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Milan Nedic's Quisling Regime and Forced Labor in Serbia from 1941 to 1944

Marija Obradović and Nada Novaković ¹

Abstract

Purpose – The study aim is an analyze of the war crimes of forced labour as a part of the German war economy, especially in Serbia under the Milan Nedic's quisling regimes in the period from 1941 to 1944, on the ground of approach of historiography using the model of scientific description.

Design / methodology / approach – An inpretative historical reconstruction of the war crimes involving the forced mobilization of civilian labour from the occupied population for engagement in the German war economy on the territory of the Reich as well as on the territory of occupied Serbia carried out by Nedic's quisling administration.

Findings – The main military –political goal of the establishment of Milan Nedic's quisling regime by the German occupation system during the Second World War was the exploitation of Serbia's entire economic resources, industry, energy resources and manpower for the requirements of Nazi German's war industry.

Research limitations/ implications – The research is a contribution in the field of the historical evidence that challenge revisionist naratives which deny the quisling nature of Nedic's administration in Serbia during the Second World War.

Originality / value – Result of this research is establishment of historical facts that the forced exploitation of manpower was an integral part of Germany's occupation of Serbia. The apparatus of Nedic's quisling administration in occupied Serbia was included in the policy of the “total mobilization“ manpower for the German war economy with the goal of contributing to the Nazi war effort. His administration was a direct participant in the implementation of the measures enforced by Germany's occupation system in Serbia during the Second World War, including those which reffered to forced labour.

Paper type – Research article

Keywords: forced labour, The Second World War, war crimes, Serbia, Milan Nedic's quisling regimes

¹ Marija Obradović (corresponding author, email address: m.obradovicinis1@gmail.com) is a researcher at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade (Serbia). Nada Novaković is a researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade (Serbia).

1. Introduction

Revisionist narratives are currently highly present in the historiography of Serbia. The main directions of such revisionism refer to denials of the collaborationist nature of the Chetnik movement and Nedic's quisling administration in Serbia, as well as the crimes they committed. Historical revisionism in Serbia is accompanied by legal rehabilitations, primarily of the members of Draza Mihajlovic's Chetnik Movement in 2004, and then of Draza Mihajlovic himself in 2011.

In 2003 the Serbian Orthodox Church canonized Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic, the founder of the political ideology of Saint-Savian nationalism which was the basis for the fascist organization, Zbor, lead by Dimitrije Ljotic.

2008 saw the launch of the court case, which is still ongoing, for the rehabilitation of Milan Nedic who was the head of the quisling administration in Serbia during the World War II. During the trial for his rehabilitation, the historical fact that Nedic was responsible for war crimes involving the forced mobilization of civilian manpower during the occupation of Serbia in the Second World War was completely omitted from the court hearing.

The Serbian collaborationist administration lead by Milan Nedic committed numerous war crimes and was responsible for the murder of over 150,000 people during the German occupation of Serbia during the Second World War.²

Alongside those crimes, pursuant to the findings of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) State Commission for Determining War Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators, Nedic's quisling administration also committed the war crime of the forced mobilization of civilian labor from the occupied population for engagement in the German war economy on the territory of the Reich as well as on the territory of occupied Serbia.³

² In the *Žrtve rata 1941-1945* (Victims of War) register in 1961, it was established that on the territory of Serbia (excluding Vojvodina) the occupiers and their collaborators were responsible for the registered deaths of at least 93,167 people. If we take into consideration that the Census Commission provided its opinion that on the whole territory of Yugoslavia, according to the census from 1964, only 56-59% of the victims were registered, the assumption is that the number of victims on the territory of Serbia stands at somewhere between 157,910 and 166,370, but that assumption has not been proved exactly. From the established number of 93,167 fatalities on the territory of central Serbia (listed by 2003) 37,079 were members of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, i.e. the Yugoslav Army (NOVJ/JA). See: Milan Radanović, *Kazna i zločin. Snage kolaboracije u Srbiji, odgovornost za ratne zločine 1941-1945) i vojni gubici (1944-1945)*, (Beograd: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2016), 580.

³ See: Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1941-1944*. Volumes 1-2 (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979); Nikola Živković, *Ratna šteta koju je Nemačka učinila Jugoslaviji u*

The practice of the mobilization of the occupied population for the purpose of work for the occupiers' war efforts was strictly forbidden by international laws of war, particularly by the conventions of the Regulations Respecting the Law and Customs of War on Land and its annex by the Hague Convention (IV) which in section III regulated the Military Authority over the Territory of the Hostile State, adopted at the international peace conferences in The Hague in 1899 and 1907^{th.4}

a) The Occupiers' Partition of Yugoslavia and the Establishment of the Quisling Regimes during the Second World War

After the demonstrations held in Belgrade on 27th March 1941, in which the members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia also participated, a *coup d'état* was conducted in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Prince Pavle Karadjordjević's three-member regency was thus dethroned and Cvetković-Macek's Government overthrown, which previously, on 25th March, had signed the Vienna Protocol on Accession to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact.

Shortly afterwards, Germany launched an attack on Yugoslavia by bombing Belgrade on 6th April 1941. The Royal Yugoslav Army was defeated by Germany in the short-lived April War. This military defeat was not only followed by occupation, but also by the partitioning of Yugoslavia and the establishment of occupational zones, and quisling states and regimes on its territory.

Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria lead an aggressive campaign of legalising the partitioned territories, based on the concept of debellation, neglecting not only the fact that the forced ending of statehood was untenable from the point of view of international law, but also that the new royal Yugoslav government-

drugom svetskom ratu (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju i NIP Export Press, 1975); Živko Avramovski, *Treći Rajh I Borski rudnik* (Bor: Muzej rudarstva I metalurgije, Rudarsko-topioničarski basen Bor, 1975); Sima Begović, *Logor Banjica 1941-1944*. tom 1-2 (Beograd Institut za savremenu istoriju i., 1989); Tomislav Pajić, *Prinudni rad I otpor u logorima Borskog rudnika 1941-1944*, ((Beograd Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju i 1989); Olivera Milosavljević, *Potisnuta istina. Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941-1944*. (Beograd: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2006); Zoran Janjetović, *U skladu sa nastalom potrebom. Prinudni rad u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944*. (Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012); *Logori, zatvori I prisilni rad u Hrvatskoj/Jugoslaviji 1941-1945, 1945-1951*. (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 2010); exhibition "Propagadni plakat u Nedićevoj Srbiji", held from 20th November until 10th December 2015 in Novom Sadu, authors: custodians-historians Kristina Meneši and Vojislav Martinov.

⁴ *The Exploitation of Foreign Labour by Germany* (Montreal: International Labour Office, 1945), 283

in-exile, established and located in Great Britain during the war, had declared the continuation of the war.

Through the establishment of dependent regimes and the creation of non-independent states on the territory of Yugoslavia during the Second World War, Germany and its allies emphasized that they were righting the wrongs of the Versailles system. They claimed to be destroying an artificial state creation and liberating the nations enslaved within it, but were in fact satisfying their territorial aspirations based on historical and ethnic motivations.

Germany adopted the "Temporary Directives for the Partition of Yugoslavia" on 12th April 1941. According to those directives, parts of Slovenia, and chunks of the Dolenjska, Stajerska, Koruska and Meznicka valleys were annexed by the Third Reich, and the rest of Slovenia was divided between Italy and Hungary. Parts of Vojvodina, Backa, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekomurje were occupied to form part of Hungary. Macedonia was divided between Bulgaria and Italy, i.e. between their Albanian quislings. Dalmatia and Montenegro were occupied by Italy and Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina became the Independent State of Croatia.

