

Stanford University
Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies
Forum on Contemporary Europe
© March 6, 2008

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**Between Hitler, Beneš, and Tito. Czechoslovak-German and Yugoslav-German
Confrontations in World War II**

It is the essential aim of this paper to present the historical, political, economic, social and internationally recognized legal premises, contexts, background, and consequences of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia between 1939 and 1945, and of Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1945, as well as to highlight the direct and indirect consequences for the German minorities after the end of the war. These include the Sudeten and Carpathian Germans, the “Danube Swabians” in the Vojvodina and East Slavonia, as well as the German Lower Styrians, together with the *Gottscheer*. Even if the Czech, Slovak, Serb, Slovene, and Croat campaigns of retaliation and expulsion were only partially due to the German occupation and annexation, these would point to essential political and moral motivations for the “AVNOJ” Resolutions in 1944/45 and the “Beneš” Decrees in 1945. Therefore, both a comparison of occupation, annexation, resistance, collaboration, revenge and displacement, as well as a comparison of the direct and indirect consequences of the war and post war years, together with the long period of repressed memories are important for an overall assessment.¹

The following facts furnish comparative background:

1. The **cohabitation and coexistence** of the Czech and German people in the Bohemian Lands (present-day Czech Republic), of the Slovak and German people in historical Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia), of the Slovene and German people in Lower Styria and in Carniola (present-day Slovenia), in Croatia-Slavonia (present-day Croatia), and historical Southern Hungary (the present-day Serb Vojvodina, including

¹ Apart from the international historiography, which is concentrated on different matters of my subject, I used archival materials of archives in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Prague, Bratislava, Vienna, Freiburg im Breisgau, as well as of the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford.

Syrmia) were relatively free of insolvable conflict in daily life until 1914. Many German-Bohemians, German-Moravians, German-Silesians, Germans of the Zips (Spiš), Danube Swabians in Banat, Bačka, Syrmia, Baranya, and East-Slavonia, as well as the Lower Styrians and *Gottscheer*, lived in their small towns and villages without any real contact with their Slavic neighbors, and therefore spoke only their own German dialect and understood their Slavic neighbors little or not at all; if anything, they understood Hungarian or Italian. On the other hand, this did not hold true for the (Sudeten) Germans in Prague, Plzeň, České Budějovice, Brno, Jihlava, Olomouc, Ostrava, Český Těšín/Cieszyn, and Bielsko, the (Carpathian) Germans in Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Kremnica, Prešov, and Košice, the Danube Swabians in Vršac, Bela Crkva, Veliki Bečkerek, Velika Kikinda, Pančevo, Zemun, Novi Sad, Sombor, Osijek, Vukovar, and Vinkovci, as well as the Germans in Zagreb, Rijeka, Celje, Ptuj, Maribor, Ljubljana, Gorizia/Nova Gorica, Trieste, and Pula. These town-dwelling Germans lived in relatively close contact with their Czech, Slovak, or South Slavic neighbors—as well as with Jews, Magyars, and Italians—and had diverse economic, social, and cultural contacts with them. Naturally, this was not possible without a certain command of the other language, for which the children were useful. There existed child-exchanges during the summer months, or even for an entire year. In addition, there was an increasing number of ethnic, and to a lesser degree, denominational, intermarriages.²

On the level of political and intellectual rivalry, an increase in “Communities of Conflict”³ and national rivalries began to develop beginning in the 1880s, which included

² Oscar JÁSZI, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago, 1929, ²1961); Adam WANDRUSZKA and Peter URBANITSCH (eds.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, vol. III: *Die Völker des Reiches* (Vienna, 1980); Gerald STOURZH, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs 1848-1918* (Vienna, 1985); Helmut RUMPLER, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa. Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Österreichische Geschichte 1804-1914, Vienna, 1997); Péter HANÁK, *Ungarn in der Donaumonarchie. Probleme der bürgerlichen Umgestaltung eines Vielvölkerstaates* (Vienna – Munich – Budapest, 1984); Robert A. KANN and Zdeněk V. DAVID, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 1526-1918* (Seattle, 1984); Mikluáš TEICH (ed.), *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge, 1998); Elena MANNOVA (ed.), *A Concise History of Slovakia* (Bratislava, 2000); László KONTLER, *A History of Hungary: Millennium in Central Europe* (Houndmills and New York, 2002); Arnold SUPPAN, „’Germans’ in the Habsburg Empire. Language, Imperial Ideology, National Identity, and Assimilation,“ in Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A.J. Szabo (eds.), *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette, Indiana, 2008) 147-190.

³ Jan KŘEN, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft. Tschechen und Deutsche 1780-1918* (Munich, ²2000); Gary COHEN, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton, 1981); Jiří KOŘALKA, *Tschechen im Habsburgerreich und in Europa 1815-1914* (Vienna–Munich, 1991); Otto URBAN, *Die*

reciprocal economic boycott provisions and occasionally degenerated into open ethnic fighting about the use of language in school and administration—as was the case in the Badeni-riots of 1897. While the Czech parties in Bohemia and Moravia pushed for the accordance of equal status for the Czech language and for the linguistic division of state institutions and schools—especially that of the Charles University in Prague, in 1882, the German parties—especially those in Bohemia—began to advocate the administrative division of the country along national lines. The result was that prior to 1914, the formation of two, often splintered, national societies occurred. In the 1880s, this process had begun in the Slovene-inhabited crown lands (*Kronländer*) too; however, it had decelerated due to the Germans' strong social position in the cities—including Ljubljana. Similar tendencies for separation between the Danube Swabians and the Croats or Serbs did not exist in Croatia-Slavonia or in Southern Hungary, as the political and administrative stratification emanated from the Hungarian government, its officials and its educators. It affected both Germans and Southern Slavs alike. The organization of political life also lagged behind developments in Cisleithania. Therefore, the German-Czech conflict conditions in České Budějovice or the German-Slovene conflict in Celje was somewhat tenser than perhaps the Magyar-Serb-German coexistence in Novi Sad.⁴

2. The **First World War**, with its heavy mobilization of people and ideology increased ethnic tensions to a level beyond anything that had occurred prior to that point.⁵ This was directly associated with the Austro-Hungarian campaigns against Serbia and Russia. However, the main problem did not lie in consistent German and Magyar doubts as to the “reliability” of the Slavic regiments, which suffered demonstrably heavy casualties on both the Balkan and Galician fronts—and later on the Italian front. Recent research on the subject shows that, in fact, there were individual deserters—for instance a

tschechische Gesellschaft 1848-1918, 2 vols. (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar, 1994); L. FASORA, J. HANUŠ, J. MALÍŘ (eds.), *Človek na Moravě 19. století. Der Mensch in Mähren des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Brno, 2004).

⁴ Vasilij MELIK, *Wahlen im alten Österreich. Am Beispiel der Kronländer mit slowenischsprachiger Bevölkerung* (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar, 1997); Peter JUDSON, *Inventing Germanness: Class, Ethnicity, and Colonial Fantasy at the Margins of the Habsburg Monarchy*, Working Papers in Austrian Studies 93-2 (Minneapolis, 1993); Scott SPECTOR, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley, 2000); Jeremy KING, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1918* (Princeton, 2002); László KATUS, „Multinational Hungary in the Lights of Statistics,“ in Ferenc Glatz (ed.), *Ethnicity and Society in Hungary* (Budapest, 1990).

⁵ Hew STRACHAN, *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Eine neue illustrierte Geschichte* (Munich, 2006); James J. SHEEHAN, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (Boston–New York, 2008) 69-91.

