

Zoran Janjetović

## GERMAN MINORITY PRESS AND PUBLISHING IN THE INTER-WAR YUGOSLAVIA

Apart from schools, the press is one of the major factors in the life of national minorities which helps them survive as separate communities. It not only cherishes the mother-tongue (that is often neglected at schools and public institutions), but it also informs members of a minority about events and processes within the minority, it serves as a mouthpiece for expressing opinions on matters of importance for a national minority, and often serves as a medium for presenting wishes, complaints, demands etc. to the majority people or to the international public. It often ties together the scattered members of a minority, thus creating the feeling of community.

The minority press in the inter-war Yugoslavia fulfilled all these functions too. Like the press of the majority peoples it expressed different opinions within certain national minorities and it championed the interests of members of the minorities in public. It was typical that certain journals served as hubs for the political and ideologically like-minded, which was very important at the times when it wasn't always possible to organize political parties. This held particularly true of the German press. The degree of freedom of the minority press corresponded with the general freedom of the press in the country, but at the same time it was also conditioned by the situation of a particular national minority. This meant the minority press was always under strict surveillance of the censorship, although this held true for the press of the majority peoples too. Thanks to the influence and power of the Third Reich, the Vollksdeutsche press had a somewhat larger leeway in the second half of the 1930s, than other minority publications. On the other hand, since Austria and Germany were Yugoslavia's neighbours or at least not far away, the Ethnic-Germans had a chance to broaden their informational horizon in their mother-tongue through the press that was legally (or often illegally) imported.

Furthermore, the minority press, just like the foreign press in the languages of the national minorities (particularly Hungarian and German) had numerous readers among representatives of the majority peoples, influencing them too. The powers-that-be kept this in mind when they decided which newspapers, articles or books could get permission for distribution.

The oldest journals in a minority language appeared in Slovenia - in German as early as the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The oldest German journal in the Slovenian territory which survived until the foundation of Yugoslavia was the Laibacher Zeitung, founded in 1778, which having lived through many changes, survived as the official journal between 1821 and 1918.<sup>2</sup> Among the more important German papers were the Marburger Zeitung (est. 1870) and the Cillier Zeitung (est. 1876). Both of them championed the Greater-German

---

<sup>1</sup> Smilja Amon, Nemško časopisje na Slovenskem, Teorija in praksa, XXV, 9-10, 1988, p. 1329.

<sup>2</sup> Amon, p. 1330; Tanja Žigon, Nemško časopisje na Slovenskem, Ljubljana 2001, pp. 32-33.

programme of Linz, but they were also putting democratic and social demands.<sup>3</sup> The Cillier Zeitung was called the Deutsche Wacht since 1883, showing also in that way its national tendency.<sup>4</sup> Apart from them, the upheaval of 1918 was survived by the Gottscheer Bote (1904-1919) which was banned in Yugoslavia only on June 1, 1919. However, it continued publication on July 1 of the same year under the name the Gottscheer Zeitung (until 1937).<sup>5</sup>

The Vojvodina Swabians, also had a very well developed provincial press ever since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, so that every larger place had some paper. In the territory of the Banat, the Bačka, Baranya and Croatia (in its historical boundaries),<sup>6</sup> there were over 300 German journals and newspapers until 1914,<sup>7</sup> but very few of them survived the First World War.<sup>8</sup> Even those which did, remained journals of local importance. The oldest among those which continued publication in Yugoslavia was the Werschatzer Gebirgsbote, established in 1857.<sup>9</sup> However, it also remained a small local paper, and it was only with the Deutsches Volksblatt that the Volksdeutsche gained a paper that would overstep the boundaries of local communities and that would be read in almost all the territories (in some places more, in others less) inhabited by the German minority.

Creation of Yugoslavia meant also the beginning of a new period of development of the press of the peoples that became national minorities. They found themselves in a state which publicly professed principles of liberal democracy, but which in practice resorted to the policy of limiting freedom of expression and censorship.<sup>10</sup> This was plain to see already in the first days of the interim state administration in autumn 1918, when the People's Administration in the former Hungarian territories introduced severe censorship that was made even stricter in early 1919.<sup>11</sup> Several Hungarian papers were suppressed,<sup>12</sup> and import from the Hungarian-controlled territory prohibited.<sup>13</sup> The desire was to limit the influence of the Hungarian and German press and in view of that, a Serbian news agency was to be founded.<sup>14</sup> Still, the new powers-that-be couldn't completely eliminate undesirable influences

---

<sup>3</sup> Amon, p. 1332; Žigon, p. 65. About the Linz programme cf. Pulzer, pp. 151-152.

<sup>4</sup> The Cillier Zeitung wasn't aimed against the Slovenes in the beginning, but since early 1880s it became a German nationalist mouth-piece. (Cvirn, Nemci v Celju, pp. 8, 25-27.)

<sup>5</sup> Amon, p. 1332; Žigon, p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> That is in the territory of the pertinent counties, which was larger than that of the present day Vojvodina and Slavonia.

<sup>7</sup> Most of these journals were in German, but since 1860s in Hungarian spirit. (HWBGAD, I, p. 260.) Typically, the German press developed slower in the Bačka than in the Banat. (Ibid., I, p. 331.)