Serbia, which encompassed Banat, the Bor Mine region, Old Serbia, and the Kosovska Mitrovica region including the Lapski, Vucitrnski and Zvecanski districts fell under the German Military Administration.

Bulgaria occupied the Vranjski and Pirot districts, i.e. southeastern Serbia. Kosovo was mainly in Italy's sphere of interest, but parts were controlled by the Bulgarians and Germans (the Kosovska Mitrovica region) for the exploitation of the Trepca Mine and securing the railway in the Ibar valley.

The territory in Yugoslavia occupied by Germany during the Second World War encompassed a surface area of 128,000 km² with around 10 million citizens, by Italy over 80,000 km² with 4 million citizens and by Hungary 11,600 km² with 1,145 000 citizens.⁵

b) The Use of Manpower by Germany in the Second World War

The policy of systematic forced mass mobilization, the brutal exploitation of foreign manpower in industrial and agricultural production, and the exploitation of ore and forests were the main characteristics of Germany's war economy during the Second World War on its own territory as well as on those under occupation.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has established that during the war, Germany used the work of between 30 and 35 million people for its war

⁵ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, Druga Knjiga, (Beograd: Nolit, 1988), 31.

efforts.⁶ Hence, the systematic use of foreign manpower by Germany to increase its production capacities was one of the significant aspects of the Second World War, unprecedented in previous European history. It is believed that without it Germany would not have been able to wage war for so long.

The German war industry and agriculture were extremely dependent on foreign workers who were conscripted and held through the powerful machinery of coercion. At the end of the war, a large number of factories in Germany comprised over 90% of laborers from occupied countries.

The existence of so-called 'employment contracts' for foreign laborers was mostly fictitious because people from the occupied territories were, against their will and on the basis of the forced mobilization of labor, engaged, especially by the Todt Organization, in the construction of fortifications, i.e. in the so-called "Western Wall", motorways, factories etc.

Foreign workers were deprived of their basic human rights: the right to free movement and choice of residence, the right set up home with their families, the right to raise and educate their children, the right to marry, the right to free movement in public places, the right to negotiate their conditions of employment individually or through freely elected union representatives, the right to set up unions, and the right to free speech and freedom of expression.

Workers of Jewish, Polish and Russian nationality were in the worst position. Jews received no compensation for their work at all, while the wages of Poles and Russians were almost half that of German, French, Dutch and Belgian workers. Such workers were placed in collective accommodation and were not allowed to leave work at their own discretion. Their food was rationed.

For German citizens, compulsory labor service was introduced as early as June 1938 by Hermann Goering. The right-to-work, introduced by the Weimar Constitution, was systematically abolished and the system of forced labor was gradually introduced. By the end of the war, wages had failed to reach the level from 1929.⁷

The policy of forced systematic mass mobilization and the brutal exploitation of the working class, with the annulment of freedom to work and the right-to-work, as well as the policy of privatization of capital⁸, as the main features of Nazi Germany's economic strategy, represented a complete turnabout from the Weimar Republic.

One of the main characteristics of the German war economy was mobilization through the forced labor of a huge mass of people, with the goal of their

⁶ The Exploitation, 64.

⁷ The Exploitation, 2, 4, 8, 12.

⁸ About Nazi privatization of capital in Germany 1933, see: Marija Obradović, *Hronika tranzicionog groblja. Privatizacija društvenog kapitala u Srbiji 1989-2012*. (Beograd: Nova srpska politička misao, 2017.)

extensive use in production. Before the attack on Poland and Czechoslovakia, Germany was striving to compensate for the drop in productivity of its economy in comparison to other developed European countries through the increase of manpower.

The consequence of the revocation of freedom to work, as a basic civil liberty and human right, was that forced labor was at the basis of all work in German's war economy during the Second World War, particularly that of foreign workers.⁹

We should emphasize that the German General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment during the war, Ernst Friedrich Christoph "Fritz" Sauckel, was sentenced to death for war crimes and crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg trials, and was hanged in 1946.

Collaborationist administrations in occupied European countries were of particular importance in recruiting manpower and their subsequent deportation to Germany to work in the war industry.

Pursuant to the International Labor Organization, Nedic's collaborationist administration in occupied Serbia particularly stood out in terms of its close cooperation with the Todt Organisation in the brutal recruitment of manpower and its deployment in various branches of Germany's war economy. Nedic's collaborationist administration recruited people for compulsory labor in the Bor Basin which was managed by the aforementioned organization.

In its report from 1945, the Montreal International Labor Office highlighted the particular significance of Nedic's collaborationist propaganda in providing manpower for the German war company Todtbor. Through propaganda texts and adverts in newspapers, particularly in the *Novo Vreme* daily, the administration attempted to convince the Serbian population that six months compulsory labor should not be perceived as a punishment, but as the duty of all Serbian citizens, regardless of the fact that leaving this work without a permit was punishable by a period of three months forced labor.¹⁰

⁹ In legal terminology forced labor is "a measure whereby one or more persons, or an entire category of people, are sent for compulsory work to a specific place or for a specific time and under threat of sanctions for failure to comply". *Zabrana prinudnog rada i savremeno ropstvo* (Beograd: Pravna klinika za suzbijanje trgovine ljudima, Pravni fakultet, Univerzitet u Beogradu, 2011), 4.

¹⁰ *The Exploitation of Foreign Labour by Germany* (Montreal: International Labour Office, 1945), 80.

c) The Role of Nedic's Collaborationist Administration in the Inclusion of Serbia's Economic Potential in the German War Effort

After the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 17th April 1941 and the partition of the country by the occupiers, military administration was established in Serbia, in the institutional sense, by the order of the High Command of the German Armed Forces (Oberkommando des Heeres – OKH) on April 13th 1941.¹¹ Milan Nedic formed the so-called “Government of National Salvation” on August 29th 1941.

This refers to the collaborationist administration established by the German Army Commander in Serbia which had two goals, to suppress the Partisan's national-liberation movement in Serbia and to mobilize all Serbian economic potentials in the aim of supporting Nazi Germany's war effort.

Banat was significant for its wheat lands and the Bor Mine which was the biggest copper mine in Europe at that time. The Trepca lead and zinc mines were also of great importance for the German war effort, as were the Belgrade-Nis-Sofia and the Belgrade-Nis-Thessalonica railways. In addition, with the help of Nedic's quisling apparatus, Nazi Germany wanted to fortify its occupation system in Serbia and to reduce the engagement of its troops in this region.

Germany's first step after the occupation and partition of Yugoslavia was to establish control over its economic potentials and to secure supplies for its military machinery with the necessary military materials, food, petrol, and so on. Soon after capitulation, the Germans took four billion dinars in cash in suitcases from the defeated Yugoslav Army, approximately two billion from Serbia and two billion from the Independent State of Croatia. In addition, following the surrender of Yugoslavia, the Germans in occupied Serbia confiscated 14,165 metric tons of iron and steel, 7,020 tons of blister copper, 1,957 tons of lead, 12,170 metric tons of chrome ore, 11,360 metric tons of unprocessed tobacco, 1,174,000 meters of cloth, 20,000 pairs of shoes, 55,000 hides and 55 million cigarettes. In order to satisfy the needs of its troops on Serbian territory, the Germans also confiscated 20,121 metric tons of food and 39,609 metric tons of petrol.¹²

The report on the Serbian economic situation, which the German special plenipotentiary for economic affairs in Serbia, Franz Neuhausen, sent to Hermann Goering at the end of 1942, testifies to the transitional role of

¹¹ Dr Tomislav Pajić, *PRINUDNI RAD I OTPOR U LOGORIMA Borskeg rudnika 1941-1944*. (Beograd, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1989), 36.

