

Unabhängige |||||
Historikerkommission |||||
zur Geschichte des |||||
Reichsarbeitsministeriums
1933 – 1945 |||||

Zoran Janjetović (Institute for More Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade)

REGIMENTING UNFREE LABOR IN SERBIA 1941–1944

Working Paper Series A | No. 3

eds. Elizabeth Harvey and Kim Christian Priemel

Working Papers of the Independent Commission of Historians
Investigating the History of the Reich Ministry of Labour
(*Reichsarbeitsministerium*) in the National Socialist Period

ISSN 2513-1443

© Unabhängige Historikerkommission zur Aufarbeitung der Geschichte des Reichsarbeitsministeriums in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, 2017

Website: <https://www.historikerkommission-reichsarbeitsministerium.de/Publikationen>

ISSN 2513-1443

All rights reserved. Any reproduction, publication and reprint in the form of a different publication, whether printed or produced electronically, in whole or in part, is permitted only with the explicit written authorisation of the UHK or the author/s.

This paper can be downloaded without charge from <https://www.historikerkommission-reichsarbeitsministerium.de> or from the Social Science Research Network electronic library. Information on all of the papers published in the UHK Working Paper Series can be found on the UHK's website.

Serbia reappeared on the map after the destruction of Yugoslavia in April 1941, but not in her old borders that were erased when she had become part of Yugoslavia in 1918. Since Hitler wanted to punish the Serbs for their repudiation of the accession to the Tripartite Pact, he wanted Serbia to be small and the Serb nation impotent. Thus the occupied Serbia comprised roughly Serbia's territory before the Balkan Wars plus the Yugoslav part of the Banat. This territory had estimated 51,000 km² and 3.8 million people.¹ The number of Serbian refugees from neighboring territories who sought shelter in Serbia during WWII mentioned in historiography ranges between 241.000 and 400.000 - depending on sources used and the point in time when they came into being.² As opposed to this huge influx, there was also a loss of some Serbian 175,000 POWs taken to camps in Germany.³ According to Holm Sundhaussen and Nikola Živković, some 35,000 of them were Serbs from the territory of the ISC, that is, from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.⁴ That would mean that Serbia's loss in manpower was some 140,000 persons. As labor force most of these men were in the best age brackets.

In terms of social structure, the peasantry in 1931 made up 85.71% of the population of Serbia. In the absence of a 1941 census, this figure can be taken as a rough approximation for the territory of Serbia in 1941. This meant that the peasantry formed a larger proportion of the population in Serbia than in the other parts of Yugoslavia.⁵ 47.23% of them worked, while 52.87% were supported persons.⁶ This was caused above all by agrarian overpopulation.⁷ Not many of the village unemployed could find work in the relatively undeveloped Serbian industry and mines. Nevertheless, the bulk of the 109,197⁸ Serbian workers originated from villages or commuted daily to work from their native villages.⁹ Because of this economic structure, the main German interest in Serbia, apart from securing the communications (the Danube, the railroad lines connecting Thessaloniki with Belgrade and further with Budapest and Zagreb, roads through the Ibar and the Morava valleys) was to obtain grain, fats and oils, and ores from Serbian mines –

¹ Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945*, Beograd 1992, p. 111; Jovan Marjanović, *Ustanak i narodnooslobodilački pokret u Srbiji 1941*, Beograd 1963, p. 23; Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, I, Beograd 1979, p. 16; Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije*, Beograd 1970, pp. 77, 394; Dragan Aleksić, *Privreda Srbije u Drugom svetskom ratu*, Beograd 2002, p. 162.

² Dušan Đ. Kerkez, *Društvo Srbije u Drugom svetskom ratu 1941-1945*, Niš 2004, p. 126.

³ Vojni arhiv, Nedićeva arhiva (henceforth: VA NA), k. 1a, f. 1, d. 13; Jozo Tomasevich, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, Zagreb 1979, p. 78; *Zarobljeni a ne pokoreni. Zapisi bivših ratnih zarobljenika 1941-1945*, Beograd 1990, p. 8.

⁴ Nikola Živković, *Ratna šteta koju je Nemačka učinila Jugoslaviji u Drugom svetskom ratu*, Beograd 1975, p. 159; Holm Sundhaussen, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte Kroatiens im nationalsozialistischen Großraum 1941-1945. Das Scheitern einer Ausbeutungsstrategie*, Stuttgart 1983, p. 181.

⁵ Momčilo Isić, *Seljaštvo u Srbiji 1918-1941*, I/1. *Socijalno-ekonomski položaj seljaštva*, Beograd 2000, p. 37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷ 61.59% of Serbian peasants had plots up to 5 ha, and 6.02% had no land whatsoever. (*Ibid.*, pp. 42, 52.)

⁸ According to the 1931 census. (Borković (note 1), II, p. 45.)

⁹ Isić (note 5), p. 16. Tomislav Pajić, *Prinudni rad i otpor u logorima Borskog rudnika*, Beograd 1989, p. 16; Holm Sundhaussen, *Istorija Srbije od 19. do 21. veka*, Beograd 2008, pp. 296, 302-304.

above all zinc from Trepča in Kosovo and copper from the Bor mine¹⁰ - as well as to harness the Serbian labor force.¹¹ On the whole, there was an adequate supply of labor in Serbia, but part of it was wrongly deployed: as soon as they took office the German authorities started complaining about the size of the local bureaucracy and demanded its reduction.¹² The Serbs in general were seen as not sufficiently industrious, a consequence of Nazi racism, but also of observation on the spot.¹³

The German authorities were interested both in using the Serbian labor force in Serbia itself (for supplying raw materials, ores and foodstuffs, producing industrial goods for the German war economy in a number of factories) and in sending workers to work in industry and agriculture in Germany.¹⁴ Thus, there were basically three kinds of workers in which the Nazi authorities were interested: peasants, industrial and mining workers and “guest-workers” to be sent to work in the Reich. Since the German occupation authorities had not enough men to staff the administration, a Serbian collaborationist administration was set up in mid-May 1941. It had to transmit and implement German orders and enable the occupiers to run the country with as little waste of German manpower, effort or material resources as possible.¹⁵

As we have seen, the peasants made up easily the largest part of the Serbian population. They were expected to feed themselves, the towns, the Wehrmacht and Bulgarian troops (who exercised vicarious power for the Germans in large parts of Serbia) and to produce food for export to

¹⁰ Die Wirtschaftslage im Bereich des Kommandierenden Generals und Befehlshabers in Serbien. Zweiter Gesamtbericht des Generalbevollmächtigten für die Wirtschaft in Serbien, July 1942, Bundesarchiv (henceforth: BArch) R 26-VI/692; Pajić (note 9), pp. 36-255; Zivko Avramovski, Treći rajh i Borski rudnik, Bor 1975, pp. 149-244; Karl Olshausen, Zwischenspiel auf dem Balkan. Die deutsche Politik gegenüber Jugoslawien und Griechenland von März bis Juli 1941, Stuttgart 1973, p. 55; Petranović (note 1), p. 111; Marjanović (note 1), p. 19; Karl-Heinz Schlarp, Wirtschaft und Besatzung in Serbien 1941-1944. Ein Beitrag zur nationalsozialistischen Wirtschaftspolitik in Südosteuropa, Stuttgart 1986, pp. 220-254, 302-355; Borković (note 1), I, p. 15; Kerkez (note 2), pp. 47-55; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 168-178, 220, 243-265, 288-298; Valter Manošek, Holokaust u Srbiji. Vojno okupaciona politika i uništavanje Jevreja 1941-1942, Beograd 2007, p. 35.