<sup>8</sup> Branko Bešlin, Vesnik tragedije. Nemačka štampa u Vojvodini 1933-1941. godine, Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci 2001, pp. 17-20. Ten German newspapers were published in Southern Hungary, 8 of which had a national tendency. Three newspapers were published in the future Yugoslav territory. (I. Senz, p. 269.)

<sup>9</sup> Bešlin, Vesnik, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> A short survey of the censorship in inter-war Yugoslavia see in: Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 72-74.

<sup>11</sup> The reason for tightening censorship was probably the fact that Hungarian and Romanian newspapers were brought into the territory under control of the People's Administration. (AJ, 14, 143/497.)

<sup>12</sup> Thus the Bácsmegeyi Napló was banned for two weeks. (Mesaroš, Položaj, p. 219.)

<sup>13</sup> Kecić, Revolucionarni radnički pokret, pp. 127, 130-131, 147. Not only were some journals suppressed, but their editors arrested. (AJ, 69, 7./14.)

<sup>14</sup> Judin, pp. 19-20; Kecić, Vojvodina u vreme stvaranja, p. 149; Krkljuš, p. 149. Throughout the inter-war period the Yugoslav authorities couldn't obviate the influence of the Hungarian and German press, read by many Yugoslavs too. (AJ, 14, 110/414; Popović, Banat, Bačka Baranja, p. 17; Novosti, January 3, 1926) The reason for broader reading public of some Hungarian newspapers, was partly their better access to information, sometimes better than that of some Belgrade newspapers. (This held particularly true of the Bácsmegeyi Napló.) (AJ, 66, 56/141.) Similar was the make-up of the readers in some parts of Slovenia, where some German newspapers (e.g. Mariborer Zeitung) had more readers among the Slovenes than among the Germans. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 26, f. 2, d. 12.)

coming from the other side of the demarcation line, because control slackened over time.<sup>15</sup> Censorship continued operating throughout the inter-war period, and in view of the minority journals and the press from the mother-countries of the national minorities, the busiest was the censorship at the State Prosecutor's Office in Novi Sad.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the Yugoslav authorities were not averse to other ways of influencing the press, such as donations,<sup>17</sup> personal talks with editors in order to convince them to change their editorial policy,<sup>18</sup> or instructions to the whole press how it should write about certain topics.<sup>19</sup> The toughest measure was suppressing of certain numbers, then of whole journals,<sup>20</sup> and even arresting of journalists were no rarity.<sup>21</sup> Similar measures were usually part and parcel of the government offensive against a party or a minority as a whole.<sup>22</sup> The same procedure was applied to foreign press, only at times it was even tougher: there were periods when importation of all press from certain countries was forbidden. The only mitigating circumstance for the readers was that foreign newspaper firms and their dealers in Yugoslavia managed to find loopholes and to break the embargo by smuggling.

Because of such conditions of publication, the minority press, just like the press of the "state people", had limited freedom of expression. It tried to broaden it by using ciphered language, which was perceived and understood by the censors who were often not able to intervene because the formal reasons were lacking.<sup>23</sup> The alleviating circumstance for the press of the national minorities was that, apart from foreign policy, it dealt, with matters that interested minorities such as education, participation of the minorities in the agrarian reform,

---

<sup>15</sup> Throughout the inter-war period the Yugoslav authorities never managed to solve this problem, and the undesirable publications found ways of penetrating the country in certain numbers time and again.

<sup>16</sup> AJ, 63 (pov.) 1939, f. 2. Some of the lists of the forbidden journals, or their numbers really impress with their length. (AJ, 14, 106/409; 213/764.)

<sup>17</sup> AJ, 37, 45/296; Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 81-82.

<sup>18</sup> AJ, 63 (pov.) 1934, f. 16; 1939, f. 2; 37, 73/457. These talks sometimes took the form of real intimidation. (Ein Notschrei der deutschen Minderheit in Slowenien (S.H.S.). Wie aus dem Deutschen Haus in Cilli ein „Celjski dom“ gemacht wurde!, s.l. s.a., p. 8.) Threats were not just empty words: sometimes, especially in the first half of the 1920s, terrorist attacks by the nationalist organizations such as the ORJUNA and the SRNAO were also applied as an argument. (PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 2.)

<sup>19</sup> This was typical of time before the beginning and during the Second World War, when the whole press in Yugoslavia was ordered not to write unfavorably about Germany (on occasion of the Anschluss) and then (at the beginning of the war) to write strictly in the spirit of neutrality. (Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 92-93; Aprilski rat 1941. Zbornik dokumenata, I, Beograd 1969, pp. 26-27.) The Volksdeutsche newspapers circumvented this order to the highest degree, transmitting mainly news from German sources, thus de facto spreading German propaganda. (AJ, 38, 93/225; Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 94-96.)

<sup>20</sup> The most famous case of this kind was suppression of the Hak, the newspaper of the Cemiyet, as well as of Hak Yolu and Mucahede, the journals with which the party tried to substitute it. (Eren, p. 375.) Moreover, after the imposition of the dictatorship, several journals were suppressed, the mouthpiece of the Hungarian Party, the Hirlap, among them. (PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 4.)

