

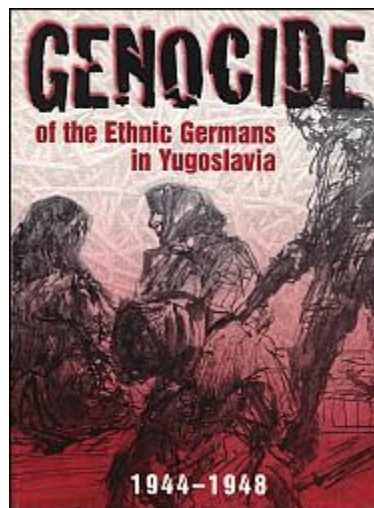
http://www.read-all-about-it.org/genocide/table_of_contents.html

16. March 2007

The expulsion and annihilation of the Donauschwaben is brought to fore in this exposé, a fact being largely ignored when discussing the German expellees in the aftermath of World War II. Especially the younger generations in the English-speaking countries have, in most instances, no inkling regarding the terrible fate their people were subjected to by Tito and his henchmen. The information presented here should help to alleviate this void.

-- Erwin E. Maruna

GENOCIDE of the Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia 1944-1948



Published by the Danube Swabian Association of the USA

2001

ISBN 0-9710341-0-9

The book, a quality soft cover edition consisting of 132 pages with maps and illustrations by Sebastian Leicht, is the answer when your children pose questions about their roots, heritage, etc. It can be ordered for a mere US \$10 plus postage from Peter Erhardt in Northlake, Illinois, USA.

Send him an [email](#) for any questions you might have.

Summary of Contents

Foreword

Prologue

Chapter 1:
History of the Danube Swabians in the USA and Canada

Chapter 2:
Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia

Chapter 3:
The Tito Regime - Executor of the Genocide

Chapter 4:
The Carnage

Chapter 5:
Central Civilian Internment and Labor Camps

Chapter 6:
Deportation of Laborers to the Soviet Union

Chapter 7:
The Liquidation Camps

Chapter 8:
Crimes Committed Against Children

Chapter 9:
The Suffering and Dying of German Clergy

Chapter 10:
Size of the Ethnic Population of Yugoslavia as of October 1944

Chapter 11:
Documentation of Human Casualties

Chapter 12:
Danube Swabian Chronology

Chapter 13, Appendix 1:
Explanation and Notes

Chapter 13, Appendix 2:
United Nations Convention on War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

Foreword

By Alfred M. de Zayas

"The right not to be expelled from one's homeland is a fundamental right ... I submit that if in the years following the Second World War the States had reflected more on the implications of the enforced flight and expulsion of the Germans, today's demographic catastrophes, particularly those referred to as 'ethnic cleansing,' would, perhaps, not have occurred to the same extent ... There is no doubt that during the Nazi occupation the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe suffered enormous injustices that cannot be forgotten. Accordingly they had a legitimate claim for reparation. However, legitimate claims ought not to be enforced through collective punishment on the basis of general discrimination and without a determination of personal guilt." [1]

These words of the first United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, José Ayala Lasso (Ecuador), were spoken at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt/Main on 28. May 1995 on the occasion of the solemn ceremony to remember 50 years since the expulsion of 15 million Germans from Eastern and Central Europe, including the Danube Swabians of Yugoslavia.

There is no question that in international law mass expulsions are doubly illegal - giving rise to State responsibility and to personal criminal liability. The expulsions by Germany's national socialist government of one million Poles from the Warthegau 1939/40 and of the 105,000 Frenchmen from Alsace 1940 were listed in the Nürnberg indictment as "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity." The Nürnberg judgment held several Nazi leaders guilty of having committed these crimes.

It is an anomaly that in spite of this clear condemnation of mass expulsions, the Allies themselves carried out even greater expulsions in the last few months of the Second World War and in the years that followed. Article XIII of the Potsdam Protocol attempts to throw a mantle of legality over the expulsions carried out by Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Nothing is said about the expulsions from other countries like Yugoslavia and Romania. However, the victorious Allies at Potsdam were not above international law and thus could not legalize criminal acts by common agreement. There is no doubt that the mass expulsion of Germans from their homelands in East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, East Brandenburg, Sudetenland, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia constituted "war crimes," to the extent that they occurred during wartime, and "crimes against humanity" whether committed during war or in peacetime.

Moreover, the slave labor imposed on persons of German ethnic origin as "reparations in kind," which was agreed by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference, [2] also constituted a particularly heinous crime, which led to hundreds of thousands of deaths during the deportation to slave labor, during the years of hard work with little food, and as sequel of this inhuman and degrading treatment.

American and British historians have not given the flight and expulsion of fifteen million Germans, in the process of which more than two million perished, the attention that this enormously important and tragic phenomenon deserves. Nor has

the American and British press fulfilled its responsibility to inform the general public about these events. On the contrary, the issue has been largely ignored and subject to taboos, even to this day. Only the occurrence of the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia during the last decade of the 20th century [3] allowed obvious parallels to be drawn, and some discussion on the subject of the Germans as victims has finally ensued. Much more is necessary.

Whereas some studies about the expulsion of the Germans by Poland and the former Czechoslovakia have been published, there is relatively little information available concerning the fate of the Germans from the former Yugoslavia. That is why the publication of this book must be welcomed, and its dissemination among the press and in the schools should follow. Testimonies of survivors of this "ethnic cleansing" of Germans should be recorded in video and on paper for future generations. Survivors of this awful crime against humanity should also speak to students in high schools and universities.

Let us remember the words of the noted British publisher and human rights activist, Victor Gollancz, one of the first courageous voices to recognize the moral implications and thus condemn the mass expulsion and spoliation of the Germans:

"If the conscience of men ever again becomes sensitive, these expulsions will be remembered to the undying shame of all who committed or connived at them ... The Germans were expelled, not just with an absence of over-nice consideration, but with the very maximum of brutality." [4]

But in order that the conscience of mankind become sensitive, it is necessary to have full information, open discussion without taboos - i.e. freedom of expression. Let us hope that this book will help us understand that all victims of "ethnic cleansing" are deserving of our attention and of our compassion.

*Alfred M. de Zayas, J.D. (Harvard), Ph. D. (Göttingen) Senior Fellow, International Human Rights Law Institute, Chicago Member, International P.E.N. Club
Author of Nemesis at Potsdam, 1998, Picton Press, Rockport, Maine
A Terrible Revenge, 1994, St. Martin's Press, New York
The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 2000, Picton Press, Rockport, Maine*

Reference Notes

[1] The complete text in German was published in Bonn, 1995, in Dieter Blumenwitz, ed., Dokumentation der Gedenkstunde in der Paulskirche zu Frankfurt/Main am 28. Mai 1995; 50 Jahre Flucht, Deportation, Vertreibung, p. 4. Excerpts from the English original are quoted in A. de Zayas "The Right to One's Homeland, Ethnic Cleansing, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia", Criminal Law Forum, Vol. 6 (1995), p. 257-314 and 291-292.

[2] A.M. de Zayas, A Terrible Revenge. The ethnic cleansing of the East European Germans 1944-1950, St. Martins Press, New York, 1994, p. 81

[3] The Nato Bombing of Kosovo in 1999

[4] Victor Gollancz, Our Threatened Values, London, 1946, p. 96

Prologue

Throughout history the Balkan countries have often been called the "Powder Keg of Europe." Indeed, they have sparked many conflicts, including World War I which created the dispersal of ethnic groups and the forging of new frontiers that to this day are the source of continual conflicts.

The current political events involving Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Kosovo focus the spotlight on Yugoslavia's attempted ethnic cleansing of Albanians, Bosnians and Croats, causing the United Nations and NATO to intervene. The genocide of the ethnic German population of Yugoslavia at the end of World War II and during the period of 1944-1948 has been, however, largely suppressed or ignored and needs to be recognized.

At the beginning of World War II about 540,000 people whose mother-tongue was German lived within the national boundaries of the then Yugoslav kingdom. About 510,000 belonged to the ethnic group of Danube Swabians, which comprise the ethnic Germans of the West Banat, Batschka, Belgrade, Serbia, Syrmia, Baranja Triangle, Slavonia, Croatia and Bosnia. Additional groups were the Germans (formerly Austrians) of Slovenia, mainly the German Untersteirer, German Oberkrainer and the Gottscheer.

This publication is a condensed version of the German language series of five volumes *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien 1944-1948* (Crimes against the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia 1944-1948) documenting the genocide of, and atrocities committed against, the ethnic Germans of Yugoslavian nationality by the Communist Titoregime at the end of World War II and the years 1944-1948. For almost 300 years these ethnic Germans have lived peacefully in, and contributed to, the prosperity of the entire region, adapting themselves to all subsequent changes of sovereignty.

Numerous eyewitnesses were interviewed and their personal experiences recorded in order to document the crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing so they can be included in the historical records of that era. These volumes were published by the Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, München, Germany. To make the world aware of these tragic events the Danube Swabian Association of the USA, in cooperation with the Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung (Danube Swabian Cultural Foundation) München, Germany, has issued this English-language edition. It is also a historical document for the Danube Swabians scattered throughout the world.

In the title, and throughout this publication, the authors have used the term "genocide" to describe the atrocities committed against the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia.

The United Nations "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" Article II and III give the following definition of genocide:

Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III

The following acts shall be punishable:

- a. Genocide;
- b. Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- c. Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- d. Attempt to commit genocide;
- e. Complicity in genocide.

The complete copy of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is included in the Appendix section of this publication.

The reader will undoubtedly come to the conclusion, as the authors have, that the crimes committed and described here come under the definition of "genocide" as determined by the United Nations Convention.

While ethnic German minorities in Hungary and Romania also were persecuted and expelled as an aftermath of World War II, it was in Yugoslavia where the most gruesome atrocities were committed against this entire ethnic group.

Between 1698 and 1782 these ethnic Germans, known collectively as "Donauschwaben" (Danube Swabians), were recruited by the territorial rulers to resettle and help rebuild the devastated areas which were liberated from Turkish invaders. At that time these territories were part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. For about 300 years they cohabited with other ethnic groups as loyal and respected citizens in their adopted homelands.

During World War II they were caught up in the political and military power struggles, particularly when German troops occupied Yugoslavia. At the end of World War II Southeastern Europe came under Communist control and the tragic fate of the ethnic Germans was sealed.

Most of those who managed to escape or were expelled and the survivors of the death camps settled in nearby Austria and Germany or emigrated to America, Canada, Australia and South America. In the United States and Canada they migrated mainly to larger communities where they were able to stay together and establish their cultural societies which foster Danube Swabian culture and traditions. They and their descendents have again become loyal and respected citizens in their new homelands but the world needs to know of their tragic history.

Chapter 1

History of the Danube Swabians in the USA and Canada

Retired Professor Michael Bresser, an immigrant to the USA after the Second World War who was born in the former Yugoslavia, has compiled a short history of the Danube Swabians in the USA, of which the following is an edited excerpt:

The first Danube Swabians arrived in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. The credit of the initial emigration obviously belongs to the travel agents. These representatives of the steamship companies visited Eastern and Southern Europe with the encouragement of the American government and of private enterprise, recruiting industrious laborers to fill the demands of the rapidly expanding factories, mills and mines in the USA. The influx of Danube Swabians lasted for 30 years. How many thousands came is anybody's guess. But we can distinguish three periods of emigration, each one of them characterized by different circumstances.

1900 - World War I

For generations only the fittest, the strongest, and most persistent colonists had survived famine, plague and war in the Danube plain. With the achievement of relative prosperity and the improvement of hygiene toward the end of the 19th century, this hardy race, raising six to eight children per family found itself in a population explosion. Since there was no virgin arable land left to settle, the family property was divided among the children, which led within two generations to tiny holdings and rapid impoverishment. There were no factories in the area to hire the landless. The Hungarian government did not promote industrialization, therefore the only remedies left were birth control and emigration.

Fortunately for these disadvantaged people the political and economic situation in Western Europe had stabilized and the lot of the poor in the Anglo-Saxon countries - England, Germany, Ireland and Scandinavia had improved. No longer did they emigrate to America to open up the West and build the factories, they preferred to stay at home. It was this socio-political fact which sent the steamship agents into the villages of Austro-Hungary, Russia and Italy in search of new reservoirs of human muscle with promises of one dollar a day wages in America, a fortune by the standards of the money-poor farm people. A few adventurous farmhands signed up first and then more and more as favorable stories from the land of opportunity reached the anxious waiting families and friends at home.

In Hungary, emigration was illegal until 1903. But it was simple enough to travel illegally to the ports in Western Europe. There were no passports and one could sail to America, if one had the money and passed medical inspection. In that year Hungary entered an agreement with the British Cunard Line and emigrants could now sail from Fiume (Rijeka) on the Adriatic Sea. This was an expensive and arduous

journey and most of the Danube Swabian people preferred the illegal route to the west. After a few years it also became legal to depart from Germany, Holland, Belgium and France. The ensuing competition between steamship companies lowered the one-way fare in 1908 to \$8.00 - less than two weeks wages for a laborer in the USA - that is steerage: 100 cubic feet space per passenger, including the iron berth with straw mattress, the life preserver as a pillow, no privacy, salt water for washing, men and women separated, steep narrow ladders up to the deck, up to 5,000 persons on one ship. Guaranteed meals: salt pork, dry peas and beans, gruel, rice, noodles, sauerkraut, potatoes, hardtack, tea or coffee for breakfast and supper during 3 weeks on an unfriendly, sometimes violent sea amid a vile smell.

Danube Swabians usually landed in New York, Philadelphia or Baltimore. After these naive villagers passed inspection and were admitted, they encountered the sweatshops, the robberbarons, the loan sharks and cut throats, the dishonest politicians, a host of natives (or recently arrived ones) ready to pounce on the "greenhorns" and take advantage of them. Not knowing the language, the laws, the mores, the customs of the land, they invariably had to learn the hard way how to survive. That did not discourage them. They were used to hardship and they did not intend to stay.

Until 1910, seventy-five percent of the immigrants were males: none of them thought of going to work on a farm. Their intention was to make money quickly, to live frugally and save as much as possible in the shortest time and then return to the "Heimat," to the tranquil villages of their ancestors. They found work in the cities, in the shops, factories, in the mills. A few worked as barbers, carpenters, and bricklayers. Single men and women, some not older than 14 (had to be accompanied by an adult), stayed longer; family men worked from 6 in the morning till 7 at night, six days a week, earning as much as \$10.00 weekly and returned home after two to three years to buy land with their savings. Many made the trip several times.

By 1913 half of the immigrants were females: women with children coming to join their husbands. How many Danube Swabians came during this period? How many stayed? How many returned, encouraged by the steamship companies? Legislation was proposed in Washington at the time "to halt the stream of 'migrate birds,' those who come to work here and take their earnings out of the country." (Fifty million dollars in one year to Hungary).

The List of Alien Passengers for the Commissioner of Immigration shows "Nationality" (country of which the immigrant is a subject) - which for Danube Swabians was Hungary. The next entry establishes "Race of People," meaning ethnic affiliation. The Danube Swabian people chose either German or Magyar. For those, 80 years later, it is confusing and difficult to evaluate these records. Many German-sounding names are followed by the entry "Magyar." Did these people consider themselves ethnic Hungarians or were they misinformed? There are no US Immigration statistics breaking down the Hungarian immigrants into Magyar, German,

Slovak, Romanian, Hebrew, etc. How many of the 193,460 Hungarian nationals who came to the USA in 1907 were Danube Swabians and how many of them went home again, successful or disillusioned, we shall never know.

The Danube Swabians who stayed in the USA identified themselves as German Hungarians. They usually derived strength and solace from each other.

At that time there was no social security, no unemployment benefits, no welfare, no health insurance available. Out of necessity, the "greenhorns" joined together in benevolent and relief associations, in societies promoting social life, cultural experiences and physical fitness.

1920 - World War II

The First World War stopped the two-way traffic between Hungary and America. At the peace conference following the defeat of Austro-Hungary, President Wilson approved, among other measures, the partition of the Danube Swabian settlement area between Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary, apparently in order to ensure everlasting peace in Europe. As a result of the huge losses incurred through the war and the chaotic disruption of production and distribution of agricultural goods caused by the drawing of new borders, the economic future for the farmers looked bleak. In addition, the Danube Swabians as a minority in their newly assigned fatherlands had to contend with the antagonistic sentiments of their new masters and their restrictive legislation infringing on the traditional German cultural heritage. This gave impetus to the second wave of emigrants who, feeling alienated in their own homeland, resolved to leave for good.

Several things had changed in the meantime in the U.S. In 1917, over the veto of President Wilson, the Literacy Test for Immigrants became law in order to exclude undesirable immigrants from certain countries. The Danube Swabians had no problem reading the required "30-80 words in any language."

By this time the quota system was also introduced in order to stabilize the racial structure of the U.S. The number of aliens of any nationality admitted into the U.S. in any year was limited to three percent of foreign-born persons of that nationality (country of birth) residing in the U.S., registered by the 1910 census. In the case of the newly defined Romania, Yugoslavia and Hungary an estimate was made of the number of people to be admitted. In any case, the number never reached the pre-war figures. The combined total, for instance, for Romania, Yugoslavia and Hungary in 1924, counting all ethnic groups, was a mere 1,747. From here on it is impossible to know how many of the Danube Swabians came to America. That information lies buried in the records of Ellis Island, where it would have to be culled from individual registration forms.

Those who came after WWI had it easier: they found well-established enclaves of Germans, Hungarians, Banater, Batschkaer, Apatiner, etc. in many cities; relatives,

compatriots, organizations which helped them overcome the initial culture shock. Only a small minority returned home during the Great Depression. Most stayed and became citizens, bought property, raised their families, became Americans. Their social life revolved around their clubs and the parishes with German-language services. They stayed apart from the "German" Germans (German nationals) and from politics.

In the meantime, an unprecedented development took place in Europe. The Weimar Government in Germany acknowledged the German origin of the Danube Swabians, to which the Austrian and German Empire before had shown 200 years of benign neglect. The Germans realized that, left unassisted and divided among Romanians, Yugoslavs and Hungarians, the Danube Swabians (the name was then coined) would not be able to resist assimilation attempts and as an ethnic group would disappear and with them a culture and values worth preserving. The Weimar Republic provided cultural contacts and eventually, assisted with economic development. The Danube Swabians, clerics and intellectuals gladly reached for the helping hand.

With the coming to power of the National Socialists in Germany in 1933, the emphasis of the German government shifted. It still emphasized culture and economics, but also political utility. As the Third Reich grew in power, its attitudes and those of its Danube Swabian representatives grew more aggressive toward their host countries. It all ended with Danube Swabians fighting WWII in the uniforms of the German Armed Forces. Of course, after the defeat of Germany, the Danube Swabians found themselves on the losing side becoming scapegoats for the injustices, calamities, war crimes, real and imagined, blamed on the German military by Romania, Hungary and especially Yugoslavia. As punishment, the Danube Swabians were disenfranchised; their property confiscated; they lost their human rights; their citizenship; they were expelled from the very homeland they had created out of a wilderness. They were sent to forced labor in Russia, and worse yet, annihilated in liquidation camps. It is this background that describes their subsequent emigration to the United States.

1950 – Present

Regular immigration of Germans into the United States after World War II was forbidden. That law also applied to "Volksdeutsche" (ethnic Germans), the designation used by the National Socialists and adopted by the Allies in order to identify people of German descent living outside the borders of the Third Reich, Danube Swabians included. There were millions of German refugees from Soviet-occupied lands languishing in the overcrowded barrack compounds scattered throughout British and American occupied Germany and Austria, homeless, hungry, without a job, vegetating from day to day, without hope for the future. Many refugees remembered the addresses of relatives and friends overseas and wrote to them for help.

The Danube Swabians in America, for their part, also had fallen upon bad times during WWII. Anything German was suspect and a sentiment of hatred, fueled by the war propaganda, was openly expressed by native Americans toward German individuals and associations alike. It took great courage and material sacrifices on the part of the compatriots in the USA to show concern for, and try to alleviate the plight of, their brothers in Europe. It is to their credit that they took action. They sent thousands of food packages to the suffering in the camps and they initiated political action in order to have the Immigration Law amended. The arguments of those who now pleaded before the Senate for the admittance of the Volksdeutsche to the USA found sympathetic minds and in 1950 the Immigration Law was changed, assigning to the Volksdeutsche fifty percent of the German and the Austrian immigration quotas.

The International Refugee Organization (IRO), several religious organizations and American consulates in Salzburg and Hamburg started with the registering, screening and dispatching of ethnic German refugees, the Danube Swabians among them. Every person had to pass a rigid medical examination, get political clearance and have a sponsor in the States, guaranteeing lodging and a paying job. Those accepted left on troop transports, on luxury liners or by airplane, glad to escape the hopeless oppressiveness of war-ravaged Europe. It is estimated that 40,000 Danube Swabians came, definitely came to stay, to start life anew with nothing but their willingness to work hard, to secure a living for themselves and their families, to learn the language and to become proud citizens of this country.

Once established, the immigrants of the 1950s searched for their identity. The experience of the last 30 years had shaped them; they could not readily identify with the old-timers, the German-Hungarians. Neither did they accept the second-class label "Volksdeutsche." Rebuffed by the "German" Germans (Reichsdeutsche) in their regional clubs, they chose to be known as the "Donauschwaben," (Danube Swabians) and as such affirmed their oneness with their brothers and sisters all over the world.

By the early 1960s, emmigration of Danube Swabians to the United States had come to an end. Those Danube Swabians belatedly leaving Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia, due to the economic and social support they received, preferred to settle in the now prosperous West Germany.

A few American Danube Swabians also have returned to Germany and Austria, (never to Romania, Hungary or Yugoslavia), only to come back again to the United States with the realization that they have found here a new homeland for themselves and their descendants.

The Helpers After the Catastrophy

The post-war history for the Danube Swabians in the USA began with the help of

their brave countrymen. There were three men, who, in response to the catastrophe, not only initiated aid in the form of Care packages to the refugees in Germany and Austria, but also were instrumental in abolishing the discriminatory immigration laws of the United States and assisted in the integration of the immigrants into their new homeland.

They represent the thousands of Danube Swabian countrymen who helped to create the enormous welfare system which allowed tens of thousands of Danube Swabians to immigrate and live in the United States.

The three men who distinguished themselves with outstanding merits in working for the welfare of the Danube Swabian Refugees were Peter Max Wagner, formerly from the Batschka Region in Yugoslavia and President of the Danube Swabian Aid Society of New York, Nikolaus Pesch, formerly from the Banat Region in Romania and founder of the American Aid Society of German Descendants in Chicago, and Father Mathias Lani from the Yugoslavian Banat, founder of the St. Emmerich Organization in Los Angeles. It is to their credit that the immigration of the refugees after the Second World War into the United States of America was made possible, giving aid together with other religious and governmental agencies, and helping with sponsors, jobs and housing once the immigrants arrived on the shores of America.

Their lives and deeds have been retold in numerous publications and books and they shall be remembered in the history of the Danube Swabians as great benefactors in the time of the greatest horror of these displaced people.

The Danube Swabians of Canada

The history of the Danube Swabians in Canada runs parallel to that of the United States. Although fewer immigrants were settled from the Pannonia Basin before the First World War, considerable numbers immigrated after the collapse of the Austrian Hungarian Empire in 1918. However, after the Second World War, immigration to Canada was also made possible for those refugees of German descent and a very impressive number of Danube Swabians settled mainly in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Those newcomers formed organizations, clubs and religious groups. They can be found mainly in Ontario in the cities of Windsor, Leamington, German Village, Niagra, Kitchner, Toronto, Newmarket, Scarbrough, Etobicoke, West Hill, Waterloo, Bradford, Willowdale, New Hamburg, Queensville, Preston, Cambridge, Brampton and West Dowsview. In the Province of Quebec many settled in Quebec City, Laval-Des-Rapides and Montreal.

In many places of Canada and the United States, population pockets of Danube Swabians are found which were begun by countrymen who had arrived before the two World Wars and who later helped immigrants settle in the same areas of the New World.

The energy and honesty of the Danube Swabians made them a sought after work force. They took advantage of the freedom provided in their new homeland and many have gained prominence in business and public service areas.

Chapter 2

The Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia

This book deals with a subject which has largely been kept secret by the Yugoslav Communist regime and by government decrees, systematically falsified for school teachings and publications: the historic truth of the genocide of the ethnic Germans of Yugoslav nationality in Yugoslavia during World War II and particularly thereafter and their flight and expulsion from their ancestral homes. The events detailed here took place particularly between fall 1944 and spring 1948.

It is, therefore, not surprising that after 50 years the likelihood that this crime will be forgotten is great and the false Yugoslav history version could prevail.

At the beginning of World War II, about 540,000 people whose mothertongue was German lived within the national boundaries of the then Yugoslav kingdom. About 510,000 belonged to the ethnic group of Danube Swabians, which comprise the ethnic Germans of the West Banat, Batschka, Belgrade, Serbia, Syrmia, Baranja Triangle, Slavonia, Croatia and Bosnia. Additional groups were the Germans (formerly Austrians) of Slovenia, mainly the German Untersteierer, German Oberkrainer and the Gottscheer.

The Danube Swabians

The Danube Swabians are descendants of the Southwest Germans and Austrians who, between 1689 and 1787, were settled in the Pannonia Basin by the Habsburg emperors after the liberation of Hungary from Turk rule (which at that time belonged to the Habsburg empire).

Origin, Settlement and Colonial Achievements

The defeat of the Turk armies at the battle of Kahlenberg (1683) at the end of the siege of Vienna led to the gradual retreat of the Osmanic Empire and the liberation of the Danube region. After 160 years of Turk domination, the victories of the Imperial Armies, under the military leadership of Karl of Lorraine, Ludwig of Baden and Prince Eugene of Savoy, laid the foundation for the reconstruction of the region.

Vienna proved to be not only a bastion against the expansion of the Turk military might, but also a launching pad for the political, cultural and economic reconstruction of the Hungarian region. Already in 1689 the Habsburg decree called for the resettlement of the depopulated Hungarian Kingdom. In the years 1722 to 1723 the Hungarian representatives to the national assembly (Landtag) at Pressburg demanded that "people of all walks of life be recruited and exempted from all public taxation for a period of 6 years."

The Monarch Karl VI was requested to issue appropriate decrees in the entire Roman Empire and neighboring countries. The colonization was carried out in a peaceful manner and with the consent of the landowners. Among the settlers from several countries, those of Germanic origin were an important and preferred group.

During the 18th century over 150,000 immigrants arrived from various German and Austrian areas and settled in the then historic Hungarian boundaries. Since many of the settlers and their descendants were of Swabian origin, historians later (1922) referred to them collectively as Danube Swabians ("Donauschwaben").

The immigration which took place throughout the 18th century reached three peak periods: 1723 to 1726, 1764 to 1771 and 1784 to 1787. They were called the Swabian treks ("Schwabenzüge"). Instead of the "Promised Land," touted by the recruiters, they encountered, particularly during the earlier phases of the colonization, harsh living conditions in the swampy lowlands and mines of the mountain regions causing hardships, epidemics, diseases and many casualties over several generations.

