

German Protestants in the Moslavina and Bilogora Regions - Part II: Migrations, Evacuations, and Pastors

Vatroslav Župančić

Institut für Osteuropäische Geschichte und Landeskunde

vatroslavzupancic@gmail.com

UDK: 274.5:314.15 (497.527.1+497.526)

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Abstract

The article researches the migrations of German Protestants in the area of Moslavina and Bilogora after the issuing of the Protestant Patent and religious liberalization in the second half of the 19th century. First, we research the regional background of the settlers (colonists), and we go on to follow the development of their church communities and parishes. After this, we describe the specific settlements with an absolute or relative German Protestant majority, as well as the historical circumstances of their church organization. Finally, we use sources, literature, and oral history (i.e., interviews) as we research the processes of migration and evacuation of German settlers and Protestants from those parts, as well as the destinies of their pastors and preachers during and after WWII.

Due to the scope of the research, the article was divided into two parts. In part 1, the emphasis was on migrations, the settlers' confessional background, and the founding of the first two large parishes in the region. In part 2, we will describe other parishes and their branches, their development, and stages of abandonment, as well as the description of their final spiritual workers' activities.

Keywords: Protestants, Germans, Moslavina, Bilogora, Ilova river valley, evacuation, migration

Introduction

In the first part, we researched the history and the “secondary” wave of migrations into the Croatian regions of Moslavina and Bilogora by German Protestants in the period after the liberalization of religious laws in Croatia-Slavonia in the second half of the 19th century. We observed the founding of settlements, the first church parishes in the two large settlements of Antunovac and Hrastovac, and their development until the demise of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. At a micro-level, we tried to place the events into the wider political and social contexts of Croatia of that time, to get an insight into the development of events, as well as the difficulties that the settlers have been facing during the initial years of establishing church organization in these regions.

The demise of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and the emergence of the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, and later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, brought about new historical challenges for German Protestants. This can be divided into two periods: a) the period of discrimination and gradual restoration between 1918 and 1931 and b) the period of the legal establishment of Protestant churches and the founding of the “German Lutheran Church (AV) in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.”

The period of discrimination and gradual restoration between 1918 and 1931 was a time when the new authorities attempted to diminish the activities and identity of certain minorities, such as Hungarians, Germans, and Albanians. This was particularly evident in the area of education and the usage of language and script, which caused a series of difficulties for German Protestants in their relationship with the government, because of the closely related religious and educational work. However, over time, especially following the political crises between the two largest constituting nations (Serbs and Croats), the ethnic minorities were gradually given back many of their freedoms. This resulted in significant improvements in the situation among Protestants, which was then reflected in the parishes in the regions that are the object of this research.

The period of establishing Protestantism through legislation at a state level and the founding of the “German Lutheran Church (AV) in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia” was a time that brought about the strengthening of parish communities and their internal connecting, as well as improving relationships with political authorities (Wild 1980, 125). This period lasted until the outbreak of the April War in 1941, which marked the beginning of the last (third) period: war, migration, evacuation, and persecution of the remaining Germans from the Moslavina and Bilogora regions. This period will be covered in this article.

1. Migrations and Evacuations of Germans from Municipalities in the Ilova valley 1942 - 1944

By the beginning of World War II in the regions of Moslavina and Bilogora, church municipalities of Hrastovac, Mali Bastaji, and Pakrački Antunovac were independent parishes. Their affiliated branches were Kapetanovo Polje, Kutina, and Strižićevac, Velika Mlinska, and Pašijan. Mali Bastaji was in charge of the branch of Veliki Miletinac, while Bršljanica and Selište were under the care of the parish in the Croatian capital Zagreb (Wild 1980, 356–358). Out of all these settlements, Hrastovac, Mali Bastaji, and Velika Mlinska have preserved their local history records.

The atrocities of war came to this area with severe intensity as soon as it began in April 1941, as opposed to Bačka and Srijem, where the majority of Protestants were based, and the devastation only came at the end of the war. Partisan forces in Bilogora, the area around Sisak, and the neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina had organized themselves fairly quickly, and they often came into the Ilova valley. They made coordinated actions against the local German population mostly as revenge against the Ustaše and German armed forces for their acts against the Serbian population in Moslavina and Bilogora (Ivković et al. 2010, 49–51).

