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SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE ETHNIC-GERMANS AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE INTER-WAR YUGOSLAVIA

Due to the incompleteness of sources, but also due to their frequent inconsistency when they are available, this chapter cannot pretend to be but a sketch about these matters.¹ Because of such conditions of the relevant literature and archival sources, this chapter will sometimes be somewhat “impressionist” and certainly less exact than it would be desirable, but we still hope it will be able to convey the essential – namely how and by what the people lived. In that context, the participation in economic life will be only touched upon, because to elucidate that topic one would need a research in its own right, and a separate monograph.²

The greatest part of the territories inhabited by the Ethnic-Germans being taken away from the Kingdom of Hungary, the Hungarian statistics will be our starting point. However, we shall keep in mind that it concerned historical Hungary as a whole, and not only those parts which would subsequently fall to Yugoslavia. This is how the ethnic make-up of the landowners in Hungary (without Croatia) looked like in 1915:³

nationality	% of population	% of landowners
Hungarians	54.51	59.9
Germans	10.4	9.9
Slovaks	10.7	7.7
Romanians	16.1	16.0
Ruthenians	2.5	2.3
Croats	1.1	0.5

¹ Statistics about the social make-up and economic activities are either non-existent or snippy. (Mesaroš, p. 88. Toma Milenković, *Stav Radikalne stranke prema agrarnoj reformi (1918-1929. godine)*, Istorija 20. veka, XI, 1970, p. 32; Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia*, Stanford, London 1955, p. 209; Todor Avramović, *Privreda Vojvodine od 1918. do 1929/30. godine s obzirom na stanje pre Prvog svetskog rata*, Novi Sad 1965, pp. 10-11, 257, 267-267; Zorn, *Nemški trgovski obrati*, p. 113; Marijan Žnidarič, *Prispevek k zgodovini Nemcev v Mariboru med obema vojnama*, Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje, LIV, 1-2, 1983, p. 221.) As an example how contradictory the statistics can be, see several different statistics of land possessions in the Vojvodina, in: AVII, pop. 17, k. 94, f. 18, d. 1; AJ, 38, 88/498.

² To reconstruct participation in economic life, particularly when industrial enterprises, commercial firms or artisan shops are in question, even in an underdeveloped country such as Yugoslavia has been, where their number was not overly large, even if reliable statistics were at our disposal, would be an extremely difficult task. The owner(s) of each and every firm would have to be established, the amount and origin of its capital, its business success and many other relevant facts. Particularly hard nut to crack would be joint-stock companies with ethnically mixed stock-holders, as well as firms with partners belonging to different nationalities. Finally, it would be important to investigate what Volksdeutsche owners were spending their income on, i.e. were they supporting cultural, political, economic and other minority institutions, or were they integrated in the corresponding strata of the majority population.

³ Laslo Kevago, *Statistička ispitivanja društveno-ekonomskog položaja južnih Slovena u Ugarskoj početkom XX veka*, Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke, 54, 1969, p. 53.

Serbs	2.5	2.5
Others	2.2	1.2

According to the data by Bogumil Hrabak, the distribution of the land in Southern Hungary looked like this:⁴

Size of holdings	Hungarians	Germans	Romanians	Serbs	Others
Under 2 ha	27.5 %	24.6%	9.5%	26.5%	11.8%
2,5-5 ha	21.7%	18.5%	12.9%	34%	12.9%
5-25 ha	21.3%	24.3%	-	31.9%	12.7%
25-50 ha	19.3%	37.4%	4.3%	27.4%	11.6%
50-500 ha	25.8%	31.6%	2.2%	27.7%	12.7%

The shortcoming of this table is that it puts too large groups of owners into one category which makes a more detailed insight into the social structure impossible. According to Nikola Gaćeša, national break-down of the landowners in Syrmium County was as follows:⁵

	Serbs	Croats	Hungarians	Germans
Up to 5 morgen	46.3%	30.92%	4.29%	13.63%
5-20 morgen	50.15%	30.92%	2.31%	8.17%
20-100 morgen	50.53%	26.32%	2.11%	18.45%
100-200 morgen	42.88%	15.95%	4.21%	36.22%
200-1000 morgen	36.71%	13.79%	12.90%	33.28%
over 1000 morgen	4.42%	41.20%	10.98%	27.16%
total	42.50%	31.19%	40.18%	17.36%

The number of households according to the nationality of their owners in Syrmium County in 1895 looked like this in percentages:⁶

	Serbs	Croats	Germans	Hungarians
Up to 1 morgen	16.98%	18.43%	36.32%	33.86%
1-5 morgen	20.78%	20.06%	25.91%	21.16%
5-20 morgen	43.33%	46.82%	27.04%	24.31%
20-100 morgen	18.45%	14.51%	9.71%	19.28%
100-200 morgen	0.35%	0.19%	0.44%	1.02%
200-1000 morgen	0.10%	0.60%	0.34%	0.29%
over 1000 morgen	0.01%	0.02%	0.24%	0.08%

This table has the same shortcoming as the previous one, but still it is obvious that more than a half of the Germans and Magyars belonged to small holders, whereas the Serbs and Croats were most often to be found in the two medium categories. Among the German and Hungarian landowners large ones were overrepresented, but this meant little from the point of view of ordinary Germans or Magyars. Some of the first were somewhat better off than was the average in their ethnic group. These were above all people living in older colonies where the Germans were enlarging their landholdings at the expense of the Serbian and Croatian population, although by the turn of the century this expansion was slowed down.⁷ The German expansion was due to better tilling methods, greater diligence, thriftiness and soberness in comparison with the natives.⁸ German landownership was expanding not

⁴ Hrabak, *Dezerterstvo*, p. 15.

⁵ Nikola Gaćeša, *Posedovni odnosi u Vojvodini pred Prvi svetski rat*, in: *Idem, Radovi iz agrarne istorije i demografije*, p. 44.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 46.

⁷ Marković, *Pravoslavna srpska parohija*, pp. 48, 65; Simonović, p. 10.

