

## The Elaboration of Power and the Minority Question in the Policy of the YCP in the Last Year of the War with Special Respect to the Hungarians in the Vojvodina 1944-1945

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In the course of WWII Yugoslavia was occupied by a number of its neighbours and split by civil war. By the end of the World War the dominant political power of the country had unanimously become the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP), which, on the basis of “the winner takes all” strived to bring political, social, and economic life under its control, indeed, with full success. Like other east-central European countries, the victorious revolutionary forces of WW II endeavoured to follow the Soviet example in elaborating a Socialist society, which meant the break with the exercise of power policy of the previous system. This break appeared on the scene of minority policy, too, in which Yugoslavia made a radical turn if compared to royal Yugoslavia. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it featured itself as the happy country of the southern Slav peoples, in which from Triglav to the Vardar the different nations and nationalities lived in fraternity and unity. The splendid future, however, was shed by the black shade of the past, in fact, the years 1944-1945, the year of the turn, of the seizing of power when it was absolutely not certain that Yugoslavia would follow the route later so frequently extolled with respect to the policy related to minorities.

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### Theory vs. practice

AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council of Peoples' Liberation of Yugoslavia) was the name of the head organ of post-war Yugoslavia's partisan movement. This held its second session on 29<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> November 1943 and accepted a decision declaring that the new state *would safeguard the equality of all southern Slav nations and the rights of the minorities*<sup>1</sup>. This was the basis of the national and minority policy. Soon, however, it was modified, fair enough, not this declaratively, that some nationalities still were not entitled to the same rights, actually, some did not deserve any rights whatsoever. The Secretary of the AVNOJ, Rodoljub Čolaković, namely confidentially, stated in the scientific institute working next to the Slovenian Peoples' Liberation Committee that it had been decided that the Germans would be ousted from the country<sup>2</sup>. However, this



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1. Branko PETRANOVIĆ and Momčilo ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavija 1918-1988. Tematska zbirka dokumenata*. Beograd, Izdavačka radna organizacija, “Rad”, 1988, p. 659.

2. Božo REPE, “Nemci na Slovenskom po drugi svetovni vojni”, *“Nemci” na Slovenskem 1941-1955*, (1988), p. 147.

was not made public and the declaration of the AVNOJ on the Peoples' Authority, somewhat detailed the decision of November 1943, strengthening that all the citizens of Yugoslavia would enjoy total equality, without any respect to nationality, race or religion, and any kind of impairment of their rights whether on national, religious or racial grounds as well as the fomentation of national and religious intolerance, contempt or arousing hatred would entail punishment<sup>3</sup>.

Hungarians, however, were not on the agenda of ousting not even in non-official decisions at that time. What is more, in January 1944 and even later, the partisan movement led by the Yugoslav Communist Party continuously called upon the sincere Hungarians of the Vojvodina to join the partisans. "After all, the only hope to escape not to share the fate of the sinful evil-doer Hungarians was to choose the route of resistance and military fight"<sup>4</sup>. The time for the planned ousting of the Germans came in autumn 1944, when the German and Hungarian troops were withdrawn from the territory of Vojvodina and the partisan troops alongside with the Red Army could enter Vojvodina and occupy the territories without serious fight.

The Commandment-in-Chief of the Peoples' Liberation Committee of the Vojvodina dispossessed the Germans of all their rights as early as 9<sup>th</sup> October. Six days later it gave the command to the local committees of peoples' liberation to draft the settlements populated mainly by Germans, Hungarians, and Rumanians, which assisted the occupiers. In order to fortify the new authority in this heterogeneously populated area as effectively and quickly as possible, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1944, in the Batchka, the Banat, and Baranja regions military administration was introduced<sup>5</sup>, which had three functions. On the one hand, to support the strengthening of the authority and the fulfilment of the transition to the new system, on the other, to safeguard the most optimal exploitation of the unimpaired economic power resources by the war in comparison with the Balkan parts of the country (especially alimentation). Thirdly, but not at all unimportantly, to strengthen the Slavic character of the territory<sup>6</sup>.

In terms of the latter declared aim agreed to by the highest military and political leadership, a series of restricting measures were introduced against the minorities: the restraint of free movement and the prohibition of using the mother tongue, etc., the inauguration of forced labour, the relocations, not to mention the cruelties and

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3. Branko PETRANOVIĆ and Momčilo ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost. Tematska zbirka dokumenata*. Drugi tom. 1943-1986, Provesta-Beograd, 1987, p.17.

4. *The manifesto of the District Committee of Batchka and Baranja of the Yugoslav Communist Party*, 27 March 1944, *Muzej Vojvodine*, Istoriskij arhiv, PK SKS, p. 906.

