4046 ethnic Germans in Serbia. *2011 Population, Households and Dwellings Census in the Republic of Serbia, Nationality, data disaggregated by municipalities and cities* (Belgrade: Statistics Institute of the Republic of Serbia, 2012), available at http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf [retrieved 21 February 2015].

3 The Danube Swabians (Donauschwaben) is a collective term for ethnic Germans who lived in the south of what was the Kingdom of Hungary, territories which became part of Yugoslavia (Vojvodina and Slavonia), Hungary and Romania following the First World War. Through interaction with other nationalities, they developed their cultural specificities and a feeling of collective belonging. In his lectures delivered at the University of Prague in 1921, the German Slavicist Gerhard Gesemann was the first to use the term 'Danube Swabians' (*Donauschwaben*), and the name soon became established in ethnology, history and related disciplines.

4 For more see: Dubravka Stojanović, *Ulje na vodi: ogledi iz istorije sadašnjosti Srbije* (Belgrade: Peščanik, 2010).

region today? How should we remember them? What should we remember? How do we provide a historical perspective and contextualise what happened, while narrowing the space for justifying violence and reinforcing notions of 'collective guilt' and 'just deserts'? Does speaking about collective retribution, their persecution and suffering, necessarily mean re-evaluating Nazism and relativising the suffering of its victims? How do we speak about the suffering they have endured and the injustice they have suffered without instrumentalising their suffering to proclaim the whole of socialist Yugoslav legacy totalitarian (which is a noticeable tendency in the region)? What are the Danube Swabians to us today? We still do not have answers to many of these questions. On the other hand, many things that confused us during our research have become clearer. The discomfort (often unspoken) of some German friends at the mention of our research topic, the need of the grandson of a woman living in Germany today, whose mother died at the Gakovo camp, to keep referring to Nazism while telling her very personal story – these are just some of the things that became clearer. Living in a country where through the past few decades, non-Serb victims have been negated and/or relativised, this is something to which we responded with our own personal discomfort.

The result is this publication, in which we aim to give an overview of the Danube Swabians' presence, life and disappearance from this region. It draws on diverse source materials (historical studies and academic research, memoires and literary works, archival material, media content – newspaper articles and analyses, reports, documentary films, etc.) and interviews with survivors, witnesses or those for whom this suffering is part of their family history, as well as interviews with people with varying exposure to this topic in. We also want to open this issue in the public arena: Why has the suffering of people that were killed, died in camps or were expelled after 1945 just because they were ethnic (Danube) Germans not been included within the domestic (Yugoslav, and then Serbian) culture of memory, and why is it important to deal with this topic today? This, in short, was the idea behind this publication.

It is divided into three main parts that focus on different issues and can be read independently of each other. The first is a text by Nenad Vukosavljević, presenting his personal story about how a chance meeting initiated research into the suffering of the Vojvodina Swabians following the Second World War, and his thoughts on the continuity of denial about the injustice committed against "the others" in this region. The second part of the publication gives a historical overview of the presence and life of the Danube Swabians in Vojvodina, and is divided into two sections. The first section, by Marijana Stojčić, gives a brief overview of the history of the Danube Swabians in Vojvodina up to the end of the Second World War and is significantly based on thorough research conducted by the historian Zoran Janjetović. The second section, by Helena Rill, deals with the fate of the ethnic Germans in Vojvodina following the Second World War. The third part of this publication provides an analysis by Marijana Stojčić of the culture of memory about the collective expulsion of ethnic Germans from Eastern European areas in the aftermath of the Second World War. This is based on research about how different social contexts and processes shaped the dynamics of collective memory about the suffering of German victims in West Germany and Yugoslavia/Serbia.

Finally, for us this research study was not just about the issue of how 'grand historical narratives' affect individual human fates, but also a way to look into the ability of communities to deal with injustices in the past and/or present that were committed or are being committed in their name (however they define themselves). That ability is also reflected in collective memory, in what will be remembered, the way it will be remembered, as well as in what will be forgotten.[5] What are our 'sites of memory' in the sense employed by Pierre Nora to denote not just geographic localities, but also memory backgrounds and cultural references used to construct

5 Todor Kuljić, Kultura sećanja – teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2006), p. 8.

collective identities?[6] Is it possible to establish a culture of memory beyond the rigid framework of ethnic identity organically understood, a memory that would transcend the simplified mythological matrix of good/evil, victim/executioner, victor/defeated and recognise the suffering of victims whatever group they may belong to? And what would be its foundations? At its core, the answer to this question would also tell us who 'we' are: what the foundational values of our society are, and what sort of values we want to take as foundations for constructing the society we live in. For, to paraphrase Stefan Barth, those who close their eyes to inhumanities of the past will be blind to them in the present and future.

And last but not least, we owe a great debt of gratitude to many who have helped us at various stages of our research: sometimes in searching for references and sources, sometimes by thinking through the dilemmas and complexities of the topic together with us, but always sharing our conviction that dealing with topics such as this one is meaningful. We would like to thank, among others, our colleagues from the Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo/Belgrade, Aleksandar Krel, Ana Bu, Ana Ranković, Anton Beck, Boris Mašić, Dr Branislav Danilović, Red Cross Serbia, Dr Dennis Dierks, Denis Kolundžija, Fabrizio Bensi (International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva), Gordana Radukić (Red Cross Serbia), Jasmina Opačić Palić, Jessica Zic, Dr Katarzyna Taczyńska, Marijan Stojčić, Dr Mihael Antolović, the Diplomatic Archives of the Serbian Foreign Ministry, the informal group 'Danube Swabians – Our Neighbours' (Neven Popović, Nikola Ćirić and Jelena Milutinović), Nenad Novak Stefanović, those who contributed their experience through interviews, Sanja Petrović Todosijević, Stefan Barth, Valentini Karas, Zlatoje Martinov, Zoran Janjetović. We would specially like to thank Dr Vladimir Geiger for his generous assistance, advice and support, as well as Dr Miroslava Malešević, Rena Raedle and Snežana Stanković for their detailed comments on the culture of memory about persecution in the aftermath of the Second World War. This research would not have been possible without all these contributions, but responsibility for any shortcomings is solely ours. Thank you.

Marijana Stojčić, Belgrade, 2015.

6 Pierre Nora, "Između Pamćenja i Historije. Problematika mjesta" in: Maja Brkljačić and Sanda Prlenda, Eds. Kultura pamćenjai historija (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2006), pp. 21–43.

The Danube Swabians – A brief historical overview until the end of the Second World War

Marijana Stojčić

The end of the Austro-Turkish wars around the turn of the 18th century and the establishment of the border between the two empires, along the Sava and Danube rivers, by the Požarevac Peace Treaty of 1718 enabled the settlement of Germans in these areas of Southeast Europe. According to Branko Bešlin, in Austrian popular histories and school textbooks, that period from the end of the 17th until the mid-18th century was for a long time referred to as the Heroic Age (Heldenzeitalter) when glorious imperial warriors – Louis William, Margrave of Baden, Maximilian I Joseph of Bavaria and Eugene of Savoy – finally pushed the Turks over the Danube and Sava, while the Habsburgs expanded their rule over the whole of the Panonian basin.1 These newly absorbed areas of the Habsburg Monarchy were relatively sparsely populated (mostly by Romanians and Serbs), without larger towns and with an underdeveloped economy, their population exhausted by lengthy wars, disease and famine. Colonisation began in the 17th century, right after the Turks were expelled, and lasted into the early

1 Branko Bešlin, "Herojsko doba – kolonizacija u 18. veku kao motiv u književnom i likovnom stvaralaštvu Podunavskih Švaba", in: Književna istorija – Časopis za nauku o književnosti 148 (2012): pp. 667–668. Available at http://knjizevnaistorija.rs/editions/148Beslin.pdf [retrieved 17 May 2015].

years of the 19th century, with the biggest wave of settlement occurring from the 1720s to the 1770s, a period which saw the arrival of over 150,000 settlers, mostly from Germany and Austria. Three major migrations are commonly identified: the Caroline migration (from 1723 to 1726) during the reign of Charles VI, the Theresian migration (from 1764 to 1771) during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa, and the Josephian migration (from 1784 to 1787) during the reign of Joseph II.2 The settlers came from all parts of Germany, but mostly the southwest. The congregating points for departure were at Ulm and Regensburg (though some embarked at smaller ports) and the way to Panonia led down the Danube. Since many of the settlers and their descendants were of Swabian origin, historians later (since 1922) referred to them by the collective term the Danube Swabians (Donauschwaben), and the settlement was termed the 'Swabian migration' (Swabenzüge).3 Despite this widespread opinion, the most numerous among the settlers were not from Swabia or Baden-Württemberg, but from Lotharingia, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Trier.4

The primary motives of the Habsburg authorities behind the settlements were economic, national, religious and military, and Germans (primarily Catholics) were considered the most desirable colonists due to their loyalty to Vienna and their work ethic. Potential colonists were offered various privileges, such as lowered land prices, the right to succession on houses and estates, and tax waivers for three (for domestic) and five years (for foreign settlers).5 What awaited them in the new environment was the draining of swamplands and a struggle to survive malaria, plague and cholera epidemics and Turkish incursions. It is estimated that a third of the settlers died of disease. Banat was called the "tomb of the Swabians". The few French, Spanish and Italian settlers were completely eradicated – they assimilated with the Germans.6 There is a song from the time that tells of this: "This here is Banat/Too late for regrets/Who cannot work like a workhorse/Eat like a pig/And bark like a dog/Will not survive in Banat for long."7 On the other hand, the tradition of the Banat Germans refers to the "bloody summer of 1738" when a number of colonists' settlements were completely destroyed. The time of the colonisation is also succinctly described by the saying: "Death to the first, poverty to the second, and bread only to the third." (Den Ersten der Tod, den Zweiten die Not, erst den Dritten das Brot).8

The German settlers that came to the territories of what was at the time the south of the Kingdom of Hungary originated from different parts of (often warring) German states and spoke different and mutually often unintelligible German dialects. In terms of social structure, the settlers were mostly peasants, with a

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2 Ibid. For more on the colonisation of Vojvodina, see: Borislav Jankulov, Pregled kolonizacije Vojvodine u XVIII i XIX veku (Novi Sad – Pančevo: Matica srpska/Istorijski arhiv u Pančevu, 2003). And also: Boris Kršev, 'Migraciona politika austrougarskih i jugoslovenskih vlasti u Vojvodini kao osnova njene multikulturalnosti', in: Društveno-humanističke nauke, psihologija: zbornik radova/IV Međunarodni naučni skup Multikulturalnost i savremeno društvo (Novi Sad: Visoka škola 'Pravne i poslovne akademske studije Dr Lazar Vrkatić', 2013), pp. 127–132. Available at: http://www.fpps.edu.rs/nauka/NS%202013/dh%20nauke-psihologija-3.pdf [retrieved 10 June 2015].

3 Radna grupa za dokumentaciju, Genocid nad nemačkom manjinom u Jugoslaviji 1944–1948, Herbert Prokle, Georg Vildman, Karl Veber, Hans Zonlajter, Ed. Zoran Žiletić (Ed. Serbian edition), Prilozi za podunavsko-švapsko nasleđe i zavičajnu istoriju Podunavsko-švapskog arhiva u Minhenu (München, Belgrade: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, Deutschland and Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, Srbija i Crna Gora, 2004), p. 24

4 B. Bešlin, "Herojsko doba – kolonizacija u 18. veku...", p. 669.

5 Ibid., p. 668

6 For more on French, Spanish and Italian settlers, see: Grlica Mirko, Ed. "Koliko se poznajemo – iz istorije nacionalnih zajednica u Vojvodini" (Novi Sad: Izvršno veće Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine – Pokrajinski sekretarijat za propise, upravu i nacionalne manjine, 2009), p. 46–47. Available at http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/projekat/Kviz/Koliko_se_poznajemo_SR.pdf [retrieved 2 July 2015]. See also: Filip Krčmar, "Tragom španskih kolonista u Banatu", in: *Zbornik za istoriju Matice srpske* 82 (2010): pp. 145–154

7 B. Bešlin, "*Herojsko doba* – kolonizacija u 18. veku...", p. 669

8 Radna grupa za dokumentaciju, *Genocid nad nemačkom manjinom u Jugoslaviji 1944–1948*, p. 25

few merchants and craftsmen. In terms of religion, most of the Germans were Catholics, with a minority of Lutherans and Calvinists. Their cultural diversity and different traditions brought over from the old homeland, their dispersion across the southern areas of the Panonia basin (Streudeutschtum) complicated the construction of a national identity. The population was mostly rural peasants, with a negligible number of petty bourgeoisie. Building up an awareness of commonality was further impeded by the national heterogeneity of the areas they settled, as well as the different legal status of areas inhabited by Germans: until 1778 Banat was under the direct administration of the Court in Vienna and then under provincial administration. Up until its abolishment in 1873, the Germans living along the Military Border were under military rule, directly subordinate to the Viennese Court, while the Germans in Bačka, Baranja and Srem were subject to Hungarian provincial authorities. In the free royal cities of Novi Sad, Sombor, Subotica and Vršac, the German population enjoyed a special status. As opposed to the Hungarians, who in the 19th century brought forth the strongest national movement in the Habsburg or Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and the national movements of the Serbs, Croats, Slovaks and Romanians that followed in response, the Germans (and Jews) did not put up a resistance to Hungarisation and were thus exposed throughout the 19th century, all the way up to the First World War, to intense processes of acculturation and assimilation.9 They were mostly focused on caring for their own welfare and progress. The differences in dialect and customs brought over from the old homeland, in addition to their dispersion over a large area and distance from the home country meant that the Danube Swabians were slower in developing an autochthonous cultural life and forms of political organisation compared to the other peoples in the Monarchy. On the other hand, the heterogeneity and diversity of the population was conducive to a rich cultural and technological exchange. Given that the German settlers came from economically more developed areas, the transfer of tools and methods mostly went in the direction from them to the other inhabitants, whether domicile or fellow settlers. This pertained particularly to agriculture, but also to crafts. It should be noted that already in the late 18th century, the Josephian colonists brought with them a strong discipline of trade guilds that they passed on to their descendants. The Serb population of Banat, therefore, took after its German neighbours in many respects, not least in improving agricultural production as well as accepting new and useful trades, methods of house building, household life and nutrition. On the other hand, in time, the Danube Swabians (including those in Vojvodina) adopted many things from their neighbours, which made them definitely distinct from their compatriots in Austria and Germany. The mutual influences mixed and intertwined, creating a new quality. The role of the Habsburg authorities – that played a large part in determining the way of life of their subjects of all nationalities – should not be overlooked.10

Cultural influences and exchanges in Vojvodina

From the very beginnings of German settlement, an important segment of cultural exchange took place within the realm of everyday life. In addition to transferring material legacies, this also included the exchange of ideas, customs, ways of production and ways of life.[11] Although the population of Vojvodina was predominantly rural, the Serbs and Romanians were mostly cattle farmers who worked the land only as a subsidiary activity; while for the Germans, agriculture took primacy over cattle, which they kept only for household use. It is,

9 Especially after the establishment of the (dual) Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867. Although that same year, the Hungarian parliament adopted laws guaranteeing equal rights to ethnic minorities, this was never upheld in practice. Instead, there is a constant tendency towards Hungarisation. For more, see: Mihael Antolović, "Nemci u Južnoj Ugarskoj u XIX veku", in: Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju 76, (2007): pp. 185–194.

10 Zoran Janjetović, "Srpski uticaji na svakodnevnu kulturu Nemaca u Vojvodini", in: *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, 2, (2009): pp. 20–24. Available at: http://www.udi.rs/articles/z_janjetovic_2009.pdf [retrieved 15 June 2015].

11 For more details, see: Zoran Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini* (Beograd, INIS, 2009): p. 61–72.

therefore, not surprising that considerable exchanges took place precisely in relation to cultivating plants and animals, and in nutrition. Noteworthy in this respect are the cultivation of corn, peppers and tobacco that the German settlers adopted from the local population and in return introduced them to the cultivation of sorts that had not been widespread in the area before, such as tomatoes (*Paradeis*), cauliflower (*Blumenkohl*), kohlrabi (*Kehlerabe*), asparagus (*Spargel*), hemp and potatoes. The names for many of these plants were adopted from German, but in their Swabian and not in their High German variants. Another result of this exchange is the tradition of Vojvodina wines. The German settlers brought with them new grape varieties and more modern methods of production, while, on the other hand, adopting grape cultivars that had been adapted to the local climate and were already widespread (such as the vine sort from the Serb village of Slankamen in Srem). It was similar with the adoption of the most widespread species of swine, namely the Mangalica breed.[12] Cultural exchanges also took place with respect to grain storage (especially corn, whose warehouses retained the original Turkish and Slovenian names of *hambar*, *čardak* and *kotarka)*, land tilling techniques and agricultural tools, whereby the settlers introduced ploughs (replacing the hoes that had dominated land tilling), the use of livestock manure, seed cultivation and plant protection. On the other side, instead of manual thrashing as practised in Germany, from the local population they adopted the use of horses for thrashing.

The appearance of Vojvodina houses, their construction and design are also the result of cultural synthesis and a creative combination of German and local building traditions, all under instructions from the Habsburg authorities, of course.[13] Their architecture developed during the 19th century, and gradually through a combination of Serb *pisé* houses, local building materials and German designs and architectural practices, the characteristic Vojvodina 'colonial house' / 'front-facing house' developed with local specificities such as summer kitchens, eaves along the yard-facing side of the house (*gong*) and household altars with images of saints in the parlour. The grid-like organisation of village houses with wide tree-lined streets meeting at right angles and infields strictly aligned is still a characteristic of the Vojvodina landscape.

From the old homeland, the Germans also brought the Central European tradition of guilds and new trades. The local population had mainly engaged in traditional crafts from the Ottoman period (there were coppersmiths, tinsmiths, silversmiths, leather workers, tailors, soap makers, shoemakers, etc.), while the Germans dealt in modern, technologically more advanced trades (masonry, brick making, carpentry, wheelwrighting, locksmiths, harness making, confectionery, millinery, cooperage, rope making, clock making, metalworking, shoemaking, etc.) The ethnic division persisted longest in this area and later extended to industrial development, with industrial plants mostly owned by Germans (and Jews).

One of the most noticeable aspects of German influence on material culture that is still recognisable today is in cuisine. Writing about the German influence on the cuisine of Serbs in Banat, Zlatoje Martinov states that it can be reconstructed thanks to the considerably well-preserved German vocabulary stilled used by people in Banat today. He says:

"Even today Serbs in Banat denote certain meals by their German terms (*fruštuk*, meaning breakfast – *das Fruhstuck*, *jauzna* (for *užina*, meaning snack or brunch) *die Jause*, appetizer – *die Vorspeise*) as well as many dishes (rinflajš – *das Rindfleisch*, cušpajz – *die Zuspeise*, knedle – *der Knodel*, krofna – *die Krapfen*), etc. The influence of the Vojvodina Germans on the cuisine of Banat Serbs was also reflected in: a) *the introduction of new dishes hitherto unfamiliar to the Serbs* (soup, as opposed to Ottoman-style stews, beef, *ajnpren*, *ajngemaht*, made from vine, from kohlrabi, etc., then pastries and pasta such as flekice - *Fleckerl*, šufnudle – *Schupfnudel*,

12 Z. Janjetović, "Srpski uticaji na svakodnevnu kulturu Nemaca u Vojvodini", p. 21–23. For more, see: Z. Janjetović, Nemci u Vojvodini, p. 66–68.

13 For more see: Maria Silađi, Anica Tufegdžić, "German Heritage in Banat Villages – The Origin, Development, and Modalities of the Country House with Yard", EPOKA University Department of Architecture, *1st International Conference on Architecture & Urban Design Proceedings 19–21 April 2012*. Available at: http://icaud.epoka.edu.al/res/1_ICAUD_Papers/1ICAUD2012_Maria_Siladji_ATufegdzic.pdf [retrieved 17 May 2015].

grenadirmarš – *Grenadiermarsch*, tašci – *Tasche*, knedle – *Knodel*, kifle – *Kipfel*, vegetable dishes such as various kinds of cušpajz, leavened dough cakes – štrudle – *Strudel*, krofne – *Krapfen*, buterozne – *Butterrozen*, buhtle – *Buchteln*); b) *the expansion of the ingredients base for preparing meals* (introducing more fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products such as sour cream [*mileram*, probably from Müllerrahm meaning "miller's cream"], butter, so-called Swabian cheese; as well as new types of meat, primarily beef, which replaced the exclusive use of pork, and spices hitherto unknown to the Serbs (lovage – *liebsteckel*, saffron, bay leaf, mustard, cumin, vanilla, nutmeg, etc.); c) *the introduction of new methods for preparing food and conserving it for later use* (sautéing and frying meat in batter, boiling vegetables; in terms of conservation methods – making compote or 'dunst', drying fruits, storing potatoes in a root cellar, salting meat with so-called salamura, etc.); d) *fixing the schedule of meals* (breakfast, lunch, *užina* [small afternoon meal], supper); e) *introducing hygienic customs before and after meals;* f) *table settings* for festive occasions; g) *the use of more modern utensils for food preparation and consumption* (*modle, radle, nudlbret,* porcelain dishes, metal utensils, etc.)."[14]

On the other hand, from their neighbours the German women adopted and modified oriental dishes such as *sarma* and bean stew, pies (*börek*), breads (*pogača*), đuveč (*güveç*), *pekmez*, etc. This mutual mixing resulted in a very specific regional cuisine, with the addition of beer, brought over by the Germans, and brandies, characteristic for Serbs and Romanians.

Clearly, the co-existence also left considerable traces in the language, but the German influence is far more marked than the other way around. According to Miloš Trivunac, most of the German loanwords that have entered the Serbian language come precisely from the dialects of the Danube Swabians, or through their intermediation.[15] The Vojvodina Germans mostly, "adopted names for concrete objects of everyday use (with the Serbian or Hungarian name often suppressing the German), certain phrases, curses and derogatory terms. During the period between the two world wars, a number of expressions from Yugoslav administrative jargon were introduced into Swabian speech."[16] On the other hand, the influence of neighbouring nations on the Danube Swabians is noticeable in encouraging political organisation and national awakening. The romantic nationalism that enveloped the other nations of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19th century was mostly absent among the Danube Swabians. They were predominantly peasants and craftsmen, with a constant drain of the meagre intellectual class that gravitated towards Vienna. The urban population was hungarised, while the religiously divided peasantry, closed up in their communities, preserving the language and customs up to the Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 when assimilation took on massive proportions. The start of the national awakening of the Danube Swabians began in the late 19th and early 20th century, precisely in areas of southern Hungary where they lived with the Serbs, Romanians, and Slovaks, whose national movements were already in full swing (which will be discussed in further detail later). To a large extent, the Serb parties served as models for the first German party in Hungary, and on the other hand, they were also a source of support to the development of a German national movement as a potential ally against hungarisation.[17]

14 Zlatoje Martinov, "Austro-nemački kulturni uticaj na Srbe u današnjem Banatu sa osvrtom na ishranu kao najstarijeg vida materijalne kulture", Presentation given in Sremski Karlovci in June 2006 during the *Kuglof* Festival, p. 16–17. Available at http://www.fenster-vojvodina.com/fensteri/fenster5.pdf [retrieved 15 July 2015]. For more, see: Zlatoje Martinov, *Nemački uticaj na ishranu Srba u Banatu* (Pančevo: Banatski forum, 1997).

15 Miloš Trivunac, *Nemački uticaji u našem jeziku* (Belgrade: Štamparija M. Sibinkovića, 1937), p. 79.

16 Z. Janjetović, "Srpski uticaji na svakodnevnu kulturu Nemaca u Vojvodini", p. 30.

17 Ibid., p. 29.

Economic and social development of Vojvodina

The economy of Vojvodina, as a peripheral area within the Habsburg or Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, primarily relied on the production of agricultural raw materials such as flour, sugar, silk, edible oil, but also on the production of construction materials, textiles and some agricultural machines. In social terms, this led to the predominance of the petty bourgeoisie, the agrarian proletariat and partly the intelligentsia. The construction of the railroad – as a key factor for the modernisation of Srem, Banat and Bačka – was particularly influential as a driver of economic and urban development where inter-ethnic exchange was most pronounced. The Sombor–Segedin railway, constructed in 1869, was one of the first in this area. The Budapest–Zemun line was constructed in 1883, and two years later also the Baja–Sombor–Novi Sad line. In 1882, the railway came to Inđija, and in 1889 the Senta–Subotica line was constructed, with the Veliki Bečkerek–Velika Kikinda line having already been constructed in 1881–1883. The beginnings of industry (primarily based on using agricultural raw materials) appear only in the second half of the 18th century and industrialisation is slower than in Western European countries. Even so, industry did improve urban development so that by the final decades of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century, most cities had an almost completely organised urban structure where empty spaces were filled in with the construction of large public and administrative buildings. The development of educational, cultural and public needs was accompanied by the construction of town halls and administrative buildings, schools and hospitals; constructed by the state and the local authorities of free royal cities. The new bourgeois class and private investors, on the other hand, established banking and loans institutions, commercial and residential buildings, as well as family and rental buildings, thereby facilitating the further development of civil engineering. All of this was also accompanied by the development of a specific social and cultural life in the second half of the 19th century, especially in cities such as Novi Sad, Subotica, Sombor, Veliki Bečkerek, Vršac, Ruma and Zemun. Every larger urban centre had its local class and sports associations (such as the archery society in Novi Sad, as well as fire-brigade associations), book clubs and singing societies. Apart from religious societies, this was when the first women's and worker's associations were established. Almost every town had its local paper and magazine, usually in German, Serbian and Hungarian. The German population was most prominent because it contained the largest number of printers.[18] These diverse trade, cultural and commercial German associations, built mainly around a shared language, and the prolific printing had an important role in awakening the national consciousness of Germans in Vojvodina.

Political organisations of the Danube Swabians in Vojvodina

The political organisations of the Germans in southern Hungary did not significantly align with their economic, social and cultural development. This began to change at the turn of the 20th century, to a large extent due to pressures from the assimilation policy of the Hungarian authorities (especially in schooling and language). The resistance of the non-Hungarian population to these measures was the catalyst for German political organising.[19] The German national movement developed out of the political and intellectual circle made up of the German bourgeoisie in Bela Crkva, Vršac, Kikinda and Novi Sad. The German People's Party in Hungary (*Ungarlandische Deutsche Volkspartei*) was established on 30 December 1906 in Vršac with a programme that included demands related to liberalisation, raising the standard of the state administration, agricultural subsidies and the like, as well as demanding the establishment of the rule of law and complete national and

18 For more see: Grlica Mirko, Ed. *Koliko se poznajemo – iz istorije nacionalnih zajednica u Vojvodini* (Novi Sad: Izvršno veće Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine – Pokrajinski sekretarijat za propise, upravu i nacionalne manjine, 2009), p. 80–83. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/projekat/Kviz/Koliko_se_poznajemo_SR.pdf [retrieved 2 July 2015].

19 See: M. Antolović, "Nemci u Južnoj Ugarskoj u XIX veku", p. 196.

civil equality, and guaranteed freedom of use of the German language and unimpeded development of German culture.[20] Ludwig Kremling, a lawyer from Bela Crkva, was elected to lead the party, and one of its founders was Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, who is considered the greatest writer of the Danube Swabians. In order to clearly delineate their role in the history of their nation, as well as within the region they inhabited, the descendants of the German colonists found the basis for developing a national awareness in the mythologised epoch of the first settlers and colonisation. Literary authors and their works, especially Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, played an important role in this respect. Particularly prominent was the *Great Swabian Migration*, a narrative of the settlement told as an epic of civilising the Danube region and the heroic history of Austria and the Danube Swabians. This, in addition to Müller-Guttenbrunn's other books, glorified the settlement to mythical proportions and turned it into the basis of the Danube Swabians' national identity.[21]

Despite the loyalty to the Hungarian state and the moderate demands contained in its programme, the Hungarian authorities prevented the operation of the German Party in various ways. At the elections for the Hungarian parliament in 1906, it did not manage to win a single seat, which should be explained by, on the one hand, the activities of the German Catholic clergy – which was predominantly pro-Hungarian and rejected the party programme as pro-Germanic and popular – and on the other, by the fact that the workers mostly voted for the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.[22]

Still, despite unfavourable circumstances on the eve of the First World War, a circle of nationally aware German intelligentsia was formed in southern Hungary. The demarcation line was also set up between those who, accepting the idea of the Hungarian state, declared themselves as Hungarians of German origin (*Deutschungarn*) and those who based their national identity on belonging to the German nation. This division would go a long way in determining the politics of the German minority in the new successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The War itself and the "brotherhood by arms" contributed to the further national awakening of the Danube Swabians through a heightened awareness of belonging to the German people, thus weakening the faith in the necessity of living within a Hungarian state.[23] Changes prompted by the First World War inevitably affected the territory of today's Vojvodina. Following the dissolution of Austria–Hungary in 1918, the community of the Danube Swabians (a population of 1.5 million at the time) was divided between three successor states – Hungary, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).[24] This first common state of the South Slavs marked an essential political change in Vojvodina. The National Assembly for Banat, Bačka and Baranja proclaimed the unification of Banat, Bačka and Baranja with the Kingdom of Serbia on 25 November 1918, as did Srem shortly thereafter. The Germans became the biggest minority population in the newly established state.

The Danube Swabians in Vojvodina between the World Wars

The new Yugoslav state met with difficult problems from its very inception. Cultural differences, the absence of a common political tradition, structural, national and economic tensions kept causing problems and

20 Ibid., p. 196–197.

21 Branko Bešlin, "*Herojsko doba* – kolonizacija u 18. veku...", p. 671–678. See also: Filip Krčmar, "Adam Miler Gutenbrun i nacionalni preporod Podunavskih Švaba", in: *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 83 (2011): pp. 45–63.

22 M. Antolović, "Nemci u Južnoj Ugarskoj u XIX veku", p. 198.

23 For more on the activities of the *German Party* and the national awakening of the Danube Swabians, see: Ibid., p. 196–201.

24 Josef V. Senz, "Geschichte der Deutschen im Königreich Jugoslawien", cited in *Genocid nad nemačkom manjinom*, p. 25–26.

frequent scandals.[25] According to the Constitution adopted on 28 June 1921, the country was a constitutional parliamentary monarchy with a centralised administration. Changes to the state framework, including a change of the official language and the conduct of the administration, worsened the position of Hungarians. The position of the German minority was somewhat better, while in the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, Slavic minorities were viewed more favourably. Still, the guiding principle of the Kingdom was the same as that in the Kingdom of Hungary – creating a nationally homogeneous state – whereby non-Slavic minorities (Germans, as well as Hungarians and Albanians) were approached with the highest degree of disdain due to the assumption that they were all too different or even inherently hostile to Serbs and the new state. This led to the repression of minorities in almost all areas.[26] On the other hand, a somewhat more liberal minority policy towards the Germans, compared to the one prevalent in Hungary, resulted from the efforts to establish a defence against Hungarian nationalism, which was considered secessionist. It consisted primarily of opening German language schools and permitting the establishment of German associations, and under such conditions, one of the aims of the leaders of the German minority became cultural autonomy akin to the kind enjoyed by the Serbs within the Habsburg Monarchy and Austria-Hungary up to 1912.[27] What is more, the statute of the most significant institution of the German national minority, the *Kulturbund* was largely based on the rulebook of the Serb Cultural Society *Prosvjeta*, which had been active in Austria-Hungary. The Swabian-German Cultural Alliance *(Schwäbisch-deutch Kulturbund),* better known as the Kulturbund, was founded in June 1920 and was the central organisation of Germans in Yugoslavia. The Kulturbund was dedicated to developing a national consciousness, fostering the German language and preserving cultural identity, as well as boosting economic progress of the German minority in Yugoslavia. Considerable effort was put into overcoming social, religious and regional divisions between Yugoslav and Vojvodina Germans, especially the religious divisions between Catholics and Protestants. This was not an easy task due to the pro-Hungarian orientation of the Catholic clergy as well as their view of the Kulturbund as anti-Catholic or Protestant. A while later, at the Kulturbund assembly in October 1922 in Novi Sad, another important institution was founded, the community of German cooperatives, *Agrarija*. The aim of Agrarija was to regulate the sale and procurement of agricultural products and its first president was the political leader of Germans in Vojvodina, a lawyer from Inđija, Dr Stefan Kraft. *Agrarija* played an important role both in the great economic progress of the German population in Yugoslavia and in establishing and strengthening trade relations between Yugoslavia and Germany in the period between the World Wars. This would turn out to be particularly important for Yugoslavia after the great economic crisis when the German Reich became one of the greatest foreign economic backers of Yugoslavia.[28] As noted by Janjetović, overall, despite its ups and downs, the position of Germans in Vojvodina was much better than that of the Hungarians, and in the 1930s it further improved due to stronger ties between Yugoslavia and Germany and the power and influence of the German Reich.[29]

The 1930s also saw great upheavals within the Kulturbund caused by an influx of young Germans returning from schooling in Germany or Austria with highly nationalistic leanings (who began calling themselves the

25 On demographic changes, agrarian reforms and the new wave of settlement of Vojvodina by colonists from Lika, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro after the First World War, see: B. Kršev, "Migraciona politika austrougarskih i jugoslovenskih vlasti u Vojvodini kao osnova njene multikulturalnosti", p. 135–138.

26 Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva: Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005), p. 445–446.

27 Ibid., p. 135–143.

28 Vladimir Geiger, "Njemačka manjina u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca u Jugoslaviji (1918–1941)", in: Hans-Georg Fleck, Igor Graovac (ed.), *Dijalog povjesničara – istoričara* (2000): p. 435.

29 Zoran Janjetović, "Proterivanje nemačkog i mađarskog življa iz Vojvodine na kraju Drugog svetskog rata", in: *Hereticus*, 1 (2006): p. 107. Available at http://www.komunikacija.org.rs/komunikacija/casopisi/Hereticus/V_1/06/download_ser_lat [retrieved 10 July 2015].

Obnovitelji [Revivalists]). It should also be noted here that life in Yugoslavia brought about a generational division among the Vojvodina Germans. Younger generations, especially those educated at German and Austrian universities, developed as nationally aware, with a need to find support in their struggle for national affirmation in the fatherland whose reputation under Hitler was on the rise.[30] Older generations were predominantly partial to Hungary and conservative, largely due to the influence of the Catholic Church, which became one of the strongest barriers to the spread of national socialism in the inter-war period. Clashes between the Catholic press and the Revivalists were constant between 1936 and 1941. Prominent within them was the Catholic priest Adam Berenc from Apatin, editor of the weekly *Die Donau*, and the conflict was most visible in Apatin, Osijek and Bačka Palanka, cities where both sides – the Catholics and the Nazi sympathisers – had their own press.[31] The Catholics accused the Nazis of wanting to destroy Christianity and saw Nazism as a form of "neo-paganism", while the Revivalists accused the Catholics of not being 'good Germans'. As stated earlier, the Catholic Church also harboured resistance towards the Kulturbund, which they saw as a Protestant organisation. According to Berenc, "Kulturbund is an empty word, nothing and nothing again".[32] However, the better part of their criticism was directed against the Revivalists. They, on the other hand, were most critical of Christian pacifism and tolerance and an inactive and non-heroic attitude regarding fate, which they considered to be negative products of the Semitic spirit.[33]

Efforts to take over the Kulturbund met with a resistance expressed mainly through challenges to the excessive concentration of authority and power within the leadership.[34] Ever since the Revivalists were formed in 1934 under the leadership of the Pančevo-based physician Jacob Avender, the conflict grew more and more intense. Escalation began with a campaign published in the *Volksruf*, their official newsletter, where they openly and offensively attacked the leading figures of the German national minority in Yugoslavia. The leadership of the Kulturbund reacted by suspending Avender and his followers from the association. For fear of causing deeper rifts between the Yugoslav Germans, the suspension was temporary, but from 1935, the Federal Board of Kulturbund started dissolving all local branches that had sided with the Revivalists and banning them from the annual assembly. In an attempt to legalise their activities, in 1937, the Revivalists joined the fascist movement *Zbor* led by Dimitrije Ljotić, which met with disapproval from both the German and the Yugoslav authorities.[35] An intervention from Berlin put an end to this conflict. At the session of the Federal Board in April 1939, the conservative leadership of the Kulturbund resigned from all offices. The decision on filling the leadership positions was no longer being made in Novi Sad but in Berlin. Dr Sep Janko from Ernsthauzen (today Banatki Despotovac), one of the more moderate Revivalists was appointed leader of the Kulturbund. A large-scale action of pressure, propaganda, intimidation and bribery helped increase Kulturbund membership from 75,000 to 300,000 in just one year. It should be noted that the membership figures did not count only the adults who joined, but also all members of their families. Thanks to this statistical sleight of hand, 90% to 100 percent of Germans in all cities became members of the Kulturbund. Lower numbers were recorded only in Apatin and Bačka Palanka, where the Catholic clergy's influence was the strongest. The talk was that only members of the Kulturbund were truly German, that being a German and being a Nazi were one and the same, and that those who did not join would not be recognised as Germans when the German forces enter Yugoslavia.[36]

30 Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 219–220.

31 Branko Bešlin, "Nemačka katolička štampa u Vojvodini i njen spor sa nacionalsocijalistima 1935–1941", in: *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 59–60 (1999): p. 112.

32 Ibid., p. 113.

33 Ibid., p. 107.

34 For more on conflicts surrounding the takeover of the *Kulturbund*, see: Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 221–232.

35 Ibid., p. 225.

36 For more on this period, see: Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva*: *nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918*–1941 (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005), and Dušan Biber, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933–1941* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1966).

Clashes in the press often resulted in numerous personal insults from both sides, these being most prominent in the Pančevo newspaper *Volksruf*,[37] the most influential newsletter of the Revivalists. The most embittered battle began after the Revivalists took over the leadership of the Kulturbund in the summer of 1939, and culminated in pranks and open attacks against the Catholic clergy that same year. After almost all the newspapers were taken over by the Nazified Kulturbund, the clergy began losing the battle. Despite this, *Die Donau* kept coming out until April 1944 when the Nazi authorities finally banned it. *Die Donau* thus became a symbol of German resistance to Nazism in Vojvodina.

The Danube Swabians in Vojvodina and the Second World War

The spread of the Second World War to the territory of Yugoslavia was a surprise for the German minority throughout the country, and thus also in Vojvodina.[38] In April 1941, Vojvodina was divided so that Srem became part of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH), Bačka became part of Hungary, while western Banat remained part of occupied Serbia and retained a certain degree of autonomy. Their positions differed respectively. In NDH, the *Volksdeutsche* (those regarded by Nazi Germany as being German regardless as their citizenship) were legally recognised and enjoyed a high degree of national autonomy, with tension in their relations with the *Ustashas*, especially in Srem. In Bačka, where Hungarians again became part of the ruling nation and where some of the local Hungarians took up important offices in the local administration, the population of younger Germans was disappointed by what they saw as an annexation, while the older generations readily accepted the return of Hungarian rule. In Banat the Volksdeutsche became the local base for the occupation administration, but with the supreme decisions made by German military authorities in Belgrade, or even Berlin.[39]

After the collapse of the Yugoslav state, in some areas inhabited by the German minority, there was violence against the local Serb population, but previous inter-ethnic relations within each distinct place largely conditioned this. In contrast, the persecution of Jews began everywhere, in some places (such as Veliki Bečkerek/ today Zrenjanin) even before the arrival of Nazi troops. With the establishment of German rule in Banat, Jewish property was looted, they were detained and tortured and taken away for forced labour through close cooperation between local authorities, the Wehrmacht and *Schutzstaffel* (SS) troops. The first individual murders appeared as early as April 1941. The start of the war against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and increased communist actions was followed by executions of political prisoners and Jews. When camps for Jews were set up in Banat, the larger part of the Jewish community was brought there, irrespective of gender and age. They began operating in August 1941, with camps established in Zrenjanin, Novi Bečej and Pančevo. The staff and administration of the camps was made up of the Volksdeutsche. In August and September 1941, Jews were transported from the Banat camps in scows and trains to Belgrade. Men were imprisoned in the *Topovske šupe* camp and women in the Jewish camp in Zemun. The Banat area was used for executions of prisoners from Topovske *šupe*. Jewish property was confiscated, and mostly Volksdeutsche were appointed administrators. Their firms also became the predominant buyers of such properties; this caused not just conflicts with companies from the Reich, but also with other Volksdeutsche companies, as well as the leaders of the Hungarian popular group who also laid claim to the confiscated properties. The situation was similar in Srem, where the occupation forces and the Ustashas supported the looting and persecution of Jews.

37 115–117.

38 For a detailed account of the situation in Vojvodina during the Second World War, see: Ibid., Chapter: "Vojvođanski Nemci u Drugom svetskom ratu", pp. 287–332.