<sup>21</sup> Mesaroš, Položaj, pp. 221-222, 243. Certainly the greatest kick-up was triggered off by the arrest of journalist Hilde Isolde Reiter in 1930 – not that much because of the arrest itself, but more because of the torture at the hands of the police. Of no small importance was the fact that she was German, so that the case caused vehement protests of the powerful German press. (PA, Rassenfrage, Fremdvölker, Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien; AJ, 38, 47-105; Empörende Methoden der südslawischen Polizei. Der Skandal um die Verhaftung des ehemaligen deutschen Abgeordneten Dr. Neuenr und der Schriftstellerin Hilde Reiter, Nation und Staat, III, 10-11, 1930, pp. 695-701.)

<sup>22</sup> Claims of some minority MPs that the censorship was tougher on the minority press than on the Yugoslav, corroborated with just few examples (SBNS KJ, Redovan saziv za 1932/33, I, p. 23), has as yet to be proved. Up to now, there are no indications that would imply such a thing. (Cf. Mesaroš, Mađari, p. 57.)

<sup>23</sup> This was typical of Hungarian newspapers. Such complaints were aired against the Bácsmegeyi Napló in January 1922, and in May of the same year against the Vajdaság (AJ, 14, 85/366), against the Délbácska in October 1927 (AJ, 63 (pov.) 1927, f. 3.), Szombori Újság in 1929 (AJ, 14, 85/336.) and Napló in 1935. (AJ, 63 (pov.) 1939, f. 2.)

(permitted) cultural activities of minority associations or with general questions (such as economy) about which it was possible to express different opinions more freely. Political leaders of the minorities deliberately avoided interfering with big political questions of the state's constitution or relations between the Yugoslav peoples, and the minority press (partly edited, or at least influenced by them) followed that line, contenting itself with formal statements of loyalty to the King and the State.<sup>24</sup> This attitude was the consequence of the realistic estimate that members of the minorities couldn't influence the big political matters, and that their interference with them could bring only harm. At the same time, it was a silent protest against the state in which they lived and conscious self-isolation. For their part, the authorities reproached them with disinterest for Yugoslavia's national-political and cultural problems.<sup>25</sup>

According to an observation, the Magyars read predominantly newspapers and journals, unlike the Germans who preferred reading books for learning and fun.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the German press was not lagging behind the Hungarian one in print-run and the number of journals, and in it even surpassed it in versatility. On the one hand, this mirrored smaller interest in pure politics on part of the German (especially Swabian) population, and its larger interest in various practical matters, and on the other, it was the reflection of diversity of German associations, many of which had their own magazines. What was typical of the German press, was its polycentrism, i.e. dispersion of the major journals throughout the whole Volksdeutsche-inhabited territory, as opposed to the Magyar journals, of which the most important ones were published in the main Hungarian territory in Yugoslavia, in the Vojvodina.<sup>27</sup> What became obvious from the mid 1930s in most of the German papers was the ideological strait-jacketing under Nazi influence, resisted only by the few, mostly Catholic, journals.

As we have seen, three German newspapers survived the upheaval of 1918. In the Kočevje the Gottscheer Zeitung succeeded the Gottscheer Bote, which remained the provincial biweekly of the Kočevje ethnic enclave throughout the inter-war period.<sup>28</sup> The Cillier Zeitung was published under that name until February 1929, when it changed the title to the Deutsche Zeitung, so as not to have to use the Slovenian form of the town's name, Celje.<sup>29</sup> This very measure symbolizes the national fighting spirit typical of this paper almost from its start. Just like before the First World War, it was the combative mouthpiece of the ever more endangered Germans of Lower Styria in their struggle against the Slovenes and the Yugoslav state,<sup>30</sup> for which it was often banned.<sup>31</sup> It was published twice a week, and formally belonged to the MP Fraz Schauer, member of the German Party.<sup>32</sup> The paper

---

<sup>24</sup> Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 31, 68-69.

<sup>25</sup> AJ, 63 (pov.) 1927, f. 3; Mesaroš, Mađari, p. 371; Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 76-77.

<sup>26</sup> AJ, F. 398, f. 1. If this observation was true, it could be explained by the fact newspapers are cheaper than books, which tallied with the weaker purchasing power of the Hungarians as compared to that of the Volksdeutsche, and with the greater interest in politics of the first.

<sup>27</sup> The exception was the oppositional A Nép of Iván Nagy, which was published in Zagreb because of the ties with the Croatian Peasants' Party and more lenient censorship. (Rehak, Štampa, p. 356.)

<sup>28</sup> Žigon, p. 59; Simonič, p. 129. According to some unproven but probable information, the paper received financial aid from the Kočevje emigrants in the USA. (Zorn, Dve poročili, p. 90.) Conservative at first, like most of the Volksdeutsche journals in the 1930s it became the mouthpiece of the Nazi propaganda, which caused prohibition of its importation in Austria. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 21, f. 3, d. 26.) Its writing became overtly Nazi since 1939. (Biber, Nacizem, p. 271.)

<sup>29</sup> Žigon, pp. 66-67.

<sup>30</sup> In a radio-address on March 16, 1933 Hitler himself praised the paper for its merits for the German cause. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 21, f. 3, d. 26.) The staff of the Deutsche Zeitung was very proud of this. (Novosti, April 2, 1933.)