Fittingly, this led them to coin the phrase "The first encountered death, the second distress and only the third bread." ("Den ersten der Tod, den zweiten die Not, erst den dritten das Brot.")

It was due to a well programmed settlement policy which led to the creation of many new, attractive villages, substantial increases in agricultural, commercial and industrial production and growth of national prosperity. Thus, the Pannonian lowlands developed, with considerable contributions by the settlers of the 18th century and their descendants, into the "breadbasket of the Danube Monarchy."

The Austrian settlement program must not be interpreted as a tendency of Germanization, as some adversaries argue. It was the principles of practicality, trade and national interests which called for the recruitment of colonists, merchants, artisans and skilled laborers from the German and Austrian territories.

Most of the immigrants in the Banat mining district were miners, foundry workers, charcoal burners and forest workers who, shortly after the retreat of the Turks, were recruited to reactivate the abandoned copper, silver and iron mines. It was their efforts, which, in the 19th century, established the basis for the largest mining and industrial region of Southeast Europe.

The Danube Swabian poet Stefan Augsburger-Roney aptly characterized his countrymen's achievements with the words: "Conquered not by the sword, but by the plow, children of peace, heroes of labor." ("Nicht mit dem Schwert, mit dem Pflugschar erobert, Kinder des Friedens, Helden der Arbeit.")

The 19th century was highlighted by positive economic growth of the rural communities. However, adverse circumstances prevented the Danube Swabians from developing their individualistic intellectual strata, since the strengthening Magyar (Hungarian) society attracted and assimilated the intellectual forces emerging from the rural peasantry.

The Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia 1918-1944

After the dismantling of Austria-Hungary in 1918, the community of the Danube Swabians (numbering 1.5 million at that time) was dissected and - disregarding

President Wilson's proclamation of self-determination rights of the people - distributed among the three successor nations Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia.

As an ethnic entity and "a people in three fatherlands" it was difficult for them to find their common identity. They had to make do and go their own way in their respective new nations. According to their individual interests they formed their own different cultural, political and economic organizations.

The majority of the Danube Swabians, their mother tongue German, became involuntary Yugoslav national citizens and lived in Westbanat, Batschka and Baranja, which was collectively termed **Wojwodina**. This province never before belonged to a South-Slavic nation. It's population was multi-ethnic and none of its segments had an absolute majority. The composition of the Westbanat, for example was: 39% Serbs, 33% Germans, 13% Romanians, 9.5% Hungarians and 5.5% other minorities. In relation to Yugoslavia as a nation, the Germans, Romanians and Hungarians were a relatively small minority. Such comparisons, however, are misleading since in their former home territory they represented considerable ethnic groups.

Restrictive Minority Politics

In the 1919 newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929) the Danube Swabian national minorities accounted for approximately half a million citizens. As a condition to be internationally recognized as a nation, at the Paris (Versailles) peace agreements, Yugoslavia had to grant contractual minority protection guarantees which provided for their individual ethnic development. However, these constitutional provisions were never carried out and an effective control system did not exist. Thus, the Serb authorities largely ignored the minority guarantees. Nevertheless, during the first two years the German minority was, temporarily, able to improve its school system, establish the basis for a German-language press and, in 1920, establish the Swabian-German Cultural Association ("Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund"); in 1922 the German Party ("Partei der Deutschen") and the very successful German trade union Agraria. These initial concessions, however, disappeared after a few years.

The restrictive school policy of Belgrade - it was only in 1940 that Belgrade permitted the first German-language full grade high school (Vollgymnasium) - the prohibition of German societies and other restrictive measures considerably impaired the ethnic-political situation of the German community.

New restrictive property legislation made the purchase of real estate within 50 km of the national border subject to governmental approval. The purpose was to stop the acquisition of real property by foreigners. However, this legislation was quickly used to also make it impossible for Germans of Yugoslav citizenship to acquire property. This measure was devised to further limit the economic base of the ethnic Germans. The situation of the Germans in Yugoslavia began to improve only in the thirties after Germany began to strengthen its political posture.

Transformation of the Ethnic German Group (Volksgruppe)

About the middle of 1939 the old national-conservative cultural respectively national-liberal society leadership, (Kulturbundführung), was replaced by representatives of the national-radical Renewal Movement (Erneuerungsbewegung) which was supported by the German government. Its leadership consisted of a handful of young intellectuals.

Dr. Sepp Janko, its leader, was elected in 1939 upon strong pressure brought about by the German government Office for Germans Living Abroad (Auslandsdeutsche). For him the principal idea of "Nationalsozialismus" was the total unity of the ethnic group, rooted in the same blood. He was convinced that the blood relationship with the German Nationals (Reichsdeutsche) necessarily united them all. The destiny of Germany would also become the destiny of the Danube Swabians.

Similar developments took place in Hungary as well, where in 1938 the "Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn" ("Alliance of the Ethnic Germans in Hungary") was established.

An opposition against the Renewal Movement was started by a Catholic Action (Katholische Aktion) under the leadership of the priest Pfarrer Adam Brenz. From 1935 to 1944 he conducted an intense ideological battle against the anti-Christian excesses and abuse in his weekly periodical "Die Donau" (The Danube).

The ethnic German group leaders (Volksgruppenführer) began adopting organizational and image models, patterned after those of Germany. Thus, after the "April War" of 1941 which led to the first partition of Yugoslavia, organizations such as "Deutsche Mannschaft" (German Team), "Deutsche Jugend" (German Youth), and "Deutsche Frauenschaft" (German Women's Group) became established. In the independent Croatia, "Arbeitsdienst" (Work Team Service) and "Winterhilfswerk" (Winter Aid Society) were also founded.

The group leaders had idealistic conceptions of Germany's "Nationalsozialismus." They had great hopes such joint common cultural and socially strengthened groups together with the interchange of the larger Germanic cultural community could give them a real chance to ensure a continuation of their own identity in this multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Southeastern Europe. Until well into the course of the war they held those idealistic notions of the Nationalsozialismus and the merits of the fight against Bolshevism of which the German propaganda projected a dramatic image.

There was another opposition group to the Nationalsozialismus which was rooted in political, ideological and religious doctrines. It included mainly the Catholics and Protestants of the middle and western Banat and had the belief that one could also be a good German if you had other role models other than the national socialistic one. The majority of the Danube Swabians were, in general, non-political. The renewed strength of Germany after 1933 increased her esteem in middle-eastern Europe. It kindled the hope of the Danube Swabians that Germany's influence would bring an end to the discrimination of the German-speaking people in Yugoslavia and give them a cultural autonomy.

A Military Coup and its Consequences

Both the Yugoslav government of Prime Minister Dragisa Cvetkovic and the German government were interested in preventing an expansion of the war in the Balkan. (World War II began September 1939.) Cvetkovic wanted to protect Yugoslavia from territorial claims by Italy and Hungary. Hitler was preparing his attack on Russia and did not care to tie up his military forces in the Balkans. He also wanted to ensure a peaceful Yugoslavia. Given those circumstances, Cvetkovic's government accepted the invitation to join the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan), particularly since his neighboring countries Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria had already done so and the conditions were favorable for Yugoslavia (no commitment on the part of Yugoslavia to participate in the Axis war or to permit transit of foreign military forces).

The pact was signed on March 25, 1941. However, two days later, a military coup in Belgrade, led by General Dusan Simovic toppled the Cvetkovic government and thus prevented the ratifications of the pact. Anti-German slogans and an agreement with Russia indicated a change of Yugoslavia's political direction. The participants of the coup were mainly members of the Serbian general staff. Documents of their secret negotiations with the Allies fell into German hands during her war with France.

The reasons for Hitler's quick decision to attack Yugoslavia was his concern of the creation of a southern front by the Allies and his desire to protect his flanks during the planned attack on Russia. The simultaneous attack on Greece was to support the Italian army which became bogged down. The Yugoslav war began on April 6, 1941 and ended on April 18 with the unconditional surrender of the entire Yugoslav army.

Contrary to some reports, the conduct of the ethnic Germans was that of loyalty to their home country Yugoslavia. Eighty to ninety percent of those subject to draft followed the call, compared to only sixty to seventy percent of the Slavic population. Accusations that members of the ethnic German group acted as a "Fifth Column" against their home country are without merit.

The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the New Constitutional Position of the Danube Swabians

As a result of the partitioning of Yugoslavia following the April War, the ethnic Germans became subjects of the independent nations Croatia (Syrmia and Slavonia), Hungary (Batschka and Baranya) and the German-occupied Serbia (West Banat). The Germans of Lower-Styria became citizens of Germany (Austria), since their homeland was annexed by Germany. Because the homeland of the Gottscheer was given to Italy, they were resettled to Lower Styria.

The partitioning of Yugoslavia created complex international and constitutional situations. In addition, the infighting among the Tschetnics, Communist partisans, and Croatian Ustaschas was leading to civil war-like conditions. The German and Italian occupation forces and Hungarian government were further power factors in the former kingdom. On July 8, 1941 Germany and Italy declared that Yugoslavia had ceased to be a nation due to its unconditional surrender, even though the exiled king

and his government-in-exile, which had fled to London, claimed the continuation of the country's existence.

Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and the newly created independent nation Croatia (USK) which had joined the Axis powers adopted the same position. The legal consequences were that the inhabitants of the annexed areas, including the Danube Swabians, became national citizens of these countries, subject to their laws and compulsory military service. It was beyond their political understanding that they could, therefore, be considered traitors to the kingdom or the terroristic partisans "liberation" movement.

Legal Position and Military Objectives of the Tschetnics

The National-Serbian Tschetnics led by the Chief of the General Staff Dragoljub-Draza Mihajlovic did not recognize the unconditional surrender. For them the kingdom did not cease to exist as a legal entity. Accordingly, the government-in-exile appointed Mihajlovic Secretary of Defense and Commander-in-Chief of the Yugoslav Army in the home territory. He considered himself the Commander of the surviving armed forces, continuing the fight. In reality, the Tschetnics carried on a gang-like war. His objectives were:

- a) The liberation of the country, re-establishing Yugoslavia's former governmental, legal and social structure with a strong Great-Serbian, centralistic domination.
- b) Fight against Communism which, in his declaration of allegiance to the Western Powers, he considered an internal Yugoslav matter.
- c) An "ethnic cleansing" of Yugoslavia, in which only Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but no minorities, were permitted. This resolution was adopted at the end of 1942 at Sahovici (Montenegro).

The Partisans and Their Strategy for Seizing Power

In 1939 the illegal Communist party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) numbered only about 2,000 members. A tightly organized underground group of several hundred persons was already active since the end of the twenties. They had an influential following among students and intellectuals and were able to infiltrate the government apparatus. In 1937 the Croat Josip Broz became Secretary General of the Central Committee of the KPJ.

When Germany attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Komintern (International Communist Committee) called upon all Communist parties of Europe to rise up. As a national section of the Komintern the KPJ also did its duty in the service of the "world revolution." On the same day the central committee of the KPJ issued a proclamation calling for the Proletariat of Yugoslavia to come to the defense of the Soviet Union, "the beloved socialistic Fatherland." On July 4, Tito, as Josip Broz now called himself, issued the call for the KPJ to rise up against the occupational forces. The same month German officers and soldiers were ambushed and killed, the railline Belgrade-Agram sabotaged and Communists were liberated from prisons, including Alexander Rankovic, who later became Tito's Minister of the Interior and chief of the notorious secret police OZNA.

The assigned tasks of the KPJ were:

- a) Tying up as many enemy divisions as possible on the secondary Balkan front.
- b) Protecting the Balkan from a British landing. For the latter purpose Tito was even willing to collaborate with the Germans. Therefore, the initial objective of the partisans was not the "liberation of the people" but grasping the historical opportunity to enforce Communism in Yugoslavia according to Moscow's plans.

The Status of the Tschetnics and Partisans According to the International Convention on the Conduct of War

As far as the German military was concerned and according to the International Convention on the Conduct of War (International Law), neither the National Serbian Tschetnics nor the ethnically mixed partisans had the status of "combatants" (soldiers). They were considered "guerrillas" or gangs. According to the Convention only combatants are authorized to carry out acts of war.

The ambush and murder of German soldiers, which started on July 7, 1941 led on August 11 to a new appeal in the Serbian newspapers by the German military to cooperate with the occupying forces. The same appeal was made in public posters. The disregard of these appeals by the partisans led to the notorious order #888/41 of the German Army Command (OKW) of September 16, 1941 which ordered the execution of 100 hostages for each murdered German soldier and 50 hostages for each wounded soldier. The express purpose was of deterrent nature. This action was purposefully provoked by the partisans as admitted by Serbian historians. The German retribution, however, far exceeded the principle of "adequate numbers," as provided by the Convention.

The strategy of the partisans, however, was to provoke the occupation forces to retaliatory actions against the civilian population and threatened summary executions of hostages. It induced many to seek refuge with the partisans in the forests.

During the course of the civil war, the creation of a Communist Yugoslavia became an increasingly greater objective of the Communist Party's central committee. For tactical reasons, however, it was necessary to expand the war and not make it appear to be a fight of the unpopular and, by the government-in-exile, unrecognized Communist party but a national "Revolutionary War" of the Yugoslav people, for the liberation from the Fascist occupiers and their collaborators. Hence the slogan "Death to Fascism - Freedom to the People." This slogan became the "signature" of the Tito-movement. This popular-front image was the concept for the realization of a Communistic Yugoslavia in order not to scare away non-Communists but rather to induce them to join and fight with them.

Autonomous Administration of the Danube Swabians in the West Banat 41-1944

With the authorization of the VOMI German government, the group leadership under Dr. Sepp Janko moved to the West Banat, which belonged to German-occupied Serbia and was permitted to establish an official autonomous self-administration of the ethnic German group. The Banat model was supposed to show that a peaceful coexistence of different ethnic nationalities in the same living space was entirely

possible. It was also supposed to prove the Pannonian lowlands could, when properly managed, deliver extraordinary economic results.

Tito-Partisans Planning the Annihilation of the Danube Swabians as an Ethnic Group

After the German attack on the Soviet Union, the Tito-Partisans also began their terrorist attacks in the Banat. This action in itself made it clear that the Tito-movement considered the Danube Swabians collectively as allies of the German enemy. Dr. Janko reported that during the fighting which led to the retreat of the partisans from their temporarily established "Uzice Republic," the "Resolution of the Executive Committee" of the "Anti-Fascist Front" was seized. It prescribed the manner in which the ethnic German group was to be destroyed. After the "punishment of the culprits," all others were to be dispersed among all areas of the country and integrated into the Slavic population. According to Dr. Janko, after this resolution became known, the leadership in the Banat came to the conclusion that there was no other alternative for the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia than to put their trust into Germany's support and protection. At any rate, the ordinary person had to feel that his fate was that of all Germans. The conviction that only Germany could protect them, was the major reason for strongly defending themselves against the actions of the partisans.

Aside from the obvious genocidal intentions, the partisans also jeopardized public safety and order, which an occupying force, according to the International Law on the Conduct of War, was obligated to uphold regardless whether such occupation of a country was legal or not. According to this international law, partisans can be executed.

As the terror actions of the partisans increased, the group leadership decided to organize a home guard regiment, named Prinz Eugen, consisting of Banat citizens, for the sole purpose of the defense of the Banat. This was entirely legal according to the Haag Convention on the Conduct of War (HLKO). In April 1942, however, Hitler ordered the formation of the "SS-Volunteer Mountain Division Prinz Eugen" instead of the home guard regiment. The service became compulsory for all ethnic Germans since there were only very few volunteers. The Division had a German-national leadership, German-national officers, and, against the original intent of the ethnic German leadership, was deployed against the Communist Tito partisans outside of the Banat.

Sepp Janko, leader of the ethnic German group was concerned about this turn of events and argued with the SS headquarters that such deployment of Banat Germans was against the laws of the HLKO. However, he had to yield to the SS pressure. Based on this fact, the Danube Swabians had to reject the later accusations of treason.

This Waffen-SS division (SS = acronym for "Schutz Staffel," was a German military organization parallel to but independent of the main army called "Wehrmacht"), however, did not cooperate with the Ustascha units (Croatian military units) which tried to exterminate the orthodox Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.

The Danube Swabians of the Batschka and Baranja - Hungary 1941-1944

After the incorporation of the Batschka and the Baranja into Hungary, the Schwäbisch-Deutsche Kulturbund (Swabian-German Cultural Alliance) became affiliated with the Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn (Alliance of the Germans in Hungary). The latter was established on November 26, 1938. Its founder Dr. Franz Basch now also became the leader of the Germans in the Batschka and Baranja. His program included, in addition to the legal recognition of the ethnic group, the establishment of schools and church services in the German mother-tongue.

At the Vienna meeting, on August 30, 1940, the German and Hungarian governments, without the participation of the ethnic Germans, agreed upon the following status of the ethnic German group in Hungary:

- a) Member of the group is a person who professes to be of German heritage and is accepted by the leadership of the Ethnic Alliance.
- b) Members of the Alliance have the right to organize and form societies.
- c) All ethnic German children should have the opportunity to receive a grade school and higher education in their mother-tongue. The necessary training of teachers will be supported by Hungary.

The Vienna agreement, however, did not grant the Alliance a legal status. Nevertheless, it succeeded to establish 300 local chapters with about 50,000 members. After the second Vienna agreement, following the incorporation of North Transylvania and Sathmar into Hungary, the membership increased to 97,000 and the incorporation of the Batschka and Baranja, as a result of Yugoslavia's partition, added another 100,000.

The leadership of the German army and lawyers of the German State Department took the position that according to the Haag Convention, the German army could not legally recruit soldiers in the allied nations Hungary, Romania and Slovakia and let them fight outside their own borders. Thus, the ethnic Germans in the Banat should not have been deployed outside their home territory.

The SS leadership, however, and its leader Heinrich Himmler insisted on the overriding concept of "Volksrecht" (Right of the People) and the "blood brotherhood." - "Same ethnicity same people," as it was called at that time, meant the same destiny and the same obligation of military service, regardless of nationality. Therefore, Himmler considered his actions in the Banat justified.

After the start of Germany's war against the Soviet Union, the Waffen-SS needed additional soldiers to make up for its losses. Himmler saw in the ethnic Southeast Germans a welcome human resource and decreed in summer, 1942 that, while there was no legal requirement for the ethnic Germans living outside of Germany to fulfill military service in the German armed forces, there was a moral requirement based on ethnicity. The governments of Hungary, Croatia and Romania were put under pressure to enter into an agreement with Germany and allow Germany to draft their able-bodied ethnic Germans into the German Army, preferably into the Waffen-SS.

To stay within international law, the SS leadership declared the recruitment to be of a voluntary nature. Furthermore, the drafted ethnics serving in German military forces automatically received the German citizenship. This made them German soldiers, in accordance with the HLKO Convention.

The agreements which served as the legal basis for the drafting of able-bodied Germans were made without participation of the respective ethnic German leadership. However, the task to direct the draftees to the induction centers was given to the ethnic organizations, thus absolving the respective governments from taking legal actions against those not complying with the draft notices.

In the third agreement regarding the Waffen-SS action, the Hungarian government transferred the military service jurisdiction over its ethnic Germans to Germany and required them to serve their military service in Germany's armed forces. Simultaneously it reversed its earlier cancellation of the Hungarian citizenship of the German-Hungarians, serving in the German armed forces. Therefore, the German-Hungarians drafted in 1944 into the Waffen-SS were neither volunteers nor formal German citizens.

During WWII, about 93,000 Danube Swabians of the former Yugoslavia served as soldiers in various national armies. One in four, 26,000, did not return. There are no records of any war crime trials of ethnic Germans of Yugoslavia, serving in the Waffen-SS.

Danube Swabians in the Independent Croatia 1941-1945

The "German Croats," referred to here collectively as definition for all Danube Swabians living at that time in the various regions of the independent nation Croatia (USK), which included Syrmia, Slavonia, Croatia and Bosnia, did not consider themselves any longer citizens of the partitioned Yugoslavia, whose government-in-exile was in London, but citizens of the newly created nation Croatia and subject to its jurisdiction.

The "German Croats" led by Branimir Altgayer, were given legal status of ethnic citizens and enjoyed considerable cultural autonomy. As members of a recognized ethnic group, they enjoyed equal rights in education. The central issue of cultural autonomy was schooling in its mother-tongue to a degree not imaginable in the former kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The Tito-partisans were operating mainly in Krajina, Bosnia, Syrmia and Slavonia, areas which belonged since the April war of 1941 to the now independent nation Croatia. The Croatian Ustascha regime was allied with Germany and persecuted the Serbs living within its territory. This caused many of them to join the Tito-partisans who fought a cruel and bitter war against the Croats and to some extent against the Muslims as well. For the National-Fascist Ustascha it was an ethnic-motivated civil war. For the Tito-partisans it was primarily a war leading to the Communist take-over. Thus, the partisans considered the Danube Swabians of Croatia also their enemies.

In view of the growing hatred and cruel actions of the Tito-partisans against everything German, the leadership of the ethnic Germans considered their own fate

inadvertently and unavoidably intertwined with that of Germany. This led the leadership and majority of the Danube Swabians to conclude that their survival as an ethnic entity was only guaranteed by a peace favorable to Germany.

Resettlement of the Germans in Bosnia and West-Slavonia

The widely scattered Danube Swabian settlements in Bosnia and West-Slavonia became a major problem for the ethnic German leadership. With the beginning of the partisan activities in summer 1941, it already became evident, particularly in Bosnia, that the German settlements could not be sufficiently protected. The German Bosnians suffered considerable casualties inflicted by the raids of the partisans. The local home guard was simply too weak to protect the scattered settlements. In late fall 1941 and in cooperation with the Croatian government, all endangered German settlements were evacuated. The 18,360 residents were shipped to various camps inside Germany and Austria.

In 1943, the situation in Slavonia became increasingly critical due to the frequent partisan raids on the scattered German settlements, particularly in West-Slavonia. It was therefore decided to resettle the German inhabitants of fifty communities. They were moved to the area between Essegg, Vinkovci and Vukovar. In total 20,206 persons had to leave their homes.

The Partisans: Raids, Murders and Lootings in Syrmia and Slavonia

Some of the partisans used the following strategy. They operated only at night, while at daytime pretended to be peaceful citizens pursuing their normal activities. These "night-partisans" were particularly successful in West- and East-Slavonia as well as in Syrmia.

However, when Croatian or German forces were further away, regular partisan units settled down in the conquered villages and coordinated their activities with the night-partisans. "Settling the score" with non-Communists, particularly government-loyal Croats and Germans were daily occurrences.

Flight and Evacuation, Fall 1944

When Soviet forces approached towards the end of September 1944, the order of the German military to evacuate the Danube Swabians in the Banat and Batschka came too late. Hence only relatively few from the West-Banat, in some of the Batschka villages only one percent, in others up to ninety percent, fled by the time the Red Army and the partisans were getting ready to cross the Theiss River.

Major reasons for this tragic evacuation delay were the tactical and political dilemma of Germany's leadership. The evacuation of the Danube Swabians was tantamount to admitting that large areas of Hungary and Croatia were considered lost, risking that the Hungarians would immediately capitulate and the Croats lose their willingness to continue the fight. On the other hand, if one did not evacuate the ethnic Germans, one risked the loss of "German blood" which again was contrary to the philosophy of Germany's Nationalism. It is known that Colonel General Alexander

Löhr (equivalent to a US 4-star general) pleaded for a timely evacuation. A few days after Romania's capitulation (August 23, 1944) in a meeting with ethnic German leaders at Belgrade he said: "If you want to save German blood in this region, we have to do it immediately."

Beginning October 1944, the German military began a systematic evacuation of the Danube Swabians in Croatia, mostly by rail and horse-drawn wagons. The evacuees, loaded onto open railroad cars tried to protect themselves from rain and cold with wooden boards and tarps. The horse-drawn wagons were traveling for weeks. The search for fodder for the horses and lodging for the nights were daily struggles. Some of them had to travel over 1,000 km (621.4 miles) to reach their allocated destinations.

By fall 1944 almost 225,000 Danube Swabians fled or were evacuated. Several thousands returned to Yugoslavia under great difficulties and were immediately forced into internment camps. Between October 1944 and May 1945 well over 200,000 civilians, whose mother-tongue was German, fell into the hands of the partisans.

The escapees and surviving Danube Swabian prisoners who could not go back totalled about 300,000. Thus, Yugoslavia achieved a first "ethnic cleansing" of more than half of its 540,000 citizens of German descent.

The Germans of Lower Styria (Untersteiermark)

The German Untersteirer are the former inhabitants of the Untersteiermark (Lower Styria) which, since 1147, for over 770 years, belonged to the Styria duchy. In 1910 the population was 74,000.

For hundreds of years they were dominant in cultural life, trade, industry and mining. At the peace treaty of St. Germain, the Lower Styria was separated from the Styria which belonged to Austria and was made part of the newly created Slovenia which in turn was incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929). After the partitioning of Yugoslavia (1941) the Untersteiermark was joined with the old Steiermark and both were attached to Germany.

"By Hitler's orders," the entire historic **Steiermark** was to be "Germanized." All 10,000 South-Slavs who immigrated into the Untersteiermark after 1918, and about 20,000 Slovenians, who openly opposed the Germanization, were expelled. The former were moved to what was left of Serbia and the latter to the "German Reich."

In their place the Gottscheer and the resettled ethnic Germans from Bukovina and South Tyrol were transferred to the southeast of the historic Steiermark, which now belonged to the "German Reich."

It is not surprising that these measures disappointed not only the Slovenes who had put their trust into the Germans but also incited the hatred of the Slovenian Nationalists which led to the partisan uprising. **The "Slovenian Liberation Movement" was created April 27, 1941.** Initially, it consisted mainly of Communists and radical Nationalists who soon were joined by desperate citizens. The partisans' actions were

brutal. Resorting to executions and torching farms, they forced the farmers to feed and support them. German countermeasures were equally brutal but could no longer contain the fire they had ignited.

Understandably, the Deutsch-Untersteier were initially enthusiastic about their incorporation into the "German Reich." However, their disappointment came rather quickly as they found out that they had no voice whatsoever in the administration of the territory. Many warned against the expulsions, executions of hostages and forced political re-education; but they were told that the nature of the war required such measures and were given glorious post-war promises.

Since their fate was intertwined with that of Germany, they had no choice but to support the German administration.

Even as the course of the war turned more menacing and eventually hopeless, with few exceptions, people were not permitted to leave. About 4,300 ethnic German-Slovenian civilians perished as a result of the partisan war, mostly by executions, torture and starvation in the camps at the end of the war; adding about 1,000 Gottschee civilians, a total of about 3,300 Deutsch-Untersteierer became victims of the genocide. Approximately 90% of the surviving Deutsch-Untersteierer found a new home in Austria. Since 1948 they are organized in a "Hilfsverein" (an Aid Society) with its headquarters in Graz.

The Gottscheer

The "Gottscheer" are inhabitants of the German speaking language enclave "Gottschee," situated in the former Habsburg crown land Krain. It was established in 1330, about 660 years ago, by German settlers from Carinthia and East-Tyrol, due to an initiative of the Carinthian counts of Ortenburg. In 1918, the naturally developed language enclave, numbered 18,000 inhabitants, living in 25 communities and 172 villages. At the peace treaty of St. Germain, (September 10, 1919), it became part of Slovenia and the newly created Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.

