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# The Germans in Hungary

The German national identity in Hungary like the one of the Serbs, Croats, Hungarians, Romanian, was practically none existing in the settlement regions of the Germans in Hungary prior to WWI. The Germans, who by invitation of the Hungarian landlords during their parliamentary session of 1722-1723 in Pressburg today's Bratislava, saw themselves as Alsace-Lorraine, Palatinates, Hessians, Schwaben from Baden-Württemberg, Bavarians, Tyrolean, Bohemians or as Austrians.

Comparing, the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation where every Kingdom, duchesse and royal house within the Empire, as well as independent cities, like Mainz, Danzig or Bremen among others, acted like in the Unites States; as individual States. They only acted in case of a national crisis, such as in the case war, as one, like during the war against the Ottoman Empire or the Napoleon war. However, here too, Bavaria and Prussia signed their own peace treaties with Napoleon making the Empire no longer functional.

As a result Emperor Franz II declared the Empire in 1806 null and void and declared himself as Emperor Franz I of Austria. After the equalization treaty with the Kingdom of Hungary in 1869 the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy was established. From 1806 to 1871 there was no such country as Germany. In 1871, Wilhelm I, was declared Emperor of the German Empire of what later would become Germany with members of Bavaria, Hestia, Palatinate, Saxony, Prussia among other provinces, royal houses and free cities.

Now there were two German Nations of equal powers which seems to be a real danger for other countries both political, but more so economically and this resulted in the WWI after the assassination of the Austrian-Hungarian crown prince Ferdinand and his wife Sofia in 1914, inspired by Serbia with the support of Russia. At that time neither Germany nor Austria-Hungary were prepared for a war nor did they want a war, although generally claimed as having started the war by historian.



In his “New concise review; Documented International Causes of WWI” Anton Schreiner, a Ph.D. Professor (Emeritus), at the North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, cites 4 root causes which were anti German by design. As first root cause he sees; “The secret agreement between France and Spain in 1904 signed in London with approval by England to conquer and divide the mineral-rich country Morocco. This was a major provocation of Germany, since Germany had major commercial trade agreements with Morocco. As second root cause he cites the secret meeting of French and English military talks in 1906. As a third cause he sees joint secret military talks in 1906 between Belgian and British although Belgium was suppose to be legally neutral. As forth reason he mentioned falsified highly inflated German armament numbers presented to the British cabinet and Parliament by Mr. Mulliner. In brief these factors counted heavily in initiating the move toward WWI.

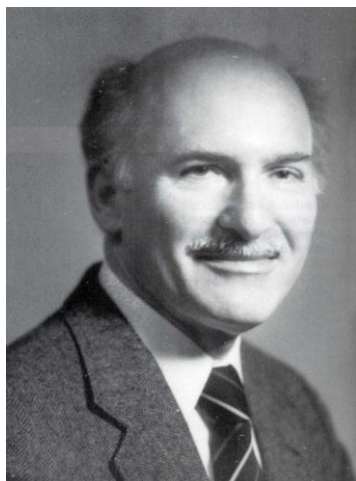
Anton Schreiner also notes; “a full military mobilization by a nation was viewed as its final act and signal of its imminent declaration of war.” The chronological order of mobilization took place in the following order;” Serbia, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France and Germany. At the 1919 Versailles treaty the allied side was bullied by France’s Clemenceau, stating that the Central Powers Germany and Austria-Hungary sole prolocutors of t he war, although studies after 1919 revealed that WWI was caused equally by both sides. Anton Schreiner used public documentations as resources for his research.

After the devastating defeat of World War I and the humiliating terms the German and Austria-Hungary Empires had to except at the peace treaty at Versailles, Germany’s intellectuals responded to the crisis in the following way. They tried to make sense of what had happened and questioned what had gone wrong both internally and externally.

