

COMMUNIST RETALIATION AND PERSECUTION ON YUGOSLAV TERRITORY DURING AND AFTER WWII (1943–1950)

ABSTRACT: The following article deals with repressive measures undertaken by communist-dominated Partisan forces during and especially after WWII in order to take revenge on former enemies, to punish collaborators, and „people’s enemies” and to decimate and eliminate the potential of opponents to a new, socialist Yugoslavia. The text represents a summary of a master thesis referring to the above-mentioned topic written and accepted at Vienna University in 2002.¹

I RETALIATION AFTER WWII IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

It is a general phenomenon in history that transformation processes of states and societies have always been accompanied by persecution, retaliation and political trials and cleansings. Nevertheless, it is a fact that with respect to the extent, intensity and the consequences retaliation upon fascism and collaboration in Europe between 1943 and 1948 stands singularly. Hundreds of thousands of real or imagined war criminals, collaborators, and „people’s enemies” have been killed, even more have been condemned by courts and millions of people (mostly civilians) have been expelled or were forced to leave their homes by the new authorities. Especially since the beginning of the 1990s the historiography has asked the crucial questions in this context and found (or is still looking) for adequate answers.² Some of these questions are:

¹ The author is scholarship holder of „ZEIT Foundation” (Hamburg) and is currently working on his doctorate on „The Process of Transformation in Vojvodina in the Period of 1944 to 1946”. Portmann, Michael, *Kommunistische Abrechnung mit Kriegsverbrechern, Kollaborateuren, „Volksfeinden” und „Verrätern” in Jugoslawien während des Zweiten Weltkriegs und unmittelbar danach*, unpublished MA Paper, Wien 2002.

² Bjelajac, Mile, „Istoriografija o građanskom ratu u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945”. in: *Istorija 20. veka*, god. XV, broj 1, Beograd 1997, p. 129–144.

– The whole spectrum of possible activities for people in an occupied country (from active collaboration to open resistance) has to be exactly defined and described.³

– Which role played collaboration in the occupying policy of the Axis powers?⁴

– Which power did indeed decide who has to be treated as a war criminal, collaborator or „people’s enemy“?

– How narrow was the link in the respective countries between legal punishment, revolutionary jurisdiction and – in areas where a civil war took place – retaliation upon former war enemies?

The often one-sided historiography in communist countries stigmatised all former war enemies and also political opponents in general as traitors and collaborators, without making any differentiation. It was exactly this one-sidedness, which led in some of the new states (Baltic republics, Ukraine, Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia) – after the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the dissolution of the old Yugoslavia – to a similar one-sided political and legal rehabilitation of convinced representatives of the collaborationist regimes. It might be one of the most delicate and difficult tasks of European historiography to describe the complex of „occupation – collaboration – retaliation“ during and after WWII with all its complex facets.

II STAND OF RESEARCH AND SECONDARY LITERATURE

The following literature review does not claim to be complete. It may be that a publication was deliberately not mentioned, or it was omitted because this author was not aware of its existence.

a) Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian literature of the 1990s

It almost goes without saying that in socialist Yugoslavia a free, scholarly-based, and public debate about the „dark sides“ of communism coming into power was neither possible nor desired. It was only after the violent break-up of the old Yugoslavia during the 1990ies, when in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro the historiography was to be turned a new page in recent history of their countries.

³ Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945). Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik. Zusammengestellt und eingeleitet von Werner Röhr (=Europa unterm Hakenkreuz. Die Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Faschismus (1938–1945), Ergänzungsband 1), Berlin, Heidelberg 1994.

⁴ Die Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Faschismus in Jugoslawien, Griechenland, Albanien, Italien und Ungarn (1941–1945), (=Europa unter Hakenkreuz. Die Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Faschismus (1948–1945), Bd. 6), Berlin, Heidelberg 1992.

The articles and books published by Slovenian historians usually do emphasize – but not over-stress – a national point of view and most of them can be characterized as professional and impartial works.⁵

In the light of the difficult political situation in Croatia between 1992 and 1995 not only the population but also a part of Croatian historians and journalists were affected and influenced by nationalistic war propaganda. Among other works, a spate of literature appeared on the sensitive topic of „Bleiburg and the Death marches”, most of it by far not reaching the level of scholarship.⁶ It rather seemed to be the intention of the authors to describe the „right” (in both senses of the word) Croats as the good ones and to condemn and stigmatise the (alleged) then and present-day enemies of the Croatian people, such as Communists and Serbs. Therewith they helped – whether on purpose or not – to prepare and legitimate the forthcoming respectively ongoing expulsion and flight of Croatian Serbs from the Krajina and Eastern Slavonia. Nevertheless, there were also some works about the so-called „greatest tragedy in Croatian history” which tried to support an objective discussion within Serbian and Croatian historiography and public on the events during and after WWII.⁷

But „Bleiburg” wasn’t the only field of interest of historians dealing with Croatian history after 1945. Other so far unrevealed aspects linked to the socialist metamorphosis of Yugoslavia have been uncovered: The role of the Croatian Catholic church during WWII and the faith of a part of its representatives was almost re-written,

⁵ The bibliographical data of the most important works are to be mentioned here: Griesser-Pečar, Tamara, *Das zerrissene Volk. Slowenien 1941–1946. Okkupation. Kollaboration. Bürgerkrieg. Revolution*, Wien/Graz 2003; Vodušek Starič, Jera, *Prevzem oblasti 1944–1946*, Ljubljana 1992; *Ibid.*, *Ozade sodnih procesov v Sloveniji v prvem povojnem letu*, in: *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 1–2, Ljubljana 1992, p.139–154; *Ibid.*, „Überlegungen zur Sowjetisierung Nachkriegs-Jugoslawiens”, in: *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung*, Mannheim 1998, p.86–98; *Ibid.*, „Stalinismus und Selbst-Sowjetisierung in Jugoslawien. Von der kommunistischen Partisanenbewegung zu Titos Einparteiensystem”, in: *Gleichschaltung unter Stalin? Die Entwicklung der Parteien im östlichen Europa 1944–1949*, edited by Stefan Creuzberger und Manfred Görtemaker, Paderborn 2002, p. 219–237; Jančar, Drago (ed.), *Temna stran meseca. Kratka zgodovina totalitarizma v Sloveniji 1945–1990*, Ljubljana 1998; *Slovenija v letu 1945*. Zbornik referatov, edited by Zveza zgodovinskih društev Sloveniji, Ljubljana 1996; Sirc, Ljubo, *Resnična borba za svobodo: množično ubijanje – čast ali sramota za Slovence?* Kranj, 1995; *Ibid.*, *Between Hitler and Tito. Nazi Occupation and Communist Oppression, London 1989* (Sirc actually belongs to the group of Southslavic exile writers); Repe, Božo, *Povojni sodni procesi v Sloveniji*, in: *Zgodovina v šoli*, Vol. 1 (1992), No. 3, p. 9–16; Vodopivec, Peter (ed.), *Usoda slovenskih demokratičnih izobražencev. Angela Vode in Boris Furlan – žrtvi Nagodetovega procesa*, Ljubljana 2001; Drnovšek, Darinka, „Zapisniki politbiroja CK KPS/ZKS 1945–1954”, in: *Viri*, 15, Ljubljana 2000; Griesser-Pečar, Tamara, Zur „Problematik der katholischen Kirche in Slowenien unmittelbar nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg”, in: *Österreichische Osthefte*, Vol. 37, book 1, Wien 1995; *Ibid.*, *Rožmanov proces*, Ljubljana 1996; Dornik-Šubelj, Ljuba, „Nastanek in razvoj organov za notranje zadeve republike Slovenije v oVolobju 1945 do 1963”, in: *Arhivi* 1-2/1993, p. 78-81; *Ibid.*, *Od delek za zaščito naroda za Slovenijo*, Ljubljana 1994.

⁶ A nationalistic view Nikolić, Vinko (ed.), *Bleiburg: uzroci i posljedice*. Spomen-zbornik četrdesete godišnjice tragedije, München/Barcelona 1988. Nikolić, Vinko, „Poslije pola stoljeća – Bleiburg je povijest”, in: *Spomenica povodom 50-te obljetnice Bleiburga i Križnog puta 1945–1995*, edited by Mirko Valentić, Zagreb 1995. Other contributions in this book – such as the one by Vladimir Geiger – are highly recommendable. Herceg Stjepan, *Samobor. Mali Bleiburg 1945*, Samobor 1996.

⁷ Žerjavić, Vladimir, „Demografija o Bleiburgu”. In: *Bleiburg. otvoreni dossier*. Marko Grčić (ed), Zagreb 1990; *Ibid.*, *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga. Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, Zagreb 1992; *Ibid.*, *Population losses in Yugoslavia 1941–1945*, Zagreb 1997.

although with remarkable differences in quality.⁸ Furthermore some of the most spectacular communist trials against both ecclesiastical and political personalities have been satisfactorily described.⁹ Principally due to the outstanding effort of Vladimir Geiger, the history of the German minority in Croatia (and Yugoslavia) is very satisfactorily explored.¹⁰ As far as this author is aware, a reliable summary – comparable with similar works in Slovenia – about the process of transformation seen as a unity has yet to be published.¹¹

In Serbia and Montenegro, the scientific discussion and non-ideological handling of the communist take over of power are in their infancy. The war years and Milošević's nationalist-communist dictatorship left its mark on Serbian historiography and amongst the population. While in Croatia „Bleiburg” stood and stands as a symbol for suffering and martyrdom of the Croatian people, a similar function was taken over

⁸ Đurić, Veljko „, Josif (Cvijović), mitropolit skopljski, i Alojzije Stepinac, nadbiskup zagrebački, prvosveštenici Srpske pravoslavne i Rimokatoličke Crkve i prekrštavanje 1941–1945. godine”, in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, Vol. 4, edited by Hans Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2001, p. 449–466; Akmaž, Miroslav, *Oduzimanje imovine Katoličkoj crkvi i crkveno-državni odnosi od 1945. do 1966. godine*, Zagreb 2003; Krišto, Jure, *Katolička crkva i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941–1945*, *Dokumenti*, 2, Zagreb 1998; *Ibid.*, „Protokatolička srpska propaganda tijekom Drugoga svjetskog rata”, in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara* Vol. 2, edited by Hans Georg Fleck und Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2000, p. 521–536; *Ibid.*, „Crkva i država. Slučaj vjerskih prijelaza u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj”, in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara* Vol. 1, edited by Hans Georg Fleck und Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2000, p. 189–205.

⁹ Geiger, Vladimir, „Smrtna presuda Vojnog suda mitropolitu Germogenu”, in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara* 2, edited by Hans Georg Fleck und Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2000, p. 569–582; *Ibid.*, „Sudski procesi vjerskim dostojanstvenicima u Hrvatskoj 1945. godine. Smrtna presuda mitropolitu Germogenu”, in: *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, Split 1995, p. 36–37; *Ibid.*, „Sudski procesi u Hrvatskoj 1945. godine. „Smrtna presuda evangeličkom biskupu dr. Philipp Poppu”, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Zagreb 1995, p. 157–166; *Ibid.*, „Sudski procesi vjerskim dostojanstvenicima u Hrvatskoj 1945. godine. O smrtnoj presudi muftiji Ismetu ef. Muftiću”, in: *Hrvatska književna revija*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Zagreb 1996, p. 233–235; Jareb, Jerôm, „Filip Lukas je bio osuđen na smrt u studenome 1945”, in: *Kolo: časopis Matice hrvatske*, p. 5–10, Zagreb 1998; Kisić-Kolanović, Nada, „Vrijeme političke represije: „veliki procesi” u Hrvatskoj 1945–1948”, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 25 (1), Zagreb 1993, p. 1–23; *Ibid.*, „Drama vojskovođe Slavka Kvaternika”, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 28 (3), Zagreb 1996; Krapac, Davor, „Revolucionarno pravosuđe kao instrument političkog progona: političko lice kaznenog postupka totalitarističkih diktatura”, in: *Odvjetnik*, Vol. 69 (1996), 11/12, p. 63–93; Sabljak, T., U redu za smrtnu kaznu. Egzekutori Vojnog suda II. armije Koče Popovića u Zagrebu, godine 1945, in: *Hrvatska revija*. Kulturno-književni tromjesečnik, g. XLIII, sv. 4 (172), Zagreb 1993, p. 432–441.

¹⁰ Geiger, Vladimir, Umrlji i zatočeni Osječani u logoru Valpovo 1945/1946. godine prema zabilješkama župnika Petera Fischera, in: *Glasnik arhiva Slavonije i Baranije*, p. 95–102; *Ibid.*, Položaj njemačke manjine u bivšoj Jugoslaviji (s posebnim osvrtom na razdoblje drugog svjetskog rata), in: *Historijski zbornik* god. XLV (1), p. 165–185, Zagreb 1993; *Ibid.*, *Nestanak folksdojčera*, Zagreb 1997; *Ibid.*, Udio djece među stradalim Folksdojčerima u jugoslavenskim logorima (1944–1948.), in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, Vol. 4, edited by Hans Georg Fleck und Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2001, p. 525–538; *Ibid.*, Sudbina Folksdojčera u Jugoslaviji nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata u jugoslavenskoj historiografiji, publicisti i književnosti (1991–1998.), in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara* Vol. 1, edited by Hans Georg Fleck und Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2000, p. 225–243; *Ibid.*/Jurković, I., Što se dogodilo s Folksdojčerima?, Zagreb 1993; *Ibid.*, Poratni logori za pripadnike njemačke manjine. Imenik i tipovi poratnih logora za pripadnike njemačke nacionalne manjine na teritoriju istočne Slavonije, Srijema, Baranje, Bačke i Banata, in: *Zatvorenik*, br. 9, Zagreb 1991.