After the collapse and partitioning of Yugoslavia in 1941, Gottschee became Italian territory and the Gottscheer (about 11,200), were moved to the Southeast Untersteiermark (Lower Styria). Like the Germans in Slovenia, they too initially were forbidden to leave when the Russians approached. The order to evacuate was issued only beginning May 1945, which for most was too late. While the exact number of those who perished during the flight or in camps is not known, estimates of the casualties including those of soldiers, run around 1,000. A large number of Gottscheer found a new home in Austria; however, other significant groups emigrated to the USA and Canada.

Chapter 3

The Tito Regime - Executor of the Genocide

In order to come to the final conclusion that these atrocities were indeed a genocide, historical examination has to ask the question: "What were the reasons of Tito's partisan movement that led to the genocide of the ethnic Germans of Yugoslavian citizenship of the former Yugoslav kingdom?"

A careful examination of the events and review of the Tito partisans own statements lead to varying reasons which induced the annihilation of the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia. The causes are of ethnic, national, ideological, poweroriented and personal nature.

Hate of Everything German

A primary reason is the hate of everything German which has its origin in the course of World War II. Beginning April 1941 and following orders of the Komintern, under the command of party leader Josip Broz, also called Tito, the Yugoslav Communists began their fight against the German and Italian occupation and shortly thereafter also against the Serbian Tschetniks who were loyal to the monarchy as well as against the Croatian Ustaschas - all in support of the Soviet Union, the "Socialist Motherland."

In 1942 the Tito partisans infiltrated the autonomous Westbanat, administered by the ethnic German Group. The "Volksgruppe's" leadership wanted to organize a battalion, called "Prinz Eugen," consisting of Banat ethnic Germans for protection, a form of home guard, considered legal by international conventions, and turned to the German occupation forces for weapons.

Himmler, head of the SS, however, had other plans. In order to circumvent the "Haag Convention on Conduct of Warfare," he declared the recruitment as "volunteer actions." The originally intended Banat home guard battalion "Prinz Eugen" became the "SS Volunteer Mountain Division Prinz Eugen." Against the wishes of the ethnic German leadership the division was used in the war against the partisans outside of the Banat. For the Tito partisans, this was reason enough to identify the Danube Swabians with their main enemy: Hitler's Germany.

The Power of the Communists

During its battle, the communist Tito movement changed direction. It saw its chance to grasp the power in Yugoslavia, provided Germany would lose the war. For tactical reasons it no longer preached the "Communist Revolution" as its objective but the "Liberation of the People" and developed a popular-front movement to entice as many non-Communists as possible to join their fight.

In its November 1943 meeting, the Anti-Fascist Council for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), an interim ruling commission declared: "Whoever served in the enemy's armed forces, whoever supported the occupation forces, is a traitor, will lose

citizenship rights, be court-martialed and indicted for treason, which carries the threat of the death penalty."

This resolution could be used as a pretext for the murder of all soldiers of the former Yugoslavia who fought against the Communists, including the Germans, Croats, Slovenes and Serbs under the leadership of Nedic or Mihajlovic.

The resolution also outlined the federative structure of the future "People's Republic." Ethnic German citizens were not included in the ethnic nationalities with equal rights. It was obvious the purpose was to punish not only the soldiers who were drafted mainly into the German units but to establish a collective guilt of the entire ethnic German population by designating them "Enemies of the People," "Collaborators" and "Fascists." These were the preparations for the annihilation of all Germans and they were no longer considered part of the future Yugoslavia.

This patriotic approach was used in the interest of the Communist power grab and to mobilize many patriots who loved their own country - while Tito had greater Yugoslavian aspirations. He succeeded to maintain this national patriotism, if not by conviction, then by force.

After Tito's death the individual Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Kosovo-Albanian Patriotisms suddenly resurfaced. We all have witnessed the horrible consequences of the unraveling of Yugoslavia since 1990.

The Aftermath of Jajce

The proclamation of Jajce removed all killing restraints for the partisan leaders and gave the executions a semblance of legality. The results were tens of thousands of victims: Croatian Ustachas, Domobranen, German soldiers, whole sections of the division Prinz Eugen and about 8,000 Danube Swabians mainly male non-military victims during the fall 1944 massacres in the Banat, Batschka and Syrmia.

The genocide of the ethnic German population, branded as Fascists, proved to be an important factor in stabilizing the Communist's power since it was an effective intimidating factor against the national-conservative forces and loyal monarchists. At the same time the annihilation of the Germans suited the Communist concept in removing a segment of the population which, in a Communist society, would have been the greatest source of resistance.

Danube Swabian Property - Reward for the Tito Partisans

There was, as admitted by the partisans, another motive for the annihilation of the ethnic Germans: the confiscated property was to serve as a reward for the fighters of the "liberation battle." In the relatively barren revolutionary regions of the country, there was a dearth of fertile agricultural soil. A large percentage of the land, if not most of it, which was redistributed by the Agrarian Reform, belonged to the Germans. Thousands of active partisan fighters and their families from these barren areas, particularly from Krajina and Lika were rewarded with the homes of the escaped or interned Germans in the Wojwodina. They had to learn how to cultivate the fertile land of the evacuated villages within the Communist's communal property doctrine.

Confiscation of German Property - A Step Towards a Government Planned Economy

The extensive Agrarian Reform of August 23, 1945 confirmed again the collective confiscation, regardless of individual culpability and the transfer of the entire tillable land belonging to "persons of German ethnicity" to the land trust of the Agrarian Reform. These former German properties were to be granted preferably to Yugoslav partisans and soldiers. This clearly illustrates that the annihilation of the Germans was contemplated simultaneously as a step towards a government-managed economy. The confiscated real property of the Danube Swabians, double the size of Luxembourg, appeared to be particularly suitable to carry out the ideology of the government.

Effects of the Planned German Expulsion from East/Central Europe

Causes only become reality if certain circumstances prevail. The Serb Djilas, in his book *Revolutionary War* writes: "Our warriors, as well as the people, became so weary of 'our Germans,' that in our Central Committee we repeatedly touched on the subject of expelling the ethnic German population. However, we might have thought differently, had not the Russians, Poles and Czechs already decided the expulsion of the Germans from their territories and started doing so. We arrived at our position, without discussion or negotiations, a matter that was understandable and justified because of the 'German crime'."

The intent of the Yugoslav government to effectively cleanse the country of her ethnic Germans is also evident in Yugoslavia's approach to the Western Allies in an Aide-memoire on January 19, 1946 asking to agree to a collective transfer to Germany of the 110,000 ethnic Germans that survived the first persecution year. It repeated this request on May 16, 1946; however, it did not receive any reply.

At a January 1947 London meeting of the Deputy Foreign Ministers in preparation of a peace treaty with Germany, the Yugoslav delegate Dr. Mladen Ivecovic again raised this request, however, it was not considered.

In spring 1946 the US government intervened at the Yugoslav government on behalf of American citizens of Yugoslav heritage and protested repeatedly against their internment in forced labor camps.

On October 18, 1946 the US ambassador at Belgrade delivered a note of protest to the Yugoslav government in which the actions of the Yugoslav government were declared a violation of the human rights of American citizens of ethnic German heritage, who were interned without any judicial process.

Ethnic Germans Declared "Enemies of the People," Expropriated and Disenfranchised of All Civic Rights

Under different political conditions, the partisans could have possibly refrained from the annihilation of the Germans. However, on November 21, 1944 the AVNOJ issued an ex-judicial decree declaring the Germans "Enemies of the People" and stripped

them of all civic rights. All their personal properties were confiscated by the government without any compensation.

Exempt were only those married to other nationals or active fighters belonging to or supporters of Tito's Communist "Peoples' Liberation Movement." To give this action a semblance of legal justification the decree had to be made by an ex-judicial process. This meant that they did not lose their citizenship but were deprived of civic rights.

Thus, the ethnic Germans could, without providing any reason, be expelled from their homes, coerced into forced labor, put into labor camps or camps for children or liquidation camps for sick persons.

Among the criteria for genocide the UNO Convention of December 9, 1948 specifies: "Genocide means: Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

The AVNOJ decrees provided exactly these conditions and are the basis and justification for the planned and government-sanctioned genocide of the Danube Swabians.

Great-Serbian Nationalism, a Partial Reason for Expulsion

The question as to what extent the expulsion of the Germans in Yugoslavia was also due to the desire of the Serbs for territorial expansion, is actually the most controversial debate among Danube Swabian and Serb authors.

The Serbs were only a minority in the Banat, Batschka and Syrmia (now called Wojwodina) which were part of the Hungarian kingdom. These areas, which for about 1,000 years belonged to Hungary and historically never to Serbia, were given to Serbia after World War I at the 1920 peace treaty of Trianon. The strongest ethnic groups which suddenly came under Serbian domination were the Germans and Magyars (Hungarians). In spite of immediate Serb colonization efforts, in 1941 the Serbs still did not represent more than 37% of Wojwodina's total population, in the Batschka only 23%.

Nationalization of the "Land of the People" (Volksboden): Objective of the Chauvinists

The objective of the Great-Serbian Nationalism to squeeze the Germans and, to a lesser degree, the Magyars out of the Wojwodina took several forms. Already starting in 1918, the government adopted anti-German measures by restricting the teaching of German-language classes at grade and high schools, nationalizing real estate, discriminatory tax rates, eliminating ethnic Germans from public service jobs, prohibition of Danube Swabian umbrella organizations, etc. After the April War of 1941 (the occupation of Yugoslavia by German forces which led to the partition of the Yugoslav kingdom), the anti-German groundswell in the Serb political thinking and the determination to eliminate the Germans increased dramatically. Germany was blamed for the demise of the Yugoslav kingdom and, by association, this also included the ethnic Germans in their own country.

The Intent to Eliminate All Non-Slavs After the War

During World War II, nationalistic Serbian circles also expressed their intent to expel minorities. In 1942, the monarchy-loyalist, but nationalistic Tschetniks, at their Congress at Sahovici (Montenegro) adopted a resolution that stipulated: "Within the territory of the future nation there can only be Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. No minorities are tolerated."

The Secretary of War of the Government-in-Exile and leader of the Tschetniks, General Oraz Mihajlovic intended to expel all Germans, Magyars and Romanians after the hoped for victory of his Tschetniks. After the renewed recent break-up of Yugoslavia the resurrected Tschetniks retained their radical nationalistic Great-Serbian course. Fifty years later, during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, their paramilitary units committed bloody massacres.

Even General Milan Nedic, the Prime Minister of German-occupied Serbia and installed by the Germans in 1941, did not want to have any national minorities in a future post-war Serbia. In 1944, the Communist party of Yugoslavia, however, became the executor of the elimination plans.

The conclusion of those who cite Great-Serbian Nationalism as a major reason for the expulsion and annihilation of Yugoslavia's ethnic Germans is the following: The three leading Serbian, respectively Serb-dominated groups, the Tschetniks, partisans and Nedic-followers, who were fighting each other during World War II, towards the end of 1942 all agreed on the elimination of the Germans from a future Yugoslavia. At the very least, the intent was to make them disappear as an ethnic group by integrating them into the Slavic ethnic sections.

Disputes of Today's National-Conservative Serbs

Lately, national-conservative Serbian authors have strongly objected against the theory that Great-Serbian Nationalism was the virus which infected the movement of the Tito-partisans and thus injected them with the idea of the expulsion of the Germans. They claim that the Great-Serbian Nationalism had no decisive influence on the Politbüro (the political leadership) of the partisan movement which at that time consisted of Tito, Kardelj, Rankovic and Djilas. They offer the following reasons:

1. The AVNOJ (Serbian acronym for Anti-Fascist Council of Yugoslav People's Liberation) of the partisans was dominated by Communists. The decisive motivation for the decision of the AVNOJ to expel and annihilate the Germans was that the Germans did not join the "Volksbefreiungskampf" (liberation struggle) of the partisans and that they defended themselves against the guerilla attacks on their villages.
2. Alexander Rankovic, although being a Serb but a radical Communist and since 1944 chief of the OZNA (Yugoslav secret police), controlled the leadership policies and issued the instructions to the OZNA chiefs of the country's regions, as well as to the other members of the political leadership. He was considered the "executor of the political suppression and annihilation of all real or suspected enemies of the regime." Therefore, the policy of political terror was Communist motivated.

3. Edward Kardelj was a Slovene, leading party ideologist and second in command after Tito. He pursued the transformation of the society according to the Communist doctrine. He considered the Germans potential opponents and enemies and he needed their property values to carry out the agrarian reform according to the Communist pattern.

4. Josip Broz Tito was a Croat, had a Croatian father and Slovenian mother. The actions of the genocide were subject to his approval and tolerance. He was hardly influenced by nationalistic Serbian considerations since he had a schismatic relationship with the Serbs. He toned down the Great-Serbian ambitions and limited the sovereignty of the Serbian part of the nation by establishing the two autonomous provinces Wojwodina and Kosovo.

5. According to the national-conservative Serb Zoran Ziletic, not enough consideration is given to the sufferings of the anti-Communist, Serbian intelligentsia, middle class, commercial and industrial citizenry and all other "South-Slavs" in the AVNOJ of Yugoslavia.

6. Zoran Ziletic and the Danube Swabian Hans Sonnleitner recognize that the Atheism of Communism is the predominant cause of the inhuman, gruesome and bestial actions of the Tito-partisans against the defenseless ethnic German population. The ungodliness of the Communist zealots diminished, even eliminated all moral restraints. Ziletic in the prologue to Nenad Stefanovic's book *Eine Welt an der Donau - Gespräche und Kommentare* (A World at the Danube - Discussions and Commentaries), published 1996 in Belgrad, writes: "The dictators in 1944-1948 also expelled our God."

Final comment by Herbert Prokle, another Danube Swabian eye witness: "Even if Great-Serbian Nationalism did not provide the impulse for the crime, it certainly facilitated it. The execution of the indescribably fiendish genocide between 1944 and 1948 on such a national scale required a large number of participants, not all of whom were Communists. Furthermore, there was a large segment of the Serbian population that, while not wanting to 'dirty their hands,' were quite in agreement with the annihilation of the Germans. The pathologically extreme Nationalism of a part of the Serbs may very well be responsible for it."

Chapter 4

The Carnage

The Tito partisans appeared behind the advancing Red Army. By October 6, 1944 the Soviets occupied the Western Banat and by October 23, 1944 the whole Batschka.

During their occupation of the Banat and Batschka, October/November 1944, the Russian soldiers rarely wantonly killed Germans, however, they did commit numerous rapes of German girls and women and destruction of property. The first action of the partisans was usually to establish local "People's Liberation Committees." Then began the arbitrary detention, brutal mistreatment, rapes, executions and murders, particularly of Germans, but also of Magyars (ethnic Hungarians), loyalist Serbs and other Slavs.

Especially during the first two months of the partisans' military administration there was a period of widespread lawlessness. During this period a great number of murders of Germans were committed; therefore it was called "the bloody autumn 1944," of the Wojwodina.

In the Banat and Syrmia during the bloody autumn 1944, approximately 5,000 and in the Batschka 2,000 Danube Swabians perished. The analogous losses in Slovenia (Untersteiermark, Oberkrain, Gottschee) are not included in these figures. Between 1941 and October 1944, about 1,100 lost their lives due to partisan raids on German communities. These are conservative figures. Names and localities are documented on page 1019, volume IV of the German-language book *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*, published 1994 (The History of the Ethnic Germans Tragedy and Sufferings in the Communist Yugoslavia).

Source References: The identification of the most important localities where the murders and massacres committed on the ethnic Germans of Yugoslavia as well as various murderous acts occurred, are based on statements of the surviving victims themselves. They were recorded and published 1990-1995 in four volumes *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*. The major part of these first-person reports are located at the Deutsches Zentralarchiv Koblenz (German Central Archives at Koblenz). So far, access for the Danube Swabians and most foreign researchers to the Yugoslav military archives ("Militärhistorisches Archiv") at Belgrade has been denied. Also, according to a statement by the director of the Yugoslav archives, Miodrag Zecevic in the Belgrade paper *Borba* of July 24, 1987, large scale destruction of archive material took place in the immediate post-war period.

A major difficulty has been the determination of individual responsibility. The reports do not always specify which of the various groups or authorities authorized or carried out the executions and murders and whether they were based on individual decisions or on orders from higher up.

The Seven Executors

The first-person reports indicated that there were seven authorities or groups acting as the direct executors of the killings: invading partisans and spontaneously organized groups, local private persons, "People's Liberation Committees," the secret police OZNA, local revenge groups, military courts and execution commandos of the "Aktion Intelligenzija." Events in Slovenia were more complicated, since additional factors were involved.

Spontaneous Groups

Occupying partisans and citizens in some ethnically mixed communities spontaneously formed groups that engaged in murderous activities.

The worst incident took place in the Banat village Deutsch-Zerne. After it was seized, a spontaneously formed group of Serbs, Russian soldiers and gypsies engaged in pillage and mass rapes of German girls and women which caused at least 55 (documented) victims to commit suicide.

Another example is the tragedy at Palanka in the Batschka where local gypsies joined an invading group of partisans. This group executed a number of prominent Germans, Magyars and Serbs. Some of the latter were executed just because they pleaded on behalf of the Germans. In Obrowatz, the partisans and local Serbs tortured and executed 33 Germans, 6 Magyars and 2 Serbs after Russian troops moved on. At Towarisch, 36 of the 48 Germans that stayed behind were also killed.

Private Persons

Personal revenge was also a motive for the murder of individual Germans. A tragic example is what happened at Homolitz. When the males between 14 and 70 years were led away for execution, the Serbs decided to spare the locksmith Kudjer since he was deemed to be useful. His young son, also in the group pleaded: "Father, don't leave me." He replied, "Son, I stay with you." The son would have also been released because of his young age, but as eyewitnesses testified, a young Serb of the same age objected because the two boys had a previous quarrel. So he also had to die; a revenge for a quarrel among children.

The Local People's Liberation Committee

Some local People's Liberation Committee (NOO=Narodno Oslobodilacki Odbor) took a liberal interpretation of the Declaration of Jajce as an opportunity to liquidate influential Germans without formal court action by branding them "Enemies of the People," "Fascists" or "Supporters of the Occupation."

At India, Syrmia, on November 11, 1944 nine men were executed. The following day an additional 64 persons, among them children, were killed with a hand grenade or beaten to death with hatchets. The names of the torturers and murderers are registered in the India chronicle.

At Sombor, Batschka, November 5, 1944, 52 men from Kolut were taken to the OZNA jail. They all perished there.

Revenge Groups and "People's Courts"

Serbian revenge groups in the part of the Batschka, which was occupied by Hungary during the war, took revenge on the Magyars for executions committed by the Hungarian military during a 1942 raid. The Serbs from Schajkasch and Tschurug are reported to have personally asked Tito for permission to take revenge on the Hungarians, which was granted. (Reported by the Hungarian historian Enikö A. Sajti.) The ethnic Germans, who had nothing to do with the Hungarian military actions, were nevertheless included in the orgiastic murders.

The "People's Court" for the areas of Batschka, Banat and Baranja instructed the partisans to collect several thousand men, mainly Hungarians and Germans but also Serbian intellectuals and trucked 2,500 of them at night to the forest near the Danube where they were shot and dumped into mass graves. This massacre is also documented by Hungarian sources.

Beginning 1945 the Communist leaders stopped the actions against ethnic Hungarians due to political reasons: Hungary had to be considered a "socialistic brother country." The barbarous extermination of the ethnic Germans, however, continued until 1948.

The Military Courts of the Partisans

Immediately after conquering an area, the partisans declared martial law and court-martialed important German personalities. The most striking example was the case of Dr. Philipp Popp, Bishop of the German Protestant Church of Yugoslavia. On the pretext that he was a collaborator, he was sentenced to death and shot on June 29, 1945.

It was evident that the military courts and prisons of the partisans' army served the power-grab strategy of the partisan regime. They were used according to their policy to achieve their "political cleansing." In the Batschka, former German soldiers and members of the Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund (Swabian German Cultural Society) were picked up and shipped to the military prison at Sombor.

The OZNA

The Germans in cities and county seats were particularly targeted for murder by the OZNA (acronym for Office for the Protection of the People), the secret police of the partisan movement. It was established in 1944 by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ). The head of the national OZNA was Alexander Rankovic. He was simultaneously Secretary of the KPJ. All heads of the regions (Republics) were important functionaries and simultaneously members of the regional KP (political arm of the Communist party). The regional OZNA organizations selected their victims rather arbitrarily and according to their own criteria. They arrested well-known ethnic

German citizens, members of the "Deutsche Mannschaft" and alleged saboteurs. Particularly notorious was the OZNA central prison at Sombor (Batschka).

Generally speaking, the OZNA was the main instrument of the Communists power-grab strategy and served to carry out the "political cleansing" in the conquered territories.

Aktion Intelligenzija

Beginning about the middle of October 1944, mobile execution commandos in the Banat and Batschka began entering the communities and arresting leading, respected and well-off Germans - sometimes against the objections of local Slavic citizens. The victims were later cruelly tortured and murdered.

Targeted were also "leading heads" of the communities, occasionally also Slavic followers of the previous monarchy, former leaders of the bourgeois-Serbian parties, industrialists, well-off trades people, rich farmers, professionals, clergy and intellectuals. All persons that were categorized as "capitalists," "class enemies" and potential "counter-revolutionaries." Most were males. The selection of these persons indicates their liquidation was carried out according to the Stalinistic pattern. Evidently, the purpose of these actions was to remove the leadership, intimidate the people and make them obedient.

The Question of Responsibility

The first six groups that carried out the executions and murders of the ethnic Germans operated during the reign of the partisan military administration. The leadership, with the active support of Tito, allowed the OZNA, local committees, "People's Courts" and individuals to wantonly persecute alleged "Enemies of the People," "Fascists" and "Supporters of the Occupiers."

The Aktion Intelligenzija was obviously planned, organized and directed by the fanatic Stalinist communists Moscha Pijade and Alexander Rankovic. But also here, Tito is mainly responsible since nothing could be done without the "highest authority's" consent.

Other fully responsible top leaders were Edward Kardelj and Ivan Ribar. Commander of the Military Administration in the Banat 1944/45 was Jovan Beljanski ("Lala"). Toma Granfil was Politkommissar. Commander of the Military Administration of the Batschka was Ivan Rukavina. Secretary of the communist party for the province of Wojvodina was Jovan Veselinov Zarko. The OZNA chief Vid Dodik was commander of all concentration camps in Wojvodina.

Description of Specific Events

The following are just a few examples out of many similar gruesome events that took place during the "Bloody Autumn" of 1944.

Banat

In most of the reports on the events the handwriting of the OZNA and Aktion Intelligenzija was evident. As a rule, a few days after occupying the communities, the victims selected for execution were taken from the communities to the county headquarters, tortured for days and then murdered. Occasionally, mass executions also took place in the individual villages. Most of the inhumane atrocities were committed against the Danube Swabians in Deutsch-Zerne.

After the retreat of the German armed forces, a spontaneously organized group of Serbs, Russian soldiers and gypsies turned into a psychotic victory and hate orgy, resulting initially in mass rapes of German women and girls and looting. At least 55 persons (documented by names) committed suicide out of despair and sense of shame. The local report describes the following sequence of events: "On October 5, 1944, at 2 p.m., the first Russian troops appear. Already at 3 p.m. the first German men, including Father Franz Brunet are beaten to death or shot to death. At the same time, a large number of German men are already locked up in the Serbian town hall. On October 6, Peter Schweininger with his horse-drawn wagon has to report to the town hall (where all crimes were committed) and is beaten to death. A drunken soldier starts shooting wildly in the cellar, killing five and wounding four people. Margareta Themare, according to her own testimony, and two other women, have to report to the town hall; eleven women are already there. The first corpse is brought out and thrown onto the wagon. A young Serb and a gypsy command the women to start singing otherwise they would be shot too. They sing till all the dead are on the wagon, then they have to run behind the wagon, clapping their hands... At the 'Schinderplatz' (knacker's yard), a gang of gypsies with shovels is already waiting. The women have to take the wagon of the murdered owner back and are then released into the town hall...

"On October 24, 1944, around 4 p.m., the first group of men and women, all from Deutsch-Zerne, tied in pairs by wire to a rope, are led to the 'Schinderplatz.' Young Serbs and gypsies with clubs escort the column and commit excesses at will. Those collapsing during the march are clubbed and dragged along. The 'column of death' is flanked by Serbian men and boys with cow bells. Church bells are ringing also.

"On this day three groups are being executed. Head executioner of all three groups is the female partisan leader Ljubica from the Batschka, who lives in the Catholic rectory. All the victims have to undress; those unable to do so are undressed by the gypsies. In groups of five to six, they have to stand before the grave and are executed with machine guns. Meanwhile several hundred Serbs have congregated as spectators. The next group of victims always has to push down the bodies of the previously shot who did not fall into the hole. There are some in the pit who are not yet dead and their death struggles evoke laughter from the spectators. The bodies are not covered with soil to leave space for the next two groups. At dusk the second group is not quite finished yet and the third is disposed of by moonlight. Towards 9 p.m., having completed the executions, the partisans return singing to the village."

Already on October 7, one day after the occupation of the town Gross-Kikinda (30,000 inhabitants, 6,000 ethnic Germans) in the Nordbanat, a prison was set up for German men. The first mass executions took place on October 7 or 8, 1944. Twenty

eight Germans were murdered on this first day. Starting October 10 the Milchhalle (milk hall) initially became the annihilation station for the Kikinda district and then the central civilian camp for the Germans of the entire northern Banat.

For days, those imprisoned were subjected to inhuman, sadistic tortures. The ones that did not succumb were shot to death. Wantonly the partisans pulled out some Germans. Before killing them, they were usually horribly tortured, then beaten to death or butchered with knives like pigs. They first killed the wealthy Germans of the entire district so the partisans did not have to account for the stolen property. Among the first victims were also the intellectuals and Father Michael Rotten of Kikinda. German men from the North Banat and the Modosch district were concentrated in the Milchhalle and there tortured to death. November 5, 1944 became a bloody Sunday. About 100 men were selected and murdered that day. Rose Mullarczyk writes about the butchering in the Milchhalle:

"On November 3, 1944 I was an eye-witness of the first slaughter of a larger group of men. Individual people were already previously liquidated. This group of 22 men, among them two I knew from our neighboring village, were fiendishly murdered. First, the men were disrobed, had to lie down, their hands tied behind their back. Then they were subjected to a terrible lashing with whips. Then, strips of flesh were cut from their bodies. Some had their noses, tongues, ears or genitals cut off. Their eyes were cut out and in between, the beatings continued. I could witness all these terrible atrocities since I was at that time, together with another female prisoner in a room on the ground floor. The victims screamed, convulsing in pain. This went on for about an hour, then the screams became weaker and eventually ceased. Even on the next day, when we walked across the yard, one could find tongues, eyes, ears and other human body parts lying all over and the entire yard was covered with blood."