5. PETRANOVIĆ and ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*, pp. 143-144.

6. The publication of Ivan RUKAVINA on 22-10-1944, cited by A. Sajti ENIKŐ, *Impériumváltások, revízió, kisebbség. Magyarok a Délvidéken 1918-1947*, Budapest, Napvilág, 2004, p. 320. To this see also in the *Slobodna Vojvodina*, the newspaper of the Vojvodina Peoples' Liberation Unity Front the article written by Nikola PETROVIĆ under the title "Historic decision". In this he wrote the following concerning the introduction of the military administration: "Although we have crushed the German and Hungarian conquering hordes and we have pushed them westwards, we have not yet radically removed the poisonous weed dissipated by them [...] Tens and hundreds of thousands of foreign elements who have settled to territories where our forefathers cut the forests, drained the swamps, thereby creating the necessary conditions for civilized life, still keep shooting from the darkness at our fighters and the Russian soldiers and do everything to thwart the normalization of the situation, preparing to stab us into the back in these hard times for us [...]. The people feel that there is need of strong-willed steps, what is more, of energetic steps which safeguard the Yugoslav character of the Batchka", quoted by Cseres TIBOR, *Vérbosszú Bácskában*, Budapest, Magvető Kiadó, 1991, p. 102.

bloodbaths euphemistically called *atrocities*, the Hungarian victims of which amounted to the magnitude of ten thousand. During the days following the military administration, a decision was made to enclose Germans<sup>7</sup> in internment camps which followed a day later for Hungarians as well<sup>8</sup>. Meanwhile, throughout the Vojvodina, peoples' liberation committees were set up meant to represent civil authority. Alongside with them the so-called *Peoples' Guards* were organized. Much is revealed, however, of the behaviour of the authorities to the nationalities by the fact that in these Slav elements could participate exclusively. In the villages where Hungarians, Germans, and Rumanians lived, no such committees were allowed to be organized. There all power was concentrated in the hands of military authorities<sup>9</sup>.

The leading power of the newly, federatively set up Yugoslavia conceived of, as we have seen, the minority question in the form of the equality of nations and nationalities. Yet, in the course of the war, a number of concepts and efforts were present which urged the radical solution of the question and coming close to the end of the war, these concepts, regrettably, came to be realized. The partisan movement, namely, by virtue of its position, or, if you like, of its nature, was in need of retaliation. It meant to build up a new system, many of its members had suffered bad offenses, therefore, a way to revenge had to be given inasmuch it wanted to create a clear situation for the future. In this aspect the ethnically heterogeneous territories were mostly affected by encroachments. At the same time, this wave of punishment was used to strengthen the new social-political system, the liquidation of the powers opposite to it. Consequently, retaliation was not exclusively directed against one or the other nation or minority but against everybody. Resolute, theoretical, purposeful retaliation against a certain nation was against the German and in October-November 1944, against the Hungarian population.

The introduction of military administration in thee Batchka, the Banat, meaning the great part of the Vojvodina as well as in the Baranja region today belonging to Croatia, gave opportunity, next to the formerly detailed aims, to remove the undesired elements from the area. In other words, chasing away or liquidating them. The task was realized by the YCP and the *fist* of the partisan movement, the OZNA (*Odelenje za zaštitu naroda*- Class of Peoples' Defence) organized in May 1944 as an internal security corps, with an active assistance of a part of the local population<sup>10</sup>. A larger land, membership in the *Arrowcross Party* (with the promise of radical land reform many poor Hungarians joined that party in the hope to gain land at last), the welcoming of the marching in of the troops of the Royal Hungarian Army in 1941, attending a Thanksgiving Holy Mass, imagined or real offenses and debates were enough reason for somebody to come into to cross-hairs, in front of an execution squadron. The overwhelming majority of the Hungarian victims had no other *sin* than to be Hungarian. Those Hungarians who participated in the atrocities and abuses against the Serbs in 1941-1944 certainly did not wait for the partisan troops to come. Those who remained

7. PETRANOVIĆ and ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*, pp. 145-147.

8. Aleksandar KASAŠ, *Mađari u Vojvodini 1941-1946*, Novi Sad, Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu, Odsek za istoriju, 1966, p. 160.

9. *Arhiv Vojnoistorijskog Instituta*, 49-1/8.k.211 Commander. Kosta Nađ's command N. 45 on the setting up of military administration, 1-11-1944.

10. Altogether 154 people belonged in the Vojvodina to the fighting strength of OZNA in December 1944 (*Arhiv Vojnoistorijskog Instituta* 16-7/6 k.214).



had no bad conscience, “we did not commit anything, why would they offend us”. They were wrong. October and November 1944 were the darkest period of Hungarians of the Southern Parts, when, especially in the Batchka, they died in thousands by inhuman tortures, brutal execution forms. In autumn 1944, Hungarians were viewed as collectively sinful, even if this was not declared. To be precise, in the case of three settlements, Csúrog, Zsablya, and Mozsor it even gained a declaration<sup>11</sup>. The population of these settlements was interned, their goods sequestrated, and even after their setting free in the second half of 1945 it was forbidden for them to return to their villages. In the background of this unique case against Hungarians was the fact that the Serbian population of this area asked Tito in late 1944 to give an opportunity to avenge and the relocation of Hungarians because after the events of January 1942 (Cold days, in the Sajka region and Novi Sad (Újvidék) a raid was held which had more than 3,000 Serbian and Jewish victims) they could not live together with the Hungarians. They received the permission. The collective culpability of the three settlements was only overruled by an order of the Serbian government as late as autumn 2014<sup>12</sup>.