¹² Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 617, 623, 624.

Nedic's collaborationist administration in the German occupation system in Serbia. According to that report, the quisling administration was maximally engaged in this plan, not only as commanders, but also as executors of the decisions made by the German occupying administration in Serbia.¹³ The goal of German support for the establishment of Nedic's quisling administration in Serbia was to ensure that all the available capacities of the Serbian economy were placed in the service of the German war effort, i.e. the ruthless exploitation of manpower and resources.

One of the functions of Nedic's quisling administration was to enable the confiscation, i.e. the requisition of agricultural products, primarily cereals, meat, dairy products, livestock, fruit, eggs, wool, poultry, fats, fodder, wood and coal for the needs of the German and Bulgarian occupying armies in Serbia and, partially for export to Germany and Italy. In that aim the directive on the compulsory consignment of wheat surpluses was adopted. This was the essence of Nedic's administration of the directive on planned agricultural production from 17th February 1942, i.e. the "planned agricultural policy". In that way, for instance, Nedic's administration placed 9,000 carloads of wheat and 38,000 carloads of corn at the disposal of the German Army, despite the poor crop, amounting to almost 80% of the harvest. Nedic's administration set up court-martials for farmers who did not cultivate their land and failed to deliver their quotas. The persecution of 'peasant farmers', i.e. farmers without land, was also carried out as well as their forced mobilization for public works. Compulsory grain deliveries were introduced in occupied Serbia in January 1942. Penalties for failing to provide the compulsory quotas were regulated by the provision on corporal punishment and the requisition of all products without compensation.

During 1942, 320,000 tons of wheat, 600,000 tons of corn, 90,000 tons of oats, 15,000 tons of fats, and 75,000 tons of oilseeds were exported from Serbia to the German Reich.¹⁴

Villages were devastated by excessive requisitions. Farmers were allotted, per hectare, 140 kilograms of wheat to be planted per year and 120 kilograms per family member for food, and everything else had to be handed over to the occupier at low prices. However, food shortages and starvation in villages was not as serious as in towns and cities.

From the report compiled by the military-administrative commander of Serbia from 7th February 1942, it can be seen that in Belgrade there was no bread, wood, coal, or lard. The black-market was booming.

¹³ AVII Na,k.44, f-1, rol.1/20.

¹⁴ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1941-1942.* knjiga 1 (Beograd: "Sloboda", , 1979), 115, 389, 390.

In bigger towns around Serbia the economic conditions were exceptionally hard during the country's occupation. Obtaining basic supplies for the population was virtually impossible. Food, clothing, and footwear had disappeared from the market. Some goods were destroyed during the bombing, while others were requisitioned by the Germans, and what was left was kept aside by owners for themselves for the forthcoming 'rainy days'.

Bread disappeared from sale. In order to obtain the guaranteed food rations people were forced to wait in long queues and there were serious shortages of meat, bacon, lard, oil, flour, sugar, salt, rice etc.

In 1942, bread rations were reduced from 400 to 250 grams. In the middle of July 1942, a kilogram of flour on the black market reached the price of 400 dinars, and corn 300 dinars, while a kilogram of meat stood at 2,000 dinars and a meter of wood 4,000 dinars. At the same time, the possibilities to earn a living were also dramatically reduced. The wages for qualified workers ranged between 100 and 150 dinars, while the average income of clerks was between 2,000 and 3,000 dinars.

In towns and cities, people mainly wore shoes with thick wooden soles, and the quisling press declared these ugly and uncomfortable shoes as the 'people's shoe'. The textile (clothing) and leather processing factories (shoes) worked for the needs of the occupiers and not those of local citizens.¹⁵ During World War II, most of the production in the field of industry and mining in Serbia was used for the Third Reich's war needs.

On the basis of the number of ration cards, it is assumed that approximately 305,000 workers were employed in Serbia during the occupation. Since around 40% of Serbia's national income was spent on occupation costs, Joza Tomasevich believes it can be claimed with certainty that half of the employed population of Serbia during the occupation were working for the Germans.¹⁶

On Germany's initiative the quisling administration created the plan for the management of the economy in order to regulate economic life, i.e. adopted the resolution to centralize plans for the entire economy in the Ministry of the Economy. The plan to manage the economy was made by the Minister of the Economy, Forestry and Mining, Dr. Milorad Nedeljkovic, and the management of agriculture by the engineer Dobroslov Veselinovic.¹⁷

¹⁵ Dr Milica Milenković i dr Toma Milenković, *Zapošljavanje u Srbiji od početka do oslobođenja zemlje 1944*. (Beograd: Republički zavod za tržište rada, 2002), 278,279.

¹⁶ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 654.

¹⁷ See: Dragan Aleksić, *Privreda Srbije u Drugom svetskom ratu* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2002).

Germany obliged Serbia to establish a managed economy in order to provide its army and war industry with a steady supply of agricultural products, metals, wood and other raw materials.

Precise quotas for the delivery of various goods were never agreed between Nedic's administration and the German military command, but the Germans took various products according to their needs. During the purchase of agricultural products such as wheat, corn, barley, meat, milk, lard, beans, potatoes, poultry, and eggs etc, compensation was paid in fixed prices set by the Germans in local currency.

Through Nedic's Ministry of Forestry, the German occupier seized wood for fuel and construction, particularly spruce for airplanes. Lead, copper, antimony, pyrite and gold were also 'exported' through this same ministry.

The Germans carried out the systematic exploitation of the forest and mining industries in occupied Serbia, exporting quantities pursuant to their needs. In 1941 production in the Bor Mine met 20% of the German occupier's copper needs.

Hence, the use of raw copper, lead, iron, and coal from the Bor, Trepca, Kostolac, Zajace and Mackatica mines was of particular importance for the German military command in occupied Serbia.

Full control over the economy in occupied Serbia was held by the German special plenipotentiary for economic affairs, Franz Neuhausen, a rich industrialist and Goering's direct representative for the Four Year Plan in occupied Serbia. His executives were directly connected with the Ministry of the Economy and Agriculture in Nedic's administration.

The apparatus of Nedic's quisling administration was also engaged in the extraction and removal of machinery and tools from Serbia to Germany. From the Military Technical Institute in Kragujevac, in 1941, the Germans took 108 carloads of machines and tools, and in January 1942 alone, 2,410 machine tools, 24,406 various tools, 250 cases of tools, 562 carloads of various materials, 11 carloads of construction materials and 10 carloads of chemical products.¹⁸

Thus, the establishment of the managed economy on the part of Nedic's quisling administration enabled the German occupier to carry out the premeditated plunder of Serbia.

During the occupation, Nedic's quisling administration paid the German military command contributions in the amount of 200 million marks each year. In 1942, Nedic's collaborationist administration provided 200 million dinars for the organization and equipment of the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division, which

¹⁸ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1941-1942. knjiga 1* (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979), 390.

comprised Germans from the Banat region, as well as 250 million dinars for the organization and equipment of the Russian Protective Corps which formed part of Germany's armed forces.

The total contributions which Nedic's collaborationist administration made to the German occupier amounted to 32,910 million dinars: 4,300 million dinars for debts to German troops, 368 million dinars for the exchange of the occupation currency, 80 million dinars for compensation to *Volksdeutsche* for war damages, 6,200 million dinars for the reconstruction of communications and 22,300 million dinars for general expenses. These figures were published by the national liberation administration on 23rd November 1944 in the *Borba* daily.¹⁹

d) Manpower Recruitment Methods in Serbia during the Second World War

In the part of Serbia under German occupation, the control over the recruitment of manpower was in the hands of the commission (Stab Generalbevollmachtigten für die Wirtschaft in Serbien) which formed part of the German Military Administration, receiving instructions from the commissioner of the Four Year Plan, Hermann Goering.