¹¹ Some other works of interest: Spehnjak, Katarina, *Narodna fronta u Hrvatskoj kao instrument partijskog monopola 1945–1952*, doktorska disertacija, Zagreb 1995; *Ibid.*, Vlast i javnost u Hrvatskoj 1945–1952, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 32 (2003), 3, p. 507–514; Jandrić, Berislav, *Komunistička partija Hrvatske 1945–1952. Organizacija, uloga, djelovanje*, doktorska disertacija, Zagreb 1995; Kisić-Kolanović, Nada, Problem legitimiteta političkog sustava u Hrvatskoj nakon 1945, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 24 (1992) 3, p. 177–196; Jurčević, Josip, *Represivnost jugoslavenskog sustava u Hrvatskoj 1945. godine*, disertacija, Zagreb 2000.

by „Jasenovac” for the Serbian nation.¹² In the disastrous, highly political-motivated quarrel about Serbian and Croatian victims during WWII, some of the previously respected Serbian historians obviously forgot their scientific obligations and became little more than a tool in Milošević’s nationalist war propaganda.¹³ Unfortunately the otherwise excellent book by the Serbian scholar Bogoljub Kočović cannot contribute much to an objective debate.¹⁴

Besides some journalistic publications on communist crimes committed in Serbia¹⁵ only a handful of source-based, scientific articles and monographs dealing with repressive aspects of the communist take over exist.¹⁶ However, both the position of the Serbian Orthodox church in the period of 1945 to 1952¹⁷ and the faith of the Danube Swabians from the Vojvodina are solidly researched.¹⁸

¹² See also: Tomasevič, Jozo, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941–1945. Occupation and Collaboration*, Stanford 2001, pp. 724.

¹³ Ekmečić, Milorad, *Srbija između srednje Evrope i Evrope*, Beograd 1992; Bulajić, Milan, *Jasenovac. Ustaški logori smrti. Srpski mit? Hrvatski ustaški logori genocida nad Srbima, Jevrejima i Ciganima*, Beograd 1999; *Ibid.*, *Tudman’s “Jasenovac myth... Genocide against Serbs, Jews and Gypsies*, Beograd 1994; Petrović, Rastislav V., *Zavera protiv Srba*, Beograd 1989; Bulatović, Radomir, *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac, s posebnim osvrtom na Donju Gradinu*, Sarajevo 1990;

¹⁴ Kočović, Bogoljub, *Žrtve Drugoga svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*, Sarajevo 1990 (first published in London 1985). Kočović himself gives a very accurate explanation why his work failed to support an open dialogue: „Very soon it dawned upon me that the major obstacle to my work would be the myths created over four decades about the number of victims, myths by now deeply implanted in the soul of the people of all religions, political beliefs and nationality; myths which, by repetition became a ‘reality’. There will be many who will reject my study because it does not conform to their beliefs... Many of them are looking for spiritual food to ignite their hatred of the Croats.” Cit. <http://mirror.veup.hr/myth/victimp.html>

¹⁵ Otašević, Ana, Zločini komunizma 1944–1956, Sudbina pobedenih, in: NIN, October 25th 2001; Pogled (specijalno izdanje): Partizanski zločini u Srbiji 1944–45: 150.000 neznanih grobova, broj 2, June 1991; Kovačević, Sonja, Milan Trešnjić - Major OZNE i generalni konzul SFRJ u Štutgartu: Oslobođanje Dedinja, in: KRUG, mart 1999, broj 8, Beograd 1999.

¹⁶ Recommendable, whenever not source-based and with definitely too much sympathy for the nationalistic Chetniks and their leader Draža Mihailović: Marković, Slobodan G., Communist „Liberation., and New Order in Belgrade, in: *The South Slav Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 3–4 (93–94), Autumn–Winter 2003 at: <http://www.southslavjournal.com/feat1.htm>; Other interesting works: Mitrović, Momčilo, Sudovi časti u Srbiji 1944–1946 posle Drugog svetskog rata, in: *Godišnjak 2*, Beograd 1994, p. 123–139, *Ibid.*, *Izgnubljene iluzije. Prilozi za društvenu istoriju 1944–1952*, Beograd 1997; *Ibid.*, *Promene svojinskih odnosa u valjevskom kraju 1944–1960*, Valjevo 1997; Radić, Snežana, *Konfiskacija imovine u valjevskom okrugu 1944–1946*, Valjevo 2002; Miloradović, Goran, *Logori za izolaciju političkih protivnika na tlu Jugoslavije 1918–2000*, in: *Istorija XX. veka*, br. 2, p. 115–125, Beograd 2000; Marković, Predrag, *Državna represija i javno mnjenje Beograda 1948–1965*, in: *Istorija XX. veka*, broj 1, p. 73–88, Beograd 1996; Jovanović, Žarko S., *Nova vlast u Srbiji 1941–1945*, Beograd 1997; A non-scientific book about OZNA and its successors provides Lopušina: Lopušina, Marko, *Ubij bližnjeg svog. Jugoslavenska tajna policija 1945/1995*, Beograd 1996; About the situation of the Catholic Church during and after WWII writes: Živojinović, Dragoljub, *Vatikan, Katolička crkva i jugoslovenska vlast 1941–1958*, Beograd 1994.

¹⁷ Radić, Radmila, *Verom protiv vere. Država i verske zajednice u Srbiji 1945–1953*, Beograd 1995; *Ibid.*, *Država, Rimokatolička i Srpska pravoslavna crkva od 1945. do polovine šezdesetih godina*, in: *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara 2*, edited by Hans Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac, Zagreb 2000, p. 653–670.

¹⁸ Janjetović, Zoran, *Between Hitler and Tito. The disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, Belgrade 2000; *Ibid.*, *Deportacija vojvodanskih Nemaca na prinudni rad u Sovjetski Savez krajem 1944. i početkom 1945. godine*, in: *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis*, No. 1, Beograd 1997, p. 157–168; *Ibid.*, *Prilog proučavanju položaja folksdojčera u Jugoslaviji 1944–1948*, in: *Istorija XX. veka*, No. 1, Beograd 1996, p. 143–152; *Ibid.*, *Logorisanje vojvodanskih Nemaca od novembra 1944. do juna 1945. godine*, in: *Tokovi istorije*, No. 1–2, 1997, p. 150–164; *Ibid.*, *The disappearance of the Germans from Yugoslavia: Expulsion or emigration?*, Bonn 2003; *Ibid.*, *O državljanstvu jugoslovenskih Nemaca*, in: *Tokovi istorije*, No. 1–2, 2002, p. 25–35; *Ibid.*, *Die Konflikte zwischen Serben und Donauschwaben*, in: *Südostforschungen*, Vol. 58, München 1999, p.119–168.

It is at least this author's impression, that the most important and delicate records are still waiting to be discovered or, in worst case, have either never reached the archives or have been destroyed. Be as it may, there is still a lot of unavoidable archive work to be done, until an all-embracing and well-balanced history of the first years of Serbia within socialist Yugoslavia can be written.

b) Yugoslav-communist literature

Although communist literature concerning the construction of the second Yugoslavia is often one-sided, there is a quite remarkable number of publications that have to be mentioned and taken into account. Primarily the document editions on People Liberation War and about the construction of socialist Yugoslavia build the starting point for further research.¹⁹ Read in a different way, these documents provide reliable and valuable information. Additionally many Yugoslav historians dealt with other (not repressive) aspects of the transformation process. Although these works are to a great extent ideologically coloured they still represent well-funded, professional contributions to recent Yugoslav history.²⁰

¹⁹ Petranović, Branko, *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbira Centralnog komiteta KPJ (11. jun 1945 – 7. jul 1948)*, (=Izvori za istoriju Jugoslavije), Beograd 1995; Petranović, Branko/Zečević, Momčilo, *Jugoslovenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*. Tematska zbirka i dokumenata. Drugi tom 1943–1986, Beograd 1987; Petranović, Branko/Marković, Ljiljana, *Zapisnici NKJ-a i Privremene vlade DFJ: 1943–1945*, Beograd 1991; Zečević, Miodrag/Popović Jovan P., *Dokumenti iz istorije Jugoslavije, Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njegovih pomagača iz Drugog svetskog rata*, Beograd 1996; Nešović, Slobodan, *Stvaranje nove Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, Beograd 1981; Ibid. (ed.), *Zakonodavni rad Predsedništva AVNOJ-a i Predsedništva Privremene narodne skupštine DFJ, – 19. XI 1944–27. X 1945*, edited by Pretsedništvo Narodne Skupštine FNRJ, Beograd 1951; Ibid. (ed.), *Rad zakonodavnih odbora Predsedništva Antifašističkog veća narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije i Predsedništva Privremene narodne skupštine, 3 April–25 October 1945*, edited by Pretsedništvo Narodne Skupštine FNRJ, Beograd 1952; Arhiv Jugoslavije (ed.), *Dokumenti centralnih organa KPJ, NOR i revolucija (1941–1945)*, Knj. 22–23, Beograd 1996; Pijade, Moša/Nešović, Slobodan, *Prvo i Drugo zasjedanje AVNOJ-a: 26. i 27. novembra 1942. u Bihaću: 29. i 30. novembra 1943. u Jajcu*, Zagreb 1963; Glavni izvršni odbor (ed.), *Saopštenja zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača u Vojvodini 1941–1944*. Vol. 1: *Zločini u Bačkoj i Baranji*; Vol. 2: *Zločini u Sremu*, Novi Sad 1946; Popov, Jelena (ed.), *Glavni NOO Vojvodine 1943–1945* (=Građa za istoriju Vojvodine, knj. 12), Novi Sad/Sremski Karlovci 1977; Vasilčić, Ljubiša (ed.), *Okružni komitet KPJ za Vojvodine 1944–1945* (=Građa za istoriju Vojvodine, knj. 11), Novi Sad/Sremski Karlovci 1978; Ibid., *Pokrajinski komitet KPJ za Vojvodinu 1941–1945* (=Građa za istoriju Vojvodine, knj. 7), Novi Sad 1971.

²⁰ Čulinović, Ferdo, *Stvaranje nove jugoslovenske države*, Zagreb, 1959; Koštunica, Vojislav / Čavoški, Kosta, *Party pluralism or monism. Social Movements and the Political System in Yugoslavia 1944–1949* (=East European Monographs, No. CLXXXIX), New York 1985; Pavlović, Momčilo, *Politički programi Demokratske, Narodne radikalne, Jugoslovenske republikanske demokratske, Socijalističke stranke Jugoslavije iz 1945. godine*, in: *Istorija XX. veka*, broj 1, Beograd 1985, p. 119–156; Petranović, Branko, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, Vol. 3: *Socijalistička Jugoslavija 1945–1988*, Beograd 1988; Ibid., *AVNOJ Revolucionarna smena vlasti, 1942–1945*, Beograd 1976; Ibid., *Političke i pravne prilike za vreme privremene vlade DFJ*, Beograd 1964; Gačeša, L. Nikola, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945–1948*, Novi Sad 1984; Stipetić, Vladimir, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u FNRJ godine 1945–1948*, Rad. knj. 300, JAZU, Zagreb 1954; Čepić, Zdenko, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija v Sloveniji 1945–1948*, Maribor 1984; Maticka, Marijan, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Hrvatskoj 1945–1948*, Zagreb 1990; Čalić, Dušan, *Industrijalizacija FNRJ*, Zagreb 1963; Petranović, Branko, *Aktivnost rimokatoličkog klera protiv sređivanja prilika u Jugoslaviji (mart 1945–septembar 1946)*, in: *Istorija XX. veka*, Zbornik radova, V, Beograd 1963; Živojinović, Dragoljub, *Vatikan, katolička crkva i jugoslovenska vlast 1941–1958*, Beograd 1958.

c) South-Slavic exile literature

A small part of Yugoslav anticommunists (former *ustaše*, *četnici*, *nedičevci*, *ljotičevci*, *domobranci*, *domobrani* and others) who managed to leave the country in time didn't let the opportunity slip away to state their position on what happened in Yugoslavia during and after WWII. While the memoirs of *ustaše*, *ustaše*-sympathisers and former *četnici* is hardly worth mentioning²¹, other authors at least tried (more or less successfully) to be scholarly and their historiographic interpretation of the events lies within an acceptable frame.²²

d) Miscellaneous literature

Not only historians of Yugoslav provenience have been showing interest in recent Yugoslav history. The bloody and tragic end of the centuries long, mostly peaceful coexistence between the Yugoslav Germans and their South-Slavic neighbours after WWII led to an intensive and not seldom half- or unscholarly tackling in Germany and Austria of the history of the German minority in Yugoslavia.²³ A comparable motivation has to be stated for Hungarian historians who tried to enlighten the faith of their

²¹ Musa, Vladimir, *Bleiburška tragedija hrvatskoga naroda*, München/Barcelona 1976; Prpić, George J., *Tragedies and migrations in Croatian history*, Toronto 1973; Studia Croatica, *La Tragedia de Bleiburg*. Documentos sobre las matanzas en masa de los croatas en Yugoslavia comunista en 1945, Buenos Aires 1963; Katalinić, Kazimir, Argumenti: NDH, BiH, Bleiburg i genocid, in: Časopis „Republika Hrvatska“, p. 7–12, Buenos Aires/Zagreb 1993; Skertić, Stephen W., *The Bleiburg-Maribor tragedy*. Croatian golgotha: fifteenth anniversary of the massacre of the Croatian army, Cleveland 1960; Omrčanin, Ivo, *Dokumente über Greuelthaten der Tschetniken und Kommunisten in Kroatien (1941–1945)*, München 1960; Rajić, Milan L., *Srpski pakao u komunističkoj Jugoslaviji*. Trilogija komunističkih zločina, Beograd 1991 (Rajić was a member of the *četnici* and his book is characterised by one-sidedness and dull Serbian nationalism.)

