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Presenting and Establishing the Number of Yugoslav Casualties of World War II from Liberation until 1951

Abstract: This article reviews the first official presentation of the number of Yugoslav victims of the World War II. It also shows the way the number changed over the time to reach the official number of 1,706,000 victims. It summarizes the activities undertaken for the purpose of establishing the number of victims of war carried out by the State Commission for War Damage (during 1945 and 1946), the State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators (from 1944 to 1948), the Association of Fighters of the People's Liberation War (during 1950 and 1951), as well as the Ministry of National Defence (during 1945).

Key words: victims of war, Yugoslavia, census of the victims of war, State Commission for War Damage; State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators, Association of Fighters of the People's Liberation War.

The official number of Yugoslav victims of the World War II was established in the first half of the year following the end of operations in Yugoslavia and Europe. On 17 May 1945, eight days after the capitulation of Germany, and two days after the end of the war in Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito (who was then the President of the Temporary Government of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia - DFJ) in his letter to the British Ambassador to Yugoslavia Ralf Stevenson wrote that, by the end of the war the

number of Yugoslav victims amounted to more than 300,000 dead and about 200,000 seriously wounded soldiers, as well as about 1,300,000 civilians.¹ This was a first step towards the establishment of a final number of Yugoslav casualties of World War II. When the above mentioned numbers of dead soldiers and civilians were summed, it became obvious that the number of Yugoslav victims was more than 1,600,000.

Three days later, on 21 May 1945, Tito mentioned the same number of killed soldiers in his speech at a rally in Zagreb: “We gave 300,000 young people in that fight,” and for the total number of victims he said: “today, Yugoslavia has 1,700,000 inhabitants less than it had in 1941.”² This was the first public mention of the total number of casualties by representatives of the Yugoslav authorities. Five days later, at a rally in Ljubljana, on 26 May, Tito repeated that the number of all Yugoslav victims was 1,700,000.³

Tito presented this figure in a very critical post-war moment when there was an open confrontation between Yugoslavia and Western allies due to the entry of Yugoslav troops into Trieste. At that moment, the Yugoslav leadership was trying to prove that Yugoslavia had the right to Trieste and Julijska Krajina, among other things, due to the number of victims fallen during the war. Yugoslavia wanted to show that its share of victory over Germany was not small, and that its role could not be ignored. The number of casualties was to numerically support the Yugoslav contribution to the final victory and its claims to Trieste.

The next time Tito mentioned the number of victims in Osijek on 5 June 1945, he said: “Not only 1,500,000 people were killed in our country, but the country itself was destroyed to the ground”.⁴ Regardless of whether he was talking about the civilians, or civilians and soldiers, this figure did not match previously presented numbers.

The occurrence of different figures and the use of phrases “more than”, “about” and “over” clearly indicated that the number of victims was not final.

1 Maršal Tito g. Stevensonu, Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova / Beograd, 17. svibnja 1945, *Tito-Churchill, strogo tajno*, izabrao i uredio Dušan Biber, (Beograd-Zagreb: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Globus, 1981), 551.

2 „Оно што је сада постигнуто, постугнуто је заувјек и више нема никакве силе која би нам то могла одузети“, *Политика*, 23. 5. 1945, 2.

3 „Југославија, чији су народи дали милион и седам стотина хиљада жртава у овом рату, достојанствено ће бранити своје тековине и право да њени народи живе у оквиру њених граница“, *Политика*, 28. 5. 1945, 1.

4 „Говор маршала Тита у Осјеку о раду на обнови земље и братству наших народа“, *Политика*, 7. 6. 1945, 1.

Approximately the same number of victims was included in the material which Yugoslavia sent to the Committee of the Chief Prosecutors at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1945 for the purposes of the court trial to the state, party and military personnel of Nazi Germany. Yugoslavia stated that the result of German aggression and occupation was “the death of 1,650,000 identified victims, and most probably of 2,000,000 Yugoslavs.”⁵

The first precise number of Yugoslav war victims was publicly announced by Mitar Bakić, Secretary General of the Presidency of Yugoslav Government on 19 August 1945. He presented the number of 1,685,000 casualties, and noted that over 75% of them “were killed or lost their lives in fascist concentration camps or death chambers.”⁶ These were the data collected by the State Commission for War Damage and presented at the Reparations Conference in Paris which was held from 9 November to 21 December 1945.⁷

Yugoslavia submitted a *Memorandum of the DFJ Government on the Issue of Yugoslav Reparations Claims against Germany* to the Reparations Conference in Paris on the basis of which it intended to realize its claims for the compensation of war damage. It contained information on the total of 1,685,000 Yugoslav citizens who were killed by Germany and its allies, which was over 10% of the total number of Yugoslav population.⁸

The number of 1,685,000 Yugoslav casualties comprised 283,540 soldiers and 1,401,460 civilians.⁹ In a more detailed explanation of the in-

5 Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, *Izveštaj jugoslovenske državne komisije za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača Međunarodnom vojnom sudu u Nürnbergu*, (Beograd, 1947), 55.

6 „Југославија је имала 1,650.000 људских жртава у рату, а материјална штета износи 62 милијарде долара“, *Политика*, 20. 8. 1945, 1.

7 The Reparations Conference was to determine the amount of reparation payable by Germany, and to establish reparation quotas. All the countries that suffered damage during the war could claim it from the German territory occupied by the Western powers, except for Poland and the Soviet Union, which were to claim damage from the German territory under the Soviet occupation.

8 Beside that, it is reported that: 425,000 inhabitants were left incapacitated, 170,000 taken to prison camps, 320,000 interned in concentration camps, 270,000 forced to labour, 530,000 forced to move and 320,000 forcefully mobilized which meant that 3,700,000 inhabitants, or 23% of the entire population, was a loss for the Yugoslav economy. Data on destroyed residential and commercial buildings are also listed. Archives of Yugoslavia (Arhiv Jugoslavije - AJ), Fond 54, Reparation Commission at the FPRY Government, f. 44, AJ 97, 1945 Memorandum, Memorandum vlade DFJ po pitanju jugoslovenskih reparacionih potraživanja prema Nemačkoj, 3.