¹¹ Jovan Marjanović, The German Occupation System in Serbia in 1941, in: Les Systèmes d'occupation en Yougoslavie, Belgrade 1963, p. 267; Idem, Ustanak, p. 19.

¹² Borković (note 1), I, p. 39; Marijana T. Mraović, Propaganda vlade Milana Nedića (1941-1944) (Ph.D. thesis, mscr.), Beograd 2015, pp. 181-184, 223. Two ordinances regulating the firing of civil servants were published in August 1941. Others followed over the duration of the occupation.

¹³ Zadaci upotrebe radne snage u Srbiji, Novo vreme (henceforth: NV), August 10, 1941; Vojni upravni nadsavetnik o zadacima upotrebe radne snage u Srbiji, Obnova, August 9, 1941.

¹⁴ Milan D. Ristović, Nemački novi poredak i jugoistočna Evropa 1940/41-1944/45. Planovi o budućnosti i praksa, Beograd 1991, pp. 264-268; Zoran Janjetović, “U skladu sa nastalom potrebom...” Prinudni rad u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944, Beograd 2012, pp. 84-98, 126-150, 156-186; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 289-326; Schlarp (note 10), pp. 207-220.

¹⁵ Die Wirtschaftslage im Bereich des Kommandierenden Generals und Befehlshabers in Serbien. Zweiter Gesamtbericht des Generalbevollmächtigten für die Wirtschaft in Serbien, Juli 1942, BArch R 26-VI/692; Saslusanje dr Georga Kiessela, Sandbostel, July 30, 1946, Arhiv Jugoslavije (henceforth: AJ), F. 110, inv. br. 13244; Czesław Madajczyk, „Restserbien“ unter deutscher Militärverwaltung, in: The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933-1945, Belgrade 1977; Avramovski (note 10), pp. 149-244; Olshausen (note 10), p. 55; Petranović (note 1), p. 111; Marjanović (note 1), p. 19; Idem, The German Occupation, p. 267; Schlarp (note 10), pp. 220-254, 302-355; Borković (note 1), I, p. 15; Kerkez (note 2), pp. 47-55; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 168-178, 220, 243-265, 288-298; Manošek (note 10), p. 35-37; Ljubinka Škodrić, Odnos nemačkog okupatora prema domaćim saradnicima u Srbiji 1941-1944, in: Oslobođenje Beograda 1944, Beograd 2010, p. 84.

the Third Reich.¹⁶ They had to be cajoled into planting more and browbeaten into selling a considerable share of the yield to the Serbian collaborationist government at fixed low prices. The collection was done by the Serbian authorities with German military and police assistance when needed. In 1942 a system of agricultural planning was introduced: peasants were ordered what to plant and in what quantity, as well as what to sell and at what price to the authorities, but also to the citizenry.¹⁷ In that way, although they continued to work on their own plots and on their own, they were harnessed primarily to German interests. In order to be able to satisfy their own needs, they had to sell or barter their products on the gray market.¹⁸

When it came to the labor force, the main problem of the German authorities was to secure workers for the mines that were of importance for the German war industry – above all in the largest copper mine in Europe, Bor, and the surrounding building sites connected with it.¹⁹ This was done with the Ordinance on Mandatory Labor and Limitation of Choice of Employment of 14 December 1941.²⁰ It foresaw mandatory labor service up to six months and affected some 30,000 people a year in Bor alone.²¹ The Ordinance was issued by the Serbian collaborationist government at German behest. For the implementation of the Ordinance no new institution was set up: it was in the hands of the Serbian government organs. The German General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, Franz Neuhausen, would determine the number of laborers needed for the subsequent year, the Serbian government would assign the quotas to counties, these to districts, and districts had to distribute them among communes.²² Communal elders determined who had to go – which, as can be imagined, was not always done without personal or political bias or bribe.²³ The program was put into practice in spring 1942. Throughout 1942 and 1943, sending people to mandatory labor was one of the collaborationist authorities' main tasks.²⁴ Formally, the people liable for “mandatory work” (as it was called) signed work contracts with (mostly) German companies working in Bor, Kostolac and building sites around them. They were entitled to salaries, free transportation to the place of work and back, plus board and lodging. In

¹⁶ Schlarp (note 10), pp. 302-338; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 168-178. True enough, the more developed and more peaceful Banat was earmarked as the main supplier of the Reich and of Belgrade. (Schlarp (note 10), pp. 309; Akiko Shimizu, *Die deutsche Okkupation des serbischen Banats 1941-1944 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien*, Münster 2003, pp. 385-388.)

¹⁷ Schlarp (note 10), pp. 302-338; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 246-276; Petranović (note 1), pp. 470-474.

¹⁸ L.P., *I naši seljaci su odgovorni za velika poskupljenja životnih namirnica*, *Obnova*, September 4, 1941; *Policija je pohvatila seljake koji su krijumčarili životne namirnice*, *NB*, February 3, 1942; *Žene na “crnoj berzi”*, *Obnova*, August 6, 1943.

¹⁹ *Bemerkungen von Herrn Ministerialdirektor Dr. Bergmann zu seinem Bericht über Jugoslawien aus dem Jahr 1946*, BArch R 26-VI/1353; Aleksić (note 1), p. 142.

²⁰ *Uredba o obaveznom radu i ograničenju slobode uposlenja*, *Službene novine*, December 30, 1941, pp. 1-2.

²¹ Pajić (note 9), p. 164.

²² Janjetović (note 14), p.133. Labor exchange played an auxiliary role sometimes and the Organization Todt undertook recruitments of its own. (Ibid., pp. 133-134.)

²³ Janjetović (note 14), p. 135.