Slovene First Lieutenant stationed on the Italian Front—but that the defection of entire regiments, or of regimental companies, simply did not occur. At the same time, the claims made by the German national propaganda were just as false, and in there way were identical to those made by the Czech national side, which wanted, above all, to emphasize its military contributions on the side of the Entente.⁶

Even more problematic in the escalating ethnic fighting were the increasing reproaches of support for Pan-Slavism, Pan-Serbianism, and Pan-Russianism made by the German-Austrian and Magyar middle-classes. By the second half of 1914, this gave rise to mass persecutions of Serb, Croat, Slovene, Czech (and Ukrainian) politicians, lawyers, journalists, professors, teachers, priests, and others who were nationally and politically active leading up to 1914. The thousands of summons to court resulted in hundreds of convictions and many long-term prison sentences, as well as death sentences and executions. The cruelty of the military conflict against Serbia and Montenegro in the fall of 1915, and partly the Austrian-Hungarian occupying regime in Serbia and Montenegro until October 1918, poisoned the relationship between the Serbs on one side, and the German-Austrians and Magyars on the other. However, in November 1918, this did not result in a large-scale campaign of revenge in the Vojvodina by the Serbian divisions of the Salonika army – such happened more often against Albanians in Kosovo and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷

3. The relationships of the new nation-states of **Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia** with their German minorities and with Germany and Austria suffered repeated setbacks after 1918 due to a variety of factors. These included conflicts over border-demarcations; the tendency towards “de-Germanization” and “de-Austrianization” (nostrification of foreign companies; land reform to confiscate estates); questions regarding the interpretation of new minority rights (in regards to the school system and the official language); the lack of political participation by minorities until 1923/25; and

⁶ István DEÁK, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York, 1990); Manfred RAUCHENSTEINER, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers. Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Graz–Vienna–Cologne: Böhlau, 1993); Ivan ŠEDIVÝ, *Češi, české země a velká válka 1914-1918* (Prague, 2001). The statement of Hugh AGNEW, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford, 2004) 164, that „the 28th Prague Infantry Regiment surrendered almost to man in the Carpathians on April 3, 1915,“ does not correspond with the reports in the Vienna Kriegsarchiv.

⁷ Milada PAULOVÁ, *Tajný výbor Maffie a spolupráce s Jihoslovany v letech 1916-1918* (Prague, 1968); Andrej MITROVIĆ, *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918* (London, 2007).

discriminatory trade restrictions between the “winning” and “losing” countries. Here, above all, the psychological factor of humiliation must not be underestimated. It is for this reason that the large majority of Sudeten and Carpathian Germans did not regard Czechoslovakia as their country—by definition, the nation state of the “Czechoslovak nation,” with “Czechoslovak” as the official state language. The same was true of the scattered minorities of the Danube Swabians or Lower Styrians and *Gottscheer*, who did not allow them to develop an allegiance to the nation state of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, with “Serb-Croat” as the official state language. Incidentally, neither of the two minority groups was allowed to play a role in the shaping of the new constitutions and administrations.⁸

Because the German Reich became not only a member of the League of Nations, but also the League Council following the Locarno Pact in October 1925, its importance to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia was reinforced, as it now had a voice in the evaluation of minority treaties. On the other hand, the global economic crisis divided the Sudeten and Carpathian Germans, regardless of their political “activism” after 1926, even more strongly from Czechoslovakia. The drop in exports in Sudeten German light industry and the decrease in spa tourism resulted in tremendous large-scale unemployment. In their view, these developments were not opposed strongly enough by the Prague government. When Milan Hodža’s government accepted demands of the younger generation of German “activists” in February and March 1938 (public works contracts for local contractors and labor in the border regions, proportional minority representation in the civil service), it was too late. Many Sudeten Germans had begun to look to Nazi Germany and Hitler in the fight against the mass unemployment. Unfortunately, they could not see the problematic budget manoeuvres of the *Reichsbank* president Hjalmar Schacht. The severe agricultural crisis in Yugoslavia beginning in the late 1920s forced King Alexander I of Yugoslavia to look for new export markets and led to a rapprochement with NS-Germany. Consequently, easements in business and the school

⁸ Zara STEINER, *The Lights That Failed. European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford History of Modern Europe, Oxford, 2005); Ivo BANAC, *The National Question in Yugoslavia* (Ithaca and London, 1984); Arnold SUPPAN, *Jugoslawien und Österreich 1918-1938. Bilaterale Außenpolitik im europäischen Umfeld* (Vienna–Munich, 1996); Zdeněk KARNÍK, *České země v éře První republiky, I: Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky, 1918-1929* (Prague, 2000); Peter VODOPIVEC, „Slovenes and Yugoslavia, 1918-1991,“ in: *The Demise of Yugoslavia* (East European Politics and Societies 6/3, 1992) 220-241.

system for the Danube Swabians (less so for the Lower Styrians and *Gottscheer*) followed. Another explanation of the Yugoslav approach to Germany was the Balkan policy of Benito Mussolini.⁹

Meanwhile, the active and passive cooperation of the German minorities in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia resulted in somewhat varied outcomes. The National Socialist wing of the Sudeten German Party established itself through its victory in the May 1935 parliamentary elections. By November 1937, its *Führer*, Konrad Henlein, had secretly written to Adolf Hitler offering up his party as an instrument for the dismantling of Czechoslovakia and for the annexation not only of the Sudeten region, but also of the “entire Bohemian-Moravian-Silesian region”. Following the *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938, the Sudeten German Party began to support publicly the German *Weltanschauung*—or National Socialism—and called for the recognition of the Sudeten German ethnic group as a legal entity and for compensation “for the injustices inflicted upon the Sudeten Germandom since the year 1918”. After the party had won 90 percent of the German vote in the local elections held in May and June 1938, Henlein systematically refused the Prague government’s (and Beneš’) proposals for autonomy, even the offer of a singular, summary *Gau*, or district, consisting of the most densely German-populated area. Henlein had long promised Hitler to demand far more than the Czechoslovak government could give. On September 12, 1938, at the Nuremberg Party Congress, Hitler threatened that he would no longer tolerate “the further oppression and persecution of those 3.5 million Germans”. With the beginning of unrest in the Sudeten region, the imposition of martial law, and the formation of the “Sudeten German Volunteer Militia” in Germany, France and Great Britain agreed to Hitler’s ultimate demands for annexation, and referred them to the Prague government

⁹ Elisabeth WISKEMANN, *Czechs and Germans. A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* (London–New York–Toronto, 1938); F. Gregory CAMPBELL, *Confrontation in Central Europe: Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia* (Chicago, 1975); Rudolf JAWORSKI, *Vorposten oder Minderheit? Der sudetendeutsche Volkstumskampf in den Beziehungen zwischen Weimarer Republik und der ČSR* (Stuttgart 1977); Piotr S. WANDYCZ, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliances, 1926-1936: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from Locarno to the Remilitarization of the Rhineland* (Princeton, 1988); Jiří KOVTUN, *Republika v nebezpečném světě. Éra prezidenta Masaryka 1918-1935* (Prague, 2005); AGNEW, *The Czechs*, 195; Arnold SUPPAN, *Zwischen Adria und Karawanken* (Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas 7, Berlin, 2002) 375-380. In late July 1934, after the Nazi July Putsch in Austria, Yugoslavia even absorbed over 2,000 emigrant Austrian National Socialists into Slovenia and Croatia, before sending them to Germany by ship. – Dušan NEČAK, *Avstrijska legija II* (Ljubljana 1995).

with the request for acceptance. Despite the mobilization of the powerful Czechoslovak army (which included also the majority of the called-up Sudeten Germans), President Beneš and the Prague government ultimately capitulated and agreed to abide by the resolutions of the Munich Agreement, which had established the surrender of all Czechoslovak borderlands with majority German populations. Indeed, more than 300,000 Czechs, Jews, German Social Democrats and Communists fled into the remaining portion of Czechoslovakia, which had diminished in size by nearly one-third. Nevertheless, the Sudeten German Party played only a peripheral role in the dissolution of the Federal State of Czecho-Slovakia, which had been in existence since October 1938. The new prime minister Rudolf Beran merged the Czech right-wing parties and began to appease Nazi Germany. But on March 14, 1939 Hitler forced the new Czecho-Slovak president Emil Hácha to capitulate. On March 15, German troops invaded Prague and Brno, and the day after Hitler proclaimed at the Prague castle the creation of the “Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia”. Just prior to the German ultimatum to Hácha, Hitler also issued an ultimatum to the Slovak Prime Minister Jozef Tiso, whom the government in Prague had tried to depose, and on March 14 the Slovak Parliament concluded a Declaration of Independence.¹⁰

Likewise, in Yugoslavia, after the Austrian *Anschluss*, National Socialist functionaries began to replace the hitherto authoritative, predominately Catholic *Kulturbund* higher-ups, a process which lasted until May 1939. Just how much significance Hitler attributed to the German minority did not become clear until his October 6, 1939 address at the *Reichstag*, in which he announced the repatriation of people from ethnically German communities in East Central and South East Europe. In the year and a half that followed, thanks to treaties and agreements with the Soviet Union, the Baltic States, and Romania, hundreds of thousands of people of German