In the surrounding area and near the vicinity of the region, we have a unique example of establishing a German Partisan unite called, “Ernst Thälmann” in 1943 in Slatinski Drenovac, which was active east of Daruvar, on the Papuk mountain. Aside from the five-pointed star, the fighters from this troop also had a black, red, and gold flag on their hats (more in Redžić 1984, and Richembergh 2010, 182). One of their headquarters was in the Catholic village of Blagorodovac in the Ilova valley, which makes the history of Germans in these parts even more complex (Panagiotidis 2015, 403–413).

2. First German Evacuations from the Region

Due to the frequent Partisan attacks, the German Protestants from the Hrastovac branch of Mlinska, Bršljanica in Zagreb, Selište, and Kutina have started their migration activities as early as 1942-1943 through a contract between the Third Reich and NDH (Independent State of Croatia) as a great endeavor together with Germans from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well West Slavonian German Catholics. This happened according to the plan of the Reichsminister Heinrich Himmler where they were supposed to become part of population exchange in newly conquered regions of former Poland (Schieder 1984, 153; Oberkersch 1989, 287–391). By the end of 1941, the church newspaper, *Kirche und Volk* (1942, 81), wrote about that migration plan:

The German Reich and the Croatian State have reached an agreement through which all the Germans from Bosnia, except from the large closed town of Windhorst, will be relocated. From all our Protestant settlements, only Trošeljce and Adolfstal, that have around 450 souls, will remain. The remaining 7000 souls will be relocated. Also, four colonist settlements from the Western part of Croatia, will be relocated, including Velika and Mala Bršljanica, Moslavačko Selište, and Kutina, which falls under the municipality of Zagreb. These number around 500 souls.¹

Hoffmann (1990, 102) additionally mentions that, besides Protestant municipalities from Western Croatia, the evacuation plan included the municipalities of Karlovac and Velika Mlinska in the autumn of 1942.² The vacated settlements were, according to the agreement, supposed to be populated by Croatian Catholic settlers as part of the ethnic homogenization policy by the government of NDH (Blaha 2009, 195–202). However, it turned out that this plan was not completely achievable due to the increasing resistance and new attacks from the Partisan troops in this region, who have also committed various atrocities over the civil population during their attacks and fights in German settlements (Ivković 2010, 49–51). Heinrich Leinberger from Bršljanica was the only one of Protestant vicars who has been relocated during this process, as will be discussed later on.

3. The Affiliated Church Branch in Velika Mlinska and the History of Resettling

Before the German colonization in the 19th century northwest of Hrastovac, near the town of Pašijan, were the settlements of Velika and Mala Mlinska. Velika and Mala Mlinska have been poorly populated by mostly Slavic population during the time of Military Frontier and were mostly organized into agrarian and patriarchal collectives.³ German Protestants from the south Hungarian “Swabian Turkey” began arriving in these areas during the third wave of colonization in the

- 1 “Das Deutsche Reich und der Kroatische Staat haben ein Übereinkommen getroffen, wonach alle Deutschen aus Bosnien mit Ausnahme der grossen geschlossenen Gemeinde Windhorst und Umgebung ausgesiedelt werden. Von unseren deutschen evangelischen Gemeinden in Bosnien sollen bloss die Gemeinden Trošeljce und Adolfstal mit etwa 450 Seelen verbleiben. Die Anderen rund 7000 Seelen siedeln aus. Aus Westkroatien werden die vier kleinen Kolonistengemeinden Groß- und Klein-Brschljaniica und Moslowatschko-Selischte bei Kutina sowie Kutina selbst, die zur Muttergemeinde Zagreb gehören ausgesiedelt, hier handelt sich um etwa 500 Seelen.”
- 2 See also: Bentz 1984; Bentz.
- 3 During the 13th century the settlement was called Sv. Andrija Timenica, and it was rebuilt after it was delivered from the Turks during the 17th and 18th centuries. The name, Mlinska, is connected with the mills which used to be there (Božičević 2010, 84).

Ilova valley, after 1880. Since Hrastovac had already been populated and property prices went higher, the new colonists who had come from poorer circumstances have been redirected to the area of Velika Mlinska some 20 kilometers away, where they have been advised that they could buy cheaper properties and houses from local Croats and Serbs.⁴

Most of the German-Lutheran Protestants have settled there during the second wave by the beginning of the 20th century, coming mostly from Hungarian villages surrounding Kaposzekso, north of Pécs, as well as from parts of Tolna and Baranja. By the time of World War II, Mlinska had become a predominantly German Protestant settlement, while the vicinity was populated by 24% Croats, 32.94% Serbs, 6.93% Hungarians, and 1.2% Czechs. The third and final wave of migrations took place between 1907 and 1921 (Božičević 2010, 84).