Special recruitment agents were employed after 1st July 1941. Since "the majority of the population of the fractured State of Serbia was made up of small and medium-sized farmers who had always maintained their land and had never been migrant workers, rural areas were not taken into consideration and the recruitment could only be carried out in towns and larger villages". However, the "call to unemployed populations to seek jobs in Germany (only) had a certain degree of success. Greater interest was only present in the Banat region."²⁰ In the light of that failure, the German administration decided to introduce compulsory labor on the occupied territory of Serbia. Workers recruited on the basis of compulsory labor were mainly employed in companies which worked for the requirements of Germany's war effort and therefore, for instance, miners from Serbia could not be recruited to Germany.

For other categories of workers a big propaganda campaign was carried out by means of posters and leaflets comparing the working conditions in Serbia with those in Germany. Newspapers in Serbia reported daily on the possibilities of finding work in Germany, and the head of the German occupying administration's recruitment of manpower division and the Serbian central Labor Exchange made daily appeals on the radio etc.

¹⁹ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 667, 668.

²⁰ *The Exploitation*, 260.

In August 1942, a temporary stoppage of the recruitment of manpower for work in Germany was even implemented in order to ensure sufficient manpower for those companies in Serbia which were working for Germany, such as the Bor Mine.

The main goal of Nedic's quisling propaganda was the attempt to convince citizens that Serbia could gain certain benefits from the German occupation, i.e. benefits from working for the occupying forces.

According to the ILO's data published in 1945, 70,000 laborers from Serbia, 95,000 prisoners of war (mostly Serbs), 200,000 laborers from the Independent State of Croatia, as well as 28,000 laborers from the occupied territory of Slovenia worked in forced labor in Germany during the war.²¹

Yugoslavian data claims that 300,000 workers from the territory of occupied Yugoslavia were deployed for work in Germany, not counting 200,000 prisoners of war and inmates. In official talks between the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and the Federal Republic of Germany, this number was agreed as the final figure.²²

"In the hearing in the State Security's investigative prison after the war, the Interior Minister in Nedic's Government during 1943 and Social Policy and National Health Minister in 1944, Tanasije Dinic, stated that over 150,000 workers from Serbia were mobilized for forced labor in Germany."²³

e) The Activities of Nedic's Quisling Apparatus in the Mobilization of Manpower for the Needs of Germany's War Economy

From Germany's point of view, which was experiencing a chronic lack of manpower, the significant function of the establishment of Nedic's administration in occupied Serbia was both to mobilize and send manpower to work in Germany and to secure production in order to satisfy Germany's war needs in Serbia's copper, lead, zinc, and coal mines and the wood industry through compulsory and forced labor.

The forced mobilization of manpower in occupied Serbia during the Second World War was carried out by Nedic's quisling apparatus. This involved the recruitment of the active working population for work in Germany, as well as the implementation of compulsory labor. Every able-bodied working man in occupied Serbia had to do poorly paid work for part of the year for the needs

²¹ The Exploitation, 260, 261, 264; Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 659.

²² Nikola Živković, *Ratna šteta koju je Nemačka učinila jugoslaviji u drugom svetskom ratu* (Beograd: Institut za savremeni istoriju i NIP Export Press, 1975), 171.

²³ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji. Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1941-1944*, knjiga 2 (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979), 63.

of Germany's war economy, as well as work through the National Service for the Renewal of Serbia, which was established in May 1942. Nedic's administration organized the dispatch of members of the Jewish and Roma populations to unpaid forced labor in mines, particularly in the Bor Mine, where the captured members and sympathizers of the revolutionary-democratic national-liberation movement and members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) were also sent.

The forced mobilization of manpower for work in Germany as well as for compulsory labor was carried out through the district and regional prefectures of Nedic's collaborationist administration, the Public Employment Service, which, in addition to Belgrade, also had branches in Nis, Kragujevac, Sabac, Pancevo, Kikinda and other towns, and the Gestapo and Special Police were often included in it.

"It was enough for a certain household to show disobedience in the delivery of wheat, meat, milk or some other product, to be forcedly transported to Germany to work for several months. A similar fate awaited citizens suspected of cooperating with or helping the national-liberation movement. The majority of workers refused to go to work to Germany."²⁴

The founding and work of so-called 'labor' institutions, such as the Main Bureau for Labor Insurance, the Main Directorate for Employment - the Public Employment Agency, the Brotherhood Treasury, the Serbian Labor Union, and the Commissariat, i.e. Ministry of Social Policy and National Health, which coordinated the work of all those institutions, served directly for the forced mobilization of manpower and its deployment at objects of interest for the economy of the German Reich.²⁵

The employment and dismissal of workers, their wages, working hours and other issues were regulated by the special provision which the German Military Command in Serbia had issued on 12th May 1941.

The working class experienced harassment, hard labor, starvation, unemployment, illness and unprecedented exploitation during the occupation. The wages of apprentices and assistants were often on the level from 1935 even though the cost of living in Serbia had increased disproportionately after occupation.

Large numbers of workers in Belgrade worked an average of 10 to 12 hours a day. Their wages were only 30 to 40 dinars, while prices for food, which was scarce and difficult to find, reached dizzying amounts on the black market. For

²⁴ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1942-1943*. knjiga 2 (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979), 59.

²⁵ Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, knji. 2, 46.

instance, the price of a kilogram of lard ranged between 300 and 350 dinars, cream cheese 200 to 250 dinars, bacon 250 to 300 dinars etc.²⁶

As head of the Serbian Labor Union, established on 12th February 1942, Milan Nedic often addressed workers in Serbia through the radio and the press, urging them to carry out the orders of the quisling administration and the German occupying authorities, to achieve maximum productivity in order to make their contribution to the victory of the Axis Powers over the anti-fascist coalition and to fight against communism within the country.²⁷

Because of the lack of manpower in Germany as a result of the war, its military administration, with the help of collaborationist administrations, attempted to mobilize as many local workers as possible from the occupied countries and send them to work in Germany.

At a meeting between representatives of German economic organizations and the Serbian quisling administration, attended by the German special plenipotentiary for economy affairs, Franz Neuhausen, held in Belgrade on 2nd June 1941, the Germans demanded that 75,000 workers from Serbia be sent to work in Germany by the end of that year. By the end of 1941, 33,400 workers from Serbia were employed as forced laborers in Germany, by the middle of 1942 that number had risen to 50,000, and by February 1943, 60,000 mostly young and able-bodied workers from Serbia were working in Germany.

According to the data which the Yugoslavian War Damage Commission gathered after the war, at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, approximately 80,000 people from occupied Serbia were used in forced labor in Germany while, according to the estimations of one of the most significant researchers of Nedic's quisling administration in occupied Serbia, Dr. Milan Borkovic, around 100,000 laborers and 200,000 prisoners of war from Serbia were located in Germany during the Second World War.²⁸

The latest research carried out by Barbara N. Wiesinger claims that 161,000 'foreign laborers' were recruited from the occupied zone of Serbia for forced labor in Germany, out of whom many were political prisoners or inmates.²⁹

As we previously mentioned, Nedic's quisling press and propaganda in occupied Serbia were actively engaged in promoting the departure of workers from Serbia to Germany. In addition to the German occupying administration in Serbia and Nedic's quisling administration, work in Germany was also

²⁶ Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, knji. 2, 48.