9 AJ, 54, 44, 97, 1945 Memorandum, Dossier Remis pour la Yougoslavie, 41.

formation presented, the Yugoslav side provided information that these were losses incurred between 6 April 1941 and 9 May 1945, and that they did not include military losses of Yugoslav armed forces outside the country¹⁰ and the Yugoslavs who were recruited by enemy armies or enemy-controlled forces. They also did not include those who died of starvation or illness.¹¹

However, during the work of the Reparations Conference, Yugoslavia amended the reported number of victims. The number of soldiers killed has increased to 305,000.¹² However, the total number of Yugoslav victims was not increased by the same number (21,460) and did not amount to 1,706,460. For unknown reasons, the new number presented by Yugoslavia was 1,706,000. This automatically meant the reduction in the number of civilian casualties by 460. In the material submitted to the Reparations Conference, there were visible corrections of previously typed numbers. Thus, the number of 283,540 injured soldiers was corrected to 305,000, and the total number of casualties to 1,706,460 and 1,706,000.¹³ However, the archival material does not provide an explanation as to why there has been a decrease in the number of civilian casualties. The reduced number is relatively small in relation to the overall figure, so it could be attributed to the rounding of figures.

The then “established” and presented official number of 1,706,000 victims did not change until the end of the existence of socialist Yugoslavia (and even after its break-up, no precise number of victims was identified). The only thing that happened was that, due to the rounding, a variation of about 1,700,000 victims appeared.

The State Commission for War Damage was also engaged in the process of establishing the number of victims of war. The Ministry of National Defence helped them by giving its contribution regarding the number of killed soldiers. The results of its work regarding the number of casualties were presented at the Reparations Conference.

10 Parts of the Royal Yugoslav Army that managed to escape from the country to the Middle East and Egypt, and became a special part of the British army there.

11 AJ, 54, 44, 99, General Notes – Yugoslavia, Footnotes to Synoptic Table II.

12 AJ, 54, 44, 99, Additions and Explanations to the Report of the War Damages of Democratic Federative Yugoslavia.

13 AJ, 54, 1, 3. - The new number was also heard at the Conference in the exposition of Yugoslav delegate Aleš Bebler. Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (Dipolomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije - DAMSPRS), Political Archive (PA), 1945, f. 24, d. 8, 188.

The State Commission for War Damage was established on 2 April 1945 to work on collecting data on war damage and its evaluation. It was about the overall war damage, caused both by the enemies (the occupiers and their collaborators), and the allies (the Red Army and the Western powers), as well as by JV, NOV, POJ, or JA.¹⁴ Collecting data on war damage included data on material damage, and those about “harming the life, health and body of personality”. Whereas, the damage done to life referred to the loss of life and the cases of missing persons, the damage to health and body referred to any kind of injury such as a body malfunction, wound, decrease in physical and social health and / or working ability, pain suffered, etc.¹⁵ These data were necessary for the calculation of war damage, since each killed and incapacitated citizen presented a certain financial loss for the state and for their families.

Activities on the collection of data on war damage started during the war, when some parts of the country had already been liberated.¹⁶ Generally, those were the data on material damage, but there was also an intention to determine the number of war casualties. Data collection was precipitated because the data on losses, both material and human were to be presented to the Allied War Commission which was supposed to meet in Moscow in June.¹⁷ However, the data included in these first reports were followed by the information that they were just estimates.¹⁸ A more detailed work on data collection was carried out in the months following the end of the war operations.

The submission of claims for the war damage by citizens and private-legal persons began in the second half of July 1945 and was supposed to take 40 days, but was extended. The process itself was advertized and

14 Уредба о оснивању Државне комисије за ратну штету, *Службени лист ДФЈ*, бр. 20, 10. 4. 1945, 179; АЈ, 54, 1, 1, Упутство бр. 4.

15 Уредба о оснивању Државне комисије за ратну штету, *Службени лист ДФЈ*, бр. 20, 10. 4. 1945, 179; Правилник о пријављивању и утврђивању ратне штете, *Службени лист ДФЈ*, бр. 44, 26. 6. 1945, 384–385.

16 Collecting data on war damage in the territory of Vojvodina started in March 1945. Historical Archive of Belgrade (Istorijski arhiv Beograda - IAB), Fond 34, Peoples' Board of Zemun County (Narodni odbor sreza zemunskog), k. 136, Glavni Narodnooslobodilački odbor Vojvodine, Statistički odsek, Ratna šteta, Uputstvo za organe koji popunjavaju obrasce R. št. 1 i 2 za svako mesto odnosno grad u Vojvodini.

17 АЈ, фонд 50, Presidency of the FPRY Government, f. 69, АЈ 153, 781, 782, 794, 798, 799, 800.