²² Dilas, Milovan, *Der Krieg der Partisanen. Memoiren 1941–1945*, Wien 1978; Karapandžić, Borivoje, *Kočevje: Tito's bloodiest crime 1945–1970*, Cleveland n.d.; *Ibid.*, *The Bloodiest Yugoslav Spring, 1945 – Tito's Katyn and Gulags*, New York 1980; Klepec, Matiaž, *Teharje so tlakovane z našo krvjo*. Tüchern ist getränkt mit unserem Blut, Buenos Aires 1973; Kovač, Tomaž, *V rogu ležimo pobiti*, Buenos Aires 1968; Hečimović, Joseph, *In Tito's Death Marches and Extermination Camps*, New York 1962; Prcela, John/ Guldescu, Stanko, *Operation Slaughterhouse. Eyewitness Accounts of Postwar Massacres in Yugoslavia*, Philadelphia 1970;

²³ Only a small part of the numerous publications related to this topic are mentioned below: Arbeitskreis Dokumentation (ed.), *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien 1944–1948, Die Stationen eines Völkermords*, München 1998; Beer, Josef, *Weissbuch der Deutschen aus Jugoslawien*. Ortsberichte über die Verbrechen an den Deutschen durch das Tito-Regime in der Zeit von 1944–1948, (=Donauschwäbisches Archiv: Reihe 3, Beiträge zur donauschwäbischen Volks- und Heimatgeschichtsforschung; 46) München 1992; Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, Vol. V: *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*, edited by Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, Bonn 1961; Sundhaussen, Holm, *Die Deutschen in Kroatien-Slawonien und Jugoslawien*, in: Günter Schödl (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Das Land an der Donau*, Berlin 1995; Suppan, Arnold (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Zwischen Adria und Karawanken*, Wien 1998; *Ibid.*/Rumpler, Helmut (eds.), *Geschichte der Deutschen im Bereich des heutigen Slowenien 1848–1941*, München 1988; Böhme, K.W., *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in Jugoslawien 1941–1949. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, Vol. 2, edited by Erich Maschke, München 1962 and 1964.

co-nationals in Vojvodina during and after WWII.²⁴ Aleksandar Kasaš however published the most reliable work about Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia.²⁵ The description of repressive measures undertaken by Partisan forces (mass executions and expulsion) against the Italian minority in Istria, Dalmatia and Slovenia is the subject of some articles published in Italy, Austria and Croatia.²⁶ Since the author unfortunately cannot read Albanian it is impossible to say what was published in Albanian about „retaliations with balists”.²⁷

Only a few other publications dealing with persecution in Yugoslavia appeared in English and German.²⁸

Finally the international comparative studies intending to stress both the differences and similarities in the process of coming into power of communist parties in the respective European countries after WWII deserve to be mentioned. The unhindered access to Eastern European archives made it possible for historians to focus on so far

²⁴ Ludanyi, Andrew, *The Hungarians of Vojvodina under Yugoslav Rule*, in: *The Hungarians, A Divided Nation*, edited by Stephen Borsody, New Haven 1988, p. 191–208, *Ibid.*, *Hungarians in Rumania and Yugoslavia: a comparative study of communist nationality policies*, 1971; *Ibid.*, *Titoist Integration of Yugoslavia. The Partisan Myth and the Hungarians of the Vojvodina*, in: *Polity* 12 (1979), p. 225–252; Cseres, Tibor, *Titoist atrocities in Vojvodina 1944–1945. Serbian Vendetta in Bacska*, Toronto 1993; *Ibid.*, *Blood Feud in Bácska*, Budapest 1991; Hommonay, Elemér, *Atrocities committed by Tito's partisans in occupied Southern Hungary*, Cleveland/Ohio 1957; Matuska, Márton, *Retaliation*, Budapest 1995; Arday, Lajos, *Hungarians in Serb-Yugoslav Vojvodina since 1944*, in: *Nationalities Papers* 24 (1996), p. 467–482.

²⁵ Kasaš, Aleksandar, *Madari u Vojvodini 1941–1946*, Novi Sad 1996.

²⁶ Bartoli, G., *Il martirilogio delle gente adriatiche*, Trieste 1961, Wörsdorfer, Rolf, *Zwischen Karst und Adria. Entnationalisierung, Umsiedlung und Vertreibung in Dalmatien, Istrien und Julisch-Venezien (1927-1954)*, in: Robert Streibl (ed.), *Vertreibung und Flucht*, Wien 1994; Esposito Giovanni, *Trieste e la sua odissea*, Rom 1952; Galliano, Fogar, *Fojbe in deportacije v Julijski krajini*, in: *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja* 25 (1985), p. 95–109; Orietta, Moscarda, *L'esodo dall'Istria*, in: *Friuli e Venezia Giulia – Storia del '900*, Gorizia 1997, p. 551–560; Tolto il segreto sui lager di Tito. Vi furono uccisi 5 mila italiani, in: „Il Giornale”, No. 126, Anno XXIV, May 29th 1997; Veiter, Theodor, *Soziale Aspekte der italienischen Flüchtlinge aus den adriatischen Küstengebieten*, in: *Festschrift für Hans Schmitz zum 70. Geburtstag*, Wien 1967; Dukovski, Darko, *Egzodus talijanskog stanovništva Istre 1945–1954*, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, XXXIII, 3, 2001.

²⁷ This is the title of a book published in Belgrade: Vidanić, Rajko, *Obračuni sa balistima 1944–1952* (=Prilozi za istoriografiju Kosova i Metohije), Beograd 1990; Also consider: Malcolm, Noel, *Kosovo. A short History*, pp. 314.

²⁸ Martin, David, *The Web of Disinformation. Churchill's Yugoslav Blunder*, San Diego/New York/London 1990; Cowgill, Anthony, *Cowgill Inquiry, The Repatriations from Austria in 1945*. The documentary evidence reproduced in full from british, american and yugoslav sources, London 1990; *Ibid.*, Cowgill, Anthony, *The Repatriations from Austria in 1945. Report of an Inquiry*, London 1990; Tolstoy, Nikolai, *The Klagenfurt Conspiracy*, in: *South Slav Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (19), p. 6–23, 1983; *Ibid.*, *The Minister and the Massacres*, London 1986; Jarman, Robert L., *Yugoslavia. Political Diaries 1918-1965*, Vol. 3: 1938-1948, Chippenham 1997; Völkl, Ekkehard, „Abrechnungsfuror in Kroatien”, in: Klaus-Dietmar Henke und Woller, Hans (eds.), *Politische Säuberungen in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit dem Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München 1991, p. 358–393; Kaltenecker, Roland, *Titos Kriegsgefangene. Folterlager, Hungermärsche und Schauprozesse*, Graz / Stuttgart 2001; Elste, Alfred, Filipic Hanzi, Koschat, Michael, *NS-Österreich auf der Anklagebank. Anatomie eines politischen Schauprozesses im kommunistischen Slowenien*, Klagenfurt/Wien 2000.

neglected fields of research, such as terror against alleged and true enemies, show trials, „cleansings” within the Communist Party and so on.²⁹

It is both the wish and hope of this author that within a reasonable period of time a professional team composed of historians from all parts of the former Yugoslavia and abroad will write an all-embracing, source-based and balanced history about the Stalinist époque in Yugoslavia. Since this process historically has to be considered as a unity (whenever with special developments in the respective republics or regions) it must also be described as one. Thus it should be possible to answer the question, what price in the hour of birth had to be paid for the fragile harmony in Yugoslavia during Cold War.

III GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE COMMUNIST TAKE-OVER

Legal base for persecution and retaliation

Since the People's Liberation Movement was predominately military organized, the origins of a yet common jurisdiction emerged within this area. Until liberation³⁰ of a respective region, primarily military courts were responsible for conviction of collaborationists and „people's enemies”. Čulinović states on the quality of this legal practice: „*This legal proceeding was not organized, informal, collective, simple, fast and mostly crowded, since often all members of the respective Partisan unit took part at the trial.*”³¹ One of the most important changes within the field of partisan military judiciary emerged with the „Directive on Military Courts” dated May 24th 1944. Article 13 and 14 defined quite clearly who in the eyes of partisan leaders were to be considered as „war criminal” and „people's enemy”:

²⁹ Weber, Hermann (ed.), *Terror. Stalinistische Parteisäuberungen 1936-1953*, Paderborn 2001; Maderthaler, Wolfgang/Schafranek, Hans/Unfried/Berthold (eds.), „*Ich habe den Tod verdient*”. *Schauprozesse und politische Verfolgung in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1945-1956*, Wien 1991; Courtosi, Stéphane (ed.), *Das Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus: Unterdrückung, Verbrechen und Terror*, München 1998; Hodos, Georg Hermann, *Schauprozesse. Stalinistische Säuberungen in Osteuropa 1948-54*, Berlin 1990; Weber, Hermann/Staritz, Dietrich (eds.), *Kommunisten verfolgen Kommunisten: stalinistischer Terror und „Säuberungen” in den kommunistischen Parteien Europas seit den dreissiger Jahren* (Beiträge des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions an der Universität Mannheim „Weisse Flecken” in der Geschichte des Weltkommunismus - stalinistischer Terror und „Säuberungen” in den kommunistischen Parteien Europas seit den dreissiger Jahren vom 22. bis 25. Februar 1992), Berlin 1993; Kuretsidis-Haider, Claudia/Garscha, Winfried R. (eds.), *Keine „Abrechnung”. NS-Verbrechen, Justiz und Gesellschaft in Europa nach 1945*, Leipzig/Wien 1998; Henke, Klaus-Dietmar/Woller, Hans (eds.), *Politische Säuberungen in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit dem Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München 1991; Deák, István/Gross Jan T./Judt Tony (eds.), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and its Aftermath*, Princeton 2000; Karsai, László, *Crime and Punishment: People's Courts, Revolutionary Legality, and the Hungarian Holocaust*.

³⁰ The term „liberation” is primarily used by Communist historians and means the establishment of communist power.

³¹ Cit. Čulinović, Ferdo, *Stvaranje nove jugoslovenske države*, Zagreb 1959, p. 155.

Art. 13

„As war criminals have to be considered, whether they are Yugoslav or foreign citizens: Initiators, organizers, commanders, helpers and executors of mass killings, torture, forced migration, internment and forced labour of the population, further arson, destruction and pilferage of state and people's property, all owners of possession and enterprises in Yugoslavia and of other countries, who brutally exploited the people having been taken away for forced labour. Officials of the terrorist apparatus and of terrorist armed forces of the occupying or domestic forces and the ones who executed mobilization of our people for hostile army.”

Art. 14

„As people's enemies have to be considered: All active ustaša, četnici and members of other armed formations in the service of the enemy and its organizers and helpers; All who are in the service of the enemy – as spies, couriers, initiators, agitators and similar. The ones who forced the people to deliver weapons to the occupying forces. Everybody who betrayed the People's fight and were on the side of the occupying forces. Everybody who secedes Peoples power and work against it. The ones who devastated the People's army or supported and support in any other way the occupying forces. The ones who execute murdering, pilferage and similar.”³²

While the term „war criminal” is reasonably exactly defined, the definition of „people's enemy” remains – probably on purpose – vague. Therewith the opportunity was provided to condemn and eliminate almost every *persona non grata*.

As the most significant act in the context of „retaliation” one has to quote the „**Act on crimes against people and state**” from August 25th 1945³³, which only represents a further development of the above mentioned and cited „Directive on Military Courts” which provided the legal base for innumerable verdicts against war criminals, collaborators and „people's enemies”.