²⁷ Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, knji. 2, 49-53.

²⁸ Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, knji. 2, 62.

²⁹ Barbara N. Wiesinger, *If you lose your freedom, you lose everything. The Experience and Memories of Serbian Forced Labourers: Hitler's Slaves – life stories of forced labourers in Nazi-Occupied Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 166.

advocated by representatives of the JUGORAS (Yugoslav Workers' Federation which was a pre-war regime and police organization.

Radio Belgrade and quisling newspapers *Novo Vreme*, *Obrnova*, *Nasa Borba* and others reported daily about the allegedly good wages, food, and accommodation for workers in Germany as well as that anybody who went there would be able to learn something. It was particularly emphasized that foreign workers enjoyed the same rights as Germans.

However, living conditions for workers from Serbia in forced labor in Germany were very hard in spite of the 'contract on employment' based on the general contract from 1st April 1941, pursuant to which workers from Serbia would work in Germany under the same conditions as German laborers.

Workers from occupied Serbia in Germany worked for much longer than the 48 hours per week regulated by that contract, particularly those who worked on agricultural land.³⁰

We have already pointed out that on the basis of the ILO's findings, the 'employment contracts' which foreign laborers had in the German Reich were basically fictitious because they worked longer hours and were paid less than German workers, particularly the so-called 'eastern laborers'. Moreover, they did not enjoy even the most fundamental human rights and civil liberties.

Foreign workers in the German Reich, the same as Germans, had to pay pension and health insurance contributions, but rarely exercised their rights based on them. Foreign workers who fell ill would be returned to their homelands without treatment.³¹

In practice, adult laborers worked 10 hours a day and were paid 0.51 marks per hour and that figure remained unchanged until 1944.

The logistics of soliciting workers for Germany was the task of the bodies of the Public Employment Service, under the supervision and instructions of the German occupying administration.

In the Public Employment Service in Belgrade, it was the sole task of three clerks to recruit workers for Germany. In the branch in Nis, as many as seven clerks were involved in this process, while in the branches in Kragujevac, Kraljevo and Cacak there were two clerks and in Krusevac, Paracin and Sabac one.

The heads of local Employment Service branches had to report twice weekly to the local German command and relevant bodies for the recruitment of foreign manpower so as to provide updates on their work and obtain instructions for further work.

³⁰ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1942-1943*. knjiga 2 (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979), 64.

³¹ *The Exploitation*, 107-134, 153-156, 208-237.

Initially, the decision to work in Germany was a voluntary one. It was mainly members of the German national minority from Banat and Serbia and Russian emigrants who opted to work to Germany. However, this voluntarism was just a sham. A large number of people signed up for work in Germany in fear of arrests and of mass shootings which were a form of German retaliation for any German soldiers killed in occupied Serbia, or as a way of avoiding forced mobilization in Chetnik formations. In addition, as already discussed, the economic and living situation in occupied Serbia was extremely bad.

Thus, the majority of people signed up for work in Germany during the period marked by the ruthless extermination of Jews and Roma in occupied Serbia, as well as the massive executions of citizens as retaliation for the deaths or wounding of Germans (Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Sabac) and the suppression of the Partisan uprising in western Serbia. "... our workers, in order to save their own skins, started to sign up for work in Germany en masse."³²

In May 1943, an agreement was made between the German military administration and Nedic's quisling administration on the release of one prisoner of war from Serbia for each able-bodied worker sent to Germany to work. Prisoners of war who were sent home were old officers or those who had contracted tuberculosis.³³

The logistics of recruiting, assembling and sending workers for compulsory labor in Serbia were carried out by the bodies of the Public Employment Service, which was the official employment institution. However, as Dr. Milica Milenkovic established, the entire archives of the compulsory labor service were destroyed,³⁴ making it difficult to establish the scope and level of exploitation to which workers were exposed during compulsory labor in Serbia.

During the war several directives and provisions were adopted pertaining to the mobilization of manpower on the territory of occupied Serbia, thus enabling the occupier to secure the necessary manpower through the quisling administration. By the directive on compulsory labor and the restriction of freedom of employment from 14th December 1941, the Interior Minister was authorized to order that "all citizens between the ages of 17 and 45, regardless of their being unemployed, employed or self-employed, could be called to

³² Dr Milica Milenković i dr Toma Milenković, *Zapošljavanje u Srbiji od početka do oslobođenja zemlje 1944.* (Beograd: Republički zavod za tržište rada, 2002), 307, 308.

³³ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 656.

³⁴ Dr Milica Milenković, Dr Toma Milenković, *Zapošljavanje u Srbiji od početka do oslobođenja zemlje 1944.* (Beograd, Republički zavod za tržište rada, 2002), 307.

work in certain factories or other branches of the economy (compulsory labor)”.³⁵

Hence, Nedic's quisling administration in occupied Serbia, just like the Independent State of Croatia and fascist Hungary, established compulsory labor and labor service.

With the directive on introducing National Labor Service for the Renewal of Serbia, adopted on 16th December 1941, forced labor was legitimized as a civil obligation for Serbia's renewal and, pursuant to the directive on compulsory labor and the restriction of freedom of employment, manual workers in coal mines could not be dismissed from work from 20th December 1941 onwards. Since the beginning of the occupation, there had been a shortage of qualified workers in the mines.

On March 20th 1943 the Military Commander in Serbia issued the directive on the introduction of wartime economic measures in Serbia which were in effect in Germany. Pursuant to this directive, the special plenipotentiary for economic affairs in Serbia could declare any Serbian citizen obliged to work, including work in Germany, which was a violation of international law.

This was the German occupying administration's first legal provision which enabled the introduction of compulsory work for local laborers in Germany. On the basis of this provision, the special plenipotentiary for economic affairs in Serbia issued the order regulating the recruitment of Germans from the Reich and Volksdeutsche who lived in the Banat region in Serbia, for work in Germany. At the beginning of August 1943, the German special plenipotentiary for economic affairs in Serbia, Franz Neuhausen, ordered the Belgrade Employment Service and its branches to set up detailed records of the entire able-bodied workforce in Serbia.³⁶

On his appointment as the president of the so-called 'Serbian Government', Milan Nedic had already announced the introduction of compulsory labor in the declaration from 2nd September 1941. Thus, the first directive on compulsory labor for which workers received some form of compensation was adopted in occupied Serbia at the end of 1941, but it was to be amended and changed on several occasions before 1944. At first, compulsory labor encompassed only males deemed fit for work aged between 17 and 45, but this age limit was subsequently increased to 55 years of age. Compulsory labor was done outside the place of residence and was legally supposed to last for four to six months per year, but in practice it lasted for much longer periods. Workers often did compulsory labor for an entire year.

³⁵ Order of the President of the Serbian Government, Milan Nedic, on the introduction of compulsory labor, IAZA-OB, I, 17/1.

³⁶ M. Milenković, T. Milenković, *Zapošljavanje u Srbiji*, 320, 315, 324.

The directive on compulsory labor also restricted freedom of employment. This was followed by the adoption of more directives on compulsory labor and restricted freedom of employment for manual workers in paper production companies and the mining and smelting industries as well as the obligatory registration of bricklayers and carpenters. The Interior Minister had the highest authority in the implementation of compulsory labor. He could order all people aged between 17 and 45 to do compulsory labor regardless of whether or not they were already employed. The decree on compulsory labor banned miners and workers in the smelting industry from leaving their jobs.