18 АЈ, 54, 20, 47, Oblasni NOO za Kosovo i Metohiju br. 572 i br. 573, 17. 6. 1945; Military Archives (Vojni arhiv - VA), Fond People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije, NOVJ), k. 25A, f. 2/1, dok. 43.

popularized through media and social organizations. The National Committees were instructed to explain to the people that the development of Yugoslavia depended on the restoration of damaged and destroyed sources of production and that reparations will help restore the country. The injured parties were informed about their personal interest therein, since they were supposed to receive an adequate compensation for their losses.¹⁹ In addition to all state-owned enterprises, institutes and institutions, every citizen of Yugoslavia also had the obligation to report the war damage. Data collection was carried out by the county committees with the help of county commissions for war damage which were established for this purpose.²⁰

Special forms were outlined for the purpose of data collecting. The reports on the war casualties were submitted through *Form no. 6 - Reporting Dead or Missing persons*. In addition to the basic information about the victim, the form also included information whether the person lost his/her life as a civilian or a soldier of the Royal Yugoslav Army (Jugoslovenska vojska - JV), the National Liberation Army (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska - NOV), the Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia (Partizanski odredi Jugoslavije - POJ), or the Yugoslav Army (Jugoslovenska armija - JA), the time, place and the way a person lost his/her life, as well as the amount of money that the person would have earned if he/she had not lost his/her life. The form also contained information about the persons having been sustained by the victim.²¹

19 Census start dates were different for different federal units and areas in Yugoslavia: 20 July for Slovenia and Macedonia, 25 July for Serbia, 1 August for Croatia, Montenegro and Vojvodina, and 10 August in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo and Metohija. „Позив за пријављивање ратне штете“, *Политика*, 18. 7. 1945, 5; IAB, Fond 28, District Peoples' Board of Belgrade District (Okružni narodni odbor Okruga beogradskog), k. 16, 105, 1.

20 Правилник о пријављивању и утврђивању ратне штете, 385–386; AJ, 54, 1, 1, Uputstvo br. 4 Državne komisije za ratnu štetu; AJ, 54, 1, 2, Državna komisija za ratnu štetu br 82 he od 1. 6. 1945 Predsedništvu ministarskog saveta.

21 IAB, 34, 94. - War damage claim forms are also stored in boxes 95 to 133 of the same fond, as well as in other fonds of the Historical Archives of Belgrade – fonds of the County National Committees and National Committees of the City of Belgrade. Part of the forms is also found in the Archive of Serbia, G-233, the Ministry of Finance of the NRS, f. 839 and 840, as well as in the files 841 to 846 with reports on damage to business entities. Part of the consequently submitted war damage claims is located in the AJ, 54, 20, 46, Legal and Physical Persons. It is assumed that the same material can be found in other regional and local archives of former Yugoslavia.

For easier administration, the County Committees organized data in three ways. The reports were grouped to three registries: A (damage to persons), B (damage to property) and V (dead and missing), and within each register they were further grouped according to the occupiers who committed the damage. In order to separate two types of injured parties, their names were entered in two registers: *Register of War Damages to Persons and Property* and *Register of Dead and Missing Persons* (so-called "Ž" Register). Furthermore, for the purpose of easier search, the cardboards sized 8x12cm were made for each war damage report. The cardboards for dead and missing persons should have been managed as separate files, and it was recommended they be of different colour, if possible.²² Apparently, the files were not created everywhere, so in 1946, there came an order to organize and manage files, as well as registers.²³

The County Committees delivered collected data to the National Commissions, which delivered them to the State Commission. This was done on a ten-day basis through a special form called the *Collective List*. It included information collected by the County Committees – both on human and material losses. The *Collective List* had a statistical purpose and was filled with numerical data; it did not include the names of the injured and killed. It contained sections which were filled with the number of dead or missing persons, classified by age and sex, and then the total number of victims, which was divided to soldiers and civilians. It also included the number of dependents who remained after the victims and the total damage caused by the death of those persons (costs of treatment and funeral, loss of income, costs of supporting those who remained). Further on, it included data on personal injury and material losses.²⁴

By summing up the numbers provided by the National Commission, the State Commission was supposed to establish the total number of war casualties. However, no documents could be found including the final number established in this way. The State Commission collected all available data, but it remained uncertain if the number reported to the Reparations Conference was established by summing. The State Commission kept receiving the data on the casualties even after the report on the to-

22 IAB, fond 44, Peoples Board of III Distric County of the City of Belgrade (Narodni odbor III reiona grada Beograda), k. 94, 4; IAB, 34, 56; 134; 137.

23 IAB, 44, k. 94–114.

24 AJ, 54, 20, 46; IAB, 28, 16, 175.

tal number of victims was submitted to the Reparations Conference, and even during the following years.²⁵

Doubts are supported by the data on the war damage for each occupying country separately. Namely, in order to request indemnification from each country individually, data on the war damage and the number of victims were classified by the occupiers who caused it. Thus classified losses were accurately recorded in the documents of the State Commission for War Damage: 1,236,305 victims killed by Germany, 150,030 by Austria, 437,956 by Italy, 20,167 by Hungary and 12,032 by Bulgaria.²⁶ However, their sum does not equal any of the two figures that Yugoslavia had previously reported, but 1,856,490 persons “dead or missing.” It is not clear how exactly this difference in numbers occurred, but it proves that the number of casualties was not precisely determined.

Data organised by the damage perpetrators were not published. The collected data were always referred to collectively, without classification by countries. The only information that was published was about the victims killed by the Italians, which was certainly a political decision due to reparations request and the conflict Yugoslavia had with Italy over the territory of Trieste and Julijska Krajina.²⁷

The available war damage material shows that the citizens’ response to claiming damage was weak.²⁸ Therefore, not all losses could have been reported. Furthermore, Yugoslavia never updated the number of victims although the damage reports kept coming even after the Reparations Conference. Especially because the Peace Conference was yet to be held, and reparations from Italy and Hungary requested, the war damage commissions were urged to supply data that had not been supplied yet in order to gather enough relevant information for the Peace Conference.²⁹

25 AJ, 54, 20, 46 – Collective lists and individual applications were sent to the DFJ Reparation Commission; IAB, 34, 136.

26 AJ, 54, 2, 4.

27 Edvard Kardelj presented the number of victims killed by Italians at the Press Conference in London in November 1945, and it was separately printed in the publication *Људске и материјалне жртве Југославије у ратом напору 1941–1945*. DAMSPS, PA, 33, *Nezavedena dokumenta 1945*, *Zapisnik pitanja i odgovora Kardelja na Konferenciji za štampu u Londonu*, 5; Репарациона комисија при Влади Федеративне Народне Републике Југославије, *Људске и материјалне жртве Југославије у ратом напору 1941–1945*, (s. l., s. a.), 56.