Compared to almost every other German-Protestant settlement in Moslavina, Mlinska never achieved cooperation with the Basel mission. The residents have placed their main emphasis on building up the school, which was finished around 1900, and first classes started in 1902, with the support of the GAV⁵ from Leipzig. Before the construction of the school, which was subsequently also used as a place of worship, new Protestant residents were baptized by Orthodox priests from Pašijan. They would then go on to send the baptism registries to the Protestant parish in Zagreb, which had occasionally sent their vicar to Mlinska to perform confirmations or wedding ceremonies. Otherwise, these functions would have been performed by the vicar from the Hrastovac parish.

The German school was German-confessional, and it was able to retain this particularity despite the government pressure against all ethnic confessional schools in the years following World War I.⁶ Before the first teacher arrived, a church presbytery was formed with one so-called “church father,” a treasurer, and three other members of the presbytery. The teachers would preach and teach on Sundays and some of them even led the choir. The reports made by Božičević and Bentz differ when it comes to mentioning the first teacher. Božičević (2010, 84–85) states that this teacher was Milan Petrović, former Catholic vicar between

4 Bentz (1984, 80) relays the memories of his grandfather, who was one of the first to arrive in Mlinska: “Die Ebene (Hrastovac) und das fruchtbare Feld schien mir für die Landwirtschaft gut geeignet. (...) Enttäuscht war ich als ich den Preis vernahm. In Ungarn war das Feld auch nicht teurer. (...) Ein Erdmann aus Mlinska kam in die Schrottmühle und wie er mir erzählte (...) in Mlinska kann man noch billig und viel Feld kaufen.” (“The plain (Hrastovac) and the fertile field seemed suitable for agriculture. (...) I was disappointed when I heard the price. Even the fields in Hungary were not that expensive. (...) A farmer from Mlinska came to the mill, and according to his words (...) it is still possible to buy a lot of affordable fields in Mlinska.”).

5 Gustav-Adolf-Verein, i.e., Gustav Adolf Society for supporting the Protestant diaspora.

6 In the summer of 1922, the government of the Kingdom of SHS decided that it would start supporting all schools (Geiger 1997, 16; Janjetović 2005, 229–238).

1903-1904, followed by Friedrich Kutschera between 1904-1908. Bentz (1984, 102-103), however, makes the contrary claim: that Kutscher was there before Petrović, who went on to be the second teacher between 1904-1909. The remaining terms of office for other teachers match with these two books, except that Božičević ends his with the year 1938, while Benz goes on until the arrival of the last teacher and the emigration. After 1909 the teachers were:

- 1909-1920: Franz Stoll, who arrived from Bolman, a Protestant - Lutheran village in Baranja. He took his office during the war, and during that time his wife took over the care for the school children. He remained there for two more years after the war and then he moved to Novo Selo near Vinkovci (Neudorf), where he took on a job as a teacher.
- 1920-1927: Philipp Mayer, whose active term of office lasted around three years because he spent his fourth year at the seminary in Vienna, during which time his wife was fulfilling the role of teacher. Once he returned, he was transferred to Banat (Vojvolica) where three years later, he died at the age of forty due to angina and blood poisoning.
- 1927: Karl Novy, who came from Bohemia, but only remained for a few months. Until the new teacher arrived, the role of Croatian teacher was taken on by the public teacher from the neighboring village of Kostanjevac.
- 1927-1940: Albert Riess. This was also primarily a teaching married couple, since his wife was a teacher in the neighboring village of Ruškovac, while Albert served as cantor until he took on the teaching role. He founded the choir in Mlinska. However, according to Bentz, there were certain misunderstandings between teachers and parents (Bentz 1984, 106). In 1940, Riess went to Osijek, where he died fairly soon.
- 1940-1941: the school did not have a teacher, so the children had to attend the public school in the village of Pašijan.

From the records, it is evident that teachers were mostly coming from already established German Lutheran parishes in Croatia and the Kingdom of SHS, because this was an explicit request of Mlinska residents, who sought exclusive German linguistic and confessional standards which they were unable to find in their region, and in Yugoslavia teachers with such profiles were rare. Teachers only stayed in Mlinska for a short time, largely due to the region's isolation and the fact that the cities offered better possibilities for the education of their children in gymnasiums (Zemun, Zagreb, Vinkovci, Osijek). Apart from Velika Mlinska, some other places were also inhabited by German Protestants, such as Veliki and Mali Pašijan, which were ethnically mixed settlements that did not have a German school or a Lutheran church (Božičević 2010, 80-83).