At least in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia proper and Vojvodina the *ad hoc* „National courts of honour” were appointed during spring and summer 1945. These special courts were founded to convict war criminals and „people's enemies” and to confiscate their property.³⁴

Some other decisive legal acts are chronologically listed below:³⁵

³² Cit. Nešović, Slobodan, *Stvaranje nove Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, Beograd 1981, p. 414–415.

³³ *Službeni list DFJ*, September 1 1945, No. 66/619.

³⁴ For Slovenia: Mikola, Milko, „Povojne nasilne razlastitve premoženja v Sloveniji”, in: *Temna stran meseca*, ed. by Drago Jančar, p. 53 ff.

³⁵ For further details: Radić, Snežana, *Konfiskacija imovine u valjevskom okrugu 1944–1946*, Valjevo 2002, p. 19–27. My list only mentions the first and original legal act. Subsequent changes, supplementations or „authentic interpretations” have not been taken into consideration.

May 13th 1944: Confidential direction by Tito to establish a Yugoslav secret police under the name OZNA³⁶

Probably May 1944: Direction by the NKOJ, Commissariat of Internal Affairs, on organization of Internal state administration³⁷

August 15th 1944: Official formation of the KNOJ (*Korpus narodne odbrane Jugoslavije*)³⁸

November 21st 1944: Decision by Presidium of the AVNOJ „on transition of hostile possessions into state property, on state administration of abandoned possessions and on sequestration of possessions which were confiscated by occupation powers.”³⁹. This decision built the legal base for confiscation of almost any German property (Art. 1 [2]) and those of alleged and real war criminals and their aides (Art. 1 [3]) regardless of their nationality.

February 3rd 1945: Decision by Presidium of AVNOJ „on abolition and annulment of all legal acts adopted by the occupying force and its helpers during occupation; on abolition of decisions adopted during this period; on abolition of all legal acts which were effective during hostile occupation.”⁴⁰.

April 23rd 1945: Act „on fighting forbidden speculation and economical sabotage.”⁴¹ The *corpus delicti* of economical collaboration was often used by Yugoslav judges to eliminate „capitalistic elements” on the one hand and to accumulate state property on the other.

May 29th 1945: Decision by Presidium of AVNOJ „on expropriation of war profit accumulated during hostile occupation.”⁴² As a consequence of this act more than 125 million. Yugoslav dinars poured in the Renewal Fund until the end of 1946.⁴³

June 9th 1945: Act „on confiscation and execution of confiscation.”⁴⁴ This act defined the terms of „confiscation” (i.e. coercive expropriation without the right of compensation, Art.1 [1]) and „sequestration” (provisional expropriation of property that will be held under state control until further decisions of a respective court, Art. 12 [1]).

July 10th 1945: Act „on kinds of punishments.”⁴⁵ This act described what possible kinds of penalties civil and military courts could have meted out.

August 3rd 1945: Decree „on general amnesty and pardon.”⁴⁶ Maybe 5.000 persons (*četnici*, *nedićevci*, Croatian and Slovenian Home guards, members of armed

³⁶ Lopusina, Marko, *Ubij bližnjeg svog. Jugoslovenska tajna policija 1945 / 1995*, Beograd 1996, p. 48.

³⁷ Nešović, Slobodan, *Sivaranje nove Jugoslavije 1941-1945*, Beograd 1981, p. 377–379.

³⁸ Vojnoistorijski arhiv, Fond NOR, kut. 15, fasc. 1/1, dok. 10.

³⁹ *Službeni list DFJ*, February 6th 1945, No. 2/25.

⁴⁰ *Službeni list DFJ*, February 13th 1945, No. 4/51.

⁴¹ *Službeni list DFJ*, April 25th 1945, No. 26/241.

⁴² *Službeni list DFJ*, Mai 29th 1945, No. 36/320.

⁴³ Petranović, Branko, *Političke i pravne prilike za vreme privremene vlade DFJ*, Beograd 1964, p. 55.

⁴⁴ *Službeni list DFJ*, June 12th 1945, No. 40/359.

⁴⁵ *Službeni list DFJ*, July 10th 1945, No. 48/436.

⁴⁶ *Službeni list DFJ*, August 5th 1945, No. 56/526.

Albanian and Muslim units) felt under this amnesty.⁴⁷ Exempt from the amnesty were *ustaše*, *ljotičevci*, members of the Russian protecting corps, members of the ethnic German Association and others.

August 10th 1945: Act „on electoral lists.”⁴⁸ Therewith the active and passive suffrage for the forthcoming federal elections of November 11th 1945 was denied to a large group of wartime opponents (former ministers, active *ustaše*, *četnici*, *nedičevci*, *ljotičevci* and persons who were condemned for deprivation of „national honour” respectively political or civil rights).⁴⁹ Similar laws were also passed on the level of republics and provinces.⁵⁰

August 23rd 1945: Act „on agrarian reform and colonization.”⁵¹ On the basis of this act a land fund consisting of 1’647’305 ha was founded.⁵² Slightly more than 38% (637.939 ha) of this total was confiscated from the ethnic Germans and the citizens of the German Reich.

August 26th 1945: The act „on implantation of People’s court.”⁵³

August 28th 1945: Act „on press.”⁵⁴ Wartime opponents (see act „on electoral lists.”) couldn’t become editors or members of the editorial office.

The State Commission on Ascertaining Crimes Committed by Occupying Powers and their Helpers.

A decision by the Presidium of the AVNOJ dated November 30th 1943 envisaged the appointment of a State commission on ascertaining crimes committed by occupying powers and their helpers during WWII (*Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača*, hereafter: DKUZOP).⁵⁵ The commission became active after the NKOJ passed a regulation and named the members of the commission in May 1944.

⁴⁷ Völkl, Ekkehard, *Abrechnungsfuror in Kroatien*, in: Klaus-Dietmar Henke und Woller, Hans (eds.), *Politische Säuberungen in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit dem Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München 1991, p. 392.

⁴⁸ *Službeni list DFJ*, August 19th 1945, No. 59/558.

⁴⁹ As far as the author is aware there are no reliable data about how many people in Yugoslavia didn’t have the electoral law on the basis of this act.

⁵⁰ E.g. in Vojvodina: „Decision on accomplishment of election for local, town, canton and district committees and for Central People’s Liberation Committee of Vojvodina”, in: *Službeni list Vojvodine*, June 1st 1945, No.3/100, especially part II, Art. 12 [1-7].

⁵¹ *Službeni list DFJ*, August 28th 1945, No. 64/605.

⁵² Gačeša, L. Nikola, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945–1948*, Novi Sad 1984, S. 362. See also: Stipetić, Vladimir, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u FNRJ godine 1945–1948*, Rad, knj. 300, JAZU, Zagreb 1954.

⁵³ *Službeni list DFJ*, September 4th 1945, No. 67/622.

⁵⁴ *Službeni list DFJ*, September 1st 1945, No. 65/612.

⁵⁵ Zečević, Miodrag/Popović Jovan P., *Dokumenti iz istorije Jugoslavije, Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njegovih pomagača iz Drugog svetskog rata*, Beograd 1996, p. 21. Unless otherwise noted, following figures and facts are taken out of the above mentioned publication.

In addition to the State commission six Republic commissions (Slovenia, Croatia, BiH, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia), one Province commission (Vojvodina), two Regional commissions (Kosovo and Sandžak), 65 District (*okružni*) commissions, 292 Canton (*sreski*) and 1,210 Municipal commissions and local evidence collectors were founded or appointed. The main task of these commissions was to collect evidence and to provide Public prosecutors and members of the OZNA/UDBA with these documents. Not only members of the commissions but also ordinary citizens could report what they (allegedly) knew about war crimes and their perpetrators. The commissions registered almost one million of these notifications (*prijava*) by Yugoslav citizens. Needless to say war crimes committed by partisan forces or members of the Red Army could not be reported. The specific/concrete handling of these notifications by members of the commissions has yet to be analysed (crucial question: how carefully did the officials deal with these notifications?), but it isn't hard to imagine what opportunities were given to people who were out to harm somebody – maybe just for some personal reasons.

To investigate „complex war crimes” the State, Republic and Province commissions set up the so-called enquiry commissions (*anketna komisija*) and elaborates.⁵⁶

The main task of State, Republic and Province commissions was to adopt **decisions** (*odluka*) on war criminals, collaborators and „people's enemies”. In all, these commissions registered a total of **66.420 war criminals**, whereof 17.175 persons were defined as „foreign” war criminals and 49.245 were considered as „domestic” (*domaći*) traitors and war criminals.

These decisions were placed at the disposal of military and public prosecutors and members of the secret police. On the basis of the decisions people could have been charged and were convicted as a matter of fact in most cases. This illustrates the heavy responsibility that officials of these commissions had to bear and at least the question must be asked, if they always were aware of it.

Undoubtedly the existence of these commissions was fully legitimised and even – after four years of mutual national hatred and scorn - a *conditio sine qua non* to rebuild a common Yugoslavia. „Real” war criminals, collaborators and traitors had to be punished; but the crucial point lies within the question, **who** decides who has to be considered a war criminal, a collaborator and a traitor. Like in most cases in history, the victorious party does. That's what happened in Yugoslavia, where exclusively mem-

⁵⁶ The State commission e.g. set up an enquiry commission for „determination of damage by Hitler's destruction of Belgrade” or the Republic commission of Serbia established an enquiry commission for „investigation on forced deportation of Slovenes to Serbia.” Zečević, Miodrag/Popović Jovan P., *Dokumenti iz istorije Jugoslavije, Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njegovih pomagača iz Drugog svetskog rata*, Beograd 1996, p. 39.

bers of the People's Liberation Movement (even more exactly: members of the Communist Party) made this grave decision. The presumption that most of the other civil war groups (especially *četnici*, *ustaše*) would have done the same is no excuse for the Communist procedure.⁵⁷ The wish for retaliation in the aftermath of cruelty exists probably from the time immemorial. In the case of Yugoslavia, political (consolidation of power) and economical (accumulation of state property) advantages additionally strengthened and supported this wish.

IV RETALIATION AND PERSECUTION: DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPECTIVE REPUBLICS AND REGIONS

Definition of „Retaliation”

Especially on the territory of Yugoslavia it is hardly possible to provide a clear separation between what has to be considered as „act of war” and what runs under the term of „retaliation”. At the first it seems the most evident solution is to treat every action that occurred after the official ending of WWII in Yugoslavia on May 15th 1945 as „retaliation”. Thus the harsh actions of Tito's partisan forces against Italian, Hungarian, German and Serbian civilians in Dalmatia, Istria, Vojvodina and Serbia proper immediately undertaken during or after the „liberation” of the respective areas would „only” count as acts of war, although these actions definitely didn't help to improve the military situation of the People's Liberation Army. Therefore a temporal break-up between „act of war” and „retaliation” is definitely not satisfactory. As a result the author will use the term „retaliation” for all killings and repressive measures against *civilians*, which took place during or after „liberation” of a respective area. Under the presumption that no or at least very poor military strategic advantage can be asserted, the killing of enemy *soldiers* (e.g. *ustaše*, *domobranci*, *belogardisti*, *plavogardisti*, *četnici*, *domobranci*, *balisti*) has also to be considered as „retaliation” (keywords: „Bleiburg”, „Kočevje”, „Zelengora”).

The Italian minority in Dalmatia and the Coast Land: Flight and Persecution

Members of the Italian minority in Istria and Italian fascists have to be counted as one of the first victims of communist retribution. Right after the Italian surrender on September 8th 1943 Slovenian, Croatian as well as Italian partisan units gained control

⁵⁷ „If the outcome of the war had been the opposite, with the quisling forces on the winning and the Partisans on the losing side, the same thing would have happened to the remnants of the Partisan forces.” Cit. Tomasevich, Jozo, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941–1945. Occupation and Collaboration*, Stanford 2001, p. 766.

over Istria, except Pula/Pola. Probably 500 to 700 Italian fascists and collaborators were killed in autumn 1943.⁵⁸ Together with dead bodies the captives were tied up and thrown into deep karstic caves (the Italian word for karstic cave is *foibe*; that's why in Italian this procedure is called *infoibamenti*). The same killing method was used in spring and summer 1945 for Croatian and Slovenian soldiers and civilians. These actions can definitely not even be considered as an attempted ethnic „cleansing” rather as a reaction to the often brutal fascist repression the Slavic population had to suffer from during the Italian rule.⁵⁹

In the context of the invasion of partisan units in autumn 1943 thousands of Italians left their homes in Istria and left either directly for Italy or for areas not yet controlled by the communists (e.g. Pula, Trst).