¹⁰ Ferdinand SEIBT, *Deutschland und die Tschechen. Geschichte einer Nachbarschaft in der Mitte Europas* (Munich–Zurich, 1993); Ronald SMELSER, *The Sudeten Problem, 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy* (Folkestone, 1975); Peter GLOTZ, Karl-Heinz POLLOK, Karl von SCHWARZENBERG and John van NES ZIEGLER (eds.), *München 1938. Das Ende des alten Europa* (Essen, 1990); Igor LUKES, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s* (New York, 1996); Igor LUKES and Erik GOLDSTEIN (eds.), *The Munich Crisis 1938. Prelude to World War II* (Portland, 1999); Richard J. EVANS, *The Third Reich in Power* (London, 2005) 665-683; Václav HAVEL, „Beneš und das ‚tschechische Dilemma‘. Das Drama eines tschechischen Politikers,“ in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Nr. 90, 19 April 2002, 6.

decent were called upon to return *Heim ins Reich*. But Hitler did not call the Transylvanian Saxons, the Carpathian Germans or the Danube Swabians in Romania, Hungary or Yugoslavia. Up until March 25, 1941, Hitler pursued no grievances against Yugoslavia relating to its German minorities; rather, he first trumpeted them in the war propaganda immediately following the government's collapse in Belgrade on March 27, 1941. Contrary to what the German and Yugoslav propaganda led people to believe, the Danube Swabians and Lower Styrians played only a minor role in the swift occupation of Yugoslavia, even if they did happily greet the German Wehrmacht troops in Banat and Lower Styria.¹¹

4. The **Nazi annexation policies** vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia did not originate from consistent strategic planning on the part of the NS leadership, but developed gradually as part of Hitler's political and military objectives. If he had already formulated a policy of conquest by November 5, 1937 before the Reich's Foreign Secretary, the Reich's War Minister, and the commanders-in-chief of army, navy and air force for dismembering Czechoslovakia and dominating of the Bohemian-Moravian region—not the “freeing” of the Sudeten Germans—as an essential goal of future war, then Hitler believed, up until March 27, 1941, that Yugoslavia, with its metal and agricultural products and a valuable source of raw materials would be able to keep out of the warlike conflict. While the targeted and aggressive annexation of Czechoslovakia, under the threat of military assault, required half-a-year, the conquest of Yugoslavia came after an eleven-day-long *Blitzkrieg*. To facilitate the German Reich's policy against Czechoslovakia, a renewal of the important political alliances between Poland and Hungary was carried out. In the conquest of Yugoslavia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Hungary played direct roles. After the division of Czechoslovakia, the Third Reich annexed almost the entire Bohemian-Moravian-Silesian region, Poland keeping only a small area around Cieszyn and small areas within the Carpathian Mountains. But the Reich established, for the first time, an independent Slovakia as a “buffer-state”, which had to abandon two German populated suburbs of Bratislava to the *Reichsgau Niederdonau*. In addition, the

¹¹ Dušan BIBER, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933-1941* (V Ljubljani, 1966); Hans-Ulrich WEHLER, *Nationalitätenpolitik in Jugoslawien. Die deutsche Minderheit 1918-1978* (Göttingen, 1980); SUPPAN, *Zwischen Adria und Karawanken*, 380-422.

southernmost border regions of Slovakia with a Magyar majority were given to Hungary, which also annexed the Carpathian Rus'.¹²

Yugoslavia was divided into approximately equal pieces between the Germans and Italians, with smaller ones going to Bulgaria and Hungary. At the same time, the new so-called Independent State of Croatia, led by the Ustasha, became a satellite state of Germany and Italy until the middle of 1943. Afterwards, it became one of Hitler's last surviving allies. The divisions of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia resulted in the great majority of Czechs, Slovaks, and Croats being lumped by Berlin together in a more or less dependant state-entity, while the Serbs and Slovenes were divided into occupation zones; however, a puppet government under General Nedić was installed in Belgrade, but not in Ljubljana, where General Rupnik got only the command of the *domobranci*.¹³

The NS command structure in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia acted under differing titles and had both direct and indirect control: German civil administrations in *Sudetenland*, Southern Moravia, and Southern Bohemia, as well as in Lower Styria, and Upper Carniola; a Czech government in Prague headed by General Alois Eliáš under German protectorate (Konstantin Freiherr von Neurath) and a Serb government in Belgrade (General Milan Nedić) with German military administration; a Slovak government in Bratislava (President Jozef Tiso; Prime minister Vojtech Tuka) along with a Croat government in Zagreb (*Poglavnik* Ante Pavelić) that were under German control. This illustrates the different levels of the Slovaks and Croats on the one side and of the Czechs, Slovenes, and Serbs on the other side in the hierarchy of the new National Socialist Europe, as well as the cooperation of different governments with NS policy. This was true of both foreign policy (especially in regards to the question of participation in the war against the Allied forces) and domestic affairs, especially in regards to the question of Jewish persecution and extermination.¹⁴

¹² George F. KENNAN, *From Prague After Munich: Diplomatic Papers, 1938-1940* (Princeton, 1971); EVANS, *The Third Reich*, 683-688; Ljubo BOBAN, *Hrvatske granice od 1918. do 1992. godine* (Zagreb, 1992).

¹³ Jozo TOMASEVICH, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. The Chetniks* (Stanford, 1975); Tone FERENC (ed.), *Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Entnationalisierungspolitik in Slowenien 1941-1945. Viri o nacistični raznarodovalni politiki v Sloveniji 1941-1945* (Maribor, 1980); Dušan NEČAK (ed.), *Nemci' na Slovenskem 1941-1955* (Ljubljana, 1998).

¹⁴ Zdeněk BENEŠ and Václav KURAL (eds.), *Geschichte verstehen. Die Entwicklung der deutsch-tschechischen Beziehungen in den böhmischen Ländern 1848-1948* (Prague, 2002); Livia ROTHKIRCHEN, *The Jews of Bohemia & Moravia. Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln-Jerusalem, 2005).

A Jewish lady who fled from Prague to London on March 24, 1939 reported:

“[...] We understand that hundreds of people who have been in refugee camps have run away into the woods. We know that there are between 600 and one thousand people moving about Prague, who are starving and cannot sleep in the same place twice [...]. Those [Jews] who can get enough money together are trying to emigrate to England, but when they reach the border at Bendheim the Dutch authorities hold them unless they have British visas, which have not been required on Czech passports up to now. I met 18 such refugees, including little children. They had not had food for two days, although they have wealthy relatives and guarantees in London. They were not permitted to take more than 100 crowns out of the country, and the Germans were refusing to cash crowns for marks even to permit to buy food.”¹⁵

5. With regard to **NS-occupation policy**, a long list of political, military, and law enforcement orders were issued. These orders came in part directly from Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich, and in part from the acting military command, high-ranking SS officers, and the police leadership, as well as the *Gauleiter* (Nazi district leaders). These orders clearly went against the international rules of war, which also applied to the German Reich during World War II. Especially for the *Unternehmen Barbarossa* or the war against the Soviet Union, a whole list of violations against the regulations of international rules of war occurred. The violations eventually also took place in the occupation zones of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, especially in Serbia where a ratio (*Sühnequote*) of 1:100 existed in regard to the shooting of Serb and Jewish hostages. The extermination of the Jews of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Vojvodina, and Serbia loomed especially large because of the number of victims concerned. In the Protectorate and in Slovakia, the prominent members of the SS were responsible for the deportations to Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and other death camps, but the *Wehrmacht* was responsible for the thoroughness of the exterminations in Serbia in 1941. The responsibility for the extermination of a large part of the Croat and Bosnian Jews lies with the Ustasha regime. The responsibility for the shootings of Serbs and Jews in Novi Sad and the surrounding areas in January 1942 belongs to the Hungarian regime.¹⁶

¹⁵ Excerpts from letters by one who left Prague [on] March 24 [1939], in Archiv ústavu T. G. Masaryka (Prague), Fond Edvard Beneš II, V 51/3b.

¹⁶ Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (ed.), *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944. Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg, 2002); Jozo TOMASEVICH, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, 2001) 580-608; Norman M. NAIMARK, *Flammender Hass. Ethnische Säuberungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2004) 77-106; Ivo GOLDSTEIN, *Croatia. A History* (London, 1999).