39 Z. Janjetović, "Proterivanje nemačkog i mađarskog življa iz Vojvodine...", p. 108.

In addition to participating in arrests, members of the Volksdeutsche formation also served as guards in some of the concentration camps, and there were 500 commissaries from among the Danube Swabians in charge of administrating the confiscated Jewish properties.[40] There was less space in Bačka than in Srem and Banat, due to somewhat milder anti-Jewish policies of the Hungarian authorities, so the extermination of the Jews was completed only after the German occupation of Hungary in 1944. A number of local Germans also participated in the notorious raid in southern Bačka in 1942.[41]

As mentioned previously, the position of the local Germans depended on the part of Vojvodina where they lived. They were most influential in Banat, where they were also most highly concentrated, and Banat itself enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy even though it was formally part of occupied Serbia.[42] Local Germans held all lower positions of power, save for the supreme office, and Veliki Bečkerek (today's Zrenjanin) was the centre of the main Volksdeutsche institutions. By the *Decree on the legal status of the German national group* from June 1941, the "national group" was legally recognised and guaranteed the right to political, cultural, economic and social activity, preservation of the national being and national-socialist world-view, as well as ties with the fatherland. The "German national group" included all Germans from the Banat area who were not citizens of the Reich, with national belonging determined by origin. The organisation of the national group included: the *Deutsche Mannschaft* for all men over 21 and its tasks concerned security and political indoctrination of members of the national group;[43] the *Frauenschaft* for women over 21 and the *Deutsche Jugend* for children and youth from 10 to 21. The leader of the national group (*Volksgruppenführer*), Sep Janko was granted the authority to issue decrees and statutes binding for all members of the group, implement disciplinary measures "for violations of the honour and reputation of the German people" and for disobeying orders. A special judiciary for disciplinary offences of the Volksdeutsche was instituted, and at the end of August and beginning of September 1943, sanctions were tightened with the addition of the possibility to be sent to a "correctional camp" for a period of 15 days to 3 months.[44] The local Germans were given primacy when buying confiscated Serb and Jewish properties, and forced labour was instituted for non-Germans on building infrastructure and working on the estates of local Germans whose family members had been recruited into military formations. On the other hand, this was a "double-edged sword" for the Volksdeutsche because it included the obligation to pay higher taxes, contribute labour to the war effort and serve in the military and police apparatus. The construction of the police apparatus had already begun in May 1941, and after Germany attacked the USSR and communist actions became more frequent, an auxiliary police force (*Hilfspolizei-Hipo*) was set up, mostly comprising members of the Deutsche Mannschaft. Some of the recruits intended for the police force were organised into the Banat State Guard which was soon subordinated to the German Security Service *Sicherheitsdienst – SD)*, and as of 1943 to the SS. It never numbered more than 1,500 members and was mostly used to fight communist insurgents, to effect retribution actions and to guard the concentration camps in Banat (in Petrovgrad, Velika Kikinda, Pančevo, Bela Crkva).

As for military service, the number of SS volunteers from Vojvodina before the attack on Yugoslavia was small. It should be noted here that Germans from eastern European territories in general (and therefore also the Germans of Vojvodiana), not being citizens of the Reich, could not serve in the Wehrmach, but only in SS

40 Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 302.

41 For more on the raid, see: Zvonimir Golubović, *Racija u južnoj Bačkoj 1942. godine* (Novi Sad: Istorijski muzej Vojvodine, 1992).

42 For more see: Ekkehard Völkl, *Der Westbanat 1941–1944. Die deutsche, die ungarische und andere Volksgruppen* (Munich, Ungarisches Institut, 1991), editor's comments

43 The *Deutsche Mannschaft* was mostly comprised of older men and never became a serious armed formation. Ibid., p. 304–305.

44 Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 306.

units. Following the April war and capitulation of Yugoslavia, during the victorious euphoria, 600 volunteers from Banat signed up, so that in the summer of 1941, the SS considered the possibility of forming a unit made up exclusively of the Volksdeutsche from Srem, Banat and Bačka. As the first difficulties rolled in, recruitment was no longer down to volunteering, so, to Himmler's proclamation, Sep Janko added his own order making "volunteering" mandatory for all able-bodied Volksdeutsche. There were very few refusals, which was not surprising, given that a group of 70 Volksdeutsche from Francfeld (Kačarevo) who had refused ended up in a concentration camp. At the start of 1942, the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division *Prinz Eugen* was formed mostly composed of Germans from Banat and Germans from NDH. It was first sent to Serbia and later to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia and the Srem front. At the end of the war the division was to be found in Slovenia.[45] It remained remembered for its crimes and brutality, probably more because it was made up of Germans from the region than because its brutality surpassed the usual level of cruelness exhibited by the Nazi occupying forces. After the war, it became a metaphor for all Yugoslav Germans.

The position of domicile Germans in Srem was somewhat different because Srem became part of NDH. Despite the proclaimed Ustasha-German alliance, there were tensions in the field, which was reflected in the less favourable position of domicile Germans compared to that in Banat. In addition, the actions of the People's Liberation Movement were more pronounced in Srem. Similar to Banat, the local Germans had their offices for culture, healthcare, German aid, economy, a German Court of Honour, as well as many professional associations and cooperatives. Various aspects of life were regulated by special legal acts of the NDH, granting them a high degree of autonomy (although not as high as in Banat). At the end of the summer, the *Einsatzstaffel* armed formation of the *Deutsche Mannschaft* was formed. It was subordinated to the leader of the German National Assembly, Branimir Altgayer, but in actuality to the head of the Ustasha Army Headquarters.[46] Referencing Miletić, Janjetović notes that on 25 September 1942, the *Einsatzstaffel* comprised 2,769 soldiers, 166 non-commissioned officers and 78 officers, mostly reservists.[47] In agreement with Pavelić, two German battalions were formed within the Croatian Home Guard (Domobranstvo), as well as one artillery battalion and one battalion tasked with guarding the railways. A special German division was established at the Ministry of Defence, as well as a command for recruiting to German units, which was based in Vinkovci. It was also agreed with the Reich leadership that 10 percent of able-bodied Volksdeutsche would serve in the Waffen SS. Following Himmler's directive stating that "though there is no legally prescribed military obligation, it nevertheless exists by the eternal law of their nationality, for all men between 17 and 50 and up to 55 in emergency situations,"[48] that percentage was soon surpassed due to the increased need of the German command for soldiers. By 1943, when full authority over the Volksdeutsche armed formations was taken over by bodies of the German Reich and the Waffen-SS, most domicile Germans had already been recruited. Parts of the Einsatzstaffel unit, which was later attached to the Prinz Eugen division and other formations, participated in combat against the Partisans throughout Yugoslavia with frequent retribution against the civilian population. Some of the Volksdeutsche, especially those in the civil service, actively participated in the arrests, torture and murder of civilians and members of the People's Liberation Movement.

45 For more see: Otto Kumm, *7. SS-Gebirgs-Division "Prinz Eugen" im Bild* (Osnabrück: Munin-Verlag GmbH, 1987); Otto Kumm, *"Vorwärts Prinz Eugen!" Geschichte der 7. SS-Freiwilligens-Division "Prinz Eugen"* (Coburg: Nation Europa Verlag GmbH, 1995); Thomas Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division "Prinz Eugen". Die Banater Schwaben und die nationalsozialistischen Kriegsverbrechen* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2003), editor's comments

46 For more see: Mladen Colić, *Takozvana Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941.* (Belgrade: Delta-pres, 1973).

47 Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 317.

48 Ibid., p. 318.

As the war dragged on, the number of those resisting increased (however, their resistance was mostly passive and involved avoiding to declare themselves German).[49]

In the third part of today's Vojvodina, in Bačka, due to the restrictive Hungarian minority policy, the domicile Germans were formally in a less favourable position than in Banat and Srem. On the other hand, they were also less exposed to the actions of the People's Liberation Movement. The first contacts with Hungarian authorities, embodied by the Hungarian Army, were by no means friendly. There were even some clashes and instances of the Hungarian forces looting and harassing the local German population. At the same time, the Germans of Banat were embittered and angry at the re-establishment of Hungarian rule. Relations further deteriorated because access to Serb and Jewish properties was denied to interested local Germans. There was also a constant effort of the authorities to limit all forms of German autonomy. Germans in Hungary could choose whether to serve in the Hungarian Army or in the SS. In the first half of 1942, an agreement was made between the German Reich and Hungary to recruit up to 20,000 Volksdeutsche from Hungary. The turnout in Bačka was much better than in other areas, but those who did not volunteer were often persuaded by beatings, graffiti and broken windows. Overall, 9,322 persons were recruited from Bačka, which accounts for two-thirds of the total recruits. The reason for such a high turnout was primarily to be found in the aversion towards Hungary and the rationale that if they had to serve in an army, they would rather have it be the German army. In the second recruitment in 1943, a total of some 8,500 people were recruited in Bačka. Most of the first wave of recruits had been killed in action by that point. With the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, the situation for the Germans in Bačka seemingly improved. Negotiations were promptly started between the German and Hungarian authorities about a third SS recruitment that would include all able-bodied men of German descent between 17 and 63 years of age. During the summer, a Home Guard (*Heimatschutz*) was formed, which in the final phase of the war participated in combat against the Partisans.

Despite all this, the Danube Swabians spent the war years in relative peace, by comparison, because Vojvodina was mostly out of the way of the destructive effects of war and its intense combat operations. The Advance of the Red Army in 1944 was a complete surprise and evacuation plans were only in their early stages. Due to its geographic position and the capitulation of Romania, the first part of Vojvodina that came under attack was Banat. Apart from being unprepared, the evacuation was also hindered by the resistance of the population. The reasons for the resistance were diverse. Sometimes they stemmed from refusals of those serving in German military units to have their families evacuated in their absence, but also from the belief shared by many ordinary people that they had done no wrong and had no reason to leave. Janjetović notes that in his memoires Janko claims that the resistance was the result of gullible propaganda and the influence of German refugees from the Romanian part of Banat.[50] The presence of one SS division in Banat also provided false hope. It is not entirely clear who prevented the evacuation of Banat. According to some, it was Himmler, expecting clashes between the allies and a sea change in the region, and threatening a court martial to anyone who tried to organise an evacuation; according to others, it was Hermann Behrends, head of the SS police for Serbia, invoking Hitler's prohibition from 10 September 1944. The Wehrmacht also resisted the evacuation, fearing that refugees would congest the roads and demoralise the German population. Ultimately, only some 20,000 people were evacuated or managed to escape from Banat. Due to its geographic position, the local Germans in Bačka had a few more days to prepare for evacuation. However, that advantage was swallowed up by fears in Berlin that an evacuation

49 Generally speaking, the response of the Yugoslav Germans to joining the resistance to Nazism remained poor. In Slavonia in 1943, the "Ernest Telman" Partisan troop was formed, but its significance is mostly symbolic and it is an exception to the rule. Ibid., p. 319. For more on this unit: Nail Redžić, *Telmanovci – Zapisi o njemačkoj partizanskoj četi 'Ernest Telman'* (Belgrade: Narodna armija, 1984). Also: Slavica Hrečkovski, "Njemačka četa "Ernst Thälmann" u jedinicama NOV i POJ u Slavoniji", *Zbornik. Centar za društvena istraživanja Slavonije i Baranje*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Slavonski Brod: Centar za društvena istraživanja Slavonije i Baranje, 1984): pp. 331–350.

50 Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 335.

would demoralise Hungary, the “last ally”, so the idea of an evacuation and reception of refugees in the Reich was decisively rejected. Due to all of the above, with the exception of Novi Sad, an evacuation plan was never drawn up. Instead, such matters were left up to the individual concerned. Srem was the only part of Vojvodina from where evacuation was successfully implemented. The approval to begin the evacuation of Srem arrived from Berlin on 3 October. By 7 November, 90,000 Germans from Srem were evacuated.

A river of refugees from eastern European territories flooded into Germany and Austria. This was the beginning of the end of the presence of the Danube Swabians (also) in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Resources

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The Danube Swabians – A brief historical overview since the end of the Second World War

Helena Rill

From the end of the Second World War in 1945, the Yugoslav state sees the German minority, or what was left of it in the country, not as one of its "peoples and nationalities" but as a problem that needs to be solved as soon as possible: The Danube Swabians became ghettoised, harassed, placed in camps, and later invisible due to pressures and "self-censorship".

On 21 November 1944, the Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) Presidency had adopted the "Decision on state ownership of enemy properties, state administration of absentee properties and the sequestering of properties confiscated by the occupation authorities". Based on this Decision, "all properties of persons of German nationality" were seized, with some exceptions to be discussed below, which legalised the beginning of the injustice committed against the German minority. This continued with the opinion of the Yugoslav Government that all Germans should be removed and sent to Germany, while the Third AVNOJ Session and the work of the DFJ national assembly in August 1945 brought numerous laws (such as the Law on Voter Registries) that sealed their fate; namely, the new legislation deprived them of their civil rights by having their names deleted from the voter registries. On 3 March 1946, the Interior Ministry of DFJ (Democratic

Federal Yugoslavia) sent a memo to regional and provincial interior ministries with instructions regarding the internment of the Danube Swabians in line with the interpretation of the Decision by the AVNOJ Presidency.[1]

Danube Swabians could manage to avoid this collective punishment (seizure of property, expulsion, internment in camps) if they could prove that they participated in or helped the NOB (People's Liberation Struggle), POJ (Yugoslav Resistance Movement), if they managed to prove that they did not declare themselves as German despite their German surnames, and if they were in mixed marriages. Citizens of neutral countries were also exempted if their conduct during the war was deemed unproblematic. In practice, things were not so simple. Some ended up in the camps despite their antifascist conduct or support provided to the resistance, some were released owing to their Slavic names, despite being Germans, and in some cases the authorities were at a loss for what to do (how to treat those from mixed marriages, what to do with their property, seize it or not, etc.).[2]

An illustration for the state's attitude is a report on the development of the minorities issue in the territory of Yugoslavia, presented by the Committee for Schools and Science of the FNRJ (Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia) in July 1946. Although the report states that the Constitution guarantees equality of all peoples and nationalities living in the territory of FNRJ, there are no Germans among them, despite the fact that it was stated that their number was about 42,978 in 1945.[3] It hardly needs mentioning that already at the Second Session of AVNOJ on 29 November 1943, and in subsequent acts, national equality had been taken as a fundamental principle.

With the arrival of the Red Army and the Partisans, many were summarily executed simply for being German, while others were in time expelled from their homes and taken to camps where many perished due to harsh conditions, committed suicide, were killed, or died of starvation. These were mostly women, old people, the frail and children. "My neighbours were disappearing," said an elderly woman from Zemun. Very few remained in their homes (fighters, supporters of the NOB, those from mixed marriages). It wasn't just the people that disappeared, but whole towns, because it is the people that make the town. For example, the Bačke Topole county had a German population of almost 8,000 before the war, but by December 1945, only 59 remained.[4]

According to the 1931 census, Gakovo had a population of 2,690 (of that number, 2,522 were Germans, 59 Hungarians and 109 others), while in 1948, the population was: 59 inhabitants (27 Serbs, 1 Croat, 1 Albanian, 9 Hungarians and 21 Germans).[5] The case of Buljkeš (today's Maglić) is particularly interesting. Buljkeš/Maglić was a predominantly German village. Some were evacuated near the end of the war, but most remained in the village thinking they could stay there because they had not caused any harm to anyone. However, at the beginning of 1945, some were deported to Russia, some transferred to camps in the surrounding towns and in Novi Sad, and on 15 April, the remaining group of 930 elderly men, women and children under 14 were interned in the camp in Bački Jarak. Due to the harsh living conditions in Jarak, 665 villagers from Buklješ died within only a year of their internment, including 172 children. The village was left deserted with just a few villagers left to greet new inhabitants. Already in early June 1945, a group of 2,702 people from Greece arrived in the village.

1 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", p. 289, 291, 294, 295.

2 Vojvodina Archives (AV), F-169 (Central People's Liberation Council of Vojvodina), 707/45. Local People's Liberation Council, 30 May 1945, memo sent to Central People's Liberation Council in Novi Sad.

3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (MSP RS) Diplomatic Archives (DA) Political Archives (PA) 1946, F-46, folio 5, sign. 7817: On 3 July 1946, the Committee for Schools and Science of the FNRJ government submitted to the Interior Ministry, political division, a report on the development of the minorities issue in the territory of Yugoslavia.

4 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 73.

5 Branislav Danilović, *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947*. (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 13, 17. According to population census data.

Four years later, those same Greeks, due to disagreement with the policies of the Yugoslav authorities at the time, left for Czechoslovakia and new settlers came to take their place.[6]

A German name, surname and/or origin was enough for the authorities to intern a person, because a German was automatically considered a fascist and an enemy. Still, that it was not all black and white is illustrated by a request from the nephew of the interned Giso Danil.[7]

In the request for his liberation sent to the camp commandant, he writes:

"I am a teacher at the gymnasium in Bačka Topola and it is my task to undo the three-year-long fascist education of the children and educate them in the spirit of democracy and socialism. It is paradoxical that the man to whom I owe the greater part of my antifascist consciousness and social thinking suffers in a camp simply because he is of German descent. All the more because, as is universally known, my uncle hated the German 'Kulturbundists' so much that he banned them from entering his house, went to their gatherings to speak out against fascism, helped victims of fascist persecution and declared himself Hungarian throughout that time, for which he was terrorised and boycotted by the Germans." He concludes: "Resolving this problem on a racist basis is not in the spirit of our struggle."[8]

How it began when it was all over

The Red Army occupied Banat and Bačka in September/October 1944 and was followed by the Partisans. In some places, only the Partisans arrived, in some they came together.[9] Their arrival brought looting, harassment, killing, rape, and then deportations to the USSR and internment in camps in the country. The looting started right away. The interned Germans left not just their property, both movable and immovable, but also stocks and other non-inventoried items in storage, etc.[10] The looting also included foodstuffs, clothes and smaller valuables. The treatment of German properties is illustrated by a report subtitled State Property: "[T]he property was treated as fascist and dealt with as fascist property."[11] The local population participated in the looting together with the new authorities. The looting was widespread both in terms of the number of looters and the quantity of stolen goods.[12] The looting was often accompanied by beatings, harassment, and even murder and rape. Houses would be raided most commonly, but Germans were also searched during transport to the camps or at the camps themselves.

There are a number of documents where the authorities describe the looting and the destruction and abuse of property.[13] Janjetović cites the example of members of the local People's Liberation Council in Parabuć/Ratkovo taking property from the Danube Swabians and distributing it amongst themselves.[14] Although there are examples to the contrary, such actions were rarely punished. One of the reports reads as follows:

6 Vladimir Bura, "Sedma jugoslovenska republika", in: *National Geographic* (June 2014): p. 123, 124.

7 Names are cited as written in the original document.

8 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 73.

9 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 191, 192.

10 Yugoslav Archives (AJ), 50 (FNRJ Government Presidency), 36–243.

11 AJ, 50, 36–243.

12 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 193.

13 Ibid., p. 196.

14 Ibid., p. 197.

"It has been found that military courts were lenient in their judgements, especially when it came to looting of state properties. [...] During the camp internment procedure, a number of abuses against the movable property of the internees were committed. They were taken to the camp directly and immediately their property was looted by members of the military and civilians. While being taken to the camp, all the money, watches and other valuables were taken from the internees, little of which ever reached the state storage facilities. Everyone found it necessary, from the camp commander to the ordinary guard to take some money and jewellery for himself. Not only did this cases occur at the beginning, immediately following liberation, but were repeated during the final internment of Germans in Novi Sad on 1 April 1945. That night, 260 persons were interned, including some 40 Serbs and Croats and a number of persons from mixed marriages. Already during the night, all the movable property of the interned disappeared, including valuables, watches, money, etc. The seizure of property was usually unregistered and non-inventoried, it was simply piled into baskets and suitcases. [...] The Commander of the camp in Pančevo submitted all the seized valuables and moneys to the Command of the locality, area, District NOO [People's Liberation Board] and military area, but only one portion, unregistered and non-itemised and without providing any certificate or statement."[15] The looting went on until the summer of 1945.[16] J. remembers this vividly, although he was only a boy, and says, "I was a youngster during the war, but I remember how they moved out, some were taken to the camp, and then they would go to their houses, take everything out of the house and distribute it to the people moving in, someone would take the table, someone else would take the chairs..."[17]

The beginning of the end of the Danube Swabians was also reflected in the confiscation of their property. The abovementioned AVNOJ session held on 21 November 1944 adopted the "Decision on state ownership of enemy properties, state administration of absentee properties and the sequestering of properties confiscated by the occupation authorities". This decision entered into force on 6 February 1945, and all German properties in the territory of Yugoslavia passed into state ownership, including all properties of German natural and legal persons.[18] People endeavoured to stay in their homes in different ways, either by declaring themselves to be of a different nationality, or by other means, and these efforts are recorded in the abovementioned report which includes the following account: "It has been recorded in Banat that, following liberation, some 40 marriages were concluded between Serbs and Germans. The purpose of these marriages was to lay claim to German properties that were intended for confiscation, for purely calculated reasons."[19]

Harassment, killings and disappearances. With the establishment of military rule,[20] the Germans felt on

15 AJ, 50, 36–243.

16 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 199.

17 J. V. (1940), village in Bačka.

18 This resulted in a number of cases before international courts regarding factories and plants with foreign capital that the state had appropriated.

19 AJ, 50, 36–243.

20 Military rule was introduced by Tito's edict of 17 October 1944 and lasted until February 1945 under the leadership of General-Major Ivan Rukavina. A quote from the order serving to explain the need for a military administration by the Central People's Liberation Council of Vojvodina: "This measure has been undertaken because this are is populated by many Germans and Hungarians who were hostile to the Slavic population and who participated in the atrocities organised by the occupier against our people. The local Swabians were particularly barbaric to the Serbs, as well as our other peoples. We must, therefore, THOROUGHLY settle our accounts will all Swabians and those Hungarians that committed crimes. Due to this large number of enemy elements living in our midst, our popular government could not immediately enjoy the authority it should and must enjoy. It is also necessary to take account of the abandoned properties of enemies of the people..."

their own skin the brutal consequences of their national identity: executions, torture, all extra-judicial.[21] One of the tasks of the military administration was to remove the consequences of the Nazi and Horthy regimes, to punish the guilty, and to enable the government to take on its responsibilities when military rule is lifted.[22]73 Some Germans were killed because they or members of their families had participated in the war structures of the time, some because they had been seen with Wehrmacht soldiers, some for personal reasons or out of retribution, and many simply because of their German identity. Some were killed on the spot. At the beginning the killings were mostly individual, but later became mass killings. Mass killings were committed in Odžaci,[23] Pančevo, Vršac, Zrenjanin, Zemun, Stara Pazova, Vrbas, Sremska Mitrovica and many other places.[24] Peter Blaha speaks about his brother Sepi who was killed on 23 November 1944, together with 181 other inhabitants of Odžaci, in the cornfields by the road to Karavukovo: "[T]hey burst into the house, two of them with rifles on their shoulders and 'Tito' hats on their heads, and they took him away. We never saw him again. He was only 16 and a half..." "They were lined up at the edge of a pit measuring four by six by two meters that they had been forced to dig themselves, and they fell into it beaten by shovels," Johan Hans Mejer later testified, the only one to survive the bloodshed.[25]

In Zemun, even individuals who had participated in the NOB were killed, because there was no time or desire to confirm their participation. Especially in the three days following the liberation of Zemun on 22 October 1944, Partisan patrols would stop people, check their papers, arrest people at their own discretion or even execute them on the spot.[26] There were also personal motives for some Germans to be killed: "In the night between 17 and 18 November 1944, four men were taken from Perles and their fates remained a mystery. The committee found that the local commander, Živa Perc, and the police commander, Blaga Perc, brothers, organised their apprehension and murder. The area command in Petrovgrad, the District NOO, the Department for National Security (OZNA) and the military court knew about this and knew it was a matter of personal animosity, and instead of doing what should have been done to bring the perpetrators to justice, they sent them to the front. They have now been arrested and an investigation is under way."[27] Sometimes, however, there was no need for a specific reason to justify an execution, simply disobeying an order could be fatal. After the arrival of the Red Army and the NOV (People's Liberation Army), at least 6,763 Danube Swabians were killed in the first wave of violence.[28]

There are testimonies to this effect: "Immediately after the arrival of the Partisans on 6 October 1944, the Partisans took my dad, along with other prominent and better-off citizens of Pančevo to a nearby village called Jabuka. Luckily, a communist, a glazier, noticed Dad and said to him: 'Mr Karlo, you don't belong here...' and he pulled him out of the column The others were summarily executed."[29]

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21 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 58.

22 Zoran Janjetović, "Logorisanje vojvođanskih Nemaca od novembra 1944. do juna 1945. godine", in: *Tokovi istorijU* 1–2/1997. (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju, 1997), p. 154

23 Denis Kolundžija, "Spokoj nad parcelom 7067/1", *Dnevnik* on 22 September 2013. This case is known as the only case of rehabilitation of a group execution of Germans.

24 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 211–212

25 Denis Kolundžija, "Spokoj nad parcelom 7067/1", *Dnevnik* on 22 September 2013.

26 Branko Najhold, *Hronika Zemuna 1941–2000*, I i II deo (Zemun: Trag, 2013), p. 77 and p. 289.

27 AJ, 50, 36–243.

28 Zoran Janjetović, "Prinudni rad folksdojčera u Vojvodini 1944–1950", in: *Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/ Jugoslaviji 1941–1945, 1945–1951.* Zbornik radova (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009), p. 206.

29 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

"During the war, father kept up our hair salon, because we had to make a living somehow. Right after liberation, together with other prominent citizens of Sombor, Dad was arrested and taken to the basement of Kronić Palace, a place you left only 'feet first'. But Dad was lucky because a Partisan woman recognised him from the hair salon. He was released based on her guarantee. (It was said that years after the war, the walls of the basement in Kronić Palace were splattered by the blood of people tortured by OZNA down in the basement)."[30]

The precise number of rapes is unknown because they were most often unreported. There were also instances of rape victims being killed. In Banatski Karlovac, 200 rapes committed by Russians were reported, and many women were infected by a venereal disease. Rapes were often committed in the presence of family members. In Srpska/ Njemačka Crnja, nine of them raped a nine-year-old girl, after which her mother first killed her and then herself.[31] M. speaks about this: "The Red Army soldiers ... they did horrible things here. They raped that woman up there by the chapel and she became deranged, she died of her nerves. She was thin as a twig... They would catch the Swabian women. The Russians did horrible things. You would hear about it, when we came here, it was talked about..."[32]

"But the only thing I remembered from his [Tito's] long speech, the only thing that stuck in my mind, was a sentence about our yesterday's fellow countrymen, our Swabians, so it is perhaps no wonder that I remember it now, here, in what used to be a Swabian house. I remembered it, because that sentence had an effect on my as a young and insufficiently 'hardened' fighter, it disturbed and confused me and even caused a reflex resistance and disagreement. Not only did it directly concern my fellow countrymen, people I had lived with in harmony only yesterday, but was indirectly also related to our brigade – a brigade that acted from the front lines as part of the national defence – and which was now put to task with that sentence to complete what it had in effect already been doing, but somehow more sporadically, off its own accord and without a clear plan, in other words: to finish the job it had started haphazardly in the field – which was euphemistically called 'clearing the enemy' – to continue this job and 'clear' the 'field' completely!

'Germans do not deserve to live in our country and we will expel all of them!' – was Tito's sentence.

[...] And why should we never meet them again? Why should then no longer be around us? And were they all truly so guilty that they had to be unconditionally expelled or taken to the camps?!"

Pavle Ugrinov, "Švapska kuća", in: "Anti egzistencija", Prosveta, Belgrade 1998, p. 109–116.

It was reported to the Yugoslav authorities that the Red Army committed: 1,219 rapes, 359 attempted rapes, 111 rapes with murder, 248 rapes with attempted murder and 1,204 cases of aggravated theft.[33] If we take into account that these are just the reported cases, the actual number of rapes must be much higher. At some point, the Yugoslav authorities intervened with the Soviet commanders to control their men.[34]

"After a few gulps, they forced my mother into the bedroom, threw her on the bed and tried to rape her. She screamed for help. Grandpa burst into the room and they left her alone. The drunken soldiers left, but

30 Životna priča Rudolfa Kumerkramera, in: Aleksandar Krel, *Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 266.

31 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 202.

32 M. C. (1936), Kljajićevo.

33 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 204.

34 Zoran Janjetović, "Logorisanje vojvođanskih Nemaca od novembra 1944. do juna 1945. godine", in: *Tokovi istorije* 1–2/1997 (Belgrade: INIS, 1997), p. 152

Grandpa knew they would be back. He said he could protect my mother, but that me and Ana had to hide in the garden. We were 14 years old. [...] Many women and girls were raped in front of their families. Some hanged themselves, and some families jumped into wells. About 70 people were buried in their yards."[35]

It all made people fearful. People were already scared by the rumours about the Red Army and the Partisans before they came, and the reactions of the new authorities only increased that fear. There was a pamphlet going around by Ilya Ehrenburg[36] from 1945, which said: "Germans are not people... Kill a German, your country demands it. Don't fail, don't avoid it, KILL!"[37] Fear drove many to suicide.

According to one witness: "In that period, between the arrival of the Partisans on 6 October and the internment of all Germans (12 November 1944), many families committed suicide. Among them, my best friend and her whole family hanged themselves..."[38]

The case of Srpska/Nemačka Crnja still elicits interest: it is said that a large number of its inhabitants committed suicide, with 55 cases documented. This is what Magdalena Metzer said about the atmosphere at the time: "We were constantly in fear. We went without sleep or respite. I used to follow my mother around day and night. I was afraid she would kill herself, like many did. She kept saying that peace would come when we jumped in the well. I didn't want that: I still had a father, somewhere out there in the world, who loved us. We would survive. I wanted to live! Mother had lost all hope. Every day was more torture, humiliation, fear. Rumours reached us about new executions. There was no one to help us. Serbs were prohibited from helping us. Whoever helped us would be killed – many were killed. [...] The Serbs started visiting German houses. They kept telling us everything would calm down and there was no need for suicide."[39] In Nemačka/Srpska Crnja, there were many cases of torture, execution and threats – that the men would be killed, and the women and girls raped.[40]

The table below speaks to the large number of casualties in the period from the end of the war to the moment of internment in camps. Most of them were killed, and some are registered as missing or as suicides. The total number of casualties prior to internment is 8,049 Danube Swabians.[41]

35 Account by Magdalena Metzer from Srpska Crnja, a place known for a large number of rapes, "Medved pred vratima", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 82.

36 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 88.

37 Hatred towards the enemy was systematically promoted at the end of the war and in its immediate aftermath. At the beginning of April 1945, two books were published in translation from Russion, first in Belgrade the book by Ilya Ehrenburg (Ilya Ehrenburg, *Rat april 1942 – mart 1943* [War April 1942 – March 1943], Belgrade: Državni Izdavački Zavod Jugoslavije, 1945), and shortly thereafter in Zagreb, the pamphlet by Mikhail Sholokhov *The Science of Hatred* (Mikhail Sholokhov, *Nauk mržnje*, Zagreb: Vjesnik, 1945). Both are anthology-worthy texts of 'hate speech'.

38 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

39 Account by Magdalena Metzer from Srpska Crnja, "Medved pred vratima", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 83

40 Denis Kolundžija, Natalija Miletić, "Crnja od smrti", *Balkanist*, 24 October 2014 http://balkanist.net/bcs/crnja-od-smrti/ [retrieved 21 February 2015].

41 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 329.

Civilian casualties prior to internment in camps

	Children	Women	Men	Total
Killed	61	806	6332	7199
Committed suicide	11	82	61	154
Missing	40	152	504	696
Total	112	1,040	6,897	8,049

How did they end up in the camps? On 11 June 1945, the Presidency of the DFJ Ministerial Council reported, "the Government of Yugoslavia is of the view that all Germans within Yugoslav borders should be displaced and dispatched to Germany as soon as *favourable technical conditions* are achieved."[42] It should be noted that the future of Germans in Europe in general was largely decided at the Potsdam Conference (17 July to 2 August 1945) where "orderly displacement of (remaining) German populations" from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia to Germany was arranged.[43] This was an instance of legal ethnic cleansing, which was to be conducted in a humane and organised fashion. The Potsdam Agreement did not include Yugoslavia, so it resolved the problem of its domicile Germans in an even worse way. Despite its requests to the allies, Yugoslavia did not receive approval for the displacement of the Danube Swabians, and the following decision was therefore made: "Until conditions are secured for their transport, they shall be kept in camps for forced labour."[44]

Compulsory labour was introduced at the very beginning, but some of the Germans were allowed to remain in their homes, while some were taken to labour camps. Internment in camps intensified due to the danger of German parachutists. Men were interned in order to be "under better control" in November and December 1944, and this continued in March and April 1945 and in June and August.[45] In time, almost everyone was taken to a camp, including children, the old and the frail or ill. After a while, the camps became common. The reasons for internment varied – from concentrating a labour force, preserving German property, making room for new settlers, to "strategic reasons".[46]

How did the process of internment take place? Many Germans were rounded up at night, the village was blocked, they were taken to some building while their valuables were searched. Their experiences varied. The following recollections refer to that process in Pančevo and Subotica.

"On 12 November, the Partisans announced that all Germans should remain in their homes in order to be registered. Instead of registration, all the Germans in Pančevo were rounded up and interned in camps. The elderly and women with small children were taken to the annihilation camps (Vernichtungslager) such as Knićanin, and the younger to the camps of 'Perjara' and the camp at the Fišplac in the centre of Pančevo. All

42 Vladimir Geiger, "Heimkehr, Povratak slavonskih Nijemaca nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata iz izbjeglištva/prognaništva u zavičaj i njihova sudbina", in: *Scrinia Slavonica*, Godišnjak Podružnice za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje Hrvatskog instituta za povijest, Vol. 3 (Slavonski Brod, Hrvatski institut za povijest Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2003), p. 525.

43 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002.* (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 293–294.

44 Based on the AVNOJ Presidency Decision of 21 November 1944 Ibid., p. 295.

45 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Beograd: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 250.

46 Zoran Janjetović, "Prinudni rad folksdojčera u Vojvodini 1944–1950.", in: *Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/ Jugoslaviji 1941.–1945., 1945.–1951.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010), p. 209.

elderly members of the Welker, Koh and Fišer families, as well as our priest, died in Knićanin of starvation and disease. [...] That autumn in 1944, my father did not have to go to the camp. His brother-in-law Stamenko saved him. In 1948, Stamenko opted for the Informbiro and could not prevent the subsequent eviction from the house (it was seized, as was the soda plant) and daily harassment. Grandpa left for Germany in 1956 with the last surviving Pančevo Germans."[47]

"I was 11 years old... going on 12, when they took my parents to the camp. Dad was... he was a tram operator, he finished his shift that night at 10 and came home... at one in the morning, someone rapped at the window. Dad asked, 'Who is it?' They said, 'Patrol.' And then when he opened the door, he recognised who he was letting in, because it was his colleague... no, not a colleague, a friend, they had gone hunting together. [...] But they took my dad away again in 1944, on 28 December, when the patrol came. That time Peter [friend he hunted with] said, 'Take two changes of underwear and come with us!' Dad went with him. They did not say where they were taking him, nothing. But it was there, where the new market is, the 'Štirkara'. That's where the camp was. [...] And then, that's where they gathered the men, and they left the women at home and us children. Then in February, but I don't know the exact date, they came and took mum away, and me... They called the doctor, from the neighbourhood, to see whether he'd take me, if I could stay with them..."[48]

"Mum had two sisters, they were in the camp together, and then they took them, around 7 o'clock, a Partisan took them to the faculty, and at 2 p.m. he'd come to pick them up and then it was back to the 'Štirkara'. So they stayed there a few months, I don't know exactly, and then suddenly they were taking them to Sekić, to a camp. [...] The streets were all blocked with barbed wire. And the women and men were on this side, and the children on the left side. They took the children from their parents."[49]

The following account gives the perspective of someone not directly affected by the internment of Germans:

"I felt sorry for them. Us children were coming home from school. We had all gathered in the centre of town around the fence when they put all the Swabians into that yard. It was all mothers and children, there were no men. [...] Then they called out their names. As they called out the names, some would go to one side, some to the other. Then they were deported in trucks, but where, how... I don't know."[50]

"We had German neighbours. They were all taken to the camp. Some escaped. There were maybe 60 or 70 families. They took all of them [that did not escape] to the camp, even those from mixed marriages. There were no executions in Telečka. We have Vujović to thank for that. He had said that everything was fine here, so no one came and no one got hurt. Even when the Russians came, they didn't touch anyone, nothing bad happened."[51]

OZNA was responsible for gathering and providing information and managed the referral of Germans to camps. Internment was conducted by military units, under local and district commands working together with OZNA.[52] Following military rule, the Camps Division of the Internal Affairs Department of AP Vojvodina made the decision on interment, but any authority could submit a proposal.[53] It can often be found in the literature, that authority over the camps was in the hands of Moša Pijade, who was succeeded by Vid Dodik – known for his speech that there was no more room for Germans in Yugoslavia and that they should all be removed to Germany.

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47 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

48 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, born 1933, Subotica).

49 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, born 1933, Subotica).

50 M. C. (1936), Kljajićevo.

51 E. F. (1927), village in Bačka.

52 AJ, 50, 36-243.

53 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 63.

Admittedly, better food became available when he took over, and even powdered milk was provided to the interned children.[54]

Deportation to the USSR. Between 29 December 1944 and 6 January 1945, some 10,000 to 12,000 people were deported from Vojvodina to the USSR[55] by 20 rail transports.[56] The deportees were often unaware of where they were being taken. There were many women on the transports – on some transports, there were six to eight times more women than men.[57] Most of the transports arrived in Donbass. There, the Danube Swabians were put to work in mines or on construction sites, at delivery stations, industrial plants, *kolkhozes*.[58] The treatment meted out to the deportees varied from camp to camp, but the food was universally bad and insufficient., As of mid-1945, the deportees received wages and the situation improved somewhat in 1947. Release from the Soviet labour camps began in October and November 1949.[59] The following are some accounts of the deportation of women and their loved ones: one from Banat, the other from Bačka.

"In October 1944, the Partisans rounded up all the young and able-bodied German women and sent them for forced labour to Russia. I was on that list too, but one of Stamenko's friends, a communist from the Pančevo glassworks, deleted my name. Only a few women returned from Russia to Pančevo in the early 1950s."[60]

"My mother was told that she was ready, that the train was ready to take her away... In Odžaci you'll hear that a whole mass of people were taken to Russia, and she was notified... My father was working in the municipality at the time and he wasn't married to my mother yet. He sent word to my mother to hide, and in the meantime he got my grandma, my grandpa and my mother out of the camp in Kruševlje. He hid them because he found out that my mother was on the list for deportation to Russia. Then, that night, they set off on foot to Hungary. Since they had a vineyard in Bač–Almaš, they went there first and were told to move on. Then they went to Pest. Then somehow news reached them [probably by word-of-mouth among the other victims] that the Yugoslav authorities would be returning confiscated properties. They had a hotel in Odžaci that had been confiscated. Then they (based on that news) returned."[61]

'Just deserts' for the damage and injustice they had caused was used as justification for the deportation of Germans. Tens of thousands of Germans and the Volksdeutsche were deported from the pre-war territory of the Reich, the territory liberated by the Red Army.[62]

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54 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 263–264

55 Zoran Janjetović, "Prinudni rad folksdojčera u Vovjodini 1944–1950.", in: *Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/ Jugoslaviji 1941–1945, 1945–1951.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009), p. 206.

56 Zoran Janjetović, "Nemice u logorima za Folksdojčere u Vojvodini 1944–1948.", in: *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka – 2, Položaj žena kao merilo modernizacije*, ed. Latinka Perović (Belgrade: 1998), p. 498.

57 Zoran Janjetović, "Deportacija vojvođanskih Nemaca na prinudni rad u Sovjetski Savez krajem 1944. i početkom 1945. godine", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 1/1997 (Belgrade, Savez društava istoričara Jugoslavije, 1997), p. 159.

58 Ibid., p. 160.

59 Zoran Janjetović, "Deportacija vojvođanskih Nemaca na prinudni rad u Sovjetski Savez krajem 1944. i početkom 1945. godine", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 1/1997 (Belgrade, Savez društava istoričara Jugoslavije, 1997), p. 166.

60 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

61 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, 1955, Sombor).

62 Zoran Janjetović, "Deportacija vojvođanskih Nemaca na prinudni rad u Sovjetski Savez krajem 1944. i početkom 1945. godine", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 1/1997 (Belgrade, Savez društava istoričara Jugoslavije, 1997), 157–158.

The Camps

While the authorities endeavoured to find a solution to the German issue through removal, the camps quickly filled up. There are numerous names for these camps and the euphemisms employed often shed light on the context. Thus, for example, the Yugoslav Red Cross referred to them as labour colonies and labour centres,[63] but they are also referred to as camps or confines,[64] collection camps, labour camps, "places under special regime",[65] "village under special regime",[66] "place for quarantine".[67] In one of the state reports describing

63 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950.

64 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-75, MO-85, sign. 420911.

65 Branislav Danilović, *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 26: "These two villages (Kruševlje and Gakovo), pursuant to a decision by the authorities of 25 November 1944, have been evacuated and proclaimed 'places under special regime' and were subsequently transformed into camps."

66 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, texted via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_ sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 61. Mačković cites this name when he refers to the Village Command taking over Sekić on 17 November 1944, noting, "'Command of village under special regime' was the full title".

67 Petar Šušnjar, *Plavo, crno, crveno: 40.000 Volksdeutsche children* (Novi Sad: DOO Dnevnik – novine i časopisi, 2006).

the process of internment and abuse, the term 'concentration camps' (admittedly, rare) is used. It is often stated that the camps were formed only as a temporary station, because there was a plan to remove the Germans.

There are documents citing that the removal of the Danube Swabians from the country had been decided in principle,[68] and even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) saw their departure from Yugoslavia as their only salvation.[69] This will be discussed in more detail in the section on repatriation.