“In the aforementioned directives and many other documents, and in newspaper reports in particular, mention was made of “state interests”, “the renewal of the country”, “the prosperity of the nation” and such like. However, none of this was true, and everything was related to the interests of the Third Reich and the direct pressure exerted by the occupier to realize such interests. The Germans’ only concern was to ensure that as many foreign workers as possible be sent to Germany for engagement in their war machine as well as to provide sufficient manpower for the companies in occupied and satellite states which were working for them. Flaunting the aforementioned phrases was only a means of deceiving the naïve. ‘Compulsory’ labor was nothing but an initially softer form of forced labor, and later blatant forced labor.” (Underlined by M.O.).³⁷

During the occupation of Serbia most of the workforce was sent to the copper mine in Bor as well as the Trepca, Mackatica, Zajaca, and Kostolac mines and other mines and factories which were of special importance for the German occupiers’ needs.

Forced labor was implemented in the wider area of eastern Serbia, in the Bor and Timocki mining basins. During World War II, copper ore and coal were exploited in occupied Serbia, and the most important metallurgy factories were under the management of the German Bor- Kupferbergwerk plant and several other smaller mining companies.

The international labor camp, Borski Rudnik, was a type of prison set up by the German occupying forces in Serbia during the Second World War for political opponents, members of certain ethnic and religious groups and civilians from Serbia and enslaved Europe, who were put to work in copper mining, which was a strategic resource for the Third Reich. This camp was under German control and 50% of Germany’s needs for this metal were supplied from this mine.

During 1942, seven barracks were built at the labor camp in Bor so as to house the influx of manpower deployed for compulsory labor. The living conditions

³⁷ M. Milenković, T. Milenković, *Zapošljavanje u Srbiji* 318

were dire, and the lack of drinking water and hygiene posed a particular problem for the occupants.

The biggest mobilization of compulsory labor in occupied Serbia took place in 1943. At the beginning of that year, the German occupying administration ordered a census of people who were to spend four months working in Serbia on Organisation Todt's big construction sites. Starting from March until the end of August 1943, contingents of between 800 and 1,000 people were sent from Belgrade to Bor, where they were deployed at construction sites between Petrovac na Mlavi and Bor.

According to the testimony of forced laborers from Belgrade who worked in Bor, even though the working day was very long (from 6.00 until 12.00 and from 13.30 until 18.00) workers were provided with very little food, clothing or footwear. The food was of poor quality and insufficient. The workers were literally starving; they were naked and barefoot, and physically mistreated. The weekly wage was 273 dinars after deductions for food and Sunday was the only day off.

"The camp barracks have three rows of four-tiered bunk beds, divided into 33 boxes. Twelve people sleep in each box, i.e. four people one above the other, and there are 396 of us in the barrack. The height distance between two beds is 1.10 meters. The bed is simple: one blanket and a straw mattress 1.75 x 0.75 meters in size, with a bit of straw which has turned into chaff and a nest of fleas, where we will spend a hundred and two nights."

Not only were the housing conditions appalling, but the diet and hygiene too. A worker's daily ration consisted of: "800 grams of wheat-corn bread, half a liter of barley 'coffee' for breakfast, and for lunch and dinner a liter of slightly flavored broth with a few slices of carrots, leaks and potatoes, or a dozen beans and tomato skins. Only on Sundays was there a morsel of mutton in that broth. The energy value of our daily meals did not exceed 2,000 calories, even though our physical work demanded 3,500 calories. [...] We are dirty and full of fleas... People rarely have a shave. There isn't enough water for drinking, let alone for personal hygiene."³⁸

Those who were deployed for forced labor in the Borski Rudnik labor camp included citizens of Serbia on compulsory labor service, inmates, Jews and Roma, 400,000 refugees from various parts of Yugoslavia, Russian and Polish prisoners of war, members of the national-liberation movement of Yugoslavia as well as between 5,000 and 6,000 Italian military internees.

Undoubtedly, the position of so-called "working Jews" from Hungary was the worst; they were barbarically exploited, starved, physically abused and tortured.

³⁸ Dušan S. Krivokapić, *Sećanja iz Nižiderskog lagera 1914-1918 .godine. Beleške sa prisilnog rad au logorima Bora 1943. godine* (Mataruška Banja, 1976), 80, 91-93.

There are numerous records about their suffering, but the most distressing are certainly those written by Gerge Istvan, *Na Smrt Osudjeni* (Sentenced to Death), which was published in the *Razvitak* magazine no.4-5 in 1973, and *Zlocini okupatora nad Jevrejima* (Occupiers' Crimes against Jews) published in the *Novi Istok* magazine in 1954.

According to Sigetvari Miklos, there were 20,000 forced laborers in the Borski Rudnik labor camp during the war. Out of that number, approximately 6,200 were Jews on 'labor service', as the Germans used to refer to it, 5,000 Jews from Hungary, 600 Zakarpattian Ukrainians, 600 Jews from Backa, and 300 Nazarenes, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and members of other Christian sects.

For the deportation of Jews, on the basis of the Hungarian-German Agreement, Hungary received a certain quantity of ore concentrate for each forced laborer. To be more precise, two kilograms of chrome or eighty kilograms of old iron was given per man. However, Horthy's Government had to compensate the Germans for the costs involved in the upkeep of 'working Jews'.

Jewish camp inmates were guarded by Hungarian soldiers, and their supervisors were members of the Todt Organisation, very young Germans between 16 and 18 years of age from Backa, who treated these 'slaves' with extreme hatred and brutality.

The battalion commanders were mainly mobilized retired teachers or public clerks from Hungary. They humiliated the forced laborers in various ways and often beat them to unconsciousness and forced them to jump like frogs and do somersaults for 45 minutes at a time.

Jewish forced laborers in the Bor Basin often had their shoes confiscated to prevent them from escaping, and they would therefore tie planks to their feet so that they could work in the quarries.

"The daily diet of forced laborers consisted of: a watered down coffee substitute every morning, barley broth for lunch and dinner four times a week, and boiled cabbage, tinned peas, beans and dry pasta for the remaining days. Whole-wheat flour, lard and oil were not used. On Sundays, 'holiday goulash' was made of rotten potatoes and meat scraps. The bread ration was half a kilogram for two days, German brown bread which was as hard as brick and often moldy". Jewish forced labors suffered chronic starvation.

Local citizens helped the Jewish forced laborers by leaving them food in baskets next to the graveyard which they passed on their way to work.

"Because of vitamin deficiency, many of them had boils on their necks and later all over their bodies, [...], Their feet were always covered in cuts from walking over sharp stones [...] Many of them had chronic diarrhoea [...].

After years of slavery, those people became so crude and coarse that they often argued and fought for the slightest reason. Such behavior is explained by hard labor, the cruelty of the guards and labor camp psychosis.”³⁹

Even the reports in Nedic's Labor Ministry emphasized that the laborers in the Bor Mine were naked and barefoot, housed in barracks with no windows or doors, without heating, and that the German occupying administration treated them brutally, calling them Serbian pigs, Belgrade gypsies, often beating them in public.

In one letter, Nedic himself admitted that ‘the laborers there are exposed to terrible exploitation and physical torture, and are naked and barefoot. The hygiene conditions were below any norms ...’.