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## **The Germans after WWI**

By Anton Schreiner, Ph.D. Professor (Emeritus),



During the 1920’s the German identity gained momentum. The concept that Germans are one people no matter where they live became more and more aware now and was central to many newly formed organizations. The slow moving often encouraged self-awareness of a joint German identity among all Germans seemed to be the result of the unfair treaties handed to the Germans in Versailles which affected the Germans in all three countries. Some of them did live fife or more generation removed from Germany, many of them now living abroad like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia, after the truncation of both empires which placed millions of Germans under foreign governments. Although

according to the treaty; equal treatment was to be guaranteed to their minorities by these nations or new nations, it was a mere myth. The populations born to German parents were by no means treated equally by the countries they were now subjects of.

Many institutions in Germany raised public awareness regarding Germans now living or were born abroad. Although, they had to think of these Germans as foreign subjects but they also saw them as fellow citizens who, because of their unfair treatments and sacrifices, were entitled to special privileges from Germany. This line of reasoning was the hope that maybe the borders of Germany could be expanded eastward again, which would make up for the land lost by the treaties. For example; during an election to determine if Silesia should stay with Germany. Despite 60% of the population voted in favor staying with Germany, the allied nations nullified the election and annexed Silesia to Poland.

In the volatile political climate of the Weimar Republic, Germans tried to evaluate their standing in Europe, deal with the humiliation of Versailles, and regain some of Germany's former power and the power of German nationality groups such as the Donauschwaben in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, who voted for an autonomy of the Batschka and Western Banat, today's Vojvodina which was also denied.

From the Austrian half of the late Austrian Empire, Yugoslavia inherited Slovenia and Dalmatia. From the Hungarian half Yugoslavia inherited the former subkingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, the explicitly Hungarian districts of the Batschka and Western Banat and from the joint Austro-Hungarian administration, the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Macedonia and the Sanjak of Novibazar had been part of the Ottoman Imperial Territories until the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913.

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What effect did this have on the German-Hungarians we refer to now as Donauschwaben, whose settlement regions were now divided among Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia? For our discussion we concentrate ourselves primarily on the historic evolution of the Donauschwaben in Yugoslavia although affected were all Germans in the former Hungary.

Ethnic conflicts became widespread in the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but by the eve of World War II ethnic differences still remained unrecognized. The German minority in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is important for our discussion, because of the Donauschwaben who were expelled during the postwar years of World War II. Today there are less than 5,000 Donauschwaben of the former citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavians living in what is now called Vojvodina, Serbia which amounts to less than 1% of the 550,000.

With 1/3 of their population, the Donauschwaben had the highest civilian casualty rate of any German Volksgroup and as such are seen as victims, who bore the brunt of the Serbian hatred and their unjust retaliation against their innocent citizens, the helpless Donauschwaben of whom can be said, were to the largest percentage loyal to the Kingdom and not involved in the war. Their involvement was not as volunteers, as Tito claims, but by force as history has clearly proven after the war by historians. Therefore Tito's history writers have written a distorted history which is now is questioned by many scholars and young Serbian historians and is seen in total "different" by them now.

War crimes do happen during the war, however the retaliatory crimes against the Donauschwaben during the post war time of 1944-1948 (Note; the war had ended in Yugoslavia in November of 1944 when the Russians entered Yugoslavia) and should be seen as such. This makes these crimes punishable under the law, as crimes committed during peace time and should make the Yugoslavia government under Tito liable for damages on these innocent citizens within that country.

We also need to note that some thirty million Europeans were forcibly resettled which included the German population in the German regions East of the Oder-Neisse Line annexed to Poland and the Polish population which lost the eastern part of Poland to Russia and was resettled on German soil east of the Oder-Neisse Line.

The demise of the Donauschwaben on the events surrounding the war itself has been the focal point for several ethnic German studies. The way in which scholars studied the ethnic German population in southeastern Europe, did not necessarily reflect how the German minorities viewed themselves in their homes, their ancestors settled centuries ago while the territories were part of Hungary.