Number and composition of the camps

Authors researching the German national minority in the war's aftermath often divide the camps for Germans into the following categories: concentration camps, collection camps, labour camps, camps for children and the infirm.[70] As Janjetović notes, the classification by Hans-Ulrich Wehler differs and includes the following categories: central labour camps, local camps and camps for the unfit for labour.[71] There is some disagreement about the classification because it is often difficult to ascertain the purpose of individual camps.[72] For instance, Bački Jarak was a camp for the ill and infirm, which is supported by the fact that of the 4,095 Germans in Jarak, only 400 of them were fit for labour. In relevant literature, it is also referred to as a concentration camp. According to Geiger and Jurković, there were at least 69 camps set up in the areas of Eastern Slavonia, Srem, Baranja, Bačka and Banat,[73] but according to Janjetović, based on calculations by Tafferner and official lists, there were 87 camps in Yugoslavia (75 in Vojvodina). The ICRC list of camps contains 70 in the territory of Yugoslavia.[74] As previously mentioned, the Yugoslav Red Cross registered 11 camps, or as they were called, labour colonies. Of course, it should be noted that not all camps existed at the same time, but would often alternate, with people being transferred from one camp to another. The majority of the camps were in Vojvodina, because the majority of Germans were there. According to the lists compiled by the Yugoslav communist authorities, in May 1945, 74,918 members of the German national minority were interned in Vojvodina. There were also German prisoners of war, ethnic Hungarians and a small number of others in the camps.[75]

According to official Yugoslav public data, 96,769 of the 110,000 Danube Swabians residing in Yugoslavia were interned (including 24,403 children, 19,953 elderly people over 65 and 52,413 people fit for labour).[76] Of this number, some 2,000 people escaped, 3,121 were taken to the USSR, and some 2,600 were released

68 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Summary of conversation between H. G. Beckh and Dr Jaeggi of 13 May 1946, signed by H. G. Beckh.

69 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Summary of conversation between H. G. Beckh and Dr Jaeggi of 13 May 1946, signed by H. G. Beckh.

70 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 257, based on the classification by Anton Tafferner.

71 Ibid,, p. 262.

72 Vladimir Geiger, "Logori za folksdojčere u Hrvatskoj nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata 1945–1947", in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2006), p. 1085: "Although the exact number and purpose of the camps where the Yugoslav Volksdeutsche were interned is contested, as well as the number of those who were interned and those who died in the camps, it is uncontested that people died in all of the camps."

73 Vladimir Geiger, Ivan Jurković, "Poratni logori za pripadnike njemačke nacionalne manjine", in: *Politički zatvorenik*, No. 9 (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo političkih zatvorenika, 1991), p. 28–31.

74 ACICR, B G 97, Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. "Liste de camps ou lieux de confinement de personnes appartenant A la minorité éthnique allemande en Yougoslavie (civils)".

75 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 260.

76 Data from early 1946: many had already died/were killed by then, and many were interned later.

on account of having supported the Partisans or being married to a member of a non-German minority. In the whole of Yugoslavia, there were 110,000 ethnic Germans, and according to this data 9,680 of them died.[77] By Geiger's account, these figures are significantly different. Of the 195,000 Danube Swabians that remained in Yugoslavia, some 170,000 were interned, and of that number some 50,000 to 60,000 died in the camps. According to the most conservative estimates, citing individual names, at least 25,987 Yugoslav ethnic German women died in the camps for Germans, along with close to 16,878 men and 5,582 children (some 45,000 children were interned).[78] At the beginning, it seemed that only men would be interned, because women had not participated in combat.[79] However the numbers involved and the subsequent testimonies indicate that it turned out differently. Already in late 1944 and early 1945, women were also deported for forced labour in the USSR. Some 50,000–60,000 Germans died as a result of abuse, exposure, starvation and disease. Mortality in the Yugoslav camps was around 30 percent. The majority of camp internees were women, children and the infirm. The data provided by Janjetović, given in the table below, are close to those of Geiger:[80]

Deaths in the camps

	Children	Women	Men	Total
Death by starvation	5524	25,740	16,390	47,654
Killed	14	157	396	558
Committed suicide	4	32	24	60
Missing	40	40	95	175
Total	5582	25.969	16.905	48.447

Killed trying to escape

	Children	Women	Men	Total
Escape attempts	21	67	55	143
Killed	10	34	35	79
Missing	1	10	7	18
Total	32	111	97	240

If to these numbers we add the 1,994 people who died in the Soviet camps (888 women and 1106 men), and the 8,049 civilians who died prior to internment in the camps *(see table on p. 37)*, then the total number of deaths among the Danube Swabians is 58,730.

77 Z. Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 261.

78 Vladimir Geiger, feljton, "Sudbina Njemica u Hrvatskoj (i Jugoslaviji) nakon Drugog svjetskog rata (2. dio)", *Deutsches Wort/Njemačka riječ*, Blatt der Deutschen und Österreicher in Kroatien/List Nijemaca i Austrijanaca u Hrvatskoj 51 (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, ožujak/März 2004), p. 36.

79 Zoran Janjetović, "Nemice u logorima za Folksdojčere u Vojvodini 1944–1948", in: *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. I 20. veka – 2, Položaj žena kao merilo modernizacije*, ed. Latinka Perović (Belgrade: 1998), p. 497.

80 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 329.

That all of this took place far from the public eye (and especially those of foreigners), irrespective of the number of missing and interned, is supported by the account of a ICRC delegate in Yugoslavia, Dr Jaeggi, of his attempt to acquire information about the exact number of Danube Swabians in the camps in May 1946. In his report he cites the figure of some 100,000 Danube Swabians interned in the camps. This is an unofficial figure, because there was no permit to visit the camps or the prisoners of war. Also, ICRC had no knowledge, at least in the beginning, of the precise location of the camps.[81]

The state refused to provide precise data on the number of internees and type of internment. During a meeting of the ICRC Director Georges Dunanda with the FNRJ Ministry of Interior, the Ministry's report states: "We replied that Yugoslavia does not have large immobile camps of the sort seen in large Western countries..."[82]

Who ended up in the Camps?

The majority of the Danube Swabians ended up in the camps, almost all of them, in fact. In some official state documents it even says, "all Germans found in the territory of Vojvodina..."[83] However, although it also says that people from mixed marriages, those that had participated in the NOB, and those who had assimilated were released from the camps, there is discrepancy between the theory and practice. The state itself admitted as much. The Presidency of the DFJ Ministerial Council stated to the OZNA department for Yugoslavia that: "the authorities conducting the internment and other measures did not act correctly in each individual case, and some Germans were exempted without proper justification. [...] On the other hand, there is a certain number of German experts and professionals in the camps who would be very useful in private companies in Vojvodina whose operations cannot proceed properly without these professionals." A report from 29 May 1945 of the Extraordinary Committee for Vojvodina of the Presidency of the DFJ Ministerial Council, submitted to Moša Pijade, Vice-President of AVNOJ, contains a more detailed description of those who were interned without cause, as well as their ill treatment. "The internment of Germans was not properly conducted in any single place, and this situation resulted from the fact that internment was done hastily and without proper criteria, which inevitably led to errors, such as: internment of those whose conduct did not warrant such a measure and vice versa, leaving those who should have been interned at large. The committee has received numerous requests illustrating improper conduct. [...] The treatment of internees is not always correct and there are cases of beatings and rape."[84] The case of a printer named Berger from Pančevo is illustrative in this respect: "[H]e helped people involved in the NOV, he was not a member of Kulturbund and throughout the occupation, he helped our folk, and now he has been taken to the camp just so the aide of the city command in Pančevo could move into his apartment. As soon as Berger was taken to the camp, the aide of the local command moved into his apartment."[85] Not even membership in the Partisan movement was enough to save the family, so the parents

81 ACICR, B G 97, Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Summary of conversation between H. G. Beckh and Dr Jaeggi of 13 May 1946, signed by H. G. Beckh.

82 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-57, MO-85, 7718.

83 AJ, 50, 36-243.

84 As for the beatings and rapes: "In Begej Sv. Đurađ, the camp commander beat two 80-year-old inmates, of which one had suffered a stroke and the other was blind, and their 45-year-old daughter was raped. [...] The same document also contains a proposal on what to do about this 'misconduct': "On this matter, the committee proposes: 1) That the entire internment system be subjected to committee review, after criteria for interment are properly defined. 2) That the committee include public authorities and that all those who are not Germans be taken out of the camps, and if they are culpable in any way, that their responsibility be determined in another way."AJ, 513 (Moše Pijade), XXXIV MP, III-3/176.

85 AJ, 50, 36–243.

of our interlocutor's father ended up in the camps, his mother in Gakovo and his father in Subotica.[86] Also, people from mixed marriages were to be exempted from internment, but that often was not the case. Thus, for example, the Croat Ana Šimunić, married to Stjepan Felder, ended up in a camp with her three children, one of whom died in the camp.[87] Those whose surnames simply sounded German, which was common for Croats, also ended up in the camps.[88] In addition, attending dances with German peers was equated with collaborating with the occupier, and was another reason for internment.[89] On the other hand, the Danube Swabians attempted to avoid the camps, deportation to the USSR and the like, most often by declaring themselves to be Hungarians, Croats or another nationality.[90]

Not even children were exempt from internment. It turned out that the Danube Swabians were destined to bear, as Geiger would put it, the fate of collective guilt,[91] and this applied to absolutely all of them, even those who were left at liberty. As for the children, in the camps they were separated from their parents, if not immediately, then later and divided into groups. Individual Germans were charged with taking care of the children. Parents were often not permitted to see their children. The number of 5,582 children who died in the camps is in itself devastating. This is one account of how children experienced separation from their parents:

"I stayed in the camp with my mother only a few months, then an order came in that all children over three or four were to be separated from their parents and taken to the children's camp. [...] There was screaming and crying. People would hide their children wherever they could, but the prison guards would find them and forcibly take them from their parents. And so the next day, we were off."[92]

What is a camp?

A camp was a street, a neighbourhood or even a whole town or village. At the beginning, people were taken to factories or large buildings with lots of space (the customs house in Zemun, the starch factory in Subotica, the Stojković-Telep in Vršac, the dairy in Kikinda, the old mill and oil refinery in Zrenjanin, the fish market or Fišplac in Pančevo). Whatever the venue, there was usually not enough space for all the people brought there.

Here is how Dr Subotić described a typical German village that acquired a completely new function in 1945: "Having arrived, I immediately found that Krnjaja (today's Kljajićevo) has completely changed its appearance in terms of population, because the domicile population, with very few exceptions, were all interned as Germans,

86 J. V. (1940), village in Bačka.

87 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 69.

88 "Many of them have been accused by individuals of being German, but there is not evidence to support this."AJ, 50, 36–243.

89 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 68–69.

90 For more see interview with Roza Vejnović, nee Mueller (Apatin, 1923) about this and the situation during the war, in: Sandra Nedimović, "Marienbund i Christusjugend u Apatinu od 1935. do 1944. godine", in: *Petničke sveske*, No. 55 (Valjevo, IS Petnica, 2004), p. 19–37.

91 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002.* (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 287.

92 Aleksandar Krel, *Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 264.

[...] there are three camps for Germans in the village: 1) One camp for women in the north-west part of the village with some 400 detainees. The command of this camp is responsible for internees housed in the centre of the village (Princ Andrijina Street) in various houses where they live in the barns with the horses, cattle, pigs and poultry and where they work for the National Goods Administration. There are some 80 persons in this situation; 2) One mixed camp of Swabians in the south-east part of the village by the wool mills, where all internees are on work duty, and they are distributed among the houses; 3) The German military camp."[93]

From the report: "Travelling through Vojvodina, I noticed many irregularities, sluggishness and negligence in the work of the authorities. I noticed that in Odžaci and Srpski Miletić, the Germans have to this day not been gathered or placed in camps. When I asked why this has not been done, the responsible comrades cited as a reason that they were protecting the confiscated properties from theft in this way, because the German owners guard these properties. This statement cannot be convincing, because it is well known that Germans keeping this property expend food, they squander and dispose of the property as they please, without accounting to anyone, nor does anyone control how these properties are being managed." *AJ, 513, XXXIV MP, III-3/180*

People were put up in houses, barns and other auxiliary buildings. There were no beds, almost as a rule, so they slept on flea-ridden hay or on the floor. Food was insufficient and people were dying of emaciation, disease and abuse or were executed. Generally speaking, the situation in the camps was difficult, as can be seen from numerous testimonies and the fact that there were so many deaths. According to the Yugoslav authorities, there were no complaints about the situation in the camps, but the number of deaths contradicts this. Even in places where the conditions were more tolerable, it was enough that people were detained and separated from their loved ones, or as can be read in a letter: "[B]ut it is not that bad for me, I only long for you and for freedom."[94] It was similar with Justine Wittine: in February 1946, she and her mother were transferred for work at the palace greenhouse in Belgrade. Directly following Tito's visit, the internees were given beds, but they were still not free, so the two of them decided to escape after 18 months of detention.[95] The desire for freedom often overcame the fear, which was more than justified.

Conditions in the camps

It is not just the personal testimonies of Danube Swabians that speak to their difficult position. Doctors that visited the camps, though this was scarcely visible due to the large number of dead, infirm and ill (such as the case of the Kruševlje and Gakovo camps), describe the situation in the camps in their official reports. Thus, Dr Dušan Jovičić, in his report on the Gakovo camp from the autumn of 1945, describes an abdominal typhus epidemic in October, saying that the hygiene is unsatisfactory due to the density of the population, that the internees are mostly children, the elderly and ill, and that the houses and flats are infested with fleas and lice whose bites are the main case of spotted typhus (he had contacted the District Sanitation Division multiple times, but to no avail), that they lack undergarments, clean clothes, that there is no fuel for heating and cooking,

93 Branislav Danilović Branislav Danilović, *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 73. Report taken from the Sombor Historical Archives, but there is no reference to collection or signature.

94 Vladimir Geiger, *Logor Krndija 1945. – 1946*. (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2008), p. 292.

95 Life Story of Justine Wittine, "Justine je gledala u sunce", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 113.

that there were no suicides in that month, which does not mean there are none otherwise. In that one month of September, 350 people died, of that 11 from abdominal typhus.[96]

It does not say what the other 339 people died of in just one month. Here is a description of the Gakovo camp by one of the female internees:

"Before the war, Gakovo was an almost purely German village. It was then closed and people were brought in and detained there so that the population was ten times that before the war. There was no doctor in the village, or medicine or food... In Gakovo, us women with small children were housed in separate rooms in the former school building. There was hay on the floor and we divided the room up with sheets... There was even less food in Gakovo than in Pančevo, we were being starved to death. Starving and dirty, we were decimated by typhus, dysentery and malaria. I remember they gave us some vaccines – they said they were against malaria, but they actually infected us with malaria germs. The next morning people were dying in droves. Every morning they would take the dead away on a cart and I remember the crying children following the cart taking away their parents... The only food we got for the whole day was 200 g of bread made of corn meal ground with cobs. If we had money, we could buy a bit of oil from the camp administration to dip the bread in. My daughter Anica, born in December 1946, was still nursing in the Pančevo camp, I myself don't know how I had milk for her. Even today, I don't know how I managed to wash Anica's things, but I know that long after the camp I would consider a piece of soap the greatest possible treasure and would always be happy to receive soap."[97]

The British Embassy in Belgrade sent a letter to the Minister (Ministry of Interior) dated 1 April 1946.
"I believe I should let you know that I have received disturbing reports about the way the German minority was expelled across the border into Austria. I am not referring to the fact that these expulsions were conducted without the approval of the British military authorities in Austria, as a result of which, as you know, His Majesty's Government found it necessary to enter a most energetic protest, but to the difficulties imposed on these people due to our expulsions.
I will not go into detail, but the reports I have received from the military authorities in Austria have convinced me that these people, after having been concentrated in camps prior to expulsion, suffered greatly due to lack of food, due to the harsh journey much of which the sick and the women, children and infants spent in cattle wagons in the middle of winter and due to the complete absence of medical care.
I am aware that during the war, the enemy conducted forcible expulsions of Yugoslavs in the most brutal manner and that this fact does not recommend to the Yugoslav authorities to treat the German minority with any mildness. But two wrongs do not make a right and I am convinced that you will agree that it would be in all respects desirable not to treat these people in an inhumane manner [...]"
MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 3656.

The situation in the Čonoplja camp with some 1,200 internees was not much better. According to a report by Branislav Danilović, people were crowded in abandoned German houses, often suffering from diseases of the digestive organs, contagious diseases, poor nutrition, without a change of clothes or soap.[98] Due to the difficult conditions, many died, and the situation in other camps was similar. Deaths in the camps are most often the result of negligence: hunger, disease, exposure, hard labour. In the book *Jedan svet na Dunavu* [A World upon the Danube], Karl Schumm says: "My other aunt, from Darda, a place in Baranja, was also taken to the camp. She was a diabetic, like me – it runs in the family. They did not let her have any insulin. She died of diabetes in that concentration

96 Branislav Danilović, *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 69, based on a report from the Sombor Historical Archives, fond 217, inv. br. 574.

97 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

98 Branislav Danilović: *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 69–70, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

camp."[99] Thousands of people died of starvation, typhus, dysentery and exhaustion, and in some camps up to 50 people died daily during epidemics. They were buried in mass graves holding up to 500 bodies.[100] The mortality was highest in the camps with the largest numbers of the infirm: Knićanin, Bački Jarak, Gakovo and Kruševlje. For example, only in Knićanin, of the 33,000 internees that passed through the camp, 10,000 died.[101] Marija Pfajfer talks about the deaths in the camp: "The elderly that could not eat or work... every morning there was a wagon... a wagon like a casket and there was one or two horses pulling the wagon, they would go down the street collecting the dead. It was like collecting fowl. Some were dressed, some naked. When someone didn't have anything to wear, they would take things off the dead. There were all sorts of things... I can't talk about them."[102] Terezija Vučković also remembers the camp where she stayed: "Already at the beginning people were dying (in Knićanin)... First the elderly and the weak children, but it still wasn't en masse... But in the last year, it was horrible. Many people died each day. The wagon would come by in the morning to collect the dead, pile them on like logs..."[103] Anna Koch talks about the diseases. She remembers how she came down with malaria, together with her small daughter. She was running such a high fever that she could barely walk.[104]

Often nothing was done to control an outbreak such as abdominal typhus, "nothing has been done to prevent it to this day," says a report on the Sekić camp.[105]

Documents testifying to the life in the camps are rare. Information is most often garnered indirectly (for example, from reports on the health condition of the internees, on measures to control typhus, and so forth). There we find evidence of ill treatment of the interned Germans.[106] One such example is a report from Dr Andrija Bruk, which says:

"General overview of the location: Upon entering the site, we see camp internees pushing carts with corpses wrapped in sheets. Asking about the cause of death almost always yields the same answer – spotted typhus. When we took a closer look at the pallbearers, we saw lice and nits..."[107] Ivan Ivanji, himself a survivor of the Nazi camps, who had taken an interest in the fate of the Danube Swabians, recounts what Mirko Tepavac, the organisational secretary of the Vojvodina Communist Party at the time and later the foreign minister, said about visiting one such camp: "It was horrible. I immediately sent the entire leadership to the Srem front because they were acting like slave owners..."[108]

As previously mentioned, apart from disease and lack of medical care, the internees also died of starvation

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99 Karl Schumm, in: ed. Nenad Stefanović, *Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari*, Šesto izdanje (Belgrade: Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, 2007), p. 47.

100 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 274.

101 Ibid, p. 274.

102 Life story of Marija Pfajfer, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 87.

103 Life story of Terezija Vučković, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II* (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 134.

104 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

105 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 64.

106 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 223, according to AJ.

107 Branislav Danilović: *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 80, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

108 Ivan Ivanji, "Pa, znate kako je, ubijalo se", nedeljnik *Vreme* No. 1132, of 13 September 2012, http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1072146 [retrieved February 2015].

or infirmity caused by malnutrition. Numerous testimonies indicate that the food was meagre, insufficient, and sometimes non-existent.[109] Some say they had nothing to eat out of and nothing to eat.[110] The ICRC was also aware that "nutrition is not provided in line with the Convention",[111] as mentioned at a meeting with the FNRJ Ministry of Interior. The response to that was that "such reports are inaccurate". In order to save themselves, those who could would escape to neighbouring villages and beg. This was a way to secure food, which would most often then be shared, or they went into the fields hoping to dig up whatever was left: "We were taken from Kruševlje to the camp in Knićanin. How we got there, I don't know. I think by foot. They took us everywhere by foot. I remember when we got to Knićanin I saw trees without leaves. There were only leaves on the topmost branches, the lower branches were completely bare. Then they told me they cooked the leaves to eat, that they had picked the leaves off the trees... It was very cold, everything was frozen, and with my small hands I would dig grains of corn one by one from the earth until I had gathered a handful. I was happy and when I went to my grandma to show her how much corn I had dug up out of the frozen ground (crying), I said, 'Grandma, today is a beautiful day, look how much corn I've brought, we'll have something to eat."[112]

In a letter from December 1944 to the Area Command, the quartermaster of the Gakovo camp warns of the consequences of malnutrition and appeals for food to be sent.[113] Anna Koch said of the camp and food in Pančevo:

"There was little room in the barracks in the camp at the Fišplac, people slept on the floors. There were twenty of us in the room and we were all hungry, and most no longer had anyone outside, so they never received any help. We would get one meal per day, usually a bland empty soup with weevils floating in it (they would squeak under your teeth) and some dry peas."[114]

On 13 August 1945, Dr Đorđe Lazić wrote to the Health Department in Novi Sad that the food was "insufficient, it does not meet calorie needs, not to mention vitamins, so there are many children with clear signs of malnutrition and vitamin deficiency."[115] Some of the internees were saved by packages sent to them. However, there are more and more official appeals from high state offices saying that "it would be inefficient for the ICRC to send aid directly to individuals or camps, and it would be better to send everything to our Red Cross" (said at the Ministry of Interior to members of the ICRC delegation), or that "the Yugoslav government requests that packages no longer be addressed to private persons but only to national authorities or humanitarian organisations."[116] Those who were interned in a camp close to where they had lived had more opportunity to get food – from their abandoned house or from neighbours or cousins who remained in the village:

"They [the Germans] were taken over to Janči major. He sent word that we should send food. When we heard this, my mother baked cakes, roasted meat, and my father went there on his bicycle to deliver the food. When he arrived, they were no longer there. They had been taken away the previous day. We never saw them again."[117]

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109 *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, Band V, Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*, Duesseldorf, 1961, Muenchen, 1984, Augsburg, 1994, Muenchen, 2004, nr. 53, p. 374.

110 Life story of Marija Pfajfer, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 86.

111 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-57, MO-85, 11347.

112 Life story of K. T., in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 65.

113 Branislav Danilović: *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 49, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

114 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

115 Branislav Danilović: *Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947.* (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 66, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

116 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-57, M-85, 3118 (MIP sent a letter to ICRC in March 1946).

117 E. F. (1927) village in Bačka. Worked for a Danube Swabian from Crvenka.

The state of the internees is also illustrated by the Sekić camp (the entire village was turned into a camp, today it is called Lovćenac). In September 1945, the hemp cooperative from Sekić was looking for healthy, strong workers to extract the soaking hemp. The commander personally looked for workers, but could not find any.[118] None that were healthy or strong.

There are few official documents referring to the killings and ill treatment of the Danube Swabians. Testimonies were mostly used for this research, and they are very similar, citing beatings, killings, looting, rape, and so on. The ill treatment ranged from beatings onwards: being made to do push-ups in excrement, to lie in icy water (in February when everything is frozen), which was fatal for some,[119] being beaten across the soles of the feet with a bicycle chain for attempting to flee[120] or being made to sit and stare at the sun the whole day, with those lowering their heads being beaten.[121] Sexual abuse and rape were also part of the ill treatment, but testimonies about them are often given only as hints and are incomplete. "When we arrived in Gakovo, they shut us down in the basement. We stayed down there for three days. When they let us out, a partisan took me to his room. It was around midnight. He shut the door behind me, but the door had a large glass pane. I ran through the glass... [...] The partisan who had taken me to the room still remembered me. He told me, 'I'll have you tonight.'"[122] "Sometimes they would order us to undress for a health check-up: the partisans would stare at us and whistle. Sometimes they wanted to check whether we were still virgins. These were moments of the greatest humiliation in our young lives."[123] Official reports on this are quite rare, but this document describes a resulting prosecution: "During the internment of Germans in Begej Sv. Đurađ, Dautović Geca raped Hermina Manes, an internee, publicly slapped Tomić Jagoda and acted very crudely towards the president of the MNO. We ordered the arrest of Dautović and an investigation is under way."[124]

The treatment of the internees also depended on the person running the camp, and even on the guards, whether they would turn a blind eye or kill them.[125] "Generally, since the new commander came to the camp, we all feel a sense of relief and improvement. We are even given polenta with our soup. We are allowed to move about the whole camp. We are no longer isolated. Once, as we were walking towards the camp kitchen, Maricineni said, 'God Himself must have sent us that man, the new commander.'"[126] Reasons for killings were always easy to find, from escape attempts, breaking the rules, refusing to obey. "Sometimes, the citizens of Zemun come out in front of their houses and throw them bread (to the internees going to work). Out of pity. They know the column is of Germans, they had Germans as neighbours, maybe they even recognise someone.

118 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: *Ex Pannonia 8* (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved July 2015], p. 69.

119 Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, Band V, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*, Duesseldorf, 1961, Muenchen, 1984, Augsburg, 1994, Muenchen, 2004, nr. 52, p. 371.

120 Life story of Georg Ritter, "Kola za hleb i mrtve", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu*, izdavač: Nenad Novak Stefanović, Belgrade 2007, p. 97

121 Life Story of Justine Wittine, "Justine je gledala u sunce", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 113.

122 Ibid.

123 Life story of Magdalena Metzger, "Medved pred vratima", in Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 85.

124 AJ, 513, XXXIV MP, III-3/176.

125 Robert Hamerštil, *O ikonama i pacovima. Jedno banatsko detinjstvo 1939–1949*. (Vršac: Gradska biblioteka, Vršac, 2003), p. 151.

126 Robert Hamerštil: *O ikonama i pacovima. Jedno banatsko detinjstvo 1939–1949*. (Vršac: Gradska biblioteka, Vršac, 2003), p. 151.

The guards accompanying the column are livid. 'Leave it, leave it,' they shout at those who catch the bread. The internees have to leave the bread on the street. One wouldn't. He shoved a piece of bread in his mouth. The guard saw him. Later, the internee dug a grave, knelt beside it, and was then shot in the back of the head..."[127] Rudolf Kummerkramer recounts a similar experience: "This one time, a bunch of us boys were sitting on that forbidden fence around the lawn. Suddenly, I heard my mother scream, 'Run!' I jumped down and started running, and then I heard the shot. The boy who had been sitting next to me was 'pegged off' by someone from the watchtower and he fell down dead."[128] Heinrich Koeller remembers: "In the summer of 1947, eleven of us boys went down to the river Tisa to bathe. Bathing in the Tisa was permitted, or rather washing, because there was no water in the village, not to mention soap. We had moved off from the bank, we knew how to swim. A guard on the bridge saw us and shot down into the water. We started swimming back. When we got out on the bank, the partisans were already running out of the forest that separates Knićanin from the Tisa river. Three partisans stood before us. They decided to shoot us on the spot. According to their rules, the punishment for attempting to flee by the Tisa river was execution. They didn't think about it, and they didn't listen to us. We were made to stand in two rows. A burst of fire. The boy in front of me was shot and fell, he knocked me down to the ground and his blood spurted over me. Drenched in blood, I lay down in the sand. I didn't move. A partisan said, 'Let's throw them into the Tisa!' I used that opportunity and escaped through the forest and over the dyke into the village. I didn't even know I was wounded. I hid.[129]

The looting did not stop with the internment. It continued in a somewhat modified manner, as illustrated by the following report: "On 19 June that year, when the Germans from Odžak were rounded up by a National Defence Corps to be interned in the camp, I was interested in how the process of confiscating and taking over their property would be conducted. Only the following can be said of this: that the authorities did not undertake any measures to prevent and halt the pilfering and sometimes outright theft of state property. This was done not just by citizens, but also by state authorities. I saw on a large number of houses, and especially on houses of better-off Germans, how the officials, as soon as the Germans were taken away, attached notes to the doors of these houses saying that they now belonged to them and were no longer German houses. [...] All of this illustrates the irresponsible approach to the confiscation of enemy property that is to pass into state ownership. I observed all of the above in one location, but such cases justifiably raise doubts that it is no better in other places, so I suggest that the necessary measures be enacted to prevent the squandering of property of enemies of the people when it is being collected..."[130]

Concerns fell on deaf ears. There were instances of attempts to rectify the situation from the state level, which we will explore later in this publication. Sometimes, even where there was a desire, or even a directive, there was no will to implement it. Thus, for example, Dr Đorđe Lazić undertakes efforts writing letters to improve the situation in the Gakovo and Kruševlje camps. When he visited the camps again, two months later, he encountered the same problems: "I hereby warn the operators that they shall be held accountable if in the future they do not most strictly adhere to the ordered instructions."[131]

When the spotted typhus epidemic got out of control, sanitation services and quarantine were organised. The question remains whether this sort of medical care would be provided for the Germans if it were not

127 Life story of Georg Ritter, "Kola za hleb i mrtve", in: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 94.

128 Aleksandar Krel, *Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 263.

129 Life story of Heinrich Koeller, "Tri uniforme tate Koellera", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 122.

130 AJ, 513, XXXIV MP, III-3/180. Signed by the DFJ Minister of Interior, Vlada Zečević, dated 4 July 1945, sent to the Presidentof the DFJ Economic Council.

131 Branislav Danilović: Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947. (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 67, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

for the danger of the typhus spreading to the population outside the camps in early 1946 (due to removal from the camp in the case of Sekić).[132] Dr Đorđe Lazić complained: "The other problem with the sanitation and epidemiology service was that the bodies of the National Agricultural Administration were not expeditious and this negligence in their work causes numerous difficulties for the work of healthcare services."[133]

The people in the camp were also terribly frightened due to what they had been through and what they continued to witness each day: "That first day, the internees were reluctant to submit to the dusting with powder. As I found out that evening, the reason was as follows: the internees believed we were trying to poison them with the powder. The second day, they completely changed their minds because those that had been dusted the first day spread the news among the other internees that they had slept well and not felt any lice bites after being dusted. Then, everyone welcomed the dusting crews in their houses and did not try to run away..."[134]

Fugitives

Although some locations/camps were not encircled with wire, guards or policemen prevented escape.[135] Escape attempts were often severely punished, with beatings and confinement in the basement without food or water, for days, being just some of the modes of punishment.[136] In some places, the entire camp was fenced in and had a number of watchtowers.[137] Escapes were often the only way to acquire food (for oneself and others in the camp) or to survive. An escape would lead to a neighbour's attic or farm, or – later – to another country with more or less state "incentive" (more on this in the section on fugitives). The following are some accounts about escaping to an attic, a farm, or across the border:

"After a while, one evening, granny went over the wire [of the camp] and arrived in Kljajićevo. They came over to tell us, 'Granny's with us. No one knew granny was in the house!' She was [in the camp] briefly, she mustered the courage and escaped. But grandpa died in Mitrovica, and in '54 they put him in the books."[138]

"The labour camp in Pančevo was disbanded on 6 April 1947 and that same day we were all loaded up into cattle wagons and sent to Gakovo, a village on the Hungarian border. We arrived in Gakovo on 7 April, after a long journey in a closed train – we received no water or food. The train had stopped along the way and Germans from the other disbanded camps were loaded in. When the train finally stopped, dead bodies were dropping out of it. When we arrived in Gakovo, we asked an old German at the station where we were. He told us it was a camp only for those who cannot escape ('*da bleiben nur die Krumme und Lahme*'). In the spring of 1947, the camp system was no longer as strict, it even tolerated escapes across the border, but you would have to bribe the camp guards, of course. Most didn't have the money, or cousins, or anything valuable to sell, or didn't even have the strength to flee..."[139]

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132 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: Ex Pannonia 8 (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), p. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved in July 2015], p. 69.

133 Branislav Danilović: Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947. (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 76, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

134 Branislav Danilović: Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947. (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 81, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

135 Stevan Mačković, ibid., p. 65, case of internee No. 559, Volf Henrik.

136 Life story of Magdalena Metzger, "Medved pred vratima", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 86

137 Aleksandar Krel: *Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 263.

138 J. V. (1940), village in Bačka.

139 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

"One escaped *(mother's sister, note by A. K)*. She mustered up the courage and escaped... and she went to a farm and there they didn't find her right away *(she hid for a while, note by A. K)."*[140]

Unfortunately, not all escapes ended well. Many were aware of the danger, but the hope that they would succeed won out. According to Janjetović, there were 240 casualties in escape attempts, including 32 children, 111 women and 97 men.[141]

He cites two types of escape from the camps: white and black. White escapes were more expensive, they were carried out with the knowledge of the camp administration and some sort of approval, sometimes they were even organised by them. Black escapes, on the other hand, were carried out without the knowledge of the camp.[142] Many testimonies mention these two types of escapes, as well as the ways in which the internees attempted to collect the money needed for escaping: "Julika escaped with her daughter across the border on 7 May 1947. The partisans and their helpers had to be paid 1500 dinars per person, so we sold the quilts, shoes and dresses we still had to gather enough money. Julika was going to Austria, because news had reached her in Pančevo that her husband had survived and was in Linz. On the way, her daughter fell gravely ill and had to spend almost six months in a hospital in Budapest, so they reached Linz only at the end of that year."[143]

In her life story, Johana Bukovac speaks about how they attempted to flee: "Then we heard that in Subotica, in the starch factory, they were organising the deportation of our people to Germany, Hungary, but that you had to pay 750 dinars. Many had found their way to freedom like that... But, when we got to Subotica, that evening the last transport had left. Secretly, but with the knowledge of the administration, it crossed the border. We were too late. But one day... Father carried the water and the locals helped us out. He got in touch with a young fellow who said he could take us to the border and across it. We gave him the money and at night we climbed over a high wall and another three rows of wire fencing. He was waiting for us and took us further, but it seemed he didn't know the way. He led us straight to the border post. He ran away. They caught us."[144]

Further evidence that the state "supported" fugitives, albeit unofficially, with the intention to "get rid of" Germans (turning a blind eye to facilitate escapes across the border) can be found in the case of the camp in Gudurica – in 1947, it was guarded only during the day, which enabled people to escape to Romania during the night.[145] Large-scale escapes began at the end of 1946 when the first larger groups fled from Gakovo and Mramorak, and by April 1947, some 3,000 Danube Swabians had escaped from these two camps.[146] Throughout August 1947, there was a continuously large number of refugees from Yugoslavia entering Austria without permits. Seeing the state they were in, the Austrian authorities let them pass, while ICRC tried to find a solution for them[147] and provide aid, which was desperately needed.[148]

The existence of cross-border escapes, both official and unofficial (with the help of the state), is supported not just by testimonies, but also by numerous documents, especially from Hungary, including protests from the

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140 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, born 1933, Subotica).

141 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 329.

142 Ibid., p. 279.

143 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

144 Life story of Johana Bukovac, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 25

145 Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 278.

146 Ibid., p. 278.

147 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Report on meeting between Bech and Thibaut of 8 August 1947.

148 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950, Ligue des sociétés de la Croix-Rouge to ICRC on 20 April 1948, "Volksdeutsche" de Yougoslavie.

Hungarian authorities and the ACC (Allied Control Commission) in Hungary.[149] Thus, for example, in March 1946, the Hungarian authorities complained that the Yugoslav authorities sent automobiles carrying 120 Danube Swabian families to Austria without the permission of ACC, a total of 280 persons, and that their transport was accompanied by the Yugoslav border guards.[150]

A letter from the FNRJ minister of interior Ranković dated 14 May 1947, in which Germans are mentioned within the context of farmers selling grain, provides another example of the unofficial role of the state in these escapes: "From your report from the Foreign Ministry, I see that you do not operate with accurate information about the number of peasants that have fled Vojvodina. [...] Those masses in Hungary are actually made up of Volksdeutsche that have fled from our camps. Their numbers are around eleven thousand and they all fled with our knowledge and tacit consent. But we do not admit to this and will not admit to this, despite the pressures of Hungarian border authorities for us to take them back. Our explanation is that these are Swabians that fled before our army during the liberation of the country. As for fugitives connected to sale of grain, organise with the Hungarian comrades to have them rounded up and sent back. Explain that they are free to return to their homes and will not be punished. We will receive everyone except the aforementioned Volksdeutsche. Inform me through this same channel about the measures undertaken. Speak to no one about the manner and in general about the escape of the Swabians from the camps."[151]

Forced labour

Forced labour was not unusual in the immediate aftermath of the war and it was imposed on various categories of the population. It was often conditioned by the scarcity of professionals such as medical staff and veterinarians. On the other hand, apart from specific work obligations, forced labour also became a mode of punishment. It was imposed on two major groups of Yugoslav citizens: the first included members of Yugoslav society sentenced to forced labour after being convicted by honour courts, and the second was the Vojvodina Germans.[152] Initially, some Danube Swabians continued to live in their homes while subject to the obligation of reporting for labour every day; others were intermittently taken for forced labour and then released; and another group were taken out of collection camps under guard. However, soon the Germans were put to work straight from the camp. From the very beginning of the new rule, the freedom of movement for the German ethnic minority was limited and forced labour was introduced, applicable to Germans aged 12 to 60, as well as Hungarian men (aged 18 to 30) and a portion of the Romanians. As Janjetović notes, this reflected the degree of guilt as established by the new authorities: Germans were the guiltiest, followed by the Hungarians and then the Romanians.[153]

Labour camps were introduced at the time of Military Administration. Forced labour was not imposed only here, in the territory of what was then Yugoslavia, but also in the USSR – mostly in Ukraine, where some 10,000

149 It should be noted that already in mid-July 1945, Austrian and German authorities closed the borders to prevent further influx of the Danube Swabians into Austria and Germany, and Yugoslav authorities were not permitted to "deport" them.

150 MSP RS DA PA1946, F-51, JUG-650, 3352.

151 AJ, 507, II D/278. Document signed by Ranković.

152 Nataša Milićević, "Neke forme prinudnog rada u Srbiji, 1944–50.", in: Zbornik radova Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941–1945., 1945–1951. (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010), p. 185.

153 Zoran Janjetović, "Prinudni rad folksdojčera u Vovjodini 1944–1950.", in: Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941–1945, 1945–1951., Zbornik radova (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009), p. 206–207.

to 12,000 Vojvodina Germans were deported.[154] (Deportations to the USSR are discussed in more detail on page 39). That Germans were treated like chattel is illustrated, for example, by this contemporary report: "In the territory of the Apatin Command... 717 men and 623 women were handed over to the Russian command and the list was submitted to the Sombor Area Command. *This Command still hasn't received a receipt* from the Russian Command, but was promised that it would be delivered in due course."[155]

Given that the healthy and strongest German men and women were deported to the USSR, few of the Germans that remained were fit for labour. This is supported, for example, by the following letter sent by the National Agricultural Administration in Kruševlje to the Regional Administration in January 1946: "We think it necessary to report that the local workers, as can be seen from the enclosed list, are 100 percent made up of the elderly over 60 and children under 16, because Kruševlje is a camp for the infirm and children, and we ask that this be taken into account."[156]

They were put to work in various jobs. Some had permanent working positions in line with their professions. Others were put to work in the fields, building roads, railways, bridges, in factories, etc. Since German women were known for their domestic skills, they were often taken to work as housekeepers or domestic servants. It was the worst for those who had to clear the minefields in Srem and those tasked with exhuming partisan corpses for a proper burial.[157] Labour lasted from seven hours a day in Bački Jarak to ten or more hours in other places where Germans were considered fit for work, or – from dawn to dusk.[158]

Forced labour was also imposed on children: "We will soon receive the schedule for pushing the wagons loaded with sacks of grain: twenty, thirty, forty boys per wagon, and to slowly push them across the plain from the railway station in Gakovo to Stanišići. The tracks are flat as the palm of your hand. We are sweating like ants around a piece of bread. The guards look on from the edge of the wagon. We're pushing them, too. The route is some 10 kilometres. In Stanišić, the wheat would be ground into wholemeal for the labourers' bread for the farmhands. We waited until the evening for the wheat to be ground and then we would take the wagons with the flour back to Gakovo. The wagons crept along the tracks; we were tired. If grown-ups had been doing the pushing, it would have been quicker, but because it was just us children replacing the locomotive, we crept along at a snail's pace."[159]

Initially, camp internees were given out for free, but payment was later introduced. It was necessary to secure funds for maintenance of the camps. This happened in 1945, at the time when the division for camps of the State Security Administration took over their management from the army. Germans were rented out as 'items' not by name, and were put to work in various jobs and institutions, companies and for individuals (mostly farmers from the vicinity of the camp), which was often much better for them because it meant they would also receive food for their work. Wages were paid into the National Reconstruction Fund. There was a generally held opinion that the German workforce in Vojvodina was not being used efficiently. "The taking over of the civilian camps in the territory of Vojvodina from the military authorities entails the obligation of the national authorities to care for their upkeep. Material funds are needed for security, food and other material

154 Zoran Janjetović, "Prinudni rad folksdojčera u Vovjodini 1944–1950.", in: Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941–1945, 1945–1951, Zbornik radova, (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009), p. 206.

155 Branislav Danilović: Gakovo i Kruševlje logori za Podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947. (Sombor: Istorijski arhiv Sombora, 2008), p. 47, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

156 Ibid., p. 51, according to the Sombor Historical Archives.

157 See: Nenad Novak Stefanović, *Zemlja u koferu*, story of Georg Riter: "Kola za hleb i mrtve", p. 91.

158 Zoran Janjetović, "Prinudni rad folksdojčera u Vovjodini 1944–1950." in: Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941–1945, 1945–1951. Zbornik radova (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009), p. 210.