In the Southern Parts of the former Hungarian Kingdom, the war, after the *liberation* of these territories by the Serbs the bloodsheds were not limited to the retaliation against the Hungarians. Next to the undoubtedly present and in many cases dominant desire to revenge, the endeavour of the new power to secure its system and create the new social order as well as to change the ethnic picture of the area played a role, along with some even more prosaic reasons: the selfish, vile and vicious human interest was decisive.

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In the light of all these, in autumn 1944 it might have seemed that despite the former expressions the aforementioned decision of the AVNOJ and the continuously appearing call-ups with which the Hungarians were meant to be introduced into the order of the new Southern Slav state, Hungarians and Germans would share the described fate. This opportunity was even more plausible as the settling of the question by this form was founded theoretically.

### The sweeping out of the minorities

The combatant of the *scientifically based* radical solution of the minority question was on the one hand Vasa Čubrilović, historian, later minister of Agriculture, on the other, the founder of Yugoslav sociology, the minister of settlement, Sreten Vukosavljević. Both were of Serbian origin and were renowned scientists in royal Yugoslavia as well. Yet they offered their services to the new power, too, which was happy to accept it. Of the two, the former was more influential. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1944 he issued a memorandum in which he outlined a complete scenario for the leadership of the YCP, in which he gave pieces of advice for the solution of the minority question in Yugoslavia for once and for all, in fact, in the forms of relocations, chasing away, and, to a smaller extent, executions. Čubrilović, as far as the relocations were concerned, wanted to follow the sequence of Germans, Hungarians, Albanians, Italians, and Rumanians. He meant that as these minorities had committed crimes against the

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11. The *State Committee to Disclose the Crimes of the Occupants and their Assistants in the Vojvodina* issued its decision of declaring the entire Hungarian population of Csúrog war criminals and to expatriate them on 22 January 1945 (*Arhiv Vojvodine*, F-183. kutija 80. Str. Pov. 2/45).

12. <<http://www.vmsz.org.rs/kormanyrendelet>> (downloading 25-8-2015).

southern Slav nation during the war, actually, they all deserved to lose their rights as citizens. From a political perspective, however, he conceived of a necessary making a difference among them:

After the horrors committed by the Germans, here and all over Europe, they lost all their rights, so they all need to be ousted without mercy. Nevertheless, Hungarians both in Yugoslavia and in Hungary, in spite of the co-operations of the murders in the Batchka and the serving the Germans in Russia, still deserve certain discretion. Against them we should not carry out all those measures taken against the Germans. The same holds true of Arnauts of Old Serbia and Macedonia. In the course of the solution of the minority question we have to bring the Batchka, Kosovo and Metohia ethnically under our control, removing some hundred thousands of Hungarians and Arnauts from the country<sup>13</sup>.

For Čubrilović the most important was not how many members of minority groups ought to be ousted but from where. The minorities living in the dispersion he deemed not dangerous for Yugoslavia. He saw the danger in the strategically and economically important minority blocks constituting a respectable number living in the provinces along the borders, especially, if they bordered their ethnically same brethren. He considered the minorities dangerous for Yugoslavia not on the basis of national ratio but on their geopolitical position. So as to avoid this danger, he saw the relocation as the most practical.

To solve these problems these wars are the most effective, which sweep through states like a gale, eradicate roots, and dissolve the peoples. What would need decades or centuries in peace times, in times of war only need a couple of months. We must not delude ourselves: if we want to solve the question, we can do it as long as the war is going on<sup>14</sup>.

As an example he referred to the Soviet Union, which was the first to use relocations for the solution of minority questions. By alluding to this, Yugoslavia can justifiably ask the allies to let them solve their minority questions this way. After all, on the basis of their record during the war they could justifiably hope that “the brotherly Soviet Union will help to do with the minority question as they used to do and are doing”. Needless to say, the war provides a great psychological atmosphere for relocations. “Our minorities are aware of what they did, so they will not resist long if we sweep them away<sup>15</sup>. [...] Perhaps no other opportunity will come to know our country ethnically fully ours. All the problems present in our country nowadays, whether of national –political, social or of economic character, can wait for their solutions for shorter or longer periods of time. Yet the minority question will never be solved if not solved now”<sup>16</sup>.

The other apostle of the nationality question, Sreten Vukosavlkević, also considered the fortification of the Slavonic, specifically Serb character of the Vojvodina as of utmost significance. Therefore, he urged to continue ethnic repressions, now

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13. Vasa ČUBRILLOVIĆ, “Manjinski problem u novoj Jugoslaviji”, *Hereticus*, vol. V. n. 1. (2007), p. 385. Arnauts is the old Serbian name for the Albanians.

14. *Ibidem*, p. 387.

15. *Ibidem*, p. 385.