In the case of Donauschwaben it was more than 250 years ago, for the Gottscheer's it was 600 years ago, the Transylvanian Saxons 800 years ago and in the case of Lower Styrians even longer. The Donauschwaben coexisted among Hungarians, Romanians, Croats, Slovenians and Serbs and other minorities in the former country of Austria-Hungary and after WWI in Hungary, Romania and newly formed Kingdom of Yugoslavia as friends and neighbors. Many Germans actually took pride in the fact that they were able to coexist as an integral part with other cultures like they did for centuries, but still maintained their own language, cultural and social mores as the other nationalities did who lived among them.

In the case of the Donauschwaben, but according to the Communist Government of Yugoslavia, they committed terrible crimes; one being the formation of the Schwäbisch-Deutsche Kulturbund, a non political union, which was founded in 1920 for the purpose to assist the Donauschwaben economically, as well as, for their costumes, social mores and cultural unity. The Kulturbund was active for four years and had 55,000 members in 128 villages in the Western Banat, Batschka and Syrmia prior to being declared illegal in 1924.

Although their Motto was; "Staatstreu und Volkstreu" which means; "Faithful to their Country and Faithful to their People" in which they faithfully stood firm, it did not seem to matter to the King's government. Again the Ethnic Germans were without representation and could no longer assist their people. The other reason was; that the same year in 1924 Dr. Ludwig Kremling and Dr. Stefan Kraft founded the Deutsche Partei (German Party) which became illegal in 1929. In addition to these struggles for their minority rights, the region experienced an economic crisis in the early 1930's. Thus the quality of life deteriorated for many Donauschwaben to the brink of poverty.

However, it would now be the Donauschwaben who entered an agreement with the Weimar Republic, which provided the Donauschwaben with the latest state of the art in agricultural tilling, harvesting equipment and machinery. They also were instructed in "Kunstdünger" fertilizing techniques for them to produce more and better crops. While the Donauschwaben in return exported grain, hemp among other

farm products to Germany, with which they not only paid for their debts but came out of the depression first in Europe. With their high productions of farm products the Donauschwaben minority of 4% in Yugoslavia, fed the Yugoslavian Nation and spurred the Nation's export. In addition the Apatin shipbuilding companies produced 20% of the gross tonnage of Yugoslavia's shipbuilding.

The Germans in Yugoslavia had provided for the education of their children with their own capital, which was generally common among a German Volksgroup, but in 1922 all schools were nationalized and the Donauschwaben thus lost control over the education of their children. This resulted in a huge educational problem for the Germans, as most of them could not study for higher educations in Serbian schools, because of the language differences, thus forcing young German students to go to Germany and Austria to study, where they now would be exposed to the National Socialistic Movement of the time.

After the German Reich and the Yugoslav Kingdom had improved their relations in the mid 1930s, political conditions improved for the German minority in Yugoslavia. In 1931 a compromise was reached regarding German education and the government allowed schools which had at least 30 German speaking students to teach German in school. However, it was too late to quiet the discontent among the younger generation and those who did not have 30 German students in their classes.

By the mid 1930's the German Volksgroup experienced an internal crisis, the younger generation, which came to be known as the; "Erneuerer" (Renewers), were looking for allegiance with the Reich. The older generations had been raised under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and saw a political allegiance with Germany as dangerous. By 1938 this split made unified political thinking impossible. The two factions attempted reconciliation but the rift widened instead and their leader faced the impossible task to serve their people, their country and the German Reich.

The churches resisted the National Socialistic Movement and could not be reconciled with their theology. Pastors held sermons in which they denounced race hatred as anti-Christian. Catholics were frequently the target and consequently some of them were particularly outspoken. Adam Berenz, a Catholic clergyman, published the newspaper; "Die Donau" (the Danube) in Apatin from 1934 until its publication was halted by the Hungarian government in 1944. This was extremely courageous and perhaps had a lot to do why so many of our people followed Berenz and opposed the war, or refused to serve in the military. This is one of the main reasons why many Donauschwaben did not flee with the German Army in front of the Red Army, as they were convinced having done nothing wrong to justify leaving their homes, their livelihood their ancestor had provided them with, during the past 250 to 300 years.

