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MIGRATIONS OF THE CROATS DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORLD WAR II

Introduction

In the “dark decade” between 1939 to 1949, which was marked by the World War II, an exceptionally large number of people in Europe was „on the move“. Around 60 million people were migrating in different directions, most of them within Central and Eastern Europe. Immediately after the war, 20 million people were displaced.¹ During that period, all national/ethnic groups in Croatia were affected by different kinds of migration. As regards minorities, German and Italian populations were especially affected by migrations, Hungarian to a lesser extent. These minorities had a significant share in the overall population. Smaller national/ethnic groups, such as Czechs², Poles and Jews³ were also moving after the war.⁴ Serb population was the target of the NDH revenge, as a reaction to the oppression against the Croats in the Yugoslav

¹ D. Stola, *Forced Migrations in Central European History*, “International Migration Review”, no. 2, 1992, p. 330; M. Mesić, *Izbjeglice i izbjegličke studije (Uvod u problematiku)*, “Revija za socijalnu politiku”, no. 2, 1994, pp. 113-123.

² S. Selinić, *Jugoslovensko-čehoslovački odnosi 1945–1955*, Beograd 2010, pp. 333-351.

³ During the war, some Jews from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina saved themselves by fleeing to safer areas, and some were spared, because they were in the so-called mixed marriages. Some individuals were awarded the status of the so-called „Honorary Aryan“ for „having obliged the Croatian people“, in the opinion of representatives of the Ustasha authorities. Many Jews from Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who survived the war, decided to emigrate to Israel after the war; some did not return to the country. E. Gitman, *When Courage Prevailed. The Rescue and Survival of Jews in the Independent State of Croatia 1941–1945*, Saint Paul 2011; M. Karakaš Obradov, *Prisilne migracije židovskog stanovništva na području NDH*, “Croatica Christiana Periodica“, no. 72, 2013, pp. 153-178.

⁴ Poles were emigrating mostly from Bosnia, and to a lesser extent from Croatia. Yugoslavia and Poland on 2 January 1946 made a protocol, regulating the emigration. 15,301 Poles emigrated from Yugoslavia, most of them from Bosnia and Herzegovina (14,088), 231 families with 999 members emigrated from Croatia. Croatian State Archives (hereinafter HDA), fund 825 – Ostavština Šantić/Inheritance of Zdravko Šantić, Nekretnine iseljenih Poljaka iz Jugoslavije, 4.1.12.1, 4.1.12.2; H. Kamberović, *Iseljavanje Poljaka iz Bosne i Hercegovine 1946. godine*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest”, no. 1, 1998, pp. 95-104.

state (because the Ustasha movement was only looking at that state), and therefore it was exposed to repressive measures of the Croat authorities, and the plan was to move many of them out of the NDH territory. At the initiative of the German Reich and NDH, some Slovenes from the occupied Slovenia were supposed to move and take the properties of those Serbs, who moved out of the NDH territory to Serbia.⁵ The plan was only partially executed due to the uprising in the NDH territory, which was led by the monarchist Chetniks, mostly Serbs, and the communist-oriented Partisans, who were ethnically mixed. Croat majority also took part in migrations, both during the war (emigration, refugees, evacuations, colonisation), and immediately after the it (“the Bleiburg refuge”).

The spreading of the World War II to the territories of Yugoslavia and Croatia caused withdrawal from politics, and then, division of the major political party in the Croat territory, Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), and strengthening of Ustasha – Croatian revolutionary organisation (after Ustasha – Croatian Liberation Movement), which was before mid April 1941 active abroad, and the Communist Party (KP), which was active illegally since 1920 in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The April War led to the disintegration of the Yugoslav territory and revealed all the impotence, especially military and political, of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which had been weakened by tense relations among the nations. With the support of the domestic nationalist political forces led by Ustasha, a solution of the "Croat question" was found in the alliance with the German Reich and the Kingdom of Italy in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which was proclaimed on 10 April 1941.⁶

The newly established state treated Muslims⁷ in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the Croats of Islamic faith. It is estimated that in the territory of NDH there lived around 3,000,000 Catholics and 700,000 Muslims, who were collectively considered by the NDH authorities as political Croats. They were also migrating during the World War II, both voluntarily and by force. There were many Muslims among refugees during the war.⁸

Together with the ally states - Hungary, Kingdom of Italy and the German Reich – NDH was trying to solve minority issues with varying success. Croat population in Dalmatia, Međimurje, Baranja and Bačka was forced to migrate due to territorial aspi-

⁵ M. Karakaš Obradov, *Migracije srpskog stanovništva na području Nezavisne Države Hrvatske 1941*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest”, no. 3, 2011, pp. 801-826; M. Karakaš Obradov, *Migracije Slovenecv na hrvaško območje v drugi svetovni vojni (izseljevanje in izgnanstvo)*, “Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino”, no. 2, 2012, pp. 139-174.

⁶ M. Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret. Od nastanka do travnja 1941. godine*, Zagreb 2006, pp. 568-605, 594.

⁷ I am referring to Bosniaks as Muslims or Muslim population, because the name Muslims with capital M was officially used to denote the ethnic category since 1963; it is only since 1990's that the name Bosniak is used to denote Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁸ *Priručnik o političkoj i sudbenoj podjeli Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*, eds. R. Landikušić, Zagreb 1942, p. 13; S. D. Milošević, *Izbežlice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, Beograd 1981, p. 134.

rations of the neighbouring states, which were parts of the Axis Powers and allies of the NDH: Kingdom of Italy and Hungary. Croats were also forced to leave the parts of the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which were occupied by the German Reich and Bulgaria.⁹

From the very beginning of the war, many Catholics and Muslims were leaving their settlements or living in forest refuges, forced by the guerilla forces: Yugoslav monarchists and communists, who divided by the end of the first year of the war into Chetniks and Partisans. Persecutions and repressive measures suffered by the Catholic and Muslim population, from either Chetnik or Partisan side, were being justified by the previously committed crimes against Serbs, and then by supporting the NDH authorities, by joining the NDH military units, etc. According to estimates, in the NDH territory the constant number of refugees was between 100,000 and 150,000, and in the last year of the war there were several hundred thousand refugees. Among the Yugoslav Army in the homeland or Chetniks, who were supporting the government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in emigration and its state order, there was a tendency in the Chetnik movement to seek the creation of a "homogenous Serbia". It was supposed to cover the areas populated by Serbs; and "non-Serb elements" were to be eliminated from those areas. The "Greater Serbia" in fact was acceptable as the Yugoslav state, with almost no place for the Croats; Muslims were to be expelled to Turkey and Albania. The composition of Partisans, led by Communists, was ethnically mixed; during and after the war, they were getting even with anyone who refused to join them or presented as actual or potential military and political opponents. Apart from fighting the occupying forces and the national forces aspiring to dissolve the Yugoslav community, they were carrying out social and political revolution, which was sweeping away anyone opposing or not supporting them regardless of ethnicity. The ethnic criterion as a basis for persecutions by Partisans was applied primarily to Yugoslavia's Germans.¹⁰

Towards the end and after the World War II, a large part of Catholic population and many Muslims were fleeing to Austria from the advancing military forces of Yugoslav Partisans and the Red Army. After the war, the NDH territory was divided mostly between the federal states of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. the People's Republics of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Croats emigrating from the area occupied by Hungary

Hungarian Regent, Miklós Horthy, recognised NDH *de facto* on 11 April, and *de iure* on 22 April 1941. Hungary then devoted itself to the "holy obligation" to protect

⁹ *Zbornik zakona i naredaba NDH*, vol. I-XII, Zagreb 1941, p. 173.