16. *Ibidem*, p. 391.



instead of Germans turning against Hungarians.<sup>17</sup> He conceived of the forceful relocation of the Banat Hungarians as the long-lasting solution, by which “proportioned” circumstances can be achieved in this part of Yugoslavia.<sup>18</sup> He viewed colonization not only as a solution for the agricultural-social but also for the historical-political problems. In order to achieve the desired purpose, he gave a number of pieces of advice: the relocation of all Hungarians, relocation of Hungarians to elsewhere in inner Yugoslavia, away from the border areas and the districts where Hungarians constitute a majority. As a final possibility he even mentioned that a part of Hungarians could be settled down in the northern Banat and afterwards, this territory could be offered to Hungary.<sup>19</sup> As the minister of settlement he intended to kill two birds with one stone. With the sweeping away of Hungarians he hoped to enlarge the number of divisible agricultural land, offering a solution for the overpopulation problems of Yugoslav villages, thereby smoothing the need of land. At the same time, economic gain would have been completed by essential political gain, too. After all, if the Hungarians disappeared from Yugoslavia, ethnic cohesion would be strengthened, the situation on the northern state border would be stabilized and the Magyarization there could be put an end to as well. This solution seemed to be appropriate to found long-lasting good relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary, as without a minority there would not be a source of conflict, either.<sup>20</sup> These theses Vukosavljević put forward with

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17. “With their participation in the war against us and our allies, joining the Hungarian and German armies voluntarily gaining Hungarian, and, respectively German citizenship, holding positions of public administration during the occupation, joining Magyarization and Germanization communities, etc., a great number of Hungarians and Germans chose Hungary or Germany instead of and against Yugoslavia. Yet those who with their acts decided for their mother countries have to be settled to Hungary or Germany. The question needs to be settled fundamentally. The carrying out could be given to a special committee or the committee investigating war criminals working in Novi Sad along with the Chief Vojvodina Peoples’ Liberation Committee. This question must not be postponed. It needs to be carried through while the war is going on”. A document without date and signature, which, judged by the content and style as well as the adjoining document most probably contains the thoughts of Sreten Vukosavljević (*Arhiv Jugoslavije*, F-97, 3-35).

18. “If the Hungarians do not expatriate, Magyarization in the Vojvodina will become even stronger. We ourselves will Magyarize them. Provided that they stay here, they must be considered citizens with the same rights and can get a share of the land distribution. As many of them are without lands, the lands which used to be in German hands will now go over to the hands of Hungarians. Financially they would be stronger than before the war. Instead of punishment reward. Our poor ones would become even poorer than before. They would remain without land in their own country. Perhaps as the servants of Hungarians”.

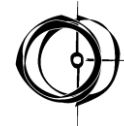
19. “If there is no other choice, we could resign some territories in the northern Banat and the Banat to Hungary, with Kanizsa, Horgos, and Zenta and in the East as far as Mokri nprovided that Hungary takes over another 200 thousand Hungarians from us. With this agreement we would ease the Vojvodina by a respectable number of Hungarians, turning up its economic structure but securing it. This would be enough to achieve that Hungarians could not constitute either an absolute or a relative majority in any of the districts. Hungary would be more reconciled with this partial expatriation to Hungary than ever. They know that they committed a lot of crimes against us and this would facilitate that they accept, understand and forget the expatriation. When the time comes that we do not have to be suspicious of our Hungarians, those who remained and we will not have any suspicion of Hungary regarding the danger constituted by the Hungarian minority in our country, then we will have a solid and long-lasting peace between us. And we need to maintain good relations with Hungary. Hungarians are a strong nation with high historic rank. And in this respect the Hungarian nation will be important as it has always been throughout its history”. (the elaboration of Sreten Vukosavljević without any date, *Arhiv Jugoslavije*, F-97, 3-35).

20. *Ibidem*.

scholarly arguments and ethical justification. Not unlike Čubrilović, he pointed out the importance of the historical moment and the need to act decisively and swiftly.

In spite of the concepts detailed above which later came to the tables of the policy-makers, Hungarians actually had a fate different from that of the Germans since in the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party the minority politics concepts became victorious according to which on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1944 the military administration made a difference between *good* and *bad* Hungarians.<sup>21</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1944 the military commandment in charge of the Vojvodina region gave command to a unified handling of the Hungarians, which in the sense of what was agreed on the second meeting of the AVNOJ meant the complete legal equality, temporarily, however, on paper<sup>22</sup>.

The turn is well shown by the setting up of the Petőfi Brigade, which exclusively served to integrate Hungarians into the new state and make them *acceptable*. The Petőfi Brigade was recruited from Hungarians only. It grew out from the Petőfi battalion created in Slavonia in 1943 and was meant to demonstrate that Hungarians also participated in the liberation war and thereby had a right to enjoy the gained liberty<sup>23</sup>. From the spring of 1945 the integration of Hungarians into the new system began, they received seats in the committees of peoples' liberation, the internment camps were closed etc.<sup>24</sup> In the background of this one can find two motifs. On the one hand, the party-and state leadership (basically identical) was interested in internal affairs, on the other, from the point of view of policy it also seemed to be advisable to alter the radical policy pursued against the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union stood in the background of both. The *brotherly Soviet Union* namely did not desire the solution of the minority question in Yugoslavia according to the Soviet model, after all, by that time it had become clear that Hungary would become a part of the Soviet block. In the sense of fraternity and unity one cannot pursue a policy of repression against certain nationalities collectively, even if some circles would have liked it. In the new Yugoslav minority policy declared from spring 1945 onwards the efforts to reduce the number of Hungarians was changed to the desire to integrate Hungarians into the new system. In May an Extraordinary Controlling Committee was set up to investigate into the injustices committed in the Vojvodina. More and more Hungarians joined the YCP, although party reports reveal that their number by far was less than their ratio within the population. In July 1945 the Hungarian Cultural Alliance was formed, Hungarian



21. *Arhiv Vojvodine*, Vojna uprava za Banat, Bačku i Baranju, F-170. kut. 5.20/44.