159 "Vagon s brašnom na otvorenoj pruzi", Michael Eisele, in: Nenad Stefanović, ed., *Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari*, Šesto izdanje (Belgrade: Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, 2007), p. 79.

needs in the camps, and these funds may be procured by charging for the labour of the internees working in the state and private sector," followed by how much different profiles of labourers cost.[160] Being sent off for forced labour also meant being able to collect some money or food for one's children, relatives and friends in the camp, and was also an opportunity to plan an escape. There were cases where neighbours, friends, relatives, as well as complete strangers, if there were able to, would rent out their German neighbours in order to enable them to have a bath, a decent meal, to see their houses and fields:

"They were in the camp, the labour camp, as there was a well-known camp here. Štirkara, it was called. [...] I know there was talk that my sister – from my mother's side, who did not have that surname – went to get one of my aunt's from my father's side out, saying she needed help around the house..."[161]

But there were bad experiences, too, where the labour was too backbreaking, the food insufficient, the abuse regular, and where rape was not out of the question.[162]

"Some of those who rented us out would feed us during the day, but this was the exception. Most used us like an enslaved labour force – they thought they had the right to it, because they were paying the camp administration for our labour. They rented me out for sewing, but I also worked in the thread factory, and sometimes my aunt, who had a friend working in the thread factory, managed to get us some food. When we worked for private owners, in the morning armed guards would take us walking to work, and in the evening they would escort us back to the camp. The hardest was working on the farm, the so-called experimental station in Pančevski Rit where we were put to work on sowing, hoeing and watering the cabbages and potatoes. I'll never forget my time in the camp – not just because we were hungry, or because our lives were endangered every day (I remember the camp administrator who had the habit of lining us up and executing every tenth person), but because we were treated like slaves, like second-rate beings... In the camp, and for a long time afterwards, I would dream about having a piece of bread, being free to go where I like, without an escort and without fear."[163]

From the perspective of the authorities

Numerous reports and letters of the Yugoslav authorities say that everything is normal in the camp and that living conditions are excellent. Below are some illustrative examples.

Example 1. Normal life. "The camps where Germans are interned do not resemble camps, but they live in their own houses and villages under almost normal conditions, and in some places under completely normal conditions, such as in Banat where the Germans did not have even their immovable property confiscated and in most cases eat better than our army..." The same report cites low mortality figures, sufficient food and good treatment without incidents or harassment. It does admit that there was previously "harassment and rape of German women, but it has all been done away with and the guilty have been punished."[164]

Example 2. This, of course, is not the only report of this kind, on the contrary. Apart from reports, there are also photographs related to the forced labour of the Danube Swabians. Thus, for example, one document on forced labour[165] contains a photograph depicting smiling people in bathing suits at a beach. The same document

160 Istorijski arhiv Sombor, F-217, inv. br. 481. Dated 7 September 1945. The public health division cites the official announcement of the division for internal affairs and forwards it to the District National Council, public health sector.

161 Aleksandar Krel's field notes, N. N. (woman, 1944, Subotica).

162 Zoran Janjetović, "Nemice u logorima za Folksdojčere u Vojvodini 1944–1948", in: *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka – 2, Položaj žena kao merilo modernizacije*, ed. Latinka Perović (Belgrade: 1998), p. 503.

163 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

164 AJ, 50, 36-243 (From a report dated 31 December 1945 at the Presidency of the Ministerial Council).

165 "*Le travail force en Yougoslavie*", MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-50, folio 13, non-registered document.

also includes a description of an ideal place for life: "All efforts of the FNRJ Government to have these persons deported from FNRJ were unsuccessful, so it became necessary to designate settlements where these persons could settle after their entire property was confiscated, and where the basic necessities for life could be provided. [...] Every family was regularly supplied with food, as far as possible under the circumstances, and prepared meals at their own hearth. Apart from food supplied to these settlements, the inhabitants were also assigned certain areas of land for collective cultivation. [...] Hospitals and clinics were established in the settlements and were run by doctors and nurses from among the inhabitants. [...] Daycare centres were organised for the smaller children... [...] These settlements were not encircled with wire or fencing, so the inhabitants could move freely within the settlement [...] The organisation and system of management or regime in the settlements where Germans were housed did not in any of the cases involve elements characterising a coercive camp or camp living. Thus, the first settlements are not on a narrowly limited space encircled with barbed wire or any kind of wall. The inhabitants were not segregated by sex or housed in collective dwellings, but live under one roof, the head of the family with all the members of the household, food is not provided from a collective kitchen to a line waiting in twos, but every household is supplied with regular rations."[166]

Example 3. The living conditions are so good, why would they need aid? Another one of the numerous replies of Yugoslav authorities depicting everything as shipshape (and it seems there were also numerous accusations and suspicions) is the reply to the Apostolic Nunciature, i.e. the Secretariat of the Holy See, which, as can be seen from the letter, had repeatedly written to the FNRJ Foreign Ministry in an effort to help the Vojvodina Germans. The following are quotes from the Ministry's letter where the state clarified many serious "inaccuracies". The reply is cited verbatim because the tone of the letter is quite specific: "The Volksdeutsche in Vojvodina are not in concentration camps but in large villages, in 'labour colonies' that have nothing to do with concentration camps... *(In some of its documents, the state, however, uses precisely that term for some of these so-called colonies, author's note).* Their material position is far from needing special aid. The Yugoslav authorities are taking care to enable as normal a life as possible under the special circumstances of the Volksdeutsche population in Yugoslavia at present. The Volksdeutsche population in 'labour colonies' enjoys all religious freedoms. Their priests can perform *[ministration: editor's note]* without any interference, both before and at present. Their religious rituals take place in existing churches that the congregation visits without disruptions. The FNRJ is not against aid being sent to the Volksdeutsche population by the Pontificate. Such aid may be sent through the Yugoslav Red Cross and would be distributed by the management of the labour colonies. Based on all of the above, the FNRJ sees no reason for the deep interest of the Secretariat regarding the conditions of the Volksdeutsche population, or for its fervent desire to provide special treatment by giving them a privileged position when the wounds inflicted on the Yugoslav peoples by the German aggression in which the VD population of Yugoslavia played a large active and fatal role remain open."[167]

Example 4. However, the ICRC informally received different information. On a number of occasions in 1946 and 1947, it requested permission from the Yugoslav Red Cross (CKJ) to visit the interned Germans, but judging from the correspondence, it was never granted. In June 1947, it referred to the fact that it was still receiving information about poor living conditions in the camps, especially basic living conditions – hygiene and treatment. The accounts received by ICRC were very similar and it wanted to visit the camps in an effort to improve the situation.[168] The CKJ reply from 6 August 1947 gives a description of the situation as favourable for the Danube Swabians, with almost ideal living conditions: "Labour colonies have been organised where these people were housed. These colonies were formed in places with a predominantly German population before the war. The families were given houses to use, as well as necessary furniture, equipment and regular meals and

166 Ibid.

167 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-64, JUG-630, 424189, written in Belgrade, 2 December 1947.

168 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-64, JUG-630, 415401.

rations. These colonies had a clinic, hospital, daycare centre and everything that could contribute to maintaining physical condition, health and hygiene. The persons were employed in line with their professions and their wishes in state enterprises, economic estates and with private individuals, as well as with farmers. They were treated correctly and humanely, they were well fed and those who excelled at their work were duly rewarded. They received parcels and money sent by their relatives and friends; there was no limit on how much they could receive, including parcels from abroad, for which the state charged transportation fees..."[169]

The conclusion that the state was being generous towards the prisoners was also supposed to be supported by the statement that Yugoslavia had not taken on the obligations under the Geneva Convention, "but as a democratic and progressive country treats prisoners humanely and completely in keeping with the spirit of the Convention."[170]

Concern of others over camp conditions and demands for intervention

Despite these state assurances that it was treating the German minority well, concerns were expressed by many individuals, and then also by organisations and states, who asked the ICRC for information about living conditions of the German minority in Yugoslavia.[171] Rumours about the harsh conditions in camps reached the ICRC and it contacted the Ministry of Interior as soon as August 1945 regarding the application of the Convention on civilian internees. The letter appealed for broader prerogatives than those accorded prisoners of war (and these prerogatives were also noted in the Tokyo project).[172] This was among the first of many letters sent by the ICRC to Yugoslav state authorities, as well as other Red Cross offices, allied occupation forces, etc.

While the state was still debating what to do with the domicile Germans, that is, how to "evict" them, information about the harsh conditions for these people ("they are dying quickly in our camps") reached the allies. Thus, for example, the Foreign Office took the view that the relocation of the remaining Danube Swabians from Yugoslavia to Germany or Austria should be permitted, but the public authorities resisted due to a lack of capacities for accommodating the additional influx of Yugoslav Germans.[173] Information about the difficult situation also came from prisoners of war – ethnic Germans from Yugoslavia that were to be found in Great Britain in 1947. In various indirect ways, they received very disturbing news about their relatives interned in the camps. The camps mentioned most frequently in this context were, "Gakovo, Rudolfsknad and Jarek".[174] The ICRC also received numerous requests for intervention, especially in the Kruševlje camp near Sombor, and one of its documents is marked as urgent and seeks a solution – *who can intervene?* Unfortunately, the ICRC did not receive permission from the Yugoslav authorities to support the German minority.[175]

The countries that had their own citizens in Yugoslavia, such as the US and France, showed the most

169 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-64, JUG-630, 415401. ACICR, B G 97, Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter from CKJ, dated 6 August 1947, to ICRC, signed by Dr Olga Milošević.

170 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-57, MO-85, 7718.

171 For example, when the British Consulate in Geneva contacted the ICRC on 4 October 1946 regarding this matter. ACICR, B G 97, Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950.

172 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-31, Švajc-14, 5016.

173 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 10013/46.

174 Gakovo, Knićanin i Bački Jarak. ACICR, B G 97, Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. The ICRC Delegation from London writes to the ICRC in Geneva on 14 April 1947. Re: Volksdeutsche interned in Jugoslavia.

175 ACICR, B G 97, Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter to the ICRC delegation in Vienna dated 21 November 1946: Demandes de libEration concerant des "Volksdeutsche" en Yougoslavie.

concern.[176] In order to help these people, everything had to go through diplomatic channels, that is, it was necessary for the governments of Austria/Germany, the allied forces and Yugoslavia to arrange the deportation/repatriation.

Effort

Extracts from the correspondence of the Yugoslav military mission in Berlin and the Foreign Ministry about efforts to have the Danube Swabians deported.

Statement and question (from the Military Mission in Berlin to the Foreign Ministry on 4 April 1946): "There has been stalling on the issue of relocating the Volksdeutsche. Please send us the numbers in the categories of male and female from 14 to 50 and above. Their fitness for work. How many of them have sponsors in Germany and everything supporting the need for their relocation." Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 3687

Attempt: The Foreign Ministry responds to the Military Mission in Berlin by encrypted telegram: "Speak with the Soviet representative in the control council and find out if it is possible to deport the Volksdeutsche to the Russian zone without a decision of the council, i.e. without an agreement between Moscow and Belgrade. If a decision of the council is required, can the Soviet representative secure the decision for relocation to the Russian zone? In that case we ask that the question be put before the council as soon as possible." Source: MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 6167 (June 1946).

Resignation: A while later, at the end of that period, the Military Mission in Berlin of the FNRJ Control Council for Germany in Berlin, Jaka Avšić wrote on 14 July 1946 to the Foreign Ministry: "Our question of relocation of the Volksdeutsche, although comparatively minor, is impossible to implement at present due to the resistance of England and America. The governments of these country still have not adopted any solution. I tried to persuade the Soviet authorities to take on 100,000 or at least 80,000 of these people, but they cannot consent without prior approval from Moscow. I think an explanation is to be found in the particularly delicate politics in the zone now, before the elections." Source: MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 9307/46.

Solidarity – or not?

The mounting concern was justified; the Danube Swabians were going through a very difficult period. The only thing that could improve their situation was solidarity, expressed in different ways. Marija Pfajfer talks about one such case: "When they expelled us... This doctor saw that we were good and she went to the Municipality and said, 'For the love of God, where are you taking these people?! They never hurt a fly, never did anything wrong!' They told her she could go with us if she felt that sorry for us. She came to say she did not manage to do anything for us."[177]

According to statements from internees, people of different nationalities would help in a variety of ways, most often help by giving food and clothes.[178] These were neighbours, friends, relatives, but also complete strangers. They would rent out the internees in order to feed them, give them food to take back to their children and to other internees, give them a chance to take a bath, rest, recover, to earn money or other goods that could be used to secure an escape. They brought packages of food, gave water to passing columns of Germans[179] or bread when the internees were being escorted to work,[180] they took care of children

176 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-6, AS-75, 12584/46.

177 Life story of Marija Pfajfer, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss, *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 85.

178 Vladimir Geiger, "Logori za folksdojčere u Hrvatskoj nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata 1945. – 1947", in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2006), p. 1087.

179 From the camp diary of Jelena (Jelka) Kurtnaker, Vladimir Geiger, "Logor Krndija 1945. – 1946." (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2008), p. 261.

180 Life story of Georg Ritter, "Kola za hleb i mrtve", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović, *Zemlja u koferu* (Beograd: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 94.

left behind when their parents were taken to the camp, or hid the children so they wouldn't end up in the camp, they also hid fugitives, etc. H. B. (a girl at the time) hid with her non-German neighbour, while the authorities were told that the girl was staying with relatives in Apatin. She still remembers how the other neighbours would come and bring her pastries. Her mother died in Gakovo, but she continued to wait for her by the door. Aid

Individual cases – American, Swiss? They can go.

The Swiss mission in Yugoslavia sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry dated 22 May 1946 requesting the repatriation of I. F. who had Yugoslav and Swiss citizenship, resident in Vršac, and after the liberation interned in the camp for Germans in the vicinity of Vršac. The Foreign Ministry writes to the Interior Ministry, forwarding a translation of the letter from the Swiss mission regarding Irma Fierz who is now interned as a German. 30 May 1946. *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 6025)*

FNRJ Interior Ministry writes to the Foreign ministry on 21 June 1946 that she is not in any of the regional camps. *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 7215)*

FNRJ Foreign Ministry to Interior Ministry on 27 June 1946: "Please inform us whether the above named is located in a camp other than those in the territory of the People's Republic of Serbia so that we may give a precise answer to the Swiss
mission in response to their letter." *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 7215)*

FRNJ Foreign Ministry to Interior Ministry on 6 July 1946: "We hereby inform you that we have received a new letter from the Swiss mission referring to the urgency of the case and again claiming that I. F. is located in the camp in Vršac and that her state is deteriorating daily." *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 8857)*

FNRJ Interior Ministry to Foreign Ministry on 30 August 1946: "Regarding your letter [...] and the letter of the Swiss mission in Belgrade dated 25 July of this year addressed to the Commander of the camp for German civilians in Vršac, we hereby inform you that, according to a report from the Interior Ministry of NR Serbia, the above named is located in the camp for German civilians in Vršac and there is nothing to prevent her being repatriated to Switzerland if that is what the Swiss mission desires." *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 10398)*

FNRJ Foreign Ministry to Interior Ministry on 7 October 1946: "With a letter dated 30 September 1946, the Swiss mission thanked the Yugoslav authorities for their readiness to enable the repatriation of I. F. At the same time, the Mission submitted the enclosed copy of its letter sent directly to the command of the camp in Vršac. This Ministry has already informed the Mission to direct all communication through the Ministry in the future. *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 11704)*

FNRJ Interior Ministry to Foreign Ministry on 30 October 1946: "In reference to our report VIII No. 8354 dated 30 August of that year, we hereby inform you that, according to the report from the Interior Ministry of NR Serbia, a decision was issued for F. I. to be released from the camp for the purpose of repatriation to Switzerland." *(Source: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-81, ŠVAJC-75, 12956)*

was also provided by writing requests to spare a specific person from the camp, in testifying that someone was Hungarian and not German, in appeals against this practice as wrong, such as the case of Giso Danilo (see page 32). Johana Bukovac speaks about this in her life story: "Before winter, they transferred the people still fit for work from Subotica to Sekić... When my parents went to Sekić, they had to pass through that like gauntlet again. We had to leave all our things again and they searched through everything again. We all still hid some gold, so we could buy something, exchange it for something... This one Montenegrin saw me looking for a place to hide this one little bag of things. He came up to me and said, 'Give it here, girl.' And I gave it to him. I thought it didn't matter where I leave it. However, when we went through the inspection, he was waiting for me on the other side and gave me my things back. So even today, I still have photographs of our house and my loved ones..."[181]

181 Life story of Johana Bukovac, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss, Dunavske Švabice II (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 24.

According to numerous testimonies, life in the camps depended on the guards/police and the director (as discussed on page 48) who could make life more tolerable or unbearable. The guards displayed solidarity by turning a blind eye to escapes, gathering food, visits, and they brought in aspirin and potatoes.[182] There were cases where they wanted to help directly. "He said how in the winter they made them go barefoot and undressed, so that even this one partisan took pity and said he would give him his own shoes. He refused, saying his feet had already become accustomed to the cold. He and part of his family were there for quite a while (somewhere in the vicinity of Subotica)."[183] An anonymous female (born 1933, Subotica) relates another example of solidarity:

"But when mama was in Gakovo, in the camp, she fell ill. She got typhus without even knowing it. And in Šandorovo our Serb, Bunjevci, Hungarians prepared a parcel for me. [...] They brought it to me and then I sent it to my mother. There was half a litre of brandy in the parcel. She fell ill and just then the brandy arrived. When she felt a bit better, her sister fell ill and so she would give her some brandy. That saved them, because they didn't receive any medicines. But, that's how it was, when I arrived by train, you could go for a visit in Gakovo.

182 From the camp diary of Jelena (Jelka) Kurtnaker, Vladimir Geiger, "Logor Krndija 1945. – 1946." (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2008), p.260.

183 E. F. (1927) village in Bačka.

[...] but I would stand here... the ramp would he here, the partisan there, and mama over there. Five minutes. For five minutes we just cried, we couldn't utter a word. And so... 'Alright, enough... five minutes is up! But there was a man... a partisan who was a father or took kindly to children. [...] There were all sorts."[184]

The writer Uglješa Šajtinac speaks about his grandfather who spent a year working for the Jerih family. When he returned home in 1944, along with other Germans the Jerih family were taken to the Knićanin labour camp. "My great-grandfather, meaning my grandfather's father, felt a sense of responsibility because in that year nothing bad happened to my grandfather in the home of the Jerih family... And my great-grandfather was very grateful that he had returned, he hadn't been humiliated or hurt. Already at that time it was known that they were in need over there, that they didn't have enough to eat. So, we've solved one mystery. People knew how the Germans lived in the camps. Those who wanted to know, knew. So they prepared bread for them, put it in a basket and covered it with a tea-towel and grandpa took it to Knićanin. He went off his own accord on horseback, he went there and said: please, I am looking for someone from the Jerih family from Lazarevo. [...] The old father showed up and he managed to hand over all the things at the gate. [...] And then my great-grandfather told him: I am Živo's father and my son spent a year with you at your house, if you remember, in the period from such-and-such. Thank you. You took care of him and this is for you. Then Mrs Frau Jerih asked, when he had brought over the basket of bread, who had given it to him. There was no one left who could bring them anything anymore. And then he said: it was Živo's father. Remember the lad who was with us, for a year, in the house? The woman could not speak. She didn't say anything. She was so touched, she could not speak, she just cried..."[185]

In his book *Jedan svet na Dunavu* [A World on the Danube], Hajnrih Keler says: "I managed to escape from the camp by that evening. I set off for Sefkerin. In Sefkerinu I knew a Serb, an officer of the Royal Army, a Laković, who hid me at his house. He nursed me while I was ill and hid me for three months."[186]

Release from and disbandment of the camps

In certain camps, living conditions somewhat improved over time; as did treatment, because torture was banned. The implementation of these improvements only started in the summer of 1946 (example of Sekić),[187] and intensified as of 1947. However, in September 1947, the ICRC was still receiving reports from private sources unequivocally describing the position of Germans in the camps as difficult, with poor living conditions related to food, treatment and hard labour. ICRC was still not permitted to visit the camps, however.[188] During the summer of 1947, a possibility was introduced of accepting "voluntary work obligation", which was a precursor to disbanding the camps. Germans would be obliged to provide labour for three years, mostly in exchange for release from the camp, money or better food. According to a Government decision from 15 March 1948, they became equal in all respects with citizens of FNRJ, but were still subject to their work obligation. The practice was different: in some places Germans were truly made equal to other citizens, some signed contracts

184 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, 1933, Subotica).

185 Uglješa Šajtinac, "Nemogućnost kolektivne sudbine", in: O Podunavskim Švabama, (Zrenjanin: Mandragora, 2014), p.185–186.

186 Life story of Heinrich Koeller, "Tri uniforme tate Koellera", in: Nenad Stefanović, ed. Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari, Šesto izdanje (Belgrade: Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, 2007), p. 122.

187 Stevan Mačković, "Logor za Nemce u Sekiću (1944–1946)", in: Ex Pannonia 8, 8 (Subotica: Istorijski arhiv Subotica, 2004), pp. 16–27, text accessed via: http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1665/08_logor_za_nemce_u_sekicu_%281944-1946%29.pdf [retrieved 21 February 2015], p. 72.

188 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorites allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950*. Report from 15 September 1947 about the visit of President Gloor to Belgrade, signed by Beckh.

with them, and some paid them less. This diversity of practices resulted from different instructions from the authorities, which was resolved only in mid-August 1948.[189] When the camps were disbanded (spring of 1948), those who had signed up for working on farms, in mines and factories were released first. Some Germans were forced to sign work contracts. If they refused, some of the released internees had to work without pay. Johana Bukovac says the following about this: "One day, they gathered us in front of the administration again, all of us from the starch factory, and read an announcement to us. We were, of course, standing. The announcement said that we would be released, that we were amnestied and that we would be free people. None of us believed it... The transport again. Cattle wagons. We didn't know where they were taking us... We arrived into a swamp, into mud. We were put in shacks... The next day, everyone was sent to work and we started receiving wages, but we had to stay there for another three years. We couldn't leave. We were not allowed to move. Our movement was restricted."[190] Undoubtedly, the great pressures of foreign forces influenced the disbanding of the camps, and Đilas described an interesting episode in his memoires, concerning what Tito and other officials found during their visit to "Belje" and the dreadful living conditions of the Danube Swabians there.

Đilas later wrote: "We were horrified that something like that was going on in our country, under our authority. Tito decided then and there: 'Give them civil rights like everyone else.'"[191] The following are some accounts of the disbanding of the camps:

"All of the members of my family were fortunate enough to live to see that moment. [*editor's note:* 1 March 1948 when the camp was officially disbanded]. We received permission to leave the camp, the so-called 'announcement' which said that the five of us, my parents, grandpa, grandma and me were to go live with our relatives in Sombor who would support us indefinitely. Another document said we were not allowed to leave the town of Sombor without notifying the police, even if we wanted to travel to the village where we used to live. We were among the last to board the train and leave Gakovo."[192]

"Every day I waited for a miracle – for news that I would be free. I found out that my husband Jani was trying to get us out of the camp and that he had already written 13 requests for our release from the camp (based on our mixed marriage). They always wanted to discourage him and kept telling him, 'Save your concern, those are dead people.' [...] Jani was in military service in the Skopje military area that did not have adequate communications after the war. Thanks to his knowledge of telephony, he installed that system and his commander, a major, wanted to reward him for it. Jani asked him to save me and Anica from the camp. This was considered impossible at that time and it took months and the major had to come to Belgrade, and he had to write multiple requests to the camp administration for it to finally be approved in Belgrade on 22 July 1947 and for the decision to be sent to Gakovo. [...] On that 7 August 1947, I dragged myself to the tree in the centre of Gakovo with my last remaining strength, leaned against it and waited for the drummer who announced the daily orders. When he announced 'Koch Ana to report to the commander's office,' I knew we were saved. At the commander's office I was given a release certificate for me and Anica and that same day I boarded the train home to Pančevo. I weighed 40 kg and was severely ill on my trip home, but also endlessly happy because beside me on the wooden bench of the train was my greatest treasure – my child."[193]

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189 Nataša Milićević, "Neke forme prinudnog rada u Srbiji, 1944–50.", in: *Zbornik radova Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941–1945., 1945–1951.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010), p. 189.

190 Life story of Johana Bukovac, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 26.

191 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 283.

192 Aleksandar Krel, Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. *veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 242.

193 Written testimony by Anna Koch.

Deportation, "transfer", repatriation

While the Germans were still interned in the camps, intensive efforts were under way to arrange for their deportation and to resolve this issue within 'international relations',[194] i.e. to secure the approval of foreign forces. As previously mentioned, the Presidency of the DFJ Ministerial Council issued a statement on 11 June 1945 that "the Government of Yugoslavia is of the view that all Germans within Yugoslav borders should be displaced and dispatched to Germany as soon as favourable technical conditions are achieved." The state had undertaken concrete steps towards deportation: gathering data, making plans, involving the FNRJ Interior Ministry and Ministry for Traffic. Data were sought about Germans *still* in Yugoslavia who "would be eligible for deportation", as well as data on sex and age and information about Germans who were not Yugoslav citizens but would be eligible for deportation. The data was needed in order to put the issue of deporting the Germans before "international forums" and in order to arrange for Germany to accept the Yugoslav Germans.[195] According to the initial data of the FNRJ Interior Ministry, there were 137,127 Germans within the country eligible for deportation: "All further information, when the deportation would begin and what the monthly or weekly quotas will be, shall be submitted in due course, as soon as we reach agreement on these matters with the Ministry for Traffic."[196] That the planning was well under way and that concrete steps had been taken is demonstrated by a letter from the Foreign Ministry to the Yugoslav mission in Vienna dated 4 February 1946 mentioning concern for locomotives and wagons: "We kindly ask [...] endeavour to make the handover of the Germans take place at the German border because locomotives and wagons *usually* do not return from German territory."[197] This indicates that the state already had experience in these matters, although allied occupation authorities had prevented the expulsion of Germans from Yugoslavia in mid-July 1945. Other state documents also feature suggestions about how to act in these situations, so it would follow that the transport of Germans continued.[198]

Numbers. According to the FNRJ Interior Ministry, in February 1946, there were 130,388 Germans "eligible for deportation",[199] after which the Foreign Ministry wrote tot he Military Mission in Berlin to contact the Control Council concerning the matter of deporting Germans from Yugoslavia to Germany and to seek the Council's approval.[200] However, that number kept changing and a month later was considerably lower with 109,994 eligible for deportation. Of that number 90 percent were located in the territory of the People's Republic of

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194 DFJ Foreign Ministry in a letter to the Presidency of the DFJ Ministerial Council dated 19 July 1945: "[T]hat at the peace conference at the latest, and possibly before, the issue of our German minorities will be brought up within international relations," and that the matter of who is German and who will be deprived of citizenship (which "category" of Germans, and which are the exceptions) is under consideration.
V. Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), citing AJ, Belgrade, fond 50.

195 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-26, 7463. In a letter such as this one, dated 26 December 1945, from the Foreign Ministry to the Federal Interior Ministry.

196 Letter from FNRJ Interior Ministry dated 22 January 1946 to the Foreign Ministry, political division. MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 796.

197 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 873.

198 For instance, the Yugoslav mission in Vienna proposes that documents of Germans being transported out of Yugoslavia should be taken away and that they should be issued special papers, and that their Dinars should be taken away, something the Foreign Ministry agrees with and seeks the opinion and response of the Interior Ministry. MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 2279 (of 5 March 1946).

199 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 1496 (In the document, list on page 51/106).

200 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 1599.

Serbia and the remaining 10 percent in the territory of the People's Republics of Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and of which:[201]

Men	32.278
Women	55.209
Children	22.507
Total	109.994

Farmers	80
Workers	13
Intellectuals	5
Others	2
Total	100%
By occupation: PA46, F51	

Fit for work	69.281
Unfit for work (the elderly, children and the infirm)	40.713
Total	109.9941

And while information was being gathered about Germans, and lobbying efforts and preparations for their deportation were under way, in May 1946, the ICRC received information that the situation was very difficult and that the only way to help them would be to evacuate the German minority. According to the Yugoslav authorities, evacuation was decided on in principle in agreement with the Allied armed forces (British and American),[202] which would later turn out to be untrue.

Background and justification. The Yugoslav authorities based their plan for deporting the German minority on the previously mentioned Potsdam Agreement that included a plan on deporting Germans from neighbouring countries – Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, with the project start date of 1 January 1946. The Potsdam Conference did have a very important impact on the Volksdeutsche, but not on the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia. Namely, it was decided on a 'transfer' (or humane removal, as it was referred to, that is, "organised transfer of the German population",[203] in an "orderly and humane manner") of Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but Yugoslavia is not mentioned and is left to its own devices.

When the transfer of a large number of people is requested, it must be justified. And justification was found in the fact that "the whole of the German minority has been deprived of any moral or legal grounds to continue living on the territory of Yugoslavia. Most members of the German minority, being aware of their guilt, left the territory of Yugoslavia during the withdrawing of the German troops; of the half million members of the German minority, only some 110,000 still remain in the territory of Yugoslavia."[204]

201 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 2619. Of the initial 137,127 in January 1946, by 11 March 1946 their numbers had diminished by about 20,000 people: FNRJ Interior ministry in a letter to the Foreign Ministry.

202 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Summary of conversation between H. G. Beckh and Dr Jaeggi of 13 May 1946, signed by H. G. Beckh.

203 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 293–294.

204 From an undated and unaddressed letter from the Foreign Ministry, because it was being forwarded for translation, but enclosed with a document/letter from the Head of the Yugoslav Military Mission in Berlin, Avšić, dated 31 December 1945 on the matter of transfer of Germans, MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 208/46. This number is lower than the number indicated in other previously cited sources.

Although the Yugoslav authorities persisted in trying to use the Potsdam Agreement as legal means to deport Germans, they were unsuccessful. Many letters testify to the various doors that were knocked on. Thus, for example, already in early 1946, the Yugoslav government contacted the American embassy in Belgrade and repeated its request in May, it also wrote to the Control Council, the Peace Conference of Foreign Ministers in London (January 1947), but to no avail.[205] An encrypted telegraph from the Foreign Ministry has been preserved and shows that a formal request for removal was sent not only to the American embassy, but to others as well – the Soviet, British, American and French embassies, to be precise. Also, the Foreign Ministry already had a concrete proposal for deportation of the German minority, which it forwarded to the Interior Ministry and asked to receive a proposal for them in January 1946.[206] Still, most hopes were laid at Moscow's door.[207] However, since none of the numerous contacts and correspondence yielded results, in 1947 the authorities facilitated fleeing abroad in some (other) way. (As discussed in the section on fugitives.)

Solutions? Moving in with relatives? The authorities believed that the solution to removing Germans would be found primarily through the Council, so they tried to lobby both in Yugoslavia and the USSR. The explanation of the USSR from April 1946 was that at that point this would be impossible due to the difficult "economic and food situation in Germany", citing the position of the "English and Americans" from the Control Commission in Berlin. At that time, the USSR also sought to resolve the matter in principle.[208] Reporting from Berlin, the Yugoslav representative, Avšić, explained that the negative decision on the matter was a result of the Potsdam protocol and, as mentioned, the food shortages in Germany. It is interesting to note Avšić's comment that the Soviets proposed delaying consideration of this issue in order to avoid a negative outcome. Still, he gives the following proposal at the end of the report: "Until a solution is found, the Volksdeutsche should be put to work, because there will always be enough time to round them up."[209]

That the allies, in principle, also had some desire to allow the transfer of the German ethnic minority from Yugoslavia to German and Austria can be seen from frequent correspondence of international humanitarian organisations and the numerous requests for repatriation and aid, often individual. A possible solution, as reported from Berlin, was the proposal for the Russians to admit the Germans into their zone, because the British were unable to take in any more Germans from Poland (this had generally became a problem even for Germans from countries covered by the Potsdam Protocol)[210] but, on the other hand, the Polish Volksdeutsche had priority in the Russian zone. That is why in September 1946 it was suggested, "to try to transfer first those families who already had some members in Germany... This would require data that could probably be obtained in the country from the Germans themselves, and if you agree, we could place ads in newspapers calling on interested persons to apply."[211] That the Foreign Ministry saw this as a good solution is demonstrated by a letter sent to the FNRJ Interior Ministry instructing it to form lists with names and other information and gather information on the whereabouts of "fugitive members" of such families in Germany.[212] In addition, in November

205 Zoran Janjetović, "The Disapperance of the Germans from Yugoslavia: expulsion or emigration", in: *Tokovi istorije*, 1-2/2003 (Beograd, INIS, 2003), p. 86.

206 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 3687.

207 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 734.

208 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 3887/46, conversation of Gen Velebit with councillor Koželjnikov, the Soviet charge d'affaires on 8 April 1946.

209 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 5050/46. Letter by Avšić from Berlin to the Foreign Ministry, dated 4 May 1946, regarding the issue of the Volksdeutsche.

210 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-89, NEM-60, 417550. Foreign Ministry submission to the FNJR Government Presidency and FNJR Interior Ministry. Re: Removal of the Volksdeutsche, dated 20 September 1947

211 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 10672/46. Telegram from Berlin, Avšić, dated 5 September 1946

212 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 2619. In response, the Foreign Ministry writes to the FNRJ Interior Ministry on 11 September 1946. 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 10672/46.

1946, the FNRJ Interior Ministry submitted a list of interned German civilians with family members that had escaped to or had been residing in Germany and Austria beforehand. The letter states that 100 lists have been enclosed for the territory of NR Serbia (the Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Archives contain only a few such lists along with individual requests for repatriation from Austria).[213]

It was not apparent how this issue could be resolved legally, as stated in a letter from 1947.[214] However the authorities were not giving up, so in the spring of 1947, they resumed lobbying with the Soviets, indicating the still unresolved issue of 110,000 domestic Germans.[215]

Others were also expending efforts. Back in early April 1946, the ICRC was seemingly impatient and confused due to information received from its representative in Belgrade that the deportation would take place, even though it was not being implemented.[216] Other humanitarian organisations were also dealing with the issue of refugees and the repatriated, such as the *Christliches Hilfswerk* (CH) in Salzburg, which was dealing with thousands of ethnic Germans that had already arrived in Austria from Yugoslavia in February 1947. CH contacted the Yugoslav Military Commission at the Foreign Ministry with a request to release those whose parents had been evacuated, to which the minister was amenable, but noted that this would require the approval of countries through which the convoy would have to pass. And so it became clear to CH that it was up to Yugoslavia to obtain the permits for Germany, as well as those for transit through Austria and Hungary. There were also pressures for the ICRC to contact the American authorities regarding the permit for entry into Germany.[217] Of course, despite the ICRC's lobbying efforts and communication with the Allies, nothing changed for the German ethnic minority. In November 1947, the French representative of the Allied Control Commission himself told the ICRC, albeit unofficially, that any requests by ICRC for a permit would most likely be refused.[218]

Despite everything – transportation. The journey to Germany and Austria. On multiple occasions, the state attempted to deport the Danube Swabians from the country and send them to Austria and/or Germany. Some had the blessing of the allies, some did not, especially later, after August 1945, when the allies prohibited their entry due to the difficult economic situation and large influx of the Volksdeutsche from other countries into Germany and Austria. Despite this, the state persisted and implemented "removal", but the conditions the transported Germans found themselves in were dire. Most often it was only people from the ICRC and other officials – mostly in Austria, sometimes in Hungary – who established the difficult situation of the people in these transportations. One of the transportations was made up of 1,000 persons from Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, including 150 children (from a 14-day-old newborn to 14-year-old children). In January 1946, people were loaded into cattle wagons, 50 to 70 persons per wagon, without sanitary equipment.[219] One of the reports states: "Illnesses caused by exposure, diarrhoea, pneumonia, have caused great infirmity. They have received warm food for the first time in three days, there is nothing nutritious for the children and babies. [...]

213 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-65, JUG-650, 13374, FNRJ Interior Ministry sends data on 'the Volksdeutsche' to the Foreign Ministry on 12 November 1946

214 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-89, NEM-60, 417550. Foreign Ministry submission to the FNJR Government Presidency and FNJR Interior Ministry. Re: Removal of the Volksdeutsche, dated 20 September 1947.

215 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-64, JUG-630, 44966. Foreign Ministry to the Embassy in Moscow, 22 March 1947

216 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter from the ICRC Delegation in Belgrade from 9 April 1946.

217 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter from the ICRC Delegation in Berlin from 17 February 1947.

218 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter to the ICRC Delegation in Berlin, to Meyer, from 3 November 1947

219 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter to ICRC Delegation in Vienna from 22 January 1946.

Although at least 40 percent of the people require hospital care, only 12 have been taken to a hospital. There have been a number of deaths."[220] This was not a transportation of only Germans from Yugoslavia, but also from Hungary and Romania, all of whom had stopped in Austria. Numerous reports stated that these people were often in a state of malnutrition (May 1946).[221] Caritas, a Catholic relief organisation, warned that these refugees, Germans from the Balkans and from Hungary, were not voluntarily on the transport.[222] Officials of the Yugoslav government delegation also wrote about these transportations and they are mentioned in one of the reports. It states, namely, that a Vienna newspaper *Neue Österreich* also wrote about this case under the headline "Three Thousand Refugees from Yugoslavia in Vienna" and that the special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* from Vienna reported that the British and American authorities had protested against their arrival. The British service reported that one transportation of refugees arrived on 20 January 1946 with 1,500 to 1,700 refugees and that the train had been en route for a week, with four persons dying during the journey and one upon arrival to Vienna. The wagons were opened only once a day; the passengers did not receive food every day, and certainly not more than once a day. Six people were taken to hospital. Most people escaped from the transport once it arrived in Vienna.[223] The Americans stated that Yugoslavia did not receive approval for the transportation and noted the dire state of the passengers, the lack of food, and that a number of them had died as a result.[224]

No one's problem. Unfortunately, after July 1945 it was not an isolated incident that Germans from Yugoslavia being transported to Austria or Germany got "stuck": unable to continue or to go back. The neighbouring countries would not admit them and at the border they were directed to return to Yugoslavia. Namely, as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia started with the mass deportations of their ethnic German minorities, the Austrian government opposed this and protested with the allies to close the Austrian border given that the large number of displaced persons was a great burden on Austria's economy and a political and social problem.[225] Caritas also reported on this, noting that blocking this route only continued, "their journey of suffering that they thought had come to an end". The report gave a detailed description of the difficult situation and its complexity: the American and British zones were closed to the transportations because the "passengers" were considered Russian refugees. The Russian zone of Vienna did not have room to house the refugees. Given that it was a temporary camp, all the Balkan Germans were being sent back. The capacities in the French zone were overfilled. "These people had two possibilities: to remain in the parked wagons. They spent six weeks in three wagons, 80 adults and 29 children. Or they were moved from one place to another only to finally be left in the shack as a constant nuisance to Austrian traffic. We believe they have the right to it and that the principle should be applied whereby no one should be forced to go where he will fear persecution. We propose that until a general regulation is reached, these people be adequately accommodated in the British, American and French zones and that further transport be provided."[226]

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220 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes "Volksdeutsche" en Allemagne et en Autriche 1945–1946. Report from 22 January 1946.

221 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes "Volksdeutsche" en Allemagne et en Autriche 1945–1946. From Linz, 20 May 1946.

222 ACICR B G 97, Minorités allemandes "Volksdeutsche" en Allemagne et en Autriche 1945–1946. Memorandum of 20 August 1946

223 All noted in this document: MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, sign. 1275.

224 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 933.

225 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 295.

226 ACICR B G 97, Minorités allemandes "Volksdeutsche" en Allemagne et en Autriche 1945–1946. Memorandum of 20 August 1946

The dire fate of those who ended up in the wagons: transportation back to Yugoslav camps. Even worse than the conditions of "stuck" Danube Swabians in Austria was their return to Yugoslavia, followed by internment in the camps. For example, 1,052 Germans were returned from Hungary back to Yugoslav territory from July 1945,[227] since the Russians did not approve further transport at Velika Kanjiža (Hungary). Then the National Commission for the Repatriation of Germans in the territory tried to take those same Germans, with another 3,000 new ones to Austria via Maribor. This was also unsuccessful because the Allied British forces would not allow it. The report states that the Germans were then returned to the interior of the country and interned in camps with the other Germans until further removal could be secured. Like numerous other reports, this one also states that "*we face terrible difficulties with these numbers of Germans*, both in terms of food, accommodation, etc. There is a particular risk of contagion, because due to the lack of medicines and adequate shelter, as well as the high heat, we have had a number of disease cases and deaths from various contagious diseases."[228]

And so, time passes... The situation of the Danube Swabians had not improved even by 1947 and they were still interned in camps. It was still uncertain that the allies would give permission for their deportation to Germany and Austria. In September 1947, the ICRC wanted to write to the Control Commission in Berlin and Vienna because, "these thousands of people appear to be in a tragic situation, they have lost their homes, their livelihoods and often their families that had left the country,"[229] but there was not much hope that things would change even in November 1947.[230] This was later confirmed as no solution was put in place.

Even in February 1948, entry into Germany and Austria was still impossible, so the ICRC looked for an alternative solution, such as emigration overseas.[231] Brazil was one possibility; something the Brazilian minister seemed amenable to on account of previous experience.[232] In March 1948, the situation remained unchanged and ICRC was looking for any kind of information to forward to persons inquiring about their family members in Yugoslavia,[233] because it was still receiving numerous requests and queries.[234]

Having evidently learned from previous experience and contradictory information, the ICRC seeks guarantees from the Yugoslav government in May 1948 before submitting a request for repatriation to the Allied Commission in Austria.[235] And finally, on 13 May of that year, the ICRC announces: "We have the honour to inform you that all persons living in the territory of Yugoslavia who are registered as Austrian citizens have been placed at the disposal of the Austrian mission in Belgrade, a group of 62 persons left on 19 March 1948 for Austria, and 2 groups of 50 people will be evacuated in a few days as soon as they receive the necessary travel papers. Apart from that, persons who wish to leave for Germany may petition the ICRC directly for repatriation, as well as all other persons wishing to leave Yugoslavia."[236] However, the negotiation process did not go without a hitch, especially when it came to prisoners, who had been recorded in lists and had then suddenly disappeared.