¹⁰ Due to the complexity and comprehensiveness of this issue, it will not be analysed in this text. S. Čekić, *Genocid nad Bošnjacima u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, Sarajevo 1996, pp. 23-27, 62-65; Z. Dizdār, M. Sobolevski, *Prešućivani četnički zločini u Hrvatskoj i u Bosni i Hercegovini 1941.-1945.*, Zagreb 1999, pp. 75-76, 102, 118.

the Hungarian population in the so-called Southern Areas (*Délvidék* – Bačka, Baranya/“the Baranya triangle“, Prekmurje/Prekomurje and Međimurje). That meant annexation of the areas they had lost after the World War I to the neighbouring countries. According to the 1931 census, the population of Baranya was around 53,800: approximately 11,200 Croats, 13,800 Hungarians, 15,800 Germans and 10,100 Serbs. The population of Bačka was around 784,800: approximately 106,500 Croats, 268,700 Hungarians, 188,800 Serbs and 173,100 Germans. The Croat population in Međimurje was approximately 91,150 out of the total population of around 93,770; so in many villages the Croats were in majority, very often in absolute majority.¹¹

Because Hungary had territorial claims against some areas in Slovakia and Romania, there was an idea to form Little Entente, through which Romania, Slovakia and NDH would defend themselves against Hungary’s “invading megalomania” towards the neighbouring states.¹²

During August 1941, many of the indigenous Croat populations in Baranya and Bačka, Bunjevci and Šokci, were moving to the NDH area with the intention to settle there. According to their testimonies, they “felt safer and more satisfied” in the territory of NDH, and the reasons stated for moving to NDH were “already known ruthless methods of Hungarianisation”. The NDH authorities were accepting Croat population, considering that a temporary measure, until the border issue is settled. The Hungarian government responded to the Croats’ protests, saying that the Hungarian occupying forces had been ordered to treat the Croats the same way, they were treating Hungarians. However, the reports from Međimurje, Baranya and Bačka showed a different picture.¹³ At the same time, the Hungarian authorities were “transferring” the so-called Salonica volunteers from Baranya and Bačka, who had been settled in that area by the monarchic Yugoslavia as a reward for them voluntarily joining the Serbian Army during the World War I. As a rule, that was an Orthodox population from Croatian areas, mostly Dalmatia and Lika, and from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were being dispossessed and expelled, after which they went to their places of birth in NDH; and that was creating problems related to their housing and food. In October 1941, the Hungarian government passed the law on nationalisation of properties of anyone who

¹¹ HDA, fund 227 – Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova NDH/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Croatia (hereinafter MVP NDH), box 6, no. 535, 1941; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 57–59, 61, 66; D. Šokčević, *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska i Mađarska 1941. godine. Pitanje diplomatskog priznanja*, u: *Međunarodni znanstveni skup “Jugoistočna Europa 1918.–1995.”/An International Symposium “Southeastern Europe 1918–1995”*, ed. Aleksander Ravlić, Zagreb 1999, pp. 109–112; Hornýák, A., *Jugoslavenski teritorijalni zahtjevi prema Mađarskoj i susjednim zemljama i planovi za njihovu primjenu nakon Drugog svjetskog rata*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest“, no 1, 2010, pp. 23–24.

¹² M. Mihanović, *Mađarsko pitanje u hrvatsko-rumunjskim odnosima od 1941. do 1944. godine: pokušaj obnove Male antante*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest”, No 2, 2001, p. 326.

¹³ HR HDA, MVP NDH, box 6, No 535/1941; N. Lazić, *Baranja 1941–1945*, Slavonski Brod 1979, p. 101.

had been given land in Baranya and Bačka in the agrarian reform and colonisation during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This also encompassed the Croats, most of whom had bought their lands, as well as those few, who had been colonised there.¹⁴

In Međimurje, which was populated almost exclusively by the Croats, Hungarians introduced in July 1941 the Hungarian military administration; in December 1941 the Hungarian parliament unilaterally annexed Međimurje to Hungary. The introduction of military administration in Međimurje put an end to the possibility of negotiations on the exchange of population; and in the next period the two states, searching for a balance, were trying to regulate the position of their minorities. Arbitration of the German Reich, sought by both sides, and later Germany's neutral position on the matter, played into the hands of Hungarians. Croatia was hoping that, according to ethnical principle, Međimurje would become Croatian again after the war, if not earlier.¹⁵

The NDH authorities did not accept or recognise the border with Hungary, but due to the lack of their own military and political strength, as well as Germany's determination to prevent conflicts among allied countries, the only option left was diplomacy, which was initially directed at improved conditions of emigration of the Croats. In September 1941, the NDH authorities made Hungarians accept that the Croats, who had emigrated or would emigrate, could take their movables with them or return, if they had left without their property, to carry out "liquidation of their properties".¹⁶

Hungarians were concerned about the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Zagreb over Međimurje. The position of the Holy See was, as the Pope's representative in Zagreb communicated to the Hungarian Ambassador to NDH, Ferenc Marosy, that the Church's jurisdictions would not be changed during the wars. The Holy See requested that the mother tongue should be used in church and at school, especially in religious teaching, according to the majority principle. Hungarian authorities were expelling Croatian priests and hindering their work; while Hungarian priests were brought to replace them.¹⁷

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of NDH, Mladen Lorković, addressed the Hungarian Ambassador to NDH, Ferenc Marosy, with the protest note, and the governments of the Tripartite Pact countries were informed of the fact that Međimurje had been "populated by Croats since time immemorial" and that it had been "a part of Croatia

¹⁴ S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 71, 72–74, 75, 76–78.

¹⁵ S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 60–61; E. A. Sajti, *Hungarian Minority in the Vojvodina 1918–1947*, Boulder, Colorado 2003, p. 274.

¹⁶ Archives of the Republic of Slovenia/Arhiv Republike Slovenije (hereinafter ARS), Urad za podržavljeno lastnino NDH v Zagrebu/Office for Nationalized Property of ISC in Zagreb, box 1, No 14710/1941; HDA, Ministry of interior Affairs/Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova Nezavisne Države Hrvatske (hereinafter MUP NDH), II-A, no. 11867.