⁸ Marković especially points out the last mentioned thing. (Cf. pp. 22, 27, 31-34, 64.)

only in Syrmium and Slavonia where the land was cheaper, but also in the Bačka, the Banat and the rest of Hungary.⁹

According to a document from the 1930s, when the main part of the agrarian reform had already been executed, this is how the ethnic make-up of the landowners in the Bačka, the Banat and Baranya looked like:¹⁰

The Bačka

Nationality	Serbs	Croats	Slovaks	Ruthenians	Germans	Magyars	Jews	others
% of holdings	26.79	4	6.15	3.23	30.80	27.70	0.49	9.32
size in %	23.70	2.07	3.18	2.22	27.94	20.45	1.27	19.10

Baranya

Nationality	Serbs	Croats	Ruthenians	Germans	Magyars	Jews	public
% of owners	11.8	20.80	0.04	21.40	34.40	0.20	1.32
size in %	5.88	13.87		12.73	14.30	0.62	52.70

The Banat¹¹

Nationality	Serbs	Croats	Slovaks	Bulgarians	Ruthenians	Germans	Magyars	Czechs	public
% of owners	43.88	0.79	3.81	0.66	16.58	19.73	13.18	0.43	0.94
size in %	36.19	0.68	1.86	0.62	11.97	16.06	6.69	0.19	22.47

According to Gaćeša, the arable land in the Vojvodina in 1938 was distributed thus:¹²

Nationality	surface in morgen	%
Serbs	1.210.090	42.38
Germans	663.572	23.22
Magyars	403.626	14.12
Romanians	148.213	5.18
Autonomous corporations	102.295	3.58
Slovaks	99.581	3.48
Bunjevci	89.213	3.12
Croats	64.148	2.24
Jews	33.215	1.16
Ruthenians	24.597	0.86
Other Slavs	11.799	0.41
Other non-Slavs	7.218	0.25

Here is the national make-up of the landless in the Bačka according to Slavko Šećerov:¹³

Nationality	# of the landless	% of the landless
Magyars	23.863	41.41
Serbs	13.071	22.68

⁹ AIDGL HA, 117; Zoran Janjetović, O širenju zemljoposeda vojvodanskih Nemaca između dva svetska rata, Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju, V, 1-3, 1998, pp. 104-105; Macartney, Hungary and Her Successors, p. 34; Slavko Stanić, Švabe u Vojvodini, Letopis Matice srpske, knj. 330, sv. 1-2, 1931; Wolf, pp. 139-140.

¹⁰ AVII, pop. 17, k. 94, f. 18, d. 1. Quite different figures for the Banat and the Bačka in 1940/41 are quoted by Egger. (Leopold Egger, Das Vermögen und die Vermögensverluste der Deutschen in Jugoslawien, Sindelfingen 1983, pp. 34-35.)

¹¹ Šijački quotes a report by the Ministry of Agriculture for 1938, which paints a considerably different picture – which is yet another example of contradictory sources. (Šijački, p. 85)

¹² Nikola Gaćeša, The Germans in the agrarian Reform and Land Ownership Patterns in the Vojvodina Province During the Period from 1919 to 1941, in: The Third Reich and Yugoslavia, p. 155. The same data in: Šijački, p. 85.

¹³ Slavko Šećerov, Socijalno agrarni odnosi u Bačkoj pred izvođenje agrarne reforme, Beograd 1929, p. 119.

Germans	10.475	18.18
Croats & Bunjevci	5.628	9.77
Slovaks	3.153	5.47
Russians & Ruthenians	1.372	2.38
Jews	16	0.02
Others	53	0.06

This is how it looked like in relation to the total number of people of various nationalities:¹⁴

Nationality	total	# of landless	% in nationality
Hungarians	260.988	23.863	9.14
Serbs & Croats	246.598	18.699	7.58
Germans	173.796	10.475	6.02
Slovaks	30.993	3.153	10.17

This was, according to the same author, the ethnic make-up of the owners of plots between 0 and 10 morgen:¹⁵

Nationality	#	%
Hungarians	9.978	35.26
Serbs	6.774	23.94
Germans	6.171	21.81
Bunjevci & Croats	2.534	8.96
Slovaks	2.180	7.7
Russians & Ruthenians	654	2.31
Others	6	0.02

On the other hand, here is the ethnic make-up of the big landowners and the combined size of their estates:

Nationality	morgen	%
Magyars	61.846	45.36
Germans	38.202	28.02
Serbs	17.345	12.73
Jews	13.827	10.14
Bunjevci	5.110	3.75

From these tables it is obvious that the Volksdeutsche as a group were somewhat better off than was the average of the overall population.

Let's see now how the make-up of the landholdings among the Vojvodina, Swabians, about which legends were spun, looked like according to the Volksdeutsche researcher Johann Wuescht. His table does not include 11% of the Swabian holdings belonging not to peasants, but to burghers, artisans and workers.¹⁶

Morgen	% of holdings	% of all arable land
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¹⁴ Šećerov, p. 125.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 84% of the Ethnic-Germans in the Vojvodina lived in villages, 65% of the village, and 30% of the urban population was employed in agriculture: this points out to a large number of craftsmen in Swabian villages, but also to the incomplete separation of towns from villages (so-called Bauernstädte, Stadtdörfer). (Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien, Augsburg 1994, p. 15E.) A somewhat different social structure of the Swabians in the whole of Southern Hungary see in: Gottas, p. 367.

5-10	36.6	13.5
10-20	32.3	23.3
20-50	25.4	39.7
50-100	4.9	16.6
over 100	0.8	7.0

This table shows clearly how wrong was the wide-spread belief the Germans had been particularly wealthy. Practically 2/3 of the Swabians had only small holdings, ¼ middle, whereas large estates were few. How then is the myth of “the opulent Swabian” to be explained? It seems it was the comparison with the even less wealthy non-Germans on the one hand, and the German expansion through buying of land on the other, in which the wealthy, but also not so wealthy (in Syrmium and Slavonia) were engaged, which awoke the impression among the Slavic population that all those buying were rich. Finally, it was the better living standards of the Swabians, made possible as much by wealth, as by the culture of living they had brought from their old homeland, which presupposed not only better hygiene, but also more orderly and sober way of living which facilitated faster acquisition and better preservation of landholdings, than was the case with the Slavic (except for Slovak), Hungarian or Romanian population. However, there were differences among the Swabians too – not only between the Vojvodina on the one, and Syrmium and Slavonia, on the other hand, but also between the Banat and the Bačka: German holdings in the Banat were somewhat smaller, with less cattle, and also less industrial crops were cultivated there than in the Bačka.¹⁷

In Đakovština, part of Slavonia with considerable portion of minority population, the ethnic make-up of the holdings:¹⁸

Nationality	Croats & Serbs	Germans	Jews	Hungarians
% of land	78.8	15	2.1	4.8
morgen	86.917	16.554	2.314	5.289

Since the Germans were 21% of the population in Đakovština,¹⁹ it is plain that the myth about “the rich Swabian” was here even less true than in the Vojvodina. For the Germans in Slavonia it was typical that somewhat smaller percentage (52%) of them was employed in agriculture than in the Vojvodina.²⁰

As for the Germans in Slovenia (even if we leave aside couple of landowners with really huge estates),²¹ their share of the landholdings was comparatively large. Around one half of the Slovenian Germans lived in towns.²² The largest number of German peasants lived in Kočevje. In Southern Styria only 14% of the Volksdeutsche was employed in agriculture, and in other parts of Slovenia this percentage was even smaller. However, German landholdings in some parts of Slovenia was sizable. In Lower Styria, out of 53.671 ha, the Germans possessed 21.146 ha. Almost one half of the vineyards around Maribor, Ormož and Slovenska Bistrica, and over one half in Halozi, Gornja Radgona and Gornji Cmurek belonged to the Germans.²³

The main Germa-inhabited region in Slovenia was Kočevje, where, according to the Volksdeutsche census from March 1941, 12.498 Germans (2.754 families) lived. Out of that, 1.889 families were engaged in land-tilling and cattle-breeding, and 346 in crafts. The total

¹⁷ HWBGAD, I, p. 282.