28 Among other cases of poor responses, the damage claiming in Srem completely failed. IAB, 34, 136, Sreska komisija za ratnu štetu za srez zemunski br. 44, 26. 2. 1946; IAB, 28, 16, 105, 7.

29 IAB, 34, 136, Sreska komisija za ratnu štetu za srez zemunski br. 44, 26. 2. 1946.

This brings us back to the conclusion that the number of victims reported was not precisely determined, although it coincided with the numbers previously mentioned in Tito's speeches. The correction that was made during the Reparations Conference itself, was the number of fallen soldiers, due to the information obtained from the Ministry of National Defence.

On 11 June 1945, a month after the end of the war operations in Yugoslavia, at the request of the DFJ Government Office, Mobilization Department of the Ministry of National Defence (MNO) delivered its assessment that the losses of the Yugoslav Army during the war were about 345,000 soldiers, namely: about 275,000 people were killed in the Yugoslav Army and Yugoslav Navy, about 10,000 in the Royal Yugoslav Army and Navy, about 50,000 killed in concentration camps and about 10,000 in captivity. These numbers were acquired by an ad hoc commission composed of the assistant to the Chief of General Staff General Lieutenant Mihailo Apostolski, the head of the Mobilization Department of the Ministry of National Defence, Major General Josip Škorpik, and the doctor at the medical department of MNO Major Ante Zimolo. When submitting the data, they stated that they were "based on experience as well as on partial data on losses, where available", i.e. it was not a precise number, but a calculated.³⁰

MNO continued to collect data on the number of victims. Correspondence between the State Commission for War Damage and the Mobilization Department of MNO, from June to July 1945, shows that military authorities were not interested in the names of the dead or missing, but only in numerical and statistical data. These data were needed "as a basis for the organization of a military force."³¹ However, during 1945, the army started making the files of the killed.³² There are no precise information whether and which number MNO subsequently submitted to the State Commission for War Damage. In the later period, however, after the beginning of the work of the Refugee Conference, the Military-Historical Institute of the FNRJ issued a publication entitled *Ratni napori Jugoslavi-*

30 VA, NOVJ, k. 25A, f. 2/1, dok. 43; VA, NOVJ, k. 25A, f. 2/1a, doc. 12. See also: Dragan Ž. Cvetković, „Gubici pripadnika partizanskog pokreta sa teritorije Jugoslavije 1941–1945. Prvi deo“ (doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Filozofski fakultet, Odeljenje za istoriju, 2016), 3.

31 AJ, 54, 1, 2, Državna komisija za ratnu štetu br 129 od 27. 6. 1945; Ministarstvo narodne odbrane, mobilizacijsko odeljenje Mb. Br. 6416 od 3. jula 1945.

32 The files of dead soldiers filled in in the following years, are located in the Military Archives in Belgrade.

je 1941–1945, which reported a total of 305,672 fallen soldiers. Out of that number, 276,749 were killed (245,549 in combat, 31,200 died of wounds), and 28,923 were reported missing. In this study, losses were also reported by years and by offensives. There was no explanation as to how these numbers were obtained.³³

The number of Yugoslav casualties initially reported at the Reparations Conference was 283,540, which is about the number of killed soldiers of the Royal Yugoslav Army and the Yugoslav Army, delivered by the Mobilization Department of MNO in June – 285,000. The amended number of 305,000 is similar to the number published by the Military-History Institute – 305,672. The lack of archival material about the process of determining the number of victims makes it impossible to explain why there are differences between the number of victims reported by military institutions and the number of victims reported by the state commissions to the Reparations Conference. However, the similarity of the numbers leads to the conclusion that the Commission for War Damage used the data received from the Ministry of National Defence.

During 1985, Vladeta Vučković, a professor of mathematics at Notre Dame University in South Bend (Indiana, USA) came out with a statement that in March 1947, as a student of the second year of mathematics, and a person who recently started working in the Yugoslav Federal Statistical Office, he was given a task to calculate Yugoslav losses during the war. Having performed the task entrusted to him, within the given two weeks, he got a number of 1.7 million inhabitants of demographic losses.³⁴ According to him, that number was then used by Edvard Kardelj to support

33 Vojno istorijski institut FNRJ, *Ratni napori Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, (Beograd, s. a.), 7, 22–29, 34; Cvetković, „Gubici pripadnika partizanskog pokreta“, 3–5.

34 Demographic losses stand for a difference between the present number of inhabitants and the assumed number of inhabitants in case that there had been no war. They include: children unborn due to war conditions (reduced by the number of children who would have died in those years), migration of the population (emigration and forced relocation) and actual war losses, i.e. killed due to warfare or died from the consequences of war conditions (illness and hunger). On demographic losses during the war, see: Ivo Lah, „Metode izračunavanja budućeg stanovništva i njihova primena na stanovništvo predratne Jugoslavije“, *Statistička revija* 2/1951, 245; Ivo Lah, „Istinski demografski gubici Jugoslavije u Drugom svetskom ratu“, *Statistička revija* 2–3/1952, 214; Душан Врућинић, *Демографски губици Србије проузроковани*

the Yugoslav claims at the Reparations Conference in Paris, and presented as real war losses. Vučković claims that this was the way the official number of Yugoslav casualties was established.³⁵ Although he repeated those statements on several occasions,³⁶ and although they were given credit in the literature dealing with the establishing of the number of victims of the war, they cannot be trusted for a simple reason that he said the calculation was done in 1947, and the fact is that the number in question appeared earlier, during 1945. It is possible that Vučković himself did some calculations and got that number, but those data certainly could not have been presented to the domestic public and the Reparations Conference in Paris in 1945.³⁷

ратовима у XX веку, (Београд: Музеј жртава геноцида, 2007), 9–10, 193; Bogoljub Kočović, *Žrtve Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*, (London: Naše delo, 1985), 35.