¹⁷ S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 59, 64; G. Hutinec, *Kotarska oblast Čakovec-Prelog 1941.–1945*, [in:] *Međimurje u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, eds. B. Bunjac, Čakovec 2007, pp. 131–134; E. A. Sajti, *Hungarian Minority in the Vojvodina 1918–1947*, pp. 272–276.

for centuries”. Croatia was requesting Međimurje back, and in return, it was willing to receive the Croats from Bačka. Marosy considered that Međimurje was, as far as Hungarians were concerned, “ethnically lost”, and that Hungarians and the Croats should be focused on solving the issue of exchange of population, especially of the Croats emigrating from Bačka, Bunjevci and Šokci, into NDH.¹⁸

The Croatian government persisted on the position that Međimurje was still a part of NDH, „occupied by Hungarians”. Between 25 June and 11 July 1942, the Croatian-Hungarian commission was working in Budapest on defining the eastern border; however, as the issue of Međimurje was not being solved, the relations between the two states were constantly tense. The territorial conflict affected the treatment of the Hungarian population in NDH, as well as the Croat population in the Hungarian territory.¹⁹

When the Hungarian army entered Međimurje, the Hungarian authorities displayed placards inviting the population, who had moved in after 1918, to leave within five days. Those dissatisfied with the Hungarian rule were supposed to leave within ten days. The Hungarian side was constantly referring to the bad treatment of Hungarians in the Yugoslavia and a “major Versailles injustice”. Initially, Hungarians were not dismissing Croat civil servants, but soon there were attacks on Croat majority and expulsions. Some civil servants were given the option to learn the Hungarian language within six months and remain in their positions.²⁰

The problem of the expulsion of the Croats from the areas annexed by Hungary continued until the end of the war. In winter 1944/1945, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gábor Kemény, met with Pavelić to discuss the issue of Međimurje, i.e. population of the Croats in the area. Again, Pavelić raised the issue of influx of the Croats into NDH, due to “fierce persecutions” in all areas under Hungarian rule.²¹

When the World War II ended, Croat refugees started to return. In the post-war period, the population in Međimurje was severely affected by the conflict between the Yugoslav authorities and Informbiro, because many of them had properties in Hungary across the Mura River. The closing of borders meant for many the loss of land, and consequently loss of income.²²

¹⁸ T. Jonjić, *Hrvatska vanjska politika 1939.–1942.*, Zagreb 2000, p. 559; M. Mihanović, *Mađarsko pitanje u hrvatsko-rumunjskim odnosima od 1941. do 1944. godine: pokušaj obnove Male antante*, p. 337; E. A. Sajti, *Hungarian Minority in the Vojvodina 1918–1947*, pp. 229–230, 272–273.

¹⁹ HDA, MVP NDH, box 6, No 588/1941, HDA, MUP NDH, box. 85, I-D 16231/1942; A. Kasaš, *Mađari u Vojvodini 1941–1946*, Novi Sad 1996, p. 124; T. Jonjić, *Hrvatska vanjska politika 1939.–1942.*, p. 563; M. Karakaš Obradov, *Migracije mađarskog stanovništva na hrvatskom području tijekom Drugoga svjetskog rata*, “Tokovi istorije”, no. 1, 2012, pp. 87–105.

²⁰ S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 58–59, 63.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 65.

²² E. Heršak, J. Šimunko, *Međimurje – povijest, identitet i seobe*, “Migracijske teme“, no. 4, 1990, pp. 584, 585.

The Croats emigrating from the areas occupied by the Kingdom of Italy

The Croatian-Italian conflict over the eastern Adriatic coast, Dalmatia, and later Istria, has a long history. It existed, simmered and flamed at the time when the two states were tied in a political and military alliance, during the World War II. The fact that the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was established under the auspices of the German Reich and the Kingdom of Italy, did not prevent the ostensibly close allies to fight from unequal political and military positions over numerous issues, especially the territory and the treatment of Croats in Dalmatia by the Italian authorities. With the unsolved issues that were dragging since the Treaty of London (1915), the Rapallo Treaty (1920), and the Treaty of Rome (1924) in May 1941, the unreliable and fickle ally, the Kingdom of Italy, and politically and militarily impotent NDH, concluded the Treaties of Rome, by which Italy took the major part of Croatian coast from Rijeka to Kotor, excluding the coastal area of Bakarac to the Zrmanja estuary, and from a point south of Split to a point between Cavtat and Vitaljina. The Italian army also took the islands of Krk, Rab and all small islands in their vicinity, all islands of the Zadar area, as well as Čiovo, Drvenik, Šolta, Vis, Biševo, Korčula and Mljet. The islands of Pag, Brač and Hvar and the Pelješac peninsula, were left to the Independent State of Croatia. Split and Korčula were supposed to get a special status, but that part of the agreement was not respected by the Italian side. On 10 June 1941, Benito Mussolini stated that the Dalmatian issue was finally solved.²³ During the same month, Zagreb received the news of Italians systematically “persecuting and exterminating” anything Croatian.²⁴

In July 1941, all Croatian political and cultural associations and institutions were dissolved, because they refused to continue their work under Italian names. The only exemptions were some societies of the Catholic Church. Names of streets and squares in town, as well as the toponomastics of the annexed area, were changed. Italianisation of Slavic surnames, which had been carried out systematically in Istria and the Rijeka area, continued during the war, however, to a lesser extent however. By October 1941, many Croats from the annexed Dalmatian area took refuge in the NDH territory. Italians were frequently accusing Croats of being communists or supporting them; and they were expelling them on that basis. The removal of memorial plaques in the Croatian language and monuments on the island of Rab, in Split, Trogir and Korčula, sus-

²³ D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, “Putovi revolucije“, no. 1-2, 1963, pp. 215-218, 226; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, p. 94; *Le vittime di nazionalità italiana a Fiume e dintorni (1939–1947)/Žrtve talijanske nacionalnosti u Rijeci i okolici (1939.–1947.)*, eds. A. Ballarini, M. Sobolevski, Rim 2002, p. 113; M. L. Monzali, *Fascist Italy and Independent Croatia: A Difficult Alliance*, “Tokovi istorije“, no. 4, 2006, pp. 86-99.

²⁴ T. Jonjić, „*Jedno izvješće o prilikama u Splitu i Dalmaciji u prvim mjesecima nakon uspostave Nezavisne Države Hrvatske*“, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest“, no. 3, 2011, p. 831.

pension of Croatian associations, and school classes in Croatian language, were the measures in support of the decision to move to the NDH territory.²⁵

From the very beginning, the Italian authorities had the plan to force the Slavic population out of Dalmatia. Civil servants, who were not born in the annexed area, and whose parents resided there, had to move out, as well as all the others who resided in that area for less than 15 years and did not speak Italian language. Those not covered by such measures could either accept Italian service or leave the annexed area. Italians were planning the return of Dalmatian Italians, who had left the area after the World War I.²⁶ One of the important issues for the Italian authorities was the revision of the agrarian reform, whose purpose was to change the ethnic composition to the Italian advantage.²⁷

Immediately after the annexation, the Italian authorities tried to win Dalmatia's population by using various measures ranging from tolerating the Croatian language to providing supplies and fixing roads.²⁸ This "tolerable cohabitation" lasted until diversions and communist attacks on Italian soldiers in major Dalmatian settlements. Such activities often had short-term negative effect on the Italian side (individual murders of soldiers or assassinations of prominent members of the Italian military and civilian authorities). The Italian response to that was retaliation against civilians.²⁹

The Yugoslav post-war history was attributing the resistance against the Italian authorities entirely to Partisans led by communists; however, the Italian side during the war was as well directly accusing the Ustasha of "agitating against them", carrying out "cleverly disguised propaganda" among the population of Croats, and even of carrying out sabotages and diversions.³⁰

²⁵ S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 99, 100, 101; H. Mezulić, *Fašizam – krstitelj i palikuća*, Pazin 1997, pp. 19–40, 55–107; R. Jelić, *Potalijančavanje hrvatskih prezimena u Zadru za vrijeme fašizma*, "Radovi Instituta Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Zadru", vol. 20, 1973, pp. 49–197; D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, p. 219.