22. *Arhiv Vojnoistorijskog Instituta*, Arhivanarodno-oslobodilačkog rat, 11-6.214.

23. The brigade numbered 1,500 people in January 1945 and a further 2,500 Hungarian fighters were in the mobilization centre in Sombor (Zombor) but only a part of these was meant to be joined to the Petőfi Brigade, claiming that “there was no need to set up a separate Hungarian division. We are in need of cadres and also, the brigade is enough to fulfill the political role for which we have created it alone”. Simultaneously, it is remarkable that the Brigade was meant to be created officially in Pécs which was an evident sign of the Yugoslav efforts to alter the frontier line. The report of the political trustee of the Third Yugoslav Army, *Muzej Vojvodine*, Istorijski arhiv PK SKS 223.

24. In September 1945 they even allowed that the Hungarians of the Vojvodina set free from Soviet arrest along with Hungarian citizens could return home to the Vojvodina if they wanted to (*Diplomatski arhiv Minstarstva Poljnih Poslova* SFRJ Politička arhiva.1945. 23. XXIII/112).

schools were opened, they got lands in the scope of the agrarian reform<sup>25</sup>, and also Hungarians participated in the elections in November 1945. Fair enough, in the areas populated by them the votes given to the Popular Front not led by the YCP was conspicuously high<sup>26</sup>.

In the background of the rapid change there stood many reasons: ranking Hungarians as less sinful than Germans, the fact that Hungary can never be as dangerous as Germany, and lastly, the most decisive reason must have been that they could get the information from the Soviet Union that Hungary would become a Socialist country like Yugoslavia. Only after the revenge desire of a part of the population was fulfilled (in the form of diminishing the minorities, especially Germans but also Hungarians whose social and economic weight was significantly weakened as well), did the YCP start its policy based on the *real* equality of nations. Still, this was largely a store front policy which put an end to the forceful assimilation exercise of former periods and instead, stressed a veiled assimilation<sup>27</sup>. In Tito's Yugoslavia individual rights were acknowledged but the forming of more important minorities into communities was thwarted. The process of the integration of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia that started in spring 1945 was not an easy one, either, and evidently not

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25. From the distribution of land Hungarians got a share, too. Nonetheless, based on the number we can state that the theory of equality could not fully be set into practice. Altogether 18,758 Hungarian families received lands on the basis of the so-called agrarian entitlement. For them 41,460 hectares of land were allotted. While in the case of Serbs 49,599 families received 109,431 hectares (the data are published by Nikola L. GAČEŠA, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945-1948*, Novi Sad, Institut za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine, 1984, pp. 198-199). At the first glimpse this seems to be fair as the families got the same size of land. If, however, we take into account that almost three times as many Serbs received land than Hungarians did, although the ratio of the Serbs within the population did not surpass that of Hungarians by 50 per cent, we have good reason to believe that the Hungarians, despite the declared theories were in the backrows at the land distribution.

26. From those entitled to vote members of the following parties and mass organizations, economic and cultural associations were banned: the Arrowcross Party, members of Imrédy's party, the Turan Hunters, Southern Parts Hungarian Cultural Association, Hungarian House (PETRANOVIĆ and ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*, p. 214).

27. There is need briefly to treat the concept of hidden assimilation. According to general view, this is a notion with a negative connotation, it questions the good-will of the measures of the given authorities and it implies the intentions of them. The definition is undoubtedly correct. However, I deem it important to ask the question of what is better for the minority, the individual, and the community: if they remain under continuous stress, fight with gnashing teeth, defying the hostile power slowing the assimilation process. Or, if they make use of the possibilities given by the authorities, not denying the bad intention of these but seek their own welfare, even achieving short-term good results. If we stress that by displaying the alternatives somewhat in a polarized way, the idea has the direct consequence that if we choose the former one, we must be happy to accept any diasadvantageous measures for the minorities as thereby, the diminishing in numbers and the integration can be postponed. While, however, we opt for the second one, we regrettably cannot avoid facing the acceleration of integration as experience in the Carpathian Basin show that tolerant policy offering concessions loosens the ranks of minorities.



rapid. On lower levels distrust against them could be felt even years later<sup>28</sup>. Perhaps we are not totally wrong if stating that this mistrust never ever fully disappeared<sup>29</sup>. The position of Hungarians in the Southern Parts after WWII is aptly described by the statement of Enikő Sajti, claiming that in autumn 1944 “Hungarians lost all the privileges enjoyed by them for a short period of time of belonging to Hungary but they carried into the new Yugoslav state all the burdens of reuniting them with their fatherland”<sup>30</sup>.