- 35 Vladeta Vučković, „Žrtve rata,“ *Naša reč* 368, oktobar 1985, London, (reprinted in: Ljubo Boban, *Kontroverze iz Povijesti Jugoslavije 2*, (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, Stvarnost, 1989), 409–410 and Bogoljub Kočović, *Žrtve Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*, (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1989), XXI–XXIV).
- 36 V. Bulić, „Mrtvi su ujedinjeni za sva vremena“, *Duga* 412, 9–23. 12. 1989, 45–49; Vladeta Vučković, „Uvodna reč“, in: Bogoljub Kočović, *Nauka, nacionalizam i propaganda (Između gubitaka i žrtava Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji)*, (Paris: Editions de Titre, 1998), 8–9.
- 37 Beside this calculation of Vučković, there were several more calculations of the number of demographic losses in the period in question (1945–1951). After the census was conducted in Yugoslavia in 1948, the conditions have been met to compare the results of the previous censuses (from 1921 and 1931) and to determine demographic losses more precisely. These calculations have been done by employees of the Federal Institute of Statistics and Records, Ivo Lah and Dragoljub Tasić, as well as the former director of that institution and professor of statistics at the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade, Dolfe Vogeltnik. Using different methods of calculation, Lah obtained three numbers of demographic losses, and he himself accepted as the most likely number of 2,100,000. Tasić came to the conclusion that the demographic losses were 2,428,000 inhabitants, and Vogeltnik reached the number of 2,900,000 (with the assumption that the change of some minimal parameters in the hypotheses that number could reach 3,250,000 inhabitants). Vogeltnik estimated the actual war losses (including killed civilians, partisans and members of the Quisling military formations) to 1,814,000 people. These calculations, published in 1951 and 1952, never entered official use, nor were they used as a reference on a daily basis. Lah, „Metode izračunavanja budućeg stanovništva“, 245–247; Lah, „Istinski demografski gubici Jugoslavije“, 214–215; Dragoljub Tasić, „Uvod“ in: *Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15. marta 1948. godine*, Knjiga I: Stanovništvo po polu i domaćinstva, (Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku i evidenciju, 1951), XLIX; Dolfe Vogeltnik, „Demografski gubici Jugoslavije u Drugom svetskom ratu“, *Statistička revija* 1/1952, 15.

The recording of the data on the victims of the war was performed simultaneously by the State Commission for War Damage and the State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators. These two activities were not census in the true sense of the word, since the basic data they collected were not the data on the victims of the war.

The State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators was established at the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council of People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), which was held from 19 to 30 November 1943 in Jajce. Its main duty was to collect documentation regarding the crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators, aiming to affect their punishment by the competent courts. Within that, the identification of the victims of the war was also done.

The Rules of Procedure of the State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators passed by the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ), on 8 May 1944, provided that the State Commission would organize the collection of statistical data on the victims of the terror of the occupiers and their collaborators. The statistical data were supposed to be collected at the level of the cities and the counties/districts, using a form that was yet to be drafted.³⁸

The form for recording the war crimes was drafted during the summer and on 20 August 1944, sent to the National Commissions. They needed to include data on the perpetrator and the victim of the crime, place, time and manner of execution and material damage caused by the commission of the crime or in connection with it. The names of the persons supported by the victim (children, spouses or parents) had to be indicated, too. The form should have been filled out for each perpetrator and victim. If there were more perpetrators and more victims in one crime, a form was filled out for each participant, and the event itself and the partic-

38 AJ, Fond 110, State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators, f. 1, AJ 1, 2-3 (Pravilnik o radu Državne komisije za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača).

ipants were linked by a note in which the data on other persons were entered.³⁹

The State Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators published the results, specifying the number of the victims for certain locations. However, it never publicly announced the total number of victims it came to, as well as the lists of Yugoslav citizens who lost their lives. The State Commission was abolished in 1948. The final report included results of the statistical data collected by the Commission: 505,182 persons killed, 384,049 injured and 1,750,032 arrested and interned. All these numbers referred to civilians, since the soldiers were not registered.⁴⁰ These numbers were not officially published until the end of the existence of socialist Yugoslavia.

The next action of collecting data on victims of the war was organized by the Main Board of the Association of Fighters of the National Liberation War (Savez boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata – SBNOR) of Yugoslavia in 1950. However, it was clear that this action could not give information on all victims, nor the total number of victims.⁴¹

The census had a multiple purpose. The main goal was to create a memorial book of the victims of NOR in each district, town and city. These were supposed to revive the memory of the fallen soldiers. Memorial books would be kept in museums or printed. Data on fallen soldiers, those who died in prisons and camps and civilians were supposed to help the processing of the history of war operations in some parts of Yugosla-

39 AJ, 110, 1, 2, 254–256; Archives of Serbia (Arhiv Srbije - AS), Fond G 25, The Land Commission for Determining Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Collaborators (Zemaljska komisija Srbije za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora), f. 33.

40 Miodrag Zečević, Jovan P. Popović, *Dokumenti iz istorije Jugoslavije. Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njegovih pomagača iz Drugog svetskog rata*, (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Zad, 1996), 42–43.