²⁶ HDA, MVP NDH, box 4, Odsjek za romanske zemlje, no. I-148/41, no. 13803/41; D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 216, 222; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 95, 96.

²⁷ HDA, MVP NDH, box 5, no. I-1845/41; D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 216, 223–225, 228; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 98–99.

²⁸ D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 218, 220, 221.

²⁹ D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 237; C. S. Capogreco, *Mussolinijevi logori. Internacija civila u fašističkoj Italiji (1940.–1943.)*, Zagreb 2006, pp. 320–321; Raoul PUPO, *Le anessioni italiane in Slovenia e Dalmazia 1941–1943. Questioni interpretative e problemi di ricerca*, "Italia contemporanea", no. 243, 2006, pp. 205–208; N. Barić, *Ustaše na Jadranu. Uprava Nezavisne Države Hrvatske u jadranskoj Hrvatskoj nakon kapitulacije Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, Zagreb 2012, pp. 60–61.

³⁰ HDA, MVP NDH, box 3, T.I. No 128/1943, T.I. No 129/43; D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 229–230, 233, 234.

Croats were often being sent to camps, not only as military and political prisoners – also entire families were being taken as hostages. In summer 1942, during the military operations of “cleaning” the area, many Croats, especially in Hrvatsko Primorje and Gorski Kotar, either fled to or were taken to Italian camps on the Apennine Peninsula, as well as camps in the annexed and occupied areas populated by Croats and Slovenes.³¹ In order to suppress the uprising and the growth of the Partisan movement, the Italian army was sending to collection camps not only Partisan fighters but also their families from the annexed and occupied areas populated by Croats and Slovenes.³²

In July 1943, the NDH authorities were coming up with the estimates of 43,000 to 70,000 imprisoned Croats, who were to return from Italian camps. There were many, around 15,000, children among them. The number of Croat refugees, only those who left “legally” until the capitulation of the Kingdom of Italy, which means that there was a written record on their leaving, was more than 17,000. The total number was most probably much bigger because many Croats, who had been forced out, joined Partisans, and the NDH authorities did not record them.³³

Representatives of the Croatian Catholic Church were expressing their protest directly to the representatives of the Italian authorities, and in the Vatican, against the measures taken against Croats. Advisor to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Holy See, Croat priest Nikola Moscatello, also protested against such Italian measures. He was particularly active in helping Jews from the Yugoslav territory. He was also making efforts to help all prisoners from the Yugoslav territory, regardless of their “political and ideological orientation”, and sought help for the “Partisan children”; in most of the cases those were Croat and Slovene children.³⁴

³¹ M. Konjhodžić, *Krvavim tragovima talijanskih fašista*, Zagreb 1945, pp. 9-17; M. Constantini, *Le Fraschette da campo di concentramento a lungo della memoria*, Ceccano 2006, pp. 13-173; I. Kovačić, *Kampor 1942.–1943. Hrvati, Slovenci i Židovi u koncentracijskom logoru Kampor na Rabu*, Rijeka 1998, pp. 64-88; C. S. Capogreco, *Mussolinijevi logori. Internacija civila u fašističkoj Italiji (1940.–1943.)*, pp. 154-156, 291-310.

³² B. Banović, *Izvoz radne snage i deportacije stanovništva s teritorija NDH u toku Drugog svjetskog rata*, “Putovi revolucije”, 1963, no. 1-2, pp. 382-383; D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 231-233; I. Kovačić, *Kampor 1942.–1943. Hrvati, Slovenci i Židovi u koncentracijskom logoru Kampor na Rabu*, pp. 93-115; Z. Begonja, *Proturječja u svezi s brojem žrtava fašističkog koncentracijskog logora na otoku Molatu*, [in:] *Logori, zatvori i prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941.–1945., 1945.–1951.*, eds. V. Geiger, M. Grahek Ravančić, M. Karakaš Obradov, Zagreb 2010, pp. 91-110.

³³ HDA, MVP NDH, box 4, T. 188/43; D. Šepić, *Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941–1943)*, pp. 225-226; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, p. 97; Z. Dizdar, *Talijanska politika prema hrvatskim prostorima i njezine posljedice tijekom Drugog svjetskog rata*, p. 651.

³⁴ M. Ristović, *U potrazi za utopištem. Jugoslovenski Jevreji u bekstvu od holokausta 1941.–1945*, Beograd 1998, p. 101; Z. Dizdar, *Talijanska politika prema hrvatskim prostorima i njezine posljedice tijekom Drugog svjetskog rata*, p. 656; M. Akmadža, *Krunoslav Draganović. Iskazi komunističkim istražiteljima*, Zagreb 2010, pp. 97-99.

Due to a very questionable alliance or rather latent enmity, the fall of Mussolini and the capitulation of the Kingdom of Italy did not incite any ally solidarity. In August 1943, the NDH authorities even started preparations to take over and retrieve the area which had to be given up in May 1941, but also the area which had been given up to Italy earlier. The NDH authorities considered the Treaties of Rome their “main burden”, and their annulment was supposed to be the „renascence of NDH”. However, NDH did not have military or political potential to achieve that. With the establishment of the Adriatic Coastland Operations Zone (Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland), the maximalistic aspirations of the NDH authorities to annex all “Croat lands along the Adriatic, from Istria and Primorje to Dalmatia” were soon abandoned, and the German Reich had a very logical justification for that, because the nations are „all mixed”, new changes of border might lead to new conflicts, and that would jeopardise „the joint war efforts”.³⁵

In the ethnic tensions between Croats and Serbs, the Italian authorities were favouring Serbs. The reason for that should be sought in Ustasha’s repressive measures towards the Serbian population, as well as in the political closeness, which was based on the hostile attitude towards the Croatian state and its borders. When the Kingdom of Italy capitulated, the Chetnik movement and its military forces in the NDH territory joined the German Reich, which welcomed that, considering the geostrategic importance of the Dalmatia at the time.