The three sister communities Charleville, Soltur, and St. Hubert with 3,300 inhabitants, of which 3,050 were ethnic Germans were almost exclusively German settlements. On October 6, 1944 the Russian troops entered without resistance. Indescribable scenes of rape by the Soviet soldiers and partisans and looting, in which civilian Serbs and gypsies from the surrounding villages participated, took place. From October till mid-December 1944, 180 Germans (documented by name) were murdered. Most of them were shipped previously to the Milchhalle Gross-Kikinda.

Some Specific Atrocities

On October 11, 1944 Adam Weissmann, a well-known farmer, was immediately tortured to death. The next day five additional men and two 15-year old youths were arrested and locked in the town hall. After a drinking bout, the partisans began a gruesome torture process. The victims were burned behind their ears with red-hot phosphorous rods and their soles beaten with bullwhips. Their screams were heard in all the surrounding houses. On October 17 they were taken to Gross-Kikinda where they disappeared without a trace.

During the night of October 31, 1944 the partisans surrounded the three villages, gathered in St. Hubert all the men they could capture including those working at the railroad and took them to Milchhalle Gross-Kikinda. Altogether there were about 70

men from Charleville, 93 from St. Hubert and 76 from Soltur. Their executions lasted until the end of November 1944. The Catholic priest Anton Adam was among them.

Dr. Wilhelm Neuner who served as presiding judge during the war period reported the gruesome events at Grossbetschkerek (35,000 inhabitants, of which 7,500 were ethnic Germans). The town's name was later changed to Zrenjanin.

"On the day the Russians came, a local Serbian government formed which, however, was changed on October 10 when Communist partisan troops from Syrmia arrived and took over control. Already on their first day after assuming control they closed off in the western part of the city those streets that had mainly ethnic Germans. Groups of partisans, including women in partisan uniforms moved from house to house and classified all their occupants. Where they found a German man or youth they chased him out of the house. The only question he had to answer was: 'Are you German?' When he answered in the affirmative, the short order issued was: 'tie-up and execute.' End of interrogation.

"Then all these ethnic German civilians, about 300, were beaten, tortured and dragged to the Serbian part of town. In the court yard of one of the houses they had to undress and were chased, in groups of ten, into the street and to a long brick wall. There they had to kneel and were shot from behind. Then the partisans brought some wagons onto which they tossed the murdered victims. At the end of the town where the partisans had already dug a pit they dumped the bodies."

In October 1944, a partisan unit appeared at the South Banat town of Karlsdorf/Banatski Karlovac (3,600 inhabitants, 250 of different nationalities) and requested a number of Germans to be executed. The local Serbs, however, refused to hand any over, stating that there were no guilty ones. Thereupon a new unit appeared on November 4, arrested a number of prominent ethnic Germans and tortured them in the city hall. There were 28 males age 22-71 and 6 women 19-38 including the pregnant Maria Pursch. Among the men, the priest Peter Weber, two physicians and the attorney Dr. Jozo Rogitsch who served as Minister for Sport and Physical Education in the Stojadinovic government were included. The detained were placed on horse-drawn wagons and taken to the county seat Weisskirchen.

During the trip Maria Pursch went into labor. She was taken off the wagon, shot in the militia building of Jasenovac and buried there. It was a double-murder. At Weisskirchen the other prisoners were tortured and executed November 8 or 11, 1944.

The partisan rule in Kubin/Kovin, a community of 8,000 (2,300 ethnic Germans) was particularly cruel. They occupied the mixed ethnic community on October 2, 1944. According to the report of Johann Fischer, the first arrests and torture of leading personalities, including the mayor Sava Gulubic, started already the next day. During the persecutions that begun by the middle of October, one girl was hung with wire slings in a doorframe and split in half with a butcher hatchet. Fischer also states that he was an eyewitness when Hilde Kucht, leader of a women's society, had her breasts cut open and pieces of flesh cut from her abdomen. Several people were tarred, bound together in a group and set aflame. Such burnings were also carried out on barges which then floated as flaming torches down the Danube. The 54-year

old Jakob Filtschek was sawed apart alive. One hundred and eight murdered victims of Kubin are documented by name in volume IV of the document Series *Leidensweg*.

Ernsthausen (Personal experiences of Ladislaus Schag and his daughter Elisabeth Flassak, née Schag.)

During the months of October/November all men in the village that could be tracked down (old men as well as teen-age youths) were herded into the Betschkerek death camp, including Ladislaus Schag.

In the first few days, 24 succumbed to the terrible tortures and lack of nourishment. The camp was also known as a "death mill" and the dead were taken away by the cart-loads. Later on those about to die were shipped out of the camp and into the surrounding villages.

One week before Christmas, Ladislaus Schag was one of them, together with 38 other victims, who were taken to Ernsthausen.

They were completely exhausted, their skin covered with sores and dirt from all the beatings. They were too weak to step down from the wagon and village dwellers had to assist them. One of these unfortunate fell down and could not get up. A partisan shoved his rifle into his stomach and the man made one more attempt, fell back and died. After the few weeks at the Betschkerek death camp, Ladislaus Schag became so disfigured that his own daughter did not recognize him. She found him among the rags and wrapped in the inner linings of his coat, shriveled to a skeleton but still alive. The local commander allowed her to take him home; all others, including the two Modosch villagers Ernst Wabersinke and Mathias Fuderer, were thrown into the Schlitter Inn.

The partisans began getting drunk. During the night they brought the prisoners out to the bowling alley, one at a time. They had to bend over and received axe blows to their back. The mortally struck bodies convulsed while the partisans erupted in sadistic laughter. The apparently lifeless bodies were then hacked into pieces to be buried in the neighborhood manure piles. This, however was not possible since everything was frozen. The next morning some old men from the neighborhood were chased out to load the dismembered pieces onto a horse-drawn wagon and taken to the cemetery. It took three wagons, dripping with blood to complete the transport, watched by the horrified inhabitants.

A young partisan from a Hungarian neighborhood village was standing guard and watched the whole event. He was still in shock when he reported the occurrence to Elisabeth Schag. The inn was covered with splattered blood, pieces of human hair and bloody axes. Some of the old men, before they died, also told their wives.

Glogon is a community belonging to the district of Pantschowa. It had a population of about 2,500, mostly ethnic Germans. One hundred and fourteen citizens, recorded by name, were murdered. Innkeeper Anton Scherer relates the following events:

"One day the village drummer announced that everybody had to report for work at the airport. The second day the workers were herded together into a group. Some were released but the rest, about 160, were tied together and chased to Opovo.

There they were driven into the marsh and shot. Among them were two of my brothers, Ignaz and Martin. At home the partisans went from house to house. Each was accompanied by a Romanian who showed them where Germans lived. Thus they collected all the men between 15-72 years of age. The partisans came from Syrmia and were much dreaded. On that day many men were murdered including the Catholic village priest."

Homolitz in the county of Pantschowa had about 5,200 residents, over half ethnic Germans. On October 3, 1944 Serbs and gypsies took over the administration of the town. Overnight, local Serbs became partisans, however, it was the mobs that were the rulers. Russians and partisans raped women and girls. One girl, only 14 years old, was raped at gunpoint in front of her parents by five Russian soldiers. On October 27, an execution squad of the Sremska brigade appeared and surrounded the village. The partisans of the brigade, led by locals, went from house to house and arrested all male German youths and men between 14-70. They took them to an inn and wrote down their names and occupations. Fifteen to twenty craftsmen were sorted out for later use and the rest taken to a tile shed at Donauried. There they had to strip and stand in front of a previously dug pit. Machine gun bursts ended the lives of 173 youths and men. Up to the end of the year 1944, 49 additional men and women of Homolitz were murdered.

Mramorak in the Kubin district had a population of about 5,200, half ethnic Germans. One week before the October 6 occupation, the partisans had already murdered mayor Johann Spahn and notary W. Walter, kidnapped five men, two women and two girls while working in the field and tortured them to death. On October 10, 105 men, distinguished citizens, farmers and German soldiers on furlough, were captured, tortured, shackled and killed in the neighboring community of Bawanischte. One hundred and forty six Germans from Mramorak, recorded by name, perished even before the general internment had begun.

The city of Pantschowa had about 22,000 inhabitants, about 8,000 ethnic Germans. Before the internment 222 of these, recorded by name, were murdered. Immediately after the occupation by the Russians and partisans and the resulting rapes and pillage, all men were arrested. Some were held in a camp at the Fischplatz; men of the intellectual level and women in the Stockhaus jail. A partisan court martial dispensed the sentences. Each morning women and wealthy intellectuals, after night-long torture, were led out and shot. Then, a few days later, all the other jailed inmates, shackled together with wire, were herded through the city and executed as well. Among those executed were member of parliament Dr. Simon Bartmann, attorney Dr. Bartosch and jeweler Boleschni. By the end of October, all still alive were chased to the 25 km distant Banat-Brestowatz and put into local German houses. Those who could no longer walk were shot on the spot.

The village of Startchowa/Starcevo had a population of 3,645 of which 850 were Germans and 1,000 Croats. The pillage began October 1, 1944; partisans and gypsies took whatever they wanted, "in the name of the people." On October 20, a Russian and local Communists, after a nocturnal drinking bout, executed the first seven Germans in the city park, "just for their amusement." The next day 300 men of a special commando of the Sremska brigade arrived. They took all the men and several youths to the inn, beat them with belts, chains, sticks, forks and rifle butts.

Except for seven, all 86 - the youngest was only 14, the oldest over 70 - were tied up in pairs and during the night taken out into the marsh. There the gypsies were already waiting with lanterns in front of excavated pits. Machine gun bursts killed all the prisoners except a 15-year old. He was able to loosen his shackles, crawl out and escape. During the months of October and November, 108 men and women were murdered.

The city of Werschetz/Vrsac had 29,000 inhabitants, almost 12,000 ethnic Germans. On October 2, 1944, after heavy fighting, the Russians and partisans occupied the city. During the month of October about 700 German civilians were murdered. Pastor Neumann reports: "The Russians behaved like rabid animals. They raped women and girls and took with them whatever they wanted." On October 3rd the partisans started with the detentions, resulting in the murder of 136 citizens. After a hidden German soldier shot a Russian major, a large number of farmers, just starting their trip home from working in the vineyards, were arrested and executed the next day. "Cheering gypsies and partisans tossed the dead onto wagons," writes Maria Nadaschdy, another eyewitness. Eighty-one of the killed are recorded by name. Johann Bless, also an eyewitness counted 124 killed. On October 23rd, 35 well-to-do citizens were taken from their homes, tortured for two days in the jail and disappeared without a trace; among them school director Nikolaus Arnold. On October 17 (or 25) Mayor Géza Frisch and five prominent citizens were chased through the city and executed at the Schinderplatz. The rest of the men were locked up at the Stojkovic-Telep. It was always at sundown that they were trucked to their executions. Serbian loyal monarchists were also among the victims.

Zichydorf/Veliko Plandiste in the Werschetz district had a population of about 3,300, almost 2,000 were ethnic Germans. One hundred forty nine of them became victims of the Aktion Intelligenzija. Most of the men jailed in the village hall during October did not survive their tortures. On November 2, 1944 about 200 partisans disembarked from a freight train and arrested all males age 14-70, in total 350 persons. They were taken to the Stoikovic-Telep at Werschetz which had acquired the sad reputation as being the execution camp for the Danube Swabians of the South Banat. There about 160 males from Zichydorf were executed, according to the Zichydorf home town book.

Batschka

The mass executions and other murders (by stabbing, beating, etc) in the Batschka during the Aktion Intelligenzija in the individual communities were, as a rule, carried out in a single day or night. This happened for instance in Bajmok, Bezdan, Filipowa, Hodschag, Kischker, Kolut, Obrowatz, Palanka and Weprowatz. The "special commandos" selected male youths from age 16 and adults up to 60 for executions. In the Banat, from 14 to 70.

Notorious was Sombor, the former regional capital of the Batschka with 32,300 inhabitants (2,500 Germans) with its Kronics-Palais, which the OZNA confiscated and converted into its central prison, and the Zupanija (district administration building). Both buildings also served as the partisans' military court.

Helene Rajal, who was arrested on November 20 in Apatin and taken to the notorious Palais, had to take food to the prisoners who were locked in a garage. She describes the conditions of that place: "About 150 men in chains were in this garage for seven weeks. The chains were so tight that the men had sores on their hands. During the seven weeks the chains were not removed once, not even for eating or performing bodily functions. Their clothing was scant and infested with lice. During the cold December days, they had to lie down on the concrete floor of the unheated garage. It was only at Christmas 1944 that a new judge arrived from Neusatz and ordered the chains removed for Christmas Eve." Rajal herself was sentenced to six months forced labor at a partisan hospital because she was a member of the Bourgeoisie.

Besides the Germans from Apatin (13,400 inhabitants of which 11,700 were Germans), the Germans from Kolut, a multi-ethnic village in the district Sombor, were one of the larger groups in the Kronics-Palais. They consisted of 52 Germans and other nationals. None of them survived.

A particularly bestial crime was committed in the multi-ethnic community Batsch-Brestowatz (8,500 inhabitants, 4,450 Germans). Magdalene Thorer, after her escape from the camp, described how the partisans summoned her to the deathbed of a Brestowatz Serb and forced to forgive the dying man, who considered himself a murderer. He confessed that he participated in the murder of her brother Stefan and eleven other Brestowatz Germans. He narrated how these men had to bury each other up to the neck in a field outside the community. Then their heads were bashed in or hacked off. Only after Magdalena Thorer forgave the murderer of her brother, was he able to die.

The district of Palanka experienced the first partisan actions against the ethnic Germans since it was situated at the front line and for a long time German troops were stationed on the other side of the river Danube. The city of Palanka had a population of about 13,200, about 6,800 ethnic Germans. The first partisans appeared on October 20, 1944 and a few days later also partisans from Syrmia who were particularly rough. According to Dr. Wilhelm Neuner, president of the local court, the partisans committed terrible massacres during the very first days of the occupation: they murdered 15-17 year old youths. On October 26, they arrested, tortured and murdered between 80-100 men, particularly prominent citizens and those considered, in the eyes of partisans, to be "capitalists." On November 17 all so-called higher-educated from all communities within the Palanka district were executed.

According to Nikolaus Dietrich, in the community Kischker/Backo Dobro Polje (population 3,660, 3,500 Germans) 77 of the 139 documented victims of the Aktion Intelligenzija were women. Usually they were almost all men. On November 9, 1944 the partisans picked out names from a list and took them to the town hall. Men and women were separated by gender and crowded into separate small rooms that gave them hardly space to breathe. The partisans continuously threatened to execute them, pushing the poor victims even closer together. After midnight the execution squad arrived. The trembling men and women were taken out one by one and hauled into the interrogation room. A woman whose life was spared relates the following procedure: When brought into the room the interrogator screamed at her, asking if

she was a member of the Kulturbund (Cultural Society) and where her husband was. When she answered that they had to be in the Kulturbund otherwise their son could not have attended the German high school and that her husband was also here, the judge, flanked by a partisan with whip, shouted: "Group 2." The interrogated were separated into two groups. Her husband was put into group 1. Those in group 2 were spared, group 1 was murdered. Twenty-two men and fifty-six women age 20-70, among them mothers, were torn from their babies. One mother left behind five children under 12 years of age. "My grandparents had a son, two daughters, two daughters-in-law, one son-in-law and two grand daughters among the murdered."

According to the Danube Swabian Karl Mengel who did not flee his hometown Werbass/Vrbas (13,900 inhabitants, 7,900 Germans) the partisans occupied the city without resistance. Werbass was the most important school center for the ethnic Germans in the Wojwodina. The executions began towards the end of October. Initially 20 respected citizens and one woman, they are recorded by name, were herded together, tortured and shot at the cemetery. The same fate happened to three young soldiers who had returned home. Repeatedly Germans were taken from their homes and disappeared without a trace.

Mengel quotes: "Interventions by known Serbs were fruitless. The leader of the partisans was a certain Anton Heller, 28 years old. He was conscripted by the Germans into a so-called "work unit," serving on Germany's eastern front and deserted to the Russians. With the advancing Russian army he returned to his hometown Neuwerbass and assumed a leading role among the partisans. Under his command 22 workers from the sugar factory, Germans as well as Hungarians, were arrested and put to death."

According to Mengel, the Aktion Intelligenzija at Werbass took place during the nights of November 19, 21 and 23. A Serbian acquaintance reported to him that on these days 150 Germans and the same number of Hungarians were rounded up and beaten. At midnight they were shackled to a long wire and chased nude to the central cemetery. In groups of two they had to stand before the pit and were executed by neck shots. Among the executed was Jakob Lotz, the former director of the Werbass Serbian high school. These reports are based on statements of Karl Schimony, who was only wounded and able to crawl out of the pit and saved by the Serb shoemaker Novo, performing guard duty. One hundred and one of the murdered Germans are documented by name.

On January 20, 1945, all Germans of Werbass still at liberty were interned at the Seidenfabrik (silk factory) at Werbass which then began to function as the notorious Central Civilian Camp.

November 23, 1994 became the "Black Day" for the district city of Hodschag/Odzaci (5,900 inhabitants, 4,750 Germans). On that day a partisan commando that supposedly belonged to the Krajiska brigade arrived at Hodschag. Anton Mathes reports on the actions of this troop:

"On November 23 they started a large scale raid; 181 men and two women were herded into the house of photographer Johann Raab. Meanwhile, 40 young people dug a large mass grave in a field along the road to Karawukowa. At that time the city

council consisted of three Serbs: Dobranov, Urbas and Pavkov. They knew what was going to happen and succeeded to free some of the prisoners. Thus, innkeeper Franz Kraus, merchant Ladislaus Kollmann and Hans Petko were saved. The three Serbs genuinely tried to prevent the mass murder, however, without success. Towards midnight the prisoners had to undress and line up in rows of four and were marched to the mass grave. There they were brutally murdered and the corpses thrown into the pit which was then closed. Hans Mayer was the only one who managed to escape during the night. For many days the mass grave was guarded and nobody allowed to go near."

The murder of men and youths of Filipowa/Backi Gracac (an entirely ethnic German community of 3,500) in the Hodschag/Odzaci district during the night of November 25 was probably the peak - at least as far as the number of victims was concerned - and the end of the "Bloody Autumn" in the Wojwodina.

These were the sequences of events, as researched by Dr. Georg Wildmann: "The evening of November 24, a squad of partisans, belonging to the Krajiska brigade arrived at the village. On the 25th they surrounded the village. After the morning mass the "Kleinrichter" went through the village and announced: All males between 16-60 have to report immediately to the village hall. Anybody not doing so and caught by the partisans will be executed on the spot. Towards 9 o'clock more than 300 men and youths congregated at the village hall. Towards 10 o'clock they were ordered into the fenced churchyard and to form into files of four. A table was brought and some Serbian clerks sat down. Two partisan officers were in command, one Serb and one Hungarian. Then the men and youths were motioned to the table, their names recorded and divided into two groups. Early afternoon the larger group of 212 had to form lines of four. Partisans stood between them. A leader, on horseback, assumed command as the condemned moved out of the village, watched by horrified women and children behind drawn curtains. The church clock struck 3 p.m. The ones left behind, about 100, were chased into the church and locked up for the night. If a villager showed himself as the condemned left the village he was shot at immediately. At one of these shots fired by the commander, his horse rose up and the commander wounded himself and fell from the horse. He was said to have died the next day. Some distance outside the village the procession stopped. In spite of the silence imposed on the participating partisans, the family members were able to learn of the tragic events that transpired. Camp inmates who were bought out as workers by Wojwodina Slavs obtained some of the details from their masters.

"First the men were asked to squeal on each other. He who would tell which ones of the co-prisoners is a member of the Swabian Cultural Society (Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund) would be freed. Nobody squealed. That's when the tortures started. The execution commando was reinforced to 50 men: Serbs, Slovaks, Bunjewatz and Hungarians from the Batschka. A Bunjewatz recognized Ludwig Vogl, the Filipowa pharmacist and requested that he be released, since he knew he was not guilty. Arguments started and a major part of the Wojwodin men joined the Bunjewatz in refusing to participate in the torture and execution of the Filipowa men. A messenger on horseback was dispatched to notify the higher-ups of the situation. He returned the same night with the order that the protesters should be immediately withdrawn."

An eye-witness from Piwnitz told Sister Lea Helfert of the "Armen Schwestern" (the Poor Sisters), who was still spared from the camp: "In 1944, I was drafted into the 'Heimatschutz' (Home Guard) and had to participate in the 'cleansing action' on November 25, 1944. I was not with the armed guards but with the ones who had to hold together the ropes so nobody could run away. What I tell you now I'll never be able to forget in all my life. Most of the men prayed and made the sign of the cross before they were shot to death. When both father and son were together, the father made the sign of the cross on his son's forehead, before they were executed."

At Roth-Sallasch they chased the men onto the hay-meadow that contained pits which were used to protect the anti-aircraft guns of the former German airfield. The men had to undress in front of these pits and then were beaten to death or shot. Bunjewatzen citizens who, unarmed, also had to participate reported to Father Friedrich Gillich the screams and praying which only ceased after the last victim expired. This unholy night gave them endless nightmares. Victims of this massacre included 35 youths age 16-19. Officially all 212 murdered were termed "Fascists" and "War Criminals."

Syrmia

Fortunately most Danube Swabians of Syrmia were evacuated. However, the fate of the ones that stayed behind was tragic. In the multi-ethnic community India/Indija (8,100 inhabitants, 5,900 Germans), it was the local Volksbefreiungsausschuss (People's Liberation Committee) which cruelly persecuted the ethnic Germans that stayed behind.

On November 11, 1944, nine well-known men were summoned to the school yard, tied with wire and chased to Alt-Pasua 8 km away. On the way they were beaten with clubs and guns. There they had to dig their graves and then were executed by a machine gun salvo. Gypsies with hatchets in their hands checked whether all were dead and split their heads. Some Croats from the area were also murdered.

On November 12, more prisoners were taken from the Hungarian school, two prisoners tied together and each was also tied around the waist with a rope. Then they were chased to the village hall, cursed at and mistreated on the way, particularly by the gypsies. At that time a messenger arrived from Semlin requesting workers for a Russian commando. After these were selected and dispatched, the rest of the prisoners were divided into three groups. The first consisted of six men, women and children. They were told that they now were taken home; but instead they were taken to the Schinderhaus, horribly tortured and herded into a room. The Serb Toso Vujanic then threw a hand grenade into the room, which tore apart many of the occupants. Those still alive were butchered or beaten to death with hatchets. During this massacre, conducted under the command of a Kommissar and a female partisan, the butchers sang partisan songs. (A local record names the participating Serbs.)

At Semlin/Zemun, a suburb of Belgrade (28,000 inhabitants, 8,350 Germans) immediately following the occupation the partisans arrested hundreds of ethnic Germans. Of the ones they murdered during the night of November 3rd, 241 are documented by name.

The local records read as follows: "The first unit of the partisans came from Beschania. Three days after their arrival posters appeared in the entire city announcing that on October 29, 30 and 31 all Germans had to report for work to the Salzamt. Anybody not following this order will be shot immediately, without a court martial." A great panic broke out among the Germans that had stayed behind.

Responsible citizens as they had always been, the majority of the Semlin and Franztal Germans reported to the Salzamt. With very few exceptions, none of them survived the trip. An eyewitness reports: "When I arrived the next day I found over seven hundred people crowded together in a small space; men, women and adolescents but mainly older people. Since I was delivering milk for a municipal institution, I was taken out of the Salzamt by the Serbian manager. In the night of November 3, all those that had reported to the Salzamt disappeared... "

A woman who wanted to bring food to one of the persons held did not find anyone, only big piles of their clothing in the hallway. The next day, a Franztal worker who did not report to the Salzamt was told by a coworker at the electricity plant: "Last night they took your fellow-countrymen past this plant, stripped and tied together two-by-two." The electricity plant was situated at the Danube River. None were ever seen again.

After this occurrence, the German Communists, under the leadership of Alexander Mettler thought they could help their countrymen in Semlin and Franztal that were still alive. According to reliable sources, Mettler went to Belgrade to protest against the Partisans' actions in Semlin and asked for assistance. He was said to have gone to Moscha Pijade, one of the most influential members of the new government whom he personally knew from the time of the Communists persecution during the reign of the Yugoslav monarchy. Mettler, however, was supposed to have been told to keep out of this matter if he didn't want anything to happen to himself. Mettler and his comrades in the Communist party were no longer considered important and they were just able to save their own heads.

In November 1944, a similar bloodbath occurred at Ruma (13,400 inhabitants, 6,950 Germans). During many nights, numerous Germans were brutally murdered, initially at the Croatian center (Hrvatski Dom) and later at the Rausch brick works.

A. Kreuzer reports: "As soon as the partisans moved into Ruma during the Autumn 1944, they began a hunt for all ethnic Germans. The Germans from Ruma and surrounding communities that had remained in the Autonomous Republic of Croatia after evacuation of the German population were rounded up and jailed in the Croatia Center. During the night a larger group of the partisan murderers, including a concertina player, arrived. They lined up in the second large hall. They all had daggers tied to the shaft of their boots or around the waist. The concertina player positioned himself in the doorway that led from one hall to the other. The ethnic Germans were ordered to lie down on the floor, closely together. When there was a deadly silence, the leader motioned to the concertina player who then played a Kolo-dance melody and the whole group danced into the hall. The murderous gang trampled over the motionless German bodies, continually shouting and cheering while they stabbed the humans under their feet until they had finished their butchering. During the next two nights the same bloody orgy was repeated with new

groups of victims. Each morning German women had to wash the blood from the walls and floor."

Some reasonable Serbs apparently protested to the new rulers against the mass murdering in the center of Ruma. At any rate, the order came to discontinue the mass killing in the Croatian Center. Now the ethnic Germans were only herded together into the Croatian Center and, after midnight, stripped and chased to the Tausch brick works. The hands of each two prisoners were tied together with wire. At the brick works they again had to lie face down. The executioners stepped on the bodies of the condemned, illuminated their necks with flashlights and dispatched them with a bullet. This process lasted until there were no ethnic Germans left alive. The murdered were covered with lime.

A young man from Ruma was also shot in the neck but not dead, only unconscious. After the murderers left the scene he recovered consciousness and being on the top layer of the dead, was able to free himself. In spite of his wound he could flee into a cornfield and make his way across the border to Hungary.

Slavonia

Originally, the community of Walpach/Valpovo had a German population of about 400. The death camp was set up in May 1945 to house the ethnic Germans of Slavonia. It closed in May, 1946. About 3,000 inmates were crowded together and 1,000-2,000 perished during the 12 month period, mainly due to typhus and dysentery.

The barracks, surrounded by barbed wire, had no window panes and were boarded up. There was no electricity nor heating. Those who could not find a place inside had to sleep out in the open, in all weather conditions. The courtyard was often a mud patch; leaking roofs also soaked the people inside.

Inmates had to report for work at 6 am, most had only torn clothing, their feet wrapped in rags or even barefoot. The meager food rations consisted of leaf tea for breakfast, a watery soup for lunch and in the evening again soup with some occasional left over potato or bean peels. The daily ration of coarse corn bread was 100-150 grams. No fat nor salt. As an unusual twist, at times people over 60 received a ration of sugar. Ten days later hundreds died. It was probably poisoned.