<sup>31</sup> AJ, 14, 86/343.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

received subsidies from large German industrialists, but nevertheless it struggled with financial difficulties,<sup>33</sup> and finally died out in 1937.<sup>34</sup> This was in keeping with the numerical and social weakening of the Germans in Slovenia, which was mirrored also in the decrease in the number of German journals.<sup>35</sup> The *Deutsche Nachrichten* appeared as a Nazi propaganda weekly for the *Volksdeutsche* in Slovenia in late 1938 in Zagreb – due to more lenient censorship there. It was published until 1941.<sup>36</sup>

The history of the *Marburger (Mariborer) Zeitung* was somewhat different. It was also a very nationally leaning paper that survived the break-up of Austria-Hungary. After the First World War it was “nationalized” and came to be owned by the concern *Slovenska banka* (Slovenian Bank) and then by the concern *Mariborska tiskarna* (The Maribor Printing-House), becoming to all intents, a Slovenian paper in the German language with a large number of Slovenian readers.<sup>37</sup> Another change ensued in the 1930s, when this paper too started sailing under the Nazi colours.<sup>38</sup> During the time between 1919 and 1936 the socialist *Volksstimme* was published in German, also in Maribor. It died out as German socialists turned national-socialists.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from these journals read in Slovenia, there was, as we have seen, a developed press in the Vojvodina too. It became more national only in Yugoslavia. The trailblazer in that direction, and the leading *Volksdeutsche* paper in the inter-war Yugoslavia was the *Deutsches Volksblatt (DVB)* of Novi Sad. It came to being on the initiative of prominent Germans in 1919 when the *Deutsches Volksblatt für Syrmien* was transferred from Ruma to Novi Sad. In order to secure regular publication and to prevent irregularities, the Printing and Publishing Joint-Stock Company (*Druckerei- und Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft – DVAG*) was established on September 29, 1919, with the main task of publishing the DVB and opening a German book-shop in Novi Sad. Through the Slovenian Germans Oskar Plautz and Franz Perz, who had connections with the Cilli industrialists, the Westen brothers, each of them holding 4000 shares, a firm connection with the Germans in Slovenia was established,<sup>40</sup> so that the DVB never was a regional Swabian paper. The first number appeared on October 25, 1919.<sup>41</sup>

The DVAG came to be the strongest newspaper and publishing house in the Vojvodina in the 1930s.<sup>42</sup> The road to that achievement was not an easy one, and it was

---

<sup>33</sup> PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 3. The *Hamburger Nachrichten* wrote on March 12, 1924 that the printing-shop of the *Cillier Zeitung* was „primitive“ – which also testifies to the lack of money. The reason the paper was discontinued were financial difficulties. (*Der Auslandsdeutsche*, XX, 7, 1937, p. 370.)

<sup>34</sup> Suppan, *Jugoslawien*, p. 918.

<sup>35</sup> Žigon, p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> Biber, *Nacizem*, p. 271; Franjo Baš, *Kulturbund v Celju*, p. 216.

<sup>37</sup> AJ, F. 398, f. 1. In the first half of the 1920s, the *Marburger Zeitung* was even engaged in a struggle with the *Cillier Zeitung*. However, the German consulate in Zagreb deemed its writing became acceptable from the German point of view again in 1926. (PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 3.)

<sup>38</sup> Žigon, pp. 69-70; HWBGAD, III, p. 481. Already in early 1934 the Banus of the Drava Province complained the paper opened its pages for the propaganda of the Austrian Nazis. (AJ, 63 (pov.), 1934, f. 16.) The military authorities feared its nefarious influence on both Germans and Slovenes, and suggested its quiet liquidation, like that of the *Deutsche Zeitung*. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 26, f. 2, d. 12.)

<sup>39</sup> Suppan, *Jugoslawien*, p. 918; HWBGAD, III, p. 481; Žigon, p. 71; Altgayer, p. 48. The Ministry of the Interior deemed in February 1926, the *Volksstimme* should be granted free railway transportation, since it was better if the German adherents of that option remain so, “instead of joining the purely German orientation which could not be the friend of this state.” (AJ, 14, 86/343.) However, this does not mean the paper wasn’t subject to occasional bans, just like any other. (AJ, 63 (pov.) 1931, f. 10.)

<sup>40</sup> Plautz, pp. 18-26; Altgayer, p. 46; Bešlin, *Vesnik*, p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> HWBGAD, I, p. 341; Bešlin, *Vesnik*, p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Bešlin, *Vesnik*, p. 25. Because of the good printing technique and solid quality, the state agencies, including the Army, used its services. (Ibid.)

successfully tread partly thanks to the aid from Germany.<sup>43</sup> The main publication of the DVAG, the DVB, was published in 10.000 to 12.000 copies, and it was read in all German-inhabited areas<sup>44</sup> - although, to be sure, mostly in the Vojvodina. Its writing, as a rule, was moderate, and almost always within the confines of the law.<sup>45</sup> Its attitude towards the authorities was marked by “political correctness”, and it didn’t meddle with internal political squabbles.<sup>46</sup> Even in the second half of the 1930s, as it fell under the influence of National-Socialism<sup>47</sup> and although it took over considerable part of its material from German news-agencies and newspapers, its tone and style still remained moderate in comparison with the organs of the “Renewers”. As for the language, the DVB was meticulous about it, since the Swabians spoke vernacular at home, and often had no chance to learn the literary language at school. Because it was well-informed, had numerous contributors and good articles, the paper managed to isolate the majority of the Volksdeutsche from non-German informational influences. To be sure, this made it easier to reorientate the German minority according to the trends in Germany and the needs of the Reich’s foreign policy in the second half of the 1930s.<sup>48</sup> Just how influential the DVB was, is proven by the fact the senator Daka Popović started the (then only) Serbian daily in the Vojvodina, the Dan, the main raison d’être of which was to criticize the writing of the DVB and the policy of the Kulturbund! However, it had a print-run of some 2.000 to 3.000 copies – like some smaller German weeklies.<sup>49</sup>