²⁴ Janjetović (note 14), pp. 130-150, 156-162.

practice, however, salaries were extremely low, often paid with great delay, or in some cases never. Lodgings were leaky barracks for 100 men with next to no hygienic facilities. Food was extremely scanty and bad (even by Serbian wartime standards), which meant that workers had to buy additional rations – if they could afford it. The treatment by German and non-German foremen was rough, working hours were long and working conditions very bad, and working sites were under armed guard – partly to defend them from possible attacks by resistance movements, but primarily to prevent the laborers from escaping.²⁵ Small wonder that “mandatory labor” soon became so notorious that workers had to be accompanied by police or district officials from their homes to the workplaces and that even despite such measures many deserted already on the way there²⁶ or soon after arrival. Many more escaped before serving their turn.²⁷ This led the German authorities to prolong the term of work arbitrarily until enough replacements arrived. This in turn led to an increased number of escapes, which created a vicious circle. For smallest infringements of the rules laborers were punished with additional months of work. In that case it was called “forced labor” and it was done under even more severe conditions.²⁸

The “mandatory work”, although presented as civic duty, was forced labor in everything but name. This is best illustrated by the fact that some 6,000 Hungarian Jews were sent there by the Hungarian government in agreement with the Reich authorities in summer 1943 to alleviate the constant labor shortage.²⁹ The Serbian Jews could not fill the gap since they had been murdered by the time “mandatory labor” was launched.³⁰

In Serbia proper, “mandatory labor” was a solely male affair. This was not the case in the Banat, with its considerable Volksdeutsche (ethnic German) population. The Banat was seen by the Nazis as a key region supplying food for export. At the same time, it was also seen by Himmler as the reservoir of manpower for the Waffen-SS. This meant that many Volksdeutsche farms were

²⁵ Janjetović (note 14), pp. 163-177.

²⁶ In 1943 it was between 50 and 60%! (Security Chief Dragi Jovanović to General Meyszner, March 21, 1943, VA NA, k. 117, f. 1, d. 11; Minister of Social Policy and People’s Health Eng. Stojimir Dobrosavljević, to Minister of the Interior, February 1, 1943, VA NA, k. 107, f. 3, d.1. Neither the German nor the Serbian authorities could solve this problem. (Cf. Bemerkungen von Herrn Ministerialdirektor Dr. Bergmann zum 3. Bericht über Jugoslawien aus dem Jahre 1946, BArch R 26-VI/1354; Dritter Gesamtbericht des Generalbevollmächtigten für die Wirtschaft in Serbien, January 1944, BArch RW 40/99.)

²⁷ Minister of Social Policy and People’s Health to the Minister of the Interior, Belgrade, February 2, 1943. (VA NA, k. 107, f. 3, d. 1.)

²⁸ Such laborers were not allowed to move freely around in their free time, were even more poorly fed etc. Furthermore, it was threatened that those who escaped would be treated as deserters or that their families would be confined in concentration camps. (Janjetović (note 14), pp. 146-147.)

²⁹ Randolph L. Brahm, *The Destruction of Hungarian Jewry. A Documentary Account*, New York 1963, pp. 104-112; Vladislav Rotbart, *Jugosloveni u mađarskim zatvorima i logorima*, Beograd, Novi Sad 1988, pp. 318-319; Pačić (note 9), 185-187; Jaša Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941-1945. Žrtve genocida i učesnici NOR*, Beograd 1980, p. 84. The Hungarian government was prevailed upon to swap the Jews for ten tons of copper concentrate a month.

³⁰ Manošek (note 10), pp. 97-114, 171-185; Branislav Božović, *Stradanje Jevreja u okupiranom Beogradu 1941-1944*, Beograd 2012, pp. 191-274; Jovan Byford, *The Collaborationist Administration and the Treatment of the Jews in Nazi-Occupied Serbia*, in: Sabrina P. Ramet, Ola Listhaug (eds.), *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two*, New York 2011, pp. 113-123. Furthermore, their overall number had been too small for the purpose anyway.

left without male labor. “Mandatory workers”, mostly Serbs, had to fill the gap. Since it was work in the fields, stables and the like, women were deployed here as well. Since 1943 when the Luftwaffe started building air-fields in the Banat, Serbian women were also made to work on these sites. On the other hand, a relatively low number of men from the Banat were sent to Bor and other mines in Serbia, since they were needed in local agriculture. The recruitment and distribution of the labor force were tasks carried out by the local authorities in which the ethnic Germans played the main role.³¹

Another form of forced labor was the National Service for the Renewal of Serbia. The NSRS was set up in late 1941.³² It was envisaged that all men between 17 and 45 would serve, but in practice only youths were called up – because the extreme right-wing collaborationist regime wanted to re-educate them through work in the spirit of nationalism, anti-communism, antisemitism, anti-democracy, loyalty to the “national community” and to teach them that duties came before rights.³³ Another reason why only youths served was that people of more mature age were called up for “mandatory work”. In fact the NSRS was an introduction into mandatory labor later on in life. To be sure, educational goals were as always intertwined with political and economic ones.³⁴ As with mandatory labor, the primary initiator of the NSRS were German officials. According to one version it was Harald Turner, the chief of the Administrative Staff of the German Commander in Serbia. He wanted to remove allegedly idle youth from the streets and cafés and have them carry out land improvement works for the Wehrmacht.³⁵ According to another version, the idea originated with the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, Franz Neuhausen.³⁶ There is also a third version, according to which the idea came from the ideologue of the Serbian

³¹ Janjetović (note 14), pp. 178-186.

³² Đ.Sl. Organizovanje Nacionalne službe za obnovu zemlje, *Obnove*, January 28, 1942; *Mladost će radom i disciplinom ostvariti novu Srbiju*, *Obnova*, February 2, 1942; Milorad Marčetić, *Radna služba*, *Prosvetni glasnik*, LVIII, 1-2, 1942, p. 91; *Putem reda i rada*, *Obnova*, March 26, 1942; Vas. Mihailović, *Omladina i preporod nacije*, NB, March 28, 1942; *Nacionalna služba kao faktor nacionalne i privredne obnove zemlje*, *Obnova*, April 11, 1944.