They now met the full brunt of the Russian advances and especially the Partisans' hatred. Our men and women in their prime were deported to Russia and other able bodies into forced labor camps in Communist Yugoslavia. In addition the very young and the very old were incarcerated into camps Tito so called; "Camps with Special Status", where people were taken to be starved to death. More than 80,000 of the 240,000 Donauschwaben exposed to the Tito Partisans, perished a cruel death due to starvation followed by malnutrition, which in turn causing severe illness and disease such as typhoid, malaria and

many others. Physical abuses, murder or pleasure butchering in the most inhuman way were committed by the Serbs, often for their amusement. Many of our people were tortured; women were raped, people were burring alive when collapsing from excessive loads of work, limbs were severed or bellies opened while still alive, before death would relieve them from their pain.

During this decade, Berenz wrote over eighty articles against race-ideological propaganda and the activities of the “Erneurer” (Renewers) who were aligned with the National Socialistic Movement. The literature of resistance is thus part of the historiography and proves that the majority of the Donauschwaben did not favor the war, nor were they affiliated with National Socialists, but instead were forced into it. In other words they had no say on their own behave justifying Yugoslavia’s claim that they betrayed their own country.

Now it was quite clear, that the unfair treatment of the Donauschwaben by the Serbs after WWI, closing their schools and force their children who wanted a higher education to attend schools in Germany and Austria, expropriating their lands which they had purchased legally prior to the agrarian reform of Alexander, not permitting to enjoy their minority rights as granted by the treaty of Trianon, all of these facts should be just cause of objection by the Donauschwaben toward the Kingdom of Yugoslavian they were subjects off since 1918.

This facts can not be stressed enough and give us the satisfaction of being able to say to our children we had no part in WWII nor did we have any voice politically to determine the fate of our future. So, why was the “Volksgroup” of the Donauschwaben collectively accused of war crimes by Tito, by the Allied Nations? The suffering placed upon the Donauschwaben must be condemned and therefore be considered as heinous crimes against innocent human beings, the Donauschwaben, who had to bear the brunt of the Serbian hatred while the rest of the world celebrated peace, during the post war years of WWII.

### **The Volunteer Waffen SS Prinz Eugen Division**

By Walter Neuner

Translated by Hans Kopp

To understand the political situation in Yugoslavia and the involvement of the Donauschwaben in WWII, we would like to refer you to Walter Neuner’s article below.

Even today the member of the Volunteer Waffen SS Prinz Eugen Division are still frequently falsely accused by the Tito Partisan and the history writers of Yugoslavia and other countries as having betrayed their country while fighting against the Tito Partisan Terrorists in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. These accusations were made either on purpose by Tito propagandists to justify their actions or in ignorance to the actual facts by history writers.

However, hardly a voice was raised in justification the relationship of the facts in honor of these brave soldiers serving in this unit. The actual facts of the political events leading to the formation of the Prince Eugene Division and the justification for the members' involvement in the war were never presented factual by either Tito or the allied nations. Connections are made between the Division and the entire German Nationality Group of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and thus they are collectively accused of collaborating with the enemy.

This is the reason why the following facts of the political development are extremely important to understand which explain the circumstances the Division was placed in and did perform their sworn duty in the best interest of their homeland and not as accused against their homeland. This presentation should shed new light on the facts and why the members of the unit acted the way they did.

Prior to these considerations one has to point out that it is untrue to claim that the Waffen SS Prinz Eugen Division of the German Nationality Group from the West Banat (Yugoslavian Banat) fought against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during WWII. It is also untrue that the soldiers of the German Nationality Group from the West Banat made themselves guilty of treason during their action in Yugoslavia.