Typhus and dysentery raged and the highest daily death rate reached up to 32. It was only in April 1946 when barrels of DDT powder arrived from the USA that the epidemics started to decline.

On July 22, 1945 an attempt was made to expel 1,800 inmates to Austria. However, the British occupation authorities refused to accept them and they had to be returned to the Valpova and Kerndia camps.

Chapter 5

Central Civilian Internment and Labor Camps

Overview

The internment of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia in central civilian labor camps began October 1944; the internment of the Gottscheer and German Untersteirer took place at the end of the war. By August 1945, all communities of Yugoslavia were cleansed of their ethnic German inhabitants. Only Germans married to other nationalities or the few that had joined the partisans, were spared from confiscation of property and internment.

In their process of the complete annihilation of Yugoslavia's ethnic Germans, the Communists established three types of camps: work camps, central civilian camps and "special camps." The latter served as liquidation camps for those unable to work.

In July and August 1945, the central camps and work camps reached their maximum capacity of about 120,000 civilian internees, of which over 100,000 came from the Banat and Batschka. They consisted mainly of marginally able-bodied men and women.

There were ten central camps in the Banat, nine in the Batschka and one in Syrmia and about 200 work camps under the jurisdiction of the central camps. Almost each community with more than 200-300 German inhabitants maintained a work camp, consisting mostly of empty, pillaged German houses. The situation was somewhat different in Slavonia, therefore central, work and extermination camps of this region are presented together.

The central camps were set up primarily in existing barracks or former factories. Some were filled with several thousand internees in cramped facilities. These camps served, particularly in the Banat, during the "bloody autumn 1944" as the partisans' torture and execution stations.

The central camps allocated laborers to its work camps. The food provided for the forced laborers was usually completely insufficient. Starting in spring 1946 Slavs and Magyars could "buy" laborers for a day, month or longer periods (payable to the camps commander; the prisoners did not receive any remuneration). For those lucky ones, it was often a life-saving opportunity. The condition in the central camps often resembled those in the liquidation camps. This is borne out by the fact that about 12,000 men and women, mostly of able-bodied age, perished between the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1948.

Central Camps in the Banat

Milchhalle at Gross-Kikinda/Kikinda Already by the middle of October 1944, immediately after the take-over by the Russians and partisans, it became a torture and murder camp for over 1,000 defenseless civilians. Subsequently, it was the central camp for the northern part of the Banat until the end of 1946.

Alte Mühle at Gross-Betschkerek/Zrenjanin It was probably the most gruesome execution camp for the Germans during the bloody autumn 1944 and then used as a central camp until May 1947.

Stoikowitch-Telep at Werschetz/Vrsac The town Werschetz, in the South-Banat was also notorious for the murders committed there. After the killing-orgies of the "bloody autumn 1944" came to an end, it served as a central camp.

Stockhaus at Weisskirchen/Bela Crkva This building too, was used for the torture and executions of hundreds of victims before it was transformed into a Southeast central camp of the Banat.

Schuschara/Susara On December 24, 1944, the whole village was declared a central camp for the German civilians of the surrounding area. For a time, children, old and ill civilians were housed there as well. It existed until spring 1947.

Karlsdorf/Banatski Karlovac Established April 27, 1945; it also contained children and old people until October 1945, when they were transferred to the liquidation camp Rudolfsgnad. At Karlsdorf 1,000 occupants, including 400 documented by name, died of starvation.

Fischplatz at Pantschowa/Pancevo This camp was established November 1944 and dissolved February 22, 1948. The conditions in the overcrowded barracks were horrible and led to diseases and epidemics. The commander, a cruel female named Radojka, indulged in torturing the defenseless victims.

Banat-Brestowatz/Banatski Brestovac November 1944 - early 1948. This camp contained, among many others, several thousand inhabitants of the city of Pantschowa, unable to work, until October 1945, when they were shipped to the liquidation camp Rudolfsgnad.

Seidenfabrik at Kubin/Kovin Towards the end of 1944, after termination of the murderous "Aktion Intelligenzija," this silk spinning mill was made into the central camp for the surrounding communities. It contained about 600 detainees.

Mramorak By the end of April 1945, all those inhabitants of Mramorak not yet interned, were put into several houses, together with children, ill and old people from the surrounding area. Beginning November 1945, they were all shipped to the liquidation camp Rudolfsgnad.

The Central Camps in the Batschka

Neusatz/Novi Sad Already in November 1944, the notorious central camp Neusatz was the first of its kind established on the swampy banks of the Danube River in the South-Batschka.

Initially it contained able-bodied men and women from the South Batschka region. After additional central camps were created, it became the main "trading center" for this modern slave-trade and engaged in a continuous exchange of inmates with other central and liquidation camps. The sick ones were shipped to the liquidation camps

and exchanged for still somehow usable workers. From here, many were selected for the deportation to Russia at Christmas 1944.

Even though the camp had a steady occupation of 2,000, it consisted only of two windowless barracks and a notorious "bunker" of six square meters. For even the slightest trespass, inmates were thrown into the waterlogged structure. For many the long ordeal of standing in the water was fatal.

The numerous mistreatments and murders without court proceedings, even though the war was over, induced Dr. Wilhelm Neuner, formerly Oberlandesgericht Präsident (equivalent to president of a state appeals court) and also internee at the camp, to send written complaints to the ministry of the interior at Belgrade. These complaints were secretly smuggled out of the camp. For his courageous actions he was locked into the "bunker." He then was passed from camp to camp, but continued his written complaints and was eventually expelled to Hungary. The camp is said to have been closed during the last days of March 1948, when its occupancy was down to about 400. There are no records of how many of the inmates perished.

Palanka/Backa Palanka The central camp Palanka was set up in November 1944, containing 14-15 year old boys and 60-70 year old, able-bodied men from its surrounding area. Eventually it grew to an average of 600 internees.

Sombor The town of Sombor, as already mentioned in a previous chapter, turned out to be the "turn-table" for the persecution, internment and murder of the Germans in the West-Batschka. It was established in November 1944 and also had jurisdiction of the central camps Hodschag, Apatin and Filipowa.

Thousands of ethnic Germans were stuffed into the lice-infested barracks, often mistreated, insufficiently fed and forced to work weekdays as well as Sundays. Whoever became sick was immediately sent to the death-camp Gakowa which was established on March 12, 1945. The first camp commander was Rajko, the second one Dusan Kurepa. Both were cruel sadists, the second one even worse; he personally committed at least thirteen murders. He sent for his victims, nearly beat them to death and then cut their throat. The camp was one of the last to be closed sometime in March 1948.

Apatin This town was originally inhabited by 12,000 Germans. During the winter the local camp, under the overall jurisdiction of Sombor, suffered from starvation. The camp commander, Mito Volic was particularly cruel. His deputy, Milivoj Beljanski from Sombor took girls from the camp into his apartment and raped them. Later he was demoted and dismissed. His successor tied women to trees, whipped them until they became unconscious and threw them naked into the cellar. His specialty was to electrify naked women's breasts and genitals.

Hodschag/Odzaci This camp too, fulfilled its purpose, particularly in the investigation and persecution of members of the "Kulturbund" (cultural society). Those arrested were never seen again.

Filipowa/Backi Gracac Because the liquidation camps Gakowa and Kruschiwl were overflowing by mid-1945, this camp was opened between mid-June to mid-October

1945 for able-bodied, as well as those unable to work, of the Hodschag area. In this short time about 250 perished due to starvation and epidemic diseases. By about October 1945, about 2,000 had died of starvation at Gakowa and since there were now openings those unable to work at Filipowa were shipped to Gakowa.

Seidenfabrik at Werbass/Vrbas Towards the end of 1945 this former silk factory was established as a central camp for the Germans of the Middle-Batschka. It also had jurisdiction over the relatively large work camps at Tschervenska, Kula and Weprowatz. The conditions there were worse than in a prison. Since there was no more work to be done in the fields as of December 1946, the camp commander made the inmates stand in formation from 5 to 11 o'clock during the bitter cold winter mornings. Then he let them sit till evening in the court yard. The camp was most likely dissolved the beginning of 1948.

Sekitsch/Lovcenac This used to be an entirely German community at the eastern edge of the German settlements and in January 1945 was transformed into a central camp for about 6,000 Germans. In October 1945 it was reduced to 1,500 inmates and was functioning as a work camp. Most of the rest were taken to the liquidation camps of Gakowa and Kruschowl at about the time their inmates were dying in great numbers. Before they were shipped they were searched once more and deprived of their last miserable belongings. They even had to exchange any still somewhat useful clothing they wore for torn rags.

Stärkefabrik at Subotica This former starch factory was most likely converted into a central forced labor camp by the middle of November 1944. The 4,000 inmates were mostly Germans who earlier had fled to Hungary but tried to return to their homes after cessation of the war. Upon crossing the border from Hungary they were immediately robbed of all their belongings. According to reports, devastating typhus epidemics raged throughout the camp. It was most likely dissolved in January 1948.

Central Camps in Syrmia

Kalvaria at Semlin/Zemun After the murderous stations in the villages India and Ruma were transformed into work camps, the central camp established on the Kalvarienberg (Kalvarien mountain) was apparently the only one of this kind. According to Hans Volk, it was a barracks area 100m x 200m, fenced in by high barbed wire. The inmates were Germans from the town of Semlin and the few Germans that did not flee from the eastern part of Syrmia. They had to sleep on bare wooden cots and forced to perform hard labor from 3 a.m. till late at night. They were repeatedly and mercilessly beaten. The food was hardly any better than in the death camps. In the morning watery soup with some ground corn (maize), at noon soup with a few rotten potatoes or wormy peas and evenings whatever was left over from noon, with a slice of corn bread, without fat or salt - the same fare as in other camps. The central camp Semlin was evacuated in August/September 1945. As Hans Volk recalled, there were only about 150 men and 60 women that survived. These were shipped to the work camp in the nearby Beschania and in November 1945 after this one was also shut down, transferred to the death camp Mitrowitz.

Hans Volk was present when, on April 12, 1945, 660 men from the Kalvarienberg camp were picked to repair the railroad line Belgrad-Slawonisch Brod. This notorious

construction probably lasted till May 16, 1945, about five weeks (including travel time to and from the construction sites). The food supply was completely inadequate and the work period punctuated by almost incredible killing episodes.

Here are some excerpts from Hans Volk's eye-witness report: "Daily several people passed away; on the way to Slakovci twelve sick were sorted out, shot and buried. When we moved on towards Semlin and arrived there on May 25, 112 out of 660 men were already dead and 20 more died during the following 2 days."

Georg König, another eye-witness from Filipowa commenting on the fate of an 82-year old who could no longer walk well: "The partisans grabbed him, threw him into a lime pit where he burned, still being alive. Whoever could no longer walk was thrown into the ditch and beaten to death. About 20 men broke down, and were brutally beaten with carbines. I had to cover the graves of the dead and still alive, stomp on them and listen to the moaning of the ones still alive. The two partisans then agreed that the sick and weak should be beaten to death. Thus, about 8 o'clock in the morning of May 2, 17 men were beaten to death with axes. From 480 men there were only 120 still alive. While we were 480 on April 20, only 71 were left on May 8."

Chapter 6

Deportation of Laborers to the Soviet Union

Stalin Demanding Deportations in Violation of Human Rights

In late fall of 1944, Stalin demanded from Romania and the territories of Hungary and Yugoslavia which it had occupied at that time, to make available German laborers for the reconstruction of Russian areas destroyed during the war. The process started at Christmas 1944 even though it was only during the Jalta Conference, February 4-11, 1945 that Stalin obtained the approval of the Western Powers to receive from Germany a portion of its allocated war reparations in the form of labor. This agreement by the Allies to the "fait accompli" gave Stalin a quasi-legal base for the German "reparation slaves" from the Southeast European nations, even though this act was a human rights violation.

The military administration of the partisans made available to the Russians at least 12,000 Danube Swabian civilians from the West Banat and Batschka (8,000 women and 4,000 men) who were forcibly shipped to the mining and industrial areas in the Ukraine. The women were between 18-40 and the men between 16-50 years of age. There were at least 8 trains, 4 from the Batschka and 4 from the Banat and each had up to 45 freight cars which were stuffed with up to 45 persons to a car. These transports, routed via Romania, took place during frigid winter weather and lasted about three weeks.

The Agony of Farewells and Brutality of the Transports

It was during the Christmas days of 1944 that the ones selected by Russian doctors had to leave all their loved ones, spouses, children, relatives and friends. They were forced to march with their baggage, often long distances and under strict military escort, to the collection railway stations. The uncertainty of their own future was only matched by the anxiety about the loved ones left behind. During frigid temperatures the work slaves were shipped in cattle cars that were locked from the outside. There was no space for movement, ability to sleep only in a sitting position and running the risk of freezing to death while asleep. Food supplies were almost non-existent and people had to survive on what little they could bring along. The lack of water was particularly painful since it was often withheld for sheer sadistic reasons. In the crowded space and absence of all hygienic facilities, bodily functions could only be taken care of with greatest difficulties. In addition, they had to suffer the mental and emotional anxiety of not knowing where they were going and when this trip was going to end. The first casualties occurred already during the three-week trip.

Catastrophic Accommodations and Difficult Working Conditions

In Russia, initially the tightly guarded billets often had neither windows nor doors. The premises were fenced in by barbed wire. Considering the notorious Russian winters, heating material was inadequate and often completely lacking, hygienic facilities insufficient, no warm water for washing and toilet facilities catastrophic. Epidemics and infestations started to erupt.

The food supply consisted almost entirely of lumpy, sour-tasting and hardly digestible bread as well as cabbage or flour soup without any meat or fat. The food had to be picked up from kitchens that were up to 3 km away. The dishes consisted of rusty tin cans. Sometimes they were forced to exchange good clothing against torn and lice-infested military garb.

Extremely hard work had to be performed under all weather conditions. The work targets were usually set much too high. While bread rations were adjusted to the work requirement, they were still insufficient. In addition to the heavy work load, the long distance to the work stations entailed long arduous marches, even during snow storms. The women too had to perform hard labor, many of them below ground, down deep in the coal pits. Twelve hours and more daily, including Sundays were mandatory, in winter at minus 40 degrees Celsius (40°F) in wet and torn clothing.

The High Mortality Rate of Humans at Their Best Age

Even though Danube Swabian men and women were used to hard physical work, many could not endure the working conditions in the mines and at the railroad and construction sites. Undernourishment, humidity, rain, cold, excessive work hours and the excessively long distance marches led to the total exhaustion of many. Men in particular, who had to work the hardest, soon suffered from dystrophy. The additional insecurity of ones' own fate which often turned into hopelessness, homesickness, longing for the loved ones at home and anxiety about their well being, soon led to the great mortality rate.

The slave labor in the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of life of at least 2,000 Danube Swabians. That is about 17 percent, including 1,100 men and 900 women. For those who were able to survive, the term of the slave labor lasted up to five years.

The first repatriation of the very sick and unable to work started towards the end of 1945. At that time, many had already died. One of the first repatriation trains went to Yugoslavia where the returnees were promptly put into camps, most of them into the death camps.

It was only during the last two years of their stay in Russia, 1948 and 1949 that the conditions improved. Food was adequate and working conditions more bearable. At the end of 1949 the Russians dissolved the camps and shipped the deported to Frankfurt an der Oder, in East Germany. The last to leave had spent five years of hardship in the "workers' paradise."

Upon Their Return, the Bitter Truth

After their arrival in Germany, the discharged slave workers had to learn that they could not return to their homeland and that their dependents, their children, parents and grandparents suffered a fate worse than their own. Bit by bit they found out who of their family and relatives did not survive the genocide perpetrated by the Tito regime. Almost all temporarily orphaned children were shipped to unknown children homes and unknown locations in Yugoslavia. It was many years before they could be located and reunited with the help of the Red Cross. Many of the younger ones no

longer recognized their parents and had partially or totally forgotten their mother tongue. Every third of the deported women had to find out that her husband was lost in the war and she stood alone in the world.

Almost all of the slave workers suffered from health problems. Many, after their return to Germany and confronted with the loss of their loved ones and their home, were overcome and passed away.

The survivors, particularly those who after their flight or expulsion, settled in Germany and **Austria** organized themselves into "hometown societies." These societies compiled rather exact statistical documentations of the fate of their former communities and inhabitants. Knowledgeable observers determined that the life span of surviving slave workers was much shorter in comparison to those who did not suffer those hardships.

Josef Purr from Parabutsch, a First Person Report

"We all, men 18-45, women 18-35, had to report to the town hall. From there we went to the Helleis Inn. Only pregnant women were excused. No consideration was given to mothers with small children. We were told we are being sent to work for one month and to bring our own food for that time. After being held for three days we, 57 persons, were chased to Hodschag, guarded by partisans. Youth is somewhat more optimistic and we celebrated New Year's Eve with the youths of Batch. When the light was turned off at midnight we wished one another a happy New Year. The 'happy' New Year came very quickly; we had to get ready for the trip. After marching for miles in the snow we suddenly had to turn around and go to the railroad station. They started loading us into freight cars. The next day, at Apatin, the loading was completed and the doors locked. One engine in front and one in the back in between over 30 cars, each crowded with 30-40 persons. More than 1,200 ethnic Germans began their trip into an uncertain fate. Nobody anticipated that over 400 would never return. We had some inkling that we were heading for Russia and we learned that several transports preceded us.

"The trip took us through Hungary and Romania. Every two days the doors were opened to get water. Only a few of us had bottles; washing was out of the question. We rubbed our hands and face with snow. Nearby fences were torn down for heating. After 19 days we reached our unknown destination, 13 km from Krasani Lutsch. The train stopped and we had to disembark. The camp consisted of stone buildings, windows were bricked shut and the only light consisted of small broken glass panes overhead as a skylight. Most of the double bunk beds still had to be constructed. We had to haul the wooden boards, which were frozen and snow covered, from the sawmills. Since we were weak from the long trip it took two persons to carry one board. There was no water since the pipes were destroyed. Day and night it had to be brought in a large tub by sled from the shed where the train engines were refilled. It took 16-20 men to pull the sled. The kitchen consisted of four bathtubs on pedestals and the fire underneath. For weeks the same menu was cooked: diced green tomatoes, cucumber or cabbage soup with four tablespoons of barley or millet gruel.

"After the speech at the shaft the Natschalnik ordered the 'instruments' to be brought up. I thought they were going to play music but the instruments were pickaxes and crowbars. With these 'instruments' we played for five years. The work below ground was very hard and dangerous. For this reason they attached us to groups of Russians, Polish or Ukrainian girls who were also forcefully conscripted. I still think often of Marusja who collected Machorka from her colleagues so we could have a smoking break. I also think of Njusa, who often gave me a piece of bread or milk, and of the old Russian who did not talk very much, bowed three times, made the sign of the cross, divided the cornmeal polenta and shared it with us. Later on we got some additional help. The Russian POWs (Prisoners of War) and displaced Russians returned from Germany. They were not sent to their homes, but again became slave laborers.

"Almost daily, accidents occurred in the shafts. One of the casualties was Heinrich Hirschberger who was killed by falling rocks. Because of the unsanitary living conditions we were all infested with lice. Therefore they shaved our heads, both men and women. During the autumn of 1945 typhus broke out in the camp and we were quarantined, the sick outside the camp. People died daily, including eight Parabutscher. After we returned to the camp we found that not only the dead but the living as well were robbed of their last few possessions. The culprits were not only the Russian camp personnel but our own fellow countrymen. There were enough informers who betrayed some of us to the political Kommisar. Those poor souls were then sent to penal or prisoner of war camps.

"In 1946 two transports of the sick were released; they were very ill or severely injured and unable to work. It was with sadness that we saw them departing and waving to us. The camp administration withheld a large portion of our wages, for the administration expenses of the camp. But we now could purchase, depending on our income, clothes, shoes and fabric. Throughout the year we were given the slogans 'Skoro domoi' (going home soon). However, we didn't believe it anymore.

"Finally, in November 1949 the day came. We didn't have to go to work anymore, and were allowed to do some necessary shopping since we could take care of our own travel provisions. Everybody had to be dressed properly since nobody could leave 'paradise' in rags. Streamers for the decoration of the freight trains were made proclaiming: 'We came as enemies, we return as friends.' We were asked if we didn't want to stay in the 'paradise' and were given many promises. As far as I know, nobody stayed. Finally, on November 23, our day of departure came. The trucks that normally carried coal took us and our wooden suitcases to the Antrazit railroad station. Suddenly the Russian coal miners from the other shafts appeared to bid us farewell. Our trip took us via Warsaw to Frankfurt/Oder in East Germany. Here we were again inundated with Socialist slogans. We were apprehensive as to what we were going to encounter in the West. We had our fill of Socialism.

"We continued to the camp at Gronefelde. We were really surprised when we were finally free. At our final destination at the camp at Ulm (West Germany) a priest welcomed us with a short prayer."

(This first person report was extracted from the documentation series *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*, Volume II, München/Sindelfingen 1991, published by the Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, München, pages 961-963.)

Chapter 7

The Liquidation Camps

Until the publication of the Leidensweg documentation there had been no systematic description of the death camps which were an essential instrument for the execution of the premeditated genocide of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia.

The condensed descriptions on these pages are based on the incidents in the death camps as published for the first time in 1995 in volume III of the documentation *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien* respectively in the *Weissbuch der Deutschen aus Jugoslawien*. (The Tragedy of the Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia). They are the depositions of first person experiences of the survivors of the death camps. Most of the original reports are located at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz (German Federal Archives at Koblenz).

Eight Liquidation Camps

In addition to the numerous local work camps and central camps the Titoregime established a third category, "special camps." In the Batschka, they consisted of the entire villages Jarek, Gakowa and Kruschiwl. They were already established during the end-phases of the war. In the Banat too, entire villages such as Rudolfsgnad and Molidorf were designated as "special camps." For the relatively few Germans that did not flee from Syrmia, the silk factory at Mitrowitz was converted into the notorious liquidation camp, whereas in Slavonia, sections of the villages Kerndia and Valpovo were fenced in and made into death camps. The first liquidation camp was established on December 2, 1944 at Jarek and the last, Rudolfsgnad, was closed in March 1948.

Conditions at the Death Camps

The following examples are typical of the conditions in all liquidation camps. The inmates of the liquidation camps were usually those unable to work, people over 60, the infirm, children up to 14 years of age and mothers with children below two years old. These were usually already separated from the able bodied at their home communities. The heart-rending scenes at these sites are described by the survivors in the depositions. We just want to mention here that all children over age two were literally torn from their mothers or relatives.

The mentioned villages in the Batschka and Banat which served as liquidation camps consisted of several hundred homes and were not fenced in, presumably because there was not enough barbed wire available. Therefore, they were closely guarded around the clock by the partisans or militia. The sentries were positioned every 100 meters. Leaving the camp was prohibited under penalty of death. The houses, built closely together as originally laid out by the Pannonian plans, had closed-in yards but no front yards which made it possible to imprison the people in the houses as well. The houses, already completely ransacked, were, depending on room-sizes, crowded with 15 to 20 occupants per unheated room or stable. As a rule, occupants had to sleep on the bare floor, often without even any straw or blankets. During daytime they also had to stay indoors. Due to the insufficient hygienic and sanitary

conditions, they were defenseless against the flees and lice, brought along by the soldiers, which was particularly painful for the older people.

Food was scarce and often withheld for days. When available, it consisted mainly of ground-up corn or flour soup, barley or pea soup, but without any salt or fat and a little coarse corn bread. It is noteworthy that the executive committee of the people's assembly of the autonomous province Wojwodina decreed in December 1945 that the bread for all camp inmates had to be made of corn flour without any wheat flour added.

Since no food was delivered to the camps until mid-1946 and the attempted begging trips by children and mothers with babies to the neighboring villages of the Magyars and Slavs was severely restricted, the predestined annihilation by starvation of the inmates proved to be very effective. The death tolls increased rapidly.

Initially, the camp management made no efforts to provide any medical service. The one or two Danube Swabian physicians among the internees in the various camps had no medications with which to treat the sick and feeble. Personal hygienic and sanitary facilities were utterly insufficient for the overcrowded camps. Starvation diets, dystrophy and lack of vitamins weakened all to diseases. Consequently, by late autumn 1945, malaria, typhus, dysentery, etc. reached epidemic proportions. The buildings which contained the sick became death houses. The winter months of 1945/46 were the worst in the liquidation camps, the last of which existed until March 1948.

The facilities in which the internees were contained had no heat even during the frigid winter months of 1945/46. The use of any kind of fuel such as wooden fences or empty sheds was prohibited. No blankets were provided and their only protection against the bitter cold was the clothing they wore or the few covers some were able to bring along. It was not until the spring of 1946 when DDT powder was shipped from the USA that the lice problem could be contained and the death rate drastically reduced. The use of DDT powder, however, was only decided when the partisan guards were about to contract the diseases and a countrywide epidemic envisaged. A further improvement of the conditions took place when the partisan guards were replaced by the militia or regular military.

The burial of the poor deceased was miserable and undignified as was their suffering and dying. When disposing of them to the mass graves they were roughly thrown onto wagons like dead cattle. The farewell by the still living family members was indescribably painful. As a rule there was no clerical assistance and relatives were not even allowed to attend the burial. The dead were thrown, usually naked (as ordered by the camp management) into the pits.

Between the autumn of 1946 and autumn 1947, the guarding of the camps was relaxed - apparently intentionally and due to political considerations. Thus about 30,000 to 35,000 were able to escape to Hungary or Romania and from there to Austria and Germany. Considering the number of escapees, the year 1947 can be considered as the peak escape year.

The two Slovenian liquidation camps Sterntal and Tüchern, as well as the two Croatian camps Kerndia and Valpovo, were dissolved one year after the end of the war. What was left of the inmates was expelled to Austria or to the Wojwodina. The camp Jarek in the Wojwodina was also closed one year after the war ended and the inmates transferred to Kruschiwl; Syrmian Mitrowitz and Molidorf, two years after the war and the internees of Molidorf were sent to Rudolfsgnad. Kruschiwl and Gakowa closed after about 2½ years (beginning January 1948) and their inmates sent to Rudolfsgnad - the largest liquidation camp, was also the last to close, March 1, 1948. Three years after the war ended all camps were officially dissolved. At Rudolfsgnad, the remaining Germans were forced into mandatory three-year "work contracts" outside their own home communities.

The Camp Victims - Horror Balance Sheet

Based on thorough research presented by Mr. Karl Weber in volume IV of the named documentations, the extent of the perished victims in the liquidation camps, including the work camps and central civilian internment camps are illustrated on Table 1

These are low, conservative figures. They are based on the investigations and compilations by the communities which, after their flight and after the war, settled in their new home countries. Since up to 70% of the victims could be accounted for by name and are documented in volume IV of the before-mentioned series, the averages of the casualties could be calculated. They are very reliable figures. These somber numbers confirm the fact that 90% of the victims lost their lives long after World War II had ended.

The physical and mental anguish which the victims had to endure up to their death cannot be adequately expressed in words or print. The mass graves were purposely made unidentifiable. Only in the late 1990's some half-hearted efforts were made to make the mass graves at Rudolfsgnad/Knicanin in the republic of Yugoslavia and those at Kerndia in what's today Croatia visible by markers.