³³ Đura Kotur, *Smisao NSOS*, in: *Tri meseca rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, s.l. s.a., p. 14; Zlatan M. Savatić, *Naša omladina, željna reda i rada spremna je da se svrsta u redove Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, *Obnova*, February 16, 1942; *Pretsednik vlade sa predsednikom opštine obišao radove u Donjem Gradu*, *Obnova*, May 19, 1942; *Obrenovačka omladina na korisnom poslu*, *Obnova*, July 29, 1942; *Govor izaslanika predsednika vlade, ministra Dobrosavljevića*, June 3, 1943; *Nekadasnje baruštine pretvaraju se u plodna polja*, *Obnova*, September 4, 1943; *Predavanje pomoćnika rukovodca Nacionalne službe Marčetića obveznicima u Mačvi*, *Obnova*, September 10, 1943; *Stvaralaštvo NSOS, Srpski narod (henceforth: SN) September 11, 1943; Uspešan rad NSOS, SN, October 10, 1943; Ministar Veselinović seoskim omladincima u Nacionalnoj službi*, *Obnova*, February 10, 1944; *Stvorićemo pravu službu rada i kroz nju sigurne temelje nove Srbije*, *Obnova*, February 12, 1944; *Miroslav Peran, Nacionalna služba kao faktor nacionalno-vaspitne i privredne obnove*, *Obnova*, April 11, 1944.

³⁴ These were also not disparaged. *Peran* (note 33).

³⁵ *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije*, I/4, Beograd 1954, p. 269; *Mraović* (note 12), p. 685. Stefanovic only speaks vaguely of “German initiative”. (*Mladen Stefanović, Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934-1945*, Beograd 1984, p. 212.) So does collaborationist Minister of the Education, Velibor Jonić in the interrogation after WWII. (*Zapisnik o saslušanju Jonić Velibora, bivšeg ministra*, August 22, 1945 – September 12, 1945, *Vojni arhiv, Četnicka arhiva* (henceforth: VA ČA), k. 269, f. 3, d. 17.)

³⁶ *Schlap* (note 10), p. 214; *Mraović* (note 12), p. 684.

extreme right-wing movement, the Zbor, Stevan Ivanić, who had been Commissary of the Ministry of Social Security and People's Health for a while.³⁷ In any case, the obvious model was the Reich Labor Service (RAD),³⁸ as was confirmed by the representative of the RAD in Belgrade, Sepp Prager.³⁹ This showed in whose interest the re-education of the young in the end had been. To be sure, the muzzled Serbian press tried to depict it differently, claiming service in the NSRS was a national duty that only the unworthy would try to evade.⁴⁰ However, not all German officials were convinced of the value of the NSRS: the ever-suspicious Senior SS and Police Chief, August Meyszner, the key German security official in Serbia, was opposed to the NSRS, seeing in it, due to its national education of (above all intellectual) youths, the kernel of a future Serbian resistance movement.⁴¹

Service in the NSRS was mandatory. Without having served at least six months in it, one could not study at university or get a job in the state or local government.⁴² It was a typical quasi-state institution with paramilitary organization and way of life.⁴³ Disobedience was punishable with fines and even arrest for up to 30 days.⁴⁴ Threats did not always suffice,⁴⁵ so the police sometimes had to round up those liable but unwilling to serve.⁴⁶ National indoctrination was imparted through political and ideological lectures and cultural programs prepared by the servicemen themselves. However, work was considered the supreme means of education. It was supposed to acquaint particularly urban youths (who made up the majority of those called up) with

³⁷ Vojni arhiv, Emigrantska vlada (henceforth: VA EV), k. 25, f. 1, d. 42. This was the information forwarded to the Yugoslav government in exile in London. However, the information that reached London was not always reliable. There was also a proposal of a Vladimir Andrijašević, official at the Instruction Department of the Ministry of Education, of June 6, 1941 in which he suggested organizing summer labor service for school-children, with exactly the same aims as listed above. (Arhiv Srbije (henceforth: AS), G 3, GPS, F. 6.) Whoever had been the initiator, the members of the Zbor were put at the organization's helm, stressing thus the ideological aims of the organization. The manager was Đuro Kotur and his deputy Milorad Marčetić. (Stefanović (note 32), p. 212.)

³⁸ Just how derivative the NSRS had been was shown by the sycophantic celebration of the birthday of Konstantin Hierl, the head of the RAD. (Priznanje duhovnom tvorcu škole rada, jedne od najvećih organizacija današnjice i budućnosti, *Obnova*, February 24, 1944.)

³⁹ Smisao radne službe, SN, December 11, 1943.

⁴⁰ Popis obveznika Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije, *Obnova*, February 11, 1942.

⁴¹ Meyszner to Bader, August 16, 1942, BArch RW 40/79; Mraović (note 12), p. 686. Maybe his opposition was also motivated by his rivalry with Turner. In any case, the Commanding General in Serbia, Paul Bader, refused to abolish the NSRS but ordered Meyszner to keep an eye on it. (Bader to Turner, September 9, 1942, BArch RW 40/79.)

⁴² Jovan Mijušković, Nacionalna služba za obnovu Srbije, in: *Tri meseca rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, s.l. s.a., p. 7; Bilans rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije od dana izlaska uredbe o sprovođenju do danas (VA NA, k. 71, f. 3, d. 2); Lagebericht des Verwaltungsstabes beim Befehlshaber Serbiens [February 6, 1942] (BArch RW 40/191); Janjetović (note 14), p. 201.

⁴³ Nekadasnje baruštine pretvaraju se u plodna polja, *Obnova*, September 4, 1943; Janjetović (note 14), p. 189.

⁴⁴ Uredba o organizaciji NSOS, *Obnova*, August 17, 1942; Prijavljivanje izbeglica u NSOS, March 26, 1942.

⁴⁵ Pajić (note 9), p. 153; Zabranjuju se intervencije u upravi Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije, NV, March 19, 1942; J. Ob., Obveznici Nacionalne službe na radovima u unutrašnjosti, NV, June 10, 1942; D.S.V., Najmlađi dobrovoljac Nacionalne službe, NV, July 18, 1942. All these articles reported on intercessions for boys from "good families" to be exempt from serving.

⁴⁶ Obaveza rada, *Obnova*, July 28, 1942. This must have been common knowledge. Otherwise the controlled press would not dare write about it.

physical labor and to teach them to respect it.⁴⁷ Furthermore, bringing together youths from all social strata to perform communal tasks was supposed to erase social differences⁴⁸ (a frequent trope of nationalist movements); it was also supposed to overcome the social gap between town and country, something that was seen as a particularly Serbian problem.⁴⁹ The government tried to rectify the formerly privileged position of towns and town-dwellers by calling up proportionally more youths from towns than from villages.⁵⁰ Furthermore, village labor units worked in their villages, whereas those recruited from towns, or with recruits from towns and villages, were sent to work away from their places of residence.⁵¹ However, this had also practical and not only ideological reasons: village lads had enough to do on their farms,⁵² and agriculture was the supreme priority both for the German and the Serbian authorities.⁵³

It is not known how many young men⁵⁴ served in the NSRS because the data are incomplete. It seems the trend was upward: numbers of recruits increased from 21,300 in 1942 to 43,000 in 1942/43.⁵⁵ Apart from widespread shirking, an important factor limiting the number of recruits to the service was the lack of tools, shoes and uniforms.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Miroslav Peran, *Temelji nove Srbije*, NB, May 31, 1942.