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When the war between Germany and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia broke out on April the 6<sup>th</sup> 1941, the men of the West Banat fought on the side of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's army as Yugoslavian soldiers against Germany and many died in the Yugoslavian uniform for the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. On April the 17<sup>th</sup> a cease fire between these countries was reached, followed by the capitulation on April the 18<sup>th</sup> 1941 while the Yugoslavian army disbanded. King Peter and his administration left the country and went into self exile in England. With King Peter leaving the country, it created a totally new situation in the country. Croatia declared its independence; the Batschka, the territory between Theiss and Danube, part of Hungary prior to WWI was reclaimed by Hungary, Macedonia was taken by Bulgaria and Dalmatia and Slovenia were occupied by Italy. The northern part of Slovenia the region of Lower Styria and the West Banat were placed under the administration of the German troops.

The relative unfavorable situation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was favored by the Yugoslavian Communists whose aim it was to oust the capitalistic-monarchist government of Yugoslavia and to dissolve its Constitution and the Royal Army. Generally it aimed to form a communistic government in the sense of the international communist party of Moscow, Russia. After the cease fire agreement between Germany and Yugoslavia the communist party in Yugoslavia did not undertake any steps against the German occupation, since Germany had a non aggression pact with Russia at the time.

As soon as Germany invaded Russia on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941, the communist movement in Yugoslavia, on demand by Stalin began to organize the Communist Partisan Units. The first victims of their assassinations in Serbia were not German soldiers, but the Royal Gendarmes which remained loyal to the King. It must be understood that the majority of the German Nationality Group from the West Banat did not wish the downfall of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, since the Kingdom insured their rights. They saw that their rights and their economic development as a minority would otherwise be in jeopardy if the Yugoslavian Kingdom would fall.

The Yugoslavian leaders knew exactly, that after the withdrawal of the German troops, they would have a difficult fight against the Communist Partisan Units in their own country and it was for this reason that they formed units to oppose the communist partisans.

The Serbian General and Minister President Milan Nadic organized the Gendarmes for the Kingdom, the right "Fascist National Tschetnik Organization" was revitalized under the Royal Justice Minister Dimitrija Ljotic, which they already had done before the war and the Royal General Draza Mihajlovic formed troops again, from men of the disbanded Royal Army of Yugoslavian, which were loyal to King Peter, after the seize fire.

Further more General Rupnik formed the so called "White Guards" while in Croatia the "Ustascha" under, Poglavnik Ante Pavelic, seized power. In Bosnia the Moslem population formed their own SS troop unit the "Handzar" later, as protection against the Communist Partisans, while in Albania the "Skander Bag" fought their ideological enemies the "Communist", in their own country.

The Yugoslavian Generals and patriots were convinced about their actions to form units, in their fight against the left oriented fascists of the communist Tito Partisans and that it would be the only way to avoid a communist takeover of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Of course they did not want the German troops occupy their country, since they were fighting the Germans, Hungarians and Italians prior to the seize fire. However, now the communist "Tito Partisans" presented a greater danger to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and were considered the more dangerous enemy, since they know that the Germans would leave after the war, however the communist would stay.

By 1942 the fight between the communist on one side and the royal loyal patriots of the King on the other side had inflamed throughout the country. The German occupational forces watched this development of the battles between the Yugoslavian rivals for some time without getting involved. But after communist gangs on order of Stalin began to sabotage factories of German suppliers and transport installations in the West Banat (and Batschka), they saw themselves committed to interfere and formed defensive units to protect the West Banat and recruited it's men for military duty.