The perfidious occupation policy of the SS, and eventually the Gestapo and the security forces in the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia, held the Czech people captive – pushing on the workers with carrot and stick policy and punishing the intellectuals. Many isolated acts and waves of terror followed. Demonstrations on October 28, 1939 accompanied the closing of all Czech universities and technical colleges and the deportation of 1,200 students to concentration camps. Mass-shootings and mass-arrests at the end of September 1941 took place following SS General Reinhard Heydrich's ascension to power as Deputy *Reichsprotektor*. The assassination of Heydrich on May 27, 1942, which was ordered by Beneš and his intelligence service chief Moravec, was followed by mass-executions and the total destruction of the small villages Lidice and Ležáky, as well as the execution of all men and a part of women living within the villages, and the deliberate execution of Czech intellectuals between June and September 1942. Nevertheless, the occupying policy of the SS and police commander, the Sudeten German Karl Hermann Frank, was in general “successful”. This can be measured by the achievement of the immediate goal of the National Socialists in making the greatest possible demands on Bohemia and Moravia for the German wartime economy. This certainly exacerbated the short-comings of the Czech resistance and the longtime blockage of any possible insurgence. Last but not least, this was a result of Frank's concept of a gradually increasing threat of terror. Although Frank's policy could without a doubt be categorized as inhumane and, was considered a war crime, it was more lenient in light of the situation than the more brutal occupation policies of other NS functionaries in Slovenia and Serbia. But Heydrich himself outlined in terrible words the fate of the Czech people in a private speech from the beginning of October 1941 in the event of a German ultimate victory: the *Germanization* of the “*guttrassigen and gutgesinnten*”, the deportation and extermination of the “*schlechtrassigen and schlechtgesinnten*”, the sterilization of the “*schlechtrassig gutgesinnten*”, and the extermination of the “*guttrassig schlechtgesinnten*” Czechs if they were not willing to be *Germanized*.¹⁷

¹⁷ Vojtěch MASTNÝ, *The Czechs under Nazi Rule: The Failure of National Resistance, 1939-1942* (New York, 1971); Miroslav KÁRNÝ, Jaroslava MILOTOVÁ and Margita KÁRNÁ (eds.), *Deutsche Politik im „Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren“ unter Reinhard Heydrich 1941-42. Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin, 1997); Bernhard R. KROENER, Rolf-Dieter MÜLLER, Hans UMBREIT, *Organisation und Mobilisierung des deutschen Machtbereichs, 2. Halbbd. Kriegsverwaltung, Wirtschaft und personelle Ressourcen* (Stuttgart, 1999); AGNEW, *The Czechs*, 208-214.

The most egregious offences against the laws of war as carried out by the NS in Yugoslavia, were chronologically as follows: the bombing of entire cities, such as Belgrade in April 1941; the deportation of over 60,000 Slovenes from Lower Styria and Upper Carniola between June 1941 and July 1942 to Croatia, Serbia, and Germany; the disproportional mass shootings of prisoners of war and civil hostages in Serbia in the fall of 1941, and in Slovenia from the winter of 1941/1942 onwards; the mass recruiting of male and female workers in Slovenia and Serbia; and the mass recruiting of Slovene soldiers. However, war reprisals and the mass-shootings of prisoners of war were not expressly forbidden in any laws of war as long as a recognizable proportionality was not surpassed. The use of excessively violent measures created and determined the playing fields between the Germans, on one hand, and the Czechs, Serbs, Slovenes, and Slovaks on the other—the worst being in Kraljevo and Kragujevac in Serbia in 1941, in a series of Slovene villages between 1942 and 1944, in Lidice and Ležáky in 1942, as well as in a series of Slovak villages in the fall of 1944. By the end of the war, there was little differentiation between the Germans from the *Altreich*, from Austria, or from other ethnically German areas; perhaps more importantly, there was little differentiation between German war criminals and totally innocent German civilians. The Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer seemed to be correct when he wrote an epigram in 1849 after witnessing the battles in Upper Italy and Vojvodina: “The path of modern education runs from humanity through nationality, to bestiality.”¹⁸

A lieutenant from the Office of Strategic Services – presumably Wayne Vucinich – who visited around the New Year 1945 the southern part of the Yugoslav Banat, reported on the rule of the German *Volksgruppe*, which exercised thorough control and organized efficient exploitation of this agriculturally fertile region:

“[...] The Serbs in this area, thoroughly suppressed, confused and frightened, worked hard for the enemy. The *Volksgruppe*, which was far more brutal than forces from Germany, controlled their lives to the last detail. Every untoward act was ruthlessly punished. Restrictions on the movements of the individuals were so thorough that a peasant could not even visit a village three miles away without special permission.

¹⁸ Klaus SCHMIDER, *Partisanenkrieg in Jugoslawien 1941-1944* (Hamburg, 2002); Franz GRILLPAZER, *Sämtliche Werke. Ausgewählte Briefe, Gespräche, Berichte*, hg. von Peter Frank und Karl Pörnbacher, vol. 1 (Stuttgart–Zürich, 1960) 500; Holm SUNDHAUSSEN, „Der Ustascha-Staat: Anatomie eines Herrschaftssystems,“ in: *Kroatien. Landeskunde – Geschichte – Kultur – Politik – Wirtschaft – Recht* (Österreichische Osthefte, Sonderband, Vienna – Cologne – Weimar, 1995) 251-287.

Within the villages all movements were forbidden from eight in the evening until eight in the morning. This latter rule was strictly enforced in 1944, however.”¹⁹

6. President Beneš ordered from his exile in London that **vengeance and retribution** be visited upon all Germans. This was also how the Czech and Slovak resistance saw the situation in their respective countries. Similar orders were issued by Marshall Tito in October 1944, as well as by Communist Party head Boris Kidrič from Slovenia in the main square of Maribor in June 1945. Not only were revenge and restitution called for, but at the same time, the creation of a “revolutionary climate” that would rid the countries of Germans, preferably in the framework of military operations. This was possible in Slovakia as the Red Army pushed towards Bratislava; and in Vojvodina towards Hungary. This only met with marginal success by the Partisans in Croatia and Slovenia, and almost not at all in Bohemia and Moravia. According to German and Soviet reports in Upper Silesia, Moravia, and the Vojvodina even hardened Soviet tank commanders were shocked by the persecution of German civilians, persecuted by Polish, Czech, and Serbian “partisans” and “revolutionaries” and therefore intervened on occasion. Beneš and other exiled politicians wanted de facto to camouflage the driving-out of Germans civilians as “national revolutions connected to a social revolution”, using the pent-up rage from the NS occupation as fuel. In the middle of April 1945, the Czechoslovak Košice government called on the Czech and the Slovak people not to have any mercy on the German enemy and to avenge German atrocities. The Czech people, during the Prague insurrection between May 5 and 8, experienced German firebombings of the city center and the use by SS units of women and children as hostages for protection against insurgents’ barricades. After Soviet tank commanders had already reached the city, the National Assembly on May 9 demanded of the people: “Capture the German murderers, and if they offer any resistance, kill them.” President Beneš stated in Brno on May 12, 1945 that: “The German people [...] appear to be, for us, the single largest human threat.”²⁰

¹⁹ OSS, Research and Analysis Branch, Field Memorandum 145 (FR-254), 2 February 1945, Report on the Situation in the Banat, Belgrade, 14 January 1945, in Hoover Institution Archives, Wayne S. Vucinich papers, box 1.

²⁰ Edvard BENEŠ, *Odsun Němců z Československa* (Prague, 1996) 137 f.; Samuel W. MITCHAM, Jr., *The German Defeat in the East, 1944-45* (Stackpole Military History Series, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2001).

The *Deutschenhass* (hatred for the Germans) of the exiled Czech politicians and resistance activists, as well as of large segments of the population grew on one hand out of the role of the Sudeten German Party in the carving-up of Czechoslovakia and out of the terror regime of Heydrich and Frank. On the other hand, it was a product of their anger at their own passiveness during “Munich”, specifically at the military’s impotence, and the more active resistance in Poland, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia. The deliberate instigation of reckless action on the part of Czech people by their main representatives—President Beneš, Prime Minister Fierlinger, and Communist Party head Gottwald—should not be underestimated.²¹

The first great acts of revenge against the Germans in Yugoslavia followed directly after the capture of Vojvodina by the Red Army, which advanced from Romania and Bulgaria into Serbia and Southern Hungary in October 1944. In the wake of the Russian soldiers, who raped countless numbers of women, Yugoslav partisans killed over 7,000 German civilians in the Banat, the Bačka, and Syrmia. These civilians neither could be evacuated in time, nor did they have the chance to flee. By order of two members of the Polit office of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Moša Pijade and Aleksandar Ranković, Commissions for the Freedom of the People and the OZNA (Department for Protection of the People), which was formed by Tito’s order on May 13, 1944 as the Communist Secret Police, organized the Peoples’ Court of Justice and the shooting-commandos. The OZNA executed especially industrialists, affluent businessmen, rich farmers, professionals, teachers, and clergymen. Rich Magyars and Serbs were not spared from the killings. On August 15, 1944 was established the KNOJ (Corps of the National Defense of Yugoslavia). Its main task was to keep order on liberated territory and to enforce “the liquidation of Chetnik, Ustasha, White Guard and other anti-people gangs”. The new regime in Yugoslavia was trying to collect data for all real and potential “people’s enemies” and “war criminals”. Also political opponents, real or supposed, were killed, imprisoned or sentenced.²²

²¹ Emilia HRABOVEC, *Vertreibung und Abschub. Deutsche in Mähren 1945-1947* (Frankfurt am Main etc., 1995).