A kind of peasants’ version of the DVB was started in 1931. The new daily came to being thanks to the merger of three papers, and had the same title as the Celje daily – the Deutsche Zeitung, but with the subtitle “Organ for the German Peasantry of Yugoslavia” (Organ für das deutsche Landvolk Jugoslawiens). It came out every day except Mondays, in 3.500 to 4.500 copies, and it was meant primarily for the less demanding village readers.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> The DVB asked for financial aid to buy a second-hand printing press in October 1922, in order to become independent and to cut costs. The Ambassador Kelle supported the petition. The paper and its printing-shop received help from Germany in 1924-1927. (PA, Abt. IIb, Pressewesen, Politik 12, Jugoslawien, Bd. 1; Höpfner, pp. 318-319.) Thanks to the VoMi which bought stocks from the Westen brothers and turned them over to the Kulturbund, this central Volksdeutsche organization became the formal owner of the firm in late 1939. (Bešlin, Vesnik, p. 69.) It is not known how big the financial aid the DVB and other German papers received from Germany was. According to Rehak, who adduces no sources, it was significant and larger than in the 1920s. (Rehak, Štampa, p. 356.) The opinion of financial aid from abroad was shared also by the correspondent of the central Press Bureau, Triva Militar. (Bešlin, Vesnik, p. 77.) However, if one takes into account the lack of foreign currency in the Third Reich, the main directions of its imperialist peptetration and ways of financing it, one should rather suppose the financial help from Germany wasn't big. (Cf. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik 1933-1938, Frankfurt/M, Berlin 1968, pp. 672-673.) Altgayer testified the Volksdeutsche organizations received financial help only in exceptional cases. (Altgayer, p. 67.) It is known for certain only that the editor of the DVB Dr. Oskar Breitwitzer received 6.000 dinars from the German Transporation Bureau in Belgrade in March 1940 as an aid to the paper (AJ, 14, 27/71.) – which wasn't such a big sum.

<sup>44</sup> The paper was distributed in 800 places. (Biber, Nacizem, p. 41.) It was also read in the scattered German villages in Bosnia. (Hoffmann, p. 58; H. Maier, p. 49.)

<sup>45</sup> Despite this, it also had to suffer a few banns. (PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 4.)

<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the paper stepped on the ORJUNA’s toes in August 1922 by allegedly writing against the state and France. (PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 2; Georgijević, Organizacija, p. 336; M. Đorđević, Organizacija, p. 33.) The offices of the DVB were damaged in a blast in March of the next year too. (M. Đorđević, Organizacija, p. 38; Plautz, p. 18.)

<sup>47</sup> According to the British diplomatic reports, the paper received subsidies from Germany at that time. (Živko Avramovski, Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, II, Beograd, Zagreb [1986], p. 440.)

<sup>48</sup> Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 25-50.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 74, 79. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Dan had to drop its permanent anti-Kulturbund section. (AJ, 38, 170/317.)

<sup>50</sup> HWBGAD, I, p. 341; Bešlin, Vesnik, p. 31.

One of the roles of the press is to serve as a means of articulating diverging opinions. With the Yugoslav Volksdeutsche, unlike with the Magyars, that was not the case in the 1920s.<sup>51</sup> When the heterodox opinions surfaced among members of the German minority, they were inspired by Nazi ideas which the students brought from German and Austrian universities. They found their first mouthpiece in the magazine Pančevoer Post which was started in 1932. Two years later, it was renamed the Volksruf. It was a weekly, published in 5.000 copies, and it was the most widely-read Volksdeutsche paper after the DVB. In it the young “Renewers” publicized their ideas which were mostly carbon copies of the spiritual trends in the Reich, adjusted for consumption in Yugoslavia.<sup>52</sup> It was through the Volksruf that the “Renewers” started their crusade against the old leadership of the Kulturbund and other minority organizations, and to be sure, against the DVB, that was controlled by the old Volksdeutsche leaders. Unlike the DVB which always kept a high level, the Volksruf, as the “Renewers” in general, often used rude insults, disqualifications, demagoguery, and even completely nonsensical accusations.