Nationality question was the fundamental question of the existence of entire Yugoslavia but the minority question was of key importance in many federal units, too: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Metohia, and the Vojvodina. No wonder, as the second Yugoslavia remained just as much a colourful ethnic tessellation as the pre-war Southern Slav state. The occupations and cruelties of the mother-countries of the minorities as well as the bloody civil war between the state-forming nations resulted in a deep and glowing hatred which in the case of state-forming nations could only be overcome by merciless rigour<sup>31</sup> whereas as far as minorities were concerned (at least with respect to Hungarians at any rate) could exclusively be suppressed after the use of the whip by means of a combination of rigour and holding out a carrot with them.

National intolerance and excesses as well as chauvinism were very much powerfully present in the last period in the territories that had come under partisan rule, such as the Vojvodina, too. In this an important role was played by the aforementioned local peoples’ liberation committees, the members of which were those who actively supported the movement or who were widely known to have been ardently sympathetic with it. Also, local *great men* gained seats in them, even wealthy people, the supporters

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28. The report made on 23 March 1945 on the circumstances and the feelings of the population. In the district of Strara Palanka it discussed the aversions of the Slav population against Hungarians of whom all they claimed to be criminals. They were dissatisfied with their equality that they underlined at every meeting (*Arhiv Vojvodine*, F-183. kutija 496. Pov. Broj 9). This is supported by the exactly non-identifiable document, too, the author of which was in all likelihood Sreten Vukosavljević, minister of settlement: “The Vojvodina is dissatisfied with the policy towards the Hungarians and Germans, as it is known, with their activities they had gravely hurt their Serb compatriots. They had dug a deep and wide pit between us. After all what had happened it is difficult to imagine common life. In the interest of correct and healthy connections with Germany and Hungary Hungarians and Germans should actually leave us” (*Arhiv Jugoslavije*, F-97 3-35).

29. Among others, this is proved by a summary report of 1947 on the achievements of the political line of the Central Committee and the political situation in the Vojvodina. In this some achievements are made mention of if compared to the years 1945 and 1946, as “still they managed to find connections to some healthy powers”. They saw the main difficulties in establishing good relations with the Hungarian masses on the one hand in objective reasons (the entire historical past and the influence of the reinforced Fascist revisionist parties on the masses of Hungarians during the years of occupation), on the other, in subjective ones. To the latter they ranked the small numbers of party cadres and their isolation, the fact that the reaction terms them the traitors of Hungarians, and that the former local leaders and activists of the Fascist organizations keep, though a hidden yet active working against the system (*Arhiv Vojvodine* F-334. Pokrajnski komitet Saveza komunista Vojvodine, Kutija 1,041).

30. “Az új kisebbségstratégia lehetőségei és korlátai, 1944-1947”, in *Büntudat és győztes fölény. Magyarország, Jugoszlávia és a délvidéki magyarok*, Szeged, Szegedi Tudományegyetem, 2010, p. 150.

31. This target was served among others by the law passed by the AVNOJ on 24 May 1945 on the prohibition of instigating national, racial, and religious hatred. The law comprised strict sanctions if national equality was hurt, if privileges were provided on the basis of nationhood. In the first case it envisaged confinement of three to five years, in more severe cases or for repeaters two up to fifteen years of gaol and partial or total sequestrating of goods (PETRANOVIĆ and ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*, pp. 184-185).



of the old order. This certainly gave a wide range to misuses, not necessarily just towards the minorities but also in terms of Serbian-Croatian relations. This grew so strong that in May 1945 a central order declared that an Extraordinary Controlling Committee be set up to investigate and heal the situation. So as to eliminate the problems the committee mentioned above elaborated an action plan for the federal government giving the advice to strengthen propaganda to crush chauvinism and reinforce fraternity and unity. Also, they maintained that the composition of the committees of peoples' liberation should be altered so that the proportion of Croats and nationalities would be the same in them<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, the leading staff should be cleansed, the control of the upper organs over the lower ones should be more efficient<sup>33</sup>. And these pieces of advice brought their fruits: at its session on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1945 the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party brought a decision to strengthen the combat against chauvinism and to support a propaganda campaign against it, to mend the local faults as well as to strengthen the party organs with cadres in the Vojvodina)<sup>34</sup>.

The severe nature of the situation is proved by the fact that at the session held on 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> April 1945 of the Vojvodina Province Party Committee of the Serb Communist Party also identified the fortification of fraternity and unity as the most essential aim in the province and not just in terms of the minorities. Jovan Veselinov Žarko, Secretary of the Party Committee addressed in his opening speech the Serbo-Croatian conflicts in the Sirmium region and sectarianism against Slovaks and Rumanians as a problem. He called the question against Hungarians very complex, being, on the one hand, a neighbouring country while on the other, a defeated state which had committed crimes against Yugoslavia, moreover, Hungary would become a Socialist state, too. (Even if at that time this fact was still unknown in Budapest – Á. H.)<sup>35</sup>.

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32. The non-Slavonic elements could appear in these committees as late as early 1945 but their number was far less than their ratio within the population. In May 1945 e.g. from the 45 members of the Vojvodina Chief Peoples' Liberation Committee 39 were Serbs, 4 Croats and only 2 Hungarians. In the district peoples' liberation committee of Subotica (Szabadka) there was only one Hungarian member. (PETRANOVIĆ and ZEČEVIĆ, *Jugoslavenski federalizam. Ideje i stvarnost*, p. 145).