²² Tamara GRIESSER-PEČAR, *Das zerrissene Volk. Slowenien 1941-1946. Okkupation, Kollaboration, Bürgerkrieg, Revolution* (Vienna–Cologne–Graz, 2003); Michael PORTMANN, *Die kommunistische Revolution in der Vojvodina* (PhD dissertation Vienna, 2005).

The number of Germans killed in Croatia and Slovenia, which were first seized by the partisan armies in April and May 1945, was not as high as in Vojvodina. This had less to do with a reduction in the feeling of hatred for the Germans, and more with the fact that the majority of Germans from Croatia and Slovenia had been already evacuated as the fleeing German armies pulled out of those regions. Nevertheless, among the tens-of-thousands of German prisoners of war, countless died. Following the end of the war, partisan fighters executed whole lists of Croat, Slovene, and Serb “collaborators” (*Ustaše, Domobrani, Domobranici, and Četnici*), those mass-graves in Slovenia only began being discovered in the 1990s. But Aleksandar Ranković, the chief of the OZNA, was unsatisfied with the work of his men: “During 10 days in liberated Zagreb only 200 bandits was shot. [...] You work contrary to our orders since we have told you to work quickly and efficiently and to finish all in the first days.”²³

7. Directly following the end of the war was the “**lawless displacement**” of Germans and Magyars from Czechoslovakia. Germans and Magyars were declared as “enemies of the state” and whole segments of the population were arrested, interned, and chased from their land, while their property was confiscated without compensation. German civilians were singled-out by having *Swastikas* drawn on their backs, or, following the example for the Jews, were forced to wear an “N” for “German” (*Němec*) sewn onto their clothes. Part of the German population was placed in concentration camps, while others were used as forced labor, while still others were transported in freight cars over the border. Czech officials initially allowed Germans to take with them thirty to fifty kilograms of belongings, necessities for three to seven days, as well as fifty to 300 Reich marks in cash. However, few Germans were able to escape the Czech militias, revolutionary soldiers, or security forces still in possession of their belongings. In this manner, from the beginning of May to the beginning of August 1945, 450,000 Sudeten Germans were expelled to the Soviet-controlled German sector, 200,000 to the American-controlled German sector, and 150,000 to Austria.

Members of the Czechoslovak army, armed revolutionaries, freed prisoners, and Soviet soldiers handed out justice, either alone or in lynch mobs, to known or suspected

²³ Hrvatski institut za povijest (ed.), *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944.-1946. Dokumenti* (Slavonski Brod, 2005) doc. 28; Vladimir GEIGER – Ivan JURKOVIĆ, *Što se dogodilo s Folksdojčerima? Sudbina Nijemaca u bivšoj Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb, 1993).

National Socialists and collaborators. With the close of the Moravian Central National Commission, German able-bodied men were brought to a work camp in Brno. On the morning of May 31, 1945, 26,000 German women, children, and elderly were put on the road out of Brno and force-marched towards the Austrian border. Of these, almost 1,000 people did not survive the sadistic displacement. A mass murder of Germans also happened at Ústí nad Labem, on July 31, 1945, after an explosion in an ammunition depot. This Prague-instigated shooting supposedly influenced the negotiations in Potsdam to favor a faster expulsion of Germans. In Western and Southern Bohemia, the Third US Army hindered larger excesses against displaced persons. Criticisms voiced came from the House of Commons after a British newspaper covered a Reuter's report about Czech displacement practices. Meanwhile, thousands of Germans were placed in barracks, movie-theater auditoriums, and guesthouses as the prisons, penitentiaries and camps filled up. Forced-labor, violence, rape, starvation, and disease caused mass-deaths and often led to suicides. After a year-long detailed study, Tomáš Staněk estimated the number of deaths in the camps at between 4,000 and 5,000 people. During the period from the end of October to the beginning of November 1945, there were an estimated 300 internment camps and prisons with a total of 150,000 prisoners documented in Bohemia, Moravia, and Czech-Silesia.²⁴

By October of 1944, Germans and Magyars were arrested and imprisoned in Vojvodina as “persons of suspicion to the state.” However, the Communist military administration began to differentiate between the two ethnic groups after December 1, 1944. Beginning at Christmas 1944, 8,000 women and 4,000 men were taken from the Danube Swabian camps and villages and deported to the Soviet Union for purposes of forced labor. After January 1945, the mass-confinement of around 170,000 Danube Swabian men, women, and children in work and starvation camps occurred in Bačka and Banat. Over 50,000 of these people didn't survive this internment.²⁵

²⁴ Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen (ed.), *Vertreibung und Vertreibungsverbrechen 1945-1948. Bericht des Bundesarchivs vom 28. Mai 1974. Archivalien und ausgewählte Erlebnisberichte* (Bonn, 1989); Tomáš STANĚK, *Verfolgung 1945. Die Stellung der Deutschen in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien (außerhalb der Lager und Gefängnisse)*, (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar, 2002); Giles MACDONOUGH, *After the Reich. The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation* (New York, 2007) 125-159.

²⁵ Donaueschwäbische Kulturstiftung (ed.), *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*, 4 vols. (Munich–Sindelfingen, 1993-1997).

8. **Resettlement plans** had already been developed during the interwar period. Not only Hitler and Stalin, but also Churchill, considered ethnic cleansing to be a tolerable political instrument in order to align future political and national borders. The example of the 1922/23 “population exchange” between Turkey and Greece was widely known and carried no negative stigma. Beneš was also an advocate of *ethnic engineering*. In the course of 1938, he had already developed five plans for the division of Czechs and Germans, whereby the fifth plan endeavored to combine a partial resettlement of the Sudeten Germans with the surrender of the Sudeten German borderlands. If from his exile, Beneš could still envisage in 1939 another compromise between the cession of territories to Germany and the resettlement of a portion of the Sudeten Germans, then by the fall 1940, he had already determined on a resettlement of all Sudeten Germans from post-war Czechoslovakia. Under the impact of the German repression, first under Heydrich, and then after his murder—particularly evident in the liquidation of the village of Lidice—Beneš attained on July 6, 1942, the public rescission of the Munich Agreements by the British government, as well as the secret approval for the general principle of the transfer of German minorities from Central and Southeastern Europe after the war. In the spring of 1943, U.S. President Roosevelt agreed, followed in December 1943 by Generalissimus Stalin and Foreign Minister Molotov— together with the exiled leadership of the Czechoslovak Communists. All the same, uncertainty as to whether the Allies would keep their word concerned the Czechs in exile, the opposition on the home-front, and ultimately, by the end of the war, the Košice government. After all, neither the Red Army in Moravia, Eastern and Central Bohemia, nor the U.S. Army in Western and Southern Bohemia were interested in any more chaos. Nevertheless, in May, June, and July 1945, both the Russians and the Americans allowed the “lawless displacement” of hundreds-of-thousands of Sudeten Germans in the German and Austrian occupation zones. It was not until the Potsdam Conference on August 2, 1945 that they put an end to these illegal displacement campaigns and arranged for the “orderly and humane transfer” of German people out of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. With that, the Allies met the basic demands of the Czech, Slovak, and Southern Slav nationalists who wanted the

land—but without its German population, regardless of whether it had constituted a majority or a minority.²⁶