⁴⁸ *Uloga reda i rada u vaspitanju obveznika Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, *Obnova*, May 27, 1942.

⁴⁹ The gap between town and country in Serbia was very deep due to the exploitation of the countryside by clerks, banks and merchants before the Second World War. During the occupation the villages retaliated (as city dwellers believed) by charging excessive prices of foodstuffs (although there were some good reasons for wartime high prices). (Cf. Nataša Milicević, Dušan Nikodijević (eds.), *Svakodnevni život pod okupacijom. Iskustvo jednog Beograđanina 1941-1944*, Beograd 2011, pp. 157, 192, 298, 799; Kosta Nikolić, *Strah i nada u Srbiji 1941-1944. Svakodnevni život pod okupacijom*, Beograd 2002, pp. 113, 135, 142, 146-147, 164-165, 170, 239; Dejan Medaković, *Efemeris, II. Hronika jedne porodice*, Beograd 1991, pp. 254-255, 269; Stevan K. Pavlović, *Hitlerov novi antiporedak. Drugi svetski rat u Jugoslaviji*, Beograd 2009, pp. 110-111; R. St., *Za tešnje veze između varoši i sela, Srpsko selo*, October 5, 1941; M. Jevtić, *Selo i grad*, NB, October 5, 1941; Rad. Stanković, *Selo i grad*, NB, January 18, 1942; Đ.Sl., *Briga za naše selo*, *Obnova*, May 5, 1942; *Selo i grad*, *Obnova*, June 25, 1942; V.J. Mandić, *Neopravdane kritike*, NB, August 29, 1942; R., *Više svesti i osećaja odgovornosti, Srpsko selo*, October 17, 1942; V.J., *Iz grada kroz selo*, *Obnova*, April 10, 1942; R., *Izvršiti svoju dužnost*, *Obnova*, July 3-5, 1944. The press noticed that peasant youths responded better to the call-up to the NSRS than sons of the Belgrade elite. (Najmlađi dobrovoljac Nacionalne službe, NV, July 18, 1942; Karakteristična i značajna dopisnica jednog obveznika, *Obnova*, July 27, 1942.)

⁵⁰ Thus town youths made up 42% of youths in the NSRS (*Dve godine Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, SN, December 18, 1943), while urban Serbs made up less 20% of Serbia's population. (Aleksić (note 1), p. 170.) Village youths had more to do at home and were less prone to go in for politics than town lads.

⁵¹ Janjetović (note 14), p. 195.

⁵² Mijušković (note 42), p. 9; Milorad Marčetić, *Zadatak NSOS*, in: *Tri meseca rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, s.l. s.a., pp. 36-37.

⁵³ VA NA, k. 33a, f. 6, d. 59; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 168-178, 243-276; Schlarp (note 10), pp. 302-308. In 1943 it was explicitly ordered not to call up peasants who had to work in planned agriculture. (VA NA, k. 107, f. 4, d. 5.)

⁵⁴ The idea of sending girls to the NSRS was never considered – probably because that would not have gone down well in a still predominantly patriarchal society; but due to the lack of shoes, uniforms and tools not even all boys could be recruited.

⁵⁵ *Bilans rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije od dana izlaska uredbe o sprovođenju do danas*, VA NA, k. 71, f. 3, d. 2; *Dve godine Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, SN, December 18, 1943; Janjetović (note 14), p. 204.

⁵⁶ *Bilans rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije od dana izlaska uredbe o sprovođenju do danas*, VA NA, k. 71, f. 3, d. 2; Lagebericht des Verwaltungsstabes beim Befehlshaber Serbien für Mai und Juni [June 1942], BArch RW 40/195; *Prve radne čete NSOS*, *Obnova*, April 23, 1942; *Rukovalac Nacionalne službe obišao radne čete u Mačvi i Posavini*, NV, July 7, 1942; *Konferencija Nacionalne službe*, NV, July 31, 1942; *Prilog naše omladine budućnosti Srbije*, *Obnova*, August 22, 1942; *Šta rade i kako žive obveznici Nacionalne službe*, NV, August 27, 1942; Janjetović (note 14), p. 201.

The NSRS conscripts worked on drainage and afforestation projects, on schemes to improve fields, on farms that were short of labor, on the rebuilding of ruined monuments and historic sites, on road-building, on archeological excavations, collecting medical herbs etc.⁵⁷ Because of the Allied bombings, from spring 1944 the tasks of the NSRS were increasingly focused on clearing debris, rather than building new structures.⁵⁸ Since educational goals were more important than economic ones, the youths in the NSRS worked only in the morning; afternoons were reserved for lectures, sports and activities of clubs and amateur associations. Lectures were on nationalist, political and antisemitic topics.⁵⁹ Amateur theaters, choirs, musical bands, sports and folklore clubs were set up. They disseminated propaganda not only among the labor conscripts themselves, but also among the general population in places where labor units were stationed. In remote villages this was practically the only way to spread regime propaganda, since they had no electricity and no radio, and newspapers could not be received because of the distance, poor and unsafe roads, lack of transportation etc. Therefore, in order to make this cultural propaganda more effective, the amateur associations and clubs of the labor conscripts were sometimes reinforced by bringing in young women or professional actors or musicians.⁶⁰ The programs of their