After the establishment of NDH in 1941, the managing of schools in the German language was made significantly easier, so the school board found Johann Friedrich from the Protestant place Novo Selo near Vinkovci. With his work permit, Friedrich began his ministry on October 29th, 1941, and remained here until the end of the school year on June 12th, 1942. In that time, Mlinska became a frequent target of Partisan attacks. For Partisans, a teacher represented the spiritual and cultural authority of local German residents, thus making him the first target of their attacks. Because of that, Friedrich was transferred, and his activities will be described further in the article (Bentz 1984, 109).

4. Migrations from Mlinska in 1942

As this has already been stated, Mlinska together with Kutina, Bršljanica, Pašijan, and Selište, entered an agreement of relocation between the official representatives of the German Reich (Deutsche Gesandtschaft), German National Group (Deutsche Volksgruppe), and the NDH government (Oberkersch 1989, 287–391). The numerous Partisan attacks caused many casualties: 19 soldiers from the German National Group (Einsatzstaffel) and three civilians (Bentz 1984, 161).⁷

On October 27th-28th 1942, several German residents from Moslavina who have been told that they are leaving “home to the Reich,”⁸ left the Garešnica station in the direction of northwest and ended up in the conquered areas of Poland (Wartheland) around October 30th, 1942. All migrants, regardless of their confession, were placed in transit camps of Kirschberg and Pabianice, near the city of Łódź, which was then called, “Litzmannstadt Ghetto”. Just like with Bosnian Germans who also arrived in the vicinity of Łódź, the arrival and formal registration were quite an unpleasant shock for the villagers, who had until the beginning of war lived in a fairly peaceful multi-ethnic area.⁹ Due to growing displeasure and the notices of further relocations into the General Governorship (Ger., Generalgouvernement) as part of the “Zamość” action, the migrants revolted.¹⁰ They were displeased with the way they were being treated so after a few weeks of being there, they sent a delegation of their representatives which came from NDH into Berlin, where they have received assurances that nobody is allowed to relocate

7 The total number of casualties in Partisan attacks, air raids on evacuation convoys in Austria and in Warthegau was assessed at 50 people (Ivković et al. 2010, 767–771).

8 The motto for all immigrants was: “Heim ins Reich.”

9 The exodus documents mention relocated migrants from Croatia and the Ilova valley, but they make no direct mentions of Mlinska, which is why it was covered in detail by Bentz (1984).

10 Zamość was part of the territory in occupied Poland and, as an autonomous part of the Great German Reich, it was supposed to become a sort of ethnic laboratory with a strong military governance and genocide policy over the numerous Poles and Jews.

them any further or recruit them without their consent. The entire action of colonizing Polish territories eventually failed because of the approach of the Soviet army. Residents of Mlinska, along with other migrants from the Ilova valley and Bosnia and Herzegovina have been then relocated into several different parts of the German Reich. When the war ended, one part of the group ended up at the border between France and Luxembourg, while the other one made it to South Styria through Salzburg (Bentz 1984, 186). After this, the residents were individually moving into different parts of Germany, such as Hessen, Württemberg, Austria, and overseas: into the USA and Canada, the fact which has only recently been given systematic historical research (see: Bethke 2019). Only a small number of them decided they would go back to Croatia.

5. The Church Branch Bršljanica

Velika and Mala Bršljanica are situated on two neighboring hills covering the area of 27.4 km², some ten kilometers southwest from Mlinska, and about twelve kilometers west from the city of Garešnica (Božičević 2010, 112). Before the establishment of the Military Frontier the population, there was exclusively Croatian, and west of Bršljanica stood the fortress of Breznica which, along with a few other fortresses, has been mainline of defense against the Ottoman Empire since the 15th century. The fortress of Bršljanac was built near Bršljanica, which was, upon the arrival of Orthodox Serbs during the 16th and 17th centuries turned into an Eastern Orthodox monastery. Over time, the monastery was also used for the development of an elementary school.

During the second half of the 19th century, Hungarians begin to settle there, followed by German Protestants from “Swabian Turkey,” as well as a small percentage of Catholic Czechs. Immediately before World War II, the population of Velika Bršljanica numbered 653 people: 59.72% were Serbs, 18.84% Germans, 16.54% Hungarians, and 4.9% Czechs; while the population of Mala Bršljanica numbered 426 residents: 52.58% were Serbs, 7.52% Croats, 0.47% Czechs, 5.16% Hungarians, and 34.27% Germans (Božičević 2010, 112).