The action by the partisan had been extended to the West Banat, Batschka and Slovenia and as protection of the territories against Partisans and safety of the civilians in the region the "Prince Eugene Unit" was formed and it was the men from the West Banat which were pressed into uniforms involuntarily. By order of Berlin it would be renamed the "7th SS-Volunteer Mountain Division Prince Eugene". The Prince Eugene Division was the first division, to which the attribute "Volunteer Unit" was attached too. With this attribute "Volunteer" the international agreement was circumvented which states: "that a country may not draft soldiers from another country into their army". The Germans from the Banat were forced to serve like any other German from the "Reich" and to refuse this order was punishable the same way as any other nation had a right too. Certainly there were also Germans from the West Banat in the unit ranks who felt compelled and committed to serve for the cause of the West Banat, to protect their families from mistreatments and their land from being vandalized by the communist invisible "Partisan Terrorists".



It is correct to assume that it is against the law of nations to force men from occupied countries to participate in the defense against their own country. However, the Germans from the West Banat did not fight against Royal Yugoslavia; they were active against the communist terrorist around Tito, the very same, the "Kings Loyalists" were fighting as well and it must be looked as helping their countrymen fight a common enemy the "Communist Tito Partisan Terrorists" who were not yet recognized as the official government of the Yugoslavia at the time while King Peter was in England.

The troops formed with West Banater men in German uniform, according to Article 43 of the "Haager Resolution" governing the rights of countries during a war, saw themselves compelled in view of the attacks by the "Communist Tito Partisan Terrorists" on civilian installations within the West Banat, to reestablish law and order. In addition according to the law of nations an occupational force must provide law and order in an occupied country regardless whether they entered the country rightfully or not.

The position and the situation of the political developments were discussed and explained in details at a conference in Belgrade by Major Upenkamp military commander of the German occupational force to the Serbian administrators in which he also pointed out that the actions taken by the occupier is within the parameters of the "Haager Resolution" and as such fully justified. The Unit would work in support of the interest of the Serbian population loyal to the King, till the end of their occupation. It became quite clear to the German nationalities in Yugoslavia, if the communists Titos Partisans would win against the Kings Loyalists their private property would be confiscated and Russian type "Kolkhozes" (Commune farms) would be established on it.

The German recruits followed this explanation by the authorities and were aware of the reasons presented to them. They were not acting against the Yugoslavian Kingdom, or against the interest of the King to whom they would have been loyal too and thus would not violate any laws as outlined in the "Haager Resolution".

The communist Partisans under the leadership of Josip Broz "Tito" (= Tajna Internationalna Teroristicka Organizacija, translated; Secrete International Terrorist Organization) at this time it is not identical with the later internationally recognized "Foderativen Jugoslawischen Republik" (Federation of the Yugoslavian Republic). The Partisan units did not represent the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at any time. The legal representation of Yugoslavia was the exiled King in London and his administration of Yugoslavian Loyalists. The exiled administration in London did not recognize the leadership of the Partisan as the rightful representative of the country. The King however recognized the royal General Draza Mihajlovic and named him as Minister of War on June 18<sup>th</sup> 1943 in order to act on behalf of the King. This situation in Yugoslavia was in effect till May 15<sup>th</sup> 1944 when the exile government was reorganized, but even then the communists under Tito were not recognized by the government of Yugoslavia in exile.

The government in exile was in constant communication with the German occupational administration and did not fight against the German Army, but they fought together with the Germans against the communist partisans, their common enemy. The Germans from the West Banat saw a need to support their King and the action against the communist Partisans as fully legal and according to the laws of the

land; they were not and did not do anything which would be punishable. What they did was in the interest of the "Law and protection of the Country" from 1922, which was still in place and not that of the Tito Partisans. Only after strong pressures from Britain, the King during a radio speech on September 12<sup>th</sup> 1944 took a somewhat different position. Till to this date King Peter refused to speak to Tito or to his Partisans.