227 Stated in a letter from the Croatian Ministry of Interior to the DFJ Ministry of Interior, July 1945.

228 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-26, NEM-7, 4390.

229 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Expose on the visit of President Gloor to Belgrade, from 15 September 1947

230 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Letter from the ICRC delegation in London dated 7 November 1947.

231 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950*, ICRC to CKJ, Olga Milošević, dated 13 February 1948.

232 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Re: "Notre correspondance avec la Croix- Rouge yougosalve au sujet des civils "volksdeutsche",* dated 7 June 1948.

233 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. Re:"Minorités dites "Volksdeutsche" en Yougoslavie, réunion des familles dispersées, autorisation d'entre en Allemagne",* dated 13 March 1948.

234 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950*. Letter to CKJ from Geneva, dated 23 March 1948

235 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950*. Letter to ICRC Delegation in Vienna, dated 3 May 1948 Re: "Minorités germaniques se trouvant encore en Yougoslavie".

236 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950*. Letter of CKJ to ICRC, dated 13 May 1948

The Interior Ministry explained: "We replied that this was possible because some 10,000 had been repatriated, some had probably died and in such cases we sent a death certificate, and some had possibly escaped."[237]

It is interesting that when repatriation officially began, the Yugoslav Red Cross stated that the Yugoslav Germans had the option of settling where they wished in Yugoslavia itself.[238] In August 1948 we find the first more concrete letters related to the repatriation of children whose parents were living in the British zone in Austria.[239] And as for the possibility of removing Germans to South America, from Foreign Ministry minutes we see that Ehrenhold, representing the Red Cross, "initiated the question of the Volksdeutsche, i.e. whether the [Yugoslav] Government would agree to have certain generations of them sent to South America. He said that he had heard how they have been released from the camps and were living freely in the territory of Yugoslavia. I replied that they have long since been released and that any removal to South America was out of the question at present."[240]

It is important to note that individual repatriation cases were being solved from before, such as the repatriation of French Germans who had been living in Yugoslavia. The French Military Administration in Germany, on orders of the French Population Ministry, took on the task of repatriating 257 people from Belgrade.[241] This case is noteworthy for the letter addressed by the National Defence Ministry to the Interior Ministry on 18 February 1946: "The French are asking for even those German prisoners they had previously rejected. But their requests are quite cautious, in one they ask for 22, in another for 3, in a third for 1, etc. We have taken the stance not to give them anything. Even though we do not believe they would use them for a political campaign against us, it is still better that they work for us rather than for them. Representatives of their military mission often inquire about this and we reply verbally that these are Germans, because they had already refused to repatriate them. [...] We have a copy of a letter from the military attaché at the British Embassy in Belgrade, dated 8 January 1946, informing us that the British are prepared to admit 500 Germans or Austrians per week. [...] It is very interesting that there is such concern of foreign institutions for our healthy prisoners, but when it comes to repatriating the invalids and the disabled, that had to wait from July 1945 to today. Given the political situation and mobilising campaigns near our borders, we are of the opinion that we should under no circumstances repatriate healthy prisoners, because if they are to work, there is plenty to do here, and if they intend to use them for some other purpose, all the more reason that they should remain in our hands."[242] And then they left on their own... The camps were disbanded in 1948, but this was not the end of troubles for the Danube Swabians. They still were not free: they had three-year contracts – mandatory work. On the other hand, the disbanding of the camps shows that the policy on Danube Swabians had become milder, and that the possibility of legal emigration had opened up. However, the authorities made sure that numerous (bureaucratic) difficulties and high fees accompanied this possibility. One of the conditions was having relatives in Germany and Austria. But what of those who had none?

In 1951, FNRJ had passed decrees on abolishing a state of war with Austria and Germany, and emigration

237 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-57, MO-85, 7718. That some had been repatriated, albeit without permission, is also mentioned in the conversation between the Director of the ICRC from Geneva, Georges Dunand, who came to the FNRJ Interior Ministry, Division for prisoners of war, with Dr Jaeggy (all this is included in the report by Pavlović from 26 June 1946), for a meeting that was also attended by Pavlović, head of the division, Georgijević from UDB for Yugoslavia and "antifascist interpreter" Dr Draksler. From the Interior Ministry's report.

238 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. CICR Agence centrale des prisonniers de Guerre to CICR Division des Prisonniers, Internés et Civils*, Letter from Warsaw, dated 23 July 1948, *Civils allemande en Yougoslavie*.

239 ACICR, B G 97, *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie*, *1945–1950*. ICRC writes to CKJ on 12 August 1948

240 MSP RS DA PA 1948, F-111, MO-22, 423456. Conversation between Vlahov, assistant minister at Interior Ministry, Ehrenhold, Krista Đorđević (CKJ) and Vejvoda.

241 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 1366.

242 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 1849. Letter signed by Chief Col. Ilija F. Pavlović.

eased as of 1952, with even individual emigration being approved. Up to then, it had been possible only through the Red Cross list, as part of family reunification, but emigration became considerably simplified as of 1955.[243] Former neighbours describe how it was: "Whatever happened with those Swabians, where did they go... and those who were not deported, they went to school with us and later went to Germany on their own. They sold their houses and left on their own. For instance, there was this one Matija Tot, had two beautiful daughters, my brother was going steady with one of them: he left, sold his house, and his fiat, and left for Germany; many left later. Some had gone to school with me, there was a Franjo, had three sons, that Franjo went to school with me. They were among the last to leave."[244] "Was there talk at the time about what was happening with your German neighbours? I don't remember, I just know that in the fifties, 1952, 1953, they started leaving. And then they left one by one, so it diminished..."[245] The Yugoslav authorities were not, after all, terribly pleased, because this meant that the workforce was leaving. Namely, in one letter dated 29 October 1948 from the Interior Ministry, sent to the FNRJ Foreign Ministry, there are new plans for transporting the prisoners: "There are new moments in the general repatriation: All of the Volksdeutsche from Yugoslavia are to remain in FNRJ, so they have been left out of the plan."[246] The authorities are no longer expelling them, but having lived through all that misfortune, with great shaming and humiliation, without basic human rights, property, without family or relatives, people were deciding to flee Yugoslavia and seek a new home elsewhere.

Repatriation of children

I request the repatriation of my little girl[247]

Although repatriation is mentioned in all official documents dealing with the issue of reunification of children with parents or relatives, it is difficult to ascribe this term its true legal meaning. On the one hand, repatriation means the (voluntary) return to the country of birth from the country of refuge, which is not the case here because the children were mostly born in the territory of FNRJ. On the other hand, even though they were members of the ethnic German minority, these were children of FNRJ citizens.[248] In this case, however, both children and parents, acting as family members requesting the repatriation of a child, were treated as non-citizens of Yugoslavia.[249]

How did parents end up being separated from their children and in need of reunification? In many documents submitted to the Yugoslav Red Cross and other relevant bodies where parents are seeking their children, it is clear that at least one, if not both, are most often interned in Russia for forced labour. This is mostly seen in the reports of the Interior Ministry or local national councils and from the requests/applications the parents were

243 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 297–298.

244 M. C. (1936), Kljajićevo.

245 J. V. (1940), village in Bačka.

246 MSP RS DA PA 1948, F-90, JUG-56, 427784.

247 The final sentence from a request by a mother, dated 3 June 1948, for repatriation of her child to Austria. YugoslavRed Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From A–H, folio 468.

248 Sanja Petrović Todosijević, "Na putu. Repatrijacija dece pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji posle Drugog svetskog rata (1948–1956)", *Tokovi istorije* 3/2012 (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012), p. 194.

249 Sanja Petrović Todosijević, Ibid., p. 210. Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From A–H, folio 468 (Internal Affairs Commission, Novi Sad, to the Social Welfare Committee in Belgrade).

required to submit. Apart from internment in the USSR, other causes of separation of children were internment in camps, death in a camp, "taken" to Austria, escaped Yugoslavia,[250] etc.

Where are they located when unification is requested? We're not sure, ask the children. At the time of the requests or the time when the child is being sent to their parent/s, who are usually situated in Austria or Germany, the camps no longer exist and the children are to be found in various places: with their grandparents, relatives, homes for children. There is also the question of how they ended up in children's homes in so many different places throughout Yugoslavia, given that the children were mostly from Vojvodina. In one request (a completed form) regarding children from Starčevo, the current residence is given as, "somewhere in Serbia, they were in Kraljevićevo in 1947". For another child it can be seen from a request form that from somewhere in the vicinity of Sombor, the child ended up in one of the homes near Varaždin. In one father's reunification request, it says that the mother had been with that child and another four children in the Kruševlje camp where one child died (1945), and that the child being sought was later taken to the Gakovo camp.[251] One child from Krnjaja/Kljajićevo ended up in the Slavija–Kotor Home for Children.[252] The whereabouts of many children are unknown both to parents and the authorities. Namely, some parents had left their children with their own parents, but when the grandparents died in the Gakovo camp, no one knew where the children ended up.[253] Some have information only until a certain point, because children were sometimes moved from place to place,[254] for instance, from Buljkeš to Slovenia (two children, but in different children's homes),[255] or from Koluti to the Debeljača Home for Children.

The process of repatriation saw cases where the state did not know the precise whereabouts of the children, although it was certain they were in one of the children's homes. One such example is the case of Paul and Peter. As part of the repatriation process, the state sends a query to the administration of the children's home where Paul is housed: "If Paul is no longer in your home […] please inform us when and where was he referred. In the same report, please inform us in which children's home is Paul's little brother Peter […], born 1936, by asking Paul to tell you."[256]

These requests and applications of parents for the return, or repatriation, of their children provide insight not only into what happened with these children, but their difficult fates can be read between the lines:

"In December 1944, as a resident of Nova Gajdobra… I was taken for labour in the Soviet Union. My child Katarina, born 1941… was at that time given to my parents… who were still living in Nova Gajdobra. On 1 April 1945, my parents, together with my little daughter K. were interned in the Jarak camp. My mother died in that camp and the child was handed over to my father, who was at the time interned in the Pašićevo camp. Later, the child was separated from my father and handed over to the Children's Home in St. Kanjiža in 1946. Since that time, I have lost any trace of my child."[257]

The Social Welfare Commission of Novi Sad to the Social Welfare Committee in Belgrade: "[W]e have found the following: that the child was never with F. P. from Apatin, but was with grandparents V. J. and R. who were interned and the child was with them in the labour settlement. We have received information from the Internal Affairs Commission that the grandmother of the child died in the labour settlement in 1947, while V.

250 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, *Op.cit.*

251 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, Ibid.

252 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, Ibid.

253 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, Ibid.

254 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, Ibid.

255 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, Ibid.

256 Ibid.

257 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche. children. From A–H, folio 468.

J. had escaped from the labour settlement with Franc already in 1947. We are, therefore, unable to provide information about his current place of residence."[258]

MNO reports on a girl who was 13 years old at the time: that her cousin (his surname and the maiden name of her mother are the same) does not know where she is, saying that she is perhaps with her grandmother or perhaps somewhere else. Luckily, however, her mother knows and names the precise person (of German descent) and place of residence of the child.[259]

FNRJ Interior Ministry, State Security Administration, Jaša Tomić, wrote the following in a letter from September 1950: "E. T. born 1935… German by nationality, without citizenship, from a poor village family. Currently located in the 'Marija Bursać' Home for Children in Konak where she is living as a child without parents/guardians. Goes to school and is a good pupil. Recently came down with tuberculosis (TBC) and spent around 2 months in a sanatorium and has now returned to the Home. The child is calm and withdrawn.

258 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From R–Z, folio 470.

259 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From A–H, folio 468.

Her father D. E. retreated with the retreating Germans in 1944 and is not in Munich, Germany. Her father has requested the emigration of the child to Germany and in that respect our opinion is that he should be allowed to take the child to live with him, because given that she suffers from TBC, society will not benefit from her as a sick person."[260]

Homes for Children, separation of brothers and sisters. Given the large number of war orphans, homes for children were often improvised. For a time, the children of the Danube Swabians shared the fate of their parents and were interned together with them in the camps, but were later separated. The first group of children was taken out of the Knićanin camp on 27 June 1946 and placed in the newly established Home in Bajša. By the end of October 1946, 1,293 children were taken from Knićanin, Gakovo, Molim and Sremska Mitrovica and placed in homes for children in Vojvodina.[261] Although the initial intention of the Yugoslav authorities was to take only orphaned children from the camps, the FNRJ Government Social Welfare Committee adopted a decision to remove all of the children because due to the, "difficult situation in the camps in terms of food, housing conditions, sanitation, the children in the camps were suffering". This decision naturally met with resistance in the camps,[262] with people fearing they would lose their children. Although the intention was to place the children in homes for children, this was not always possible: many children were in a very poor state, so they first had to be put in quarantine to recover, and the recovery periods were often long.[263] Life in the homes for children was often difficult, too. Unaccustomed to another language, which was often wholly unfamiliar to them, they went through a drill meant to instil patriotism, rid them of religious feelings and a, "tendency towards homesickness".[264]

They were separated not just from their parents, but also from each other. Thus, for example, two brothers from Starčevo, two years apart in age, were separated so that one ended up in Sopot (central Serbia) and the other in Krušedol (Vojvodina).[265] From Sekić, one child was put in a home in Zrenjanin and the other in Crkvenica.[266] From Krnjaja, one child, born 1934, was placed in the Pupil's Home No. 1 in Novi Sad; the other, born 1936, into the Home for Children in Kanjiža; and a third, born 1942, was sent to the Home for Children in Starčevo.

260 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche. children. From R–Z, folio 470.

261 Sanja Petrović Todosijević, "Na putu. Repatrijacija dece pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji posle Drugog svetskog rata (1948–1956)", *Tokovi istorije* 3/2012 (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012). p. 201.

262 Ibid., p. 202.

263 Ibid., p. 202, 203.

264 Ibid., p. 206.

265 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsch. children. From A–H, folio 468.

266 Ibid.

There very many homes for children and here are some that were set up in Vojvodina: Bačka Palanka, Secondary School Boarding Home Bela Crkva, Children's Recovery Home Bela Crkva, Apatin, Bečej, Volosdiovo, Vlajkovac, Vršac, Kovin, Titel, Konak, Kanjiža, Kovačica, Children's Recovery Home Krušedol, Miloševo, Mol, Stari Lec, Vera Gucunja Sombor, Temerin, Zrenjanin, Futog, Uljma, Pupil's Boarding Home – Ruma, Golubac, Pupil's Boarding Home Pančevo, Secondary Agricultural School Vrbas, Debeljača, Pupil's Boarding Home in Novi Sad. It is estimated that there were over a hundred homes for children,[267] and some children were housed in up to 15 homes.

Extensive documentation and administration. The repatriation of a single child required numerous tasks and red tape. According to one Yugoslav official responsible for these matters, repatriation was a slow and arduous process.[268] A lot of correspondence between the Interior Ministry, the Yugoslav Red Cross, the homes for children and the Social Welfare Commission has been preserved, demonstrating that the documents required included certificates (e.g. from Austria), requests, petitions; all within a single case. Requests and applications took months to resolve (in one case from June 1950 until the spring of 1951), and even years (from July 1948 to September 1950).[269] Informal requests through the ICRC or Yugoslav Red Cross arrived long before repatriation of children was started. It was only much later that this matter was formalised and certain conditions were determined, which put in place some type of protocol.[270] The difficulties were numerous and children were often impossible to track down. Thus, for example, one report of the Bačka Palanka County Internal Affairs Commission states in reference to a Katarina B that "she has been placed in a home for children, which is […] unknown."[271]

Repatriation process. The repatriation process – returning children to their parents – was not easy. The ICRC often intervened, not just politically (by representations, appeals, mediating between different authorities), but would also forward individual repatriation requests (for more see the chapter on "Repatriation").[272] That this was not a simple process is illustrated by an example where the ICRC asks the Yugoslav Red Cross to determine a list of children and a plan for organising a convoy, corresponds with the Social Welfare Committee and negotiates

267 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 256.

268 ACICR B G 97, Minorités 1939–1950, letter from Geneva dated 29 August 1949 about a meeting of Joubert and Beckh with Caveney (Allied Commission for Austria, US-element), *enfants "Volksdeutsche" en Yougoslavie – enfants yougoslaves en Autriche.*

269 The procedure for the latter case was as follows: request to the Yugoslav Repatriation Commission (Vienna) submitted on 10 July 1948; next a document of the Social Welfare Committee to the Political Mission of FNRJ, Repatriation Delegation (Vienna) requesting confirmation from Austrian authorities that the applicant is the father of the child, dated 13 July 1949. On 29 November 1949, the father submitted a formal request, having filled out the appropriate form; then on 17 May 1950, the Political Mission of FNRJ in Austria, Repatriation Delegation, sent a certificate to the Social Welfare Committee in Belgrade confirming that he was indeed the father (this was six months later). After that, on 26 June 1950, the NRH Social Welfare Ministry, planning and statistics division, sent information to the Social Welfare Committee in Belgrade that the girl in question was in the Children's Home Maruševac, and finally on 26 August 1950, the Social Welfare Committee sent instructions to the administration of the Maruševac Children's Home that the child would be repatriated on 1 September 1950. This means that a little over two years had passed between the initial request of the father and the final repatriation. Source: Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From A–H, folio 468.

270 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From R–Z, folio 470 (e.g. March 1947).

271 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From A–H, folio 468.

272 Yugoslav Red Cross 1950, search service, repatriation of Volksdeutsche children. Cases of repatriated Volksdeutsche children. From R–Z, folio 470.

with the Allied authorities so that they would facilitate the entry of Germans who are meant to reunite with their families.[273] The delicacy of the situation is attested to by the need of the ICRC in September 1948 to receive assurances from the Yugoslav Red Cross, a promise that nothing would stand in the way of repatriation of children and that transport to the border would be ensured.[274] As expected, the process was not quick. Lists for transport after the one planned for 5 May were established already in 1948 (or that is when they were submitted) with an additional 33 documented children. It is interesting that German children were exchanged for Yugoslav children residing in Austria/Germany at the time, which begs the question of whether that was the primary motivation for the repatriation of German children:

"They should be made aware [the Political Mission of Austria in Belgrade] that soon after this transport, we are prepared to sent them the remaining 33 documented chidlren from the list submitted to you with letter No. 3737 on 28 December 1948, if they agree to return to us the same number of our children from Austria. Talks regarding the exchange of these Volksdeutsche children for our children should endeavour to set the time and place for the exchange as soon as possible."[275] Related to this issue is a note from 11 August 1947 about a conversation with comrade Dr Olga Milošević, Secretary of the Red Cross Yugoslav Society, which warns against allowing, "the Anglo-Saxon tendency for equating based on present needs (e.g. equating German, Austrian and our children)."[276] A note in another document seems to continue the previous quotation: "This view must be expressed very tactfully lest we be accused of lacking in humaneness. An argument that equating is neither humane nor just could be used here, because our children have been starving since 1941, for 4–5 years now, while German children only from capitulation in 1945. Equating them is, therefore, inappropriate."[277]

From words to actions. In October 1948, the repatriation plan was well on its way. The ICRC had communicated with the FNRJ Government Social Welfare Committee, because this was the body initially delegated by the Yugoslav Red Cross for the repatriation of children. The ICRC received general approval from the British authorities that they would accept into their zone children whose parents were already there, because their agreement was also necessary, and securing a demarche for other zones was under way. The ICRC was confused by the lack of information about who was responsible for organising the convoy (it turned out to be the Committee for Children, and the Yugoslav Red Cross for convoy organisation),[278] but it sent a demarche for acceptance of the convoy at the border.[279] Indeed, the letter sent to the Yugoslav Mission in Vienna contains information about the time, number and location from where the repatriation of Austrians would start on 29 October 1948. According to this letter, the first date of departure was 3 November and the last 15 January 1949.[280]

As Petrović Todosijević notes, eleven transportations of children were organised with larger numbers of repatriated children. According to official Yugoslav Red Cross data, in the period from April 1951 to December 1956, at least 1,423 children were sent from Yugoslavia to Germany, Austria and other countries.[281] However,

273 ACICR, B G 97 *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie 1945–1950*. Letter from ICRC to CKJ dated 12 August 1948.

274 ACICR, B G 97 *Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie 1945–1950*. Letter from ICRC delegation in Vienna to ICRC in Geneva, dated 29 September 1948, "*Minorités germaniques en Yougoslavie, leur accueil en Autriche; réunion des familles disparsées".*

275 Yugoslav Red Cross 1946–1951. Search Service. Repatriation of Volksdeutsche children, Lists of Volksdeutsche children transported to Germany and Austria, folio 471. Signed by Vuksanović.

276 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-75, MO-85, 416229.

277 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-75, sign. 416229, p: 75/152. From note dated 12 September 1947 regarding the Regional Conference of European Red Cross Organisations in Belgrade. From Magarašević to comrade Brilej.

278 ACICR, B G 97 Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie 1945–1950.

279 Ibid.

280 MSP RS DA PA 1948, F-90, JUG-56, 427784.

281 Sanja Petrović Todosijević: "Na putu. Repatrijacija dece pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji posle Drugog svetskog rata (1948–1956)", *Tokovi istorije* 3/2012 (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012), p. 207, 208.

there were also initial transportations prior to the spring of 1951, even though they were much smaller. Based on extensive correspondence between the ICRC, the Committee and the Yugoslav Red Cross, it can be concluded that they were treated and organised with particular care, both in terms of ensuring the necessary preconditions and with regard to the ICRC mediated handover. For instance, repatriation to Germany and Austria on 5 October 1950: 46 children repatriated to Germany and 74 to Austria. Following this first transport, the FNRJ Government Social Welfare Committee wrote to the Interior Ministry on 8 April 1949: "This Division decided to send a transport of 10 Volksdeutsche children on 5 May that year/their list was submitted to Austria. The transport will be organised by the Yugoslav Red Cross and handed over to the Austrian Red Cross at the border near Rosenbach."[282]

It was already known that children were being used for political purposes, here for manipulation and upholding of the image of the state, and the following letter to the Main Board of Red Cross of NR Croatia should be interpreted in that light: "If the children are poorly clothed, we ask that you dress them to look decent." And the one to the Main Board of Red Cross of NR BiH: "If the children are not well clothed, give them additional clothes so that they look modest but decent."[283]

Despite this, the transport was organised with care, including the organisation of the train, the photographing (via Tanjug, photography department), provision of medicines and food. Diseases were taken into account, apparently, for example: "Since there is an 11-year-old girl among the children who had tuberculosis of the spine and is lying in a cast, we ask that your ambulance vehicle be sent on 20 November to Kovačica where little XY is located in the children's home to bring her to Belgrade to the Red Cross Admission Centre..." On 20 March 1950, the FNRJ Government Social Welfare Committee wrote to the Provisions Administration of Belgrade IONO, Administration for Children's Provisions, Belgrade: "We ask that you provide for 35 German children being transported to Germany at the end of this month the following articles for the journey (in kilograms): 10 biscuits, 10 candies, 35 jams, 35 compotes, 10 marmalades, plus ration of 20 kg margarine, 40kg kashkaval cheese and 10kg cocoa."[284]

The handover itself was quite complicated.[285] "Suggestions on the procedure for handover drawn up by the Yugoslav Red Cross were accepted by the ICRC, the German and Austrian Red Cross, and the date of handover of the children was determined by the ICRC."

282 Yugoslav Red Cross 1946–1951. Search Service. Repatriation of Volksdeutsche children, Lists of Volksdeutsche children transported to Germany and Austria, folio 471.

283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.

285 Ibid.

Prohibition of return

While efforts were being made to get the Germans to leave the country by any means, there was also insistence that those who fled, as well as those who were evacuated or expelled, should by no means return to the country. The Yugoslav authorities decided to prohibit the return of Yugoslav Germans (whose who fled and those who were expelled) at the session of the National Repatriation Commission held in Belgrade on 22 May 1945.[286] The same session of the National Repatriation Commission also decided the "former" Yugoslav citizens of Hungarian nationality may all return to Yugoslavia, but individual "wrongdoers" would be held responsible.[287] Before that, Hungarians had fallen out of favour and were interned in camps.

A certain number of Danube Swabians, considering themselves innocent of any wrongdoing, wanted to return to Yugoslavia, to their families and their estates, after they had been evacuated shortly before the end of the war. However, these were not just people who were evacuated shortly before the war ended, but also those "sent" out of the country by the state. While the Yugoslav authorities viewed members of the German minority

286 Vladimir Geiger, "Logori za folksdojčere u Hrvatskoj nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata 1945–1947", in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2006), p. 1081–1100.

287 Vladimir Geiger, "Heimkehr, Povratak slavonskih Nijemaca nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata iz izbjeglištva/prognaništva u zavičaj i njihova sudbina", in: *Scrinia Slavonica*, Godišnjak Podružnice za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje Hrvatskog instituta za povijest, Vol. 3 (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2003), p. 525.

as Germans, the Allied occupation authorities in Germany and Austria registered the ethnic Germans who had fled or were expelled as Yugoslav citizens and therefore sent them back to Yugoslavia. And that the number of Danube Swabians – Yugoslav citizens – trying to return to the country was not insignificant is demonstrated by the fact that from just 30 August to 2 September 1945, "five wagons of Swabians" plus a transport of 1,750 people (including four Slovenians; the rest were all Germans) were returned from stations in Hungary to Austria.[288]

The Yugoslav authorities viewed the return of "their own" Germans as a danger and a threat, irrespective of the circumstances of their departure from Yugoslavia. This is why they decided to act. To their delegations abroad, in Prague and Vienna for instance, the authorities issued instruction for, "'separating out the Swabians', for them to be expelled in those areas,"[289] meaning that they were to go to prisoner camps (abroad) and separate out the Volksdeutsche in order to prevent their return to the country,[290] then to tighten controls and keep them there,[291] and to try to separate them from "our people".[292] Perhaps an even more difficult task was put before the Yugoslav delegation at ACC in Hungary. Diplomatic steps had been taken and appeals addressed to the Soviet military authorities and the Anglo-American occupation authorities to stop sending Yugoslav Germans back to Yugoslavia so as to prevent their *infiltration* in considerable numbers in Vojvodina (so that "large numbers of Germans do not crowd our borders"), and instructions issued to the Yugoslav authorities were to, "*strictly* make sure that the [Germans] do not come back in."[293] The reasons for this were allegedly security-related: "This matter is of great importance for our country, because the presence of Germans in our country represents a permanent danger for the internal and external security of our state and we must, therefore, urgently resolve this matter and undertake efforts to make sure the Soviet government informs the governments of England and America of its position."[294] Certainly, a large number of Germans were transferred from Hungary to Subotica, and Yugoslav authorities sought Moscow's support in resolving this problem,[295] but evidently without much success. The reply from Moscow was simple: the Yugoslav authorities were to secure the border and those Germans managing to enter Yugoslav territory should be treated as offenders.[296]

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288 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 4299. Report of the DFJ Ministry for Social Policy for the Head of the Yugoslav Delegation at the ACC in Hungary.

289 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F20, JUG-34, 3955. DFJ, Ministry for Social Policy, Repatriation Department, fol. No. 388, 5 September 1945, writing to the Yugoslav Delegation at the ACC in Budapest.

290 Correspondence of local authorities with the Yugoslav Repatriation Delegation in Vienna via the Ministry for Social Policy, Repatriation Department. MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-4, sign. 7115, dated 21 September 1945.

291 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34/omot 11, 5162. to the Foreign Ministry in Belgrade, 18 October 1945 (telegram to delegation in Budapest referring to fol. No. 5162).

292 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34/omot 11, 5162. Foreign Ministry in Belgrade, 18 October 1945 (telegram to delegation in Budapest referring to fol. No. 5162).

293 Minister for settlement, Sreten Vukosavljević, presents his position to the DFJ Presidency of the Ministerial Council on 26 July 1945. Vladimir Geiger"Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch*
2002. "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 295.

294 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-26, NEM-7, 2063, Foreign Ministry letter to the DFJ Embassy in Moscow dated 31 July 1945.

295 Example: On 3 August 1945, forty wagons were transported to Subotica. MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-26, NEM-7, 2888.

296 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-26, omot 4, 3051. Telegram from Moscow, 10 August 1945, to the Foreign Ministry, signed by Vlado Popović.

It is interesting to note the terms used in these types of letters: Germans were "returned", "removed", or "Swabians were prevented" from entering the country.[297] Johana Bukovac speaks about how they returned to Yugoslavia; she is one of those who managed to "infiltrate" themselves.

"When the war ended in 1945, in the part of Austria where we were, the Russians came. My father interpreted for them, because he spoke Russian. Now, they knew we were Yugoslavs and the people from Nikinci themselves who were in that area decided to go back to Yugoslavia. They wanted to till their land. We contacted the Russian command and the Russian command organised the transport, put us on a train and we were off for Yugoslavia... When we arrived in Hungary, there was no more train and we had to go on foot, but local villagers would give us rides from village to village... The journey from Austria to Yugoslavia took more than a month. We arrived in Varaždin. In Varaždin, from the riding school where we were put, we were taken to a camp. On the very border when we were crossing from Hungary into Yugoslavia, a woman with two small children was returning from Yugoslavia, holding them by the hand, and she had nothing with her, she started shouting when she saw our column: 'People, where are you going, don't go there. See what I've been through. See how I'm taking my two girls back. Look at me – I have nothing. You're all going to the camp over there.' Our people could not believe it... When we arrived in Varaždin, there was general commotion, shouting and crying – when people saw what they had gotten themselves into."[298]

One possible explanation for how it was possible that the Yugoslav Germans returned to the country from abroad, despite all precautions and instructions about avoiding this, may be found in the following letter: "It is likely that not even our own officers, attached to the English, know how it came about that there are such large numbers of the Volksdeutsche outside our borders and that they themselves believe these are not Germans, because many speak Serbian so that they are not identifiable as Germans, because there are also many Slavs with German surnames, such as for instance in Slovakia. For the sake of illustration, we present the case that in March all of 30 families originally from Bosnia arrived in Smederevo; they all presented themselves as Slavs – Serbs and Croats – but were in fact all Volksdeutsche. It would therefore be necessary, in agreement with the English military authorities, to send a commission of ours to the English occupied area in order to weed out the Volksdeutsche so that they are not returned when the transport is sent here."[299] One of the best explanations for why the Germans should be left where they are can be found in a letter of the Foreign Ministry to the Military Mission in Vienna: "There is no sense in sending back those Volskdeutsche who we would have to return in a month anyway and the allied authorities would have to receive again. The scarcity of foodstuffs prevents the Yugoslav authorities from keeping the collected Volksdeutsche in camps."[300]

There are many similar dispatches, announcements, reports, letters and telegrams in the Foreign Ministry Archives, which speaks to the strong pressure to prevent the return of Danube Swabians into the country. The explanation, much like in the previously cited documents, is more or less the same: The Danube Swabians have only themselves to blame and will therefore not be allowed back in (example from a letter by the Foreign Ministry to the US Embassy in Belgrade). Such letters are numerous.[301] Below is a transcript of extracts from a report on banning the return of Germans to the country, and in the Annex (page 92) you can find the correspondence about the events at the Yugoslav-Hungarian border illustrating the policy of the Yugoslav authorities regarding the return of Danube Swabians to the country. Even members of the establishment were known to say: "One gets the impression that the Yugoslav government does one thing and says another."[302]

297 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 4299. Report of the DFJ Ministry for Social Policy for the Head of the Yugoslav Delegation at the ACC in Hungary.

298 Life story of Johana Bukovac, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II* (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 22.

299 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 3264.

300 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 1818. Letter from 23 January 1946

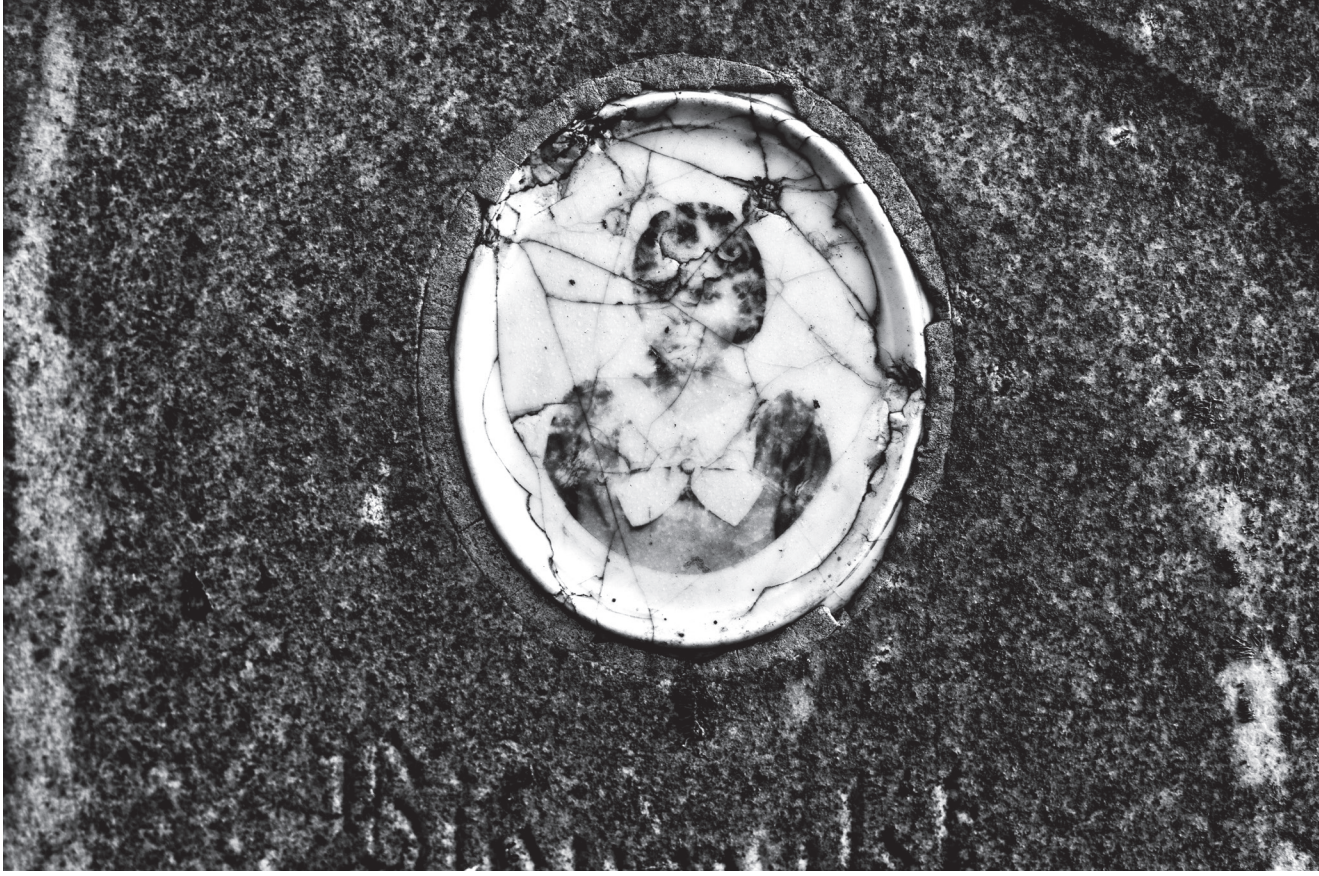
301 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 2183.

302 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 2018.

Illustration – prohibition of return in official documents:

On 19 July 1945, a session of the National Repatriation Commission was held, and the minutes included an item about the "treatment of Germans illegally returning to our country". This part reads: "At its session held on 22 May 1945, the National Repatriation Commission adopted the conclusion not to allow the return of Germans, our former citizens, to Yugoslavia and that they should be turned away immediately at the border. [...] Despite even the strictest measures at the border to prevent their return to Yugoslavia, there are still cases where numerous Germans, whole families, illegally enter our country. In order to prevent this, and in order to prevent the stay of those who cross the border in this manner in the country, the National Commission has adopted the following conclusion: 1) In all collection centres of our prisoners, where there is even the bare minimum of control of our bodies abroad, the strictest controls should be carried out regarding the nationality of all those persons whose language, pronunciation, various bodily markings, names and surnames, as well as places of residence in the past give rise to even the slightest suspicion that they belong to the German nation. If it is thus found beyond doubt that certain persons belong to the German nation, they should be prevented not just from going to Yugoslavia, but in line with local conditions and in consultation with local authorities, all measures should be undertaken to remove them to Germany. 2) Authorities organising the transports, be they ours or allied authorities, as well as the commanders of the transports, who are as such chosen by the repatriates themselves, should be advised that Germans are constantly attempting to infiltrate our transports along the way in order to enter Yugoslavia undetected. In such cases, our authorities are to intervene immediately and remove each such German already en route. 3) If, despite all these precautions, Germans still manage to gain entry into the territory of Yugoslavia, the national authorities shall round them up and deliver them to existing reception centres for prisoners of war, or to Repatriation Headquarters in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. If the national authorities are at a loss about how to proceed, they should seek instructions either from the headquarters or from interior ministries in their respective federal unit. Relevant instructions on further action will be issued to headquarters and reception centres in due course."[303]

303 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-23, KOM-6, 2582.



Graveyards, tombs and sports grounds

I want to go to the Swabian graveyard... - Oh, but you won't find anything there.[304]

"The graveyard in Mramorak where my parents were buried no longer exists," says Terezija Vučković,[305] and she is not alone. Everyone deserves to be buried and left in peace, but that is not the case with the Danube Swabians. On 18 May 1945, the DFJ Interior Ministry passed a decision to remove and destroy graveyards and graves of the "occupier" and "domestic enemies", instructing that "all enemy graves of Germans and Italians as well as their collaborators Ustashas and Chetniks are to be removed and razed to the ground immediately."[306] The Catholic Church reacted, which led to another conflict between the new authorities and the Church.

304 From an interview with M. C. from Kljajućevo conducted in August 2014. In the meantime, the graveyard in this village in northwest Vojvodina was revitalised in preparation for the visit of Danube Swabians from Germany to the village.

305 Life story of Terezija Vučković, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss, *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 109–152

306 Vladimir Geiger, "Odluka o uklanjanju grobalja i grobova 'okupatora' i 'narodnih neprijatelja' Ministarstva unutarnjih poslova DF Jugoslavije od 18. svibnja 1945. (II)", *Politički zatvorenik*, No. 258, (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo političkih zatvorenika, 2014), p. 31.

Since the end of the Second World War until today, graveyards of Danube Swabians have been destroyed, abandoned, or neglected.[307] One of the graveyards that has disappeared – the so-called Frantal graveyard – was located in Zemun and the ethnic Germans from Zemun were buried there. The large stairs from Prilaz towards Kalvarija were paved with broken tombstones from the Frantal graveyard, which was destroyed and dug up and a hospital was later built at the site. An ethnic German woman testifies about this, relating how her mother and aunt were taken to work at Kalvarija Hill, their job being to bring tombstones from the nearby graveyard to pave the steps and streets.[308] Parts of the demolished St. Wendelin Church were preserved, but few know where. The attitude towards German graveyards and towards the dead of ethnic German origin does not end there, nor does it end with the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, but continues on even without a state standing behind it. "The monument to our parents was torn down. We put it up, somebody tears it down, we put it up, they tear it down again... Now it lies flat next to their graves. We didn't bother putting it up again. There is tombstone standing upright. Just one, actually. These people did not have any children and they gave the Serbian Church five acres of land so that it could buy bells. Well, their tombstone wasn't torn down. All the other German tombstones have been torn down. But we have reconciled with this."[309]

Even if these had been graves of prisoners of war, according to the Geneva Convention there is an obligation to, "ensure that prisoners of war who have died in captivity are honourably buried, [...] and that their graves are respected, suitably maintained and marked so as to be found at any time." Also, the side on which such prisoners depended must be informed of their death and burial and the location of the grave.[310]

There are quite a few mass graves whose existence was known, but they were not marked until recently. Some are still unmarked, such as Šinteraj, Šinderviza, the former cattle cemetery and there are still debates about whether a monument should be erected and whether the site should be marked or not. "If you look closely, you can see a cylindrical outline some ten meters long and then a dip in the ground some four or five meters wide. That is just one of a number of mass graves at Šinteraj. The outlines of the others have been hidden by tall grass, says Bugarčić. There is no sign or cross to mark it, people work normally around it – they make chocolate, a tractor comes down the road between the cornfields."[311] Helena Vukobratov also speaks about the mass grave: "My father was buried in Bački Harak, in a collective grave... I don't even know where his grave is. […] Behind the graveyard in Bački Jarak, there were four mass graves. There were stories that they buried the bodies until the filled up the graveyard and then they dug these mass graves..."[312] There are also mass graves we tread on unaware, such as the bus station in Sombor and its surroundings.[313]

In some places, the Danube Swabians were able to mark the sites of suffering, but in some cases local

307 For more see: Vladimir Geiger i Slađana Josipović Batorek, "O sprovođenju odluke komunističkih vlasti iz 1945. O uklanjanju grobalja i grobova 'okupatora' i 'narodnih neprijatelja' u Slavoniji i Srijemu", in: *Scrinia Slavonica 15* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2015).

308 Life story of Magdalena Metzger, "Medved pred vratima", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 84

309 Life story of Suzana Svrkota, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski
Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 165, 166.