On August 2, 1945, the Beneš Decree was issued which denied Germans and Magyar, with the exception of the “antifascists”, the citizenship and was the legal basis for coerced resettlement. The Prague government explained to the Allied Control Council for Germany that there were still 2.5 million Germans left to evacuate – a number which was surely exaggerated. On November 20, 1945, the Allied Control Council agreed to the dispersion of displaced persons to occupied zones in Germany: 1.75 million Germans from Czechoslovakia would be deported to the U.S. zone, and 750,000 to the Soviet zone. The Prague Department of the Interior was meant to administer the *Abschub* (*odsun*), or evacuation through its “regional settlement agencies” in cooperation with its “national committees”, which were organized by the police force and the army. After finalizing the date, the Germans were brought to a holding camp, where they waited for up to three weeks for evacuation transport. U.S. authorities persuaded the Prague government to allow the Germans to bring with them fifty kilograms of luggage, along with three days worth of necessities, as well as 1,000 Reich marks per person. The bringing of any objects of value, apart from wedding rings, was still forbidden. However, the Americans insisted that only whole families be deported and that there be a doctor’s examination before compulsory eviction. Each transport was to consist of forty freight cars, with nearly 1,200 people who would be accompanied by German doctors and nurses. In March 1946, the Czechoslovak government learned that Stalin had coerced the reluctant Marshall Georgij K. Žukov into accepting even more Sudeten Germans into the Soviet-occupied zone. From the middle of June until the end of October 1946, an additional 630,000 Germans were thereupon deported into the Soviet-occupied zone, whereby they were allowed to bring fifty kilograms of luggage and 500 Reich marks.²⁷

“Antifascists” and certain groups of skilled tradesmen, whom Czechoslovakia needed, were exempted from the displacement and remained. An “antifascist” was considered to be any person “who had remained true to the Czechoslovak Republic, had

²⁶ Detlev BRANDES, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung 1938-1945. Pläne und Entscheidungen zum ‚Transfer‘ der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen* (Munich, 2001).

²⁷ Alfred M. de ZAYAS, *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Anglo-Americans and the Expulsion of the Germans – Background, Execution, Consequences* (London, 1979).

never gone against the Czech and Slovak people, and had either taken an active part in the fight for his freedom, or had suffered under the NS-Terror.” In the face of the hate-filled, anti-German sentiment, however, nearly 53,000 German Social Democrats emigrated to the American-occupied zone, by July 1947, and almost 43,000 Communists to the Soviet-occupied zone. Even still, in 1947 roughly 240,000 Germans remained behind, often involuntarily. These were mostly skilled craftsmen and their families who, among others, were employed at the Jachymov uranium mine.²⁸

Clearly, there was no comparable master plan for the displacement and resettlement of the Yugoslav ethnic Germans in either the AVNOJ leadership or in Marshall Tito’s closest staff (in any case, none has been made known to date). However, plans among Serb intellectuals existed for achieving a Serb majority in the Vojvodina through the resettlement of the Danube Swabians and Magyars. The most famous of these plans came from one of the seven assassins responsible for the death of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Vaso Čubrilović, who became the Yugoslav Minister for Agriculture and Land Reform in March 1945. In Yugoslavia, mass expulsion and imprisonment in camps of certain ethnic groups—especially Germans—was less a revenge for their real or presumed support for the Nazi ideology and the Nazi occupation policy and more a way to change the national structure of population on specific territories (mainly in the Vojvodina, in Slavonia, and in Slovenia) and to attempt to solve social problems. The new government was aware of the fact that confiscation of property of real and supposed enemies opened the possibility for realisation of land reform and colonisation. Confiscation of “public enemies” property was anticipated by the decision of the Presidium of the “Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia” (AVNOJ) on November 21, 1944 to transfer the “enemy property” and the property of absent persons under state administration. As a result of an amendment to the proceedings and interpretation of the AVNOJ Resolutions of November 21, 1944, the international historiography is even today in agreement that, on this day, there was not only a resolution on expropriation, but also a resolution on disenfranchisement, which is not actually true. The Yugoslav Germans lost their earlier citizenship not due to an

²⁸ Adrian von ARBURG, *Zwischen Vertreibung und Integration. Tschechische Deutschenpolitik 1947-1953* (PhD dissertation Prague, 2004).

AVNOJ Resolution, but rather, in the summer of 1945, through their loss of voting rights. On June 9, 1945 the Law on confiscation on property and implementation of confiscation was enacted. These measures disqualified all potential enemies and at the same time meant the possibility for higher communist officials to acquire material benefits. The intention of the new communist authorities was obviously to economically destroy all social classes which were considered the enemies of the new social order.²⁹

Independent from the Serb demographic ambitions, the “Slovene National Liberation Council” (OF) developed as early as February 1944 strategies to deport the Lower Styrians from the Slovene region due to their role in NS occupation policies. Above all, members of the *Kulturbund* (cultural association) or other NS organizations, along with their families, were to be expelled from the country. Indeed, even today, it remains unclear why the Yugoslav government did not ask the Potsdam Conference for the mandatory resettlement of the mostly interned Germans who remained in Yugoslavia in July 1945. When the Tito government submitted this request to the Allied forces in January 1946, the U.S.A. and Great Britain declined, as the mass transports had just begun from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

9. The **AVNOJ Resolutions and Beneš Decrees** and the fate of the Danube Swabians, the German Lower Styrians, *Gottscheer*, and *Laibacher*, as well as the Sudeten and Carpathian Germans are for the most part – though not completely – to be understood as political and legal reactions to the German occupation forces in Serbia (including Vojvodina) and Slovenia and in the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia (and, as of August 1944, also in Slovakia) on the other hand. The idea of “revenge against Munich” played an especially important role in the Czechoslovak exile in London around President Beneš. Neither in Yugoslavia nor in Czechoslovakia were any laws, decrees, or other legal actions adopted which would have expressly authorized German displacement and mandatory resettlement. Thus, still today in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Serbia there are politicians, lawyers, and historians who contend that the displacement and mandatory resettlement were direct consequences of the war—in the case of those who fled from the Red Army or from the Yugoslav partisans—or who attempt to make excuses on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement or the Allied Control Council for

²⁹ *Partizanska i komunistička represija*, 28.

Germany. Some even cite both chains of events as determining factors. To that end, it must be noted that the flight and evacuation before the Red Army affected essentially only in parts of the Vojvodina (specifically in Sylvania) and Slovakia, while the flight from partisans only occurred in Vojvodina and Slovenia. What should particularly not be overlooked is that both the Belgrade and Prague governments deprived the Germans of any available possibility for livelihood through their resolutions of expropriation. Furthermore, the Czechoslovak government had prepared a “forced eviction decree”. The only reason this was not enforced was the Potsdam Agreement.

A retribution decree signed by President Beneš on June 19, 1945, “for the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors, and accessories”, aimed at punishing crimes against humanity and freedom, or war crimes, but also “attacks against the Republic.” In the case of temporarily enacted “extraordinary People’s Courts”, drumhead court-martials were used in which trials had to be concluded within three days. In these proceedings, appeals were barred and sentences were executed within two hours of the rulings. The Czech People’s Court handed down 475 death sentences against Germans, and 234 against Czechs; 443 life sentences to Germans, and 293 to Czechs; 19,888 people were given up to ten years in prison; 9,132 were freed of any charges; and 5,129 people fled or died during the process. Provided that the goal had been “to contribute to the fight for the recovery of freedom for Czechs and Slovaks, or fight for the deserved retaliation against acts committed by the occupiers and their helpers”, a May 8, 1946 law declared that all misfeasance committed between the time of the Munich Agreement and October 28, 1945, would go unpunished. An amnesty was not, however, issued! This judicially problematic policy of forgiving punishments, for which there were comparable rules in France, Italy, Belgium, and Austria, is unfortunately still in place in the Czech Republic.³⁰

The communist leadership of the Yugoslav partisan movement publicly preached the creation of a new state on democratic principles, with respect to human, civil, national and ethnic rights and international civil and military laws with the establishment of a legal framework for punishment of war criminals and “people’s enemies”. But the real

³⁰ Benjamin FROMMER, *National Cleansing. Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, 2005).

actions of the political and military leaders, as well as of the policemen completely disregarded the official principles. The paragraphs of criminal law were misinterpreted during trials and in numerous cases elimination of real and possible enemies and robbery of their property took place without any form of legal proceedings. Following countless drumhead court-martials during the war and thousands of death sentences, mass-sentencing ceased in Communist Yugoslavia. The new style of justice concentrated on show-trials against German generals, SS leaders, NS functionaries, previous advocates of that ethnic group, and leading “collaborators”. In this way, the Austrian-born Colonel General Alexander Löhr and the Chetnik-leader Draža Mihailović were executed in Belgrade, the Lutheran Regional Bishop Philipp Popp was executed in Zagreb, and General Rupnik as well as the Carinthian District Leader for the Reich Friedrich Rainer were executed in Ljubljana. Rainer had been responsible for the entire occupation district between the Karawanken Mountains and the Adriatic after September 1943.³¹