In the course of communist coming into power in the Adriatic coast in spring 1945 an estimated number of 5'000 to 7'000 people (fascists, members of the National Liberation Committee, collaborators and captured German and Italian soldiers) were killed.⁶⁰

Up to a quarter million of Italians left Yugoslavia (Dalmatia, Coast Land) between 1943 and the 1950s.⁶¹ Their motivation was complex, since the long time unsolved border conflict, Yugoslav assaults, anti-communist attitude, economical considerations and Italian propaganda have to be cited as reasons and causes for their emigration.⁶² At the first official census after the war only 36'000 people avowed themselves to Italian nationality.⁶³

⁵⁸ Veiter, Theodor, „Soziale Aspekte der italienischen Flüchtlinge aus den Küstengebieten”, in: *Festschrift für Hans Schmitz zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by Theo Mayer-Maly, Albert Nowak, Theodor Tomandl, Vol. II, Wien/München 1967, p. 285. The Italian literature acts from the assumption that several thousands of Italian died between 1943 and 1945 in these karstic caves. Bartoli, Gianni, *Il martirologio delle genti adriatiche*, Trieste 1961; Fogar, Galliani, „Foibe e deportazioni. Nodi sciolti e da sciogliere”, in: *Qualestoria*, No. 2/3, August-Dezember 1989, p. 11-20; Ibid., „Foibe: politica e storia”, in: *Quaderni del Centro studi economico-politici Ezio Vanoni*, No. 20/21, 1990.

⁵⁹ Bahovec, Tina, „Der Zweite Weltkrieg im Alpen-Adria-Raum”, in: *Alpen-Adria. Zur Geschichte einer Region*, edited by Andreas Moritsch, Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien, p. 467-468.

⁶⁰ Bahovec, Tina, „Der Zweite Weltkrieg im Alpen-Adria-Raum”, in: *Alpen-Adria. Zur Geschichte einer Region*, edited by Andreas Moritsch, Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien, p. 467-468. In Triest/Trst alone approximately 800 collaborators were thrown into karstic caves. Sirc, Ljubo, Nobel Peace Prize for Tito, p. 5.

⁶¹ Magosci, Paul Robert, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, Vol. 1, Seattle/London 1998, p. 165.

⁶² Bahovec, Tina, „Der Zweite Weltkrieg im Alpen-Adria-Raum”, in: *Alpen-Adria. Zur Geschichte einer Region* (edited by Andreas Moritsch), Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien 2001, p. 468. For further details: Magosci, Paul Robert, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, Vol. 1, Seattle/London 1998, p. 165 and Wolfrum, Gerhart, „Die Völker und Nationalitäten”, in: *Markert, Osteuropa-Handbuch Jugoslawien*, p. 20.

⁶³ Kofos, Evangelos, „Balkan minorities under Communist regimes”, in: *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 2, Thessaloniki 1961, p. 43.

Serbia after liberation

In the course of successive withdrawals of German units and quisling forces (*nedićevci*, *ljotićevci*)⁶⁴ and parallel invasion (or liberation) of Serbian towns and villages by soldiers of the People's Liberation Movement, a spate of detentions and assassinations without trial of Titos opponents came over Serbia. Not only enemy (foreign and domestic) soldiers were arrested, sentenced and killed, but also civilians who in the eyes of the Partisans were seen as „collaborators”, „traitors”, and wartime profiteers (industrialists, wealthy peasants, intellectuals, artists and other „class enemies”).

Until the liberation of Belgrade, the Communist Party was numerically weak in the capital.⁶⁵ It was only during autumn and winter 1944 that the party organization was established.⁶⁶ The city was then divided into quarters (*rejon*) and cells (*ćelija*) that were controlled by loyal party members. A military administration (*komanda grada*) was set up with General Ljubodrag Đurić as its commander. During the first months the military administration assumed civil functions as well, although a provisional executive committee (*Izvršni narodnooslobodilački odbor*, hereafter: INOO) had already existed since October 26th. Unreliable officials and „useless elements” from the former municipality were dismissed and loyal members of the partisan army took their posts. A curfew was introduced, starting from 8:00 pm.⁶⁷ One of the main tasks for the new rulers was fighting „great Serbian chauvinism”, meaning the manhunt after followers of Mihajlović, Nedić and Ljotić and other real or imagined collaborators. Petranović writes: „*Some of the collaborators were taken in front of courts, but many people „disappeared in the dark” during the days of expulsion of the Germans. Execution role played the OZNA, which under the term of retaliation with fascism executed thousands of innocent people, who were innocently accused, assassinated without trial, even without knowledge of their families, as dangerous people for the future or because they worked against the leaders of the new government during war.*”⁶⁸ In Belgrade, mass executions took place e.g. at *Banjička šuma*, in the quarters *Braće Jerković* and *Žarkovo* and in the stadium „*Grafičar*.”⁶⁹ Similar repressive sanctions by the Secret police and partisan units must be presumed to have happened in other Serbian towns and villages after invasion in autumn 1944.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ While approx. 300 high-ranking officials of Nedić' government left Belgrade already in September 1944 and reached Vienna, Milan Nedić and Dimitrije Ljotić together with German officials escaped in October 4th 1944. Milovanović, Nikola, *Kroz tajni arhiv Udbe*, Vol. 1, Beograd 1986, p. 28.

⁶⁵ Immediately after invasion of the partisans, merely 960 party members were located in Belgrade. Petranović, Branko, *Srbija u drugom svetskom ratu*, p. 652.

⁶⁶ In May 1945 the Communist Party counted 1.810 members in Belgrade; at the end of 1945 there were already 5.614. Petranović, Branko, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, p. 652.

⁶⁷ Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, p. 654. According to Marković the curfew started already at 6:00 pm. Marković, Slobodan G., „Communist „Liberation”, and New Order in Belgrade”, in: *The South Slav Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 3–4 (93–94), Autumn-Winter 2003 at: <http://www.southslavjournal.com/feat1.htm>.

⁶⁸ Cit. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu*, p. 655.

⁶⁹ Ana Otašević, „Zločini komunizma 1944-1956, Sudbina pobedenih”, in: NIN, October 25th, 2001, p. 27.

The available Yugoslav documents at present don't enable us to reconstruct the exact procedure and extent of these persecutions. After all, eyewitness accounts provide an idea of how any sort of enemy simply „disappeared” these days. Only appraisals and statistical calculations (always within the frame of Kočović's and Žerjavić's reliable and exact calculations⁷¹) about the number of Serbian victims in Serbia (including Kosovo and Vojvodina) can be provided: This author estimates that in Belgrade maybe 10.000 Serbian collaborators (soldiers, officials of Nedić's government) and „class enemies” were killed during the first months after the partisan invasion; in Serbia itself (including Kosovo and Vojvodina) likewise 10.000 victims of communist retaliation might be realistic.⁷² Milan Grol, the leader of the Yugoslav Democratic Party writes in his diary on November 11th 1944: “*Horrible news reached us [...] In Belgrade everything is still unsettled and unclear [...] People go about their private business in fear and uncertainty about everything that is happening and that is going to come [...] 2'000 have been executed, 2'000 arrested [...] This explains the silence from Belgrade [...] How can order be created out of this blood, this fear and hatred, and such arbitrariness from the authorities? And what kind of order?*”⁷³

*The Vojvodina under military administration (with special consideration of the German and Hungarian Minority)*⁷⁴

Immediately after the invasion by the Red Army and the Yugoslav partisan units the Military administration was set up on October 17th 1944 in the area of the Banat, Bačka and Baranja (*Vojna uprava za Banat, Bačku i Baranju*, hereafter: VU BBB).

⁷⁰ *Pogledi* (specijalno izdanje): Partizanski zločini u Srbiji 1944-45: 150.000 neznanih grobova, broj 2, June 1991. In this „special edition” the numbers of victims in the respective towns are presented (they are definitely exaggerated and do not base on scientific calculations): Čačak: 3.500; Kragujevac: 2.000; Kruševac: 6.500; Užice: 3.000; Valjevo: 4.000; Niš: 12.000; Leskovac: 1'200; Gornji Milanovac: 800; Resava: 800; Jagodina: 2'500; Zaječar: 8'000; Šabac: 2'000; Požarevac: 2.800; Arandelovac: 3'600. See also: *Pogledi* (specijalno izdanje br. 1): „Zločini komunista nad Srbima”, April/Mai 2004, Beograd 2004.

⁷¹ Kočović counts **151.000 Serbian and Montenegrin victims** (114.000 in Serbia, 4.000 in Kosovo and 33.000 in Vojvodina) for the whole wartime period of 1941 to 1945. Kočović, Bogoljub, *Žrtve drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*, London 1985, p. 171 (prilog 32). Žerjavić number is slightly higher: **190.000 Serbian and Montenegrin war losses** (142.000 in Serbia proper, 3.000 in Kosovo and 45.000 in Vojvodina). Žerjavić, Vladimir, *Population losses in Yugoslavia 1941–1945*, Zagreb 1997, p. 152–153 (tables 33, 33a and 34).

⁷² For further estimates by different authors: Marković, Slobodan G., „Communist ‘Liberation’, and New Order in Belgrade”, in: *The South Slav Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 3-4 (93–94), Autumn-Winter 2003 at: <http://www.southslavjournal.com/feat1.htm>.

⁷³ Cit. Marković, „Communist ‘Liberation’”, p. 7.

⁷⁴ For further details about the military administration: Cvejić, Ruža, „Uloga KPJ u organizovanju i radu Vojne uprave za Banat, Bačku i Baranju”, in: *Istraživanje*, No. 1, Novi Sad 1971; Malović, Gojko, *Vojna uprava u Banatu*, Master thesis, (Manuscript), Beograd 1979. Unsubstantial the short essay by Končar: Končar, Ranko, „Vojna uprava u Banatu, Bačkoj i Baranji 1944/1945”, in: *Narodna vlast u Vojvodini 1941–1945* (Radovi sa savetovanja održanog 22–23. novembra 1982. u Novom Sadu), Novi Sad 1986, p. 736–738.

After the end of all combat operations and liberation of the whole country, the VU BBB was to be abolished; in fact civil authorities (the so called People's Liberation committees, hereafter: NOO) resumed power already on February 15th 1945.⁷⁵

The reasons for the establishment of a military administration were complex: Since the partisan movement in Banat, Bačka and Baranja due to the „efficient” Hungarian and German occupation policy was underdeveloped, the NOO couldn't immediately operate as the new authority. It was additionally stated in the public announcement (*proglas*), that the „Yugoslav character of these areas must be preserved”.⁷⁶ The military authorities saw to it that economical resources of the Vojvodina were primarily used for purposes of the People's Liberation Army.⁷⁷ Maybe one of the main motives for the implementation was the desire of the Partisan military leadership to punish both the German and Hungarian population and to take control over German property.⁷⁸ A letter from the Province Committee of the Vojvodina of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (hereafter: CPY or CP) to all members of the CP in the Banat, Bačka and Baranja seems to confirm this impression:

„As you know, with the decision by the High Commander of our army, comrade Tito, a military administration was set up in the Banat, Bačka and Baranja. This step was taken because a lot of Germans and Hungarians live in these our parts, who were hostile towards the Slavic population and committed crimes organized by the occupation forces. Especially the domestic Swabians acted barbarically towards the Serbs and others of our nations. Thus it is necessary to **thoroughly**⁷⁹ retaliate upon all Germans and upon those Hungarians who have committed war crimes. [...] Further it is necessary to take care of abandoned and enemy property. [...]”⁸⁰

Some of the most important tasks of the military authorities are to be mentioned here:

- Recruiting of all men born between 1915 and 1926
- Establishment of People's and border guards (especially in German, Hungarian and Rumanian settlements)
- Confiscation of and administration over „abandoned” (*napušteno*) and „fascist” property
- Internment of Germans and control of the camps

⁷⁵ Trujić, Vera, *Vojna uprava za Banat, Bačku i Baranju – Novi Sad (1944–1945)*, Analitički inventar, Sremski Karlovci 1981, p. VII-IX.

⁷⁶ Arhiv Vojvodine (hereafter: AV), Fond Vojna uprava, predmet 2.

⁷⁷ Petranović, Branko/Zečević, Momčilo, *Jugoslovenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*. Tematska zbirka i dokumenata. Drugi tom 1943–1986, Beograd 1987, p. 144.

⁷⁸ Janjetović, Zoran, „Die Konflikte zwischen Serben und Donauschwaben”, in: *Südost-Forschungen, Sonderdruck* Vol. 58, München 1999, p. 164.

⁷⁹ Heavy print in the original document.

⁸⁰ Cit. AV, Fond Pokrajinski komitet Saveza komunista Vojvodine (hereafter: Fond PKSKV) (F-334), not specified.

– Detention and conviction of war criminals, collaborators and „people’s enemies”

From a Communist point of view the work of the VU BBB has to be seen as a success: The Yugoslav Germans didn’t present a threat anymore, since most of them have been transferred into camps and their property was confiscated. The detention and elimination of domestic quislings and people’s enemies remained within the competence of the OZNA and the general (forced) mobilisation led to the intended increase of troops within the Yugoslav Army. Most of the (not democratically elected) members of the NOO were members of the Communist Party or at least loyal fellow-travellers to a new, socialist Yugoslavia.⁸¹

a) The Yugoslav Germans in the Vojvodina after 1944⁸²

Since evacuation of the whole German population from Vojvodina due to inability and indecision of Reich German and *Volksdeutsche* authorities failed, an estimated number of **150.000 Germans** were still settled in the area of Bačka, Baranja, the Banat and Syrmium when the Partisans liberated Vojvodina in September/October 1944.⁸³ Already on October 18th the decision was made to concentrate the German population in camps and to confiscate their property.⁸⁴ In all German settlements severe military

⁸¹ An internal paper by the Province committee of the Communist Party Vojvodina proves 1.780 Communist delegates of the NOO in Vojvodina (this corresponds to approx. 30% of all delegates) on April 16th 1945. AV, Fond PKSKV, pred. 1122 and 11120.