⁵⁷ Marčetić, *Zadatak NSOS* (note 52), pp. 29-30; Nacionalna služba za obnovu Srbije, NV, January 13, 1942; Prva smotra obveznika NSOS, *Obnova*, March 17, 1942; J. Ob., *Povećanje žetve za 180 miliona*, NV, March 22, 1942; Pretsednik vlade sa pretsednikom opštine obišao radove u Donjem Gradu, *Obnova*, May 19, 1942; Melioracija jednog dela Posavine osposobiće preko 5.000 hektara najplodnijeg zemljišta, *Obnova*, June 24, 1942; Omladina vredno posluje..., *Obnova*, June 26, 1942; J.J., *Obveznici Nacionalne službe rade na isušenju Mačve*, NV, July 2, 1942; Veliki melioracioni radovi u Mačvi, *Obnova*, July 6, 1942; Rukovalac Nacionalne službe obišao radne čete u Mačvi i Posavini, NV, July 7, 1942; Omladina u radu na obnovi Srbije, *Obnova*, July 10, 1942; Radovi na isušenju Mačve, August 10, 1942; N.S., *Zamašni radovi seoskih četa Nacionalne službe*, NV, July 25, 1942; J.M., *Život i rad smederevske SNOS*, NV, July 31, 1942; V.R., *“Ostrvo neznanih Robinzona”*, NV September 22, 1942; V.J., *Mladići podigli most za svega pet dana*, July 31, 1942; *Poseta maturanata beogradskih gimnazija obveznicima Nacionalne službe*, NV, May 23, 1943; *Inspekcion put pomoćnika rukovoca Nacionalne službe*, NV, July 10, 1943; Velibor Jovanović, *Oko šest stotina beogradskih i šabackih omladinaca pretvaraju beskrajne mačvanske močvare u plodna zemljišta*, *Obnova*, September 19, 1942; *Stvaralaštvo NSOS*, SN, September 11, 1943; *Kako će zimovati obveznici Nacionalne službe*, NV, November 16, 1943; *Četvorogodišnji plan izgradnje puteva*, *Obnova*, December 16, 1942; *Radovi na isušenju Mačve*, *Obnova*, September 3, 1943; *Nekadašnje baruštine pretvaraju se u plodna polja*, *Obnova*, September 4, 1943; *Radovi na isušenju Makiša*, *Obnova*, October, 2, 1943; V.J. *Obveznici Nacionalne službe uređuju obalu Kolubare i podižu betonski most u središtu grada*, *Obnova*, October 22, 1943; *Polu miliona radnih časova*, NV, March 21, 1944; V.M., *Pripreme za proslavu dvogodišnjice NSR u Kostolcu*, NV, July 22, 1944.

⁵⁸ VA NA, k. 24, f. 3, d. 57; *Obveznici nacionalne službe iz Kragujevca, Valjeva, Lapova i Šapca rade na raščišćavanju ruševina u Beogradu*, *Obnova*, July 1, 1944; V.M., *Pripreme za proslavu dvogodišnjice NSR u Kostolcu*, NV, July 22, 1944; *Valjevo ostalo bez Nacionalne službe rada*, NV, August 18, 1944.

⁵⁹ J.M. *Uspesh Nacionalne službe u Smederevu*, NV, May 9, 1942.

⁶⁰ Marčetić, *Zadatak NSOS* (note 52), p. 32; *Nastava, vaspitanje i sport*, in: *Tri meseca rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, s.l. s.a., pp. 50-52; *Bilans rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije od dana izlaska uredbe o sprovođenju do danas* (VA NA, k. 71, f. 3, d. 2; k. 24, f. 4, d. 28), *Peta konferencija članova srpske vlade sa okružnim načelnicima*, February 7, 1942 (VA NA, k. 1a, f. 2, d. 37); M.S., *Nove pozorišne priredbe Nacionalne službe*, NV, April 6, 1942; *U Leskovcu je otpočeo rad Nacionalne službe*, NV, April 14, 1942; *Prve radne čete NSOS*, *Obnova*, April 23, 1942; *Akademija obveznika Nacionalne službe u Narodnom pozorištu*, *Obnova*, May 20, 1942; *Aktivnost obveznika Nacionalne službe na polju umetnosti*, *Obnova*, August 13, 1942; *Prosvetno-kulturna akcija Nacionalne službe u Valjevu*, NV, August 14, 1942; *Prilog naše omladine budućnosti Srbije*, *Obnova*, August 22, 1942; *Predstave obveznika Nacionalne službe u Smederevskoj Palanci*, NV, August 23, 1942; *Proba 100 omladinaca*, NV, August 25, 1942; *Oko šest stotina beogradskih i šabackih omladinaca pretvaraju beskrajne mačvanske močvare u plodna zemljišta*, *Obnova*, September 19, 1942; *Nacionalna akademija u ničkom*

performances had to be strictly “national” – Serbian folk songs, Serbian plays, and Serbian poems.⁶¹ Thus, while the economic results of the NSRS were important, cultural and educational activities were equally important for building the new Serbian man.⁶² Although NSRS was seen as a refuge for bourgeois youngsters who wanted to evade recruitment for mandatory labor or armed units, there were also conscripts who absconded.⁶³

Schoolchildren were not spared forms of forced labor either. Since the collaborationist authorities viewed the young as in need of correction,⁶⁴ together with the reform of the educational system they undertook, they saw work as the best way to reshape youth.⁶⁵ Work was imposed also on schoolchildren (who had to do school gardens and plant vegetables for school kitchens in which poor pupils were fed) partly for economic reasons, but because of its social meaning, this work had an educational component too.⁶⁶ Pupils were also used for clearing snow, so as to be useful for the broader, albeit local, community.⁶⁷ This was seen as a step towards integration into the wider “national community”. Furthermore, such assignments were to teach them that “a man and a people make progress only through honest and assiduous work, which is also the source of the greatest personal fulfilment.”⁶⁸

Apart from using the free work of peasants (who were denied the legal possibility of selling their products on the free market), “mandatory labor” and the NSRS, the German occupiers harnessed Serbian labor as a resource for the economy in the Reich. However, in most cases (except

Narodnom pozorištu, *Obnova*, September 29, 1942; Poseta maturanata beogradskih gimnazija obveznicima Nacionalne službe, *NV*, May 23, 1943; U Valjevu je obrazovana prva obveznička folklorna grupa, *Obnova*, September 1, 1943; Nekadašnje baruštine pretvaraju se u plodna polja, *Obnova*, September 3, 1943; Radovi na isušnju Makiša, *Obnova*, October 2, 1943; Uspela priredba samostalne čete Nacionalne službe u Valjevu, *Obnova*, October 14, 1943; Uspela akademija kragujevačkih obveznika Nacionalne službe, *Obnova*, April 13-14, 1944.

⁶¹ Marčetić, *Zadatak NSOS* (note 52), p. 32; *Nastava, vaspitanje i sport*, in: *Tri meseca rada Nacionalne službe za obnovu Srbije*, s.l. s.a., pp. 50-52; Akademija obveznika Nacionalne službe u Narodnom pozorištu, *Obnova*, May 20, 1942; Akademija obveznika Nacionalne službe u Narodnom pozorištu, *Obnova*, May 30, 1942; Jedna lepa manifestacija u Narodnom pozorištu, June 1, 1942; Kulturna delatnost članova Nacionalne službe, *Obnova*, June 16, 1942; Srpska omladina radi..., *Obnova*, September 1, 1942.

⁶² “Kroz Nacionalnu službu stvoricemo novog srpskog omladinca”, *NV*, October 11, 1943.

⁶³ *Ljotićevci u Leskovcu 1941-1944. godine*, AS, BIA, II/77.