¹⁸ Geiger, Nijemci u Đakovu, p. 62.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

²⁰ Das Schicksal, p. 18E.

²¹ Dušan Biber, Socijalna struktura nemačke nacionalne manjine u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis, 1-4, 1978, p. 406; Idem, Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933-1941, Ljubljana 1966, p. 28.

²² Franjo Baš, Slovenski Nemci (Mscr. in the Institute for Nationality Questions in Ljubljana, file 152), p. 4.

²³ Biber, Socijalna struktura, p. 406; Idem, Nacizem, p. 28.

German landholding in that area, according to this census, was 47.528 ha.²⁴ However, it should be kept in mind that Kočevje was an economically neglected forest area with unfertile (although not everywhere equally bad) soil and backward agriculture, so that large part of the population went peddling since 15th century – first wooden articles, and then tropical fruits. A large emigration to the USA ensued in the last third of the 19th century. Due to the weak agriculture, crisis of industry and peddling during the inter-war period, the area managed to survive to a large extent thanks to donations from the relatives from America, so that in remote village shops one could pay in Dollars even in the late 1930s.²⁵

The certainly poorest group among the minority peasant colonists in the former Habsburg territories, were the German colonists in Bosnian villages. Except for few, they never made it. The reasons were: bad soil (which often had to be cleared first), short time since their arrival, overall backwardness of the country, poverty of the large part of the colonists, small government aid, and, what is very important, lack of the market for agricultural products. Most of these colonies could hardly make ends meet, so it was not difficult for them to make the decision to emigrate either during the Second World War (the Germans).²⁶

Some members of certain national minorities, or some minority villages specialized in cultivating some crops. Thus for instance, hemp was very much cultivated, especially in the 1930s, in Novi Sad, Bačka Palanka, Bač, Odžaci, Novi Vrbas, Bogojevo, Vajska, Svetozar Miletić, Sv. Ivan and Čib – with large German populations.²⁷ Some Banat towns with sizable portions of German inhabitants (Vršac, Bela Crkva) were important centres of viticulture, but they were hard hit by the drawing of the Yugoslav-Romanian border which had cut them off from their hinterland.²⁸

As we have seen, together with colonization of the non-Yugoslav agricultural population, craftsmen were settled down too. Considerable part of them were village artisans catering to the needs of their respective villages and doing some land tilling on the side. Many of these craftsmen were Germans in the early 20th century. They were above all to be found among masons, carpenters, stone-masons, locksmiths, tin-smiths, white-washers, weavers, knitters, but also in the production of ropes, wool and wagons.²⁹ Furthermore, they were pursuing modern crafts which industry did not hinder, but rather promoted: electricity, plumbing, mechanics.³⁰ Just like agriculture, crafts were better developed in the Bačka than in

²⁴ Kočevska, p. 26. Jože Rus claims 47,8% were employed in crafts and industry. (Rus, Jedro, p. 152.)

²⁵ Grothe, pp. 103-105; Kočevska, p. 24; Josef Kranland, Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Gottscheer Landes, in: Jubiläums-Festbuch, pp. 99-103; Wilhelm Turer, Die Entwicklung der Landwirtschaft, in: Ibid., pp. 88-89; HWBGAD, III, pp. 70-72, 78. Some Slovenian authors explained the economic backwardness of Kočevje by sloth of the population and its lack of attachment to the native soil. (Rus, Jedro, pp. 166-168.) Whatever the reasons, it was the fact that in bad years (such as 1931 and 1937) Kočevje was literally starving. (AJ, 37, 46/299; Deutsche Zeitung (Celje), August 9, 1931.)

²⁶ HWBGAD, I, pp. 498, 500; Sommer, p. 38; AIDGL, HA 1327. Because of the bad living conditions in villages, part of the colonists used to work in industry. (DOPUNI – OBERKERSCH)

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 99, 172. A corresponding manufacturing industry developed in these places, most of it owned by members of minorities.

²⁸ Helmut Frisch, Werschetz (Versacz - Vršac). Kommunale Entwicklung und deutsches Leben der Banater Wein- und Schulstadt, Wien 1982, pp. 280-302; Heimatbuch der Stadt Weißkirchen im Banat, Salzburg 1980, p. 127; Bukurov, Naselja u južnom Banatu, pp. 42, 49. According to the meyor of Vršac, Kosta Georgijević, that town was at the brink of bankrocy in 1940, i.e. even after 20 years in Yugoslavia it was in a desperate situation because it had been cut off from its surroundings. (Pravda, May 14, 1940). This shows how difficult the process of economic accomodation and integration into the new state framework was on the one hand, and how little ties of alliance with Romenia meant for the economy, on the other.

²⁹ Avramović, p. 225.

³⁰ D. Nikolić, p. 150; Popović, Banat, Bačka i Baranja, p. 13; According to Petranović 18% of the Germans in the Vojvodina worked in crafts, and in 1940 the Kulturbund claimed they were responsible for 30-40% of artisan production in that province. (Petranović, p. 58.)

the Banat.³¹ Crafts were also developed in Đakovština in late 19th century, with the local Germans playing a prominent role in them.³² German crafts were very developed in Lower Styria too, where the Germans had ¼ of crafts in their hands.³³ There were many German artisans in Kočevje too – according to an author, 47,8% of the population was employed in crafts and industry.³⁴ In Bosnia part of the colonists turned to crafts out of necessity (smiths, tailors, bakers, carpenters, masons, locksmiths).³⁵