The Partisan movement in Istria and Dalmatia started its boom in military and political sense with the capitulation of the Kingdom of Italy. The Partisan forces, which used the military collapse of Italy to its advantage, not only in Istria, soon had to step back pushed by the German Reich. Defining of the Italian/Yugoslav/Croatian/Slovene border could only start when the German Reich and its allies were militarily defeated; and the diplomatic battle for the borders had yet to be fought.³⁶

The Croats emigrating from the areas annexed and occupied by the German Reich and Bulgaria

During World War II Slovenia was divided among the German Reich, the Kingdom of Italy and Hungary. The German Reich made obvious its intentions towards Slovenes and the Slovene area as early as at the very start of the occupation. German staffs for emigration were established in Maribor and Bled; and the job was being done by the „experienced personnel”, who had had the same task with the emigration from Poland. Slovenes were being moved mostly to the territories of the German Reich and the Inde-

³⁵ D. Dukovski, *Rat i mir istarski. Model povijesne prijelomnice 1943.–1945*, Pula 2001, pp. 163-164; *Le vittime di nazionalità italiana a Fiume e dintorni (1939–1947)/Žrtve talijanske nacionalnosti u Rijeci i okolici (1939–1947)*, p. 177; M. Mikolić, *Istra 1941.–1947. Godine velikih preokreta*, Zagreb 2003, pp. 315-322; F. Butić, I. Jelić, *Prilozi za proučavanje historije NDH u razdoblju 1942 do 1943 godine*, „Putovi revolucije“, no. 1-2, 1963, p. 355.

³⁶ D. Rudolf, *Granice s Italijom u mirovnim ugovorima nakon Prvoga i Drugog svjetskog rata*, „Adrias”, vol. 15, 2008, p. 78.

pendent State of Croatia, to which many Slovenes had fled in order to avoid relocation to the German Reich. Some of them were moved to Serbia, mostly those unwanted by NDH because of their “pro-Yugoslav and Pro-Serb” political orientation.³⁷

Between May and October 1941, there were negotiations going on, and there was some exchange of Slovene and Serb population between German Reich and NDH. It was agreed then that some 20,000 Croats, according to German estimates, should be relocated from Lower Styria. At first, the same measures, which included expulsions not based on agreements, were applied to both Slovenes and Croats. Later on, the NDH authorities arranged for Croats and persons from Croat-Slovene marriages, including those where the wife was a Croat, to have better conditions of moving out.³⁸ An agreement was signed on 12 November 1941 regulating the relocation of Croats from Lower Styria. The main element of the agreement was that a decision to move was to be made without coercion. Croats from the occupied Slovene territory were supposed to be indemnified for the abandoned property. Refugees and forcibly relocated persons were to be given the possibility to return for the period of three months in order to solve the issue of property.³⁹

Because of the uprising in the NDH territory, the population exchange was not running as planned. As the German villages in the NDH territory were increasingly jeopardised by Partisan and Chetnik attacks, relocations were planned to the area of Łódź/Litzmannstadt in occupied Poland. Namely, almost all Germans from Bosnia, and a smaller number of Germans from Croatian territory, were supposed to move out. An agreement between Germany and NDH was signed on 30 September 1942 on the relocation of members of the German minority from some areas of NDH to Germany. Properties of the relocated Germans were to be taken by the Croats from occupied Slovenia.⁴⁰

³⁷ T. Ferenc, *Nacistička politika denacionalizacije u Sloveniji u godinama od 1941 do 1945*, Ljubljana, Beograd 1979, pp. 154-157; *Slovenska novejša zgodovina. Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije 1848–1992*, eds. J. Fischer, Ljubljana 2005, pp. 575-576, 587.

³⁸ HDA, MVP NDH, box 3, Odsjek za germanske zemlje, NJ 987/1941; S. D. Milošević, *Izbečlice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, p. 315; A. Marđetko, *Predstavništvo Nezavisne Države Hrvatske u Mariboru 1941.–1945*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest”, no. 3, 2003, pp. 825-827.

³⁹ S. D. Milošević, *Izbečlice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 314-318; A. Marđetko, *Predstavništvo Nezavisne Države Hrvatske u Mariboru 1941.–1945.*, pp. 828-831; B. Godeša, *Izseljevanje Hrvatov iz nemškoga zasednoga ozemlja na Štajerskem in Gorenjskem v luči primerjave položajev Slovencev in Hrvatov v okviru nacističnoga novega reda*, [in:] *Migracije in slovenski prostor od antike do danes*, eds. P. Štih, B. Balkovec, Ljubljana 2010, pp. 278-281.

⁴⁰ HDA, MVP NDH, box 3, Ugovor između vlade NDH i Njemačke vlade o selidbi pripadnika njemačke narodnosti sa stanovitih područja NDH u Njemački Reich od 30. rujna 1942; HDA, MUP NDH, II-A, 21206/42, no. 551/44; *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, Band V, Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*, Augsburg 1994, 83E-84E; V. Oberkersch, *Die Deutschen in Syrmien, Slawonien, Kroatien und Bosnien. Geschichte einer deutschen Volksgruppe in Südosteuropa*, Stuttgart 1989, p. 388.

In January and February 1944 there were still efforts to relocate Croat population from Slovenia. A problem occurred, because at that point most of the people did not want to move or state their ethnicity, especially those from mixed families (e.g. German father and Croat mother) or the elderly with Croatian affiliation, who did not want to express it, because they wanted to stay in Slovenia. The relocation of Croats from the occupied Slovenian territory was also hindered by the fact, that the properties of the relocated Germans from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had already been occupied by Croats who had fled from Lika and Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to escape Chetniks or Partisans.⁴¹

Besides the occupied parts of Slovenia, Croats were also moving from Serbia and Macedonia. There were around 20,000 Croats in the Serbian territory.⁴² As of April 1941, there was the Office of the Croat Club working in Belgrade, which was supposed to mediate the process of moving of Croats from Serbia to NDH; it was also mediating the process of moving of Serbs from NDH to Serbia. Until September 1941, 11,800 Croats moved from the Serbian territory. The Serbian authorities under General Milan Nedić, according to the instructions of the German military administration, have recorded Croats in their territory, and they were – as a rule – moved out. All men, especially military persons, were supposed to be returned to NDH, which was particularly difficult for the mixed Croat-Serb families. The NDH authorities suspected that those who were going to Serbia in order to move their families were “disappearing”, and they ascribed that to murders. Another explanation could be that they were avoiding military service. It was planned also that the Serbs from Banja Luka, which was then a part of NDH, should be replaced by Croats returning from Serbia, among them around 7,000 of Janjevci, Catholics from Kosovo.⁴³

Croats residing in the part of Macedonia occupied by Bulgaria were mostly farmers, who had been moved during the Kingdom of Serbs; Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia to the uncultivated marshlands, which needed to be dried and cultivated. Workers and intellectuals of Croatian origin resided in Skopje. A problem that arose in that area was the negative attitude towards the Catholic Church, because some

⁴¹ HDA, Department of colonization of Independent State of Croatia/Zavod za kolonizaciju NDH (hereinafter ZK NDH), box 53, Popis Hrvata preseljenika iz kotara Rann, box 331, Popisi iseljenika sa željezničke postaje Brücl, box 344, 1162/VII, I Rann; HDA, MUP NDH, no. 551/44.

⁴² HDA, MUP NDH, I-A, no. 1437/42; *Spomen-knjiga prve obljetnice Nezavisne Države Hrvatske 10. 4. 1941 – 10. 4. 1942*, Zagreb 1942, p. 335; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941-1945*, p. 319.