41 „Akciju prikupljanja podataka žrtava NO rata ne treba zvati popisom, jer ona stvarno ne može dati podatke o žrtvama rata u Jugoslaviji“, AJ, Fond 297, The Union of the Associations of Fighters of the People’s Liberation War (Savez udruženja boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata) – Inventory I, f. 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu, Zaključci savetovanja pretsednika komisija za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata i sekretara sekcija za prikupljanje istorijskog materijala održanog u Glavnom odboru Saveza boraca NO rata Jugoslavije na dan 24 decembra 1949 g.

via. Based on the obtained data, the necessary measures should have been taken to give due recognition to the fallen soldiers and victims of fascist terror, but also to their parents and relatives.⁴²

The census itself was carried out by the Commissions established especially for the purpose of collecting data on the victims of the war. They included not only the members of SBNOR, but also other mass organizations and national committees of the whole country. Beside the Main Board of SBNOR that led the action, there were national, regional, district / county / city and local / area commissions.⁴³

The census covered those soldiers and civilians who, from 6 April 1941 to 10 May 1945, disappeared or were killed during combat or warfare, in camps or exile, or during the forced labour, those who succumbed to the injuries or died of consequences caused by the war. Those who died after the war, and whose death was a direct consequence of wounds or injuries occurring before 10 May 1945, were also listed. The census did not include persons who were on the side of the occupiers or collaborators, either as soldiers, either as helpers or sympathizers. The Chetniks fallen in the fight against the occupiers at the beginning of the war were excluded (unless they fought the Partisans), as well as the members of the Croatian police who did not participate in the fight against the Partisans (but not those among them who were killed in a confrontation with the Chetniks). It was advised that collaborators should not be rejected as a rule, but that each case should be approached individually, due to forced mobilization

42 AS, Fond Đ 115, The Associations of Fighters of the People's Liberation War of Serbia – Main board PRS 1947-1962 (Savez boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata Srbije – Glavni odbor NRS 1947-1962), f. 65, Pismo Srete Kovačevića bez datuma, 1; Uputstvo Komisijama za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata, 1; AS, Đ 115, f. 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, Savezu boraca treba pružiti pomoć pri evidentiranju žrtava; AJ, 297, I, 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu – Zaključci savetovanja predsednika komisija za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata i sekretara sekcija za prikupljanje istorijskog materijala održanog u Glavnom odboru Saveza boraca NO rata Jugoslavije na dan 24 decembra 1949 g, 1; Mihael Sobolevski, „Prilog metodologiji istraživanja stvarnih ljudskih gubitaka Hrvatske u tijeku drugoga svjetskog rata“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 1/1992, 191.

43 AJ, 297, I, 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu – Zaključci savetovanja predsednika komisija za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata i sekretara sekcija za prikupljanje istorijskog materijala održanog u Glavnom odboru Saveza boraca NO rata Jugoslavije na dan 24 decembra 1949 g; AS, Đ 115, 65 – Pismo Srete Kovačevića bez datuma; Uputstvo Komisijama za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata; AS, Đ 115, 63 – Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala - Savezu boraca treba pružiti pomoć pri evidentiranju žrtava; Sobolevski, „Prilog metodologiji istraživanja stvarnih ljudskih gubitaka Hrvatske“, 190.

to the quisling formations, among whom there were also NOR sympathizers. It was also advised that, if there were doubts about whether to collect data for a person or not, it should be done, and additional checks would be made later. It was noticed that those who died after 1945 in the fight against the remainder of the Ustashas and Chetniks should not be listed.⁴⁴ While preparing the census, there seems to be an intention to list "national enemies", but not to include their names in the memorial books, but to keep data in the census material. However, this intention was abandoned.⁴⁵

The data were to be collected in the places of residence of a person providing the data, and if the data concerned a person who did not live in that place before the war, the form was to be sent to the place where the person lived. This was done to avoid duplication of data, especially due to the fact that there were many colonists and refugees who did not return to their homes.⁴⁶

It was recommended, in addition to interviewing and visiting households, to use all available documentation, such as population censuses, registries of births and deaths, and lists of personal and family invalids. There was also a possibility to add the victim's data, which could not have been collected at that moment, after the census or when they be-

44 AJ, 297, I, 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu – Zaključci savetovanja predsednika komisija za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata i sekretara sekcija za prikupljanje istorijskog materijala održanog u Glavnom odboru Saveza boraca NO rata Jugoslavije na dan 24 decembra 1949 g; AJ, 297, I, 25, Zemaljski odbor SBNOR BiH pov. br. 10/49 od 28. 11. 1949; AS, Đ 115, 65 – Pismo Srete Kovačevića bez datuma; Uputstvo Komisijama za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata; AS, Đ 115, 63 – Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala – Savezu boraca treba pružiti pomoć pri evidentiranju žrtava; Mihael Sobolevski, „Prešućena istina – žrtve rata na području bivše Jugoslavije 1941.–1945. prema popisu iz 1964. godine“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 2–3/1993, 89–90; Mate Rupić, „Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj iz 1950. godine“, *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara* 4, Pečuj, 20.–22. oktobra 2000, priredili Hans-Georg Fleck i Igor Graovac (Zagreb: Zaklada Friedrich Naumann, 2001), 541.

45 Marica Karakaš Obradov, „Žrtve savezničkih bombardiranja nezavisne države Hrvatske u jugoslovenskim popisima žrtava rata (1947., 1950. i 1964.) i Hrvatskim žrtvoslovima (1991.–2005.)“, *Polemos: časopis za interdisciplinarna istraživanja rata i mira* 10/20/2007, 74, napomena 6; Rupić, „Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj“, 541.

46 AS, Đ 115, F 65, Pismo Srete Kovačevića bez datuma, 2; Uputstvo Komisijama za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata, 3; AJ, 297, I, 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu – Glavni odbor SBNOR pov. br. 16 od 10. 12. 1949; AJ, 297, I, 25, Zemaljski odbor SBNOR BiH pov. br. 10/49 od 28. 11. 1949.

come available, since a copy of the form should have remained in the city or district.⁴⁷

The census form entitled *Data on killed, murdered, injured or missing citizens in the territory of the FPRY during the Second World War*, in addition to basic personal data, included the question of arrest and imprisonment, as well as the stance therein; about the engagement in NOB, the units in which he served and the functions, ranks, decorations, praises or recognitions he had; the location, the time and the circumstances of death or disappearance, as well as the possible belonging to enemy formations and organizations.⁴⁸

The census was planned to last from 15 January to 15 February 1950. Then, from 15 February to 1 March, the entire material should have been classified, with the Republican League of Soldiers being allowed to change these dates if necessary. The census in Vojvodina began on 2 January, in Central Serbia and Kosmet on 15 January, and in Belgrade on 29 January, because SBNOR of Serbia decided to list the village settlements first, and the cities in the end.⁴⁹ In Croatia, the census lasted from 22 Jan-

47 AS, Đ 115, F 65, Pismo Srete Kovačevića bez datuma, 2; Uputstvo Komisijama za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata, 3; AJ, 297, I, 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu – Glavni odbor SBNOR pov. br. 16 od 10. 12. 1949.