For the general public, up to this day, the genocide of the ethnic German citizens of the former Yugoslavia has remained a "non-event." Nor have any of the murderers, several of whom are still alive today, been charged in any courts.

Expulsion and Transfer to the Liquidation Camps

"Austreibung" (expulsion) is the term used by the Danube Swabians for their permanent deportation from their homes and the complete removal of the ethnic German inhabitants of the German villages. The usual "modus operandi" was as follows:

Partisan commandos secretly encircled the community and suddenly, beginning at one end of the village, began to chase the unsuspecting and unprepared inhabitants from their homes. They were chased to the village pasture at the edge of town where three to four thousand villagers were awaiting their screening: The separation of the able-bodied from those destined for the death camp. If a child was two years old or less, both mother and child went to the death camp. But if the child was three years old, it was torn from the mother and shoved to a grandmother or other relatives or

neighbors. The mother went to the work camp, the three-year old or older child with the transport to the liquidation camp. Many a mother tried to smuggle herself over to her children.

The following description of the expulsion in Filipowa is a typical example of what happened in hundreds of villages.

On March 31, 1945, the village of Filipowa in the Batschka, after having been settled 182 years ago, ceased to exist as a Danube Swabian community. Rita Prost-Pertschy, in her book *Das Heimweh der Simon Rita* (The Homesickness of Simon Rita) describes her expulsion experience as a ten-year old:

"Saturday before Easter (March 31, 1945), the women were baking for the Easter holiday when they heard loud cries and sobbing from the street. To their horror they saw people being chased from their homes at the lower end of the village. Hastily my mother made me put on several layers of clothing and my sister's new coat. Then we collected food in a blanket, but it was too heavy for me, so I threw half away and ran into the house to find lighter items. When I got into the courtyard, the partisans were already in front of the gate. They shouted 'Napolje! Brze, brze!' We did not understand those words, however, when they started beating us with their rifles, we knew it was a situation of survival. They were beating mother, but she did not hurt too much since she wore several dresses.

"A long line of people was moving past our house and we were shoved into the line. We now realized we had to leave our home forever. The women cried and prayed to God. The partisans chased us like cattle from the village to the pasture. There people were lying crowded together like a herd of animals. Here we spent the first day.

"At daybreak they took every second woman and chased her into a house. When the women came out again, crying, they no longer had their bundle and no more jewelry. Also part of their clothing was removed. We met our aunt; she only had the empty baby buggy left. She had to put the baby into it without any bedding. When night came we had to search for a place to sleep. The partisans chased a group of 20 to 25 people into the court yard of a house where we had to sleep in the open. The next day it started all over. Back to the street. People were robbed again of everything they had. This continued for three days and nights. We were sitting on our bundles in the dust and dirt and found out that people were even shot. (In Filipowa two men and a woman were shot.) I shall never forget these days, full of tears and sorrow. However, sometimes they were also full of hope, when we were told we could go home tomorrow.

"The nights were particularly difficult. The children cried because they were hungry and freezing. Dogs were barking all night, being hungry and left alone in the houses. A few days later they were all shot. During the night you could hear the women crying and praying. While we were still under the stars of our homeland and the wind was still the same; however everything else had changed. I was particularly sad during the nights. I was longing for my father and sisters. We did not know where they were.

"On the last day when the plundering started again, it was my mother's turn. The partisans dragged her from the column and into a room. When I wanted to hold on to

her I was slapped in the face. I felt no pain since my fear for her was greater. I was happy when I saw her emerge alive. But this joy did not last long. Mother was ash-pale and her body shook. When she wanted to say something to me, blood streamed out of her mouth. Blood also dripped from her ears. Her gold-covered teeth were broken out and the earrings torn from her ears....

"The next day started with a murder in front of our eyes. At daybreak we were chased to the railroad station. In front of us walked a man who continually laughed. I could not understand this. Our situation was anything but laughable. He wanted to join our row. When one of the partisans saw this, he came to us in a rage and shouted at the man, who continued laughing. The partisan beat him with his rifle butt, however, the man continued laughing. His wife tried to pull him back, but then the rifle cracked and the man sank to his knees. The blood spurted in a high ark out of his body and his face turned pale. But his mouth continued to laugh. At that moment, I developed a fright of uniforms and weapons which will stay with me for life. The women had to dig a hole right then and there into which he was dumped, his body still warm.

"We were thinking of Easter, but it was not a time to think about celebration. We were stuffed into cattle cars. The partisans did not care whether families stayed together. The cars were sticky from the wet straw on which hundreds were shipped days before, going in the same direction. We were crowded with no place to lie down. When the train started moving, I was glad the doors were shut... We did not know where this trip would take us. But we sensed we were going farther and farther away from our homes. When, after many hours of torture the doors were opened we saw that we were shipped to the Gakowa liquidation camp."

Camp Molidorf/Molin (Banat)

Established: September 1945 for the ethnic Germans of the North and Middle Banat

Original size of community: 1,200

Number of internees: 5,000 - 7,000

Duration of camp: September 1945 - April 1947 (20 months)

Casualties: about 3,000 (2,012 documented by name)

Main causes of death: starvation, typhus, malaria

Overview: The ethnic Germans of Molidorf had to endure the revenge of the local partisan chiefs even before the establishment of the death camp. In addition to the looting by the Red Army, partisans and particularly the residents of the surrounding Serbian communities, they immediately began with the arrests and torture of ethnic German men and the rape of women. Mayor Georg Haverkorn and four men were brutally beaten to death. At Christmas 1945, 58 women and 8 men were deported to Russia.

Between September and November 1945 the Yugoslav authorities began cleansing some 20 local work camps of men and women unfit for work, children and mothers with small children were herded in long marching columns into the Molidorf death camp. The community, which originally had only 1,200 inhabitants, was stuffed with 5,000 - 7,000 occupants.

The camp administration often withheld food for days. Breakfast usually consisted of boiled water with ground corn, no fat nor salt. Lunch was always pea soup, also without fat or salt. Dinner consisted of 150 grams corn bread, no fat. The hunger drove the inmates to catch and eat the cats in the village and, during the nights, to make their way into the neighboring villages, e.g. Torda and Hungarian Zerne to beg for food. Whoever was caught by the partisans was either brutally tortured or immediately executed. The latter fate was suffered by two mothers with children.

In addition to the starvation and scurvy, the infestation with lice led to the demise of many inmates. The end came always the same way: the feet began to swell, then the face and after a few days, death.

The ones able to work were separated from the unfit and had to perform hard labor, day or night. Whenever the church bells rang they had to report for work. The shifts often lasted up to 20 hours. They also had to carry all the wood, corn flour for bread and the entire provisions for the camp from the railroad stations of the neighboring communities. Many had to carry loads of up to 30 kilos, with insufficient clothing and bad shoes along snowy and icy roads. They were slave caravans. Whenever somebody broke down, which happened frequently, sympathetic men or women who wanted to come to their help were beaten with rifle butts and brutally mistreated.

Camp inmates had to suffer not only from starvation and lack of other necessities, but also from continual torture and mistreatments. These mistreatments were carried out not only by the camp commander and the guards but also by Serbs who came into the camp and picked out their victims. In one instance, Marianne Haberkorn, received repeated bloody beatings by her former farmhand who shouted: "Now we subordinates are the masters."

The camp commander was a sadist. Here is an example of his sadistic actions: On February 18, 1946 at five in the morning he chased thirty women, without any reason, into a water ditch where they had to remain for half an hour in the icy water and mud. Then they were chased to work, in their dripping clothing. They were given no food and after work, at about 17:30, they were chased back. Three of the women were so weak they collapsed. The first two were left where they fell and died the same night. The third was able to drag herself into the village. The first two women were 25 and 27 years old and left behind three small children. Seven other women became seriously ill.

According to statements of Dr. Jenő Heger, himself an internee who was allowed to function as camp physician between January 1 and February 22, 1946, the health condition of the inmates was extremely bad. There were no sanitary installations, people had no soap or other cleaning materials to keep themselves clean. Rashes and other skin diseases were widespread. Among the infectious diseases, particularly typhus has to be mentioned, since it spread rapidly because of the weak body resistance of the inmates. During his position as camp physician, the daily mortality rate was between six and seven.

In view of the hopelessness of their situation and the inhuman torment, more and more inmates risked their escape to Romania. During one such attempt a young woman from Kesic was killed. Since Dr. Heger could no longer tolerate the barbaric

punishment of women and the reckless use of fire arms by the camp commander, he filed a complaint against him and also fled to Romania.

Dr. Steiner, from Zerne, who temporarily functioned as camp physician tried to help the sick but his possibilities were very limited. The only medications available were some aspirin, quinine, carbon dust against diarrhea and a skin cream against skin diseases. Cold compresses were the general treatment against all diseases.

There were no mass graves at Molidorf. Twenty four old men, designated as grave diggers, had to dig, in addition to the graves required during the day, additional holes as a reserve for the next day. The dead were sewn into old blankets and buried without any ceremony.

Taking Dr. Heger's daily mortality figures as a base, the extended number of the casualties for 20 months would be about 4,000. Mr. Karl Weber's estimate of 3,000, is also within the same proximity. Two thousand and twelve are documented by name in volume IV of the documentation series Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien.

At the end of April 1947 the partisans dissolved the Molidorf liquidation camp and transported the inmates to the camp Gakowa in the Batschka. Only about 300 younger inmates who were still able to work, in spite of all the mistreatments, were retained and used for agricultural work in the Molidorf area.

This place of horror was totally destroyed by a flood during 1955 and 1956 as if nature wanted to extinguish all memories of it.

Camp Rudolfsgnad/Knicanin (Banat)

Established: October 10, 1945 for unfit for work ethnic Germans, particularly of the Middle and South Banat.

Original size of the town of Rudolfsgnad: 3,200

Number of internees, average: 17,200 average (maximum: 20,500)

Duration of camp: October 10, 1945 to mid-March 1948 (29 months)

Casualties: about 11,000 (7,767 documented by name)

Main causes of death: starvation, typhus, malaria

Overview: The large "special camp" Rudolfsgnad was located at the edge of the ethnic German settlement area of the Banat. Traffic-wise it was well-situated and easy to control since it was positioned at the point where the River Theiss flows into the Danube. Of the town's 3,200 inhabitants, 900 did not flee.

Before all the camps in Yugoslavia were officially dissolved, all their remaining inmates were transferred to Rudolfsgnad. There all remaining ethnic Germans were conscripted into 3-year "work contracts," mostly serving in areas outside their home territories, e.g. the mines of Serbia and Kosovo and the marsh areas of Baranja, Batschka and around Pantschowa.

The health conditions, illnesses, treatments and mortality statistics were well documented by Dr. K.F. Of all the camps, Rudolfsgnad had the highest mortality rate with 11,000 deaths.

Immediately after its occupation, Rudolfsgnad experienced the fury of the persecution. Responsible were the commanders Rado Perz of Perles and Lazo Milenkovic of Tschenta. Under their command, on October 16, the Danube Swabians Jakob Werth, Franz Hess, Franz Metz and Michael Wacker were tortured, shot and hung from acacia trees. Johann Drumm, out of desperation, hung himself. Anton Karl, 78, was shot for no reason. Milenkovic wanted to execute all Rudolfsgnad men but was prevented from doing so by Russian officers.

On December 27, 1944, 47 girls and women as well as 20 men were deported to Russia as slave workers. On April 14, after the village was completely ransacked, the Rudolfsgnad inhabitants had to leave their houses. All the women and children were concentrated in the school building and the men age 14 and up in the Kindergarten. The gypsy Gajo, also known by the names Arandjelski and Bocarac commanded the guards.

As of October 10, 1945 the Tito regime interned thousands of ethnic German civilians, predominantly senior citizens, women with children and children whose mothers were shipped to Russia and concentrated them in the now empty houses. The camp was guarded by about 80 armed militia.

The arrivals, dressed with only minimal clothing were crammed into the empty houses, usually 20-30 to a room. They had no blankets and were forced to lie on the floor which was only barely covered with straw. During the entire period of the camp's existence and up to its dissolution in March 1948, the straw was never changed nor replaced.

Nourishment consisted of ground corn soup, polenta (corn) mash, corn bread and tea, no salt. Even babies and feeding mothers received nothing else or any additional rations. Initially, the usual camp soup was ladled out but already in the winter 1945 and 1946 it was given out scarcely and the inmates received only about 2 kgs raw ground corn per month. Soon there were no more wooden fences, barns or fruit trees left. The inmates had to cook their own meager rations which they tried to augment by adding edible grasses or clover to fill their empty stomachs. They gulped down anything they could get their hands on.

Klara Deutsch, at that time only 13 years old, records: "People became blind or insane because of starvation, or they just lied down, went into a stupor for a few days until they fell asleep for good. The worst off were the ones that became insane. They screamed day and night; many walked around aimlessly, could not find their way home and died in the street."

Stray cats and dogs were butchered, even dead ones were eaten. The sufferings from diarrhea are indescribable; they drained the last strength from their bodies and also led to other diseases. Once hit by diarrhea or dysentery, there was rarely a recovery. That winter thousands died.

These conditions forced people to desperate attempts to slip out of the camp and beg for food in the surrounding villages, inhabited by other nationalities. The Catholic priest Johann Nuspl, formerly priest at Tscheb in the Batschka, remembers that during one of these begging trips four women and five children were shot by the guards. The ones caught were usually locked into the cellar, called the "bunker," received almost no food but instead fierce beatings which some did not survive.

Cooking in the camp's kitchen resumed in spring 1946 and was considered a luxury not known for many months. The soup consisting of peas and barley was, for those who survived this terrible winter, the essence of delicacy. Beginning 1947 the food rations were somewhat improved; however, the emaciated inmates hardly noticeable. As of May the restrictions on receiving packages was eased for the Serbs and non-camp internees. Also, many who had related or acquainted Serbs could occasionally benefit from these relaxed restrictions. The CARE program and the International Red Cross relief actions were supplying some camps. Now even packages from America arrived, sent by relatives who learned of the misery at Rudolfsgnad, Father Nuspl reports.

Beginning May 1946 a "softer touch" in the elimination started at Rudolfsgnad as in other camps as well, apparently directed by higher authorities and due to political considerations. Now parcels could be shipped directly into the camp. The larger aid program, initiated by Peter Max Wagner and his Danube Swabian Aid Society of Brooklyn, started towards the end of 1946. The first phase of large-scale parcel shipments from the USA probably reached the camp around Christmas 1946.

Starting spring 1946, Serbs and Hungarians in the surrounding area could "lease" camp inmates for work, at a rate of 50 Dinars per head. The Germans were often shamelessly taken advantage of by their employers. Nevertheless, the inmates eagerly competed for this slave work since they received at least some food whereas there was almost nothing to eat within the camp. For many this outside work opportunity was a lifesaver. Also, starting in spring 1946 and particularly in 1947 many inmate workers took this opportunity to escape. At an opportune moment they would sneak away, searching a way to cross the border into Hungary or Romania. It was always a life threatening undertaking.

The heroic endeavors of the camp physicians and nurses, who themselves were internees, to fight against diseases and the epidemic were mostly in vain. The deplorable hygienic conditions, the meager rations, lacking salt and vitamins contributed to the spread of the epidemic. The physical and mental deterioration of the humans robbed them even of the strength to defend themselves against the infestations of lice, mice and rats that suddenly appeared in large numbers. Where the rats didn't find anything to eat they started to gnaw not only at the dead but also the defenseless living. The mortality rate reached its peak in February 1946.

Finally, the spread of the epidemic alarmed the authorities and a medical commission arrived to investigate. Quarantine was declared and the camp was sprayed with DDT powder. The group of physicians and nurses, risking infection themselves, worked selflessly to fight the epidemic and to save the humans. Nevertheless, many succumbed. In April 1946, after the epidemic was eradicated, the quarantine was

lifted and the camp received a "clinic" for adults, a "children clinic" and a "children home." There the food was somewhat better than in the camp.

The "homes for the aged" were virtual dying places. Father Johann Nuspl, a camp inmate himself, was allowed to visit the homes in Molidorf as well as Rudolfsgnad twice a week. He writes about his visits: "The sick and dying were lying on the floor which was covered with a thin layer of straw, tightly crammed together and separated only by some loosely placed tiles. Dirty bowls with rotten food leftovers, pots serving as spittoons, unwashed bed pans, dirty rags, etc. were scattered among the sick and dying; many in their own feces. This was the last chapter of our people's tragedy. I had never seen our people in such misery and downcasts as here, however, at the same time so heroic. Most of them died composed and God-devoted. I remember with awe and reverence the people in these homes."

The partisans' treatment of the ethnic German children is one of the saddest chapters in the chronicle of the Yugoslav liquidation and slave labor camps. One has to keep in mind that the initial occupants of the dying camps consisted of boys and girls under fourteen years of age.

Lorenz Baron, assistant to electrician Weissmann who had to install electric lighting in the so-called "children home" writes: "Upon entering the home one could hear a monotonous hum. It was the song of the children dying. Every room of the large building was full of defenseless, dying children. Not able to express any feelings myself, I climbed up the ladder and installed the fixtures. Some of the skeletons below me were still able to move somewhat and followed every move I made. Some then fell back, their gaze still focused on me - and were dead. Nobody showed any compassion, knowing that we ourselves could be the next to die."

During the summer of 1946 the authorities then began to allocate groups of children to government children homes in order to assimilate them as "good citizens" into the national fold.

The camp administration and militia, belonging to the camp guards, were housed in the town hall. Some followed their orders off and on, others, however, were very evil. Franz Apfel, fourteen years old, was caught going begging, beaten unconscious by the guards and, presumed dead, dumped into a manure pile. Regaining consciousness, he mustered all his strength to free himself and crawl to the next house where, with some help, he could get back to his family.

Leaving the camp was strictly forbidden. Dr. K. F. recorded eleven executions in 1946 and three in 1947. In spring 1947 two men cutting down a tree were caught by a policeman and shot. Out of desperation eleven inmates committed suicide. Every death and cause was recorded. The month of February had the highest mortality: 1,346. February 4 had the highest daily number: 72. Total deaths during the existence of the camp (October 10, 1945 - March 1948) were over 11,000.

The first mass graves were dug at the village cemetery. Due to the floods in spring 1946 no more dead could be buried there, but had to be moved to the Teletschka hill, about 2 km south of Rudolfsgnad.

Camp Gakowa/Gakovo (Batschka)

Concentration camp for the unfit to work, primarily for the Middle and West Batschka.

Original number of inhabitants of the town of Gakowa: 2,700

Number of camp inmates: 17,000

Duration of camp: March 12, 1945 - beginning January 1948 (33 months)

Casualties: Approximately 8,500 (5,827 documented by name)

Main causes of death: starvation, typhus, dysentery, malaria

Overview: On March 12, 1945 the two neighboring communities Gakowa and Kruschiwl, situated near the Hungarian border became the two large death camps for the ethnic Germans of the West Batschka. The 6,000 ethnic Germans of Apatin were the first inmates. Between March 13 and October 17, 1945 the unfit to work from 24 communities of the districts Apatin, Hodschag and Sombor were interned in these two camps.

In the year 1931 the community of Gakowa had 2,692 souls, 2,370 were ethnic Germans. By the end of 1945, 17,000 were crammed into the completely emptied houses of the community. During the first ten months approximately 4,500 had already died or were murdered.

Since both death camps were not fenced in by barbed wire and watch towers, they were guarded by patrols and sentries, placed about 100 yards or more apart. The camps were surrounded by fields and meadows. Due to this arrangement it was at times possible to sneak past the sentries and go begging or to attempt escapes. The camp commanders punished such attempts with executions, incarcerations, beatings and withholding of food, which many victims did not survive.

The daily camp ritual was as follows: The still somewhat able-bodied were chased out by the guards and divided into work teams. Under guard they had to work in the surrounding fields, perform work in the camp or push carts around the area to collect anything burnable for the kitchen.

For about a year, lasting to May 1946, there was, according to the impression of the inmates, a definite annihilation program by starvation, exposure to cold and further aggravated by unforeseen epidemics. During that time the guards were particularly cruel. About half of the 8,500 victims died during the "months of death:" November 1945 - March 1946.

The attempted escapes from Gakowa to Hungary started rather early. However, more frequent and larger escapes began with the loosening of restrictions and the replacement of the cruel guards. Relatives, friends and other helpful compassionate minorities also aided the escapees. Most of them continued their flight to Austria and Germany.

Beginning late autumn 1946 and lasting into fall 1947, the so-called "white escapes" were tolerated by the camp commanders. The term "white escapes" was used in contrast to the previous "black escapes" which were prohibited and severely punished.

The use of DDT powder in March 1946 also brought an end to the "months of death." The replacement of the partisan guards by a militia in May-June 1946 also reined-in the worst of the wanton physical mistreatments which, at that time, were also officially prohibited. Apparently the hard annihilation, policy was replaced by a "softer" elimination process.

Now the orphaned children were taken to government education centers with the intent to educate them to be "young pioneers," model fighters for communism. Four of such transports of children from the Gakowa camp are known to have taken place.

Starting May 1946, people outside the camp were allowed to bring or send packages to camp inmates. However, there was no mail service, only the receiving of packages was tolerated. American food donations could be distributed such as powdered food for undernourished children. American CARE packages began arriving by the end of 1946, shipped by the Danube Swabian Aid Society of Brooklyn and American relatives of camp inmates.

The neighboring camp Kruschiwl was dissolved on December 10, 1947 and their inmates transferred to Gakowa. By the middle of January 1948 the last inmates of Gakowa were moved to the Banat liquidation camp Rudolfsgnad.

Peculiarities of the Gakowa Camp

The primary reason for the rapidly growing mortality was due to starvation which became more acute by the middle of October 1945.

Josef Thiel narrates: "During the winter 1946 the news was passed around the camp that a horse died outside the camp. My sister and I as well as a cousin slipped out of the camp, cut off large pieces and brought them back to the camp. Since there was almost no firewood the meat had to be eaten half-raw. The cousin died from it. Whenever a dog or cat was found it was caught and eaten."

During the summer and early spring 1945 the first epidemics such as malaria, dysentery and dystrophy began to appear and caused numerous deaths.

Chaplain Matthias Johler voluntarily came to the Gakowa camp to look after the spiritual welfare of the inmates. He himself became sick with typhus and was bedridden for four weeks. Here is an excerpt from his diary: "December 1, 1945. The Almighty also took my sister-in-law. The funeral is supposed to be today. Deep in thought and worrying about the young orphaned children I went to the cemetery to see if the grave had already been dug. Upon entering I noticed two girls, shivering, trembling and weeping bitterly. They were looking for their mother. They tell me that a cart was passing by their house and picked up their mother. It was the cart, picking up the dead. 'Now we are all alone' lamented the older, eleven-year-old. 'Only me and my sick little four year old brother who is at home.' I ask: 'and whom are you holding in your arms?' She replied: 'That's my little brother, ten months old' and presses him, covered in a piece of cloth, to her shaking bosom; he was dead."

In January 1946 the camp command decided to order a regrouping of the able-bodied, the children and the sick. This took place during the worst three-day

snowstorm of the winter and had disastrous results. It was apparently done on purpose to expedite the annihilation.

Eyewitness Eva Schmidt of Filipowa: "A buggy went from house to house to collect the dead who were loaded like pieces of firewood. Those who could not be collected were pushed to the cemetery on a wheelbarrow. This manner of transporting the dead was a daily occurrence. Others pushed their dead children out into the street, children their mothers. Some corpses were sewn into a piece of linen, but most had only their faces and waists covered since there was nothing available to cover the entire body. At the cemetery the dead were piled up in the mass graves like logs. The priest could only utter a general blessing. No family members were allowed to be present."

During the period of March 5 to April 4, 1946, Wendelin Gruber relieved the chaplains Johler and Pfuhl who were ill. In a discussion with the camp commander he was able to obtain the permission for the inmates to go to church on Sunday evening, after completing their allocated work duties. He was, however, not allowed to conduct any service. But he disregarded the order and did preach on March 24. The church was too small to hold all the people; many were standing outside. The church bells rang and someone played the organ. During the service they repeated the solemn promise that, should they survive, to make an annual pilgrimage and should they be able to get back their homes and possessions, to build a church in the honor of the mother of Jesus Christ. The Danube Swabian annual pilgrimage to Altötting (Germany), taking place since 1959 is the redemption of this promise.

The Chaplains Johler and Pfuhl, after their recuperation continued to look after the religious needs of the inmates, a heroic achievement, considering the persecution of the clergy by the Communists. In January 1946 the camp administration attempted to prohibit further clergy activity in the camp. Nevertheless, the clandestine activity continued. On October 30, 1946, however, both chaplains were also thrown into the camp as inmates.

The fate of the children was deplorable, writes Chaplain Paul Pfuhl. "When a child fell ill it was taken to the so-called children hospital. This term, however, is misleading. While it had some beds, they were too few and often three to four children had to share one bed. These children hospitals were the saddest site in the whole camp. Reduced to skin and bones, they were too weak to call for help and even their weeping was feeble. Their eyes conveyed unspoken sadness, like those of a wounded animal - and an accusation for the injustice perpetrated upon them. One had to muster all one's strength to leave without shedding tears."

Camp Jarek/Backi Jarak (Batschka)

Established: December 2, 1944 as a concentration camp for the unfit to work of the South Batschka

Original number of inhabitants of the community Jarek: 2,000

Average number of camp inmates: 15,000

Duration of camp: December 2, 1944 - April 17, 1946 (16.5 months)

Casualties: at least 7,000 (5,240 documented by name)

Main causes of death: typhus, dysentery, exhaustion, dystrophy

Overview: This community consisted of about 350 houses and was entirely ethnic German. Fortunately most of the inhabitants fled before it was captured by the Red Army and the partisans. Only 54 persons stayed behind. The entire community was declared as the first "Special camp" for those ethnic Germans of the South and Middle Batschka that stayed behind. It was planned for the unfit to work of the regions Palanka, Neusatz, Schablj and Titel as well as some communities of the Kula region. The liquidation camp Jarek was also a collection point for the ethnic Germans from the Batschka and Syrmia who were put to work and survived, completely exhausted, the notorious Syrmia work projects, such as the rebuilding of the raillink Belgrade-Bosnian Brod.

At times the number of camp inmates numbered as many as 15,000. It was dissolved April 17, 1946 and the survivors were transferred to the liquidation camp Kruschiwl. During the existence of the camp at least 7,000 civilians became mortality statistics of the mistreatments, starvation and epidemics. Mr. Karl Weber registered 5,400 by name. The victims came from 75 communities, predominately from the South and Middle Batschka as well as from Syrmia.

The peculiarity of the mistreatments of the Jarek camp consisted in the virtual confinement of the inmates to their lodgings. They were only allowed to come into the street to receive their meals, for which the church bells were rung.

According to the hometown chronicle of Futok, the meals were dispensed from 19 kitchens. About 500-600 persons were served by one kitchen. New arrivals, however, received their first meal only after the eighth day. Normally three meals a day were served. Breakfast consisted of ground corn boiled in water; lunch was usually a soup, some barley or peas, also boiled in water, occasionally bugs included, and 200 grams of coarse corn bread. Dinner was again soup.