As for the commerce, the data for the Vojvodina, are fragmentary,³⁶ so that the share of each ethnic group in it can be even less determined than in the case of crafts.³⁷ In any case, the members of the German minority were less represented in trade than in crafts or other branches of the economy.³⁸ Traditionally, better represented in commerce were the Serbs,³⁹ and since mid-19th century, the Jews.⁴⁰ Furthermore, wholesale trade was being taken over by big Viennese and Budapest firms since the end of the 19th century.⁴¹ The share of the members of Germans in commerce was largest there where their share in the town population was largest – in Lower Styria – where 21,7% of commerce was in German hands.⁴² In Maribor wholesale trade was predominantly in German hands, whereas in Celje the German share in commerce was also extraordinarily significant (wholesale firms Rausch, Rebewschek, Stayger, Jelenz).⁴³ However, this was not the case only in Lower Styria: until 1918 most of the trade was in German hands in Ljubljana too, and afterward the “nationalization” measures did not bear the fruit the Slovenian authorities had hoped for.⁴⁴ In Kočevje many people were engaged in commerce, but its profits were small since it was retail trade or peddling which had become obsolete.⁴⁵ There were also several mixed Slovenian-German trading firms.⁴⁶ To sum it up, it can be said that German presence in commerce was stronger in places where it had longer tradition – in towns of the Vojvodina, Slavonia and Slovenia and in Kočevje. Still only a tiny fraction of German population lived by it. In the Vojvodina, Slavonia or Bosnia it was controlled to a large extent by members of the peoples in whose hands it had already been before (the Serbs, Jews, Aromuns) or by large firms from Vienna or Budapest before the First World War, and big wholesale Yugoslav firms after it.⁴⁷

³¹ HWBGAD, I, p. 282. In the Vojvodina the crisis of crafts began since mid-1920s. It was caused by illegal artisans and industry and too many workshops. (Šijački, p. 151.)

³² Geiger, Nijemci u Đakovu, pp. 65-67.

³³ Biber, Socijalna struktura, p. 405. There were 670 German and 172 shops in Maribor on the eve of the First World War. (Hartman, p. 235.)

³⁴ Rus, Jedro, p. 152; Grothe, p. 186.

³⁵ Burda, p. 187.

³⁶ Avramović, p. 286.

³⁷ Popi claims the Romanians had no merchants at all, shop-keepers in their villages being usually Jews or Germans. During the inter-war period, there were only few Romanian trading firms. (Popi, Rumuni, p. 16.)

³⁸ According to Petranović only 3% of the Germans in the Vojvodina were engaged in commerce. (Petranović, p. 58.)

³⁹ HWBGAD, I, pp. 221, 224; Popović, O Cincarima.

⁴⁰ Geiger and Egger mention no German merchants, which also proves their number, especially outside of small towns, was insignificant.

⁴¹ Šijački, p. 40.

⁴² Biber, Socijalna struktura, p. 405. According to some data, the Germans controlled 45% of trade in Ptuj and 30% in Celje in the late 1930s. (Zorn, Nemški trgovski obrarti, pp. 115-116.)

⁴³ Zorn, Dve poročili, p. 91. Biber says the Germans in Slovenia had 18 wholesale firms during the inter-war period. (Biber, Socijalna struktura, p. 406.)

⁴⁴ Zorn, Dve poročili, p. 91.

⁴⁵ According to some, there were 239 shops in Kočevje. (Rus, Jedro, p. 150.)

⁴⁶ Zorn, Nemški trgovski obrarti, pp. 115-117.

⁴⁷ Sometimes a German firm was hidden behind a Yugoslav name. The best-known such case was Jugo-Agrar, which was a Volksdeutsche firm representing big German manufacturers of agricultural machines on the Yugoslav market. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 32, f. 1, d. 28.)

The situation prevailing in industry was quite different. In Northern parts of the country it was disproportionately owned by members of the minorities⁴⁸ – to be sure, not of all minorities. Thus, for instance, the Romanians and Slovaks had no industrialists.⁴⁹ This means the industry owned by the non-Yugoslavs belonged to the Jews, Germans, partly to the Magyars and to few a Czechs. The data about the number of industrial firms are not complete, so the exact share of each nationality among the owners cannot be determined, but judging by names of owners and firms, it can be supposed with high degree of probability, which firms belonged to owners of which minority nationality.⁵⁰ Foreign capital was penetrating the industry through joint-stock companies,⁵¹ and there were also a few industrial enterprises in which one owner belonged to a minority, and the other to a Yugoslav nationality.⁵² Among industrial plants in the Vojvodina, mills and brickworks were numerous, there were six breweries, and several food-processing firms, as well as textile and metallurgical firms. Large part of that belonged to the Ethnic-Germans – according to a memo their leaders submitted to the government in 1940, as much as 46,7% of it belonged to the Volksdeutsche.⁵³ It would be difficult to say if the figure was correct, but it was certain that their share surpassed by far their share in the total population of the province. Similar situation was in Đakovština.⁵⁴ As for the numbers and percentage of the labour force, it is even more difficult to obtain reliable data.⁵⁵

The influence and power of the minority-owned industry was most strongly felt in a small country like Slovenia. The real economic and social power of the German national minority in that land was for greatest part, probably based on the strength of the Ethnic-German industry.⁵⁶ It was concentrated in Maribor, Celje, Jesenice, Zidani Most, and in a few other smaller places.⁵⁷ Kočevje was an economic loser in this respect too – attempts at

⁴⁸ In the Bačka and Baranya, there were 317 industrial, commercial and artisan firms in 1920s. 222 out of that were owned by members of the minorities, three were mixed, 49 Yugoslav, 40 were joint-stock companies and 6 were state-owned. (Gordana Krivokapić-Jović, *Oklop bez viteza. O socijalnim osnovama i organizacionoj strukturi Narodne radikalne stranke u Kraljevini SHS (1918-1929)*, Beograd 2002, p. 312.) In Syrmium and around Osijek there were 96 firms, only 14 of them Yugoslav. (Ibid., p. 314.) To be sure, many minority-owned artisan workshops were included in these figures.

⁴⁹ Popi, p. 15; Biljnja, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁰ Šijački, pp. 197-230; Avramović, pp. 140-145, 154-157, 163-200.

⁵¹ Avramović, p. 145.

⁵² Avramović, pp. 179, 189, 190, 195.

⁵³ Petranović, p. 58.

⁵⁴ Geiger, *Nijemci u Đakovu*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ According to the pre-First World War literature, 50% of the workers in the Vojvodina had been of Hungarian nationality. However, if the Magyarizing tendencies of the time are kept in mind, this should be taken with a grain of salt. (Mesaroš, *Položaj*, p. 90.) According to the same author, the ethnic make-up of the workers in the Vojvodina roughly corresponded to the ethnic make-up of the overall population in the province. (Mesaroš, *Mađari*, p. 20.) There were 3.052 German workers in the Vojvodina according to the 1931 census (Das Schicksal, p. 17E). A report by the First Army District of October 23, 1938 claimed 65% of the employees (workers and clerks) in industry in the Bačka were Germans and Hungarians, whereas in the Banat 46% were Yugoslav, 37% German and Magyar, i.e., 53% were non-Slavs. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 21, f. 2, d. 1.) There seems to be an error in this: 37% of German and Hungarian employees would imply 16% of the labour force in industry was most probably Romanian, which contradicts the facts.