48 AS, Đ 115, F 63, Formular *Podaci o poginulim, ubijenim, nastradalim ili nestalim građanima sa teritorije FNRJ u toku II svetskog rata*. - The filled forms can also be found in: IAB, F 989, County Board of the Union of the Associations of Fighters of the People's Liberation War of Belgrade County (Sreski odbor SBNOR-a sreza beogradskog), k. 4 и k. 5 и F 990, County Board of the Union of the Associations of Fighters of the People's Liberation War of Zemun County (Sreski odbor SBNOR-a sreza Zemun), k. 3 и k. 4, and it is assumed that they can be found in other fonds of the committees of the Fighters' Associations in the regional and county archives in the territory of former Yugoslavia. According to Mihael Soboleski, they are also found in the Archives of the Institute for Contemporary History in Zagreb, fond: RO SUBNOR Croatia. Commission for collecting data on the victims of NOR. (Sobolevski, „Prilog metodologiji istraživanja stvarnih ljudskih gubitaka Hrvatske“, 191–192, napomene 33 i 41).

49 AJ, 297, I, 21, 1949, Materijali komisije za popis palih žrtava u II-om svetskom ratu, Zaključci savetovanja predsednika komisija za prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata i sekretara sekcija za prikupljanje istorijskog materijala održanog u Glavnom odboru Saveza boraca NO rata Jugoslavije na dan 24 decembra 1949 g, 2; AS, Đ 115, 65, Pismo Srete Kovačevića bez datuma, 1; AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, Savezu boraca treba pružiti pomoć pri evidentiranju žrtava; AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, U nekim srezovima i gradovima prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata ne vrši se uspešno.

uary to 22 February.⁵⁰ In other republics, the beginning of the census was different.

The census itself did not go as planned. Although most of the work was done, numerous shortcomings were noted. In some areas the commissions worked poorly, and in others they did not list anything. The problems were primarily of organizational nature: preparation was poorly done, the qualitatively weak committees were inactive, the census teams were not formed, it was not supported by other mass organizations, and the like. So in Belgrade, the census teams did not go back to those houses where they did not find anyone on the first day. In Dolovo and Žablje the teams went only to those houses that suffered some kind of damage, and in Bečej region it happened that they recorded enemies. The problem were also the families for which there was no one to give data because all members were killed during the war. Thus, it was noticed that not all the Jews were listed. The problem was also the shortage of the listed victims from the actual (or assumed) number. Some justification for the poor results was that the maize purchase was in progress, as well as the engagement of local organizations in the elections that were to take place.⁵¹ In Croatia, the data were compared to the results of the Commission for War Damage. It was noticed that the data were different - for some counties smaller, for some bigger.⁵²

In order to improve the work on the census, various measures were undertaken, and in some places the census was repeated. However, the results of these activities were also unsatisfying. Somewhere they were successful, but somewhere not. The reasons for the one more failure were the same as the first time – the poor organization, above all.⁵³

50 Sobolevski, „Prilog metodologiji istraživanja stvarnih ljudskih gubitaka Hrvatske“, 191; Rupić, „Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj“, 541.

51 AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, U nekim srezovima i gradovima prikupljanje podataka o žrtvama rata ne vrši se uspešno; AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, Pregled rada; AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, Zapisnik sa sastanka komisije za evidentiranje žrtava, sekcije za prikupljanje istorijskog materijala pri Zemaljskom odboru Saveza boraca NOR Srbije sa komisijom za evidentiranje žrtava pokrajine Vojvodine, održanog 10. 1. 1950; Zapisnik sa sastanka sekcije i komisije za popis žrtava pri zemaljskom odboru Saveza Boraca održanog 18. 2. 1950; AS, Đ 115, 65, Zapisnik od 10. 3. 1950 o popisu žrtava; AS, Đ 115, 66, 1948–1955, Izveštaj o radu SBNOR u toku I tromesečja 1950 godine, 20. 4. 1950, 16–17; AJ, 297, I, 25, Izveštaj o radu za tromesečje januar–april 1950 (SBNOR BiH), 24; AJ, 297, I, 24, Izveštaj za prvo tromesečje 1950 godine (SBNOR Hrvatske).

52 Rupić, „Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj“, 542.

53 AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, Pregled rada, Zapisnik sa sastanka sekcije i komisije za popis žrtava pri zemaljskom odboru Saveza Boraca

By the beginning of April, 182,021 victims of the Second World War were registered in Serbia. That was 60.67% of the estimated number of all victims for Serbia⁵⁴ (about 300,000). After another census, the number rose to 188,184⁵⁵ and after sending data to other republics (those who lived outside Serbia before the War), the number decreased to 149,670.⁵⁶ By the end of April, 86% of the estimated number was reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina (186,000 out of 212,000), but in some places the estimations were exceeded, so the ratio of listed compared to the estimated number of victims was 110% in Tuzla, and 107% in Sarajevo.⁵⁷ In Croatia, they predicted that about 300,000 people should be listed, but the results gave almost half the number.⁵⁸

Because of all the shortcomings and attempts to correct them, the census was not successfully completed during that year. Data on the numbers of fallen soldiers and victims of fascist terror kept coming throughout 1951.⁵⁹