According to the testimony of Tanasije Dinic, the Interior Minister in Nedic's Quisling administration in 1943, compulsory and forced labor was introduced in Serbia at the Germans' demand. “However, it was carried out arbitrarily, according to personal whims and moods, and therefore those who did not have any means of paying for their ransom were deployed for forced labor. In addition, while there, they were not provided with even the most basic living and sanitary conditions. People remained in the Bor Mine and other German companies regardless of the time period they were sent for, poorly fed, with no clothing and footwear, without any sanitation conditions. And those who were there on forced labor were treated like wild animals.”⁴⁰

Until June 1943, 22,790 laborers from Serbia worked in the Bor Mine: 13,874 for the Todt Organisation and 8,944 miners in the mine itself. If the workers from the Bor labor camp are also taken into consideration, the number of employees in the Bor Mine reaches the figure of 30,000 people.

In Trepca, Zletovo and other surrounding mines, an average of 4,500 workers were engaged in 1941, 6,000 in 1942, 6,500 in 1943 and 5,000 in 1944 until the liberation.

In sixty-one coal mines on the territory of Serbia, 14,028 workers were engaged in February 1943, out of whom 9,047 were pit miners, and 4,981 workers on the mine surface. In the same period, 4,770 workers were engaged in the Kostolac mine.⁴¹

In order to increase productivity and discipline in the Bor Mine, in summer 1943, on Hitler's orders, the Germans brought a battalion of 1,000 German soldiers-miners from the Reich. They also started to bring forced laborers to the Bor Mine from occupied territories or those of their military allies. In

³⁹ Sigetvari Mikloš, *Sećanje jednog Borskog prinudnog radnika: Zbornik radova Muzeja rudarstva i metalurgije Bor* Knj.V-Vi, 1989-1990 (Bor: Muzej rudarstva i metalurgije Bor, 1990), 223,224,226

⁴⁰ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1942-1943*. knjiga 2 (Beograd: “Sloboda”, 1979), 68.

⁴¹ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, knj.2., 66.

summer 1943 1,200 Jews were deployed from Hungary, followed by workers from Poland and Bulgaria and captured Greek partisans. In March 1944, Italian prisoners of war were also deployed, followed by a further 5,000 Jews from Hungary.⁴²

From the saved documents from the German Bor Kupferbergwerk, it can be seen that from the beginning until the end of the war, approximately 23,000 people were engaged daily at this company's various sites and factories, on the occupiers' demand and though the implementation of force.

Only a small part (around 7,000 people in Bor, Majdanpek and Kostolac and around 1,500 people in the Timok coal mines) had the status of 'voluntary' workers. However, in 1941 they too were returned to work in accordance with directives and other regulations issued by the German military command. The majority of such 'voluntary' workers were conscripts from the former Yugoslavian Army, who were released from German captivity on condition that they return to their previous jobs.

The differences between 'voluntary' and 'compulsory' forced laborers in terms of their position and obligations were very small. This became increasingly obvious in situations when the occupier made attempts, by means of force and terror, to improve workers' 'discipline' and increase production in companies.

According to Dr. Tomsilav Pajić's research, because of the high turnover of workers, around 100,000 people passed through the Bor and Timok mining basins.

Based on documentation, it was established that between 1941 and 1944, 11,953 tons of blister-copper, 14,268 tons of electrolytic copper, 6,375 tons of copper stone, 571.5 tons of cement sludge, 5,340 tons of copper concentrate and 59,179 tons of pyrite concentrate were sent from Bor to Germany.⁴³

Nedic's entire apparatus was involved in the policy of the "total mobilization" of manpower in occupied Serbia at the beginning of 1943.

Various forms of pressure and repression were used in order to force people to fulfill their compulsory labor obligations. The authorities worked against people who did not have confirmation of their regulated labor obligations, and they were unable to get travel permits, food rations for flour and other foodstuffs, or even tobacco. Compulsory labor rapidly turned into forced labor.

In the recruitment process for the essential manpower for certain companies and mines, the central quisling authorities ordered regional bodies to provide

⁴² Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 657.

⁴³ Dr Tomislav Pajić, *Prinudni rad i otpor u logorima Borskog rudnika 1941-1944*. (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1989), 286, 288.

established quotas of able-bodied working males each month and to send them to work. These regional bodies passed on those obligations to districts, and in turn to municipalities, towns and villages. The Kragujevac municipality, for instance, was supposed to provide 5,000 workers in January 1943. When the authorities failed to gather this number of workers, in February, during night raids, a manhunt was launched and in that way 800 people were caught and sent to the Bor Mine.⁴⁴

Since the working conditions in the mines were very hard, workers often fled their workplaces. Consequently, at the beginning of April 1943 the German plenipotentiary general for economic affairs in Serbia issued a warning to all mine managements that workers were strictly forbidden to leave their posts. Those who fled compulsory labor would be arrested and sent to concentration camps.

For this reason, the Ministry of the Economy requested support from the Interior Ministry in order to prevent workers escaping from the mines. Mine managers received a memorandum demanding the strictest sanctions against all laborers who left their workplace for any reason. Any such worker, pursuant to the regulations on compulsory labor, would be punished with a period of one year's forced labor and sent to the forced labor camp in Bor.

Considering that around 80,000 people were engaged in compulsory labor in occupied Serbia for each war year, it is certain that the pressure exerted by Nedic's police on the citizens of Serbia to respond to calls for compulsory labor and to stay there as long as demanded was indeed great.

Due to the unbearable working conditions, workers fled from compulsory labor en masse, particularly in the Bor Mine. In less than nine months in 1943, 12,019 workers escaped from the Bor Mine.

Nedic's police chased down runaway workers, arrested them and returned them to forced labor, or alternately they would arrest an adult member of the runaway's household, keeping such persons in prison until the absconder had returned to work.⁴⁵

Over 2,500 Jewish forced laborers were killed during the war in Serbia in various camps and prisons. During their attempts at escape, a large number of other workers from Yugoslavia and other European countries under German occupation were also killed.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Dr Milica Milenković i Dr Toma Milenković, *Zapošljavanje u Srbiji od začetka do oslobođenja zemlje 1944*. (Beograd: Republički zavod za tržište rada, 2002), 321.

⁴⁵ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1942-1943*. knjiga 2 (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979), 66, 67, 70.

⁴⁶ Dr Tomislav Pajić, *Prinudni rad i otpor u logorima Borskog rudnika 1941-1944*. (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1989), 287.

At the end of 1943, around 40,000 laborers were working in occupied Serbia in companies which were producing for Germany. However, more than half had left their workplaces before the end of their mandatory period of forced labor. Out of 17,000 deserters, only 1,000 were caught and sent back to forced labor. The agreement made with the Germans from December 1943 obliged certain Chetnik commanders in Serbia (Ljub Jovanovic-Patak and Mihajlo Cacic) to catch and bring back runaway workers to the mines and factories on the territories they controlled, even if those laborers had joined their own units.⁴⁷

At the beginning of 1944, following a directive from the German Supreme Command in Belgrade and Nedic's administration, the forced mobilization of female manpower was carried out for work in factories which was of special importance for the German occupying administration.

After the bombing of Belgrade on 16th and 17th April 1944 by Anglo-American air forces, women were regularly mobilized to clear up parts of the city and other areas destroyed by the bombs.⁴⁸

f) Forced Labour and International and Comparative Labour Law

In legal terminology forced labour is a measure according to which one or more persons, or an entire category of people are sent to do forced labour for a specific time or to a specific place under threat of sanctions if they fail to respond.

The rise of fascism in Europe, as an ideology and political practice, was accompanied by a degradation of labour legislation and the implementation of a forced labour system on a massive scale.

The Forced Labour Convention was adopted at the International Labour Organisation General Conference on 28th June 1930, which then went into effect on 1st May 1932. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was a member of the International Labour Organisation, ratified this convention and, for that purpose, passed the Law on the Project of the Convention on Forced or Compulsory Labour on 19th October 1932.⁴⁹

Under the Forced Labour Convention, number 29, the term forced or compulsory labour referred to any work or service exacted from persons under threat of penalty and for which the said persons had not offered themselves voluntarily (Article, 2 paragraph 1).