The first camp commander who came from the neighboring village Katch was relieved of his command because he was too humane. In his place came Jana Dragojlovic from Banostor, Syrmia. She was young but very much dreaded and considered sadistic. She usually rode on horseback, attacked unsuspecting women and children, pulled them by their hair, whipped them, had them tied to trees and beaten until blood flowed from their noses and mouths. Her usual comments while perusing the daily list of the dead was: "Not enough have died, more have to die." When she was rotated she remarked to the incoming commander: if he was going to annihilate 7,500 Germans within five months as she did, there won't be any left.

The guards were considered more sadistic than in other death camps and more trigger-happy. According to Katharina Frank they received for each kill a special furlough or other bonus. Katharina Haller had to witness how her own father was murdered. He was gunned down while trying to get a few potatoes from a nearby field.

Fritz Ilg also reports: "Daily the partisans came since some of us still had good clothing. We had to give everything away while being beaten. An old man used to ask: "Why are you beating me? I gladly give you my shoes, you don't need to beat me!"

Susanne Harfmann tells of three women who were murdered while coming back from a begging trip: "The three women were lying only 50 yards from the village; they were riddled by bullets. Next to each was a small bundle with food for themselves and their starving children."

Among the clergy interned at Jarek were also Kornelius Weinmann, Franz Klein, Karl Elicker and Kaspar Kopping. They were selected for particularly rough mistreatments by the partisans, ridiculed, beaten and had to perform the most menial jobs.

Martha Müller describes the appalling conditions at the infirmary: "The sick were lying on the floor on a bundle of straw and waiting to die. They all had diarrhea and the lice were crawling over their faces. As soon as they were dead we took them out to the horse stable. The camp commander Jana repeatedly jumped on their chests and shouted: 'You Swabian, have you kicked the bucket?' "

Peter Wilpert, at that time six years old, talks about a somewhat older boy who climbed over fences to be with his mother who became insane and was tied to a post. "Her gaze was staring into a void. Her son sat in front of her, weeping silently. Even though I was younger than he, I sensed that it was his greatest pain to realize his mother did no longer recognize him. For me it was a heartbreaking scene."

Martha Müller was appointed head of the children home. She relates: "The children were left to fend for themselves, neglected, dirty and lice-infested. They were sitting or lying around in the corners, usually in a state of shock. Nevertheless, they continued trying to break out of the home and go begging to the neighboring town Temerin, an attempt that often was fatal. There was nothing we could do to prevent the mass dying; they were too weak and starving. One day they were still playing in the yard, the next day they were dead on their bundle of straw. Maybe it was a blessing that many a mother does not know how her child had to die. I repeatedly had to witness that the last words of children were: 'Mother please give me a piece of bread.'"

Many of the inmates coming from the village Bulkes in April 1945 collapsed since they arrived during a period when no salt was available. Ten to twelve inmates succumbed daily due to starvation, diarrhea and exhaustion. No medicine was available. The physician Dr. Hans Müller and pharmacist Öhl, both inmates themselves, tried to help and concocted some heart drops from a mixture of herbs. Even though they were not effective, they nevertheless had a psychological benefit and people were grateful.

Katharina Haller describes the misery and dying in Jarek: "Wherever you looked, you saw people, shrunk to a skeleton, who were trying to pick the lice from each other's body. They were lying on their straw bundles, conscious or unconscious and waiting for death to arrive. Most of them had sores over their entire bodies. Children had oversized heads and stomachs and one could count each bone. Some slept and died, others were struggling desperately with death. They couldn't help one another since everybody was helpless."

When Agathe Prohaska visited her great grandmother who was dying in the horse stable, the latter whispered to her: "My child, the dogs are biting at my legs." When

she checked she saw that the rats were gnawing at her great grandmother's toes even though she was still alive.

Karl Weber who was eleven years old at that time relates his feelings about the dying children: "They died without their mother and without loving care, medical help or compassion. We were so stoic that we felt no sorrow about somebody's death. On the contrary, we were relieved that another crybaby disappeared. Everybody was concerned only with his or her own survival." Many of the surviving children report that, after having been witness to so many miserable deaths, they could no longer shed any tears, even at the death of their own family members. They were completely devoid of feelings and in a state of shock.

The last journey of the dead was equally inhuman. The daily removal of the many corpses had to be done with primitive means. A rack wagon was the hearse. The corpses were thrown into the wagon, one on top of the other, like the disposal of dead stray animals. In the mass graves, they were dumped, nude, in layers of up to five deep and then covered up. Family members were not allowed to be present, nor any clergy.

The Bulkes community has exact documentation on the perished occupants of the former hometown Bulkes. According to these records the chances of survival at the death camp Jarek were as follows: for children up to and including 14 years of age only about 50%. Adults from 50 to 54 years old about 30% and from 55 to 69 about 10%; older ones practically nil.

Camp Kruschiwl/Krusevlje (Batschka)

Established as a concentration camp for the unfit to work of the West and North Batschka.

Original number of the inhabitants of the village of Kruschiwl: 950 (900 ethnic Germans)

Average number of camp inmates: 7,000

Duration of camp: March 12, 1945 - December 10, 1947 (33 months)

Casualties: 3,000 - 3,500 (2,100 documented by name)

Main causes of death: starvation, typhus, dysentery

Overview: The village Kruschiwl was only four km from the Hungarian border. On March 12, 1945 it was designated as the liquidation camp for the Danube Swabians of the West and North Batschka. Between April 15 and 17, 1946 it received a significant increase in inmates due to the transfer of survivors from the Jarek camp. About 100 persons, mainly old people and children were crammed into each house.

The camp Kruschiwl was particularly notorious for the cruelty of its guards and series of public executions ordered by the commanders. After being able to escape in 1946, Therese Schieber reported the following events: "In April 1945 we were forced to hand over all money, watches, rings, earrings, jewelry and items of value. At 4 o'clock in the morning we were called out into the street and the process lasted until 5 o'clock in the morning of the 15th. We all had to stand there during that time, including women with babies.

"Two women, Theresia Peller and Rosalia Langbein, were found to have hidden some change. Mrs. Langbein implored the partisan not to shoot her since she had a five month old baby. In vain, both women were executed. As a deterrent for the others, the corpses were left in the street until the next day.

"On April 24, 1945 Anni Schreiner, a 16-year old girl from Sonta and the 31-year old Elisabeth Piry were taking meals into the field and then went to Stanischtisch to beg for food. They were betrayed and upon return to the camp arrested and locked in a cellar. Like criminals they were taken before the camp commander and given a short tongue-lashing. A partisan, Hungarian, was ordered to execute them; however he refused. The next partisan's rifle misfired and a third was called. He first shot and hit Mrs. Piry who fell down; then he shot at the girl but she was only slightly wounded. She walked towards the partisan and implored him to spare her. However, he dispatched the girl with a bullet into the head. The three grave diggers who were present were ordered to put the two women onto a cart and take them to the cemetery.

"On the way Mrs. Piry regained consciousness, asked for some water and for her child. The six year old daughter was walking along and praying next to the cart. The mother told her to remain brave and tell her father what was done to her. The partisan guard at the village entrance noticed that Mrs. Piry was still alive and notified Djevic Stanko the camp commander who mounted his horse and rode to the cemetery. There he ordered the gravediggers to put the gravely wounded but fully conscious woman next to the dug grave, shot her in the head and pushed her with his boots into the grave."

The two guard teams were notoriously quick with cruel beatings. Mrs. Schieber writes: "Women before being beaten had to disrobe so that the whips and belts hit their bare bodies. Just before Easter several women were caught sneaking out of the camp to beg for food for their children. First they were thrown into a cellar and then brought to the guard house where they had to disrobe. In the middle of the room were two chairs, with the partisans sitting around them. Always two women had to kneel down and grasp the chairs with their hands. Then two partisans began beating the bare backs of the women. When the two were tired they were relieved by two others. The women's backs were bloody and became festered. Most of them died of their wounds. Only the 'third generation' of camp guards, mostly Moslems, were somewhat more humane. "

The cold winter temperature was also one of the premeditated procedures to reduce the number of camp inmates. Another draconian edict was that no heating of the inmates' houses was allowed. According to Stefan Mutter, "During Christmas and New Year 1945, the partisans chased us barefoot during the nights repeatedly across the yard and we had to stand for two hours in the snow until we were stiff from the cold. Then they chased us back into the camp. Most of the people became gravely ill. I myself suffered from an inflammation of the joints."

During the autumn 1945, a typhus epidemic spread throughout the Kruschiwl camp, as it did in the neighboring death camp Gakowa. Over 10 people succumbed daily to this disease.

Another major factor, in addition to starvation and epidemic diseases, was the lack of personal hygiene and washing facilities, which caused infectious skin diseases. This problem and the bites of fleas and lice affected particularly children. The dead were collected daily by a cart which at times had to make two or three trips a day.

Chapter 8

Crimes Committed Against Children

The most cruel and most shocking chapter of the tragedy of the ethnic Germans in the communist Yugoslavia is the fate of the children. Their demise in the liquidation camps, caused by starvation and diseases is documented in many eyewitness and first person reports. The extent of the spiritual and mental anguish, however, can never be adequately described.

The attempt of the Tito regime to send the surviving children who had no parent or relative left in the camp to government children homes, subject them to a re-nationalization process and arbitrarily determine their ethnic identity runs against the human rights and personal dignity. Fortunately for most of the children, this despicable experiment had to be terminated at the beginning of the 1950's due to world-wide moral pressures, particularly those exerted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (IKRK) in Geneva. At that time, the IKRK, as well as world opinion, could resort to the United Nations Resolution of December 9, 1948 according to which the re-nationalization was explicitly termed a form of genocide and condemned.

The torture of children was also programmed at the end of 1944 together with the internment of all ethnic German civilians. The children were, together with the old, the sick and those unable to work chased into the liquidation camps - also called "death camps," and "starvation and dying camps." Particularly cruel was the brutal taking of children from their mothers since almost all young women were to be shipped as work slaves to Russia.

It is documented that 45,000 children, of up to 14 years of age, were interned and at least 6,000 (13%) starved to death. The percentage of children in the liquidation camps was very high. On April 30, 1946, at the Rudolfsgnad camp there were approximately 18,000 inmates registered of which 8,288 were children under the age 14. For many children the care by parents or relatives was of short duration, since the death rate, particularly up to May 1946, was at its peak and the older people used to sacrifice themselves by giving their tiny rations to the children.

The terms "death camp," and "liquidation camp" are, indeed, justifiable, particularly when you consider that, for example, at the death camp Jarek 171 of the 190 children of the village Bulkes, Batschka, died within one year. That's 42% of the 457 children interned at Jarek.

At the Rudolfsgnad camp 7,664 people out of 17,000 perished between October 1945 and December 1946. Of these 1,036 were children up to 10 years old.

The rapid demise of older people, mostly grandparents and relatives of these children without parents, created a high percentage of orphans. These were then put into children homes within the camps. From there they were then shipped to children homes in the Banat and the Batschka and from there split up to distant homes from Mazedonia to Slovenia.

Siblings were separated with the intention to make them forget their origin. This was mainly achieved with very young children. Those forcefully separated brothers and sisters met again only many years later - if at all - at Belgrad where the Red Cross organized the reunification transports. Most did not recognize each other any more and even spoke different languages. Very few, however, still spoke German.

Eyewitness Reports of the Children's Fate

Volume III of the documentation series Leidensweg III contains 53 reports. They were written by men and women who experienced these events as children. The following are a few of these tragic experiences.

DAVID GERSTHEIMER, born 1936 at Kischker/Batschka. Within a few months after being interned at the Jarek liquidation camp his mother, six siblings and grandparents died of starvation. David, at that time 8 years old, was the only survivor and sent to a government children home for re-education and "Slavinizing."

Father WENDELIN GRUBER, born 1914, Filipowa/Batschka. He spent some time in the Gakowa death camp: "Afternoons I went to the children homes which were set up in the larger farm houses. There the children, between 20 to 30 in a room, were lying around, only on straw and scantily covered. Only skin and bones, sick, and with infected wounds. Nobody cared for them. The small ones cried and screamed pitifully - they were starving. Others were lying motionless; they didn't even have the strength to cry anymore. I went from room to room, always the same picture. A woman who took over as caretaker leads me to the room in the back. Carefully she pulls the cover from a pile of children. What a sight! 'Are they still alive?' I ask trembling. These little ones, in a row on rags are almost naked; skin and bones only. They are gasping for air with open mouths. The last thing the world can offer them. 'We pulled these out since they cannot digest food any more and are the first to die,' was the reply."

Suco, the almighty commander of the Gakowa camp, responding to the question of what plans the Communists had for the surviving children tells Father Wendelin Gruber: "Don't worry, comrade Pope! Everything will be in order! Our Socialist State will look after the children. They now will be adequately fed and then housed in government children homes. A progressive kindergarten teacher has already arrived. She will now take over the responsibility for a good education. These children will be Tito's pioneers and brave fighters for our liberation revolution. You will see, these Fascist, Capitalist children will become model members of the liberated working class and enthusiastic supporters of a better future."

This programmed re-education which was supposed to awaken the hatred for their "Fascist" parents was reported by most of the children. At the time of the reunification process there were children who did not want to go home to their "criminal parents."

KARL WEBER, at that time 11 years old, reports of the tragic consequences of trying to go begging. "My friend Philipp was beaten to death during such a begging trip (on October 28, 1945). It didn't take much, we were already half dead," said Karl Weber about the fate of his friend Philipp Bauer with whom he undertook several such begging trips.

At the Jarek camp, FRIEDRICH GLAS from Bulkes who saw two of his great-grandparents and two grandparents, as well as his two year old sister starve to death, was caught, together with his friend PETER KENDL slipping out of the camp to go begging. The two partisans took them to the guardroom. After a while they were led back to the place where they were caught and motioned to go away. After they made a few steps the guards then shot at them from behind. Fritz who played dead, survived. The wounded Peter, however, screamed after the guards had already started to go away. They returned and killed him with a bullet to the head.

Suicides because of despair, fright and sense of shame after being raped also occurred. Not even children were spared from rape during the mass rapes at Deutsch-Zerne in October 1944. EVA BISCHOF, only nine years old, was cruelly raped by nine men. Her injuries were so severe that she lost consciousness and was unable to move. Thereupon her own mother, in desperation, hung her child and hung herself.

JULIANE WIRAG, born 1908, from Ridjitza strangled her twin daughters, born in 1944 because she could find no way to save them from slow starvation and then hung herself.

EVA BUTZSCHEDEL, born 1932, from Gakowa, relates one of the most tragic and touching experiences documented. Her mother was sick with typhus. "Day by day, the condition in our room and that of my mother became worse. We were praying intensely. Mother never stopped praying. God, however, had other plans for her. Her condition became worse and we saw death approaching. Everybody in the room already had high fever and nobody was aware of the others around them. When Monika, my sister, became aware of mother's imminent death, she did not leave her side. She constantly called: 'Mother, you will not die, right, Mother you won't abandon us, right?'

"She implored the Holy Mother: 'Wonderful Mother please help our mother.' She continuously caressed Mother and noticed that she became increasingly weaker. Her tears kept dripping down on the terminally ill as if she believed they would help save her from death. I think there is nothing worse in this world for a child than in such a state of loneliness, surrounded by death and distress to kneel at the deathbed of the mother, not being able to help in her struggle and having to watch how the hand of death slowly takes her away forever. . ."

KAROLINE BOCKMÜLLER, born 1905, Deutsch-Zerne, Banat, describes the condition of the children camp in a part of the Rudolfsgnad liquidation camp. "I had to visit this children camp and happen to enter a room which contained 30-35 children (from babies to 16 months old) whose parents had died. None of them could stand, let alone walk. They were just lying there or slid around the room on their bellies. The room was reeking of excrements. The children were crying, pale and starving. Their bodies were smeared with excrement, which was partially dried to the skin. I fled from the room, weeping and asked the women whether there was anybody to look after these poor abandoned children. They replied they could not help since they had no diapers, nor towels, water basins, water, soap - practically nothing. They continually asked the camp administration for just the basic requirements, however received nothing, only the comment: 'The children should kick the bucket.' They also tried

repeatedly to take away my grandchild and put it into the children camp but I did not give her up. After she died I escaped from the Rudolfsgnad camp and went to Molitor to look for my mother. There I was told that my mother and aunt had died of starvation in the camp."

PETER WILPER, born 1938, from Palanka, Batschka, talks about the conditions at the liquidation camp Jarek: "Both grandmothers died within a week. After that I was all by myself, only six years old, terribly alone."

KATHARINA WEBER, born 1935, from Bulkes/Batschka, at that time ten years old was, together with six of her schoolmates at the Jarek liquidation camp. Five of them died between September 1945 and February 1946. The sixth girlfriend died in October 1947 at the Subotica camp. The surviving Katharina was shipped to a government home.

ANNA NIKLOS-NYARI describes the sad passing of an entire family at the Gakowa liquidation camp: "There was a young mother who lived in a room with her three small children. When her last child was struggling with death she said to the people in the next room: 'I don't know anymore for whom I should pray, mourn or weep first: for my husband who died in the war, my parents, my grandparents, brothers and sisters or for my children. What does the Almighty want to do with me? Haven't I suffered enough yet? Do I now also have to give up my last child?' She staggered back into her room and knelt down next to the dying boy. We stood in our own room and wept. If the years of compassion could have helped, the little boy surely wouldn't have died.

"We heard the boy groan and for a long time I could not fall asleep. It must have been early in the morning when I woke up. Everybody around me was still asleep. I looked into the neighboring room. The little boy, lying on the floor had his hands folded; I knew what this meant: the woman's third child had now also died. She didn't wake anybody but kept watch and prayed all by herself. At that moment I saw her kneeling down, her gaze up to the ceiling and she started to talk aloud. Was she becoming insane? Her voice was humble: 'Almighty, you have taken all my loved ones to you. I hope you now won't forget to take me. Don't let me wait long, I am ready to die. I have only one wish: When Tito dies let all the poor souls who were tortured, starved to death and murdered on his orders pass by his death bed, me and my children last. Only then should he be allowed to die.' "

Rescue Efforts

Promises of the Yugoslav representation in the USA were never carried out. It was all deception and delaying tactics. Endeavors of governmental, ecclesiastical, as well as the efforts of the welfare offices of the Red Cross in Germany and Austria, remained ignored by the Communist Yugoslavia. Even the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva remained without real success. There were not only problems with the Yugoslavian authorities, the Allied occupation forces in Germany and Austria were not always understanding and often delayed possible support.

Finding the location and repatriation of the "lost children" entailed great efforts. The distribution of the publication *Kinder im Schatten* (Children in the Shadow) by

Batschka writer Adalbert K. Gauss, in early August 1950 initiated some movement in the rescue of the children. Several organizations and individuals and particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross, after tedious struggles, achieved some success and, between 1950 and 1959, about 2,300 children could be re-united with their parents and relatives. Still, several hundred German children could no longer be found and meanwhile were "reeducated" and "slavinized." They now live somewhere in the partitioned Yugoslavia. They may be lost, but never forgotten. It is one of the most tragic chapters of the Danube Swabian tragedy.

Chapter 9

The Suffering and Dying of German Clergy

The Catholic and Protestant clergy was a highly respected profession by the Germans in the former Yugoslavia. During the persecution of the ethnic Germans by the partisan regime, 37 of them were killed, mostly in a gruesome manner. The clergy of both denominations became martyrs for two reasons: first because they were declared ideological enemies of the Atheist dominated Yugoslavia and second because they belonged to the ethnic German population which was destined to be exterminated.

The short biographies of some of these murdered clerics are representative of the suffering and annihilation of this vocational group. More detailed descriptions are documented in the book *Verbrechen an den Deutschen in Jugoslawien 1944-48*, (Crimes Against the Ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia), pages 256-270, published by the Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, München 1998.

Already in 1941, at the beginning of the Axis Powers' war with Yugoslavia, some clerics were taken as hostages and interned at Peterwardein. With the battle fronts getting closer in 1941, most of the clergy refused to leave, even though implored to flee. While some were initially spared from internment, others were ridiculed, forced to do menial work and tortured. Several were already murdered in their parishes immediately after the occupation as part of the annihilation process by the Intelligenzija campaign. For them death was a release from their sufferings.

Here are some particularly notorious examples of such suffering and murders.

Dr. PHILIP POPP, (1893-1945) Bishop of the German-Protestant church in Yugoslavia and Senator of the Yugoslav Upper House, 1940. Dr. Popp was loyal to his German heritage and the Yugoslav nation. In those difficult times he was criticized by those not sharing his views, however, he preserved the independence of his church. When Croatia became an independent nation, he protested against the persecution of Serbs, helped them to flee and accepted them in his church without baptism.

Towards the end of the war, when the partisan army approached, he remained in his Agram parish. He was arrested in May 1945, court-martialed and condemned to death on false charges on June 28, 1945. He was shot the next day. The Serbian Patriarch in Belgrade described Bishop Dr. Popp as a just and loyal man. He died a martyr's death for the Danube Swabian Protestant church.

ADALBERT von NEIPPERG, (1890-1948) Count von Neipperg was a priest who looked after the spiritual needs of the German troops at Windisch-Feistritz. He became a prisoner of war in 1945, refused the offer of freedom and remained with the soldiers as a medic and priest. At the notorious POW camp Werschetz/Vrsac he succeeded in obtaining additional food and performed religious services. The POWs (Prisoners of War) called him "Our Father." On December 23, 1948, the day before Christmas Eve, he was summoned to the Communist staff headquarters and did not return. He was found the next day with his throat cut, tortured and murdered. His

remains were transferred to the monastery chapel at Neuburg. The grave marker reads "Martyr of Love."

ANTON ADAM, (1908-1944) born in Chicago, IL, USA died at Gross-Kikinda. He was the priest for the parishes St. Hubert, Charleville and Soltour. Father Adam was, together with 120 men, tortured and executed by machine guns.

ANTON BERGER, Kunbaja (1884-1944) Priest at Tavankut. He was taken out of his rectory and disappeared. Manner and place of death unknown.

JOSEF BÖCKMANN, Rudolfstal/Bosanski Aleksandrovac (1910-1945) Priest at Glamoc and Prijedor (Bosnia). Secretly executed.

FRANZ BRUNET, Modosch (1898-1944) Priest at Deutsch-Zerne. Representative of the Belgrade See at Gross-Betschkerek was taken as hostage and executed by the partisans.

JULIUS BÜRGER, Kula (1885-1944) Priest at Podravska Slatina. Executed for keeping religious articles.

VALENTIN DUPP, Bukin (1883-1944) Priest at Tschurug. Even though he intervened on behalf of the Serbian priest during the Hungarian occupation in 1941, the son, a partisan, ordered him executed.

JOSEF EPPICH, (1874-1942) Priest at Bittersdorf near Gottschee. Was killed on his way to visit sick people at one of the dispersed settlements.

FERDINAND GASSMANN, (1914-1946) Franziscan and Missionary took food to the Gakowa liquidation camp. He was arrested by the OZNA (Secret Police of the Partisans), condemned to death and executed.

ANTON HAUG, (1890-1945) Priest at Tschonopel. After torture and starvation, died at the Svilara camp.

THEODOR KLEIN, (1872-1945) Priest at Manoster/Beli Manastir, Dechant. Died after torture at the village inn.

FRANZ KLEIN, (1879-1946) Priest at Katsch, Decau. Had a good relationship with the authorities and Serbian clergy. Looked after inmates at Jarek and Kruschiwl camps. Died of starvation.

JOSEF KNAPP, (1912-1944) Priest at Glogon. Before being executed with 46 men of the community, he admonished his companions to face death with faith and confidence.

JOSEF KORNAUTH, (1872-1945) Priest at Gross-Gaj. He died at camp Setschanfeld.

WILHELM KUND, (1880-1946) Priest at Pantschowa, Senior. In spite of prohibition to preach, torture and injuries he secretly prayed with the camp inmates. He succumbed to his injuries from torture at the camp prison.

JOHANN NEPOMUK LAKAJNER, (1873-1944) Priest at Ruma. He refused to be evacuated before the capture by the partisans and stayed with his community. He was said to have been tied to a wagon and dragged to death by the partisans.

PETER MÜLLER, (1884-1951) Priest at Filipowa. Arrested by the UDBA (Yugoslav Secret State Police) in 1948 because he was corresponding with former members of his parish (prisoners of war, refugees and deportees to Russia) he was sentenced to 3 years at the penitentiary. Since he was terminally ill, he was released after 20 months and died.

STEFAN MÜLLER-MAJOROS, (-1946) Priest at Neu-Palanka, Batschka. In 1944, forced by the partisans to walk to Hungary he was supposed to have died there due to the hardships he endured.

JOSEF NOVOTNY, (1909-1944) Priest at Plawing/Plavna. Kidnapped by the partisans to Batsch, tortured to death at the cellar of the town hall and disposed of in the forest.

FRANZ PLANK, (1885-1944) Priest at Alt-Siwatz. Murdered by the partisans.

EMANUAL RETZER, (1912-1944) Lutheran pastor at Heidschütz. Deported as slave worker to Russia and presumably succumbed to the hardships in one of the slave labor camps.

MICHAEL ROTHEN, (1895-1944) Chaplain at Weisskirchen, Zichidorf and Werschetz. He was tortured and murdered, together with 28 other ethnic German men at the notorious "Milchhalle" at Gross-Kikinda.

MICHEL SCHAFFER, (1908-1946) Priest at Laibach. As a German national and priest he was arrested in 1945, became ill while in jail and, after his release, died as a result of his incarceration.

WILHELM SCHÄFER, (1848-1944) Priest at Tschestereg. Was interned with community inhabitants. Being a priest he was humiliated and tortured. He died in the camp.

FRANZ SCHAFFHAUSER, (1919-1945) Franziscan. He is one of the 139 Franziscans who were murdered in Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1946 by either the Tschetniks or partisans.

LORENZ SCHERER, (1912-1947) Vicar at Tschervenka. Was deported as a slave worker to the coal mines of Russia. Because of his faith esteemed but particularly mistreated. He died of exhaustion.

JOSEF SCHMIDT, (1913-1944) Professor for religion and youth counselor on the island of Daksa near Dubrovnik. As an enemy of communism he was murdered on the notorious "Death Island."

JOSEF SCHMIDT, (1876-1949) Priest at Modosch. Because he issued documents to members of his former Modosch congregation, he was admonished, then arrested and sentenced to two and one half years of detention. He died while in jail.

KARL UNTERREINER, (1897-1944) Teacher of religion at Palanka, Papal Honorary Chaplain, founder of Boy Scout groups and the Bonifatius Society at Budapest (Hungary). Arrested together with 100 German men and, after gruesome torture, executed in the forest near Palanka.

ANDREAS VARGA, (1913-1944) Priest at Toba. Chaplain at Werschetz and Weisskirchen. Tortured at the town hall, dumped into the basement, killed and disposed of.

PETER WEBER, (1884-1944) Priest at Karlsdorf. During the "Aktion Intelligenzija" tortured by Red Army soldiers and executed.

PETER WEINERT, (1874-1945) Priest at Batschka-Palanka. Together with 1,200 ethnic German men chased to the central camp at Neusatz, where he died. The regime had to consent to his burial in the tomb of the last abbot of Neusatz, with a large participation of believers.