The official results of this census have never been published. SB-NOR did not have the strength to carry out all the actions until the end. The inactivity and poor performance of some committees in the field made it impossible to record all the victims of the war. The results obtained were much different from those estimated immediately after the war, so this might have been the reason why they were not made public. Although the action lasted longer than anticipated and although it did not meet all expectations, it was presented as a success. At the Second Congress of SB-

održanog 18. 2. 1950; AS, Đ 115, 63, Rezultati sakupljanja istorijskog materijala, Pregled rada, Zapisnik sa sastanka istorijske sekcije i pojedinih članova komisije za evidentiranje žrtava održan 8. maja 1950; AS, Đ 115, 66, 1948–1955, Izveštaj o radu SB-NOR u toku II tromesečja 1950, 7; AJ, 297, I, 21, Materijali o žrtvama rata i žft, Izveštaji o žrtvama rata i žft po republikama, Stanje po republikama do kraja jula 1950; AJ, 297, I, 25, Izveštaj o radu za tromesečje januar–april 1950 (SBNOR BiH), 24–25.

54 AS, Đ 115, 66, 1948–1955, Izveštaj o radu SBNOR u toku I tromesečja 1950 godine, 20. 4. 1950, 16.

55 AS, Đ 115, 66, 1948–1955, Izveštaj o radu SBNOR u toku II tromesečja 1950, 7.

56 AS, Đ 115, 66, 1948–1955, Izveštaj o radu istoriske sekcije pri zemaljskom odboru SBNORS od I kongresa do kraja 1950. g.

57 AJ, 297, I, 25, Izveštaj o radu za tromesečje januar–april 1950 (SBNOR BiH), 25.

58 Rupić, „Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj“, 542–544; Vladimir Geiger, „Ljudski gubici Hrvatske u Drugom svjetskom ratu koje su prouzročili 'okupatori i njihovi pomagači'. Brojbeni pokazatelji (procjene, izračuni, popisi)“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 3/2011, 704–705.

59 AS, Đ 115, 72; Sobolevski, „Prilog metodologiji istraživanja stvarnih ljudskih gubitaka Hrvatske u tijeku drugoga svjetskog rata“, 191; Rupić, „Popis žrtava Drugoga svjetskog rata u Hrvatskoj“, 541.

NOR of Yugoslavia, held from 10 to 11 March 1953, Aleksandar Ranković also spoke of the census in his report. He pointed out that this difficult task was done in a short period of time and that data were collected and organized for most of the victims of the war, which gave each district an insight into the number of dead, those who were shot or died in prisons, refuges and camps, or killed by bombing, while the associations of the fighters established closer relations with the families of the fallen soldiers.⁶⁰ On this occasion, Ranković did not mention the final number of registered victims, nor the need to bring together all the data collected. Since the results of the census had never been published, the number of 1.7 million casualties was deliberately left as official, and the population was convinced that there were records to confirm it.

None of the above mentioned ways of determining the number of victims of the war could give an accurate number of human losses. The biggest problem was the inability to list families that completely perished during the war, and had no close relatives or neighbours (they were also gone). It should be noted that about 90% of the pre-war Jewish population in Yugoslavia disappeared during the war, as well as the entire settlements. On the other hand, due to a conscious avoidance of listing collaborators and partisan enemies, the actual number of victims could have never been established.

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⁶⁰ Savez boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata, *Drugi kongres Saveza boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata Jugoslavije*, (Beograd: Crvena Zvezda, 1951), 16.

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Резиме

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Представљање и утврђивање броја југословенских жртава Другог светског рата од ослобођења до 1951. године

Апстракт: Рад прати прва званична изношења података о броју југословенских жртава непосредно по завршетку Другог светског рата и показује како се он у тим тренуцима мењао, да би се коначно, као званична, утврдила бројка од 1,706.000 жртава. Приказане су и активности на утврђивању броја жртава рата које су спровели Државна комисија за ратну штету (током 1945. и 1946), Државна комисија за утврђивање злочина окупатора и њихових помагача (од 1944. до 1948), Савез бораца народноослободилачког рата Југославије (током 1950. и 1951), као и Министарство народне одбране (током 1945. године).

Кључне речи: жртве рата, Југославија, пописи жртава рата, Државна комисија за ратну штету, Државна комисија за утврђивање злочина окупатора и њихових помагача, Савез бораца народноослободилачког рата Југославије

У писму британском амбасадору у Југославији Ралфу Стивенсону 17. маја 1945. године Тито је написао да је број југословенских жртава око 1,300.000. Три дана касније, у свом говору у Загребу, рекао је да је тај број 1,700.000. Ово су била прва изношења броја југословенских жртава рата. Следећих дана и месеци, југословенски званичници износили су разне бројеве и сви су били преко 1,5 милиона. На крају, званични број је представљен током Репарационе конференције у Паризу (од новембра до децембра 1945). Југославија је тада изнела чињеницу да је укупан број цивила и војника страдалих у рату 1,706.000. Овај број се није променио до краја постојања Југославије. Током првих послератних година, две југословенске институције прикупљале су податке о југословенским жртвама: Државна комисија за ратну штету (током 1945. и 1946) и Државна комисија за утврђивање злочина окупатора и њихових помагача (од 1944. до

1948). Број погинулих војника утврдило је и Министарство народне одбране. Неколико година касније (током 1950. и 1951), попис жртава рата организовао је Савез бораца Народноослободилачког рата Југославије (СБНОР). Ниједан од поменутих покушаја није дао број жртава рата који је званично представила држава. Због тога бројеви које су они утврдили никада нису јавно објављени. Сваки од ових покушаја утврђивања броја (или пописа) жртава имао је одређену методологију. Разлози за неуспех су били слични. Највећи проблем је био наћи информације о породицама које су целе нестале током рата.