⁵⁶ According to Biber, the Germans in Slovenia owned 29 factories and one mill, 11 saw-mills, 2 mines, 1 brick-yard, and 1 water saw-mill (Biber, *Socijalna struktura*, p. 406). On some occasions when Slovenian workers were laid off, the Slovenian authorities were prone to explain that by nationalist reasons (for instance in Slovenske Konjice in 1937 and in Maribor in 1940) (AJ, 37, 54/351; AVII, pop. 17, k. 528, f. 2, d. 13.)

⁵⁷ Zorn, *Dve poročili*, p. 91; Kržičnik, pp. 15-30, 35-41; Žnidarič, p. 221; Kerner, pp. 47-52, 58-60. The Yugoslav customs policy favoured the development of some big German industrial firms, such as Westen, of Celje. (Franjo Baš, *Kulturbund v Celju med dvema vojnama*, *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*, XXXVIII, 2, 1966, p. 218.)

founding industrial plants there were not particularly successful, and part of industrial firms there was not German-owned.⁵⁸

The bulk of the industry in Bosnia-Herzegovina was in the hands of foreign capital, and the immigrant foreign workers, for great part Germans, made up a considerable part of the labour force, and almost one half of all newcomers in the province. However, after the First World War greater part of them emigrated or was assimilated.⁵⁹ Part of the second-generation rural German colonists, for whom there was not enough land, sought work in the urban industry.⁶⁰ However, they sometimes met with discrimination when applying for a job, although this seems not to have been a rule.⁶¹

Finally, we should say something about another vital branch of the economy, of which the overall economic strength of a minority depended to a large degree: banking. In the Vojvodina this economic branch started developing only in the last third of the 19th century.⁶² This, among other things, encouraged the influx of the Budapest capital until the First World War.⁶³ In order to get the picture of the financial situation in Hungary on the eve of the foundation of Yugoslavia we shall use the following tables showing the situation of banks, saving-banks and agricultural institutions of credit in Hungary in 1915.⁶⁴

Nationality	# of institutions	average capital in 1000 kronen
Hungarians	1.468	9.267
Romanians	156	1.262
Germans	95	5.214
Slovaks	36	2.612
Serbs	30	1.018

The situation of credit cooperatives was as follows in 1915:⁶⁵

Nationality	# of cooperatives	average principal capital in 1000 k.
Hungarians	2.574	375
Germans	271	249
Romanians	101	103
Slovaks	24	176
Serbs	12	228

Such ethnic make-up of the proprietors of land and financial institutions was hiding social differences within each ethnic group. Due to greater social development, the social differences within the ethnic groups which became national minorities in Yugoslavia were larger than among the members of Yugoslav peoples. This is how the number of financial institutions and their share in the total capital in the Vojvodina looked like in 1914:⁶⁶

Nationality	# of institutions	% of institutions	capital in million k.	capital in %
Serbs	86	38	12.817	21.7

⁵⁸ Grothe, pp. 171-174. For greater part it was the Slovenes and Croats who were employed in the local wood industry. (Rus, Jedro, p. 170; HWBGAD, III, p. 69.)

⁵⁹ HWBGAD, I, pp. 498-499.

⁶⁰ AIDGL, HA 1327.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Boris Kršev, Bankarstvo u Dunavskoj banovini, Novi Sad 1998, p. 31.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶⁴ Kevago, p. 40.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kršev, p. 34.

Hungarians	70 ⁶⁷	30.5	18.733	31.7
Germans	59	25	24.436	41
Romanians	9	3.9	1.872	3.2
Slovaks	6	2.6	1.442	2.4

All these institutions put together had the capital equivalent to that of an average Budapest bank. They made up approximately 14% of Hungarian banks, but their own capital did not exceed 7% of all banks in Hungary.⁶⁸ Obviously, these were small provincial banks. As for the capital in each of them, it is the question if it was the fruit of local conditions, i.e. to what extent it came from the outside of the region (from Budapest, Vienna, or abroad).

Be that as it may, the Yugoslav authorities, aware of the importance even of such modest capital, buckled down to putting it under their control. The first measure, which did not hit only the banks in the Vojvodina, but the whole population of the former Habsburg territories, was the exchange of the kronen for the Serbian dinar in ratio 4:1, which caused dissatisfaction in all former Austro-Hungarian lands.⁶⁹ We won't discuss here if this exchange rate was justified or not. We shall just remark that this measure was not leveled against the national minorities, because it hit all inhabitants of the former Austro-Hungarian territories. What is important is that it reduced the financial power of the banks in the former Habsburg territories to one quarter.

Another measure that was applied, was the so-called "nationalization", which was, just like the exchange of currency, also not introduced in the Vojvodina alone, but in all former Habsburg lands. Its aim was that foreign banks and firms, as well as those controlled by the members of national minorities go over into the hands of the "state people". This was to be done either through assimilation of assets and liabilities or through sequestration. In practice, in many cases all ended with few more or less prominent Yugoslav politicians joining the executive or supervisory boards.⁷⁰ However, in many cases, the "nationalization" actually took place.⁷¹ Some financial institutions sought rescue from sequestration in merger with some Yugoslav institution.⁷² As for the German and Hungarian depositors, until the laps of the option period in 1922, they were treated as citizens of enemy countries and were allowed to encash only 10% of their deposits.⁷³ In other words, not only institutions, but also individuals were discriminated against. Furthermore, banks themselves had difficulties with the Austro-Hungarian war loan, which was treated as assets by the new authorities, and taxed as profit.⁷⁴

Let's have a look what results the "nationalization" process achieved in the banking sector in the Vojvodina.⁷⁵

Nationality	# of institutions	principal capital in dinars	% of capital in Vojvodina banks
Germans	41	43.321.000	25.09
Serbs	35	104.710.000	60.63

⁶⁷ Sajti recons with the total of 168 Hungarian banks, branches and savings-banks. (Sajti, pp. 164-165.)

⁶⁸ Kršev, p. 33.

⁶⁹ Popi, Rumuni, pp. 16-21; Kršev, pp. 48-49.