33. *Ibidem*, p. 146

34. Zapisnici sa sednica politbiroa Centralnog Komiteta KPJ (11-6-1945 ti 7-7-1948) Predio Branko Petranović (*Arhiv Jugoslavije*, Službeni list SRJ. Beograd, 1995. p. 66).

35. "You know that many Hungarians participated in the Horthy-bloodsheds. With respect to Hungarians, however, our standpoint is special. Hungary as a state can never be as dangerous for us as Hitler's Germany since Germany is the country which can turn against our nation again if we do not defeat it. Hungarians are a different case. Also, we are Communists, therefore, internationally minded. We represent the following theory towards Hungarians: to evolve the feeling that they want to live in this country and fight for it. But here we have found hardships. We often talk of ignorant, misinformed peasants and their fraternity and unity with Hungarians. Yet then we are criticized. Here we should apply and realize the line of the party. In our speeches there are many stereotypes. Thereby we make the normalization of the situation of Hungarians and Serbs difficult because we say the same in various places and under various circumstances. There are faults with the Serbs and the Hungarians alike and thus the situation is not normalized. It occurred that the feeling of Hungarians towards us was tried to be explained that formerly Great Serb hegemony had suppressed them. This is false. The crimes committed under the occupation we link to the war. Here one cannot allude to what used to be before. Those Hungarians who committed these crimes were the servants of the occupants, and we judge them accordingly" The register is quoted in Hungarian by Slobodan BJELICA, "A kommunista hatalom és a nemzetiségi kérdés a Vajdaságban a második világháború utáni első években", in Karol BIERNACKI and István FODOR (eds.), *Dél-Alföldi évszázadok. 28. Impériumváltás a Vajdaságban (1944)*, Szeged, Zenta 2010, pp.104-105.

The solution of the problem of chauvinism in the Vojvodina region (as well) was mostly heated with relation to the state-building nations, there were a lot of examples in the case of Serbs, Croatians, and Bunevats people alike<sup>36</sup>. “As long as in the Vojvodina we do not find a solution for the question of the relations of nations well in the spirit of the movement of peoples’ liberation, we will not be able to settle other tasks, either”- summarized the importance of the question the first person of the Party in the Vojvodina<sup>37</sup>. In order to heal the situation, in line with the concepts of the central leadership of the YCP which attributed a stressed significance to the achievement of the most harmonious cohabitation of the nations and nationalities, envisaged the break with stiffness and sectarianism and held it desirable that the minorities have their own schools, newspapers and cultural programmes<sup>38</sup>.

The number of Hungarians dropped significantly in Yugoslavia after the war. The retaliation against Hungarians in the Southern Parts demanded victims of a range of ten thousand<sup>39</sup>. About 80 thousand left especially for Hungary, many voluntarily but a respectable part of them was forcefully expatriated by the Serbian authorities. The majority of those exiled comprised the state office-holders and their families who moved to the Southern Parts following the 1941 reunion<sup>40</sup>. The rapid and effective removal of Hungarians who settled down after the marching in of the troops of the Royal Hungarian Army is well demonstrated by the report of the national committee of Temerin of 12<sup>th</sup> September 1945. According to this “on the territory of the National Committee of Temerin no persons of Hungarian origin live who moved here after 5<sup>th</sup>

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36. “There is a mistaken concept, too, that our comrades in the Party represent the Serbs, the Croatians the Croatians, the Slovaks the Slovaks, etc. But this phenomenon is the least among Serbs. And then one intervenes in the interest of the other [...]. The Bunevats people do have some chauvinism. This is centred in Subotica (Szabadka) and in that neighbourhood. Some Bunevats comrades in leading positions are convinced that the Serbs are following the same policy they used to follow before the war. This led to a debate: formerly the Serbs held the power in that town, now all power should be concentrated in the hands of the Bunevats. This is a mistake. In Subotica there is no Cyrillic spelling at all. This is wrong. There is a kind of chauvinism there that can be very dangerous for us” (*Ibidem*, p. 105).

37. Quoted by Jelena POPOV, *Narodni front u Vojvodini 1944-1953*, Novi Sad, Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu. Institut za Istorije Monografije, Knjiga 27, 1986, p. 248.

38. *Ibidem*, p. 106. He certainly did not count the Germans here because a decision had been made on their complete expatriation.

39. According to the found documents in the course of the archival research led by the Hungarian-Serb Academic Joint Committee some 7,000 victims were identified, in all likelihood Hungarians. At the same time, the list of names in Novi Sad (Újvidék) and Sombor (Zombor), although one was taken, is lost and has not been found. The number of those victims can be estimated about 1,000-1,500 according to memories, registers of legally dead, and parish registers. To these come those victims who are not listed in archival sources yet disappeared exactly in the given period or were declared to be legally dead. As to their numbers, one has to rely similarly upon estimations which, however, often show 40 per cent differences if compared with other sources. If the entire Vojvodina is taken into account, the number of victims amounted to about 13-14,000 (<[http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/teljesnek-tekintetho-a-delvideki-magyar-aldozatok-nevsora-136548](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/teljesnek-tekintetho-a-delvideki-magyar-aldozatok-nevsora-136548)> downloading 27-8-2015)

40. The cease-fire signed with Hungary rendered it possible that according to the order No.221 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued on 31 March 1945 all the office-holders appointed by the occupying Hungarian authorities had to leave the Vojvodina together with their families and move to Hungary within a fortnight. They were allowed to take with themselves only what they had brought (this was, naturally enough, hard to control and gave opportunities to misuse). By early 1946 5,564 people had left the Vojvodina this way. Still not even Yugoslav sources were clear about how many exactly were public servants and how many of them had pursued any other jobs (*Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva Spoljnih Poslova SFRJ*. 1946. f.55. Kab. Broj.108).



