

# **Compensation as first step for reconciliation**

By Hans Kopp

The Topic of compensation and reconciliation is of interest to all of us? But how should these compensations and reconciliation of genocide under such unjust manners, in such huge proportions such as that at the hands of the Yugoslavian Tito Communists, committed on the Danube Swabian, become a reality? Also considering that all the atrocities that were committed were committed during peace time, during the post war years of 1944-1948.

How do you evaluate the lives of the ones who were murdered or died of starvation in the dead camps or slave labor camps? Starving to death is a painful, slow and probably the cruelest death that can befall a person, especially the death that was suffered by so many of our innocent children.

How does one evaluate the suffering of the survivors, of which many are burdened by illnesses for the remainder of their life's, one thinks here of kidney ailments, heart problems, incurable lung diseases, joint inflammation and more, which all were contracted during the incarceration in the dead camps and the slave laborer camps.

I lost three years of school and for me to make up the years I had to be a student till I was 31 years old. How should one calculate the income lost as a result of it? Many of our children lost their relatives and became orphans and dependent on others. Many of the children lost between 5 and 8 school years and were never able to make up the lost years. Among them are now some, who neither speak correctly German nor correctly Serbian or any other language spoken in the countries in which they live today, like for example English in the United States and Canada.

How can one evaluate the time lost by our men and women who were in the best years of their lives and who were deported to Russia as slave laborers for five years? They had to leave their children behind in the care of their grandparents and thus the children suffered the drama of being torn from their parents as young as three years old? How does one evaluate the lives of their parents that died in Russia, or the children whose relatives died away in the dead camps? Many of the children were taken to Serbian orphanages and were forcefully separated from their brothers and sisters? Were these not crimes too?

How does one evaluate the lost homeland? What is homeland to us? Homeland is if one comes home from afar and everyone knows and welcomes you. Homeland is if you are welcomed by your parents in the house you were born and raised, homeland is when your mother greets you with open arms and tears in the eyes and your father comes rushing toward you limping, since the hard work left his marks on his legs, he quickly wipes his hands dirty from work on his trousers and clutches his arm around you and when your sweetheart is waiting for you with a hug and kiss. This homeland was destroyed; this homeland for us is lost forever.

If the Serbian Government makes some efforts now in an attempt, to correct its wrong doing in that it wants to offer the Danube Swabia living in Austria a compensation for their property by estimation its value at the end of 1945: that would be quite all right, however one needs to calculate rent for leases of more than 60 years. For this calculating we must consider compounded interest. The compensation of reparation offered to the Danube Swabian living in

Austria is an insult, another slap in the face, the damages done to the Danube Swabian is far greater and not considered by the Serbian Government at all.

What was offered to the Danube Swabian living in Austria is not even enough to begin any discussions, especially with the Danube Swabian in the USA or Canada, so much is clear to us. A honest effort must be made first by the Serbian Government; They must recognize their guilt, that they have unjustly accused the Danube Swabian, collectively of war crimes, drove them from their homes, deported their men and women in their prime to Russia, murdered or starved 1/3 of the Danube Swabian population to death in Yugoslavia. This must be followed by an apology by the Serbian Government to the Danube Swabian, its former citizens of German descent.

A must is the abolishment of the "Antifasiticko Vece Narodnog Oslobodjenja Jugoslavije" doctrine in short "AVNOJ" and then they must think to compensate us for our suffering, the lost school years and finally for the death of our beloved family members. Then, and only then, can we be satisfied with compensation and only then we can seriously think about a possible reconciliation with the Serbian government.

We have no hostility against the Serbian population of today, nor do we accuse our former Serbian neighbors, who did not make themselves guilty of any crimes under Tito's government, nor do we accuse the Serbs as collective criminals as we Danube Swabian are accused off by the Serbs.

We are not guilty on the wrong doing made in the name of Hitler on the Serbs, as we explained in our charter of 1950; we seek no revenge, but seek an honest effort on the part of the Serbian Government toward fair reparation, considering that 200,000 Danube Swabian were exposed to the Tito Partisans according to the data published by Karl Weber of Bulkes, the former Batschka. If one evaluates every Danube Swabian, not considering their property, since not everyone owned a house or fields, with a low sum of only one million Euro of compensation, which is more than justified, we arrive at a sum which runs in the billions of Euro.

We all know that will never happen, that we can expect an apology, here the Serbian country would have to admit and confess their sins which they committed during the Tito Government nor can we expect the sums named above. However, the Serbian citizens must understand that the Yugoslavian Government had no right to expropriate the Danube Swabian property, to take all of our rights away, to treat us in death camps like animals, deport our parents to Russia and take the life of many of our innocent citizens. I was hardly ten years old at that time and feel in no way guilty of any war crimes. I speak here for all survivors and not only for the Danube Swabian who lost their life.

Furthermore, we want to finally stop connecting us with the deeds of Hitler, since none of us had a voice in our fate or anything to do with the hardship of the Serbs. This is for most Danube Swabian living in the USA or Canada the case. It is also for this reason, that most of us have no interest neither the desire to visit the Vojvodina or Serbia. Nor do we want destroy the only thing which is dear to us; our **memories** we cherish the **memories of our homeland**. What should we do in the Vojvodina or Serbia? **Go into our houses and say; „you are in my beloved home of my parents you stole from us“?**

The one or the other often doubts the intelligence of the Danube Swabian. Here are the following considerations which need to be made; a) the Yugoslavian Government closed the

German schools after WWI, b) the German were denied an education by the Communist Government or to go to school during the time of their incarceration in the death camps and thus lost valuable school years.

During my research for my book, I found documents and learned; “although the Danube Swabian represented a population of only 4% in Yugoslavia between the World Wars, they produced it enough food to feed the Yugoslavian Nation. Furthermore they produced enough agrarian products to contribute 67% to the Yugoslavian export”.

How can one merely say that the Danube Swabian lack intelligence? In the USA or Canada, the free world, not only the Danube Swabian showed what they are capable off, but also their children among them you find professionals in every field. Many of the Danube Swabian can be considered as wealthy. Tito made a huge mistake by destroying the Vojvodina German and their property. Everyone knows, in the 30's of the past Century, our farmers were the most progressive, owning the most modern agricultural machines and equipment in Europe. Through Tito's stupidity, he ruined the agricultural economy in Yugoslavia which still has not recovered. How does the clique say? “One does not bite the hand that feeds one”.

Generally, hardly anyone of the survivors in the USA or Canada speaks about reconciliation with the Serbian people because we have no quarrels with them, solely with the Serbian State; therefore one does not even want to speak about it.

I personally have nothing against the Serbian citizens for which I would have to forgive them. If it would not have been for our former Serbian neighbors in the surrounding communities of the death camps, who clearly saw when we came to beg to them, how badly we were treated by the Tito partisans. They expressed pity on us and opened their hearts and their benevolence contributed to the survival of many of us. We are forever grateful to everyone who helped us survive and we want the descendants of the Serbs to understand and know this too.

Learn more about the human misery in the death camps see;

[http://www.donauschwaben-usa.org/Human%20Misery\\_Life%20in%20a%20Death%20Camp.htm](http://www.donauschwaben-usa.org/Human%20Misery_Life%20in%20a%20Death%20Camp.htm)