⁷⁰ Kršev, p. 45; Avramović, pp. 310-311; Sajti, p. 164; Branko Bešlin, Nacionalizacija banaka sa isključivo stranim kapitalom u Vojvodini posle Prvog svetskog rata (Mscr.), p. 16. (I would like to use this opportunity to thank the last mentioned author once again for putting this paper at my disposal.)

⁷¹ Mesaroš, Madari, p. 313. "Nationalization" was taking place at a smaller scale throughout the inter-war period. (Aleksandar Kasaš, O jednoj predstavi jugoslovenskih Madara iz 1940. godine, Istraživanja, XIV, 1992, p. 200.)

⁷² Bešlin, Nacionalizacija, p. 14.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kršev, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁵ Kršev, p. 43; Mesaroš, Poličaj, p. 105; Nikola Gaćeša, Privreda Vojvodine između dva svetska rata, in: Idem, Radovi iz agrarne istorije i demografije, p. 200.

Hungarians	34	17.795.000	10.30
Slovaks	7	5.312.000	3.08
Romanians	6	548.000	0.90

If we compare the situation of the Vojvodina banks in 1914 to that of 1923 we come to the following conclusions: the number of Hungarian banks halved (despite financial aid from Hungary)⁷⁶ and their share in the Vojvodina capital fell to one quarter of its pre-war amount. On the other hand, the number of German financial institutions also fell, but their share in the overall Vojvodina capital increased. Slovak banks increased their share in the Vojvodina capital, and that of the Romanian ones dropped. In order to explain these changes, a comprehensive research would be needed. As a working hypothesis for such a research, we would put forward the following explanation: Hungarian banks were hard hit by the severing of ties with their money sources in Budapest – which explains their diminished capital; many banks closed down due to government measures or merged with Yugoslav institutions. German banks were also cut off from the sources of capital, but despite their reduced number, their share in the Vojvodina capital increased. The possibility that part of the Hungarian-friendly Swabians transferred their money from Hungarian to German banks after the First World War is not to be excluded. In the context of the policy of winning the Swabians over and weaning them from the Magyars, their banks were probably less put under pressure than the Hungarian ones.⁷⁷ Serbian banks experienced huge growth, which was certainly due to government benevolence and support. For part of their increase, they probably had to thank Hungarian (and maybe other minority) banks, some of which merged with them. Probably the benevolence of the government made the increase in number and their share in the Vojvodina capital possible. The division of the Banat and (probably unfriendly) government policy in the first after-war years, caused the number and capital of Romanian banks to decrease. All these are just suppositions which should be proven by a research in archives. In any case, according to the situation of 1923 (if the adduced statistics is correct), we couldn't quite agree with some authors that the "nationalization" was a complete failure.⁷⁸ However, the success was qualified, since the banks in the Vojvodina remained dependant on foreign capital throughout the inter-war period, and it was coming mainly through the same channels as before the First World War.⁷⁹

In later years, the minority banks were sharing the fate of other banks in the country. Foreign capital which started to increase in the later years,⁸⁰ probably went partly to minority banks – but this, as well as the share German institutions received, remains to be explored too.⁸¹ It is a moot point to what degree these banks had access to the credits of the National Bank of Yugoslavia. According to some authors, they had none whatsoever.⁸² On the other hand, contemporary politicians and nationalists claimed all the money of the National Bank of Yugoslavia meant for the Vojvodina went into minority establishments.⁸³ It seems the truth

⁷⁶ Sajti, p. 164. The Hungarian government was helping Magyar credit cooperatives through the National Commercial and Credit Bank (Országos Kereskedelmi és Hitelbank), saving 80 of them. Subventions were discontinued in 1930s due to financial difficulties. (Ibid., p. 165.)

⁷⁷ However, the policy of forthcoming towards the Germans had its limits – which was best proved by the fact they were not allowed to found a central Volksdeutsche bank. (PA, Abt. IIB, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6 Jugoslawien, Bd. 1.)

⁷⁸ Bešlin, Nacionalizacija, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Avramović, p. 42.

⁸⁰ Kršev, p. 40.

⁸¹ According to the commander of the First Army District, 89% of deposits in the Vojvodina in 1940 belonged to members of minorities. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 32, f. 1, d. 40.)

⁸² Cf. Dammang, p. 156; Kasaš, O jednoj, p. 200; The Hungarian Minorities in the Succession States, Budapest 1927, p. 108.

⁸³ Thus for instance Duda Bošković (SBNS Kraljevine SHS, Redovan saziv za 1926/27, knj. V, Beograd 1927, p. 391) and Daka Popović (AJ, 66, 72/195).

was somewhere inbetween: minority institutions did receive favourable credits from the central bank, but smaller and fewer than banks owned by the Yugoslavs.⁸⁴ It remains to be researched how important in this connection were national preferences, the Bank's policy towards particular regions, and the lack of funds with the National bank of Yugoslavia.⁸⁵

As for the Germans in Slovenia, they had several large financial institutions, the main being the Maribor Credit Institution, with 10 mil. dinars capital, the Credit Institution in Ljubljana which was formally in German-Slovenian ownership, but actually controlled by the Germans, the Credit Institution in Ptuj which possessed 23.7 mil. dinars in 1935, the Kočevje Savings Bank etc.⁸⁶ Even if one takes into account the changes of currency rates over time, these few data testify to large financial power of these German banks in Slovenia. At the same time, one should keep in mind that some German banks in that province were confiscated right after the First World War.⁸⁷

Sequester, as the first step toward possible confiscation, was imposed on many firms owned by nationals of enemy states and members of national minorities immediately after the First World War. It was often used (together with occasional confiscations) particularly in Slovenia – due to great economic power of the Germans which the new powers-that-be wanted to break.⁸⁸ It was put over all firms suspected of sending their profits abroad.⁸⁹ The aim was to pressurize owners into “nationalizing” their property, i.e. into putting it under control of the Yugoslav authorities.⁹⁰ Sequester was also used in other parts of the country which used to belong to Austria-Hungary, and it was applied especially during the agrarian reform, which we shall deal with in one of the coming chapters.⁹¹

The question which did much to awake discontent in the inter-war Yugoslavia was that of taxes, which differed drastically in various historical provinces. Although the statistics of how much was imposed and levied differ from year to year, Northern parts – more developed and untouched by the war – were actually paying much more than the Southern ones. And the main minority region, and the region where the largest number of Ethnic-Germans lived, the Vojvodina, was paying most.⁹² According to Macartney, it was not only that the taxes were highest there: the payment was enforced more strictly than in other places too.⁹³ Some historians explained such position of the Vojvodina by the attitude of the powers-

⁸⁴ PA, Abt. IIb, Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien, Politik 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 3 and Bd. 5.