The AVNOJ Resolutions and Beneš Decrees had numerous consequences. The worst of these naturally involved the complete expropriation and loss of rights of most of the Sudeten and Carpathian Germans, most of the Danube Swabians, and most of the Slovene Germans. Using the Beneš Decrees Nr. 12 and 108, the Sudeten and Carpathian Germans (and Magyars) were stripped, without compensation, of a total of 1.62 million hectares of arable land and 1.3 million hectares of forest, or more than 29,000 km² (a total land area larger than Moravia!), in addition to nearly 3,900 industrial concerns, 34,000 handicraft enterprises, hundreds-of-thousands of commercial operations, homes, and apartments, as well as banks, insurance policies, hotels, treatment facilities, medical practices, attorney’s offices, libraries, theaters, museums, and 120,000 motor vehicles. The Sudeten Germans estimated the total loss to 33,516 billion Reich marks. Due to the AVNOJ Resolution of November 21, 1944, the Danube Swabians and Slovene Germans lost all of their real estate, and the larger part of their moveable property: a total of individual 96,874 possessions with 636,847 hectares of agriculture and forestry land, all industrial concerns, 8,268 handicraft enterprises, commercial operations, houses,

³¹ *The Trial of Dragoljub-Draža Mihailović*. Stenographic records and documents, published by the Union of Journalists’ Associations (Belgrade, 1946); [People’s Republic of Slovenia] (ed.), *Proces proti vojni zločincem in izdajalcem Rupniku, Rösenerju, Rožmanu, Kreku, Vizjaku, in Hacinu* (Ljubljana, 1946); Maurice WILLIAMS, *Gau, Volk und Reich. Friedrich Rainer und der österreichische Nationalsozialismus* (Klagenfurt, 2005).

apartments, banks, insurance policies, hotels, treatment facilities, medical practices, attorney's offices, libraries, theaters, museums, etc. The total loss of assets in the accepted currency and 1945 price ratio amounted to 84,266,690,000 Dinar, which, when converted to Reich marks, and then to the ratio of the 1982 German mark, is equivalent to a loss of 15,589 billion German marks.³²

Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia certainly submitted data to the reparation conference in Paris in 1946 regarding personal and material losses which amounted to markedly higher totals than those calculated by the German displaced persons. The Federal Republic of Germany began to pay reparations to Yugoslavia under different legal titles beginning in the 1950s. In addition, according to its 1955 state treaty, Austria also had to renounce all claims to Austrian assets in Yugoslavia held prior to 1938 (24,000 hectares of agricultural and forestry land, industrial concerns and handicraft enterprises, houses, apartments, bank balances, insurance policies, hotels, treatment facilities, medical practices, attorney's offices, patents, means of transportation, etc.). In 1954 and 1955, however, both Bonn and Vienna were forced to renounce claims against allied and associated countries, a point which has been forgotten in some political and international law discussions that have taken place after 1990.

10. A summary also requires a description of the **death toll of war**. According to the 1930 population census, the population of Czechoslovakia before the Munich Agreements equaled at least 15 million, of which 7.5 million were Czechs, 3.3 million Germans, 2.4 million Slovaks, 730,000 Magyars, 580,000 Ukrainians (*Rusini*), 350,000 Jews, 90,000 Poles, and 50,000 Roma. Between October 1938 and December 1946, nearly 600,000 of these people violently lost their lives: in NS death and concentration camps, as soldiers on the frontlines, in guerilla warfare, by military and police executions, as victims of bombings, by forced labor, and by expulsion. The greatest number of victims was Jews, of which all told 270,000 were murdered, predominately in Auschwitz: 80,000 from the Bohemian lands, 70,000 from Slovakia, 80,000 from the Carpathian Rus', and 40,000 from the area of Southern Slovakia which was ceded to

³² Karel JECH, Jan KUKLÍK, and Vladimír MIKULE (eds.), *Němci a Maďaři v dekretech prezidenta republiky. Studie a dokumenty 1940-1945. Die Deutschen und Magyaren in den Dekreten des Präsidenten der Republik. Studien und Dokumente 1940-1945* (Brno, 2003).

Hungary.³³ 6,000 Roma also fell prey to racist persecution. The Sudeten and Carpathian Germans counted roughly 180,000 soldiers killed in action, and 30,000 victims of displacement. The Czechs suffered a death toll of 40,000-45,000 (including victims of concentration camps and imprisonment, the executed, guerilla fighters and allied soldiers killed in action, forced laborers, and victims of bombings); the Slovaks counted approximately 40,000 victims (insurrectionists, partisans, soldiers, the executed, forced laborers, and victims of bombings). The number of Czechoslovak Magyars, *Rusini*, and Poles who violently lost their lives has never been statistically recorded. The number lost on account of the war might include close to 20,000 *Rusini*, 10,000 Magyars, and 5,000 Poles.³⁴

In March 1941, the population of Yugoslavia, which continued to increase into the 1930s, consisted of almost 15.9 million, of which – based on projections from the 1931 population census – nearly 6.3 million were Serbs, 3.7 million Croats, 1.3 million Slovenes, 1.1 million Bosnian Muslims, 700,000 Macedonians, 600,000 Albanians, 550,000 Germans, 500,000 Magyars, 250,000 Montenegrins, 150,000 each of Romanians and Turks, 130,000 Bulgarians, 82,000 Jews, 80,000 Roma, 80,000 Slovaks, 55,000 Czechs, 40,000 Russians, 30,000 Ukrainians and *Rusini*, as well as 10,000 Italians. Between April 1941 and March 1948, over 1.1 million of these people violently lost their lives: in mass persecutions by the Ustasha against Serbs, Jews, and Roma; in partisan and Chetnik wars against the occupying forces, as well as against the Ustasha, Muslims, and each other; in German, Italian, Hungarian, and Bulgarian hostage shootings and executions; in Croat and German death and concentration camps during the war; in Yugoslav concentration camps after January 1945; as soldiers on the frontlines, from forced labor, and by expulsion. The Serbs had the largest number of victims, of which a total of 530,000 lost their lives (330,000 of which in *NDH*); the Croats suffered 210,000 deaths, the Bosnian Muslims around 90,000, the Slovenes almost 50,000, and the Montenegrins nearly 30,000. Among the minorities, the Jews had relatively the highest

³³ Saul FRIEDLÄNDER, *Die Jahre der Vernichtung. Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, 2. Bd.: 1939-1945 (Munich, 2006).

³⁴ Miroslav KÁRNÝ, „Die tschechoslowakischen Opfer der deutschen Okkupation,“ in Jörg K. Hoensch and Hans Lemberg (eds.), *Begegnung und Konflikt* (Essen, 2001) 143; Jaroslav KUČERA, „Statistik auf dem Holzweg,“ in Richard G. Plaschka, Horst Haselsteiner, Arnold Suppan, and Anna M. Drabek (eds.), *Nationale Frage und Vertreibung in der Tschechoslowakei und Ungarn 1938-1948* (Vienna, 1997).

number of victims with 67,000. The Yugoslav Germans lost nearly 60,000 civilians and more than 25,000 soldiers killed in action. The Yugoslav Magyars claimed around 20,000 soldiers and civilians killed, and the Yugoslav Bulgarians roughly 10,000 soldiers and civilians. The number of victims among the Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Romanians, Slovaks, Czechs, Russians, and Ukrainians was relatively minor. Finally, of the Yugoslav Roma, 20,000 suffered violent deaths.³⁵

Until the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991/92 it remained largely unclear whether the total death tolls among the South Slavic people were due more to the occupying powers or the different fratricidal wars. Generally, it is believed that the fratricidal wars—initiated, naturally, by the occupation—caused considerably more deaths than the occupying powers. In this manner the Slovene fratricidal war between the Communist-led “Liberation Front” and the *Domobranci* cost 12,000 Slovene victims, particularly in the days of May and June 1945. In the “Independent State of Croatia”, fratricidal wars between the *Ustaše*, *Domobranci*, partisans, *Četnici*, and Muslims claimed the majority of the victims. Even in Serbia, the mutual campaigns of revenge by the *Četnici* and partisan fighters exceeded the brutal persecution measures of the NS occupation in terms of mass executions of hostages. Finally, it is important to remember that at least 50,000 Croat victims—captured in part by Yugoslav Army troops, in part by the British Army—were liquidated after the war by the partisans in Northern Slovenia.³⁶

11. The question as to whether what happened in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia during and after the Second World War was “**genocide**” or “**ethnocide**” has brought varied answers in the historiography. Many Czech, Slovene, and Serbian historians describe the NS occupation tactics in Bohemia, Moravia, Slovenia, and Serbia as “ethnocide.” Many German experts on international law describe the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as “genocide.” One thing is certain: the predominant, manipulative execution of the majority of Jews living in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia by SS and NS groups must be called genocide. Also certain is that the purpose of the SS *Volkstumpolitik* (racist policy) was to dissolve the Czechs, Slovenes,

³⁵ Vladimir ŽERJAVIĆ, *Yugoslavia. Manipulations with the Number of Second World War Victims* (Zagreb, 1993); *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien, vol. IV: Menschenverluste – Namen und Zahlen* (Munich, 1994); TOMASEVICH, *Occupation and Collaboration*, 608-610, 718-750.