⁴³ T. Ferenc, *Nacistička politika denacionalizacije u Sloveniji u godinama od 1941 do 1945*, p. 251.; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941-1945*, pp. 319-320, 323; *Zločini na jugoslovenskim prostorima u Prvom i Drugom svetskom ratu. Zbornik dokumenata. Zločini Nezavisne Države Hrvatske 1941-1945*, vol. I, Beograd 1993, no. 118, no. 311, no. 125, no. 323, no. 127, no. 130, no. 132, no. 137; S. Bandžović, *O migracionim kretanjima u Bosni i Hercegovini 1941. godine*, [in:] *Migracije i Bosna i Hercegovina*, Sarajevo 1990, p. 249.

Albanians residing there were Catholics, and the “pressure” affected Croats as well. NDH envoy requested the mediation of NDH embassy in Sofia in solving the issue of indemnity for the abandoned properties to the Croats emigrating from Macedonia. From April to December 1941, 4,000 to 5,000 Croats were moved out of Macedonia. Serbs from the NDH territory, who had been relocated to Macedonia, were not wanted back by the NDH authorities, except in some cases. They proposed that they should be moved to Serbia, because most of the Serbs living in NDH were also supposed to move to Serbia, based on the agreement between the German Reich and NDH.⁴⁴

Colonisation of the Croats during World War II

The main task of the NDH’s Colonisation Bureau was to move the Croats from overpopulated and depressed areas to less populated and more developed ones, which which had been populated during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia mostly by so-called Salonika volunteers, mainly Serbs from Serbia or indigenous Orthodox population. They were supposed to populate the villages with Serb population, which the NDH authorities were evacuating as a part of the exchange population plan, and take over the properties owned by the Serbs, who had fled, been evicted, imprisoned or killed. The Colonisation Bureau also had at its disposal the properties of the German and Hungarian population, who had left the NDH territory. The idea was to modify the pre-war agrarian reform and colonisation, which had been, according to the NDH authorities, unjust to Croat, Muslim and German population; and that was based on the fact that most of the benefits had been given to Salonika volunteers, usually Serbs, in the Serbian army during the World War I. The NDH authorities’ intention was to change the ethnic structure, which had been created as a consequence of the colonisation between the two wars in Slavonia and Sirmium, and to change the ownership structure. The colonisation carried out by NDH was mostly finished by the end of 1941; afterwards it slowed down, and in late 1943 it was entirely suspended due to the political and military situation in the country.⁴⁵

As early as October and November 1942, there were colonists who wanted to return to “the old land”. The uniform records usually stated the same reason for leaving the properties, and that was that the persons were “jeopardised by Partisans”, who threatened to kill them, and that they did not have any “armed protection”. This proba-

⁴⁴ HDA, MVP NDH, box 6, no. 1085/1941; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, pp. 321–322.

⁴⁵ V. Horvat, *Suvremene nutarnje seobe i kretanja Hrvata*, Zagreb 1942, pp. 53–63; S. D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945*, p. 125; M. Matićka, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Hrvatskoj od 1945 do 1948*, Zagreb 1990, pp. 21–23; I. Lajić, M. Bara, *Ratovi, kolonizacije i nacionalna struktura Slavonije u dvadesetom stoljeću*, Zagreb 2009, pp. 67–70, 83.

bly was the actual reason for most of them, but some of them also failed to adjust to the new environment.⁴⁶

It is estimated that around 7,000 to 8,000 families were moved in 1941. This number increased up to 9,500 families with around 50,000 family members in 1942. The increase was a result of the influx of Croat refugees and displaced persons, mostly from Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁷

After the war, most of the colonists were returned to their properties; some of them returned voluntarily. New communist authorities were making efforts to take care of those colonists who had actively joined them during the war. Therefore, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia ordered in August 1945 the suspension of the expulsion of colonists, and pointed to the fact that even those colonists, who had joined Partisans, were expelled from some areas. Those whom the new Yugoslav authorities considered to be “colonised knowingly as a tool of promoting the Ustasha ideas”, were particularly maltreated.⁴⁸

Numerous Muhajirs, Muslim refugees from Bosnia, found themselves in Croatian territory at the end of the war. The Yugoslav communist authorities had a very negative attitude towards them, and referred to them in their paper *Naprijed* “as engrained Ustashas” and „enemies of the People’s rule”. They were accusing them of not going back to Bosnia because they knew they were “guilty before the people”. In late 1945, at some local levels, there were still persons, who requested a “more humane” treatment for them, but it was yet required that they should be “moved out radically”. In March 1946, the People’s Republic of Croatia concluded an agreement with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina on their return to Bosnia and Herzegovina. By mid-1946, 4,500 families with 24,000 family members were returned from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁹

Evacuations abroad

The capitulation of the Kingdom of Italy and the advancement of the military forces of the German Reich and military units of the Independent State of Croatia towards the Dalmatian region in September 1943 caused a big wave of refugees, led by Partisans, consisting of around 35,000 to 40,000 people, who were transferred to the island of Vis. Western Allies started transferring refugees from Vis to the south of Italy as early as in the end of 1943. Refugees from central Dalmatian islands and a smaller number from other Dalmatian regions were transferred to Italy by the end of January

⁴⁶ HDA, ZK NDH, box 91, *Odjel za izbor i naseljenje kolonista* (Va), Zapisnici o razduživanju kolonista; M. Karakaš Obradov, *Novi mozaici nacija u 'Novim poredcima'*, p. 102.

⁴⁷ M. Maticka, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Hrvatskoj od 1945 do 1948*, p. 23; I. Balta, *Kolonizacija istočne Hrvatske u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest“, no. 2, 2001, p. 392.

⁴⁸ M. Maticka, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Hrvatskoj od 1945 do 1948*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, pp. 32, 33-34.

1944. Refugees, from around 26,800 to around 28,200 persons, according to different sources, were transferred from southern Italy to Egypt during January and February of 1944. Around 7,800 remained in southern Italy, while mostly children, women and elderly people went to Egypt. They were housed in tents in a former English military camp, and the existing fixed facilities were used as warehouses, medical clinics, offices of camp management etc. The refugees themselves ensured good functioning of the camp, which was attributed to placing refugees according to their respective villages and not separating the families, as mentioned in the reports by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Agency (UNRRA). They also emphasised that the refugees received more food and medical assistance than in their own country, and that the feeling of arriving to safety was of exceptional importance.⁵⁰ Military representatives of the exiled government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia also had a detailed plan for the arrival of around 7,000 Yugoslav/Croatian refugees to El Shatt in 1944. It can be assumed that Western allies were informing Yugoslav government-in-exile about the arrival and the housing of refugees.⁵¹ There were political frictions between supporters and representatives of the Partisans and supporters and representatives of Yugoslav government-in-exile, particularly with those who were also housed in El Arish camp in Egypt. The refugee leadership consisted of mostly communist-oriented individuals, leading to political disagreements with the representatives of the Head Allied Command. This was a consequence of complex political relations of western Allies with the communist-led Yugoslav Partisans, on one hand, and with the exiled government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on the other. Post-war return started in April 1945 and ended in March 1946, with around 24,600 persons returning. The difference in the number of people dispatched and those repatriated was caused by death cases, mostly occurring with children and the elderly. Some individuals did not wish to return. Instead they wanted to leave for the USA and Australia, where they had relatives.⁵²

A massive evacuation of population and material property from Slavonia, and to a lesser extent from a wider Zagreb area, was carried out at the beginning of January 1945, led by National Liberation Committees. Around 15,000 refugees were initially housed in Hungary, and later in Vojvodina. The evacuation was mostly carried out in the areas of the cities of Virovitica, Slatina, Slavonski Brod and Našice. The first to be evacuated were families with members who joined the Partisans, Croats, Serbs and others. The ethnic composition of refugees is known only for the area of Slavonski Brod. Among the evacuated, there were 894 Croats, 755 Serbs and a smaller number of Hungarians, Rusyns, Bulgarians, Poles, Germans, etc. The evacuation was carried

⁵⁰ V. Huljić, *Vis 1941.–1945.*, Split 1979, p. 296; M. Bratanić, *Hrvatski zbjegovi u Egipt 1943–1946.*, doctoral thesis, History Department, University of Zadar, Zadar 2009, pp. 210.–217.