⁸⁵ Avramović, p. 316.

⁸⁶ Biber, *Socijalna struktura*, p. 406; Idem, p. 28.

⁸⁷ Kerner, p. 54; Martin Wutte, Oskar Lobmeyr, *Die Lage der Minderheiten in Kärnten und Slowenien*, Klagenfurt 1927, p. 72; Morocutti, p. 41; HWBGAD, III, p. 331.

⁸⁸ PA, Abt. IIb, Unterrichtsweesen, Politik, 17 Jugoslawien, Bd. 1.

⁸⁹ Adolf Lenz, *Die deutsche Minderheit in Slowenien*, Graz 1923, pp. 46-47; Bešlin, *Nacionalizacija*, p. 4.

⁹⁰ PA, Abt. IIb, *Deutschum in Jugoslawien*, Politik 25, Jugoslawien, Bd. 1; Wutte, Lobmeyr, p. 72; Suppan, *Zur Lage*, pp. 174, 219; Bešlin, *Nacionalizacija*, p. 13; Gligor Popi, *Formiranje, razvoj i delovanje Rumunske stranke (1923-1929)*, Istraživanja, 3, 1974, p. 317.

⁹¹ Sequester against citizens of enemy state was no Yugoslav specialty: Great Britain and France used it against citizens of Austria-Hungary too. (Bešlin, *Nacionalizacija*, p. 13.)

⁹² Bogumil Hrabak, *Autonomizam u Vojvodini 1919-1929. kao reakcija na finansijsko iscrpljivanje i političko zapostavljanje pokrajine*, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Vojvodine* 1982, pp. 69, 75, 78-80; Idem, *Barba demokrata za samosvojnost Vojvodine (1919-1928)*, *Zbornik Historijskog instituta Slavonije i Baranje*, XIX, 1, 1982, pp. 35-39; Rehak, pp. 281-284; *Situazione dei magiari in Jugoslavia*, Budapest 1941, pp. 11-12; Kršev, p. 53; Avramović, pp. 335-337, 353; Macartney, Hungary, p. 397; *Politika*, December 9, 1925; SBNS *Kraljevine SHS, Redovan saziv za 1925/26*, knj. II, Beograd 1926, p. 588; *Ibid.* za 1926/27, knj. V, Beograd 1927, p. 391; *Ibid.*, knj. III, p. 15; *Ibid.* za 1927/28, knj. VII, Beograd 1928, p. 204; SBNS, *Vanredni saziv za 1931/32*, knj. IV, Beograd 1932, p. 221. Dissatisfaction found its expression in the ditty “Srem, Banat i Bačka, Srbijanska pljačka” (Syrmiium, the Banat and the Bačka, the Serbians’ plunder). (SBNS, *Redovan saziv 1927/28*, knj. I, Beograd 1928, p. 151.) However, it is only fair to point out that the taxes levied in the Vojvodina in the first ten-odd years were those inherited from Hungary. (Mesaroš, *Položaj*, p. 100.)

⁹³ Macartney, p. 397.

that-be towards national minorities.⁹⁴ It is questionable if this claim is tenable, since complaints were arriving from other parts of the country too.⁹⁵ There were complaints that the taxes were assessed with bias, against the Germans, Hungarians and Jews, which entered modern historiography,⁹⁶ although it seems, they were sometimes due to the then propaganda. On the other hand, the nationalists of the “state people” admitted the taxes were high, but claimed that members of the minorities, being better off, evaded paying more often.⁹⁷ Keeping in mind the regional differences in the assessment of taxes, the leader of the German national minority, Stefan Kraft, was probably closest to the truth when he said the taxes were assessed according to party affiliation in the 1920s⁹⁸ - which, of course, sometimes overlapped with the affiliation to a (minority) nationality.

Apart from the regional differences in tax assessments (and of course the general economic situation throughout the country), economic activity and social stratification of the national minorities in the Northern parts of the country were influenced by the decree limiting transfers of property rights for real estates in Slovenia, issued at the demand of Slovenian public on September 4, 1936.⁹⁹ Clearly, the measure there was aimed against the Ethnic-Germans who had purchasing power, and who were perceived as Slovenians’ arch-foes. On February 18, 1938 validity of this measure was extended to the territories of the Courts of Appeal in Zagreb and Novi Sad. The Decree concerned transfer of immovable property rights in a border zone 50 km deep, if it served speculation, creating of large landed estates or if it infringed on the interests of national security.¹⁰⁰ In fact, this concerned the Germans and Magyars, who were buying much more than the Slavs or Romanians, and who were, due to the developments within these two minorities and in Europe, perceived as disloyal and particularly dangerous for the state.¹⁰¹ In practice it meant, special commissions had to approve transfer of property rights. As a rule, their decisions were negative if the seller was of a Yugoslav and the buyer of a minority nationality.¹⁰² Although it was not strictly enforced,¹⁰³ it caused a widespread discontent among the minorities,¹⁰⁴ and it also led to great

⁹⁴ Čedomir Popov, *Vojvodina u Narodno-oslobodilačkom ratu i socijalističkoj revoluciji*, Novi Sad 1984, p. 12.

⁹⁵ Cf. Rudolf Bičanić, *Ekonomska podloga hrvatskog pitanja*, Zagreb 1938.

⁹⁶ Mesaroš, *Položaj*, p. 177; Idem, *Mađari*, p. 20; Gower, p. 68; Andrija Bognar, *Položaj Mađara u Vojvodini od 1918. do 1995*, in: *Međunarodni znanstveni skup Jugoistočna Europa 1918-1995*, Zagreb 2000, p. 94; Scherer, p. 14; PA, Abt. IIb, *Nationalitätenfrage, Fremdvölker in Jugoslawien*, *Politik* 6, Jugoslawien, Bd. 2.

⁹⁷ Fedor Nikić, *Revizija naše politike u Vojvodini – povodom desetogodišnjice Oslobođenja i Ujedinjenja*, *Letopis Matice srpske*, knj. 319, sv. 2, 1929, p. 256.

⁹⁸ SBNS, *Vanredni saziv za 1931/32*, knj. IV, Beograd 1932, p. 221.