Since the DVAG remained in the hands of the old leaders, the “Renewers” had to wage their ideological campaign through new Nazi-oriented journals which they themselves started: the monthly Volk und Bewegung (1936), the weekly Deutsche Bauernzeitung (1936) meant for peasantry, the humorist weekly Die Wespe (1937), the calendar Volk und Arbeit (1938), the youth magazine Schaffende Jugend (1939) and the weekly Die Heimat. All these journals were edited by the same people, and all of them, except for Die Heimat and Die Wespe were published in Pančevo, which was the centre of the “Renewal” Movement.<sup>53</sup> An increasing number of the “Renewers” journals appeared over time, which struggled against local papers supporting the old leadership of the Kulturbund. A reflection of divisions within the German minority was also the short-lived (1938-1939) weekly the Deutsche Volksbote für Jugoslawien, which espoused the interests of Stefan Kraft in his conflict with the ex-MP Dr Hans Moser (supported by the DVB).<sup>54</sup> Among the *de facto* “Renewers” journals one should list also the Slawonische Volksbote from Osijek which started on September 6, 1936. In the beginning it was moderate, becoming increasingly radical over time, mirroring thus the national awakening of the Slavonian Germans.<sup>55</sup> Since the Slavonian Germans knew not Gothic script, due to lack of German schools, it was printed in Latin characters.<sup>56</sup>

However, Nazi ideas were not particular only to the “Renewers” papers. Gradually they infiltrated the journals under control of the leaders of the Kulturbund and smaller “independent” papers. In the case of the Kulturbund leadership and its journals, it was the habit of following the trends in the mother-country on the one hand, and, on the other, the concrete need to remain, through ogling with National-Socialism (and above all, with Anti-Semitism which had a strong home-grown tradition), on good terms with the ruling factors in the Reich from whom material and moral aid for improving the situation of the German national minority was expected, just like in the 1920s.<sup>57</sup>

Among the newspapers which opposed the penetration of Nazi ideas, as did the old leadership of the Kulturbund, the Deutsche Volkszeitung of Veliki Bečkerek, started on August 20, 1933, deserves mention. It was the mouthpiece of the Young German Movement

---

<sup>51</sup> In fact, unison existed until Hitler’s accession. (Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 68-69.)

<sup>52</sup> In a letter to the minister of justice and others, the interior minister said of the Pančevoer Post: “Reading the above mentioned newspaper, one gets the impression one reads a newspaper published in Germany.” (AJ, 63 (pov.), 1933, f. 14.)

<sup>53</sup> Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 50-61; Biber, nacizem, p. 271.

<sup>54</sup> AJ, 38, 93/225; Bešlin, Vesnik, pp. 61-62.

<sup>55</sup> Biber, nacizem, pp. 68, 270.

<sup>56</sup> AKB, II, 1.1.4.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Zoran Janjetović, Vajmarska republika i nemačka manjina u Jugoslaviji, Tokovi istorije, VI, 1-4, 1998, pp. 140-155.

of Dr Hasslinger, and it was, just like the movement itself, directly government funded. On March 18, 1934, it changed the title into the *Jungdeutsche*, and in the autumn of that year, already pretty compromised as the regime paper, it moved to Novi Sad. In May 1935 it was renamed again to *Die Presse*, but by then the Young German Movement had lost its influence. The paper vegetated until the end of 1938, when its survival under the completely changed circumstances both in Europe and Yugoslavia, and within the German national minority made no sense any longer.<sup>58</sup>

The Young-Germans' paper struggled more against the influential old leadership of the Kulturbund, than against the opposition Nazi "Renewers". The strongest resistance against the penetration of Nazi ideas was offered by several Roman-Catholic papers, headed by *Die Donau* from Apatin.<sup>59</sup> This weekly, published in 1.000 copies, was started in mid-1935,<sup>60</sup> but it was only at the beginning of the following year, when the Apatin parson Adam Berenz became editor, that it started opposing Nazi ideas from the Roman-Catholic, Hungarian-nostalgic point of view. Whereas *Die Donau* spared the DVB and vice versa, it waged war to the last against the *Volksruf*, the main mouthpiece of the "Renewers", the war which, due to the situation which was increasingly changing in favour of the Nazis, it couldn't win.<sup>61</sup> Apart from *Die Donau*, *Der Jugendfreund* and *der Familienfreund* (firstly from Crvenka and then from Novi Vrbas) also opposed Nazism from the Roman-Catholic positions.<sup>62</sup> The first appeared as a feuilleton, and then from 1936, as an independent youth journal, first in Belgrade and then in Odžaci, in 4.000 copies.<sup>63</sup> The latter was published since 1927 as a biweekly in 1.000 to 2.500 copies.<sup>64</sup> Even though it couldn't prevent the spread of National-Socialism, the German Roman-Catholic press grew stronger through conflict with it.<sup>65</sup> As for the Protestant *Volksdeutsche* ecclesiastical journals (*Grüß Gott*, since 1934 *Kirche und Volk*), they accepted national-socialism without much hesitation, trying to convince their readers there was no opposition between Germandom and Christianity.<sup>66</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned journals, which to a great extent dealt with politics, there was a number of local informative, fun, educational and professional journals (such as the *Müller-Zeitung*, *Der jugoslawische Imker*, *Der jugoslawische Tischler*). Whereas the political-informative papers were of local significance, emulating the tone and the direction of the big papers, others catered to various tastes and needs for instruction, information and fun, mirroring thus the differentiated interests of a community on the high level of civilization.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned journals, some papers of the Kulturbund enjoyed wider circulation. In the first place it was the weekly *Bilder Woche* that was started in early 1937 and that, with its appearance and topics, didn't lag behind its European models.

---

<sup>58</sup> Bešlin, *Vesnik*, pp. 80-83.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, *Nemačka katolička štampa u Vojvodini i njen spor sa nacionalsocijalistima 1935-1941. godine*, Zbornik za istoriju Matice srpske, XXIV, 59-60, 1999, pp. 107-122.