⁸² About agitation of both German and Hungarian population during the occupation period (selective): Mirnić, Josip, *Nemci u Bačkoj u Drugom svetskom ratu*, Novi Sad 1974; Kačavenda, Petar, „Zločini nemačke okupacione vojske i folksdojčera nad Srbima u Banatu 1941–1944. godine”, in: *Istorija XX. veka*, broj 2, p. 91–99, Beograd 1994, Ibid., *Nemci u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945*, Beograd 1991, Krnić, Zdravko, „The Transfer of Volksdeutsche from the Independent State of Croatia During the Second World War”, in: *Historijski institut Slavonije, Zbornik 4*, Slavonski Brod 1966, p. 73–88, Ibid., „The German Volksgruppe in the Independent State of Croatia as an Instrument of German Occupation Policy in Yugoslavia”, in: *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia*; Biber, Dušan, *Nacizem i Nemci u Jugoslaviji 1933–1945*, Ljubljana 1966; Calic, Marie-Janine, „Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Kroatien 1941–1944”, in: *Südostdeutsches Archiv*, Vol. XXX/XXXI, München 1987/1988; Živković, Nikola, *Ratna šteta koju je Nemačka učinila Jugoslaviji u Drugom svetskom ratu*, Beograd 1973; Kasaš, Aleksandar, *Madari u Vojvodini 1941–1946*, Novi Sad 1996; Völkl, Ekkehard, *Der Westbanat 1941–1944. Die deutsche, ungarische und andere Volksgruppen*, München 1991;

⁸³ This number is based on own research. It is estimated that in Banat approx. 85.000 (and therefore 65% related to the calculated „number to be expected” of the German population of the Banat in autumn 1944), in Bačka and Baranja approx. 60.000 (and therefore 35% related to the calculated „number to be expected”) and in Syrmium maybe 5.000 Yugoslav Germans remained in Vojvodina. AV, Fond Komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (hereafter: KUZOP), pred. 130; 156; 195; 203. An unofficial census of November/December 1944 accomplished by the VU BBB lists only **100’655 Yugoslav Germans** at this time in the area of the Banat, Bačka and Baranja (without Syrmium). This number might be quite realistic, considering the fact, that during the first contact with the Partisans several thousands Germans have been immediately killed, likely several thousands have been already taken into Yugoslav or Sovjet camps and were not counted anymore. Furthermore one has to assume that some Germans simply didn’t appear for the census or declared themselves (if possible) as Hungarians or South-Slavs. For the census: AV, Fond Pokrajinski zavod za statistiku (F-205), fol. „Podaci o stanovništvu Bačke 1945”.

control was introduced, all German inscriptions disappeared and the German language was forbidden both for public and personal use.⁸⁵ The Army and/or the NOO took control over German stores, factories and enterprises.⁸⁶ The Germans who were sentenced to death had to be publicly shot.⁸⁷

In May 1945 the general imprisonment of 80 to 90 percent⁸⁸ of the German population (an estimated total of 110.000 people⁸⁹) in more than 40 camps or „localities under special regime” (*naselja pod specijalnim režimom*) was completed.⁹⁰ The disastrous living conditions in these camps and the exhausting hard labour were the main causes for the high mortality under the Yugoslav Germans. According to reliable statistical appraisals approx. 46.000 Germans from Vojvodina (Bačka, Banat, Sirmium) died between autumn 1944 and spring 1948, when the camps were officially disbanded.⁹¹

The harsh Partisan treatment of the remaining Yugoslav Germans was – above all – a consequence of the arrogant, disloyal and often brutal behaviour of a large part of the Vojvodina Germans and their superior position during occupation period.⁹² Of course: not all of them were Nazis and only a minority committed war crimes (e.g. as member of the SS, in their function as concentration camp guards or members of the HiPo). But very few resisted the temptation to lead a privileged life under German protection and even fewer recognized the danger that was hidden in their role as a powerful minority. If Germany would lose the war (and every reasonable German had to take this into account), they would definitely become victims of Yugoslav revenge – regardless who the victorious party in the Yugoslav civil war will be.⁹³

This author shares the view of Janjetović concerning the *Volksdeutsche* accusation, communist authorities committed genocide against Ethnic Germans. „*However large the number of victims was, no intention of exterminating the Ethnic-Germans existed. Thus, although the consequences were almost as bad as genocide, the whole deplorable affair cannot be called by that name.*”⁹⁴

⁸⁴ Petranović, Branko/Zečević, Momčilo, *Jugoslovenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*. Tematska zbirka i dokumenata. Drugi tom 1943–1986, Beograd 1987, p. 145–147.

⁸⁵ Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 159.

⁸⁶ Petranović, Branko, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1941–1945*, Beograd 1992, p. 646.

⁸⁷ AV, Fond Vojna uprava, pred. 38.

⁸⁸ Yugoslav sources talk of an imprisonment rate for the districts Novi Sad and Pančevo between 80 and 90 percent. AV, Fond KUZOZ, pred. 130; 156.

⁸⁹ In an unsigned letter from August 23rd 1945 written by a member of the Province Committee Vojvodina the author refers to 90.000 to 100.000 “Swabians, who were settled in camps at the end of August 1945. AV, Fond PKSKV, not specified.

⁹⁰ Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 159 and AV, Fond Vojna uprava, pred. 38.

⁹¹ Arbeitskreis Dokumentation, *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien 1944–1948. Die Stationen eines Völkermords*, München 1998, p. 314.

⁹² It is exactly this fact that is often neglected by *Volksdeutsche* authors. „[...] *German authors tend to concentrate on admittedly unjust treatment of huge masses of their conationals, but they are often prone to overlook the causes that produced these huge forced migrations*” Cit. Janjetović, Zoran, „The Disappearance of the Germans From Yugoslavia: expulsion or emigration?”, in: *Tokovi istorije* 1–2/2003, p. 74.

b) The Hungarian minority

During the first days and weeks of the existence of the VU BBB the Yugoslav Hungarians (especially in Bačka) suffered a similar or even worse treatment by Partisan forces and local South-Slavic inhabitants than the Ethnic-Germans. Undoubtedly, these (spontaneous) killings and harassments against Hungarians represents a reaction to the repressive and bloody Hungarian occupation period (keyword: *Racija*) in Bačka.⁹⁵ A certain number among the Hungarians indeed belonged to the category of collaborators, war criminals and people's enemies and were arrested and killed – particularly by members of the OZNA - without much ado immediately after the Partisan invasion.⁹⁶ While a small number of Yugoslav Hungarians together with some officials from Hungary⁹⁷ – appointed between 1941 and 1944 - escaped from Yugoslavia in autumn 1944, the vast majority of the autochthon Hungarian population remained in Vojvodina.⁹⁸ Maybe 30.000 persons (that is approx. 7.5% of the then present Hungarian population in Vojvodina) were temporarily imprisoned.⁹⁹ But already in December 1944, an order by the commander of the VU BBB, General Major Ivan Rukavina, arranged the release of innocent Hungarian civilians from camps and prisons: „According to the decisions of the second session of AVNOJ, the minorities are treated as equal citizens of Yugoslavia what is also true for the/also refers to the Hungarians, who have equal rights and duties like the other inhabitants of our country. There from exempted are only those Hungarians, who were as war criminals involved in Hungar-

⁹³ Members of the Yugoslav exile government thought over the future of Ethnic-Germans. I. Jukić pleaded in 1941 to settle out the Germans after war and the Yugoslav spokesman of BBC T. Skrbić threatened all Germans with dreadful Serbian revenge: „For every killed Serb the Swabians have to pay a hundred price and no power of the world will be able to hold up the sword of revenge when time has come. „Für jeden ermordeten Serben, für jede ermordete Serbin werden und die Schwaben in schwäbischen Leben einen hundertfachen Preis entrichten, und keine Macht der Welt wird das Schwert der Rache aufhalten können, wenn die Zeit gekommen ist.“ In the political program of the *četnici* the expulsion of 500.000 Ethnic-Germans from Yugoslavia was scheduled. Janjetović, Zoran, „Die Konflikte zwischen Serben und Donauschwaben“, in: *Südos-Forschungen*, Vol. 58, München 1999, p. 160 and Tomasevich, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, p. 158.

⁹⁴ Cit. Janjetović, Zoran, „The Disappearance of the Germans from Yugoslavia: expulsion or emigration?“ in: *Tokovi istorije 1–2/2003*, p. 85–86.

⁹⁵ „Personal retaliations“ occurred especially in Novi Sad, Čurug, Žabalj, Šajkaš and Mošorin, where the Serbian population mostly suffered from the bloody *racija* in January 1942. The entire Hungarian population from Čurug and Žabalj (slightly more than 5.000 persons in March 1945) was expelled and taken into camps, since they were found collectively guilty for the *racija*. AV, Vojna uprava, pred. 94 and Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, pp. 181.

⁹⁶ On the basis of notifications by local inhabitants, the responsible commanders made lists of people who were to be checked and as the case may be eliminated. Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 160.

⁹⁷ In a decree by the department of internal affairs of March 31st 1945, the evacuation of Hungarian officials from Vojvodina was determined. *Službeni list DFJ*, April 6th 1945, No. 19/194.

⁹⁸ The first unofficial census in Vojvodina (Banat, Bačka, Baranja and Syrmium) took place in October 27th 1944 and quotes **386.692 Hungarians** (this is 27.8 percent of the population in Vojvodina). AV, Fond Pokrajinski zavod za statistiku (F-205), fol. „Podaci o stanovništvu Bačke 1945“.

⁹⁹ Völkl, Ekkehard, *Der Westbanat 1941–1944. Die deutsche, die ungarische und andere Volksgruppen*, München 1991, p. 189.

ian fascist crimes committed on our population. These Hungarians have to stand trial in front of military courts according to existing legal regulations. This means:

a) All camps containing Hungarians have to be disbanded and only the accused Hungarians or the ones already condemned by the respective military court have to be kept in camps.[...]¹⁰⁰

It is quite obvious that this turn-around in Yugoslav Hungarian policy (from possible expulsion to integration) has to be seen in the context of „socialist fraternity”, since Hungary was to become a Communist country too.¹⁰¹

The question remains, how many Hungarians were actually killed in autumn 1944 by Partisan forces, members of the Secret police and local inhabitants? As far as this author is aware, only one Yugoslav document refers explicitly to this question: the so called „book of evidence of killed war criminals in 1944/1945”.¹⁰² In this book, a total of 1.686 executed war criminals are listed by name, whereof approx. 1.000 persons were presumed to be Hungarians.¹⁰³ Of course, this number is not the definitive figure of all Hungarians killed after Partisan invasion. The highly professional analysis by Kasaš has led him to the admittedly provisional result of approximately 5.000 Hungarians killed in the aftermath of liberation.¹⁰⁴ Thus – may it be coincidence or not – this number lies within the region of 8.000 persons (mainly Serbs) killed during Hungarian occupation period in Bačka.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Cit. AV, Fond Vojna uprava (F-170), pred. 17.

¹⁰¹ Milovan Đilas remembers: „*Within the CK we have only completed with arguments that the Hungarians shouldn't be expelled. The main reasons for our position: We knew that the Soviet government would oppose to the expulsion of the Hungarians [...], since Hungary was forseen as a socialist country. [...] Hungary isn't that powerful that we had to be frightend, as we have for Germany. And finally, although nobody could explain why this shouldn't be applied for the Germans – the people, women and children cannot be guilty for the crimes committed by their leaders.*” Cit. Đilas, Milovan, *Revolucionarni rat*, Beograd 1990, p. 411–412.

¹⁰² AV, Fond KUZOP (F183), knj. 73.

¹⁰³ AV, Fond KUZOP (F183), knj. 73 and Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 160–172. According to Kasaš, among the others killed were 211 *četnici*, 468 Croats and 65 others (mostly Russian emigrants). Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁴ Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p.178. For other (exaggerated and tendentious) estimates: Cseres, Tibor, *Titoist atrocities in Vojvodina 1944-1945. Serbian Vendetta in Bácska*, Toronto 1993, p. 9: „[...] when the Serbians brutally massacred 40.000 Hungarian civilians [...]”; Ludanyi, Andrew, *Hungarians in Rumania and Yugoslavia. A Comparative Study of Communist Nationality Policies*, Louisiana 1963, p. 63–64: 40.000 Hungarians; Kocsis, Károly, „Ansiedlung und ethnische Raumstrukturen in den ungarischen, serbischen und rumänischen Grenzräumen (1944-1950)”, in: *Regionen im östlichen Europa – Kontinuitäten, Zäsuren und Perspektiven*, edited by Horst Fassel und Christoph Waack, Festschrift des Instituts für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde für Horst Förster, (=Tübinger geographische Studien, paper 128), Tübingen 2000, p. 98: „approx. 16.800 Hungarian civilians became victims of the blood feud by Serbian Partisans”.