⁴⁷ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 656, 655.

⁴⁸ Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji Kvislinška uprava u Srbiji 1942-1943. knjiga 2* (Beograd: "Sloboda", 1979), 70.

⁴⁹ Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 22nd December 1932, no. 297CXI/I.

In addition to the definition of forced or compulsory labour and its elements, the convention also set its abolishment within the shortest possible time period as a rule.

Pursuant to this convention, forced labour did not include the participation in public works which formed part of the normal civic obligations of the citizens of a self-governing country.

It should be emphasised that, at the time of the adoption of this convention, the International Labour Bureau in Geneva considered that this would apply only to those countries with colonies, i.e. in the international community there was no anticipation of the introduction of forced labour in Europe, which occurred during the Second World War.⁵⁰

The beginning of the Second World War did not only result in the full disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as we saw in the previous part, but also the full suspension of its legal system, including the labour legislature in all annexed and occupied parts where forced labour was implemented.

The basis of the legislature of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was the Law on the Protection of Labourers from 1922, which guaranteed freedom of work, the regulation of labour relations by contract, labour institutions etc. This law guaranteed an eight hour working day, predicted the regulation of labour relations by means of individual and collective contracts as well as the establishment of labour chambers as the class representatives of labourers whose duty it was to protect the economic, social and cultural interests of labourers and employees. For the sake of regulating the job market, this law predicted the founding of labour exchanges (Article 70).⁵¹

In the occupied parts of Serbia in which Milan Nedic's quisling administration was established, all the elements of this law were suspended and forced and compulsory labour was introduced by means of a series of regulations.

In its statement the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFY) state commission for establishing crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators in the Second World War, which was founded in February 1945⁵², on the basis of the Law on Criminal Acts Against the People and the State adopted on 25th August 1945⁵³, established and described the forms of the implementation of forced labour in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), 'Nedic's Serbia and Backa and Baranja in which Hungary imposed a slave labour service.

In Article 10 of the aforementioned law, forced labour imposed by the occupiers and quisling structures was defined as a war crime. "Any person

⁵⁰ "G. Albert Toma's reply to his critics – a letter to Pravda", Pravda, 7th March 1930.

⁵¹ This Law was passed on 8th February 1922, The Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, no. 128 from 14th June 1922.

⁵² Official Gazette no.1 from 1st February 1945.

⁵³ Official Gazette of FNRJ, no.66 from 1st September 1945.

who, during the war, cooperates economically with the enemy and occupier, i.e. who places their industrial, trade, transport or other companies and expertise at the disposal of the enemy for the aim of production or themselves produce products which strengthen the production power and war potentials of the enemy, or whose cooperation with the enemy comprises particularly harsh forms of exploitation and pressure on labourers with the help of the occupying administration will be punished by arrest and a period of 10 years forced labour and the confiscation of their property”.

In international law “deportation for forced labour” was established as a war crime by Law number 10 for punishing persons responsible for war crimes, and crimes against peace and humanity which was adopted by the Alliance country members in the Second World War as the unique legal grounds for the trial of war criminals and other perpetrators in Germany, and on the basis of the Moscow Declaration from 30th October 1943 “regarding the responsibility of Hitler’s supporters for atrocities committed” and the London Agreement from 8th August 1945 “pertaining to the prosecution and punishment of the main war criminals from the European Axis Powers”, which were an integral part of this law.⁵⁴

The same as in the case of Yugoslavian law, the punishment prescribed for crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity included the death penalty, imprisonment, forced labour, the confiscation of property, the return of illegally acquired property, and the withdrawal of certain or all civil rights.

According to the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFJ) state commission for establishing crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators, prisoners from the Sajmiste Camp in Belgrade were taken to Germany for forced labour. Approximately 3,500 prisoners from this camp were isolated and accommodated in the concentration camp for forced labourers, the so-called TOT Organisation Camp which was just opposite the Sajmiste Camp. This camp had its separate administration and was under the command of the Schmiots. The prisoners from that camp were sent to Germany and Norway for forced labour.

“Their pursuit was particularly aggressive in Srem. The citizens who were captured were usually sent to Ruma to the notorious Bauer camp. There, everybody had to declare whether they would go to work in Germany or otherwise be detained in the Sajmiste Camp. Under threat of being beaten, and often just to avoid the fate which awaited them in Sajmiste, many prisoners

⁵⁴ Miodrag Zečević, Jovan P. Popović, *Documents from the history of Yugoslavia. The state commission for establishing crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators in the Second World War*, (Belgrade: Archives of Yugoslavia, 1996.), 474.

agreed to go to work. Most of them, however, as the first stage, had to go through Sajmiste. After undergoing the torment inflicted in this camp, if there were not killed, they were sent to work.

... From the statement made by Branko Radanovic from the village Batajnica, we can see that out of 460 people who were sent to work on 1st September 1943, 350 people died shortly afterwards and the rest, around 100, became seriously ill.”⁵⁵

Both men and women were sent to forced labour from the Sajmiste Camp.

The Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFJ) state commission for establishing crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators established that the Hungarian occupiers sent 26,671 people from the territory of Yugoslavia to forced labour.⁵⁶

Conclusion

During the Second World War the labor market in Serbia was replaced with forced mobilization, and instead of hired labor, a system of forced labor and a managed economy was introduced. The forced exploitation of manpower was an integral part of Germany's occupation of Serbia.

The apparatus of Nedic's quisling administration in occupied Serbia was included in the policy of the 'total mobilization' of manpower for the German war economy with the goal of contributing to the Nazi war effort. His administration was a direct participant in the implementation of the measures enforced by Germany's occupation system in Serbia during the Second World War, including those which referred to forced labor.

This refers to both the coercion of manpower for work in Germany as well as the recruitment of the population of occupied Serbia for compulsory and forced labor.

Hence, Nedic's quisling administration, as a collaborator of the German occupying administration and its bodies in Serbia, committed the war crime of the forced mobilization and exploitation of the occupied population, political opponents and prisoners of war, i.e. the manpower of the occupied population for its engagement in the German war economy on the territory of the Reich as well as on the territory of occupied Serbia. Such practice was banned by the international laws of war.

⁵⁵ The Democratic Federal Yugoslavia State Commission for establishing crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators, Statement no. 66-93, About crimes committed by the occupiers and their collaborators, (Belgrade 1945.), 797, 798.

⁵⁶ The same, 821.

During the Second World War, around 300,000 workers from Yugoslavia were deployed to Germany for forced labor, out of whom approximately 100,000 were from Serbia, in addition to 200,000 prisoners of war. It has been calculated that around 80,000 workers were engaged in compulsory labor in Serbia for each year of the war. During the war, around 100,000 forced laborers from Yugoslavia, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the USSR, Hungary, Romania, Italy, Holland and France passed through the factories and worksites of the Bor copper mine and the Timok mining basin alone.

However, the majority of that manpower was gathered from Serbia on the basis of the directive on compulsory labor issued by Nedic's quisling administration in 1941. This was Germany's attempt to avoid the obligations from the international law banning the exploitation of civilian manpower on occupied territory and that was one of the main reasons for the establishment of the quisling administration in occupied Serbia. The purpose of this administration was in fact to implement the policies and measures established by the occupier.

Forced labor in Serbia was also used as penal measure for captured members of the national-liberation Partisan movement, as well as prisoners of war and Jews.

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