⁵¹ Archives of Yugoslavia/Arhiv Jugoslavije, Royal government in exile/ Emigrantska vlada, box 10, no. 85.

⁵² K. Ajlec, *Jugoslovanski begunci v Egiptu in njihova politična opredeljenost 1943–1946*, “Zgodovinski časopis”, no. 3–4, 2013, pp. 428–448.

out by carts and with people walking in columns. The direction of evacuation went from Virovitica to the area in Hungary, which was taken over by the Red Army. Representatives of the Red Army refused the evacuation at first, but when the Soviets left Barcs, Yugoslav Partisans could start the evacuation. The first to be transported were the wounded, around 3,000 or 4,000 of them. The Partisans paid particular attention not to evacuate the 'young and healthy' to Hungary, and recruited them instead in Partisan units. Soon after the refugees arrived in Hungary, it was ordered to transfer the children to Vojvodina, which was difficult, considering that the Red Army moved through that territory. At the beginning of March 1945, other refugees were also transferred to the area of Bačka. Refugees were involved in farming, road repair and assistance in hospitals, where they helped those infected by spotted fever, because "no one would do it". The refugees also succumbed to numerous infectious diseases, and there were problems with the supply of food and clothes, leading to "misunderstandings" between the refugee representatives and Partisan representatives in the "authorities of the people's government" in Vojvodina (Serbia). The tension was additionally increased by poor relations of refugees, mostly the Croats, with the local Serbian population. The return of the refugees, mostly to Slavonia, began in April 1945. This evacuation was only partially justified due to war danger, and it had a great influence on male population joining Partisans, and contributed to increase of the political influence of Partisans on the population.⁵³

Exiles and refugee camps abroad immediately before the end of WW II and after it

In May of 1945, the retreat of military forces of the German Reich and Croatian Armed Forces caused a large-scale exodus of people. Only a small part of soldiers remained in the country, and was preparing to fight the communists, forming the basis of the guerrilla movement, the so called crusaders, in Croatia. Those Croatian soldiers and civilians which were not handed over by allies to Yugoslav authorities in Bleiburg, mostly ended up in refugee camps of the allies. The refugees came not only from Croatian, but also other Yugoslav areas. In their desire to return to their countries, the only thing they could do was to hope for a confrontation between the democratic West and communist states, led by the USSR, to happen as soon as possible.⁵⁴

As soon as the war was over, the western allies organised displaced persons camps in their occupation zones in Austria, Italy and Germany. These camps housed foreign citizens who found themselves mostly on German and Austrian territory after the down-

⁵³ S. Ljubljanović, *Evakuacija stanovništva Slavonije u Mađarsku i Vojvodinu početkom 1945*, „Zbornik Historijskog instituta Slavonije“, no. 4, 1966, pp. 15-34; M. Karakaš Obradov, *Novi mozaici nacija u 'Novim poredcima'*, pp. 95-96.

⁵⁴ *Bleiburška tragedija hrvatskoga naroda*, ed. V. Nikolić, Zagreb 1993; M. Grahek Ravančić, *Bleiburg i križni put 1945. Historiografija, publicistika i memoarska literatura*, Zagreb 2009.

fall of the German Reich, members of the defeated armies and other people fleeing from the Red Army and Partisan-communist forces from the East, Central and Southeast Europe. The camps existed from the end of the war to the beginning of the 1950's. Their number continually changed, as some of them were closed down, while others were set up. The issue of status and repatriation of all these persons was a humanitarian, political and a military one. It was attempted to be solved firstly by military representatives of the western allies and the United Nation Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA), as well as by the International Refugees Organization (IRO) later on.⁵⁵

In agreement with the military representatives of the western allies, in March 1946 the UNRRA took over the role of caring for people in displaced persons camp, except in cases of identified war criminals and collaborators. The UNRRA also denied its assistance to the "Yugoslav political refugees" who fled to Italy after the war, except in the case of Jews.⁵⁶ Post-war Yugoslav government stated that immediately after the war "the emigrated" persons were members of "different class and ethnic structure" and members of different "quisling military formations". They also put particular emphasis on war prisoners of the Royal Yugoslav army, members of "various civil parties" and „instruments of the court" of the Yugoslav king in exile. As an important category, they also listed the "internees", imprisoned during the World War II in various camps and forced labourers, many of whom voluntarily returned to Yugoslavia and therefore formed, to a lesser extent, a part of post war political emigration. Yugoslav communist government particularly disapproved of the members of defeated military units from the Yugoslav area: Ustasas, Chetniks, White Guards etc., most of them with the status of the "Prisoner of War" or "Surrendered Enemy Personnel". Their respective countries of origin claimed that most of them were "war criminals", for whom the western allies had a special "War Crimes Enclosure". When the western allies came, war prisoners detained at the beginning of the war by the German Reich military units assumed the status of „Recovered Allied Military Personnel". This also referred to the imprisoned soldiers of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. There were those, primarily Jewish survivors, who were considered "displaced persons". As the number of persons decreased, whether by repatriation, legal or illegal move overseas or by being extradited due to war crimes indictments, everyone was ultimately deemed "displaced".⁵⁷

The best known and the biggest camps with Croatian emigrants were Fermo, Bagnoli, Modena, Belluno, Eboli, Forli, Grumo Appula Grottaglie/Taranto, Mestre,

⁵⁵ M. Karakaš Obradov, *Novi mozaici nacija u 'Novim poredcima'*, pp. 13-15.

⁵⁶ B. Robionek, *Croatian Political Refugees and the Western Allies. A documented History*, Berlin 2010, pp. 152-154.

⁵⁷ S. Domankušić, M. Levkov, *Politička emigracija. Aktivnost političke emigracije protiv samoupravne socijalističke Jugoslavije i njenih oružanih snaga*, Beograd 1974, pp. 64-65, 76; M. Sančević, *Od bosanskih šuma do Venezuele. Događaji i ljudi u mojim sjećanjima*, München, Barcelona 1982, pp. 249-255; M. Bošković, *Šesta kolona. Nastanak, organizacija i djelovanje antijugoslovenske fašističke emigracije*, Zagreb, Novi Sad 1985, pp. 52, 242, 421-422; K. Spehnyak, *Britanski pogled na Hrvatsku*, Zagreb 2006, p. 147.