310 Vladimir Geiger, "Odluka o uklanjanju grobalja i grobova 'okupatora' i 'narodnih neprijatelja' Ministarstva unutarnjih poslova DF Jugoslavije od 18. Svibnja 1945. (III)", in: *Politički Zatvorenik*, No. 259 (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo političkih zatvorenika, 2014), p. 12–17.

311 Life story of Magdalena Metzger, "Dan u Vršcu", in: Nenad Novak Stefanović: *Zemlja u koferu* (Belgrade: Nenad Novak Stefanović, 2007), p. 121.

312 Life story of Helena Vukobratov, Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 46.

313 From correspondence with Anton Beck, President of Deutscher Verein *St. Gerhard* form Sombor.

authorities were practically trading with the bones of their dead. For example, at the site of the collective grave in Bački Jarak the local authorities built a sports ground.[314] But there was also cooperation in marking execution sites. Of particular importance are cases such as Gakovo where people met and talked about their fears and pain (more under the heading "Encounters") and Kruševlje where one of the municipal leaders attended the commemoration for the first time. Boris Mašić also mentions the case of Knićanin, one of the rare places where the graveyard was not destroyed. The new inhabitants, "even respected the mass graves, which are in effect a hill the size of a football field, where the mount is huge, but they did not disturb the mass grave, they didn't plough around it, they even maintained it as much as they could. Thanks to Lorenzo Baron, who is also originally from Knićanin, an annual commemoration began to be organised at this execution site. I was involved from the very beginning in this whole action. Later, [similar] actions followed in Bačka, where and when it became possible, first in Gakovo, now in Kruševlje and in September in Odžaci, then in Bački Jarak; in all those places where there are mass graves and execution sites, the idea is to have them marked. We have just recently opened a memorial complex at the graveyard in Prigrevci, which means the situation is now developing normally."[315] For many whose grave sites are known, they were never registered. Funerals for the "enemies" killed in the immediate aftermath of the war were dispersed by force and often banned.[316] "They expelled them from Stara Pazova (a father of 83 and his daughter) to the Zemun airport. Exhausted, he died at the airport. They threw his body in a ditch by the runway and covered it with some earth. Although she was at the airport too, they would not allow the daughter to attend the burial, but there was no funeral service anyway."[317]

These were also some experiences:

"Now, I didn't know how it went, I only found out when we were going after restitution. Their deaths were not registered anywhere. [...] That was for grandpa. And now for grandma. We went to Subotica to the archives, and to Sombor and Kljajićevo and found nothing. Nothing in Gakovo, either."[318]

"I know we would always go, it was a Swabian cemetery, up there, a lot of ours... we were wrong. Just like now in Kosovo, they're tearing down tombstones, making a mess, that's what our people did to the Swabian tombstones, if we're to be honest. Apart from the Swabian, there was also a Jewish cemetery, there are houses there now, gardens; it used to be maintained, but not any more after the war."[319]

"We would go to the village in the summer, we remember the German and the Jewish graveyard, how it was destroyed over time, how the tombstones went missing. They'd take the tombstones to pave the sidewalks. I could find those photographs, I started photographing graveyards a long time ago."[320]

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314 Nadežda Radović, "Rečitost muka 60 godina ćutanja o sudbini naših Nemaca", in: *Fenster, Poverenje, Pomirenje, Poštenje*, No. 4 (Sremski Karlovci: Nemačko udruženje za dobrosusedske odnose Karlowitz, 2006), p. 36.

315 Aleksandar Krel's field notes, Boris Mašić (1966).

316 Vladimir Geiger, "Odluka o uklanjanju grobalja i grobova 'okupatora' i 'narodnih neprijatelja' Ministarstva unutarnjih poslova DF Jugoslavije od 18. Svibnja 1945. (III)", in: Politički Zatvorenik, No. 259 (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo političkih zatvorenika, 2014), p. 12–17.

317 Life story of Karl Schumm, "Artisti i modeli istorije", in: Nenad Stefanović, ed. *Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari*, Šesto izdanje (Belgrade: Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, 2007), p. 47.

318 J. V. (1940), village in Bačka.

319 M. C. (1936), Kljajićevo.

320 Z. Š. (1973) and G. Š. (1973), children of a German/Russian mother.

Ancestors and descendants: As long as I'm not German

Assimilation, trauma, coping

Whether they left the country or stayed, the Danube Swabians continued to face much hardship and many challenges. There were cases of people who had escaped from Yugoslavia wandering around Hungary for days on end, without a clear destination, in order to reach Austria or Germany.[321] Those who managed to avoid the camps in Yugoslavia, not to mention those who found themselves in Austria or Germany after having been through the camps, never imagined that their troubles were far from over. They found themselves in a country where their mother tongue was spoken, but where they did not have a home. They were often despised, discriminated, belittled. Living conditions in Austria and Germany were generally quite difficult. During the summer, the refugees found shelter and food with peasants, but winters were particularly harsh. Camps where Germans were collected (Tirol, Kematen) had a predominance of Yugoslav Germans, including a large number

321 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950, letter from 13 May 1947 from the ICRC Delegation in Salzburg to ICRC in Geneva, "Volksdeutsche de Yougoslavie et du Banat".

of women and children.[322] Although most people escaped and went to Austria and Germany via Hungary, the Romanian Red Cross informed ICRC in July 1947 that hundreds upon hundreds of Yugoslav citizens of German origin were crossing the Yugoslav–Romanian border without papers and looking for shelter in Romania.[323]

"The treatment meted out by occupation and German authorities was often worse towards the Germans. [...] Our immigrants were often subject to their chauvinistic chicanery. For instance, they were not allowed to take trade exams as Germans even though they were formally German citizens, they received no concessions, and on the other hand, our disabled veterans on benefits and windows are deprived of 50 percent of their pension or rent for war damages," says one of the documents where the consular representative (and social attache) for the British occupied zone in Germany writes to the Foreign Ministry and attaches a report from the social attache in Düsseldorf dated 15 October 1946.[324]

Those who remained in Yugoslavia continue to face constant discrimination, prejudice, harassment, so that the general atmosphere resembled that of the camps. Yes, there was food to eat, but the basic feeling of safety had been lost, and feelings of fear were still dominant. Johana Bukovac speaks about this: "In 1950, I married a good and honest man. His parents accepted me. They never objected to me being of a different religion and nationality. For I long time I didn't know that my husband had to get a permit from the committee to marry me. He told me about it after fifteen years of marriage... I didn't talk to anybody about what happened to me after the Second World War. Actually, I did tell my husband, but even him I told gradually. I would say a bit today, and another bit tomorrow, so that he understood and took my side... At the beginning, when I started working, I was very afraid. Some colleagues practically didn't want to talk to me. Only those who knew me and were in contact with me at school didn't care that I was a German. They talked to me nicely and we had a good relationship in general, friendly."[325] Descendants also talk about these difficulties:

"Her father was the only one left in that place (Kruščić, formerly Veprovac). His mother went to Germany, all his brothers; he was the only one left, he worked in trade. He stayed. Montenegrins moved into all the houses around him. He stayed, he thought he would be protected because he was married to a Rusyn woman, so my mother's mother was Rusyn. [...] The older I got, the more I understood him: how much trouble he had in that place, all that he went through, how he had to keep quiet about so many things, how they took everything from him, they took the radio out of his house, he kept quiet the whole time. They came, racketeering him where he worked as a trader. And later I came to understand his resentment and bitterness. [...] In time I came to understand him because mum started talking about some of the problems."[326]

322 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes "Volksdeutsche" en Allemagne et en Autriche 1945–1946. The report from 1 June 1946 gives the following numbers: Camp in Tirol: men 403, women 711, children 485, total 1599. In the Vorarlberg camp, Romanian Germans make up the majority, while the Yugoslav Germans there are: adults 163, children 65, total 219. It also says that a large number of children are malnourished. In the Kematen camp, there were 232 men, 335 women. In the 16 to 60 age range, there are 203 men, 293 women, as well as 171 children from 6 to 16, and 85 from 0 to 6.

323 ACICR, B G 97, Minorités allemandes de Yougoslavie, 1945–1950. The ICRC delegation in Romania writes from Bucharest on 4 July 1947 to the ICRC in Geneva.

324 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-65, omot 1, 13505.

325 Life story of Johana Bukovac, in: Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss: *Dunavske Švabice II*, (Sremski Karlovci: LDIJ-Veternik, 2001), p. 28.

326 From interview with Z. Š. (1973).

Marked – Descendants: The name as the cross to bear

Unfortunately, it was not just those who stayed that were marked, but also their descendants – name and ancestry became their cross to bear. And unfortunately, there are many examples: from the word 'German' being written without the initial letter capitalised, to children refusing to sit with a child whose parent is German, and so forth. Being German was a weight, a hazard; an insecurity that was passed from parents and grandparents to children:

"I remembered this one event. My daughter was in primary school, second or third grade I think, and they were learning about the Partisans and the Germans [as part of a lesson on the Second World War and the People's Liberation Struggle] and what the Germans were like. Then my daughter stood up and said: 'My grandpa and grandma are not like that.'"[327]

"You felt it by second or third grade, while we were still little and some seven or eight years after the war, you would hear that their father told them or, I don't know, their mother told them to watch out because that one is a Švabo and: 'Watch out, because he's a fascist, he's a killer.' You would hear about it, but no one ever said it to your face. People would talk behind your back."[328]

"Well, I experienced unpleasantness. I was born in Odžaci and we moved to Sombor when I was five and a half. When I started in first grade, my teacher at the time was an 'advanced' communist who became a teacher after completing some course, as was done at the time, after the Second World War. She knew my mother *[so she knew the mother was German; note by A. K.]...* and her sister was killed *[by Germans or their collaborators, note by A.K.]* and she could be intolerant towards me. [...] There were also these two Hungarian girls in my class, but she didn't pick on them. [...] My father constantly spoke German with my mother, because he had learnt it from his neighbour and the maids in his house, everyone spoke German. [...] If I accidentally forgot something, I was made to stand for 45 minutes, for all the children to see me, and then, because I had my hair in neat plaits, she would pull them and say, 'You dirty German, you forgot such and such.' Second, I didn't speak Serbian properly, because at home we spoke German, or the Swabian dialect. *[When questioned about whether the parents reacted, note by A.K.:* No, they were afraid, because she was a Party activist. My father told me to keep quiet and bear it and that I wasn't to do anything against it. *[When prompted about how long the harassment lasted, note by A.K.]:* Well, it was sometimes less – sometimes more. Then she *[the teacher]* was pregnant and away on leave for most of the school year, but later I had no unpleasantness there. This all happened in 1962–63. This probably happened because she was irritated by me because of the fact that her sister was killed, probably by a German."[329]

There were many such experiences. What is perhaps surprising is that children with German surnames did not fare better even in the 1980s, especially in monolith communities. On the one hand, the image of Germans was changing, but the identification of Germans with the enemy remained unchanged at some levels. "We spent the whole summer holidays in the country in Vojvodina and then when we were little, some would tease us – your grandpa hid Hitler during the war. I remember it was terrifying for us..."[330]

327 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, 1932).

328 Aleksandar Krel's field notes, Anonymous (man, 1945, Subotica).

329 Aleksandar Krel's Field Notes, Anonymous (female, 1955, Sombor).

330 Z. Š. (1973) speaking about her experience in the 1980s – decades after the Second World War.

I just didn't want to be German, so they wouldn't take us to the camps again[331]

Although a few years after the war civil rights were restored to the Danube Swabians, they still lived in very modest circumstances. Eduard Grollinger talks about how, when he and his parents and grandparents were released from the camp (which was officially disbanded) they went to live with relatives – eleven of them slept in a single room.[332] It still wasn't easy to be German, even many years later; as can be seen from the testimony of people who were children during the 1960s and all the way up to the 1980s. In order to avoid some of the suffering or – as some would say "in order to survive" – people resorted to changing their names, and declaring themselves as members of a different ethnic group (most often as Hungarians or Croats). In his book, Aleksandar Krel used a quotation from an interview with his mother for a subheading title:

"We would have been Chinese if only they'd leave us in peace."[333] The German language was almost never heard: "When we left the camp, mum and me, we'd speak German, but if someone happened by, we'd quickly switch to Serbian. You couldn't hear German in the streets, not a word." (man, born 1939, from Sombor)[334] About what it was like to be German, not just at that time, but also later, we learn from Anonymous (man, 1945)[335] from Subotica:

"[O]ut of fear, when my father died, my mother immediately changed my last name to her maiden name D. That's a Hungarian surname. It was because, she told me: Mani, I've already lost my husband, I don't want to lose you. To lose you because of a German surname. You'll be good, you'll be capable, whatever your name is. [...] Just as the names were lost, so was the language. In school, I was like the others: I blended in. I had no one, not even an acquaintance who was German, I knew none of my relatives. They'd all left, moved away, died..."

It is important to note that assimilation was inevitable at the time. Boris Mašić, president of the *Adam Berenc* association says: "Despite having assimilated and you no longer feel that sense of belonging as much, but assimilation after sixty years is inevitable, you couldn't avoid it in such a situation, because you needed to assimilate in order to survive. There was no other way to survive in this environment."[336] There were other experiences, albeit less frequent, such as the experience of Peter Blah who said that after 1948, he never faced difficulties because he was a Swabian.[337]

However, for him and his family, their German identity was what had led to his father and brother being killed with another 180 civilians in the vicinity of Odžak.

Encounters

In the past few years, there have been many news items about visits by Danube Swabians to Vojvodina, but also about departures of the ethnic Germans from Vojvodina to Germany. Many years have passed from the time of individual visits to their houses and home towns, to organised visits also involving the local authorities, but there is evident progress in that direction. Such visits make their previous presence in this area visible.

331 Life story of Rudolf Kumerkramer, in: Aleksandar Krel, Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 271.

332 Aleksandar Krel, ibid., p.243.

333 Aleksandar Krel, ibid. p.141.

334 Aleksandar Krel, ibid. p.148.

335 Aleksandar Krel's field notes, N. N. (man, 1945, Subotica).

336 Aleksandar Krel's field notes, Boris Mašić (1966).

337 Peter Blaha, *Odžaci u mom retrovizoru* (Odžaci: Narodna biblioteka *Branko Radičević*, 2009), p. 37.

Memorial plaques are installed, monuments erected, commemorations held. Politicians and representatives of the authorities attend commemorations and monument unveilings. The commemoration in Kruševlje was attended by the president of the Sombor Municipality, Slavoljub Slavković, who said: "An injustice was done to these people," which is a big step for the recognition of the Danube Swabians who used to live there.[338] The local townspeople, in gratitude to their German neighbours for their help during the Second World War, installed a memorial plaque with a sign that reads: "The Serbs of Kać in memory of the Swabians of Kać who in a raid in 1942 saved 170 families from the pogrom," and a sign to commemorate the Evangelical church that had existed from 1895 until the fateful year of 1947.[339] Important steps are being taken on the symbolic level.

Perhaps the most impressive cooperation we have seen to date is the one that has intensified in the past few years in Kljajućevo. In 2015, the 250th anniversary of the settlement of this town was organised, which was attended by about seventy Danube Swabians and their descendants. "We left Kljajićevo when I was eight years old. I returned to Kljajićevo for the first time when I was seventeen, together with my sister. When I come, I visit what used to be our house, our street and I remember how I would run around the moats with the neighbourhood children. The local townspeople received us well, I'm glad to be here again," said Helmut Gertner who came together with his granddaughter. There were those who had come to Kljajućevo for the first time after seventy years.[340]

Although M.C. (born 1936) was little when she moved to Kljajućevo with her parents, she remembers what it was like to arrive after others had left:

"We arrived on an unscheduled train *[laughter].* We came here to Krnjaja, it was Krnjaja back then, and we got off the train here and they were waiting for us. First we got doused because of lice, because of the cattle wagons, and then they allocated us. And my father, my uncle was a volunteer fighter and had the right to choose a house. There were first a few volunteer fighters. My father arrived earlier and selected a house for us down the road, you came by from down the road; there were ploughs in the street and then we came straight to that house. [...] We were overjoyed. The houses were so colourful, we were overjoyed, how the Swabians used to paint the houses, it wasn't like it is now. It was the most beautiful house in Kljajićevo. My mother-in-law asked my father-in-law if the houses there had roses, and every house did. And my house, that my father chose, was very big, with five big rooms, and then there was another large room leading to the attic, then there was the stable for horses, and another stable for cows, a shed, a summer kitchen with a pantry, and there was a well in front, and a water pump and tub beneath the well: it was all tidy must've been someone rich. And the doors and windows were white, tall, beautiful. Everything was white but the walls were colourful. A very, very beautiful house. Then we got furniture, there was a warehouse with what they had confiscated from the Swabians, and they gave it out to us, we got a wardrobe and a bed for each room. Nothing else. There were some quinces, some pillows that we got, we mostly brought all our own cloth with us, everything was woven from wool."

She also remembers what it was like when some of the formerly resident Danube Swabians came to visit here, even before the organised encounters and visits; people would come, many years later, to see the graveyard, the houses that used to be theirs, the streets where they played as children: "A few years ago, when the girls had gone off to university, and I was on my own, [...] I went to draw the blinds, I open the windows, the sun was already warming that morning and as I'm drawing the blinds, three men come up to the house: 'Good afternoon,' 'Good afternoon,' 'Can we come to your house?' They speak Serbian well, I go out, greet them,

338 Nadežda Radović, "Rečitost muka 60 godina ćutanja o sudbini naših Nemaca", in: *Fenster, Poverenje, Pomirenje, Poštenje*, No. 4 (Sremski Karlovci: Nemačko udruženje za dobrosusedske odnose Karlowitz, 2006), p. 36.

339 We received information about this memorial plaque, as well as other important information from members of the group *Podunavske Švabe – naše komšije – Donauschwaben unsere Nachbarn* [Our Neighbours, the Danube Swabians], https://www.facebook.com/groups/64378966902/ [retrieved 21 February 2015].

340 Soinfo.org, "Prijateljski susret starih i novih Kljajićevčana", http://www.soinfo.org/vesti/vest/15004/1/Prijateljski-susret-starih-i-novih-Kljajicevcana/ [retrieved July 2015].

welcome them in, but they don't want to go in the house, they prefer the terrace. Would they like something to drink? No, nothing, though I had brandy and Coca-Cola, to serve them as guests – coffee and all that. And so they introduce themselves. The oldest one says, 'This was my house.' He had brought his son to show him. He tells me, 'I live in Canada.' 'My house is gone,' he says, as we'd already built this house, but he says, 'You've built such a beautiful and large house on such a small plot. Can we take a photo?' I say, 'Sure.' And his son takes a picture. When he went into the yard, and saw I kept guinea fowl in the yard, he says, 'My mother kept guinea fowl here, too, and the acacia is still here.' There was an old acacia tree there. I say, 'We won't let it get cut down, we're always quarrelling over it, our neighbour keeps complaining it's in the way, keeps quarrelling, but it's in our yard.' He tells me, 'My father planted that acacia long ago.' He went to the pig sty, we also had chickens, he was happy to see them, glad, he said, 'I brought my son to see this.' Now, he spoke Serbian well, his son didn't at all, and the third man that was with them, he spoke it perfectly. He tells me he went to school here, then he asks if I remember this one, do I know that one, I remembered some, some I didn't, and the younger man tells me he's from Kljajićevo, and I say I should know him, then, but he says, he's not sure, he left afterwards. He later married a girl that used to go to school with me. He tells me how he has a very good friend from before, he's a bit younger than me, says they used to go to school together. Whenever I visit, I always get together with him and we have a grand time. He's doing very well, I've seen his vineyard, his orchard, and I keep quiet. [...] Those Swabian girls, they learned, they spoke Serbian. It's interesting that they all spoke Serbian so well, and we never learnt Swabian, or Hungarian."[341]

Perhaps the first and biggest step in bringing the communities together was made with the organised visit to Gakovo and Kruševlje. Rudolf Weiss talks about the preparations: "The start of marking execution sites was not easy. We started with Gakovo. We first set up a meeting with the leadership of their local community. There, we met the president of the local community, the president of the local executive board and the principal of the school in Gakovo. We went to them and told them straight out what was on our minds. We were honest and we said, 'People, there are mass graves at that site! At least eight and a half thousand Germans are buried in them! Atrocities were committed there! We know you are not to blame and that you were settled in Gakovo by decree. But let's see what we can do to mark that site.' It was an honest conversation, over brandy and coffee, without formalities or stuffiness. We encountered understanding from these people, because some of them, just a few years previously, had felt the cruelty of war on their own skin."[342] It was by no means easy, confirms Tode Miletić, president of the Gakovo local community council and principal of its primary school,[343] as there was definite fear on the part of the local population.

Confession or silence: the trauma that remains

Although the German ethnic minority was proclaimed a national minority in the Republic of Serbia in 2007, this did not help people who had suffered the "fate of collective guilt" to say what was on their minds. In addition, many stories, as well as many traumas, were reactivated in the first years of the 21st century with the initiation of issues of restitution. Some continued to keep quiet, feeling they could do nothing else, but some started dealing with their own or their family's trauma. The descendants were most often the ones who wanted to hear the stories, find out more, and open up numerous issues.

"It was when I wanted to talk to my mother about these things, she started crying and said: 'Leave me be.'

341 M. C. (1936), Kljajićevo.

342 Aleksandar Krel, *Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), p. 175.

343 Ibid., p. 200.

She patted my head and said through tears: 'Leave it be, we'll talk about it tomorrow, or the day after. When I forget a bit, then we'll talk about it.' Unfortunately, 50 years went by and then she died. We never talked about it. A bit, just a bit. We talked about it just a bit. [...] It can't really be defined, because in my time, when I was at school, at that time, whoever was German did not want to show it, so no one knew who was German. And more or less, in my crowd there were two or three, but we never talked about it, it was a taboo topic, that whole 'keep quiet', it's known who you are and what you are, so don't... Just keep quiet."[344]

"I told my mother – mum, let's check, there was mention of some ranch, some estate, but she was not really interested: 'He had nothing, let's not get into that.' I can see she's not interested, but she would still mention those machines, the horses they had, but then says nothing will come of it, nevermind. [...] It was probably the fear of people who lived in the villages, of someone showing up to take inventory."[345]

And finally, Boris Mašić says: "I was always interested in these things and I wanted to know the real truth, because with us, it gets passed on as a trauma... I hope it won't get passed on to my children... because traumas such as persecution, camps, suffering leave a deep trace in the family. Compared to that, the confiscation of property was secondary, because it was not a matter of life or death."

There remains the hope that all these traumas that are not spoken about in our region, including those of the Danube Swabians, will not be passed on to our families and our society. Still, we are aware that we bear a heavy burden of the unspoken, the weight of trauma and the vicious circle of violence. On the geographic map of crimes, it spins and spins, so that Ovčara becomes a camp for the Danube Swabians at the end of the Second World War, and then an execution site during the wars of the 1990s. What remains unsaid, what is kept quiet, takes on a greater weight and the capacity of greater evil because it can always be used for manipulation and further violence. Or as Ivan Ivanji put it: "We are dealing with this so that we don't end up in some new camp."[346]

344 Aleksandar Krel's field notes, Anonymous (man, 1945, Subotica).

345 Z. Š. (1973).

346 Interview with Ivan Ivanji, author. This was his reply to the question of how it is possible that he is dealing with the issue of Germans and the injustices against them when they killed his parents and sent him to a camp, "Milost poznog rođenja", in: Dnevni list *Glas javnosti*, http://arhiva.glas-javnosti.rs/arhiva/2002/08/06/srpski/K02080501.shtml [retrieved July 2015.]

Instead of a summary

The end of the Second World War, that is, the entry of the Red Army into the area of Vojvodina, marked the beginning of what could be called the beginning of the end for the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia. The fate of collective guilt,[347] as Geiger called it, came crushing down on them. It started with arbitrary killings that spread, looting, harassment, rape, suicide; and continued through the organisation of forced labour, the establishment of camps, confiscation of property and suspension of all civil rights for the Danube Swabians.

It is estimated that 8,049 civilian lives – of Danube Swabians – were lost already before their internment in camps (killed, suicides, missing), with 48,667 perishing in the camps or in escape attempts, and another 1,994 among those who were deported to Soviet camps. Altogether it brings the number of casualties among the Danube Swabians from the territory of Yugoslavia to 58,730, including a large number of children and the infirm.[348]

The attitude of the state towards the Danube Swabians – apart from decisions and laws that were adopted – is also reflected in the rhetoric and the denial that anything bad was happening to *those* Germans; a denial that there were camps at all, and an insistence that treatment in "labour colonies" was good. Reports and letters showing the real attitude of the state towards the Danube Swabians are rare. The state tried to get rid of them, to "remove" its Germans, by any and all means. It encountered resistance from allied forces and organised many of its transportations illegally. On the other side, the Yugoslav Germans – those that had been previously evacuated, transported or were refugees – tried to return to Yugoslavia, to their farms, their homes and families. This was practically impossible and the state did everything in its power not to receive these people. International humanitarian organisations tried to do something. They participated in providing aid to the Yugoslav Germans, but it took a long time until it was finally implemented, primarily through repatriation –first of children, and then of the rest.

After much suffering and trauma, without property, still belittled, though in a different way, more or less subtly, often living in abject poverty, many members of the German ethnic minority in Yugoslavia, or more precisely in Vojvodina, decided to leave the country, which became more feasible in the 1950s.

The emptiness left behind by the Yugoslav and Vojvodina Germans was quickly "filled": another set of people came to take their place in their houses. The Germans who remained carried a mark of silence and trauma. Those who left, relieved that they had escaped and gotten out alive, also carried the heavy burden of emptiness in their hearts. They sometimes return to visit, with their descendants, to show them where their homes used to be.

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347 Vladimir Geiger, "Folksdojčeri, Fatum kolektivne krivnje", in: *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice/VDG Jahrbuch 2002*. (Osijek: Njemačka narodnosna zajednica Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj/Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien, 2002), p. 287.

348 Zoran Janjetović: *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, 2nd revised edition, (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), p. 329–330. A list of names of victims who were Yugoslav ethnic Germans divided into categories and by camp can be found in the book: *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*, Band IV, *Menschenverluste – Namen und Zahlen zu Verbrechen an den Deutschen durch das Tito-Regime in der Zeit von 1944–1948*. (München – Sindelfingen: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 1994).

Annexes

Case Study – Hungary: Whose are the Volksdeutsche?

(Extracts from documents of the Diplomatic Archives of the Serbian Foreign Ministry)

The position of ethnic Germans and the extent to which the state was explicit in preventing the return of Yugoslavia's Danube Swabians to the country is best illustrated by the events on the Yugoslav–Hungarian border and its related correspondence.

Problem. The Yugoslav delegation at the Allied Control Commission in Hungary writes to the Foreign Ministry on 2 June 1945: "Various groups are arriving from other countries, Austria, Czechia, Germany, including Germans and Hungarians – they are regularly stopped, but many escape and *somehow* cross the border. We asked for strict control of the border."[349] A reply received by the Foreign Ministry on 22 June 1945 quoted the Hungarian foreign minister as stating: "Lately, Swabians have been returning from Austria via Hungary to their native Bačka. Up to now, the Yugoslav authorities have been letting them through, but as of recently, they are being stopped near Subotica and returned to Hungary, 10,000 of them so far. The Hungarian government requests that the Yugoslav government intervene to receive the Swabians into Yugoslavia, because that is where they are from. Otherwise, the Hungarian government will be forced to prevent their crossing of the western border because the Bačka Swabians are Yugoslav citizens." Colonel Cicmil, head of the Yugoslav delegation at the ACC in Hungary writes further: "Currently in Hungary, at its southern borders, there are *a few thousand Swabians*, and more keep arriving from the north. I have informed the Hungarian foreign ministry that it is also our desire for them to close their western border to the Swabians who were formerly Yugoslav citizens..."[350]

Reply from the Foreign Ministry to the Yugoslav delegation in Budapest: "The Swabians who were formerly Yugoslav citizens and who evacuated with the German army before liberation cannot be repatriated to Yugoslavia under any circumstances. You are personally responsible for this irrespective of any contrary instructions from relevant repatriation authorities. [...] Through the Moscow embassy, the intervention of Russian military authorities in Hungary was sought to prevent the return of Swabians to Yugoslavia."[351]

Again. Just a month later, the minister for social policy (repatriation department) writes to the Foreign Ministry on 22 July 1945 that according to one report from the area of the village Kelebija, where the railway enters from Hungary into our country, "a transport of 3,000 Vojvodina Germans has arrived. Our authorities did not grant them entry into the country, and the Hungarians won't admit them either, because they also want to be *freed* of their domestic Germans, so these people are now neither there nor here. The Hungarian authorities have stated that in the future, if they attempt to enter Hungary again, and Germans will most likely be gathering at the border and continue their attempts to cross it, they will resort to armed force. [...] Request an urgent intervention from the Soviet authorities..."[352]

SOS. The Yugoslav delegation with the ACC in Hungary writes to the Foreign Ministry: "We request that the Foreign Ministry undertake urgent steps to make sure that repatriation delegates at all repatriation points, and particularly in Vienna, Bratislava, Brno and Prague make more energetic interventions to prevent the sending of transports with Germans, former Yugoslav citizens. [...] Delegates of the Ministry for Social Policy stationed in Budapest are doing what they can *to remove all Swabians from the trains*, entire compositions are even being dismantled, but given the proximity of our border, the transportees approach the border in various ways and

349 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 1802.

350 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 1664.

351 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 1664.

352 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 2512.

attempt to cross, so that there are now thousands of Swabians at our border. Also, given that there are only two repatriation delegates, they are unable to check each transport, particularly those transports that make only a short stop before quickly proceeding to Subotica, or those that manage to get through in small groups."[353]

Again. A letter to the Foreign Ministry arrives from Cicimil in Hungary on 23 February 1946: "Our border authorities have again transferred a group of Swabians to the Hungarian border even after the liquidation of the Swabian case near Murakeresztur. One gets the impression that the Yugoslav government does one thing and says another. I request an urgent intervention from the Ministry."[354]

Cicimil's talks in Hungary are by no means easy; he is under pressure from various sides. Brief correspondence exchanged between the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the Yugoslav delegation at ACC, namely Cicimil. He reports that 180 Swabians – women and children – were transferred on 21 February 1946 near Kelebija from Yugoslavia to Hungary.[355] The FNRJ Interior Ministry, passports department, writes to the Foreign Ministry on 11 March 1946, "Regarding the transfer of 180 persons of Germany ethnicity from Yugoslav to Hungarian territory, we submit the following report of the Interior Affairs Department at the GIO of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina: 'In this concrete case, the Hungarian authorities have, without any agreement with our representatives abroad or any other authorities, *simply delivered* a group of some 180 Germans and attempted to transfer them to our territory. They claimed that these were allegedly German fugitives from our territory and that we should admit them. They submitted no evidence to this effect, nor did they seek anyone's approval for this action. Especially not of our authorities that were not asked beforehand whether we would admit them.' Due to all of the above, the Head of OZNA for the Sombor district ordered that these people not be admitted and that they be sent back to Hungary. "*There is doubt these persons are from our territory at all*, but are instead from Hungarian territory and the Hungarians want to be rid of them in this way."[356]

Sent Swabians. A letter from the Soviets to Cicmil dated 23 March 1946 reads: "According to verified reports at the disposal of the ACC, in mid-March 1946, the Yugoslav authorities sent by motor vehicles 120 Swabian families, a total of 280 persons, to Austria via Hungary, without the approval of the ACC in Hungary. This Swabian transport was accompanied by members of the Yugoslav boarder guard."[357]

Epilogue. The FNRJ Interior Ministry (passports department) sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry dated 5 April 1946: "The FNRJ Interior Ministry has issued the strictest order to its authorities that they may not carry out any transfers of Germans until the issue is finally resolved. According to the concrete cases cited by our delegation in Budapest, these can only be persons who had previously crossed into our territory without the knowledge of our authorities."[358]

Washing our hands. The Austrian political representative contacted the Foreign Ministry on 9 July 1947 due to the unapproved crossing of the Austrian–Hungarian border by German-speaking refugees from Yugoslavia. The Foreign Ministry writes to the Interior Ministry, requesting a report on the actual state of affairs regarding the Germans in Vojvodina in order to take a position with respect to the communication of the Austrian representative. The Interior Ministry replies on 5 August 1947: "We are aware that there have been such unauthorised border crossings in the past, but the FNRJ authorities have already undertaken the necessary steps to prevent these escapes from our camps. If despite the undertaken measures, this practice continues, the escapes will be completely individual in nature and there is no danger that they could take on a wider scale."[359]

353 MSP RS DA PA 1945, F-20, JUG-34, 3745.

354 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 2018.

355 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, sign. 2250.

356 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650/omot 3, 2618.

357 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 3353.

358 MSP RS DA PA 1946, F-51, JUG-650, 3863.

359 MSP RS DA PA 1947, F-64, JUG-630, 414756.

Acronyms

ACC – Allied Control Commission
ACICR/ICRC – (Archive of) International Committee of the Red Cross
AJ – Archives of Serbia and Montenegro/Yugoslav Archives
AVNOJ – Antifascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia
BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
CH – Christliches Hilfswerk
CKJ – Yugoslav Red Cross
DFJ – Democratic Federative Yugoslavia
FNRJ – Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia
MIP/MSP – Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Foreign Ministry
MNO – Local People's Council
MUP – Interior Ministry
NDH – Independent State of Croatia
NOB – People's Liberation Struggle
NOO – People's Liberation Board
NR – People's Republic
NOV – People's Liberation Army
OZNA – Department of National Security
POJ – Yugoslav Resistance MovementUSSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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A Sketch for a culture of memory

Perceptions of suffering of Germans from Eastern European areas following the Second World War in Germany, and of Danube Swabians in Serbia and Yugoslavia

Marijana Stojčić

(Edited version of the text)

Introduction

It should be noted that the following text deals with the perception of collective suffering of Germans in the aftermath of the Second World War by examining how different social contexts and processes shaped the dynamics of collective memory of their expulsion from Eastern European areas after the war in (West) Germany[1] and of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia[2]/Serbia. Starting from the premise that memory never happens in a vacuum and that collective (as well as individual) memory is actually selective, subjective and shaped by the

1 This analysis does not cover the German Democratic Republic (DDR) since it almost completely adopted the Soviet narrative about the Second World War. For the remainder of the text, the term 'Germany' will be used to refer to the Federal Republic of Germany until the unification of the two states in 1990. See for example, Mihael Antolović, "Kultura sećanja: nemačko iskustvo. Masovna demagogija ili diktatura finansijskog kapitala? Interpretacija nacizma u Zapadnoj i Istočnoj Nemačkoj (1945–1965)", in: Milivoj Bešlin, Petar Atanacković, ed. Zbornik radova *Antifašizam pred izazovima savremenosti* (Novi Sad: Alternativna kulturna organizacija – AKO, 2012), p. 178–179, p. 182–184 and p. 187–188. For more see, Andreas Dorpalen, "Weimar Republic and Nazi Era in East German Perspective", in: *Central European History* 11/3 (1978): p. 211–230. As for the expulsion of Germans from Eastern European areas in the aftermath of the Second World War, Karl Betke notes that dealing with this topic was prohibited in DDR throughout its existence. Carl Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", in: Vera Katz, ed. Zbornik radova *Revizija prošlosti na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju u Sarajevu, 2007), p. 259.

2 Hereinafter, the term 'Yugoslavia' shall be used to refer only to socialist Yugoslavia which existed from 1945 to 1992 as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1963) and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963–1992).

needs of the present and a vision of the future,[3] this text will examine memory as a social and cultural construct with its own history. In that sense, memory will be analysed as an *image of the past* in light of the mechanisms of social transfer and transformation of the past, and the functions it fulfils, i.e. as a, "more or less conscious individual, group or collective attitude towards events from the past where individuals and groups use the past to distinguish themselves from others and construct their identity".[4] Hence, this analysis will focus on how ways of representing historical events correspond to the social (ideological, political, cultural) context and thereby shape a certain culture of memory.

The general research hypothesis is that memory of the expulsion of Germans from Eastern European areas in the aftermath of the Second World War, in Germany, but primarily in Yugoslavia and subsequently Serbia, is marked by an experience of large-scale destruction, crimes against the civilian population and the *breakdown of civilisation* brought on by the war. In that sense, the assumption is that the attitude towards the victims (who are part of both the German and Yugoslav, subsequently Serbian culture of memory) is shaped by attitudes towards the war and the ways it was interpreted in the concrete social context. Given that the identification and designation of collective *victims* and collective *executioners* often serves as a strategy – for relief and repression – used by societies to eschew responsibility for the "dark pages" of their past, it also plays a vital role in the ideology of victimisation constructed in various narratives. Therefore, in this text, the dynamics of the memory of persecution will be analysed through its interaction with the social context and the functions fulfilled by such memories in different time periods, as well as from the point of view of a diversity of positions of belonging, as ascribed to the persecuted. Namely, in Germany they are classified as victims from the majority group, while in Yugoslavia and (subsequently) Serbia, they belong to a minority group. On the other hand, these are victims that belong to the collective of the losing side in the war.

No memory is ever a "past unto itself", but a dip into the past always *from a new present* (Todor Kuljić), largely influenced by the social context of a given historical moment. As opposed to remembering understood as, "storing contents from the past", memory is a reconstruction of the past. Although only individuals remember (in the literal, physical sense), it is social groups that determine what will be remembered and how. This includes memories of much that they have not directly experienced.[5] This kind of *memory work* is shaped by various social identities and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), who remembers, and with what intention.[6]

When thinking about a culture of memory, it is therefore necessary to identify the principles of selection, their functions, changes dependent on group and place, as well as their changes over time. These usually say more about the present society than about the past. Conditioned by the interests, needs and current conditions in a society, the interpretation of the past determines actions in the present, as well as ways to coexist with others who do not share the same view of the past. Also, the choice of what will be remembered in a society and how that reflects the principal political determination of the society, is an expression of the aims for the future that society sets before itself at a certain point in time. In short, interpreting the past also means *choosing a future*.

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3 Todor Kuljić, *Kultura sećanja – teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2006), p. 8.

4 Ibid., p. 11.

5 Piter Berk, "Istorija kao društveno pamćenje", *Reč – Časopis za književnost i kulturu, i društvena pitanja* 56/2 (1999): p. 83. Available at http://www.fabrikaknjiga.co.rs/rec/56/83.pdf [retrieved 12 June 2015].

6 John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship", in: John R. Gillis, ed. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity (*Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 5.

Memories of expulsion in Germany – In the shadow of the Holocaust

The Second World War forever changed demographics, culture and world-views, in many respects establishing the world as we know it today. It was the first truly global war causing losses that are difficult even to estimate because, "civilians were killed as readily as people in uniform, and many of its worse massacres happened in places or at times when no one was in a position to count the victims or no one cared to do so."[7] The death of between 10 and 20 percent of the *total* population in the USSR, Poland and Yugoslavia, 4 to 6 percent in Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Japan and China, around 1 percent in Great Britain, France and the US, was a direct consequence of the war.[8] Victory in 1945 was total, the surrender unconditional, and the defeated states were completely occupied by the victors. After the Second World War, which included the project to wipe out the European Jews, left facing each other were – for the first time – not just the *victors* and

7 Erik Hobsbaum, *Doba ekstrema – Istorija Kratkog dvadesetog veka 1914–1991* (Belgrade: Dereta, 2002), p. 39.

8 Ibid.

the *defeated*, but also the *perpetrators* and the *victims*.[9] Describing the very end of the war, Ian Buruma talks about triumphalism, the liberation of the concentration camps, about people throughout Europe with nowhere to return to, the hunger prevalent in destroyed cities, the acts of retribution over real or imagined collaborators, the mass rape of German women.[10] A series of conferences between 1943 and 1945 in Teheran (1943), Moscow 1944), Yalta on the Crimea (early 1945), Potsdam (August 1945) and Paris (end of 1945) were where deals were made about distributing the spoils among the victorious powers and working out their post-war relations.

The reparations clause established at the Crimea Conference, when it was decided that postwar Germany would be forced to pay reparations, among other means also through the "use of the German labour force", was augmented by a decision adopted at the Potsdam Conference about relocating the German minority from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to Germany, "in a humane manner".[11] At the conference on reparations in Paris, which is where accounts of material and human losses in the war were settled, the principle of collective responsibility was established, whereby "Germany should be forced to compensate to the greatest extent possible the losses and suffering caused to the United Nations for which the German people is directly responsible."[12] Despite numerous protests, among others by high-ranking US diplomat George F. Kennan, as well as Bertrand Russell, "humane removal" was imposed on more than 13 million members of the German minority, many of whom were killed or died during removal or in camps of disease, starvation and poor conditions.[13] The British publisher and activist Victor Gollancz wrote with bitterness: "So far as the conscience of humanity should ever again become sensitive, will this expulsion be an undying disgrace for all those who remember it, who caused it or who put up with it. The Germans have been driven out, but not simply with an imperfection of excessive consideration, but with the highest imaginable degree of brutality."[14]

At the same time, Germany faced the task of integrating 12 million refugees, which was an enormous social problem.[15]

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9 In this context, the terms "perpetrators" and "victims" are used to denote models established at the collective level, including the symbolic identity of the collective as viewed from outside. After the Second World War and the Holocaust, both Germans and Jews are seen as "symbolic peoples". This is, among other reasons, due to the vast asymmetry of violence during the Holocaust and the cultural processing of that experience. In contrast to the relationship between the victors and the defeated, where (despite an inequality expressed through victory and defeat) there is a certain symmetry of violence based on the alternation of acts of war, between perpetrators and victims there is an asymmetry without any attendant mutuality. For more see: A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 100–101 and p. 132.