April 1941. Around 500 Hungarian settlers lived here, a great part of whom, an estimated one hundred escaped while the others were chased away from their territories, as soon as our authorities took over the power. So no such person lives with us”<sup>41</sup>. Here it should be mentioned that in summer 1945 the United States of America found it necessary to admonish the Yugoslav government that in the solution of the question of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia not merely the interests of Yugoslavia should be viewed but also the ones of European security and the needs of future peace in general. Also, the hardships of the Allied Occupying Forces in Hungary had to be taken into account as the movement of the people constituted complications. One can only make guesses why exactly then, in summer 1945, when the new policy towards minorities started to be realized this admonition came from the USA to Yugoslavia that the Hungarian question should be harmonized with the Great Powers. It is plausible that the pieces of advice given and submitted regarding the expatriation of Hungarians and the negotiations of these questions had got as news to Washington D.C. which urged to call the attention of Belgrade that it regarded all attempts unlawful which on the basis of war responsibility were aimed to expatriate all members of an ethnic group<sup>42</sup>.

94 Mostly to the areas of the exiled families, in the sense of the conscious nationality policy resettlements followed in the course of which many hundreds of thousands of southern Slavonic, mainly Serbian people arrived from the most underdeveloped parts of the country. Colonization was large-scaled in the entire country but it was nowhere as extended as in the Vojvodina. Whereas in the other federal units it was only internal colonization, i.e. people changed their place of habitation within the given republic, in the Vojvodina 44,116 families that settled down largely arrived from the territories of the Croatian Republic populated by Serbs and from Montenegro<sup>43</sup>. As a consequence of all these, the ethnic structure of the Vojvodina underwent a basic change. Especially important was the rise in the number of Serbs: in 1945 it counted 593,735 persons, in 1948 it amounted to 841,246 people. In 1948, at the time of the first official Yugoslav census there lived 496,492 Hungarians (3.2 per cent) in the country<sup>44</sup>. Out of these 428,750 lived in the Vojvodina (26 per cent of Vojvodina’s total population), in one block along the right shore of the river Tisza and in great numbers in northern Banat. The 50,000 Hungarians in Croatia lived primarily in the Drava-corner and the Hungarians living in Slovenia numbered 10,000 people, along the border in the Mura region<sup>45</sup>. The reason why despite the exiles, chasings away, retaliations Hungarians still did not diminish in their numbers as it is revealed by the data of the census, is that the Germans staying in Yugoslavia confessed themselves to be Hungarians, hoping that they could enjoy the somewhat better policy towards Hungarians.

Finally, I deem it important to mention that minority policy had two aspects in the policy of the YCP. One was the question of the minorities of Yugoslavia, the other the policy regarding the southern Slavic minorities outside Yugoslavia, thee detailed

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41. *Arhiv Vojvodine*, F-183. kutija 23. br. 52.

42. DASIP PA 1945 F-23.1378. The note of the Belgrade American Embassy on 7-6-1945.

43. GAČEŠA, *Agrarna reforma*, p. 368.

44. *Ibidem*, p. 374.

45. The census of 1948, *Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948 godine: Stanovništvo po rodnom kraju*, Beograd, Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1954. See also *Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948 godine: Stanovništvo po narodnosti*, Beograd, Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1954.

treating of which will be the topic of another study. Here I would like to refer only to the most conspicuous points as well as the most significant elements of the modifying of the Yugoslav policy towards the southern Slavic minorities in Hungary. In the latter, namely, a radical change came about if compared to the former era: the nationality-minority question in the Hungarian-Yugoslav relations virtually reversed after the Second World War. While in Yugoslav foreign affairs the southern Slav minority played a completely negligible role in the interwar period, there were only scant memoranda on the question, even those rather in the form of lexical composition in the 1930s, after the World War Yugoslavia showed a definite interest in its nation-parts living in the northern neighbourhood. It is difficult to judge seriously to what extent this was due to the feeling of national coherence or to real policy considerations. We perhaps come closest to truth when we claim that the weight of these depended on the circumstances. As in the interwar period Hungary attributed an important role to the minority question in achieving its foreign policy aims, so in the first years after the Second World War Belgrade also looked upon its minorities remaining outside Yugoslavia as a tool to assist its foreign policy endeavours. Not exclusively in achieving direct concessions for it (like the changing of the frontier in favour of Yugoslavia) but rather to secure wide-range targets, in alignment with the Soviet Union, or to push its relations with Czechoslovakia, such as in the case of the population exchange of summer 1946. In this context the question of the southern Slavic minority appeared as a part of drawing the border from late 1944 to 1946, as a kind of tool of achieving the possibly arising Yugoslav territorial demands.