⁶⁴ The collaborationists accused the former Yugoslav system of education of making the young internationalist, lazy, irresponsible, selfish and greedy. However, after a year and a half in office Minister of Education Jonić also had to observe that communism was spreading among high-school students, that they (boys and girls together) visited coffee-houses, dancing schools and cinemas when films forbidden for the young were on, smoked, wore hats instead of students’ caps, resold cinema tickets and even had sex. (Konferencija direktora, February 3, 1943, AS, G 3, GPS, F. 6.)

⁶⁵ Dimitrije Najdanović, *Osnovni problemi naše prosvete*, *Prosvetni glasnik*, LIX, 1-2, 1943, pp. 6-7; Rad Ministarstva prosvete na vaspitanju omladine i prosvetivanju naroda, *Obnova*, December 3, 1943.

⁶⁶ M.K., *Za radnu službu u srednjoj školi*, *Obnova*, September 19, 1941; *Naša omladina na poslu*, *Obnova*, May 14, 1942; Zl. M. Savatić, *Omladina na poslu*, *Obnova*, May 31, 1942; Ministar prosvete obišao je đачku radnu službu beogradskih građanskih škola, *Obnova*, June 8, 1942; *Živa aktivnost leskovačke srednjoškolske službe rada*, *Obnova*, July 10, 1942; *Đaci građanske škole obrađuju polja*, *Obnova*, June 12, 1942; *Zl.M.S., Valjevci su pregli da obrade sve slobodne površine zemljišta*, *Obnova*, June 19, 1942; M. Simić, *Uspesha đачkih radnih četa na obrađivanju zemlje u Nišu i okolini*, *Obnova*, July 16, 1942; *Učenci beogradskih srednjih škola vredno obrađuju slobodno zemljište*, *Obnova*, March 24, 1943.

⁶⁷ Milićević, Nikodijević (eds.) (note 49), pp. 123-126, 148.

⁶⁸ *Vaspitne i građanske pouke*, AS, G 3, GPS, F. 6.

for a smaller number of deportees) this was voluntary work freely contracted.⁶⁹ The motives for volunteering for work in Germany included the effects of the Nazi press campaign, the wish to avoid “mandatory labor” or being recruited into partisan or *četnik* units, the desire to earn more than in Serbia or the hope of escaping German reprisals caused by the uprising.⁷⁰ In summer 1941 Franz Neuhausen and his team hoped to get 75,000 manual laborers to Germany by the end of 1941.⁷¹ The German and Serbian authorities issued no ordinance to facilitate that, but 16 recruiting officers from the Reich Ministry of Labor arrived in Serbia in late June 1941.⁷² They cooperated with the Central Employment Administration and Employment Offices in the largest cities, i.e. Belgrade, Bečkerek und Niš.⁷³ Later on, the number of recruiting offices was increased when branches were opened in smaller towns.⁷⁴ Serbian officials had to follow the orders of their German superiors in promoting work in the Reich. These Serbian institutions also had to defray the costs of recruitment.⁷⁵ Some German companies tried to attract workers directly by publishing adverts in newspapers.⁷⁶ The first group of 1,000 workers - attracted by good working and living conditions, high wages by Serbian standards, eight paid holidays a year, and other benefits - left for Germany on 4 July 1941.⁷⁷ The regime newspaper prized the possibilities of holidays and free time, religious freedom, opportunities for enjoying culture and entertainment and for perfecting one’s education.⁷⁸ The Government organs also promoted going to Germany to work.

⁶⁹ Aleksić (note 1), pp. 321.

⁷⁰ Aleksić (note 1), pp. 322-323; Odluka o utvrđivanju zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, Krmpotić dr Mario. (AJ, 110, F. br. 789/I.);

⁷¹ Aleksić (note 1), p. 314; Borković (note 1), II, p. 62; Živković (note 4), p. 165. The resolution of the State Commission for Establishing Crimes of Occupiers and their Helpers declaring Dr. Mario Krmpotić, the former head of the Main Administration for Mediation of Labor, a war criminal, speaks about 40.000 persons (Odluka o utvrđivanju zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, Krmpotić dr Mario. AJ, 110, F. 789/I.).

⁷² Der Einsatz serbischer Arbeiter im Reich. (BArch R 26-VI/1350); Schlarp (note 10), p. 208.

⁷³ Živković (note 4), p. 164.

⁷⁴ BArch R 26-VI/1350; Saopštenje radnicima koji putuju u Nemačku na rad, NV, January 23, 1942; Aleksić (note 1), pp. 314-315.

⁷⁵ AJ, 110, Inv. br. 1935; Odluka o utvrđivanju zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, Krmpotić dr Mario. (AJ, 110, F. br. 789/I.)

⁷⁶ Pažnja radnicima, NV, August 31, 1941; Nemačka traži zidare i tesare za velike novogradnje u Nürnbergu, NV, October 4, 1941; Radnici, koji želite da putujete na rad u Nemačku, slušajte!!!, NV, October 19, 1941; Viner-nojšeter flugcojgverke traži radnike bez obzira na kvalifikaciju, NV, November 3, 1942.

⁷⁷ M. Mar., Preksinoć otputovala prva grupa naših radnika u Nemačku, NV, July 6, 1941; Sutra polazi prvi transport radnika za Nemačku, NV, July 3, 1941.

⁷⁸ Srpski radnici proslavili su Božić u Nemačkoj, NV, January 24, 1942; S.M. Jank., Zabava za strane radnike u Berlinu, NV, March 21, 1942; M.S. Janković, Srpski radnici na zabavi u Berlinu, NV, June 2, 1942; M. Mikašino- vić, Izlet srpskih radnika iz Berlina, NV, July 7, 1942; S.M. Janković, Srpski radnici na izletu u Potsdamu, NV, July 10, 1942; S.M. Jank., „Snaga i radost“ za strane radnike u Berlinu, NV, November 13, 1942; S.M. Janković, Filmske predstave za srpske radnike u Nemačkoj, NV, November 20, 1942; S.M. Janković, Prva predstava srps-kih radnika u Berlinu, NV, December 11, 1942; S.M. Janković, Prelo i kolo na bini u Berlinu, NV, December 26, 1942; S.M. Janković, Naš Badnjak i Roždestvo u Berlinu, NV, January 16, 1943; Naša proslava svetog Save u Nemačkoj, NV, February 4, 1943; Slob. M. Janković, Uskršnji praznici naših u Beču, NV, April 28, 1943; Radol-jub Ž. Ilić, Treće srpsko veče u Berlinu, NV, May 19, 1943; S. Janković, Veseli časovi srpskih radnika na obalama Dunava, NV, June 12, 1943; Rodoljub Ž. Ilić, Srpsko radničko diletantsko pozorište otpočelo je da daje svoje predstave u Berlinu, NV, June 20, 1943; S. Janković, Duhovni napredak srpskih radnika u Nemačkoj, NV, Sep-tember 5, 1943; S. Janković, Život naših u Beču, NV, September 19, 1943; Proslava Hristovog vaskrsenja u Ber-