10 Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945.* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), p.13–130. For a more detailed overview of the situation from October 1944 to the winter of 1946/47 in Germany, see: Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler. The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), p. 22–222.

11 "Ujedinjene nacije – Zbirka dokumenata 1941–1945" (Belgrade: Arhiv za pravne i društvene nauke, 1948), from p. 96. See also: "Foreign relations of the United States: diplomatic papers: the Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945", II, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945, from p. 1495.

12 "Final Act of the Paris Conference on Reparation", Command Paper 6721, 1947, quoted from Duško Dimitrijević, "Zahtevi pripadnika nekadašnje nemačke manjine za restituciju imovine u Srbiji", Original academic paper, MP 1 (March 2011): p.
134–135. Available at: http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/img/doi/0025-8555/2011/0025-85551101126D.pdf [retrieved 17 July 2015].

13 E. Hobsbaum, *Doba ekstrema – Istorija Kratkog dvadesetog veka 1914–1991*, p. 45.

14 Victor Gollancz, "Our Threatened Values", p. 96, quoted from Alfred de Zayas, "Anglo-American Responsibility for the Expulsion of the Germans, 1944–48", in: Steven Bela Vardy, T. Hunt Tooly, *Ethnic Cleansing in 20th Century Europe*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 148. Available at: http://www.hungarianhistory.com/lib/vardy/vardy.pdf. [retrieved July 2015].

15 C. Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", p. 256.

In 1945 Germany was a divided and completely destroyed land, with four occupation forces having marched into it. As Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich note in their famous book *The Inability to Mourn*, the downfall of the Third Reich, despite doubts that were certainly present, was a cataclysmic event most Germans were not prepared for, as they were unprepared for re-examining their role in that system.[16]

Millions of Germans were involved in the crimes in myriad ways: as direct perpetrators, as inactive participants, as bystanders who did nothing. The Nuremberg trials (1945/46) and the denazification measures, through which the public was informed about the brutality of the Nazi regime, the scale of the crimes committed and the systematic persecution and destruction of European Jews, had limited scope.[17]

In her chronological overview of the German history of memory, Aleida Assmann denotes the designation as taboo of recent war events and mass crimes, own responsibility and own suffering in public space, as well as the overstepping of the boundary from private towards political and public communication enjoying widespread social consensus as the phase of "communicative silence" and a *mass defence mechanism against memory*. She situated this phase in the period from 1945 to 1957.[18] This is also generally applicable to traumatic memories from the point of view of the German civilian population that were very slow in becoming public topics. In contrast to memory of the bombings, which never disappeared, remaining both common and particular without collapsing, "into a condensed and transferable narrative accepted by the whole of society", there was usually no room for memory of rapes even in protected family memories.[19] On the other hand, this does not mean that the memory of German victims was wholly absent from the political discourse of the postwar period. On the contrary, from the very beginning, there was a clear tendency to publish and politicise victims' experiences. The topic of expulsion played an important role, because in the first two postwar decades in Germany, it was a major psycho-social strategy for avoiding responsibility for the Second World War and the Holocaust.[20] According to Assmann, associations of exiles dominated the presentation of "expulsion from the East" as public memory and they articulated it not as social but as political remembering,[21] whereby it was often used to relativise or

16 Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarethe Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

17 For a brief overview of the denazification process, see: Heinz-Gunther Stobbe, "Denacifikacija u Nemačkoj", in: Nebojša Popov (ed.), *Srpska strana rata – Trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju*, Deo II (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2002), p. 295–300. For more on the denazification of Germany from the perspective of the German population and occupation forces, see: Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler. The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), from p. 223. See also John H. Herz, "The Fiasco of Denazification in Germany", in: *Political Science Quarterly* 63/4 (December 1948): p. 569–594. On the failure of the denazification programme in the American occupation zone, see, for example, James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

18 A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 125; Also, Todor Kuljić, *Prevladavanje prošlosti: uzroci i pravci promene slike istorije krajem XX veka* (Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2002), p. 216.

19 A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 236.

20 See: Teodor Adorno, "Šta znači rad na prošlosti", Reč – Časopis za književnost i kulturu, i društvena pitanja, 57/3 (mart 2000): pp. 49–57. Available at http://fabrikaknjiga.co.rs/rec/57/49.pdf [retrieved 3 March 2015]. Also noted by Bethke. See: C. Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", p. 256.

21 A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 249. On the close ties between associations of exiles and German conservative parties, see: Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945–1990* (New York: 2004), p. 176.

equalise victims and as an argument against *allied terror*, re-education and "pride in guilt".[22]

Already in the early 1950s, a political party was formed in Kiel (province of Schleswig-Holstein) called the 'League of the Expelled and Disenfranchised' (*Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten/ BHE*) whose policy concentrated on two areas: the "Right to live in the West" (*Lebensrecht im Westen*) and the "Right to a home in the East" (*Heimatrecht im Osten*). The former related to advocating for the interests of the exiles and programmes of material and social assistance, while the latter covered a rather vague set of objectives, the central being the re-establishment of borders from 1937. Ideologically, the party invoked the Christian West and anticommunism, while its leadership included a considerable number of former Nazis. Although there were attempts to include other target groups apart from the exiles, such as victims of the bombing campaign or those let go from public services as part of denazification, up until its merger in 1961 with the right-wing conservative 'German Party' (*Deutschen Partei/DP*) into the 'All German Party' (*Gesamtdeutschen Partei/GP*), it remained a party representing the interests of the exiles. At the federal elections in 1953, it won 27 seats and played an important role in halting the denazification process and introducing persons with a Nazi past into politics in the early Federal Republic of Germany. This electoral success was never repeated and by the end of the 1960s, with a change in the social climate, it had become a marginal political party.[23]

On the other hand, federations of exiles (united in 1957 into the 'Federation of Exiles' – *Bund der Vertriebenen/ BDV*) had an important role in supporting the articulation of memory about expulsion through a rich native historiography. Although uneven in quality (mostly not written by historians), and sometimes ideologically burdened and full of ressentiment, it is nonetheless a rich historical source.[24] Another valuable source of local historical and ethnographic data are the official and homestead registers common to practically every German village (including villages in Vojvodina, Bosnia and Slavonia). This is all the more important because German scholarly historiography of the time by and large stayed away from topics related to the millions of German exiles and refugees, since their views were often seen as the "lobby of right-wing extremism". The only exception from that period is an ambitious project titled *The Expulsion of Germans from Eastern and Central Europe* pursued from 1953 to 1962 by the most prominent historians of the time, including Werner Conze, Theodor Schieder and Hans Rothfels. The incentive for it came from the Ministry for Refugees, Expellees and War Victims as part of preparations for a peace conference where allied demands for reparation would be met with a list of material losses and victimisation of Germans who were expelled or had fled from the territories east of the Oder and the Neisse. For the purpose of this research study, witnesses from almost every German village in Eastern Europe (including Yugoslavia) filled out questionnaires about events during and after the Second World War. These are still kept as the so-called "Eastern Documentation" in a department of the German Federal Archives in Bayreuth,

22 "Pride in guilt" is a polemical term originating from the radical right of the political spectrum and relates to the allegedly masochistic obsession of Germans with guilt. It is usually employed in polemics concerning collective responsibility for National Socialism and its consequences (especially its victims). See: A. Asman, Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti, p. 98. A certain parallel may be drawn with the term "auto-chauvinism" used in Serbian public discourse to denote those who question the dominant nationalist narrative about the Serbs as, if not the only, then the greatest victims of the wars from the 1990s and of communism. See, for example: Rade Ivković, "Srpski autošovinizam ili identifikacija s agresorom", Nova srpska politička misao, 17 April 2012 Available at: http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/srpski-autosovinizam-ili-identifikacija-sa-agresorom.html?alphabet=l [retrieved 10 February 2015]. See also, "Srpski autošovinizam: Mržnja prema sopstvenom narodu", Emisija Raskršća, Intermagazin, 22 February 2015. Available at: http://www.intermagazin.rs/srpski-autosovinizam-mrznja-prema-sopstvenom-narodu-video/ [retrieved 3 March 2015].

23 For more see: York R. Winkler, *Flüchtlingsorganisationen in Hessen 1945–1954:BHE, Flüchtlingsverbände, Landsmannschaften* (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 1998).

24 Zoran Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, Deo: "Kratak pregled relevantne literature" (Belgrade: INIS, 2009), p. 17–40. In this section Janjetović gives a thorough overview of relevant literature dealing with the Danube Swabians in Germany and from the former Yugoslavia. See also: Mihael Antolović, "Dželati i/ili žrtve – nemačka manjina u srpsko-hrvatskoj i nemačkoj istoriografiji (1945–2010)" (unpublished manuscript).

Bavaria.[25] The fifth volume of the documents, produced on the basis of interviews and archival sources and written by Hans-Ulcrih Wehler, deals with Yugoslavia and was long considered the most relevant scholarly study on the topic.

In contrast to the previous period – when memory about the expulsion of Germans was mostly utilised to equalise and suppress the experiences of Holocaust victims, thereby acquiring a discursive form loaded with a strong right-wing ressentiment[26] – in the second phase of the German history of memory, when society finally recognised the suffering of Jewish victims, memory of fleeing and expulsion from the East was almost entirely stigmatised as a strategy for suppressing and relativising responsibility for Nazism.[27] Thus, working on that trauma (as well as the trauma of the bombing campaign of German cities and the mass rapes at the end of the war) was blocked from two sides: on one side by its use to suppress other victims, and on the other, by staunch criticism and a focus on second-generation Jewish victims – the children. In such a context, there could be no room for German traumatic experiences presented publicly and incorporated into national identity, and it was left to right-wing nationalists and private memories of the expellees who continued to grieve for "the old homeland". At the same time, this also prevented a constructive processing of the trauma among the children's generation that had been caused by the collective silence of the parents' generation.[28] According to Assmann, referencing Werner Bohleber, "From a psychoanalytic perspective, the suffering of Jewish victims 'shut the mouths' of the children's generation, so that they could not speak about 'their own traumatisations'."[29]

The speech given by Richard von Weizsäcker[30] at the Bundestag at the Ceremony Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the End of War in Europe and of National-Socialist Tyranny is considered a turning point for memory about 1945. He mentioned the suffering of Germans, but in von Weizsäcker's case this was not in the form of *settling the score*, where one set of victims cancels out another, or of universalising victims whereby Jewish victims, for instance, are placed on the same level as SS officers killed in action, as was done during the Bitburg visit[31] (to be cancelled out again in a different way). He appealed for compassion towards all suffering left behind by the Nazi epoch, including the suffering of Germans: in bombings of cities, expulsions and pillaging, rapes, injustices and tortures, without instrumentalising that suffering to diminish or reject German responsibility for the war.

25 Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 24. See also: C. Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", p. 258.

26 And with the new policy towards the East (*Ostpolitic*) of Chancellor Willy Brandt and the signing of agreements in Moscow and Warsaw in 1970 that included recognition of the existing borders along the Oder-Neisse line, the discourse about expulsion acquired, for many, the connotation of being reactionary. C. Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", p. 257.

27 A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 239.

28 For more on the effects of silence about the past in families on the socialisation of new generations, see Gesine Schwan, "Razorna moć prećutane krivice", in: Republika (1997): p. 169–170. Available at: http://www.yurope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/97/170/170_30.HTM [retrieved 15 May 2015]. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich also describe the paralysing effects that perpetrator memory – with its desire to "draw the line" and tendency towards forgetting – had on West German postwar society. See: A. Mitscherlich, M. Mitscherlich, The Inability to Mourn.

29 W. Bohleber, *Trauma, Traurer und Geschichte*, p. 143, cited in A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 253 (footnote).

30 Richard von Weizsäcker, "Speech in the Bundestag on 8 May 1985 during the Ceremony Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the End of War in Europe and of National-Socialist Tyranny", Office of the Bundespräsident (ret.) Richard von Weizsäcker. Entire speech available at: https://www.lmz-bw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Medienbildung_MCO/fileadmin/bibliothek/weizsaecker_speech_may85/weizsaecker_speech_may85.pdf [retrieved 2 July 2015].

31 This was a joint visit by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and American President Ronald Reagan on 5 May 1985, when during Reagan's visit to Germany, they visited on the same day the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and in the afternoon the German military cemetery where, among others, SS officers were buried. This caused an uproar among the German public.

In the debate that took place in 1986 and 1987, referred to as the "historians' dispute" (*Historikerstreit*) – which renewed before the German public the debate surrounding fascism and whose intensity was comparable to similar debates from the late sixties – echoes of Weizsäcker's speech can be discerned, as well as discussions (both in the Bundestag and among the wider public) about the planned museum of German history and the Holocaust memorial. Despite its name, the dispute did not arise out of new historical facts, but concerned the way facts were presented. Also, the heated debate saw the participation of not just historians, but almost the entire public. In somewhat simplified terms, because the debate lasted a long while, and was multilayered[32] – the dispute, as before, centred on whether the past should be "done with" and German nationalism freed from the mortgage of Nazism, or whether through Auschwitz, it must remain as a constant warning against what radical nationalism can lead to, and at the same time as the background for thinking about contemporary right-wing extremism in Germany.[33]

Only constant dialogue with the past and re-examination of the present, of identities being constructed, of political ideas and practices in the light of the past and its consequences can be a source of political pedagogy. A past that is disturbing, that resists being made routine and normalised is the way to turn responsibility for the past into responsibility for the present and the future.

In the last decade of the 20th century, the coordinates of collective memory in Germany shifted towards more complex representations of the past. On the one hand, this meant further expansion and inclusion of other victims of National-Socialism into collective memory; and on the other, long suppressed by the trauma of the Holocaust, memory of the German victims – of bombing campaigns, rape and expulsion from Eastern European areas – once again became a topic of scholarly research[34] and slowly entered the public eye. Based on a study of media content and topics of commemorative ceremonies, Klaus Naumann designated 1995 as the, "turning point in the culture of memory" when it came to the perspective of German victims. Compared to 1985, the themes of the ceremonies had changed significantly and were focused on the bombings and expulsions, while the experience of German victims was increasingly present in public memory discourse.[35] Aleida Assmann places that "return of memory" somewhat later, in 2003, when the suffering of Germans at the end of the Second World War was discussed with much emotional engagement in the media, in literature and films, interviews and documentaries. She cites as one of the reasons the biological disappearance of the last eye-witnesses and the entry onto the scene of the third generation – the grandchildren's generation. As in the seventies and eighties, here again the terrain was that of family memory, however, not set for confrontation or defence, but rather the exploration of that memory as part of one's own biography and identity, which sometimes took on the character of apologia.[36] This was by no means simple or without tensions both on the internal and the external political scene. The last decade and a half has been dominated by political debate about the initiative of the Federation of Expellees to build in Berlin the "European Centre against Expulsions", which was discussed at a session of the

32 For a detailed overview of the course and significance of the "historian's dispute" in Serbian, see: T. Kuljić, *Prevladavanje prošlosti: uzroci i pravci promene slike istorije krajem XX veka*, p. 148–168. See also: Geoff Eley, "Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986–1987", *Past & Present*, 121 (November 1988): p. 171–208. Available at http://sciencepoparis8.hautetfort.com/media/02/02/34a0c6eb87bbd821ef62bcfe05504854.pdf [retrieved 1 July 2015].

33 According to Kuljić, "this debate is informative as a developed model of the conflict between conservative nationalists and critics of nationalism throughout Europe". T. Kuljić, *Prevladavanje prošlosti: uzroci i pravci promene slike istorije krajem XX veka*, p. 162.

34 For an overview of relevant historical research see: Mihael Antolović, "Nemačka nacionalna manjina u Jugoslaviji kao predmet nemačke istoriografije (1945–2010)" in: *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju*, 87 (2013): p. 145–148. Available at http://www.maticasrpska.org.rs/wordpress/assets/ZMSI%20br%2087%20%28stampa%29.pdf [retrieved 12 June 2015].

35 As cited in A. Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti. Kultura sećanja i politika povesti*, p. 236.

36 For more see: Ibid., p. 235–264.

Bundestag in 2002. Its construction is strongly supported by the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU), the federal president, organisations of expellees, but also by some left-wing and liberal intellectuals. Those opposed to the construction of the Centre see it as an attempt to establish an "antipode" to Holocaust memory and space for strengthening the influence of various organisations of expellees (ranging on the political spectrum from right of centre to radical right wing). The discussion about the Centre against Expulsion was accompanied by much controversy.[37] Following forceful protests by the Polish and Czech governments, as a compromise and joint initiative of German and Polish institutions the 'Network for Remembrance and Solidarity' was formed, bringing together European scholars, researchers and organisations working on these topics.[38]

The re-emergence of memory about German victims in a little over the past two decades in Germany is not, of course, unequivocal. It is possible to trace within it (at least) two tendencies: one runs along the path of instrumentalisation and politicisation of suffering in the spirit of the 1950s model in an endeavour to terminate dealing with the Nazi past ("draw the line");[39] the other has a more complex and layered approach that does not deny German responsibility for Nazism or try to re-evaluate it, but instead by overcoming the simple dichotomies of executioner/victim and "us"/"them", opens up space for the recognition of all suffering. The former approach is based on a moral particularism, the normalisation of nationalism and popularising traditional values and national symbols;[40] at the core of the latter is moral universalism stemming from the basic ethical norm of human dignity founded on solidarity and respect for each human being irrespective of belonging. For the latter approach, dealing with the past is a never-ending process, because history remains a constant warning about what human beings are capable of doing to each other. These processes are not simple and do not pertain only to the Germans. Europe is closely linked, among other things, by its past and the legacy of Nazism, which had different dynamics and consequences in all European countries. They are also linked to processes of dealing with the past in other European countries, which posit the question of responsibility for those countries in different ways. As such, they are also susceptible to different instrumentalisation and politicisation practices.

37 In the media, see, for example: David Crossland, "The World From Berlin: German Expellee Leader Hurts Her Cause With Polish 'NPD' Comments", *Spiegel Online International*, 7 March 2007. Available at: http://www.spiegel.de/international/the-world-from-berlin-german-expellee-leader-hurts-her-cause-with-polish-npd-comments-a-470372.htmlthe-world-from-berlin-german-expellee-leader-hurts-her-cause-with-polish-npd-comments-a-470372.html; Žarko Rakić, "Bekstvo, progon i dug put pomirenja", *Politika*, 18 February 2009. Available at http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/75734/ Svet/Bekstvo-progon-i-dug-put-pomirenja; Rob Turner, ed. "Controversial German politician renounces claim on post in expellees museum", *Deutsche Welle*, 11 February 2010. Available at http://www.dw.com/en/controversial-german- politician-renounces-claim-on-post-in-expellees-museum/a-5239231 [retrieved 12 June 2015].

38 C. Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", p. 257.

39 Now in a new context: after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of block divisions in the world, where the united Germany is a powerful economic and political factor.

40 And the history about the victims could play the role of a new national myth connecting the experience of East and West Germans, offering them an important emotional bond as a counterweight to the many things that still divide them.

Memories of the expulsion of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia – On the side of the angels...

At the beginning of this section, it is important to bear in mind the complexity of Yugoslavia as an entity, as well as the fact that up until its dissolution, it took on different forms in the various stages of its (also) socialist history depending on the social, political and economic processes taking place not just within the Yugoslav space, but also within the wider international context. Although the nineties may be designated as a turning point, many of these processes were under way already during socialism (especially since the early eighties within the circles of the intellectual opposition). The intensification of centrifugal tendencies within the party leaderships of the republics following Tito's death and the ideological vacuum created by the combined effects of a system in crisis[41] and the breakdown of a common vision of the past in Yugoslavia, encouraged a comprehensive re-examination of the historical experience of Yugoslavia in its intellectual circles. This also led to the removal of numerous taboos. Again, this was not an unequivocal process, but one emanating from the tensions in efforts to expand human and civil rights, on the one hand, and the strengthening of ethno-nationalist discourse based on

41 For a detailed analysis of systemic factors in the breakup of Yugoslavia, see: Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija – država koja je odumrla/Uspon, kriza i pad Četvrte Jugoslavije* (Zagreb, Belgrade: Prometej, Samizdat B92, 2003). See also: Laslo Sekelj, *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja – Ogled o uzrocima strukturne krize jugoslovenskog društva* (Belgrade: Izdavačko preduzeće "Rad", 1990).

self-victimisation and injustices committed against the collective by *others* (mostly other Yugoslav nationalities), on the other. At the start of the nineties, the transformation of the socio-economic and political system required a new model of legitimation and entailed re-interpreting the past in line with the new social context. The new present (once again) demanded a new past. As in other parts of former Yugoslavia, in Serbia this involved a re-evaluation of 1945 in collective memory. This wider context should be kept in mind when researching memory about the expulsion of the Danube Swabians in the aftermath of the Second World War, because it strongly influences the dynamics and shaping of that memory.

Historically, the Second World War left its mark on Yugoslavia through 2 million deaths – either direct victims of war, those who died in camps, mass liquidations or from starvation and disease, or indirect victims (due to abortions, emigration, kidnapping, removal or expulsion).[42] Apart from deaths, statistics have also recorded some 400,000 prisoners of war, interned persons and forced labourers, 530,000 expellees, as well as 320,000 forcibly mobilised persons.[43] It was not just a war against Nazism, but also a bloody inter-ethnic conflict within the country, resulting in mass murders and ethnic cleansing within its ethnically more heterogeneous areas. The war also left its mark on the survivors who were deeply traumatised by deaths of family members, friends and neighbours, as well as their own experiences of starvation, suffering and the ubiquity of violence. The end of the war and its immediate aftermath were marked by ideological reckoning and the persecution of ideological enemies, as well as the establishment of a new socialist order based on the idea of egalitarianism and the brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav peoples and nationalities. For the Yugoslav communists, the People's Liberation Struggle (NOB) was the catalyst and foundation for the legitimacy of the socialist revolution, and the People's Liberation Army and Yugoslavia's Partisan Units (NOV and POJ) the institution that embodied the ideal of "brotherhood and unity".[44] The end of the war also marked the end of the centuries-long presence of the Danube Swabians in the territory of what we now refer to as the former Yugoslavia.[45] Apart from those who actively participated in the NOB, or were married to a member of a different ethnic group, the entire ethnic German population that remained in Yugoslavia was treated under the principle of collective guilt. Based on a decision of the Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) from 21 November 1944,[46] all property of the German Reich was confiscated, as well as the property of persons of German ethnicity who had Yugoslav citizenship (later used for the agrarian reforms and distributed among the new settlers). In June 1945, the Yugoslav government decided, "all Germans [...] should be removed to Germany".[47] Since the provisions

42 Mari-Žanin Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku* (Belgrade: Clio, 2013), p. 209.

43 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Federal Institute for Statistics (ed. *Yugoslavia*, from p. 191)

44 Ibid., p. 205–209.

45 In the late summer of 1944, a portion of the Danube Swabians left the country following orders for the evacuation of the Reich Office for the Volksdeutsche. Josip Mirnić states that of the approximately half a million Danube Swabians living in Yugoslavia before the war, some 200,000 remained at the end of the war. Josip Mirnić, *Nemci u Bačkoj u Drugom svetskom ratu* (Novi Sad: Prosveta, 1974), p. 332. When the Red Army crossed the Danube in October 1944, some 30,000 German prisoners and forced labourers were deported to the Soviet Union. Ibid., p. 327.

46 This refers to the 'Decision on state ownership of enemy properties, state administration of properties of absentee persons and the sequestering of properties seized by the occupation authorities' adopted by the AVNOJ Presidency on 21 November 1944. Apart from the properties of citizens of the German Reich and Yugoslav Germans, it also included the properties of war criminals, irrespective of citizenship, and persons whose properties were to be turned over to the state based on judgements of military and civilian courts. For more, see: Marijan Maticka, "Zakonski propisi o vlasničkim odnosima u Jugoslaviji (1944–1948)", in: *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, 25/1, Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu (Zagreb: FF press, 1992), p. 126–127. Available at http://hrcak.srce.hr/51101 [retrieved 25 August 2015].

47 For more see: Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: Zoran Janjetović, 2005), from p. 111.

of the Potsdam Protocol did not apply to Yugoslavia, and because the allies remained steadfast in refusing to "transfer the entire German minority population" to Germany, the remaining ethnic Germans (including, women, children and the elderly) were taken to camps for forced labour where many died of disease, abuse and starvation. The number of those that died in the camps is 48,447, which is almost 10 percent of the pre-war ethnic German population, and given that only the smaller part of Yugoslav Germans remained in the country in the autumn of 1944, the percentage of those that died in the camps was actually much higher.[48] With the closing of the last camps in 1948, following the clash with the Informbiro, many of the remaining Germans emigrated, predominantly to Germany and Austria.

As mentioned earlier, much like in Germany, memory of the persecution of the Danube Swabians following the Second World War in socialist Yugoslavia was deeply marked by, on the one hand, the experience of the war, and, on the other, by ideological confrontations between two systems, the capitalist and the socialist, that followed in the war's aftermath. Created as a defensive union of small peoples amidst large neighbours, Yugoslavia heavily relied on the image of the *external enemy*, and the state's identity was developed around the idea of diversity and seeking a "third path" with respect to the USSR, on the one hand, and the pre-war Yugoslavia and liberal democracy in general (where liberal democracy and capitalism were used interchangeably), on the other.[49] The People's Liberation War and the Partisan's struggle for liberation from Nazi occupation, together with the socialist revolution, represented the founding myths of the new state. Hence, the Second World War had a special status in collective memory, and, due to its specific nature, was frequently used as the first line of defence of the very idea of socialism. The identity of the New Yugoslavia was constituted around it and promoted not just through official historiography (and its 'operationalised' version in the form of school history textbooks), but also as an important part of popular culture. The epic struggle against the occupier was part of popular mythology, promoted through films, books, comics and music. Given that, to a certain extent, products of popular culture reflect socially acceptable values, while also influencing their production,[50] it is particularly interesting to follow an important segment of popular culture from the socialist period: the so-called cinematographic offensives (within partisan war cinematography). These were films that presented on the big screen seven major military operations of the German army and its allies against the Yugoslav Partisans during the Second World War. In a symbolic sense, the offensives on film held an important position within the official ideological discourse of Yugoslav socialism. They were, in a manner of speaking, state projects. According to Nemanja Zvijer, over time, the narrative about the *seven enemy offensives*[51] became an, "important site of memory and one of the more important segments serving as the foundation for the ideological monopoly, as well as a significant means to reduce the complexity of the Second World War in the territory of Yugoslavia."[52] By

48 Zoran Janjetović, "Da li je bilo genocida nad Podunavskim Švabama u Jugoslaviji?", Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju.

49 Defining the enemy in general means defining the collective and is an important point of distinction in relation to which a collective constructs an image of itself. The process usually involves ascribing 'bad' characteristics to the enemy, whereby one's own collective is freed of them. In that sense, the assumption of the existence of the enemy and one's own endangerment legitimises the political actions of the collective. For more, see: Suzan Bak-Mors, *Svet snova i katastrofa* (Belgrade: Beogradski krug, 2005), from p. 12.

50 For more see: Jack Nachbar, Kevin Lause, ed. *Popular Culture: An Inrtoductory Text* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992).

51 The offensives on film are: Kozara (1962), Raid on Drvar (1963), Battle of Neretva (1969), Sutjeska (1973), Guns of War (1974), Fall of Italy (1981) and Igman March (1983).

52 Nemanja Zvijer, "Koncept neprijatelja u filmovanim ofanzivama", in: *Sociološki pregled*, XLIV/3 (2010): p. 419–437, from p.421. See also: Nemanja Zvijer, *Ideologija filmske slike: Sociološka analiza partizanskog ratnog spektakla* (Belgrade: Filozofski fakultet u Beogradu, 2011).

analysing *representations of the enemy* in them, he concluded that representations of Germans are more or less constantly dominated by an image of their advantage in terms of numbers and technology, their brutality and facelessness. Although their characterisation varies in intensity from film to film, depending on contemporary political and ideological, as well as practical reasons (such as, for instance, the Yugoslav-German co-production of the *Battle of Neretva* or the first wave of mass tourism during the sixties when, "historical enemies were transformed into welcome tourism clients"[53]), the negative image of Germans is fairly constant. Facing this cruel enemy is a collective made up of the Partisan army as a group of lofty individuals and the helpless people it protects.[54] The official version of history, whereby all responsibility for suffering and crimes has fallen on the Germans (without deeper examination of the civil war, inter-ethnic conflicts within the Yugoslav territory, or the extermination of Yugoslav Jews and Roma that would not have been possible without widespread collaboration of local stakeholders), resulted in a situation in Yugoslavia, as in many other European countries, in which many memories about events during the war and its aftermath were "conveniently forgotten".[55]

When it comes to memory of the Danube Swabians in the socialist period, with few exceptions, in the official and public memory, they were entirely equated with Nazism and the experience of the Second World War, while memory of their persecution is either situated within that discourse or completely excluded. By the mid-sixties, barely a few thousand Danube Swabians remained in Yugoslavia. Under the burden of unfaded anti-German sentiment, they mostly opted for ethnic mimicry up until the early nineties: declaring themselves to be Hungarian, Croat, Serb, Czech or members of another ethnic community.[56] The words of Stjepan Seder, when he speaks about his ethnic identity, can serve as illustration of that process: "Up until I turned eighteen, I was registered for school records and other documents as a Croat. This was by no means unusual, because by and large, almost all Germans in Sremski Karlovci declared themselves as Croats after the Second World War. This was, actually, their *modus vivendi*. When I turned eighteen, I started declaring myself as Yugoslav."[57]

While the Germans mostly functioned as a hidden minority, gradually assimilating, the topic of their persecution after the war remained taboo up until the dissolution of the state in the early nineties – not just in public and official memory, but to a large extent also in historiography. Much like in Germany, it was shaped by ideological differences and powerful memories about the war. This is visible not just in the interpretation of historical events, but also in the choice of research topics. Research devoted to Danube Swabians mostly dealt

53 Renata Jambrešić Kirin, "Politika sjećanja na Drugi svjetski rat u doba medijske reprodukcije socijalističke kulture", in: Lada Čale-Feldman, Ines Prica (ed.), *Devijacije i promašaji* (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2006), p. 173.

54 This should not be taken to mean that the entirety of Yugoslav cinematography can be reduced to non-critical reproduction of official ideology. For instance, films included in what was termed 'New Yugoslav Film' (1961–1972), or the Yugoslav 'black wave' provide a much more critical and complex picture that deviated from common ideological stereotypes in depicting the Partisan struggle and the Partisans, as well as the Yugoslav reality of the time. Still, their influence remained limited to relatively narrow intellectual and artistic circles. For more on the Yugoslav 'black wave', see for example: Greg Dekjur, *Jugoslovenski crni talas: polemički film od 1963. do 1972 u Socijalističkoj Federativnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2011). On the other hand, a film called *Let Me Be Just a Pigeon* was made for East German producers in 1990 about the Slavonian Partisan troop "Ernest Telman". The troop was formed in 1943 and was made up predominantly of Slavonian Germans and a number of defectors from the Wehrmacht. For more about the troop, see: Nail Redžić, *Telmanovci – Zapisi o njemačkoj partizanskoj četi 'Ernest Telman'* (Belgrade: Narodna armija, 1984). The film *Let Me Be Just a Pigeon* is available at https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge26Y2BTyFo [retrieved 18 August 2015].

55 Tony Judt, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe", in: *Daedalus*, 121/4, *Immobile Democracy?* (Fall 1992): p. 89.

56 For more see: Aleksandar Krel, *Mi smo Nemci – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut, SANU, 2014), Deo: "Bili bismo i Kinezi – Etnička mimikrija Nemaca u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji", p. 141–151.

57 Ibid., p. 146.

with the period after 1918, and especially events during the Second World War.[58] The interpretation framework, established already in 1946 within the official report of the Province Commission for determining the crimes of the occupiers and their collaborators in Vojvodina, "Life, work and conduct of domestic Germans (Volksdeutsche) before the war, during the war and during the occupation", was retained with more or less finesse until the early nineties.[59] Twenty years later (1966), the first of three (which would be the total published during the socialist period) monographs devoted to Germans in Yugoslavia was published. The monograph was about Nazism and Germans in Yugoslavia during the thirties by the Slovak historian Dušan Biber *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933–1941*. The second, *Nemci u Bačkoj u Drugom setskom ratu* [Germans in Bačka in the Second World War] was published in 1974 and is the work of Josip Mirnić. It analyses the role of the German minority in Bačka on the eve of and during the Second World War. Although both studies remain within the confines of the dominant ideological paradigm of domestic Germans as "fifth columnists", these are nevertheless significant historiographic treatises, well founded on available sources in the literature.[60] This cannot be said of the work of Petar Kačavenda in his *Nemci u Jugoslaviji 1918–1945* [Germans in Yugoslavia 1918–1945], which interprets historical processes selectively and is permeated by the presumption of the collective guilt of the German minority as a, "strong fifth column factor in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the years immediately preceding the Second World War and [...] their determination to voluntarily and consciously engage in such tendencies."[61] Due to its one-sidedness, this work is more illustrative of blatant instrumentalisation of history. Completely equating the Nazis and the Vojvodina Germans logically implies that those who advocate a differentiated approach when it comes to the fate of the Danube Swabians, research and Nazi mobilisation during the war, as well as their postwar persecution, "endeavoured – and continue in their endeavours – to justify the Third Reich." [...]".[62] The Danube Swabians were represented as collaborators and fifth columnists in textbooks as well.[63] As shown by Jajetović's survey of Serbian history textbooks from 1918 to 2000, the only situation where Danube Swabians are mentioned is the settlement and agrarian reform after the Second World war (but even then with no mention of their expulsion), instead what is regularly noted is that the distribution of land, "also included the land of the Volksdeutsche who collaborated with the occupier and who fled in fear of just punishment".[64] Generally speaking, the history of relations between the South Slavs and the Danube Swabians is tackled in a very fragmented manner, without any attempt to present a comprehensive picture of the presence of Swabians, of coexistence and mutual influences. In this selected representation of a common history, the image of the Danube Swabians is predominantly negative, focusing on conflicts that usually remain either unexplained or the explanations are one-sided, or are sometimes even falsified; while their achievements and contributions through a history of coexistence to the local culture, technology and economy are either omitted or portrayed as part of a "hidden agenda" such as Germanisation, German imperialism or conquest of lands. This is not

58 For a detailed overview of relevant research, see: Mihael Antolović, "Srpska istoriografija o Nemcima u Vojvodini" in: *Spomenica Istorijskog arhiva Srem*, 7 (Sremska Mitrovica: Istorijski arhiv "Srem", 2008), p. 149–165, from p. 150. See also: Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, from p. 29.

59 Antolović notes the tendentiousness of this study in proving the basic presumption that the lion's share of the German minority were "fifth columnists", thereby legitimising the postwar policy towards the Germans. M. Antolović, "Dželati i/ili žrtve – nemačka manjina u srpsko-hrvatskoj i nemačkoj istoriografiji (1945–2010)", p. 9.

60 Ibid., p. 9–10; Z. Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini*, p. 31–33.

61 Petar Kačavenda, *Nemci u Jugoslaviji 1918–1945*. (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1991), p. 67.

62 Ibid., p. 68.

63 Zoran Janjetović's survey included only Serbian history textbooks, but it is fairly safe to assume that textbook content was similar in other parts of the country during the socialist period. Not much changed even after the collapse of socialism. See: Zoran Janjetović, "Nemci Jugoslavije u srpskim udžbenicima 1918–2000", in: *Prvi i drugi međunarodni seminar Zajednice Nijemaca u Hrvatskoj 2001/2002* (Zagreb: 2002), p. 125–134.

64 Ibid., p. 130.

surprising if we bear in mind that educational institutions also act as places of ideological production, where textbooks also convey what is considered socially acceptable knowledge and desirable models of behaviour and thinking. To go back to Jan Buruma and his words about growing up in the Netherlands in the fifties: "It was comforting to know that a border separated us from the nation that embodied the evil. They were evil, so consequently we must have been good. The fact that we grew up in a country which had suffered under the German occupation meant, to us, that we were on the side of the angels."[65] It is not unexpected that there was little room in Yugoslavia for the history of the injustice and suffering that would disrupt the image of those who were *on the side of the angels.*

As mentioned earlier, the crisis in the early eighties opened up space for re-examining Yugoslavia's past and tackling previously taboo subjects, mostly within intellectual circles and something that could be called proto-civil society. It originated already in the second half of the sixties (and then blossomed in the eighties). This is closely linked to the specific nature of Yugoslavia's "third way" following the split with Stalin in 1948. Primarily, this meant fragmented decentralisation (institutionalised in the guise of "socialist self-management"), a relatively wide scope for creative freedoms in art and science[66] and the relative openness of the country towards the West (which ensured constant circulation of goods, people and ideas). Self-management was used as the institutional framework for greater autonomy in the operation of scholarly (philosophical, sociological) and artistic (visual, literary, cinematographic) movements and associations.[67] By the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, the field of art, literature, theatre and film was the only place where the fate of the Yugoslav Germans during the Second World War was represented, but even there it appeared relatively late and limited in scope.[68] Its representations varied, ranging from the stereotypical ones in the spirit of the dominant ideological matrix – featuring domestic German characters as embodiments of all things negative (such as, for instance, the short stories of Mladen Markov "Smešan konj" and "Kod Žolija")[69] – to those rarer examples where representations of that time and the fates of Yugoslav Germans were more complex and went beyond the set framework (such as, for instance, Zoran Petrović's novel *Selo Sakule a u Banatu*[70] and *Panonska saga* by Predrag Adamov[71]).

The Vojvodina Germans were thematised for the first time after the war in 1953, in Arsen Diklić's children's book *Salaš u Malom Ritu* [The Farm in the Small Marsh] set during the war in a small village in Banat. It later grew into a trilogy *Salaš u Malom Ritu*, Jesen *u Mrtvaji* [Autumn in the Oxbow] and *Moriški snegovi* [The Snows of Maros] (published in 1978). In 1975, based on Diklić's script, Branko Bauer directed the feature film and television series *Zimovanje u Jakobsfeldu* [Wintering in Jakobsfeld], and the next year the feature film and series *Salaš u Malom Ritu*.[72] The film *Wintering in Jakobsfeld* takes a subtle approach to the war in the heterogeneous environment of Vojvodina and for the first time we see a character who is a Banat German overcoming the classical stereotype (such as, for instance, the character of Šicer in *Salaš u Malom Ritu*). The story is told from the

65 J. Buruma, *Plata za krivicu – Uspomene na rat u Nemačkoj i Japanu*, p. 10.

66 Provided that a number of central systemic and ideological categories are not questioned, such as in general the historically progressive nature of socialism as opposed to capitalism, the life and work of Josip Broz, the one party system, and the absolutely positive role of the Partisan movement during the Second World War.

67 Mladen Lazić, *Promene i otpori – Srbija u transformacijskim procesima* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2005), p. 66–70.

68 Vladimir Geiger, *Sudbina jugoslovenskih Nijemaca u hrvatskoj i srpskoj književnosti.* (Zagreb: Zajednica Nijemaca u Hrvatskoj, 2009), p. 16. This book contains an exhaustive overview of works of literature dealing with this topic. Available at http://www.zajednica-nijemaca.org/images/geiger%20knjiga.pdf [retrieved 5 June 2015].

69 Both published in Mladen Markov's collection *Žablji skok* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1974), pp. 24–33 and pp. 66–76.

70 Zoran Petrović, *Selo Sakule a u Banatu* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1969).

71 Predrag Adamov, *Panonska saga* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1986).

72 The film *Zimovanje u Jakobsfeldu* (1975); *Salaš u Malom ritu* (1976).

point of view of two boys rejected by the Partisans for being too young, so one of them ends up as a farmhand on the farm of a Banat Volksdeutsche, Jakob Jerih and his wife Marta. The character of Jakob Jerih is complex and many-dimensional. On the one hand, he is stern, vain and full of disdain towards the *Slavs*, set in his anger and pain having lost his only son who died on the Eastern Front; while on the other, he is a just and caring Banat farmer, unaccustomed to "the ways of world politics". When, in an SS uniform with a red band he put on for the occasion (similar in fashion to the one his son died with and that could only be worn by Germans who were not citizens of the Reich), he goes to intervene on behalf of the boy, despite the dread elicited by the uniform, what remains is a sense of compassion for that rift, the depth of his personal grief and the senselessness of all those great historical events of which he (too) is a victim.

Finally, there is a work from that period that is interesting for multiple reasons – the novel *Isterivanje boga* [Exorcising God] by Mladen Markov, published in 1984.[73] It is interesting as a gripping artistic portrayal of, among other things, post-war collectivisation, the repression it entailed, and the postwar fates of the remaining Germans in Banat after the war; but also because it reflects a wider shift in the discourse that was taking place at the time in society and that would become much clearer in the decades to come.[74]

73 Mladen Markov, *Isterivanje boga* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1984).

74 The novel contains one of the most vivid and detailed ethnic German characters, that of Jakob Štulmiler, the village tinsmith and trader – a pre-war Belgrade communist who lives (and ultimately dies) in that village and is on good terms with everyone. Janko Tarajić, a communist he had been hiding that whole time, tortures and humiliates Štulmiler after the war in front of the other villagers, whom he also persecutes and harasses as kulaks. Ibid.