¹⁰⁵ Kasaš, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 178.

The final days of the četnici

As mentioned before, it was the intention of the Communists to destroy the remnants of all domestic war enemies. Since as early as December 1941 the hostility between Partisans and *četnici* constantly increased, a bloody and uncompromising end (wherever the victorious party might be) was foreordained. In a directive of September 5th 1944 Tito wrote: „Remember that the main task of this operation is to eliminate the *četnici* of D. Mihailović and *nedićevci*, as well as their apparatus. [...]”.¹⁰⁶

After the Partisans took control over Serbia and especially Belgrade in autumn 1944, the *četnici* were withdrawing in two groups. Due to quarrels in January 1945 between Mihailović and another Četnik-leader named Momčilo Đujić, the latter marched unmolested through Croatia (according to an agreement with Pavelić), trying to reach the Austrian border,¹⁰⁷ while Mihailović in contrast was moving towards Serbia. Mihailović and his remaining troops were „instructed” via radio by a certain Major Ćosić, who actually was a member of the OZNA. The *četnici* finally reached the Drina in May 1945 intending to cross the river. But units of the Yugoslav Army and KNOJ attacked the exhausted troops at Zelengora, and annihilated them almost totally. In *Hronologija* the following entry can be found on May 12th 1945: „In the area of *Stujeska* and *Zakmura* the units of the 3rd corps of the Yugoslav army and the 3rd division of the KNOJ commenced with the destruction of strong chetnik groups. The chetnici were mainly captured or destroyed, except some 300 to 400 *četnici* who were dispersed over the area between *Zelengora* and *Prača*, among them *Draža Mihailović* and members of the Chetnik High Command.”¹⁰⁸ Mihailović escaped and was captured only in March 1946. After a short show trial he was sentenced to death and executed on July 17th 1946.¹⁰⁹ It is still an object of scientific discussion as to how many troops and Serbian civilians died in the course of this final battle in May 1945. According to Yugoslav-Communist sources, 9.235 četnik soldiers lost their lives between May 1st and 18th 1945.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Cit. Tito, Josip Broz, *Vojno djela*, I, Beograd 1961, p. 273.

¹⁰⁷ Vgl. Milovanović, *Kroz tajni arhiv UDBE*, Vol. 1, p. 45 und Tomasevich, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, p. 385 und 391.

¹⁰⁸ Cit. *Hronologija oslobodilačke borbe naroda Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, edited by Vojnoistorijski institut, Beograd 1964, p. 1107.

¹⁰⁹ Tomasevich, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, p. 407. See also: *The trial of Dragoljub-Draža Mihailović. Stenographic Record and Documents from the Trial of Dragoljub-Draža Mihailović* (published by the Union of the Journalists' Associations of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia), Belgrade 1946.

¹¹⁰ Tomasevich, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, p. 403.

Bleiburg and the „Death Marches”¹¹¹

In the closing days of the war the Croatian and German armies were retreating to Slovenia and Austria, in order to avoid being caught by Partisan units. Tomasevich asks three main questions concerning this issue: “*First, how many Croatian Quisling troops and civilian refugees were actually withdrawing and how many of them fell into Partisan hands? Second, how many troops were captured on Yugoslav soil and how many succeeded in crossing into Austria and were returned to the Partisans? And third, what happened to these troops and refugees once they were given over to the Partisans?*”¹¹² None of these questions can be definitely answered. While the course of the events in May and June 1945 is quite clear, there is disunity concerning the figures.

It seems reasonable to estimate a total of 200.000 men (troops and civilians) who were moving towards Slovenia and Austria (over Zidani Most, Celje and Maribor, Dravograd and Bleiburg) during the first days in May 1945, often fighting against partisan units while retreating.¹¹³ Additionally 150.000 to 200.000 German troops (army group „E”) and some Yugoslav collaborationist forces were retreating.¹¹⁴ Part of these people were captured by partisans on Croatian and Slovenian territory, but **the head** (approx. 30.000 people) of this maybe 50 kilometres long Croatian column arrived at Bleiburg on May 14th and negotiated with British officers about crossing the border. It is important to note, that the majority of the retreating mass was still located on Yugoslav soil, when negotiations with the British failed on May 15th.¹¹⁵ Due to allied terms of surrender the British refused the crossing of Croatian quisling troops and handed them over to the Partisans (that means only the estimated 30.000 troops who were already in Austria).

¹¹¹ The most reliable and detailed work about the final days of the Ustaša forces provides Tomasevich: Tomasevich, Jozo, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941–1945. Occupation and Collaboration*, Stanford 2001, p. 751–768. See also: Tolstoy, Nikolai, „The Bleiburg Massacres”, in: *Jugoistočna Europa 1918 – 1995. /Southeastern Europe 1918–1995*. An International Symposium, Zadar 2000 at: <http://www.hic.hr/books/seeurope/015e-tolstoy.htm#top>

¹¹² Cit. Tomasevich, *Occupation and Collaboration*, p. 760.

¹¹³ This number comes from an Ustaša source and belongs to one of the lowest appraisals: Babić, Ivan, „Military History”, in: *Croatia: Land, People, Culture*, vol. I, p. 131–166, edited by Francis H. Eterovich and Christopher Spalatin, Toronto 1964. Other estimates: 200.000 troops and 100.000 civilians at Völkl, Ekkehard, Abrechnungsfuror in Kroatien, in: Klaus-Dietmar Henke und Woller, Hans (eds.), *Politische Säuberungen in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit dem Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München 1991, p. 368; the same numbers states Perić: Perić, Ivo, Hrvatska u vrijeme Drugoga svjetskoga rata, in: *Spomenica povodom 50-te obljetnice Bleiburga i križnog puta 1945–1995*, editet by Mirko Valentić, Zagreb 1995, p. 27. Musa writes: „100.000 Croatian soldiers and tenthsousands of civilians. See: Musa, Vladislav, *Kurze kroatische Geschichte*, München 1980, p. 179. For more estimates: Tomasevich, Jozo, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941–1945. Occupation and Collaboration*, Stanford 2001, p. 760–761. An excellent overview on existing literature concerning “Bleiburg, provides Geiger: Geiger, Vladimir, „Bleiburg i križni put u historiografiji, publicisti i memoarskoj literaturi”, in: *Spomenica povodom 50-te obljetnice Bleiburga i križnog puta 1945–1995*, edited by Mirko Valentić, Zagreb 1995, p. 71–91.

¹¹⁴ Schmidt-Richberg, Erich, *Der Endkampf auf dem Balkan. Die Operationen der Heeresgruppe E von Griechenland bis zu den Alpen*, Heidelberg 1955, p. 153 and Böhme, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in Jugoslawien*, p. 38.

¹¹⁵ Recommendable: Cowgill, Anthony, (ed.), *The repatriations from Austria in 1945. The documentary evidence reproduced in full from British, American, German and Yugoslav sources*, London 1990.

With respect to the first and the second question it is estimated that between 100.000 and 150.000 Croats¹¹⁶ fell into Partisan hands, whereof 30.000 managed to cross the border but were later handed over to the Partisans by the British.¹¹⁷

Now what happened with the captives after May 15th? According to eyewitness accounts they were disarmed and plundered.¹¹⁸ Columns of different strengths were built and they were sent to camps all over Slovenia and Northern Croatia, where harassment and mass executions occurred. At the latest after having arrived in the camps, the captives were separated according to national affiliation, service grade and military formation.¹¹⁹ Mass graves of Croatian soldiers and civilians have been located near Maribor, Celje, Slovenska Bistrica, near Laško ("huda jama,") at Sošice („Jazovka”)¹²⁰, in Zagreb (quarters Maksimir and Prečko) and at numerous other places along the route of the „Death marches”.¹²¹ The routes of these marches (*križni putevi*) ran from Slavonia along the Hungarian border, then toward Belgrade and the Banat and Bačka. The aim of these painful marches was punishment, harassment, humiliation and „elimination” of yesterday’s and tomorrow’s enemies to a communist Yugoslavia. Part of the captives was individually sentenced, others were sent home without conviction, since they benefited from an amnesty becoming effective in August 1945.¹²²

The figures of Croatian (and German, Muslim and Serbian) losses in the context of „Bleiburg” and the „Death marches” vary widely. While exile Croats (Ustaša and Pro Ustaša writers) and Croatian nationalists tend to deal with some 200.000 victims or even more¹²³, the already mentioned Croatian demographer Vladimir Žerjavić assu-

¹¹⁶ The Yugoslav Veteran association states, that the Yugoslav army in 1945 captured 221'287 enemy troops, whereof 84'453 Germans. Among the rest there were Croatian, Slovenian, Serbian and Montenegrin soldiers. Tomasevich, *Occupation and Collaboration*, p. 760-761.

¹¹⁷ This number provide Prcela/Guldescu: Prcela, John/Guldescu, Stanko (eds.), *Operation Slaughterhouse*, Philadelphia 1970, p. 78.

¹¹⁸ Very little has been written by Yugoslav Communists on operations of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army in Slovenia during the first two weeks of May 1945. *Hronologija oslobodilačke borbe naroda Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, edited by Vojnoistorijski institut, Beograd 1964, p. 1112.

¹¹⁹ Völkl, Ekkehard, Abrechnungsfuror in Kroatien, in: Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Woller, Hans (eds.), *Politische Säuberungen in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit dem Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München 1991, p. 368.

¹²⁰ For „Jazovka”: Žanko, Želimir/Šolić, Nikola, *Jazovka*, Zagreb 1990.

¹²¹ A map of these execution sites can be found in: Prcela, John/Guldescu, Stanko (eds.), *Operation Slaughterhouse*, Philadelphia 1970, p. 458.

¹²² See page 10 in this text. It is estimated that approx. 5.000 persons benefited from this amnesty. Keesing's *Archiv der Gegenwart* 15 (1945), p. 351.

¹²³ Hecimovic, *In Tito's death marches*, p. 17: 500'000 Croats; *Völkermord der Tito-Partisanen 1944–1948. Dokumentation*, edited by Österreichische Historiker-Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kärnten und Steiermark, Graz 1993, p. 240: the majority of 200'000 Croatian refugees; Šklopan, Vladimir, Povlačenje hrvatskih oružanih snaga u svibnju 1945., in: *Od Bleiburga do naših dana*. Zbornik radova o Bleiburgu i križnom putu s drugog međunarodnog znanstvenog simpozija u Zagrebu 14. i 15. svibnja 1994, Zagreb 1994, p. 85: The author is referring to different publications, where the number of victims varies from 200'000 to 500'000; Kordić, Lucijan, U danima srdžbe i gnjeva. Iz dnevnika 1945., in: *Bleiburg: uzroci i posljedice*, editet by Vinko Ninkolić, München/Barcelona 1988, p. 123: 300'000 death tolls, whereof 200'000 Croats; Nikolić, Vinko, *Bleiburška tragedija hrvatskoga naroda*, 4th edition, Zagreb 1995, p. 46: 200'000 Tote; Tolstoy, Nikolai, *Klagenfurter Verschwörung. Kriegsverbrecher und Geheimplomatie*, edited by Hermagoras Bruderschaft, London 1983, p. 21: the majority out of 200.000 Croats; Nikolić, Vinko, *Poslije pola stoljeća - Bleiburga je povijest*, in: *Spomenica povodom 50-te obljetnice Bleiburga i križnog puta 1945-1995*, edited by Mirko Valentić, Zagreb 1995, p. 39: 200'000 Croats, 12'000 Slovenes, 6'000 Montenegrins, 3'000 Serbs and approx. 60'000 Germans. Indeed the editor (Mirko Valentić) comments, that the figures are exaggerated.

mes the number of **49.000 people** (45.000 Croats and 4.000 Bosnian Muslims), who died in the vicinity of Bleiburg and the „Death Marches”.¹²⁴ Tomasevich thereto comments: „*The annihilation of most quisling troops captured at the end of the war – which is a fact – was an act of mass terror and brutal political surgery, similar to that practiced by the Ustašas and the Chetniks earlier in the war.*”¹²⁵

But nevertheless: The responsibility for „Bleiburg” to a vast extent rests with Pavelić and the Ustaša regime itself: The bloody terror of *ustaše* against the Serbian population (coercive conversions, expellings and mass killings), the Croatian state’s determined alliance with Nazi Germany and - last but not least – the order by Pavelić not to surrender but to withdraw under battle to the Austrian border have to be stated as reasons for the indeed brutal Partisan retaliation.