MICHEL WERNER, (1883-1944) Priest at the abbey of Martonosch. Dragged, together with 21 ethnic German men, by local Serbs to the basement of the town hall. There they were tortured, mangled with pliers, taken to Tschurug, shot and disposed of in trenches.

ANTON WEISS, (1913-1943) Served as German military chaplain. Captured at Stalingrad (Russia) and executed by the Russian army.

RICHARD WEISS, (1916-1944) Chaplain at Modritsch (Bosnia). Tortured and murdered by Tschetniks or partisans.

Chapter 10

Size of the Ethnic German Population in Yugoslavia as of October 1944

541,000 Germans comprise 508,000 Danube Swabians and 33,000 Germans of Slovenia. For documentary reasons these figures include 13,000 killed soldiers up to that time. Please refer to Table 2, Table 3, Table 4

The Danube Swabians lived mainly in the Banat, Batschka, Baranja, Syrmia, Slavonia and, to a lesser extent, in Croatia, Bosnia and the capital Belgrade. The Slovenia-Germans consisted predominantly of the Gottscheer and of Lower Styria.

Larger Communities and Dispersed Settlements Up to 1944

At the census of 1931 in the pre-war Yugoslavia more than 1,000 inhabitants in 115 localities stated to be of German ethnicity which corresponds to about 70 percent. The majority lived in entirely German communities, particularly in the Banat and Batschka where most of the Danube Swabians were domiciled. In Slavonia, Croatia and Bosnia the Danube Swabians lived mainly in dispersed settlements.

In October 1944 the remaining 33,000 ethnic Germans in today's independent state Slavonia, whose numbers since World War II were greatly reduced due to political circumstances, lived mainly in dispersed settlements, except in Laibach, Marburg and Gottschee (which were predominantly German).

Disappearance of the Ethnic German Minority in the Former Yugoslavia

More than 90,000 ethnic Germans of the former Yugoslavia did not survive the war and the genocide. Almost all of the survivors of the camps have left Yugoslavia. Counting these to the previously evacuated and escaped, about 450,000 ethnic Germans of Yugoslavia were rescued. Only Germans in mixed ethnic marriages and the few Communists remained in the former Communist Yugoslavia. The realistic figures of the Germans remaining in their homeland are, at the most, 12,000 to 15,000. Of these 10,000 to 12,000 are Danube Swabians.

The New Homelands of the Surviving Ethnic Germans of Yugoslavia

Most Slovenian Germans found their new homeland in Austria. According to reliable figures about 300,000 (or 70%) of the Danube Swabians from Yugoslavia settled in the country of their ancestors, Germany; another 60,000 in Austria, 25,000 in the USA, 10,000 in Canada (also similar numbers of Danube Swabians from Hungary and Romania), 10,000 in Hungary, 4,000 in Brazil, 2,000 in Argentina, 1,000 in Australia and about 3,000 in various other countries.

Today, in the year 2001, about 170,000 (40%) of the 425,000 Danube Swabians who escaped the genocide are still alive. Counting their descendants, the total of Danube Swabians exceeds one million.

Chapter 11

Documentation of Human Casualties

The previous chapters described the gruesome atrocities committed against the ethnic Germans by the Yugoslav Communist regime, resulting in the genocide of this significant part of the Yugoslav population.

After their flight and expulsion, the survivors of the Danube Swabian genocide organized "home town societies" in their new domiciles, particularly in Germany, Austria and overseas countries. This enabled them to establish reliable documentations of the tragic events and casualties, including names, times and places of their deaths. Over 60,000 names are recorded. This represents about 70% of the 86,000 calculated victims. The following tables detail the numbers and localities of their demise between 1944 and 1948.

Table 2: Banat, Batschka

Table 3: Baranja, Syrmia, Slavonia/Croatia, Others

Table 4: Total Casualties of Danube Swabians

Table 2

<i>Banat</i>			<i>Batschka</i>		
CAMP	VICTIMS BY NAME	ROUNDED ESTIMATED FIGURES*	CAMP	VICTIMS BY NAME	ROUNDED ESTIMATED FIGURES*
Banat Brestowatz	335	400	Altker	27	
Banater Topola	24		Apatin	261	300
Betschkerek	201	300	Batsch-Brestowatz	33	
Botschar	32		Batsch-Sentiwan	32	
Charleville	185	200	Fillpowa	221	250
Elemer	21		Futok	36	
Deutsch-Zerne	46		Gajdobra	19	
Ernsthausen	81		Gakowa	5,827	8,500
Etschka	12		Hodschag	96	100
Franzfeld	99	150	Jarek	5,240	7,000
Georgshausen	13		Karawukowa	17	
Glogon	16		Kernei	61	
Heideschütz	38		Kischker	21	
Heufeld	20		Kolut	29	
Homolitz	21		Kruschiwl	2,103	2,800
Jabuka	160	200	Legin	64	
Karlsdorf	394	500	Miletitsch	18	
Kathreinfeld	336	400	Neusatz	81	100
Kikinda	111	200	Palanka	28	
Kubin	87	100	Schowe	21	
Kudritz	298	300	Sekitsch	309	400
Lazarfeld	25		Sombor	97	150
Mastort	72	100	Stanischitsch	91	100
Modosch	20		Subotica	42	100
Molidorf	2,012	3,000	Torschau	53	
Mramorak	78	100	Tschonopel	31	
Nakodorf	201	200	Weprowatz	31	
Pantscowa	298	400	Werbass	76	100
Pardan	16				
Rudolfsgnad	7,797	11,000			
Schuschara	59				
Setschan	58				
Setschanfeld	185	200			
Sigmundfeld	48				
Soltur	15				
St. Georgen	60				
St. Hubert	12				
Stefansfeld	218	250			
Tschestereg	23				
Weisskirchen	71	100			
Werschetz	100	300			
Zichydorf	50				

Table 3

<i>Baranja</i>			<i>Syrmia</i>		
CAMP	VICTIMS BY NAME	ROUNDED ESTIMATED FIGURES*	CAMP	VICTIMS BY NAME	ROUNDED ESTIMATED FIGURES*
Albertsdorf	10		Irig	16	
Mirkovac	16		Mitrowitz	1,033	2,000
Mitvar	60	100	Semlin/Franztal	277	500
			Vodjinci	13	
			Vrdnik	17	
			Wukowar	23	

<i>Slavonia/Croatia</i>			<i>Others</i>		
CAMP	VICTIMS BY NAME	ROUNDED ESTIMATED FIGURES*	CAMP	VICTIMS BY NAME	ROUNDED ESTIMATED FIGURES*
Essegg	17		Belgrade	11	
Gross-Pisanitz	15		Bor	26	
Josipovac	38	100			
Kerndia	100	300			
Valpovo	393	1,000			

**Rounded off and estimated figures calculated on this basis.*

<i>Estimate of Camp Casualties by Area</i>	
AREA	ESTIMATE OF CASUALTIES
Banat	22,000
Batschka	22,000
Baranja	250
Syrmia	3,000
Slavonia	1,750

Note: the place of death of 3,424 victims listed in volume IV is not known.

Table 4

Total Casualties of Danube Swabians (figures rounded off)

Casualties		Banat	Batschka	Baranja	Syrmia	Slavonia/ Croatia	Bosnia	Serbia	Others	Total
Before internment after 1941	M	3526	1599	40	975	602	85	55	15	6897
	F	332	247	10	326	90	20	10	5	1040
	C	27	18		29	28	5	5		112
	T	3885	1864	50	1330	720	110	70	20	8049
During internment in Yugoslavia from Oct 1944 to March 1948	M	7547	7157	581	703	790	45	45	10	16878
	F	11822	11322	806	824	1058	70	70	15	25987
	C	2471	2318	133	268	357	15	15	5	5582
	T	21840	20797	1520	1795	2205	130	130	30	48447
While escaping from internment	M	33	33	11	15	5				97
	F	41	51	4	10	5				111
	C	6	12	4	5	5				32
	T	80	96	19	30	15				240
Total in the former Yugoslavia	M	11106	8789	632	1693	1397	130	100	25	23872
	F	12195	11620	820	1160	1153	90	80	20	27138
	C	2504	2348	137	302	390	20	20	5	5726
	T	25805	22757	1589	3155	2940	240	200	50	56736
In the USSR during slave labor period	M	398	708							1106
	F	427	461							888
	C									
	T	825	1169							1994
Outside of Tito's jurisdiction and outside the USSR	M	17	38	8	40	32	89	4		228
	F	22	57	6	54	37	54	4		234
	C	8	20		13	32	68	2		143
	T	47	115	14	107	101	211	10		605
Total civilians	M	11521	9535	640	1733	1429	219	104	25	25206
	F	12644	12138	826	1214	1190	144	84	20	28260
	C	2512	2368	137	315	422	88	22	5	5869
	T	26677	24041	1603	3262	3041	451	210	50	59335
Soldiers	M	8804	7748	794	3662	3926	850	250	30	26064
	F									
	C									
	T	8804	7748	794	3662	3926	850	250	30	26064
Total of all casualties	M	20325	17283	1434	5395	5355	1069	354	55	51270
	F	12644	12138	826	1214	1190	144	84	20	28260
	C	2512	2368	137	315	422	88	22	5	5869
	T	35481	31789	2397	6924	6967	1301	460	80	85399

M = Male; F = Female; C = Children; T = Total

Chapter 12

Danube Swabian Chronology

Early beginnings up to 1919

1526

Battle at Mohatsch

1526 - 1918

Turkish victory over Hungary. The Imperial House of Habsburg also became Hereditary Kings of Hungary and Croatia.

1526 - 1686

Most of Hungary under Turkish rule.

1683

Imperial and royal Polish forces defeat the Turks at Vienna.

1684 - 1699

Hungary liberated from Turkish rule. Germans recruited to settle in the territory.

1697

Prince Eugen of Savoy defeats the Turks at Senta.

1699

Peace treaty at Karlowitz: Hungary, Syrmia, Slavonia and the Batschka ceded to the Emperor Leopold I.

1712

The first Swabian settlers arrive at Sathmar.

1716 - 1718

Prince Eugen defeats the Turks at Peterwardein, Temeschburg and Belgrade.

1717 - 1779

The liberated Banat becomes imperial crown land with its own administration.

1718

Peace treaty at Passarowitz: the Banat, North Serbia and Belgrade ceded to Austria.

1722 1726

First large-scale Swabian migration trek (Grosser Schwabenzug) during Emperor Karl I's rule.

1723

Settlers granted tax exemption and inheritance rights.

1736 - 1754

Cathedral built at Temeschburg.

1737 - 1739

War with Turkey and peace treaty at Belgrade result in the loss of North Serbia.

1746 - 1780

Empress Maria Theresia settles 50,000 Germans in Hungary.

1763 -1773

Second large-scale Swabian trek.

1779

The Temescher Banat crown land comes under Hungarian administration.

1780 - 1790

Emperor Joseph II abolishes bondage; decrees German as the official language and in school teaching.

1782 - 1787

Third "Grosser Schwabenzug." Protestants included for the first time.

1790

Hungarianizing begins; Hungarian becomes the official language.

1806

End of the "Old Reich," demolished by Napoleon I.

1812

Opening of the German theater at Pest. Ludwig von Beethoven composed the ceremonial music.

1849 - 1861

The imperial crown land "Serbian Wojwodschaft and Temescher Banat" becomes established.

1867

The double monarchy Austria-Hungary is formed.

1868

The Hungarian parliament passes legislation, guaranteeing equal rights for its ethnic minorities, but they were never honored.

1907

Swabian Society (Schwabenverein) founded at Vienna.

1913

Society of the Germans in Croatia and Slavonia founded.

1914

Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand assassinated by Serbian Nationalists at Sarajevo.
Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
Start of World War I.

1918

End of World War I. US President Wilson promulgates self-determination rights of nationals.
The dual monarchy collapses.
1,500,000 Danube Swabians are split up (1/3 given to each of the successor nations Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania.)

1919

At the Versailles peace negotiations, a peace delegation of the Danube Swabians pleads for keeping the Banat undivided.

The Danube Swabians in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS), Renamed Yugoslavia after 1929

1919 - 1944

In the peace treaties of Versailles, Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary pledged to provide international guarantees for their ethnic minorities which, however, were never adhered to.

1920

Founding of the Swabian-German Cultural Alliance.

1922

Founding of the German Economic Organization Agraria.
Founding of the German Party (Partei der Deutschen).
The collective term "Donauschwaben" (Danube Swabians) is becoming widely accepted.

1929

Parliament and political parties in Yugoslavia are dissolved and replaced by a "Royal Dictatorship."

1931

German School Foundation and Private Teachers College founded.

1939

Start of World War II.

1941

German forces occupy Yugoslavia. Disintegration of the Yugoslav state. Splitting up of the Danube Swabians: The Batschka and Baranja-Triangle revert to Hungary; the Banat remains with Serbia under German military occupation; Syrmia and Slavonia

are attached to Croatia. With the German attack on Russia, Yugoslav partisans begin raids on ethnic German settlements.

1942

Partisan raids lead to evacuation of ethnic Germans from Bosnia and Serbia.

1942 - 1944

Due to partisan raids all dispersed German settlements in Syrmia and Slavonia are resettled in larger communities.

1943

The anti-Fascist council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (acronym AVNOJ), the highest political body of the partisan movement, declares all persons who opposed the People's Liberation Army "enemies of the people and traitors." They lose all civic rights, are disenfranchised and face the threat of the death penalty. Without formally mentioning any specific persons, ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia are affected and considered disenfranchised.

1944

As of October 1944 over 1,000 ethnic German civilians are killed by the partisans.

The End of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia

1944

By October 4, 10,600 Danube Swabians from the West Banat and 2,500 from Serbia manage to escape from the Partisans and the Red (Russian) army.

Starting October 3: About 100,000 Danube Swabians from Syrmia, Slavonia and Croatia are evacuated, mainly to Austria.

Starting October 8: About 80,000 Danube Swabians in the Batschka and Baranja heed the evacuation call and flee.

October 20: Belgrade captured by the Russian Army and partisans.

Supported by the Russian army, the Tito-partisans assume control of Serbia and the Wojwodina. Close to 200,000 Danube Swabians come under the rule of the Tito-regime.

"Bloody autumn" in the Wojwodina. By the end of November about 7,000 Danube Swabian civilians in the Banat, Batschka, Baranja and East Syrmia are murdered.

Beginning November: camps for civilians and work camps are set up.

November 21: AVNOJ declares, without judicial process, Danube Swabians "enemies of the people and traitors" and thus disenfranchised. All movable and stationary property is confiscated by the government.

December 2: The first liquidation camp for Danube Swabians in the South Batschka is established at Jarek/Backi Jarek.

1944 - 1945

About 167,000 civilians are disenfranchised and interned between the beginning of December 4 and the end of August 1945.

December 29 - Jan 6, 1945: 8,000 women and 4,000 men, all Danube Swabians from the Batschka and Banat, are selected for slave labor and shipped to Russia.

March 12: The liquidation camps Gakowa/Gakovo and Kruschiwl/Krusevlje in the Batschka are set up.

May 8: German Armed Forces capitulate.

May 15: 150,000 German and over 200,000 Croatian soldiers lay down their weapons and become prisoners of the partisans.

May 22: 2,000 Danube Swabian soldiers of the SS Mountain Division Prinz Eugen are butchered by the partisans at Rann/Brazice (Slovenia).

May: The death camp Sternthal/Strnisce and Tüchern/Teharje (Slovenia) established.

May: Liquidation camp Walpach/Valpovo (Slavonia) established.

Liquidation camp Kerndia/Krndija (Slavonia) set up.

August: Liquidation camp "Svilara" (silk factory) established in Syrmian Mitrowitz/Sremaka Mitrovica.

September: Liquidation camp Molidorf/Molin (Banat) established.

October: Liquidation camp Rudolfsgnad/Knicanin (Banat) established.

1945

At the end of the year about 24,000 children, women and elderly starved to death in the liquidation camps.

1945 - 1946

November to April: Additional 20,000 camp inmates die due to starvation and typhus epidemic. Orphaned children are shipped off to Yugoslav children homes.

1946

Late autumn: Begin of mass escapes from the camps to Hungary and Romania - sometimes tolerated by the camp administration, sometimes being at mortal risk.

1947

Additional 4,000 civilians die in the liquidation camps.

Autumn: Camp administration stops further escapes. Since autumn 1946 about 30,000-40,000 Danube Swabians escaped to Hungary and Romania.

1947 - 1949

Discharge of most slave labor deportees from Russia, mainly to the former East Germany.

1948

March: Closing of the liquidation and work camps in Yugoslavia. The surviving ethnic Germans were forced to enter three-year work contracts.

1948 - 1959

Search in Yugoslavian children homes for separated children.

1950 - 1959

Repatriation of children to Austria with the help of the Red Cross.

1952 - 1960

Evacuation of the still remaining Germans by paying Yugoslav government for release from their Yugoslav Nationality.

1960

Only about 10,000 ethnic Germans remain in Yugoslavia.

New Homelands in the West

1946

Aid Society of Danube Swabians in the USA founded by Peter Max Wagner.

1948

About 10,000 Danube Swabians settle in France. (Part of the Danube Swabians are descendants of French settlers.)

1949

Umbrella organization of the Danube Swabian state societies in Austria founded.
German federal society of the Germans of Yugoslavia founded.
Southeast German cultural project established in Munich, Germany.

1950

Charter of the Expellees proclaimed at Stuttgart, Germany.

1951

Council of the ethnic Germans of Southeastern European countries founded at Bonn, Germany.

1952

2,000 Danube Swabians resettle from Austria to Brazil. Today this settlement is called Entre Rios.

1954

German state of Baden-Württemberg assumes the sponsorship of the Danube Swabians.

1964

Cultural Center of the Danube Swabians in Austria completed.

The German city Sindelfingen assumes the sponsorship of the Danube Swabians of Yugoslavia.

1970

The cultural center of the Danube Swabians opens at Sindelfingen.

1978

The Danube Swabian Institute, a public corporation for the promulgation of Danube Swabian research, documentation and cultural activities founded at Munich, Germany.

1987

Danube Swabian Institute for history and research at the University of Tübingen, Germany founded.

1996

"Haus der Heimat" (Homeland Center), a cultural convention center for the ethnic German societies in Austria opens at Vienna.

Chapter 13: Appendix 1

Explanations and Notes

Names of localities are listed by their German as well as Yugoslavian nomenclature. Example: Werschetz/Vrsac. Where only German or Yugoslavian designations are available, they are retained in their original version.

Abbreviations and Expressions used in the Chapters

Aktion Intelligenzija

Originally a Russian expression for cleansing the society of intellectuals, wealthy, influential, political persons. Also adopted by the Yugoslav partisans.

AVNOJ

Anti-Fascist Council for the Liberation of Yugoslavia. Legislative Assembly of Partisan Movement.

DDT-Powder

Insect powder used against lice and typhus epidemics.

HLKO

Haag Convention on Conduct of War.

KPJ

Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

LW I-IV

Documentation Series, Volumes I-IV, The Sufferings, Tragedy of the Danube Swabians, published by the Donaueschinger Stiftung, Germany.

Magyare

Ethnic Hungarian.

Polenta

Cooked ground corn (maize).

OZNA

Secret Police of Partisans.

SHS

Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, before renamed Yugoslavia.

USK

Independent Nation of Croatia.

VDU

Alliance of Ethnic Germans in Hungary.

VOMI

German SS-Office in Berlin, dealing with ethnic German affairs.

Wojwodina

Yugoslav area comprising the Banat, Batschka and Syrmia.

ZK

Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

Chapter 13: Appendix 2

War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, Including Genocide

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 78 U.N.T.S. 277, entered into force Jan. 12, 1951.

The Contracting Parties,

Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world,

Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and

Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

Article I

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;

- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

Article IV

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Article V

The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention, and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article VI

Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

Article VII

Genocide and the other acts enumerated in article III shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition.

The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

Article VIII

Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article IX

Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

Article X

The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

Article XI

The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

After 1 January 1950, the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid.

Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article XII

Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

Article XIII

On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary-General shall draw up a proces-verbal and transmit a copy thereof to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

Any ratification or accession effected, subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

Article XIV

The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force.

It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of five years for such Contracting Parties as have not denounced it at least six months before the expiration of the current period.

Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article XV

If, as a result of denunciations, the number of Parties to the present Convention should become less than sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date on which the last of these denunciations shall become effective.

Article XVI

A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General.

The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such request.

Article XVII

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in article XI of the following:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in accordance with article XI;
- (b) Notifications received in accordance with article XII;
- (c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into force in accordance with article XIII;
- (d) Denunciations received in accordance with article XIV;
- (e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with article XV;
- (f) Notifications received in accordance with article XVI.

Article XVIII

The original of the present Convention shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

Article XIX

The present Convention shall be registered by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the date of its coming into force.

Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes Against Humanity,

G.A. res. 2391 (XXIII), annex, 23 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 18) at 40, U.N. Doc. A/7218 (1968), entered into force Nov. 11, 1970.

PREAMBLE

The States Parties to the present Convention,
Recalling resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations 3 (I) of 13 February 1946 and 170 (II) of 31 October 1947 on the extradition and punishment of war criminals, resolution 95 (I) of 11 December 1946 affirming the principles of international law recognized by the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, Nurnberg, and the judgement of the Tribunal, and resolutions 2184(XXI) of 12

December 1966 and 2202(XXI) of 16 December 1966 which expressly condemned as crimes against humanity the violation of the economic and political rights of the indigenous population on the one hand and the policies of apartheid on the other,

Recalling resolutions of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations 1074 D (XXXIX) of 28 July 1965 and 1158 (XLI) of 5 August 1966 on the punishment of war criminals and of persons who have committed crimes against humanity,

Noting that none of the solemn declarations, instruments or conventions relating to the prosecution and punishment of war crimes and crimes against humanity made provision for a period of limitation,

Considering that war crimes and crimes against humanity are among the gravest crimes in international law,

Convinced that the effective punishment of war crimes and crimes against humanity is an important element in the prevention of such crimes, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the encouragement of confidence, the furtherance of co-operation among peoples and the promotion of international peace and security,

Noting that the application to war crimes and crimes against humanity of the rules of municipal law relating to the period of limitation for ordinary crimes is a matter of serious concern to world public opinion, since it prevents the prosecution and punishment of persons responsible for those crimes,

Recognizing that it is necessary and timely to affirm in international law, through this Convention, the principle that there is no period of limitation for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and to secure its universal application,

Have agreed as follows:

Article I

No statutory limitation shall apply to the following crimes, irrespective of the date of their commission:

(a) War crimes as they are defined in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, Nurnberg, of 8 August 1945 and confirmed by resolutions 3 (1) of 13 February 1946 and 95 (I) of 11 December 1946 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, particularly the "grave breaches" enumerated in the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 for the protection of war victims;

(b) Crimes against humanity whether committed in time of war or in time of peace as they are defined in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, Nurnberg, of 8 August 1945 and confirmed by resolutions 3 (I) of 13 February 1946 and 95 (I) of 11 December 1946 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, eviction by armed attack or occupation and inhuman acts resulting from the policy of apartheid, and the crime of genocide as defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and

Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, even if such acts do not constitute a violation of the domestic law of the country in which they were committed.

Article II

If any of the crimes mentioned in article I is committed, the provisions of this Convention shall apply to representatives of the State authority and private individuals who, as principals or accomplices, participate in or who directly incite others to the commission of any of those crimes, or who conspire to commit them, irrespective of the degree of completion, and to representatives of the State authority who tolerate their commission.

Article III

The States Parties to the present Convention undertake to adopt all necessary domestic measures, legislative or otherwise, with a view to making possible the extradition, in accordance with international law, of the persons referred to in article II of this Convention.

Article IV

The States Parties to the present Convention undertake to adopt, in accordance with their respective constitutional processes, any legislative or other measures necessary to ensure that statutory or other limitations shall not apply to the prosecution and punishment of the crimes referred to in articles I and II of this Convention and that, where they exist, such limitations shall be abolished.

Article V

This Convention shall, until 31 December 1969, be open for signature by any State Member of the United Nations or member of any of its specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency, by any State Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, and by any other State which has been invited by the General Assembly of the United Nations to become a Party to this Convention.

Article VI

This Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article VII

This Convention shall be open to accession by any State referred to in article 5. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article VIII

1. This Convention shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after the date of the deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession.

2. For each State ratifying this Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article IX

1. After the expiry of a period of ten years from the date on which this Convention enters into force, a request for the revision of the Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.

Article X

1. This Convention shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit certified copies of this Convention to all States referred to in article V.

3. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States referred to in article V of the following particulars:

(a) Signatures of this Convention, and instruments of ratification and accession deposited under articles V, VI and VII;

(b) The date of entry into force of this Convention in accordance with article VIII;

(c) Communications received under article IX.

Article XI

This Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 26 November 1968.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, being duly authorized for that purpose, have signed this Convention.

Principles of international co-operation in the detection, arrest, extradition and punishment of persons guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

General Assembly resolution 3071 (XXVIII) of 3 December 1973

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 2583 (XXIV) of 15 December 1969, 2712 (XXV) of 15 December 1970, 2840 (XXVI) of 18 December 1971 and 3020 (XXVII) of 18 December 1972,

Taking into account the special need for international action in order to ensure the prosecution and punishment of persons guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity,

Having considered the draft principles of international co-operation in the detection, arrest, extradition and punishment of persons guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity,

Declares that the United Nations, in pursuance of the principles and purposes set forth in the Charter concerning the promotion of co-operation between peoples and the maintenance of international peace and security, proclaims the following principles of international co-operation in the detection, arrest, extradition and punishment of persons guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity:

1. War crimes and crimes against humanity, wherever they are committed, shall be subject to investigation and the persons against whom there is evidence that they have committed such crimes shall be subject to tracing, arrest, trial and, if found guilty, to punishment.
2. Every State has the right to try its own nationals for war crimes against humanity.
3. States shall co-operate with each other on a bilateral and multilateral basis with a view to halting and preventing war crimes and crimes against humanity, and shall take the domestic and international measures necessary for that purpose.
4. States shall assist each other in detecting, arresting and bringing to trial persons suspected of having committed such crimes and, if they are found guilty, in punishing them.
5. Persons against whom there is evidence that they have committed war crime and crimes against humanity shall be subject to trial and, if found guilty, to punishment, as a general rule in the countries in which they committed those crimes. In that connection, States shall co-operate on questions of extraditing such persons.
6. States shall co-operate with each other in the collection of information and evidence which would help to bring to trial the persons indicated in paragraph 5 above and shall exchange such information.
7. In accordance with article I of the Declaration on Territorial Asylum of 14 December 1967, States shall not grant asylum to any person with respect to whom there are serious reasons for considering that he has committed a crime against peace, a war crime or a crime against humanity.
8. States shall not take any legislative or other measures which may be prejudicial to the international obligations they have assumed in regard to the detection, arrest, extradition and punishment of persons guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
9. In co-operating with a view to the detection, arrest and extradition of persons against whom there is evidence that they have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity and, if found guilty, their punishment, States shall act in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.