Thus the Commissary for Refugees informed the communes on August 16, 1941 to spread the word among the refugees (i.e. among the most vulnerable section of the society) about the possibilities of employment in Germany.⁷⁹ Not everyone went as a volunteer. The fight against the partisans (and *chetniks*) probably made it possible to “smuggle” some of the captives to work in the Reich as “volunteers”.⁸⁰ Between early July and late August 7,328 workers were recruited for industry and 14,909 for agriculture.⁸¹ By the end of the year, according to German data there were 32,000 Serbian workers in the Reich.⁸² It seems transportation difficulties made it impossible to send a larger number.⁸³ By mid-1942 the number of Serbian workers in Germany had reached 43,700. Despite the increased shortage of labor in Germany, recruitment had to stop then because the same shortage began to be felt in Serbia itself, too – especially in and around Bor.⁸⁴ In spring 1943 recruitment was renewed, and 3,400 workers applied.⁸⁵ Subtracting those whose contracts had expired and those who had broken them and returned home before they were due, German historian Karl-Heinz Schlarp estimates there were between 35,000 and 45,000 Serbian workers in Germany at that point.⁸⁶ After a slow-down in recruitment in summer 1943, the total reached some 65,000 by the end of the year.⁸⁷ However, the German documents testify there were also forced laborers from concentration camps (captured partisans) among them.⁸⁸ Although Neuhausen’s report from early 1944 spoke of 63,000 Serbian workers in the Reich there were actually only some 30,000 to 35,000.⁸⁹ The interest in going to work in Germany decreased drastically in 1944 because German towns were increasingly exposed to bombings, wages were lagging behind inflation, rations were cut back, and German defeat was in sight.⁹⁰ For these reasons only 3,850 Serbian workers departed for the Reich in 1944.⁹¹

linu, NV, May 20, 1944; R.Ž.I., Osnivanje srpskih radničkih biblioteka u Nemačkoj, NV, June 15, 1944; Kako žive strani radnici u Beču, NV, May 21, 1944; M. Mladenović, Srbi na drugom frontu, NV, April 10, 1943.

⁷⁹ Načelstvo sreza svrljiškog opštinskoj upravi Svrljig, July 21, 1941. (VA NA, k. 53, f. 1, d. 2.)

⁸⁰ Schlarp (note 10), p. 209.

⁸¹ Schlarp (note 10), p. 208.

⁸² KTB abbreviation for what? April 4 – December 31, 1941. Zusammenfassung Dezember. (BArch RW 29/31); Ristović (note 14), p. 263. Turner mentions 34,000. (8. Lagebericht des Verwaltungsstabes beim Befehlshaber Serbien, BArch RW 40/190); Schlarp, quoting the Second total report adduces 32,800. (Schlarp (note 10), p. 209.)

⁸³ KTB January 1 – June 30, 1942, Zusammenfassung Januar 1942 (BArch RW 29/31).

⁸⁴ Wehrwirtschaftstab Südosten, KTB July 1 – September 30, 1942, Zusammenfassung Juli 1942 (BArch RW 29/33); Ristović (note 14), p. 263; Schlarp (note 10), p. 209.

⁸⁵ Schlarp (note 10), p. 209.

⁸⁶ Schlarp (note 10), p. 211.

⁸⁷ Dritter Gesamtbericht des GBW in Serbien, Januar 1944 (BArch RW 40/99; BArch R 26-VI/693); Schlarp (note 10), p. 210.

⁸⁸ A report of November 15, 1943 mentions 1,000 workers sent to Germany in October 1943, 400 of whom were “perceived as reliable and set free from SD camps”. The author of the report complains that there were hardly any volunteers left at that time; Wehrwirtschaftstab Südosten, KTB October 1 – December 31, 1943, Lagebericht Serbien (BArch RW, 29/38).

⁸⁹ Dritter Gesamtbericht des GBW in Serbien, Januar 1944. (BArch RW 40/99; BArch R 26-VI/693.)

⁹⁰ Wehrwirtschaftstab Südosten, KTB January 1- March 31, 1944, Lagebericht Serbien, February 15, 1944. (BArch RW, 29/39.)

⁹¹ Schlarp (note 10), p. 210.

It would be difficult to paint a unified picture of actual living conditions of Serbian workers in Germany. Since they were scattered all over the Reich Serbian government organs could not visit all of them and it is certain that the German authorities let them see those whose situation was more favorable. However, the absence of horror stories in the public memory after the Second World War seem to give reasons to believe that living conditions were decent under the given circumstances.

The communist authorities collected data about forced laborers after the war, but because of incompletely preserved documents, conflicting numbers, the fact that free and forced workers often worked together, because many people had served several terms, and last but not least because the line between different kinds of work was blurred, it is difficult to determine the exact number of people who undertook forced labor. The State Commission for Determining Crimes and Occupiers and their Helpers found that only 16,500 people had worked in Bor during the war.⁹² The total number for the whole of Serbia was given as 64,291⁹³ although a single document from 1943 spoke of almost 130,000 in that year alone!⁹⁴ Apart from the above listed reasons, it is obvious that not all former forced laborers had registered their working stints with the Commission – because they did not trust the new authorities or were afraid they would be regarded as collaborators for having worked for the Germans, or simply because they did not expect to gain any redress. To be sure, some did not live to tell their stories. The sufferings of forced laborers were upstaged for decades by the allegedly glorious fight of the partisans and by tens of thousands of dead in concentration camps and in German reprisals.⁹⁵

⁹² Tabela pregled po okruzima prinudno oteranih radnika na rad u Borske rudnike, s.l. s.a. (AJ, 110, 598/48); Wilhelm Sparkuhle (AJ, 110. F. br. 22265).

⁹³ Zbirni spisak Zemaljske komisije za ratne zločine za Srbiju za štetu pričinjenu od strane Nemačke po stanju July 25, 1945 – March 1, 1946. (AJ, 54, 20/46).

⁹⁴ Pregled uposlenog ljudstva na raznim radovima, s.l. s.a. (VA NA, k. 108, f. 3, d. 2). Schlarp, quoting a document from September 1943, adduces the number of 128,000 (Schlarp (note 10), p. 219). This indicates that both documents came into being around the same time.

⁹⁵ The first book to deal specifically with forced labor appeared in 1989. (Cf. Pajic.)