<sup>60</sup> According to Altgayer, it was financed by countesses Chotek. (Altgayer, p. 54.)

<sup>61</sup> Bešlin, *Vesnik*, pp. 151-159. The articles from *Die Donau* were re-published in: Michael Merkl (ed.), *Weitblick eines Donauschwaben*, Dieterskirch 1968.

<sup>62</sup> Merkl (ed.), pp. 22-26; Josef Haltmayer, *Die katholische Donauschwaben in der Batschka*, in: *Die katholische Donauschwaben in den Nachfolgestaaten 1918-1945. Im Zeichen des Nationalismus*, Freilassing 1972, pp. 245, 266.

<sup>63</sup> Bešlin, *Vesnik*, p. 164. Although the print-run of 4.000 is quite good, Merkle, quoting memoirs of the parson Koloman Muillion, adduces 8.000. Obviously it is the case of exaggeration on part of people who wanted to give too great importance to their resistance to National-Socialism. (Merkle (ed.), p. 22.)

<sup>64</sup> Bešlin, *Vesnik*, p. 163.

<sup>65</sup> Bešlin, *Nemačka katolička štampa*, p. 111.

<sup>66</sup> Idem, *Vesnik*, pp. 169-174.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182-235.

Furthermore, there were professional magazines: the pedagogical *Unsere Schule* (1928-1932) and *Schwäbischer Volkserzieher* (from 1938), the ethnographical-demographical *Volkswart* (1932-1935) and *Volk und Heimat* (since 1938), the peasant-cooperative *Landwirt* (since 1933, renamed into the *Landpost* in 1940), the social-cooperative *Woge Blatt* etc.<sup>68</sup> A brown ideological thread went more or less through these journals too, but despite this, many of them were on a quite high professional level, often publishing articles and studies of considerable value. If several journals published in Slavonia are added to these (above all the “Renewers” *Slawonischer Volksbote*, *Die Slawonische Presse* (since 1937) and the ecclesiastical *Christliche Zeitung*,<sup>69</sup> all from Osijek) one gets a picture of a developed journalism rich both in number of journals,<sup>70</sup> and in their versatility. Whereas the censorship and deliberate self-isolation led to choking of the plurality of opinions in the 1920s, clashes of opinions developed in the 1930s, the battlefield of which was often exactly the press. They ended up in the Nazi victory so that at the time of the break-up of Yugoslavia almost all *Volksdeutsche* journals ideologically stood on the side of the Reich.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from the real minority journals, there were journals of Yugoslav parties for national minorities, among others, for the Ethnic-Germans. Thus the CRPP published the *Freies Heim* from October 1923 to January 1925 in German.<sup>72</sup> In the 1930s the most diligent in this field was the *Pan-Slav*, and at the same time German-friendly movement “Zbor” of Dimitrije Ljotić which published in turn from mid-1936 to the beginning of 1938, the *Erwache*, *Sturm* and *Angriff* for members of the German minority, all of which were duly banned. Also for the Germans, the *Deutsche Beobachter* of the Vojvodina Movement was published from 1935 until the end of 1938,<sup>73</sup> and the adherents of Svetislav Hođera (the “Borbaši”) published the weekly *Kampf* for their German followers.<sup>74</sup>

The choice of press in minority languages was enriched almost throughout the inter-war period by journals imported from abroad – in the first place from the countries which had minorities in Yugoslavia. The import should be understood in the broadest sense, i.e. as legal and illegal. The latter never stopped, although the authorities did their best to prevent it. As for the legal import, it depended on the country, paper and the time.<sup>75</sup> The censorship offices kept updating the lists of prohibited and (again) permitted journals.<sup>76</sup> That was the way to isolate the readers in Yugoslavia from undesirable influences, but also to compel certain newspapers to write more propitiously of the situation in Yugoslavia.<sup>77</sup> Since most of the

---

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102-134; J.V. Senz, *Das Schulwesen*, p. 107.

<sup>69</sup> The paper was published continuously from 1919 to 1941 in 800 copies. (Bešlin, *Vesnik*, p. 150.)

<sup>70</sup> Just like in the case of the Hungarian press, the number of 26 German journals in the 1930s mentioned in official propaganda writings is too low. (AJ, 38, 93/225; F. 335, f. 80.) 26 German journals were mentioned also in Fedor Nikić’s *Jugoslovenski dnevnik* on July 4, 1930.

<sup>71</sup> Despite the unison of the greatest part of the *Volksdeutsche* press, some sources doubted the efficiency of the propaganda it spread. Thus a report from Vršac from 1938 claims all provincial German papers were Nazi, although the Nazis were a small minority among the *Volksdeutsche*. (AJ, 37, 54/351.) In the annual report for 1940 of the Apatin district chief it is said: “Their [Nazi] propaganda, large in quantity, is pretty clumsy and by its hysterical way of writing often provokes ironic remarks by the Germans themselves.” (AVII, pop. 17, k. 21, f. 7, d. 23.)

<sup>72</sup> Leček, o.c.

<sup>73</sup> Bešlin, *Vesnik*, 90.

<sup>74</sup> Altgayer, p. 52.

<sup>75</sup> Importation of the Hungarian press was completely forbidden in 1925. (AJ, 14, 219/781; 85/335.)