The end of real and alleged Slovenian collaborationist forces

Since the dominating Communist bloc within the Slovenian „Liberation front” (*Osvobodilna fronta*, hereafter: OF) often ignored the proposals of non-left-wing groups and condemned (since December 1941) other forces beyond the OF in general as „traitors” and „public enemies”, the outbreak of a Slovenian civil war was only a question of time.¹²⁶ From the very beginning of the war it was the (hidden) intention of the Communist Party to rebuild Yugoslavia as a „People’s democracy”.¹²⁷ Already in August 1941 the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party formed a Secret police unit under the name VOS (*Varnostno obveščevalna služba OF*) which in spring 1944 became part of the notorious OZNA. Zdenka Kidrič, the wife of the well-known Slovenian communist politician Boris Kidrič, headed the VOS. Since December 1941 the VOS committed numerous assassinations of high-ranking Slovenian per-

¹²⁴ Žerjavić, Vladimir, *Population losses in Yugoslavia 1941–1945*, Zagreb 1997, p. 95 (table 8a). Žerjavić also states, that approx. **50.000 Serbs** (and additionally 13.000 Jews, 12.000 Croats and 10.000 Gypsies) have been killed in the Ustaša concentration camp Jasenovac. Both figures are the most realistic ones and should be finally taken as the basis for historiographical and social dialogue in Serbia and Croatia and between the two countries. For the Serbian victims in Jasenovac: Žerjavić, Vladimir, *Population losses in Yugoslavia 1941–1945*, Zagreb 1997, p. 91 (table 6a). See also: Sundhaussen, Holm, *Das Konzentrationslager Jasenovac 1941–1945: Konstruktion und Destruktion eines Kriegsverbrechens und Weltkriegsmythos*, in: *Kriegsverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Wolfram Wette and Gerd Überschär, Darmstad 2000, p. 370–381.

¹²⁵ Cit. Tomasevich, *Occupation and Collaboration*, S. 766.

¹²⁶ It was – to a great extent – exactly this intolerant and arrogant behaviour of the Slovenian communists that forced some middle and right-wing groups into collaboration with the German and Italian occupiers. These people were far away from being fascists or Nazis, but they mistrusted communism as well. Or as Ljubo Sirc accurately puts it in an open letter to the former Slovenian President Milan Kučan: „*And finally, Mr. President and general Dolničar: you Communists keep repeating that the only choice was between communism and collaboration with the enemy. After all, if nothing else, one could decide for the United States, Britain, France, and for their way of life. Only you, the Communists, rejected this option, just as you rejected the Atlantic Charter and all but equalized the Western Allies with Hitlerism.*” Cit. Sirc, Ljubo, *An open letter to the President of the Republic, Mr. Milan Kučan and to the General Ivan Dolničar*, Kranj 1995, p. 35.

¹²⁷ Bahovec, Tina, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg im Alpen-Adria-Raum*, in: *Alpen-Adria. Zur Geschichte einer Region* (edited by Andreas Moritsch), Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien 2001, p. 463.

sonalities who in the eyes of the Communists were seen as collaborationists and traitors.¹²⁸ In May 1942 the OF threatened to execute all persons who were trying to organize resistance beyond the OF. In the context of conviction and execution of hundreds of Slovenian *belogardisti* after the Italian surrender by members of the OF, a spectacular mass trial against 21 *belogardisti* took place in Kočevje in October 1943.¹²⁹ The communist-dominated, legitimate resistance against the occupying forces was from the beginning accompanied by revolutionary terror against any sort of political enemies.

During the first days of May 1945 about 30'000 soldiers (10'000 Germans, 10'000-12'000 Slovenians, 4'000 Serbs¹³⁰, 4'000 members of the Russian Protecting Corp and approximately 6'000 Slovenian civilians) moved northward to the Austrian border. These units surrendered on May 12th to the British troops and were quartered near Vetrinje/Viktring on an open field. Between May 24th and 31st the British handed over some 18'000 of these refugees to the Yugoslav Army (12'000 Slovenians, 4'000 Serbs and Montenegrins and 2'000 Croats)¹³¹ under the make-believe they would be transported to a safe place in Italy, although the British commanders must or at least should have known what would be their fate.¹³²

Yugoslav partisan units took over the prisoners and sent them into camps in Kranj, SHent-Vid, SHkofja Loka and Teharje/Tüchern. Under surveillance and direction of the OZNA they were brought to places of execution. Between 14'000 and 18'000 Slovenian citizens (not including prisoners of war, civilians and soldiers of Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, German and Italian nationalities¹³³) were executed by the OZNA, the KNOJ and particularly the units of the 3rd and 4th Yugoslav Army Corps, or died in prison and camps after May 9th 1945.¹³⁴ Burial grounds can be found all over

¹²⁸ The victims were among others: Fanouš Emer, catholic politician; Avgust Praprotnik, entrepreneur; Lambert Ehrlich, catholic priest and Marko Natlachen, former *Banus* and leader of the Slovenian People's Party, the latter shot on October 13th 1942. Tomasevich, Jozo, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration*, Stanford 2001, p. 98.

¹²⁹ Ferenc, Tone, *Kollaboration in Slowenien*, in: *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz. Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938-1945)*. Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik. Zusammengestellt und eingeleitet von Werner Röhr, Berlin/Heidelberg 1994, p. 342.

¹³⁰ Vodušek-Starič only mentions 2'700 Serbs. Vgl. Vodušek Starič, Jera, *Prevzem oblasti*, p. 227.

¹³¹ Karapandžić, *Tito's bloodiest crime*, p. 53. Pučnik: 10'5000 Slovenian *domobranci* und 600 Slovenian civilinians. Pučnik, Jože, *Množični poveljni poboji*, in: *Temna stran meseca. Kratka zgodovina totalitarizma v Sloveniji 1945-1990*, Ljubljana 1998, P. 41. Vodušek-Starič: On May 24th three Serbian corps have been transported over the border, on May 27th 600 Slovenian *domobranci*, on May 28th 3'000, on May 29th 1'800, on May 30th 3'000 and on May 31st 2'700 Slovenian officers and soldiers, together with a total of 500 to 600 Slovenian civilians in this period. Vodušek Starič, *Prevzem oblasti*, p. 239.

¹³² According to a secret inter-allied agreement the British were obliged to hand over all Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian collaborationist forces to Yugoslavia. Bahovec, Tina, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg im Alpen-Adria-Raum*, in: *Alpen-Adria. Zur Geschichte einer Region* (edited by Andreas Moritsch), Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien 2001, p. 466.

¹³³ It is estimated that at Kočevski Rog only died about 3'000 Serbian Home Guards, 2'500 Croats and 1'000 Montenegrin *četnici*. Vodušek Starič, Jera, *Prevzem oblasti 1944-1946*, Ljubljana 1992, p. 243.

¹³⁴ Pučnik, Jože, *Množični poveljni poboji*, in: *Temna stran meseca. Kratka zgodovina totalitarizma v Sloveniji 1945-1990*, Ljubljana 1998, p. 45.

Slovenia: At the karstic caves in Kočevje, in mine shafts in the area spreading from Laško to Trbovlje, in antitank ditches near Brežice, Celje, at Bistrica ob Sotli, at Tezno near Maribor, and elsewhere.¹³⁵

At least 2'000 German civilians from Slovenia starved or died from diseases in one of the camps; several hundreds were killed without trial during the first contact with the partisans and likewise some hundreds died in Soviet working camps.¹³⁶

Legal proceedings and show trials in Yugoslavia

Innumerable trials against collaborators, war criminals, „people's enemies” and other „suspicious elements” that had already started during the war, reached their culmination in 1945/1946. These were phased out towards the end of the 1940s, when other charges – as a consequence of the conflict with Stalin – came to the fore.¹³⁷

Until August 1945 most verdicts against collaborators and „people's enemies” were meted out by military courts. Simultaneous with the new structure in the judiciary enacted by the act on „Organisation of People's courts”¹³⁸ from August 26th 1945, the competence shifted to civil courts. So called „National courts of honour” were temporarily and additionally installed, only in charge of proceedings against „people's enemies”.¹³⁹

High-ranking officials and civil servants of the former war enemies, Yugoslav Germans, German, Hungarian, Italian and Albanian officials and soldiers of the occupying authorities, Catholic and (to a lesser extent) Orthodox and Muslim) clergymen, wealthy peasants, industrials, opposition-minded intellectuals and politicians, members of clandestine organisations (e.g. the Croatian *križari*) and others belonged to the wide group of people who had to stand trial. The numbers of these sentences in Yugoslavia between 1944 and 1950 can only be estimated at this point. There must have been thousands, many of them ending in capital punishment.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Pučnik, Jože, Pučnik, Jože, Post-War Massacres, in: *The dark side of the moon. A short history of the totalitarianism in Slovenia 1945–1990*, edited by Drago Jančar, p. 23–24.

¹³⁶ Suppan, Arnold (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Zwischen Adria und Karawanken*, Wien 1998, p. 417. The Danube-Swabian research counts on 4'300 civilian victims under the Germans from Slovenia. Arbeitskreis Dokumentation (ed.), *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien 1944–1948, Die Stationen eines Völkermords*, München 1998, p. 312.

¹³⁷ The last war criminal process took place in April 1986 against Andrija Artuković (minister of Internal Affairs of the NDH). *Völk, Abrechnungsfuror*, p. 385.

¹³⁸ *Službeni list DFJ*, September 4th 1945, No. 67/622.

¹³⁹ See page 8 of this article.

¹⁴⁰ Some references: *Völk, Abrechnungsfuror*, p. 375–394; Keesing's Archiv der Gegenwart (1945); *Temna stran meseca*, Brunšek, *Procesi*, p.107; Milovanović, Kroz tajni arhiv, p. 277–295; Elste, NS-Österreich auf der Anklagebank, pp. 30; Bianchini, Stefano, *Säuberungen und politische Prozesse*, p.75; Kisić-Kolanović, *Vrijeme političke represije*, p.19–20.

In order not to be misunderstood we should stress that many (but not all) of these prominent persons indeed were war criminals, collaborators and/or people's enemies and it was not only legitimate but even essential for the new government to have them in front of court. It is in fact an important element in a successful and constructive coming into terms with a dreadful past to convict and punish the persons in charge. But the majority of all these trials were *politically* motivated. It was characteristic for the Yugoslav legal practice after WWII to refer to the behaviour and attitude the accused was showing during the war period. It was not the primary intention of the new regime to finish with recent events but rather to eliminate political opponents and thus to consolidate and expand power.

V FINAL REMARKS

Nowhere else in Europe after WWII the link between legitimate and legal punishment of „real” (domestic and foreign) war criminals, collaborators and „people's enemies”, retaliation upon war enemies and elimination of political opponents in order to consolidate power is closer than in Yugoslavia. These three elements have to be considered as the main motives and causes for all communist repressive measures between 1944 and 1950. It is often impossible to state which of these three motives in a specific case finally prevailed and each of them could have played a role already since the end of 1941.

There's no doubt that Communist repressive measures must not be considered in isolation: the not seldom brutal and awkward occupation policy by Germany, Hungary and Italy, the racist, serbophile and anti-Semitic policy of the Croatian *ustaše*, the disloyal and often arrogant and violent behaviour of Yugoslav Germans, Hungarians and Kosovo Albanians against their South-Slavic neighbours and the great-Serbian, nationalistic and also ruthlessly acting *četnici* made a bloody end to the war almost unavoidable. Hatred and animosity between the different groups increased steadily during war. The presumption that either the domestic war enemies (*ustaše* and *četnici*) or the foreign occupying forces (in case of their victory) would have dealt similarly with Tito's Partisans at the end of war is probably true but nevertheless no excuse or legitimation for the Partisan actions.

Above all the systematic, forceful and thorough elimination and suppression of „national forces” during and immediately after the war made it possible to rebuild a second Yugoslavia, where all nationalities of the country were to be equally treated. Thus the taboo in historiography and public to discuss openly the events of WWII (including crimes committed by Partisan forces) both helped to construct a new Yugoslavia in 1945, and to destroy it in the 1990s.

APPENDIX

Appraisal of numbers of victims bases on the entire material used for the master thesis

Period	Place	Groups	Estimated death tolls
1943-1945	Dalmatia, Istria and Coast Land	Italian officials, soldiers and civilians, German soldiers, political enemies	10'000
Autumn 1944	Belgrade	Serbian political enemies and collaborators	10'000
Autumn 1944	Serbia and Vojvodina	Serbian political enemies and collaborators	10'000
After Autumn 1944	Vojvodina	Hungarian officials and civilians	5'000
Autumn 1944 to 1948	Banat, Bačka, Baranja, Syrmium Slavonia, Slovenia	Yugoslav German civilians	50'000
January to March 1945	Kosovo	Albanian soldiers, officials and civilians	2'000
May to August 1945	Slovenia, Northern Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, Bosnia, Vojvodina	<i>ustaše</i> , <i>domobranci</i> , <i>četnici</i> , <i>domobranci</i> , members of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian civilians	80'000 (thereof 60'000 under the keyword „Bleiburg” and 20'000 under the keyword „Vetrinje” and „Kochevje”)
May 1945	Bosnia	četnici	10'000
May 1945 to 1948	Yugoslavia	Collaborators and „people’s enemies”, political opponents, „agents” and „pies”	3'000
Total (1943-1950)	Yugoslavia	Soldiers and civilians of all nationalities under the keywords persecution and retaliation	180'000