³⁶ Drago JANČAR (ed.), *Temna stran meseca. Kratka zgodovina totalitarizma v Sloveniji 1945-1990* (Ljubljana, 1998); TOMASEVICH, *Occupation and Collaboration*, 751-778.

and Serbs as political nations, perhaps not as ethnic groups. After the war, Czech, Slovene, and Serb politics focused on getting “the Germans” completely out of their countries, or at any rate, to “liquidate” the Germans as an “ethnic group”. If “ethnocide” can be understood as the liquidation of a people as a political nation, then the German acts of violence against the Czechs, Slovenes, and Serbs can be described as “ethnocide”, just as the Czech, Slovene, and Serb acts of violence against the Germans were. German violence against Serbs from 1941-1944 and the Serb partisan violence against Germans in the Vojvodina from 1944-1948 are even harder to characterize. The German hostage shootings in the fall of 1941, in which Serbian children and their teachers were shot too, and Communist Serb actions against Danube Swabians from 1944 to 1946, in which children were held in death camps, fulfill, without a doubt, the definition of a “genocide”, the intentional killing off a part or all of an ethnic, religious, or national group.³⁷

Hannah Arendt’s lecture, *Some Questions of Moral Philosophy*, which was presented at the New School of Social Research in New York three years after the execution of Adolf Eichmann, raises questions as to the origins of “evil”, including fundamental aspects of German-Czech and German-Yugoslav disputes. If one reads the diary entries of the learned historian Josef Pfitzer during his time as the Deputy Mayor of Prague and the American interrogation protocol records of NS State Minister Karl Hermann Frank, one learns about the day-to-day workings of the NS Regime in the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia. On the one hand, one gets to know prototypical agents who thoughtlessly and bureaucratically fulfill their duties. On the other, one gains insight into a *Weltanschauung* incited by racism, which, in its tyrannical, politically-amoral delusions defied every form of the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*). Neither of these reflects upon what is “good” and what “bad” and they also repress the ability to remember. This nihilism, to the point of death and suicide, removes all restraints and allows the culprits to take the law into their own hands. Both Frank and Pfitzner were sentenced to death and executed in Prague.

12. Part of the **former German settlement area** suffers to this day from the expulsion of Germans sixty years ago. As a result of the expulsion in Northern Bohemia

³⁷ Norman M. NAIMARK, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001) 3.

and Northern Moravia, as well as in former Austrian Silesia, there are still deserted villages, dilapidated houses, an antiquated infrastructure, and very little modern industry. The Germans were replaced by Czechs, Slovaks, Roma, Greeks, and Vietnamese. The once overwhelmingly Sudeten German district Freudenthal (Bruntal) is today the poorest region in the Czech Republic. Even the entry into the EU has brought, to date, only meager investment into these crisis-region. Despite this, there are already trendsetting industrial business projects in the former Sudeten German region: Karlsbader Oblaten, Gablonzer Bijouterie, Bohemian glass, Mattoni Mineral Water, Pilsner Urquell, Budweiser Beer, and Karlsbader Becherovka. For the socio-economic history of the latter half of the 20th century, one can say that, on the one hand, the loss of over three million well-educated, skilled, and entrepreneurial fellow citizens was a blow from which the Czech Republic has yet to recover. On the other hand, the expelled Sudeten Germans and Danube Swabians have contributed to decisive “economic miracles” in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Austria.

Even so, the former breadbasket of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Vojvodina, was hard hit, even with Germans making up “only” twenty percent of the population. Also here, along with the Germans and a part of the Magyars, many gifted people were expelled who could not be “replaced” with “colonists” from Yugoslavia’s southern regions. This is still the case in many ways, especially concerning the people who have fled Serbia since 1991. Today, the Serbs have established the long aspired absolute majority, but the economic handicap, when compared to Southern Hungary, is increasing. In the same way, the Eastern Slavonian region of Croatia was hard hit by the evacuation, flight and expulsion of the Germans in 1944/45. Only in Slovenia can the wounds of the Second World War be considered healed, at least economically, though not psychologically.

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An examination of the German/Austrian-Czechoslovak and German/Austrian-Yugoslav history of conflict in the 20th century reveals—in addition to a wealth of positive economic, social, technical, cultural, academic, and scientific connections—a long list of discrimination, injury, degradation, oppression, warlike actions, destruction,

persecution, and eviction, which could ultimately be compared to ethnic genocide. Therefore, it is understandable that different, at times very contradictory, historical understandings still exist at the beginning of the 21st century—both between the relevant nations, as well as within ethnic groups. In order to overcome the divide that exists in East Central European comparative history, it is absolutely necessary for each side to incorporate a deeper understanding not only of the pain and injustices they suffered, but also of those crimes they perpetrated. “Remembrance, therefore, is so important in the posttraumatic period following excessive criminal violence, because the determination of whether the former states of violence will be implicitly accepted and protracted, or effectively disowned, allowing for the ushering in of a new era, is dependent on this one thing alone. The remembrance of a perpetrated injustice, and the public acknowledgement of the victim, is the litmus test for the internal transformation of a country [and its society, note: Suppan]; it is the necessary symbol of its denunciation of terrible, historical consistencies.”³⁸

“The desire to free oneself from the burden of knowledge of an event, the burden of accountability for an event, the burden of memory of an event”, is understandable, but futile. We confront the past as an individual and collective memory: “People in their relative present want to know what actually happened in the past, why it happened, and how it could happen.” Since 1989, a new generation, less familiar with the people and countries east of the “Iron Curtain”, wants to discover and explore Eastern Europe, with its many different languages, religions, and cultures—without the ballast of the National Socialist and Soviet Communist past. Naturally, with that also come the German, Austrian, and Jewish histories of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, including the violent chapters. In the course of two totalitarian dictatorships, and of National Socialist, imperialist, racist, nationalist, and Communist motivated wars and acts of repression, over forty million people violently lost their lives in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the decade between 1938 and 1948. Amplified knowledge of the complicated history of this region, the exploration and interpretation of this past as “learned history”, and the “historicization of events” could perhaps help to make comprehensible the old and new

³⁸ Aleida ASSMANN, „Morgen kommt Moskau“, in *Die Presse*, 1 July 2006, „Peace vermutet: Europa in 50 Jahren“, 44 f.

prejudices and fears, the inherited images of “the enemy”, and national sensitivities, or at least to make known the difficulties in creating a politically, economically, socially, and emotionally united Europe. In any case, any sort of moral arrogance in the unilateral assignment of blame is therefore wholly misplaced. Only with a shared reconsideration of the past, borne from a European spirit of reconciliation, can the history of Europe’s ethnic groups during that dark decade interlink; and with that, contribute to the development of a shared European culture of remembrance.³⁹

Surely, the Slovene writer Drago Jančar’s warning is meant in earnest:

“It is good, when it comes down to symbolic actions of reconciliation by politicians. But these actions will not change the fact of the horrors that took place in this part of Europe. Nor will they absolve us of our responsibility for a more secure future, if we don’t grasp the messages from our past. These messages have been coming to us for years as historical falsehoods and hushed up chapters of the dark side of the moon. Therefore, we must put the words truth and remembrance in the place of the word reconciliation, a word which transforms all too quickly into a ritual, political nicety.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Rudolf VIERHAUS, „’Historisierung’ als Gegenwartsbewältigung. Das deutsch-tschechische Verhältnis 1918-1989,“ in, Jörg K. Hoensch and Hans Lemberg (eds.), *Begegnung und Konflikt* (Essen, 2001) 13-21.

⁴⁰ Drago JANČAR, „Der Verbrecher“, 50.