<sup>76</sup> Some of the lists of the prohibited newspapers see in: AJ, 14, 91/372; 85/335; 86/342. On a list of prohibited papers (probably from 1921) there are 19 Hungarian, 33 Austrian, 3 Romanian, 2 Bulgarian and 1 Czechoslovak journal. (AJ, 14, 91/372.)

<sup>77</sup> This was achieved with some Austrian papers in mid-1920s, which agreed to write more moderately about Yugoslavia in order to safeguard their material interests. (AJ, 14, 85/335.) However, this measure couldn’t

countries from which the press was imported wasn't overly friendly disposed towards Yugoslavia, and indeed not all the press in friendly countries (e.g. Romania)<sup>78</sup> was friendly, such measures were understandable. This held true particularly for the Hungarian press the larger part of which wrote inimically of Yugoslavia.<sup>79</sup> Sometimes foreign press published secret government decrees which it obtained in a spurious way, which was, to be sure, extremely dangerous from the government's point of view – especially since foreign press wasn't read only by members of the minorities.<sup>80</sup> However, the government measures were not implemented too strictly so that the interested importers managed to find ways to supply their readers.<sup>81</sup> As for the permitted journals, readers could subscribe for them, just like for the Yugoslav ones.<sup>82</sup>

Let us take a glance at the literary production of the national minorities in Yugoslavia between the two world wars. It was much scantier than the press. This is understandable in view that book publishing takes longer and that the potential readership is much more limited than that of the press. For these reasons, for the reading-friendly minorities (above all those in the North of the country) it was easier and less complicated to import books than to print them.<sup>83</sup> Typical for the Germans in the 1930s, apart from (also insufficient number of) textbooks and calendars, was publication of historical and ethnological surveys and so-called "homeland books" on occasion of anniversaries of various German settlements.<sup>84</sup> This was part of the deliberate policy of national awakening led by the Volksdeutsche, and especially Swabian, intellectual elite. Throughout the inter-war period Hungarian and German books were imported in considerable numbers, which enhanced the reading opportunities not only of the minority population, although the choice was not always to the authorities' liking.<sup>85</sup> There were several German book-shops, and in September 1940 a Hungarian one was opened in Novi Sad.<sup>86</sup>

It can be concluded that in the field of the press, as in many others, the aim of the authorities was to weaken the national minorities and to shape them ideologically in accordance with the wishes of the ruling circles.<sup>87</sup> Minority journals were to be kept under

---

influence all Austrian newspapers so that many remained forbidden in Yugoslavia. (Wutte, Lobmeyr, p. 43.) The Mariborski večernik complained on September 30, 1933, that the Maribor Germans awaited in pubs in the evening the arrival of German and Austrian newspapers in order to find in them things which slipped through the Yugoslav censorship.

<sup>78</sup> AJ, 38, 52/120; 14, 87/346; Aprilski rat, pp. 43-46.

<sup>79</sup> AJ, 14, 85/333; Bajagić, pp. 35-44.

<sup>80</sup> AJ, 14, 126/457; 63 (pov.) 1931, f. 10.

<sup>81</sup> AJ, 38, 22/177; 63 (pov.) 1931, f. 10. The Attorney General in Ljubljana complained in February 1934 the Maribor Germans could read almost the entire German press. (AJ, 63 (pov.) 1934, f. 16.)

<sup>82</sup> Popi, Rumuni, pp. 146-147. One could subscribe to 50-odd German and Austrian papers through the DVAG in 1934, whereas agencies Avala and Putnik which were also in that business, complained of the DVAG's competition. (Bešlin, Vesnik, p. 38.) How well organized the distribution of German and Austrian newspapers had been, was testified by the fact that they reached even the scattered German villages in Bosnia. (Hoffmann, p. 58; H. Maier, p. 45.)

<sup>83</sup> AJ, F. 398, f. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Anton Scherer, *Donauschwäbische Bibliographie 1935-1955*, München 1968; Simonič, p. 129.

<sup>85</sup> AJ, F. 398, f. 1. Packages of Nazi propaganda literature became increasingly frequent in the 1930s. The post sent them back or destroyed them, at which the German Embassy protested, especially since part of the titles destroyed in that way could be found on the free market in other places. (AJ, Zbirka Cincar-Markovića, fasc. II; 37, 22/177.)

<sup>86</sup> AVII, pop. 17, k. 528, f. 2, d. 10.

<sup>87</sup> The correspondent of the Central Press Bureau, Triva Militar, wrote in his study about the minority press in 1935: "According to this situation, tasks and duties, both of our official circles and social classes are called for in order to suppress the minority press in these parts. We have a double duty at that task: on the one hand, we must

control even more than the rest of the press, whereas the importation of foreign journals was to be selective – especially since the press in minority languages (local and imported) wasn't read only by members of the minorities. Despite this, the Ethnic-Germans, who had the necessary tradition and means managed to develop quite a strong press published in large number of copies, characterized by large variety of themes (albeit not always of ideological approaches too). The Volksdeutsche press was nevertheless one of the major fields where the conflict between the old and the more moderate elite and the pro-Nazi "Renewers" took place. After the Volksdeutsche press was made to toe the line, it was easier to make the whole German national minority to accept the new leaders.

---

strive unconditionally to develop and further our national press in this territory, and on the other, to force a constant decrease in number of minority papers." (Bešlin, Vesnik, p. 78.)