Memories of the expulsion of Vojvodina Germans in Serbia in the final decade of the 20th Century

The domino effect of collapsing socialist systems throughout Europe and the end of the Cold War at the start of the nineties finds the former Yugoslavia in the throes of nationalist mobilisation and preparations for war. Nationalisms in the republics fully revived old ethno-centric narratives and political myths, but also created new ones about themselves and 'others' while relying on old rivalries. Apart from actual weapons, every nation armed itself with precisely those memories that best supported its own positive self-image and legitimated its own political aspirations and actions. A special role in that process was reserved for emphasising the differences between Yugoslav citizens who belonged to different ethnicities,[75] where one's own group was always represented as the victim of injustices committed by others, and the group's aspirations always as honest, legitimate and correct. The social turnabout at the start of the nineties was also marked by a thorough overhaul of national historiographies, wherein the Second World War was the period that underwent the most dramatic changes in its interpretation. The reason for this was not just the reviving of ideologies that had been on opposite sides during the war, but also the fact that the Second World War had left numerous victims on all

75 See: Beti Denič, "Rasturanje multietičnosti u Jugoslaviji: mediji i metamorfoza", in: Džoel M. Halpern and Dejvid A. Kajdikejl, ed. *Susedi u ratu: jugoslovenski etnicitet, kultura i istorija iz ugla antropologa* (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2002), p. 60–81.

sides in the former Yugoslavia. For many of those victims, there had never been room in collective memory, nor were all memories accepted in the realm of public communication. Especially not those about the casualties of bloody inter-ethnic clashes that during the socialist period were most threatening to the accepted dogma of brotherhood and unity, and the fellowship of the Yugoslav peoples. The history of the region includes the history of wars where members of different groups waged violence against each other. Also, the history of denial was accompanied by the creation of multiple (mutually exclusive) truths that most often excluded the suffering of the *Others*. Selecting very different historical points as proof of one's own victimisation and as a way to eliminate the perspective of the other resulted in the creation of a multitude of "completely parallel para-realities".[76] The existence of a history of multiple (mutual) denials of crimes and suffering was the necessary precondition for the exploitation of victimisation, for its manipulation in the service of producing fear and actual victimisation. Jansen's research into the ways in which traumatic memories of the Second World War marked the current political context, as opposed to the official truth from the socialist period (where recognised victims were primarily the partisans who symbolised the *unarmed people* defending themselves from Nazi occupation and collaborators), show that there had always been parallel local versions of the self-same events. The key characteristic of these local versions (very similar to the official historical narrative in terms of their selectivity) was that, as a rule, emphasising the suffering of one side was accompanied by complete exclusion of the suffering of others (usually another ethnic community).[77] In the nineties, these local narratives were promoted to become new official versions of history, opening a real *victimisation competition to take up starting positions* in the conflict that was ahead, where the violence committed by the "victims" was justified by past suffering, preventive defence and "righting the wrongs of history". *The ideology of victimisation* (based on the conviction of absolute righteousness of one's own group as the only victim of cruelty and injustice; on the *dehumanisation*[78] of the opponent by ascribing frightening characteristics and behaviours to all members of that group; and through negative comparisons of groups)[79] is the common denominator for all the warring factions in the former Yugoslavia. It was constituted around a number of different narratives: the narrative of exclusive victimisation ("we are the only victims"); the narrative of victimisation hierarchy ("we are greater victims"); the narrative of justified revenge ("getting them back for what they did to us"); the narrative of preventive aggression ("if we don't do this to them, they will do it to us")[80]. The collectivisation of victims always entails the collectivisation of *executioners*, and any change to the position of the *victim* group entailed a change of the collective occupying the position of *executioner*. While the position of the victim group is exclusive and rules out all others, more than one group may occupy the position of the executioner, but one remains primary. In relation to the past, the authoritarian collectivist matrix from the socialist period, based on an image of the righteous collective threatened by *external enemies* and *internal traitors* acquired a different – this time an ethnic – prefix. At the start of the Yugoslav wars, in the Serbian *pantheon*, the Serbs as *victims* were juxtaposed to the "genocidal nature" of the Croats (and to a greater or lesser extent all other Yugoslav peoples, as well as

76 Marina Blagojević, "Prebrojavanje mrtvih tela: viktimizacija kao samoostvarujuće proročanstvo", in: Temida, 3/2 (2000): p. 7.

77 Stef Jansen, "Violence of Memories: Local narratives of the Past After Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia", Rethinking History, 6/1 (2002): p. 77–94. Available at: http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/stef.jansen/documents/SJ-violenceofmemories.pdf [retrieved 17 April 2015].

78 For more see: Vamic D. Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationship* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

79 See: Daniel Bar-Tal, "Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict: The Israeli Case", in: *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 9/1, January 1998, p. 22–50. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Daniel_Bar-Tal/publication/235261619_Societal_beliefs_in_times_of_intractable_conflict_The_Israeli_case_International_Journal_of_Conflict_Management_9_22-50/links/00b49526c2691abc22000000.pdf [retrieved 14 February 2015].

80 M. Blagojević, "Prebrojavanje mrtvih tela: viktimizacija kao samoostvarujuće proročanstvo", p. 7.

what was colloquially referred to as the "international community", and Germany in particular).[81]

With the regime change in 2000 and the missed opportunity for the newly established political elite to disclose the war accounts of Serbia and have its citizens face the defeats and their high – economic, political, national, international, security – price, that image remained, to a large extent, frozen in Serbia. There are three main reasons for this. The first is the NATO bombing of the third Yugoslavia, or Serbia, which became the central point from which all wars were were subsequently viewed and interpreted in the local public. Its dynamics, as well as its final outcome, confirmed the already established *conspiratorial* understanding of war, as well as facilitating an additional (self-)victimisation of Serbs and Serbia. It is, therefore, not surprising that the NATO bombing of Serbia became(/remained) the main reference and determination point in the ongoing process of (re)shaping the state and national identity of the Serbs. At the same time, there is a parallel process of active forgetting of the role of Serbia in the wars of the nineties that works through relativising, shifting responsibility onto others and deleting the responsibility of the state for wars fought in this region.[82]

When it comes to the wars and war crimes of the nineties, the relationship of Serbia to the past is reduced to denial and lack of interest (in the case of BiH and Croatia), and a discourse of martyrdom and endangerment (in the case of Kosovo). It should be noted that the centre of the political and intellectual elite, close to the government at the time, shaped public opinion in Serbia during the nineties around the idea that Serbia did not participate in the wars to destroy the second Yugoslavia but only used all means necessary, including military means, to help its endangered fellow nationals and protect them from annihilation. At the same time, the international community and some of its main protagonists (Germany, the Vatican, NATO the United States, etc.) were presented in the local public sphere as the main culprits behind Yugoslavia's dissolution, which was seen as the inevitable result of the materialisation of their long hatched secret plans to secure their geo-strategic interests in the Balkans. This view of the past was in many ways supported by the ambivalent messages sent out by the political and cultural elite and the media, as well as by unreadiness to truly begin the process of dealing with what happened in the past.[83] Also, in time since the wars ended, the focus in the construction of the victim gradually shifted from Serbs in other parts of the former state to Serbs in Serbia who were promoted into *victims of communism*. Again, the Second World War was a key argument, no longer in territorial wars with neighbouring Yugoslav peoples, which had already been brought to a close, but instead for internal ideological and political reckoning. After 2000, the narrative had come full circle from the time of the socialist period. The

81 For more on ideological preparations for war, see: Nebojša Popov, ed. "Srpska strana rata" (Drugo izdanje), I tom (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2002). See also: Jovo Bakić, "Jugoslavija: razaranje i njegovi tumači", Deo: "Nacionalistički diskurs u Srbiji: 26. jun 1991. – 21. novembar 1995" (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2011), p. 130–132. For more on the role of conservative elites in that process in Serbia, see: Jr. V. P Gagnon, 'Serbia and the Strategy of Demobilization 1990–2000' in *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*,pp. 87–130.

82 According to research findings by Miroslav Hadžić and Zoran Krstić, a little over two-fifths of the respondents in Serbia situated responsibility for the wars with others (be they the international community, other peoples of the SFRJ or local elites). A little over two-fifths believed that the international community was mostly to blame for the destruction of the second Yugoslavia by war (almost a third of the respondents (30.6 percent) considered it to be solely responsible). When distributing responsibility among the peoples of the former Yugoslavia, the percentage of those who believed that the Serbs were most responsible for the war drops to just 3 percent. Even if we add to that the 4 percent of those who believed the Serbs were the most responsible, but that part of the responsibility resided with other peoples, there is no doubt that the respondents were very partial to denying any, not to mention a predominant responsibility of their own (Serb) people for the wars. It is also significant that almost 30 percent of respondents still claim not to know or refuse to directly answer who was, and to what extent, responsible for starting the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the nineties**.** See: Miroslav Hadžić, Zoran Krstić, "Odgovornost za YU-ratove" in: Srećko Mihajlović (ed.), *Kako građani vide tranziciju – Istraživanje javnog mnjenja tranzicije* (Belgrade: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010), p. 177–189.

83 This segment relies on the "Strategic Platform for drafting the National Peacebuilding Strategy" of the Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo/Belgrade (forthcoming).

tables had turned and now it was the Partisans (or communists) who stood in the place of the *executioners*, while the position of *victims* was occupied by members of various formations that fought opposite the Partisans, or by anti-communists (especially the Chetniks of Draža Mihajlović).[84]

84 For more see: D. Stojanović, *Ulje na vodi – Ogledi iz istorije sadašnjosti Srbije*, Deo: "Na tihoj vatri. Udžbenici iz istorije kao izvor konflikta" (Belgrade: Peščanik, 2010), p. 85–157. For a broader analysis of this process, see also: Todor Kuljić, "Anti- antifašizam", Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju, XII/1–3 (2005): p. 171–184.

During the nineties, various civic initiatives, organisations and groups cropped up in parallel with the nationalist mobilisation and mostly stood in opposition to the war regimes. A considerable portion of them did not concentrate their activities on attempting to warn against the rampant militarisation and resist the hegemony of the ethno-national determination of the state and everything that went along with it (ethnic intolerance; mass violations of human rights and the most elementary rights of minorities; the revival of the patriarchy and rapid deterioration of the position of women; the suffocation of critical thinking...). The reaction to nationalist mobilisation inevitably imposed a set of human rights through the perspective of protecting elementary human rights as a matter of immediate vital importance for vast numbers of people. Although they essentially remained marginal, these groups and organisations were formed throughout the former Yugoslavia.[85] During the nineties in Serbia, the main focus of such initiatives, organisations and groups revolved around resisting war and nationalist homogenisation, while a considerable segment of their activities was devoted to making crimes against non-Serbs visible and overcoming the silent and silencing response to them in society. Among other things, these organisations and civic initiatives positioned the topic of war, violence and militarisation within public discourse, taking issue with the illusion of consent for the war that the regime imposed and entering into direct political confrontation with it. In addition, by problematising the dominant ethno-nationalist political matrix, based on fear, a sense of endangerment and resistance to the enemy *Other*, they developed an autonomous public sphere and opened up debates on human rights, diversity and taboo topics.

Along with the formation of German associations in Vojvodina, this was one of the main factors leading to the public visibility of the fate of the Danube Swabians after the Second World War in Vojvodina. Already in 1991, the German studies scholar Zoran Žiletić initiated the formation of the *Society for Serbian-German Cooperation* in Belgrade, and in 1994 in Pančevo, as part of a local initiative, the *Banat Forum, the Centre for Documentation on Vojvodina Germans* headed by Zlatoje Martinov.[86] The first German Association "Donau" (*Deutscher Verein "Donau"*) was formed in 1992 in Novi Sad under the leadership of Andreas Bigermajer, and this process (especially after 2000) continued in a domino effect and is still under way in other urban areas where Germans live.[87]

These German associations put revitalising and preserving the German community as their primary task, and a significant segment of their work is devoted to putting up memorial plaques at sites of suffering after the Second World War and organising visits by former German inhabitants now living in Austria, Germany and overseas to their old homeland.[88] After the regime change in 2000, the activities coming from civil society and

85 For more see: Bojana Šušak, "Alternativa ratu", in: Nebojša Popov, ed. *Srpska strana rata* (Drugo izdanje), II tom, (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2002), p. 98–124. See also: Žarko Paunović, "Deset godina NVO u SR Jugoslaviji – Od ilegalaca i neprijatelja do važnih aktera društvenih promena", in: Multiple authors, *Deset godina protiv – Građani Srbije u borbi za demokratiju i otvoreno društvo 1991 – 2001* (Belgrade: Medija Centar, 2001), p. 57–63. Also useful for this topic is the work of Bojan Bilić "Opiranje zlu – jedno sociološko promišljanje (post)jugoslovenskog antiratnog angažmana" published in the magazine *Republika*, 520–521 (December 2012). Available at http://www.republika.co.rs/520-521/20.html [retrieved 1 August 2015].

86 C. Bethke, "Ponovno otkriće povijesti Nijemaca u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije – prva bilanca poslije 15 godina", p. 261–262.

87 For more on the dynamics of development of German associations in Vojvodina, the formation in 1997 of their first umbrella organisation, the *German National Federation*, and the formation of the *German Minority National Council in 2007*, see: A. Krel, "*Mi smo Nemci* – Etnički identitet pripadnika nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na početku 21. veka", Deo: "Proces rekonstrukcije i revitalizacije etničkog identiteta Nemaca u Vojvodini", p. 153–226.

88 Ibid., p. 159; See also: Aleksandar Krel, "Položaj nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na primeru Nemaca u Subotici", in: Vojislav Stanovčić, *Položaj nacionalnih manjina u Srbiji: zbornik radova sa međunarodnog naučnog skupa održanog 24–26. novembra 2005* (Belgrade: SANU, 2007), p. 442–443.

German associations were joined by institutional reforms and measures undertaken in the interest of Serbia's membership in the European Union (such as redefining the position of national minorities and adopting international standards).[89] It could be said that the interaction of these social fields determined the memory of the suffering of Vojvodina Germans in public discourse.

Apart from the approach that became prominent in literature,[90] the opening of this topic in the nineties was also present in journalism and non-fiction writing that examined and reinterpreted this part of the past in different ways and with different results. Although the first book to appear was Slobodan Maričič's *Susedi, dželati, žrtve.Folksdojčeri u Jugoslaviji* [Neighbours, Executioners, Victims. The Volksdeutsche in Yugoslavia], the book that is considered pivotal for the image of the Vojvodina Germans in the Serbian public is *Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari* [A World upon the Danube – Conversations and Comments] published in 1997. The editor was Nenad Stefanović and the book is divided into two thematic sections. The larger portion of the book is devoted to collected testimonies from Vojvodina Germans now living in Germany and Austria. These are distressing personal memories of what had been pushed out of official history: the sound of children crying as they were separated from their parents in Franzfeld (today Kačarevo);[91] meeting the ten-year-old brother who had forgotten his family and language at the station in Jasenica in 1950 after almost five years of separation,[92] the mass deaths from starvation in 1946 in Knićanin,[93] the doctor's advice "to write as much as I can about the camps, about all the terrible things, to cast the images out of myself somehow, to calm them,"[94] about how a village is turned into a camp,[95] but also about acts of resistance and solidarity (though few and far between).[96] Decades have passed since these events; perspectives and subsequent narratives differ, but what is common to all the memories is that they tell the story of a lost home and a pain that time stifles, but does not heal. The other thematic sectionwith "Comments" by Fridrih Binder, Zoran Žiletić and Goran Nikolić, and the "Chronological History of Southeast Europe and the Danube Swabians" provides a wider historical framework into which these memories are situated. *A World upon the Danube*s significant not just for its new approach that illuminates how the relevant historical events affect the lives of some ordinary people, but also because of the public attention it garnered in Serbia. Up until then, although numerous personal testimonies of the ethnic German expellees (also) from Vojvodina (collected already between 1953 and 1962) had long been available in Germany, in Serbia they had been almost completely unknown. After its publication, a dozen promotions for the book were held in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Sombor, Zrenjanin, Kać, Vršac, Kragujevac... According to Nenad Stefanović, "the responses were diverse, but without exception very emotional."[97] The other important book published a little later and with a similar approach was a book of non-fiction in two volumes *Dunavske Švabice* [The Danube Swabian Women]

89 For more on the institutional framework for organisations of national minorities, see: Goran Bašić, "Političko organizovanje nacionalnih manjina u Srbiji". [retrieved 11 July 2015]. For more on the Vojvodina Germans, see: A. Krel, "Položaj nemačke nacionalne manjine u Vojvodini na primeru Nemaca u Subotici", p. 440.

90 For a detailed overview, see: Vladimir Geiger, "Sudbina Folksdojčera u Jugoslaviji nakon Drugog svjetskog rata u jugoslavenskoj historiografiji, publicistici i književnosti (1991.– 1998.)", in: Hans-Georg Fleck, Igor Graovac (ed.), *Dijalog povjesničara – istoričara* (Zagreb: Zaklada Friedrich Naumann, 2000), p. 225–243.

91 Nenad Stefanović, ed. *Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari*, Šesto izdanje (Belgrade: Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, 2007). p. 91.

92 Ibid., p. 82.

93 Ibid., p. 101.

94 Ibid., p. 123.

95 Ibid., p. 79.

96 Ibid., p. 89 and 95.

97 Ibid., p. 8. Six editions of the book were printed, with a print run of 15,000 copies, which is a large print run in local terms.

by Nadežda (Ćetković) Radović (co-authored by Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter and Vesna Weiss).[98] The volumes are a collection of memories of Danube Swabian women who had been interned in Yugoslav camps after the war. In the first volume, the four of them, now already elderly, meet once a week, talk and support each other. These women from Kikinda talk about how they stayed in Banat as the only remaining members of their numerous families, they discuss their survival strategies in the face of hatred directed at all Germans indiscriminately, they relate how they changed their names and religion, "blended in with the environment" and made sure not to

98 Nadežda Ćetković, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, *Dunavske Švabice* (Belgrade: KRUG Medijska knjižara, 2000). Nadežda Radović, Dobrila Sinđelić-Ibrajter, Vesna Weiss,*Dunavske Švabice II* (Belgrade: KRUG Medijska knjižara, 2001).

stand out. In the second volume, twelve women who had been in the camps talk about what they hadn't talked about for most of their lives – the humiliation and suffering in the camps, the long unuttered pain, the fear and the shame. These books – A World upon the Danube and The Danube Swabian Women – as well as research by historians such as Zoran Janjetović, Branko Bešlin, Mihael Antolović and Filip Krčmar in the late nineties and following 2000 mark the beginning of a differentiated and more complex approach to the persecution and suffering of the Vojvodina Germans that overcomes the one-sided dichotomy of collectivising "executioners/ victims". At the same time, thematising their suffering, though still insufficient, has made an impact in public space. It could the said that the strategy of silence regarding the fate of the Vojvodina Germans, which was dominant in the socialist period, was now partly brought into question. The origins of this development were various: some came out of the institutional sphere, such as, for example, through discussion of the Law on Returning Confiscated Property and Reparations (Law on Restitution),[99] the work of the Survey Board tasked with determining the facts about the suffering of the civilian population in Vojvodina in the period from 1941 to 1948[100] and the formation and findings of the *State Commission tasked with finding and marking all secret graves containing the remains of persons executed following the liberation in 1944* (*the State Commission for secret graves of persons killed following 12 September 1944*), established in 2009;[101] they sometimes came from academic circles, issuing from discussions among historians, and sometimes out of literary works, journalism and artistic initiatives, which will be discussed in more detail later. Initiatives to set up memorials at the sites of mass graves and execution grounds were also significant in encouraging public debate. In some places, such as in Knićanin, Gakovo, Kruševlje, memorials were ultimately constructed.[102] Although still very limited in scope, each of these thematisations opened up space for public debate, and sometimes for heated polemics.[103] The clashing of views, different perspectives and ideological viewpoints brought to the forefront not just the issue of the postwar fate of the Vojvodina Germans, which had been almost completely unknown before, but also issues closely related to the role of history in the present time, the relationship towards the Second World War and the socialist past, the foundations for constructing a national identity. The different approaches to their fate were also often determined by the function of a given interpretation in the local context, so that discursive strategies were adapted to this function and most often combined to fulfil more than one function. Generally speaking, in the print and electronic media, the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans is still rarely brought up. As noted by Jelena Jorgačević and Biljana Vasić, "only a few newspapers write about this and usually it is the tolerance of the pre-war period that is emphasised, without going into the subsequent events."[104]

99 Nenad Stefanović, ed. *Jedan svet na Dunavu – Razgovori i komentari*, Šesto izdanje (Belgrade: Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, 2007). p. 91.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

Approaches to thematising the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans following the Second World War

In the context of this research, in the approach to the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans following the Second World War the effect of victimological identity policies can be summarised into two extremely polarised viewpoints. On the one side – German suffering that excludes any possibility of responsibility and guilt; on the other – German guilt that excludes any experience of suffering.

An illustration of the former (in the local context noticeabley less common) approach to the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans can be found in the book *Genocid nad nemačkom manjinom u Jugoslaviji 1944–1948* [Genocide of the German Minority in Yugoslavia 1944–1948][105] published in 2004 as a licensed edition of the Serbian-German Cooperation Society. It offers a multitude of authentic testimonies by victims and from their perspective, and in a way that is almost entirely unknown in this context, which is in itself a great achievement.

The way in which these memories are contextualised – that is, the wider framework within which the memories are situated – can be viewed as an instrumentalisation of suffering. According to the authors, the

105 *Radna grupa za dokumentaciju, Genocid nad nemačkom manjinom u Jugoslaviji 1944–1948*, edited by: Herbert Prokle, Georg Vildman, Karl Veber, Hans Zonlajter, Serbian edition editor: Zoran Žiletić, Prilozi za podunavsko-švapsko nasleđe i zavičajnu istoriju Podunavsko-švapskog arhiva u Minhenu, (München, Beograd: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, Deutschland and Društvo za srpsko-nemačku saradnju, Srbija i Crna Gora, 2004).

reasons behind the suffering of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia were contained in the communist, "hatred for all things German"[106] and a plan that existed, "long before the creation of the Yugoslav state".[107] The purpose of the "terrorist attacks"[108] by the Partisans was not, "the liberation of the people, but an endeavour to seize the historical opportunity to introduce communism into Yugoslavia in keeping with Moscow's plans"[109] and the establishment of, "Tito's criminal communist regime".[110] They are also blamed for the executions of civilians, because their aim was, "to provoke the occupation forces to retribution against the civilian populations, including the summary execution of hostages".[111] The *Prinz Eugen* SS division is portrayed as a legitimate defence, created, "for the exclusive purpose of defending Banat from the terrorist actions of the communists"[112] which was, "entirely legal under the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War"[113]. And the leaders of Nazified organisations of the Vojvodina Germans who held, "idealistic ideas of National Socialism and the values of fighting Bolshevism"[114] were destroyed because that was in the interests of the, "communist conception to remove segments of the population that would be the source of greatest resistance in communist society."[115] These lines of argument are akin to those employed (also) in the "historian's dispute" in Germany during the eighties (as discussed earlier), but laid bare in a localised form. Given that the editors – Herbert Prokle, Georg Wildmann, Karl Weber and Hans Sonnleitner – live in Germany, it could be assumed that these arguments are (also) reflective of that dispute. Through decontextualisation and selectivity in portraying events,[116] and by deleting distinctions between victims, casualties and perpetrators, the Danube Swabians, as a homogeneous collective, were established indisputably as the *victims*. This type of portrayal is paradoxical because the notion of a homogeneous collective is also at the basis of the view legitimating collective guilt. The mechanism is identical, only the prefix differs. The result equates the Danube Swabians with the Nazis, justifies Nazi crimes and indirectly re-evaluates Nazism along the lines of Nolte's hypothesis of preventive war.

On the other end of the spectrum of interpretations regarding the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans post-Second World War is the position of collective guilt of the Germans, where the Vojvodina Germans are fully identified with Nazism and Nazi crimes. In it, German guilt precludes any experience of suffering. This view dominated public discourse in the nineties when it was most often the extension of the existing negative

106 Ibid., p. 47.

107 Ibid., p. 232.

108 Ibid., p. 33.

109 Ibid., p. 32.

110 Ibid., p. 18.

111 Ibid., p. 32.

112 Ibid., p. 34.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., p. 28.

115 Ibid., p. 50.

116 The book aspires to a comprehensive overview of the presence of Danube Swabians, from the time of their settlement to their disappearance from these areas. However, events during the Second World War are hardly touched upon, leaving an empty gap between 1941 and 1944. For example, the annihilation of the Jews, the camps and looting are not even mentioned, or the participation of part of the Vojvdina Germans in these activities. The decision of the Wehrmacht Supreme Command (1941) to execute 100 hostages for every killed German soldier and 50 for every wounded soldier is mentioned as a *punishment* with the express purpose of "deterrence" which was "deliberately provoked by the Partisans". (Ibid., p. 32). In the "Danube Swabian Glossary" provided at the end of the book, a reference to the period between 1941 and 1944 is limited only to information about the partitioning of Vojvodina: noting, "Partisan attacks led to the evacuation of the German population from Bosnia and Serbia" and citing AVNOJ decisions from 1943. (Ibid., p. 242). If we were to go back to the classification of repression strategies, this type of expression would be categorised as deletion and concealment.

stereotype about Germans in general.[117] It appears in various variations, depending on current needs and daily (usually political) developments. Based on a book edited by the historian Drago Njegovan, *Zločini okupatora i njihovih pomagača u Vojvodini* [Crimes of the Occupiers and their Collaborators in Vojvodina],[118] a supplement published in the *Večernje novosti* daily newspaper between 3 and 14 December 2014, is a good illustration of this approach. The chapter headings are themselves reflective of the approach to the topic:

"The Reich Dictates and Finances", "Infinite Faith in the Fuhrer", "A Carpet of Flowers for the Occupier", "Looting Neighbours Together", "With the Ustasha and the Black Devil", "The Bloody Sheen of Black Shirts", "Merriment around the Hanged Serbs".

Interpretations of this sort are, to a large degree, an extension of the ideological model from the socialist period, but with a new ethnic slant to reflect the current state of affairs. Although at first glance it may seem that the newspaper supplement has situated the suffering of the Danube Swabians within a wider historical context, its linearity, to the exclusion of any ambivalence or complexity, actually leads to the events being decontextualised. The logic of ascribing based on principle, undermines the very possibility that any of the Yugoslav and Vojvodina Germans could have been victims, and by mixing present and past within the same plain, a mythical ahistorical time is established where the Serbs (Slavs) are the constant victims of the Germans' evil intentions throughout the centuries. Although both Jews and Roma are mentioned as victims, this is primarily in order to support the main thesis. Here the Serb national identity is constructed (and reproduced) through a mythical narrative of suffering which mixes the present with the past, combining them into the narrative of the Vojvodina Germans as "fifth columnists", traitors of their neighbours with *destructive* and *hostile* intentions, always on the look out for an opportunity to *stab them in the back*. In his famous book *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*, Stanley Cohen denotes this form of denial as "denial of the victim".[119] It essential boils down to statements such as: "They started it," "Look what they did/are doing to us," and "They got what they deserved."[120] According to Cohen, this is a *melodramatic discourse* – "legendary heroes and persecuted victims, conquest and defeat, blood and revenge" which always ends the same way: "'history' proves that the people whom you call victims are not really victims; we, whom you condemn, have been the 'real' victims; they are, in the 'ultimate' sense, the true aggressors; therefore they deserve to be punished; justice is on our side."[121] The effect is to be freed of any responsibility for inflicted suffering. It is also interesting that, in the supplement, the suffering of those who remained is present only through its *absence*. Although it is concealed, deleted and denied, it is at the same time situated into the context of just deserts.

Between these polarised positions, illustrated by the abovementioned texts, there are also approaches that facilitate the individualisation of both perpetrators and victims and the recognition of suffering and

117 For more on stereotypes of Danube Swabians in the press during the nineties, see: Zlatoje Martinov, "Štampa u Srbiji o Podunavskim Švabama 1992–2000" (courtesy of the author). For more on stereotypes about Germans in general in Serbian society in the 19th and 20 century, see: Ranka Gašić, "Srpski stereotipi o Nemcima i percepcija Evrope", Međunarodni skup *Mitovi I stereotipi nacionalizma i komunizma* (Novi Sad: Centar za istoriju, demokratiju i pomirenje, 2008). Available at http:// www.centerforhistory.net/images/stories/pdf/ranka_gasic.pdf [retrieved 7 August 2015]. For the period from 2003–2014, see: Jelena Jorgačević, Biljana Vasić, "Istraživanje nedeljnika *Vreme*: Slika Nemačke u štampanim medijima u Srbiji 2003–2014". Available at http://www.vreme.com/download.php/system/storage/pdf/slika-nemacke-webNB.pdf [retrieved 1 July 2015].

118 Drago Njegovan, ed. *Zločini okupatora i njihovih pomagača u Vojvodin*" (Novi Sad: Prometej i Malo istorijsko društvo, 2011).

119 Stanley Cohen distinguishes between denial and repression, where the former refers to events in the present, and the latter to events in the past. For the purposes of this study, the distinction is not relevant, so both terms are used interchangeably. See: Stenli Koen, *Stanje poricanja – Znati za zlodela i patnje* (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2003), p. 180.

120 Ibid., p. 152–153 and p. 172.

121 Ibid., p. 153.

injustice, irrespective of who was on the receiving end. Just like in the nineties, as discussed earlier, the impulses problematising the image of a *glorious* and *pure* past based on a narrative of collective victims and collective executioners and glorifying war and justifying violence came primarily from the sphere of civic organising and civil society, academic circles and the arts. In terms of the approach to the fate of the Vojvodina Germans following the Second World War, initiatives to mark sites of their suffering are noteworthy, as is the role of the historian Zorana Janjetovića in introducing this topic into the field of scholarly research;[122] and the tackling of this topic in journalism[123] and television programmes, as well as art (primarily literature,[124] theatre,[125] and recently on film[126]).[127] In these cases, it is not the argumentation that matters so much as the approaches to the suffering and expulsion of the Vojvodina Germans following the Second World War and their efforts to initiate public dialogue on this topic. They take as their starting point the existence of multiple perspectives of the same events and their legitimacy, as well as the tendency to avoid ascribing the stigma of criminals or the halo of victims to entire collectives. Such approaches exhibit an effort to view events within their historical and social context, including the possibilities and limitations for actions that they entailed.

The programme *Podunavske Švabe – Balkanska Atlantida* [The Danube Swabians: A Balkan Atlantis][128] which aired on RTV Vojvodina on 11 November 2014 is illustrative of this/those approach(es). It did not deal so much with *what* happened as with the dominant *attitude* towards it in Serbia today. The reason why this programme is particularly illustrative is that it succinctly marks the key points of the relationship towards the "dark pages" in the past of one's own political community, which in the case of Serbia includes the fate of the Vojvodina Germans in the aftermath of the war. Much that is said in the programme is in the spirit of challenging the "drawing of the line", which can be seen in discussions about the past in Germany. And the interviews hint at the contours of what we could call a "constructive approach to national memories".

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122 A bibliography Zorana Janjetović's works is available at the website of the Institute for Newer History of Serbia: www.inisbgd.co.rs/celo/janjetovic.htm [retrieved 13 July 2015].

123 Works such as *Švapčići iz poslednjeg transporta: deca u logorima* (2006) by Nadežda Radović, *Plitki grobovi* (2006) by Stjepan Seder, *Zemlja u koferu* (2007) by Nenad Novak Stefanović, *Gakovo i Kruševlje – Logori za podunavske Švabe u Bačkoj 1945–1947* (2008) by Branislav Danilović, *Razgovor Srbina i Nemca na Dunavu* by Stefan Bart and Nenad Novak Stefanović, *Krst na vršačkom Šinteraju* (2014) by Nadežd Radović and Dragi Bugarčić are just some examples.

124 For example, Ivan Ivanji's short story *Guvernanta* (2002), the novels of Dragi Bugarčić *Sporedna ulica* (2006) and *Gatalica* (2013), as well as those by Nemanja Rotar *Netrpeljivost* (2006), Igor Marojević *Šnit* (2007) and *Majčina ruka* (2011), Živan Ištvanić *Crni baron* (2008), *Doktor sluša sving* (2009) by Nenad Novak Stefanović, etc.

125 For example, the play *Banat* by Uglješa Šejtinac, directed by Dejan Mijač, which premièred in 2007 at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre (JDP), as well as the play by Kaća Čelan *Heimatbuch (Homeland Book)* directed by Gorčin Stojanović, which premièred at the Sombor National Theatre on 16 November 2015.

126 The feature documentary *Podunavske Švabe* [The Danube Swabians] by Marko Cvejić, produced by Mandragora film, premièred in early December 2011. It was supported, among others, by the Secretariat for Culture of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Promotions of the documentary in fifteen Vojvodina towns and villages, in Germany and Austria, from March to June 2012 included panel discussions after the screenings. The documentary is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkW5FyvCPfI [retrieved March 2015]. The debate about the documentary between its director Marko Cvejić and Zoran Janković is available in the archives of the magazine *Popboks – web magazin za popularnu kulturu*. See: Zoran Janković, "Kako su me ukrali Nemci – Miloš Miša Radivojević & Podunavske Švabe – Marko Cvejić: Priče iz magareće klupe", *Popboks – web magazin za popularnu kulturu*, 18 January 2012, available at http://www.popboks.com/article/8499. Marko Cvejić, "Reakcija reditelja filma Podunavske Švabe", *Popboks – web magazin za popularnu kulturu*, 7 February 2012. Available at http://www.popboks.com/article/8523 [retrieved 17 June 2015]

127 This in no way implies that the approaches are unequivocal (or that they have no narrative of their own), but only that, as opposed to closed narratives (examples of which were given earlier) they establish this topic as a field for dialogue to a greater or lesser extent.

128 "Podunavske Švabe – Balkanska Atlantida", Emisija Dokument, RTV Vojvodina, 11 November 2014.

The author of the programme, Eržika Pap Reljin, interviewed the president of the German National Union in Serbia, Rudolf Weiss, as well as Eduard Grolinger, a survivor of the Gakovo camp, Agnes Ozer, a historian, and two writers, Nemanja Rotar and Nenad Novak Stefanović. Introducing the programme, the author presented its framework: “Dealing with one’s own crimes and faults makes a people better. Unfortunately, we tend to see it as holding our tail between our legs. When will we be able to talk about innocent German victims in the camps in Vojvodina at the end of the Second World War without the inevitable ‘and what about the Serbs and others who were killed in the Second World War’? To be clear, we are not talking about German war crimes and attempts to minimise them or, even worse, justify them. Seventy years have passed. How much time needs to pass before we can talk about this openly and without bias?”

Summary and concluding remarks

This study used a comparative perspective to analyse how changes in social and political conditions influenced memory regarding the expulsion of Germans from Eastern European areas in Germany and memory about the expulsion of Germans from Vojvodina after the Second World War in Serbia. Changes in these conditions effected changes in the way these memories were recognised, adapting to new developments in the present. In both Germany and Yugoslavia, and subsequently Serbia, these memories are marked by an experience of large-scale destruction, crimes against the civilian population and the breakdown of civilisation brought on by the Second World War. In that sense, the assumption was that the attitude towards victims would be shaped by the attitude towards the war and its interpretation in the given social (ideological, political, cultural, etc.) context, and also that the attitude towards the "same" victims would be closely linked to the functions they are accorded depending on whether they belonged to the majority or minority group.

The dynamics of memory about expulsion were thus viewed through their interaction with the historical and social context and the functions of such memories in different periods, as well as from the point of view of different positions in terms of the belonging of the expellees. Namely, in Germany the victims were from the majority group, while in Yugoslavia and (subsequently) Serbia, they belonged to a minority group. Also, up until the breakdown of socialism and the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the nineties, they were influenced by the Cold War and the ideological and political confrontations between the two competing systems: socialism and capitalism. In both Germany and Yugoslavia/Serbia, dealing with the topic of expulsion revolved around issues of "collective guilt" and "collective victimisation", i.e. the issue of who had the right to claim victim status. Identifying and naming collective victims and collective executioners, as well as selectivity in the approach to victims – depending on their group belonging and the instrumentalisation of their suffering – form an important element of the ideology of self-victimisation and strategies to repress the "dark pages" in the history of one's own political community; while. at the same time, deleting the victimisation of those whose suffering (for various reasons) is seen as inappropriate. These strategies ranged from silence and deletion, equating/levelling (rhetoric whereby faults are measured against each other and, so to speak, "mathematically cancel each other out") to externalisation, where all responsibility is ascribed to the other and reduced to "it wasn't us, it was them", and existentialisation, where historical processes are portrayed as "natural disasters", "historical circumstances" or fate (depriving them of any moral quality). At the same time, but seemingly paradoxically, instrumentalising suffering to construct a collective identity around the role of victim depersonalised the actual victims of expulsion and narrowed the space where their suffering could be recognised and their voices truly heard. The form and combinations of strategies to repress the past most often depended on the given moment and their function in society, and were connected to a multitude of factors ranging from the availability of data on victims and the ideological, political and cultural framework to the degree of development of a democratic culture of dialogue and the capacity of communities to discuss these issues openly, as well as the wider global context.

In both Germany and Yugoslavia/Serbia, the identification and naming of collective victims and collective executioners was used as a strategy for unburdening and repression whereby these societies sought to avoid responsibility for the "dark pages" of their history. Deleting and repressing from collective memory injustices committed against "Others" by one's own side and in the name of one's own political community are an integral part of the ideology of victimisation which was crystallised/is crystallised in various narratives. At the same time, but seemingly paradoxically, instrumentalising suffering to construct a collective identity around the role of victim depersonalised the actual victims of expulsion and narrowed the space where their suffering could be recognised and their voices truly heard.

When it comes to Serbia, its legacy in the 20th century is both the history of a nation state and the history of

the socialist Yugoslav community (which includes the suffering of Yugoslav Germans). Memory of the expulsion of Germans from Vojvodina is marked in Serbia by that discontinuity. Up until the nineties, it formed part of a wider Yugoslav narrative of victory – where the struggle of the Yugoslav peoples against the Nazi occupier, as a founding myth of the new state, was formed around the victimisation of Partisans as a symbol of the unarmed people. By completely identifying the Yugoslav Germans with Nazism and ascribing them collective guilt, this narrative precluded any possibility of their suffering. There was no room for memory of suffering and expulsion in public and political memory, or in official historiography. Instead, it remained in the sphere of informal social memory, mostly among the few Germans that remained. Since the start of the nineties, memory of the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans became marked by the dynamics between, on the one side, nationalist mobilisation and the construction of collective identity around the role of victim, where Serbs as victims stood in opposition to more or less all other Yugoslav peoples and the international community (especially Germany) as the executioners; and on the other side, resistance to the ethno-national determination of the state and war, coming primarily from civil society.

At the end of the nineties, when territorial wars against neighbouring Yugoslav peoples had come to an end, the focus shifted to ideological and political delineations within Serbia. Compared to the socialist period, the positions of victim and executioner were rotated: the position of executioner was now occupied by the Partisans and communism, and the position of victim by members of various formations that fought against the Partisans during the Second World War and that were anti-communist. This was closely linked to the need to legitimise the new socio-economic system being set up during the nineties, which was based, on the one hand, on an ethnically defined state, and on the other, on the neoliberal economic model. In that sense, the two key elements of Yugoslav socialist legacy – the possibility of coexistence and the construction of a super-ethnic political community and the issue of social justice – represent a particularly subversive part of that legacy.

However, just like in the nineties, impulses problematising the image of a glorious and pure past based on a narrative of collective victims and collective executioners, and glorifying war and justifying violence, came primarily from the sphere of civic organising and civil society, academic circles and the arts. Following the regime change in 2000, they are joined by institutional reforms and measures that support Serbia's aspirations for accession to the European Union. Together with the formation of German associations in Vojvodina, it could be said that the interaction of these social fields determined the memory about the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans. The thematisation of their suffering, though still insufficient, managed to make an impact in the public space. It could be said that the strategy of silence regarding the fate of the Vojvodina Germans, which was dominant in the socialist period, was now partly brought into question. The different approaches to their fate were often significantly determined by the function of any given interpretation in the local context, and discursive strategies were duly adapted. Between the polarised positions of suffering and expulsion, where on the one side stands German suffering (to the exclusion of any possibility of responsibility and guilt), and on the other stands German guilt (to the exclusion of any experience of suffering), more complex approaches to this topic developed, surpassing the simple dichotomy of collectivised "executioners/victims". Their particularity was the effort to view events in their historical and social context and facilitate public dialogue about this topic. On the one hand, this kind of approach opens up space for universal recognition of the suffering of innocents that becomes possible only through the dismantling of self-victimisation narratives; and on the other, it could also open up the space to question national identity based solely on ethnicity as it is being constructed in Serbia today. It is only by changing the current ethno-national identity policy to include all citizens of this country into that image of common belonging that a change in the attitude towards victims becomes possible. Memory plays an important role here, because it tells us where we come from, what are the important moments of our history, who are our heroes, what are the values we strive for. These are the elements of the narrative that builds identity and shapes the answer to the question of who we are. It bridges past, present and future, acts selectively, conveys values at the basis of the identity profile and norms of behaviour, so that what is remembered, in the form of official, political memory, the way it is remembered – as well as that which is

forgotten – speak more about the present of a society and the values it is founded on than they do about the past. It is precisely the attitude towards own and/or other victims that clearly delineates the values underpinning the political community and determines those that are included in it and those that are excluded from it. At the same time, the ability of societies to integrate into their heritage, through dialogue and inclusion of multiple perspectives, also those aspects of their own history in which injustice was committed against others (however those others may be defined), speaks to the kind of societies they are today, the extent to which they are able to include and respect diversity and the degree to which they are themselves based on the universal ethics of human dignity. Although the past itself is impossible to change, the attitude(s) towards events from the past and their victims, as well as the various instrumentalisaitons of human suffering are shaped by it to a large extent. In that sense, the attitude(s) towards the suffering of the Vojvodina Germans following the Second World War and the ability to engage in dialogue about this topic are important for Serbian society not (just) in terms of its attitude towards the past, but also in terms of its present and its future.

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