The leadership of the Partisans was aware of this and because of all their efforts, they did not receive the recognition to represent Yugoslavia from the exiled government therefore they ousted the exile Government of Yugoslavia in London on their second day of their "Antifasiticko Vece Narodnog Oslobodjenja Jugoslavije" ("Antifascist Tribunal for the Liberation of Yugoslavia") conference in Jajce, Bosnia on November 29<sup>th</sup> 1943 in which they forbid King Peter to return to Yugoslavia and decided to reorganize the country into the "Federation of the Yugoslavian Republic". Several of the royal ministers were accused as criminals and sentenced as such. The Royal Minister of War General Draza Mihajlovic who was recognized as the representative of the King until May 15<sup>th</sup> 1944 was captured after the war in Belgrade, tried as traitor and executed.

From all the facts presented, the Tito Partisans were units operating as illegal organization in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the war and as such were not protected under international law nor did they recognize and observe the international laws of wars, established under the "Haager Resolution".

This is why the West Banater men, who followed the draft into the "Waffen-SS Division Prinz Eugen Division" and fought against the enemy of the King, did not commit any wrongdoing against the Yugoslavian law by fighting against the Tito Partisans. All the communist organizations were operating illegally in Yugoslavia according to the "Law for the Protection of the State" from 1922 until September 12<sup>th</sup> 1944 (Speech of King Peter). There is nothing which could change that fact not even the speech made by Churchill of May 25<sup>th</sup> 1944 where he was outspoken against the King decision not to support Tito, although England and Russia supplied the terrorist organization with weapons, so that they could tie up the German troops in the Balkan.

When on November 21<sup>st</sup> 1944, the declaration of the AVNOJ ("Antifascist Tribunal for the Liberation of Yugoslavia") Resolutions was made by the Communist Tito Partisan, stating that all Germans in Yugoslavia have their citizenships revoked and every person of German decent was declared as enemies of Yugoslavia and their property declared property of the state of Yugoslavia, they had no right to do so. In other words the Germans in Yugoslavia lost all their rights by this decreed and thus it became legal to do what they pleased with their citizens of Germans ancestry, even murder them and never be criminally charged.

The Germans from the West Banat in the Prince Eugene Division had as one can see now, a rightful duty to fight along with the Kings Loyal against the Tito Partisans, as we saw the political situation developing. The idea of expelling all Germans was not a new one and was often said by Tito that the Germans should have been expelled already after WWI. As it becomes clear now Tito's excuse that the Germans were traitors of their country, can not be accepted, but was only a convenient excuse to disown the Germans and settle his loyal men according to his promise, who stood at his side during his campaign in Bosnia-

Herzegovina. The confiscation of German property and fueling the rage of the Serbs by issuing false propaganda statements make his followers take revenge against innocent citizens of German ancestry in a lethal way.

Because of the AVNOJ Resolutions the West Banter Germans in the Prince Eugene Division now are no longer citizens of Yugoslavia; they were given German citizenship by declaration of the "Third Reich" and now as such came under all the rights of the Haager War Resolutions as German citizens should.

The aftermath for the West Banater German soldiers were the same as that of other German soldiers who after May 1945 capitulated to the British troops in the region between Rann and Zagreb. They laid down their weapons and should have had the same rights as any other German soldiers. The British however turned over 100,000 German troops, who had surrendered to the British troops, only to be turned over to Tito's Partisans by them. Without seeking after their identity the Tito Partisans selected 3,500 soldiers and simply butchered them in the cruelest ways totally ignoring their rights as POW's. The remaining German POW's were executed and tossed in mass graves. These were war crimes, which never were punished in which the British are not without blame.

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### **A Summary of the Heroes of the Prince Eugene Division**

The German men from the West Banat in the 7th Waffen SS Prinz Eugen Volunteer Mountain Division as the only Donauschwaben division ever organized drew a fate no other military unit in the German Wehrmacht did experience. The Donauschwaben who settled after the Turkish war in Hungary during the three Great Swabian Migration periods, served in the military units of the Royal Imperial K&K Army of Austria-Hungary, the Hungarian Honvéd, the Romanian Army and the Yugoslavian Royal Army, but only once they served as a Unit on behalf of their own cause. The Unit marked as; "Volunteer" unit to circumvent the, "Haager Resolution", the governing laws of nations during war times established at the Geneva Convention, were for the most part "rubberstamped volunteers" among a few actual volunteers.