⁹⁹ *Beschränkung des Erwerbes der Liegenschaften, Nation und Staat*, XI, 2, 1937, pp. 145-147; Suppan, *Zur Lage*, pp. 185, 231; Idem, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 790, 919; HWBGAD, III, p. 77; Dobrivoje Erić, *Agrarna reforma u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*, Sarajevo 1958, p. 524; Biber, *Nacizem*, p. 203. There were two attempts at legalizing such limitations during the 1920s, but they were thwarted by the representatives of the Party of the Germans. (Oskar Plautz, *Das Werden der Volksgemeinschaft in Südslawien*, Novi Sad 1940, pp. 58, 64.) The Town Council of Subotica introduced a similar measure in its territory already in November 1930. (Mesaroš, *Mađari*, p. 40.) Similar, or even more stringent measures existed also in some other countries – none of them a paragon of democracy – in Germany (since 1938, extended to Austria after the Anschluss), Hungary, Romania and the USSR. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 21, f. 3, d. 21; k. 90, f. 1, d. 11.) Austria had its own similar regulations already in the 1920s. (Wutte, *Lobmeyr*, pp. 70-71.)

¹⁰⁰ Biber, *Nacizem*, p. 203; Gaćeša, *The Germans*, pp. 158-159.

¹⁰¹ The amount of land that had changed hands between 1918 and 1938 was not known at that. (Gaćeša, *Privreda*, p. 208.)

¹⁰² Gaćeša, *The Germans*, pp. 159-161.

¹⁰³ Gaćeša, *The Germans*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁴ The former Volksdeutsche official Josef Beer wrote in his memoirs the Decree had hit the Ethnic-Germans much more than the unsolved school question their representatives kept carping about throughout the inter-war period. (Josef Beer, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte aus erster Hand*, München 1987, p. 63.)

corruption.¹⁰⁵ German and Hungarian representatives (including the diplomatic ones) protested on several occasions demanding that the Decree be abrogated,¹⁰⁶ which was eventually done after the fall of France, on September 19, 1940,¹⁰⁷ in keeping with rapprochement with Germany. However, there are indications the Decree remained in force – albeit in somewhat changed form.¹⁰⁸

The Decree on limiting the transfer of property rights came into being also as a result of the pre-war psychosis of fear caused by the strengthening of the Third Reich and the spread of its influence among the Volksdeutsche in the second half of the 1930s. A conspiracy theory appeared in part of the ruling circles and nationalist public, according to which, the Ethnic-Germans, aided by large sums from Germany (300 mil. dinars, according to the Minister of the Interior, Anton Korošec),¹⁰⁹ were buying land systematically and with a plan, especially near the border, often paying too much for it.¹¹⁰ More sober observers pointed out to the greater concentration of capital in the Volksdeutsche banks, better organization, greater diligence etc, which combined with the starting position somewhat more favourable than the average, enabled the Yugoslav Germans to buy more land than others.¹¹¹ Final proofs that the Germans had been receiving (larger sums) of money from Germany for buying land are lacking, and the financial situation in the Reich was not speaking in favour of paranoid fears of the nationalists.¹¹²

Finally, we shall mention another factor which influenced the social make-up of the Ethnic-Germans in Yugoslavia, i.e. emigration. Emigration of the poor was, above all, a numerical loss for each minority. From the point of view of a minority as a whole, much more was felt, as we have already seen, the emigration of the intelligentsia and people from upper strata. This process weakened significantly all the big national minorities. The Germans in Slovenia were particularly hit hard, especially by the loss of the intellectual and official elite, whereas the economic magnates remained in their places. The Germans in the Vojvodina and in Slavonia only started creating their elite in Yugoslavia, because until then their elite was absorbed to the largest extent, by the Hungarians and Croats.

If we were to summarize the social structure of the German national minority in Yugoslavia between the two world wars, we would have to say that it is impossible to reconstruct it as a whole. There were significant social differences within the anyway heterogenous minority. Even the Germans in Slovenia, who enjoyed many advantages in the old Austria, could not brag about great material well-being on the whole: Kočevje, just like some other parts of the old Austria (Tyrol, partly Carinthia) remained a poor and

¹⁰⁵ SBNS, Vanredni saziv za 1939. godinu, knj. I, Beograd 1939, p. 698; Gaćeša, *The Germans*, p. 167. Many members of minorities held for years the land they had already paid for, but due to the Decree, they were not able to register it. The Main General-Staff demanded in 1940 that attention be paid to such occurrences and that they be prevented. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 21, f. 3, d. 32.)

¹⁰⁶ Mesaroš, *Mađari*, pp. 196, 211-212; Biber, *Nacizem*, pp. 204-206; Gaćeša, *The Germans*, pp. 162, 167; SBNS *Kraljevine Jugoslavije, Vanredni saziv za 1939, I*, pp. 655-657; *Volksfreund*, February 4, 1940; *Magarország*, June 6, 1940.

¹⁰⁷ Gaćeša, *The Germans*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁸ Branimir Altgayer, *Elaborat o njemačkoj narodnoj skupini, I* (Mscr.), s.l. 1947. (AVII, Nemačka arhiva, k. 40-D, f. 3, d. 1; Kasaš, pp. 184, 198; AIDGL, *Nachlas Lichtenberger*, a letter by Sepp Janko, former *Volksgruppenführer* in Yugoslavia (1939-1941) and the occupied Banat (1941-1944) to Wolf Oschlies. The limitation remained officially in force only in the surroundings of border fortifications. (*Esti Kurir*, September 26, 1940.)

¹⁰⁹ Gaćeša, *The Germans*, p. 162; Biber, *Nacizem*, p. 203.

¹¹⁰ *AJ*, 38, 7/27; 37, 58/371; AVII, pop. 17, k. 32, f. 1, d. 26; k. 36, f. 4, d. 38; k. 528, f. 2, d. 10; Janjetović, *O širenju*, pp. 101-103. It seems Gaćeša also tends to accept the opinion about the planned buying. (Gaćeša, *Privreda*, p. 209.) Apart from fear the Germans would buy up land, there was also fear they would buy up industrial plants too. (AVII, pop. 17, k. 92, f. 1, d. 2; k. 76, f. 1, d. 54.)

¹¹¹ Janjetović, *O širenju*, pp. 108-109.

¹¹² Gaćeša, *The Germans*, p. 162; *Idem, Privreda*, p. 209; Janjetović, *O širenju* pp. 109-111.

comparatively backward area. Only a fraction of German colonists in Bosnia prospered economically. Furthermore, a large number of workers and officials emigrated from there after the First World War, weakening thus numerically and structurally the Volksdeutsche population. However, set off to the great general poverty of the overall population of the Kingdom, the Ethnic-Germans, seen as a whole, were somewhat better off. Than their neighbours. Their wellbeing differed from region to region, sharing the general development of the area. Although hit by some government measures after the First World War, the economic existence of the German national minority was never endangered. Indeed, in some areas, over time, part of the Volksdeutsche managed to prosper regardless of unpropitious government measures. Despite social differences within the minority and social unrest spurred by the Great Depression, economic survival was never the real problem number one of the German minority in the inter-war period.