Reggio nell'Emilia, Rimini, Grumo/Bari, Taranto, Terno etc. Croats and members of other Yugoslav nations, as well as citizens of other European countries, were in Austrian camps of Asten/Graz, Braunau, Hürt, Glasenbach, Murdorf, Leibnitz, Lienz, Krumpendorf, Kellerberg, Klagenfurt, Peggetz, Pignes/Lienza, Glasenbach/Salzburg, St. Gertraud/Wolsberg, Dietersdorf/Judenburg, St. Weit, Spittal, St. Johann/Pongau, St. Veit, Treffling, Troffaiach, Villach, Vitring etc. A smaller number was also in Germany (Darmstadt, Kremberg, Lohne, Mattenberg, Oberursel, Werdau, Zirndorf, Walka/Nürnberg etc.). Formal designation of refugee camps or camps for "displaced persons" was numerical rather than toponymic in many Croatian emigrants' memories of camps, Slovenes, Serbs, Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Czechs.⁵⁸

Between the end of the war and the 1950's, different data is presented on the number of Yugoslav citizens who were to be repatriated. Members of the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, majority of whom were war prisoners in Germany from 1941 and in allied military forces to a lesser extent, initially did not want to be repatriated to Yugoslavia. Yugoslav communist government exerted strong pressure on the allies to allow access to camps for their representatives, who would tell the internees "misled by enemy propaganda" the "real truth" about the new Yugoslavia. A smaller portion of repatriates were those who left the country at the end of the war. According to Yugoslav authorities, around 50,000 emigrants who stayed were in Italian camps. Around 26,000 emigrants were in camps in the American, British and French Zone in Austria, and around 48,000 emigrants in the American and British Zone in Germany.⁵⁹

In the period between 1946 and 1948, British military representatives had the following data at their disposal. Over 77,000 refugees, tentatively speaking, from the Yugoslav area, at the beginning of 1946 were mostly in Austria (over 38,000), Italy (over 22,000) and Germany (over 17,000). These numbers did not include Yugoslav Germans, the refugees and the exiled towards the end of the war and after the war. It is estimated that, out of 500,000 Yugoslav Germans, around 240,000 were evacuated and fled before the advancing Red Army and Yugoslav Partisans. They were not allowed to return to the country, i.e. to repatriate, even though the allies, including the Soviets, encouraged Yugoslav Germans to return to the country, too. Immediately after the war,

⁵⁸ HDA, State Security Service of the Republic Secretariat for Internal Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Croatia/Služba državne sigurnosti Republičkog sekretarijata za unutrašnje poslove Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske, no. 015-7-1; T. Mortigija, *Moj životopis*, eds. T. Macan, Zagreb 1996, p. 31; K. Spehnyak, *Britanski pogled na Hrvatsku*, p. 147; B. Jandrić, *Saveznički izbjeglički logori počeci otpora hrvatske političke emigracije komunističkom režimu u domovini /logor Fermo/, [in:] 1945. – razdjelnica hrvatske povijesti*, eds. N. Kisić-Kolanović, M. Jareb, K. Spehnyak, Zagreb 2006, pp. 311-312.

⁵⁹ S. Domankušić, M. Levkov, *Politička emigracija. Aktivnost političke emigracije protiv samoupravne socijalističke Jugoslavije i njenih oružanih snaga*, p. 65; M. Bošković, *Šesta kolona. Nastanak, organizacija i djelovanje antijugoslovenske fašističke emigracije*, pp. 55, 422; B. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, Beograd 1988, p. 440; Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1941.–1991. Od zajedništva do razlaza*, Zagreb 2006, p. 47.

Yugoslav communist government was expelling the remaining German population until the allies closed the Austrian border. Yugoslav Germans were then subsequently transported to the camps until “technical conditions were created” for their emigration.⁶⁰

Conclusion

World War II triggered migrations of the Croats in the area of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Similar to other national/ethnic/religious groups on the territory of the occupied Kingdom of Yugoslavia, they were affected by the emigration (around 100.000), evacuations and exiles (around 250.000), as well as colonisation (around 50.000). Towards the end of the war and immediately after it, many Croats and Muslims found themselves fleeing before the Partisans, i.e. the Yugoslav army, not only as soldiers of the defeated side and political opponents of Yugoslav communists, but also as civilians. Many lost their lives, and a number of them experienced the hardship of repatriation or living in “displaced persons camps” abroad. Even after the war, a great number of the Croats in the socialist Yugoslavia, “fled across the border” for economic or political reasons, left to find temporary work abroad etc., continuing a long and negative emigration tradition.

Summary

MIGRATIONS OF THE CROATS DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORLD WAR II

The “April war” fragmented the territory of Yugoslavia and displayed the lack of power, especially military and political, of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was being eaten away by tense relations between nations. The solution to the “Croatian issue”, supported by local nationalist political forces led by Ustashas, was found in alliance with the German Reich and the Kingdom of Italy in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which was proclaimed on April 10, 1941. The Independent State of Croatia attempted, more or less successfully, to deal with the issues of minorities with the allied countries of Hungary, Kingdom of Italy and German Reich. Croatian population in Dalmatia, Međimurje, Baranya and Bačka was pressured to emigrate due to territorial claims of neighbouring states, which were a part of the Axis powers and

⁶⁰ K. Spehnbjak, *Britanski pogled na Hrvatsku*, pp. 150, 155; D. Nećak, *O problemu ‘razseljenih oseb’ (D. Ps.) in jugoslovanskih ‘Volksdeutscherjeu’ v Austriji te o britanski ideji njihove zamenjave s koroškimi Slovenci (1945–1947)*, “Zgodovinski časopis”, no. 4, 1996, pp. 56-564; Z. Janjetović, *Odlazak vođovanskih Švaba – proterivanje ili iseljavanje*, „Tokovi istorije“, no. 3-4, 1997, p. 113; V. Geiger, *Heimkehr. Povratak slavonskih Nijemaca nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata iz izbjeglištva/prognaništva u zavičaj i njihova sudbina*, „Scrinia slavonica“, vol. 3, 2003, pp. 521-524, 52.

allies of the NDH, Kingdom of Italy and Hungary. Croats also had to emigrate from the area of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia occupied by the German Reich and Bulgaria. The NDH authorities also wanted to change the national structure of population which was a consequence of the post-war Yugoslav colonisation of the so-called Salonika volunteers, mainly Serbs as a rule, in the Serbian army during the World War I, who populated Slavonia and Sirmium. The colonisation by the NDH government was mostly carried out by the end of 1941. It slowed down significantly, and consequently was completely discontinued at the end of 1943, due to military and political conditions in the state, which caused big exiles of mostly civilian population abroad. Towards the end, a large number of people, mostly soldiers of the defeated NDH army, and also civilians, started a big exile towards the West in order to surrender to the western allies.

Keywords: migrations, Croats, World War II, post-war Period

Słowa kluczowe: migracje, Chorwacja, II wojna światowa, okres powojenny

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