The unit comprised of farmers and craftsmen who would see action in the mountains and valleys of Bosnia, Dalmatia, Herzegovina and Montenegro. They were continually opposed by an invisible enemy who fought, disregarding all established laws of war set by the Geneva Convention. Many dressed in civilian clothes the partisans attacked units of the Division from ambush positions and did not take prisoner, but killed all captured soldiers by torturing them first and then literally butchering them. The young medical student Alexander Lermer who was assigned to a German Medical Unit was an involuntary eye witness of such cruelties committed by Partisans time and time again. They found corpses with open bellies, limbs and sex parts cut off. The reports of cruelties committed by the Tito Partisans as told by this eye witness, were committed without mercy and must be condemned by all free Nations as criminal acts and as a disgrace to humanity.

Their homeland would be overrun by the Russians on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944, then by the Tito Partisans who created havoc among the unprotected civilian German populations. The partisans organized the

operation "Inteligenza" by rounding up many of the civilians' intellectuals and setting up tribunal style court hearings on open fields outside of towns, torturing them and then killing them without mercy.

The men from the Prince Eugene Division learned of the tragedies their family had to face and continued their fight without hope. One of the examples took place in the field between the towns of Filipowa and Hodschag where 220 men found a cruel death without mercy; one after the other was tortured and then butchered in front of the others who had to watch the proceedings wondering who would be next. Only one man was able to escape, through the fire wall which was created around them, by sheer luck to tell the story. The irony however is, the town of Filipowa was one of the most religious towns in the Donauschwaben regions which over the years had produced 40 priests and 90 nuns. Other reports stated that they asked everyone from Ernsthausen to step forward (home of Sepp Janko) and then were executed. This random wild executions style murders also took place in Kischker, where 100 citizens, men and women were randomly gathered, taken out of town, forced to dig their graves prior of being executed.

The civilian population of the West Banater Schwaben had an extreme difficult time to flee across the Theiss River, as a result of this, they became subject of persecution by the Tito Partisans when they were expelled from their homes and incarcerated into death camps such as Rudolfsgnad and Molidorf where thousands lost their lives.

Nenad Stefanovic, of Belgrad a young Serbian author, learned about Rudolfsgnad across the Danube from Belgrade and questioned the fate of the people in this death camp and brought to light in his book; "A people on the Danube" what was "history distorted" by the communist government after the war for more than a half century and now young Serbs are seeking the truth and asked the question what happened to the Vojvodina Germans after the war.

Finally, German POW's were driven during a revenge march toward Belgrade, a distance of 750 to 800 kilometers away, without food or water and most of them poorly dressed, some without shoes, because they were robbed of their clothes and shoes by Serbian civilian gangs. The soldiers who surrendered in the regions of Cilli and Ljubljana, who lacked behind because of illness or weakness, were driven on by various ways of mistreatments, till they collapsed and died. The mistreatment partly ordered by the Partisan leaders was tolerated by the victors. Their treatments were „Criminal Acts against prisoners of war" punishable under the war criminal acts, but they never were enforced in Communist Yugoslavia as these laws should have been by the world organizations.

The survivors among the POW's from this march were taken to the coal mines of Bor in Serbia and again they were exposed to inhumane conditions which took more lives. That some of them did actually survive is a miracle attributed to their unyielding willpower and determination to survive against all odds. Many of the leaders among the soldiers were executed for even the smallest trumped up charges, so revenge could be taken against them. This explains the reason of why only few men of the Division survived the ordeals placed upon them. This ends one of the most unheralded military units of all time, who severed their country faithfully. May we remember them always in our prayers?