Out of the total number of Protestants, almost 27.15% of them were German Lutherans who arrived in the settlement in 1891 (Korpiaho 1988, 77). After the colonization, believers begin their religious activities, which also started with the support of the mission of St. Chrischona from Basel that sent their missionaries there (Wild 1980, 358–359). The first person to start coming for pastoral visits was the teacher Johann Haas from Hrastovac, who died in Bršljanica in 1901 (Korpiaho 1988, 87–92). After the official establishment of the municipalities of Velika and Mala Bršljanica in 1898, they become a branch of the Zagreb parish. The memoirs of the famous German evangelist Ernst Modersohn who visited Croatia in 1910 described the isolation and distance of Bršljanice from the capi-

tal Zagreb at the turn of the 20th century: “My voyage from Zagreb was directed towards Bršljanica. First, I spent four hours traveling by train, and another three hours on Croatian mud roads on a carriage with no amortization. I have been told that these paths are completely impassable in winter and springtime. One cannot even pass through using their own horses and carriage...” (Modersohn 2008, 135–136).¹¹

Then came a preacher and teacher Ivan Zmaila, who will later become a pastor of Zagreb parish, and he is recorded as one of the first Croatian Protestant priests after the time of Reformation. Due to his commitment and the donations from Switzerland, the first place of worship was built in Bršljanica (Korpiaho 2018). Although the literature mentions his departure as vicar to Zagreb in 1906, Zmaila continued to run the church in Bršljanica, because in 1910 he received the above-mentioned German evangelist and mission worker of the “Gemeinschaftsbund,” Ernst Modersohn (Modersohn 2008, 135–139). Korpiahu (2018) finally states that Zmaila died in 1918 in Bršljanica from the complications caused by the Spanish flu.

In 1920, Heinrich Leinberger comes as a preacher from Bosnia and Herzegovina. During his term, a new church was built in every village; however, classes in German as part of elementary school was canceled in 1927 by the authorities, so German children had to go to a state school and attend classes in the Croatian language, while Leinberger’s teaching of German was reduced to “simple confirmatory classes” (Lendl 1941, 48–49; Wild 1980, 132; Božičević 2010, 112–113). Bršljanica also provided pastoral care for German Protestants from the neighboring village of Selište, where 120 members belonged to one church before the evacuation (Wild 1980, 358).

During the wartime in the autumn of 1942, Velika and Mala Bršljanica were included in the evacuation plans towards occupied Poland (Warthegau). The first known source that speaks of the relocated vicar Leinberger indicates that before the war ended, he served in Krumau (Český Krumlov) as a minister of the Protestant Church AV and HV in Austria (Leinberger, *Dienstbestätigung*...). According to testimonies that were handed through the head of the historical society “Bršljanica” Petar Miščević, after the war returnees who were coming back to Bršljanica, were forced to share their homes with new residents who had moved in from Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, due to the pressure from the authorities, by 1953 they had to completely abandon their homes, mostly relocating to-

11 “Von Agram ging meine Reise weiter nach Brsljanica (sprich Brschlanitz). Zuerst musste ich etwa vier Stunden lang einen Personenzug benutzen, dann ging es drei Stunden auf kroatischen Landwegen bergauf und bergab, auf einem federlosen Leiterwagen. Im Winter und Frühjahr sind diese Wege, wie man mir erzählte, einfach unpassierbar. Da kommt man weder zu Pferde noch mit eigenem Wagen durch.”

wards Germany and Canada (Župančić 2020b). The church in Velika Bršljanica remains to this day, and it was restored in 2005 with the aid of donations from the “Martin Luther Bund” society from Germany, and today it is being used by the parish in Kutina as a branch for Lutheran and Catholic services (Martin Luther Bund 2005).

6. Evacuations from Hrastovac in 1944

Unlike the refugee convoys from Banat and Bačka, the evacuation of Germans from the NDH was very well organized, which means that around 80-90% of the total number of Germans from NDH were successfully evacuated from Croatia (Bethke 2016, 41). Hrastovac, the oldest Lutheran municipality in Moslavina, was fully evacuated by late summer of 1944 as part of that evacuation. There are very few official documents and literature about this period of evacuation and the situation of the parishes. Mostly we have self-published family memoirs (e.g., Englert 2014). The Lutheran church bulletin in Croatia at that time, *Kirche und Volk* (The Church and the People), as well as the preserved church records and the municipal church registry, are the only valuable and preserved sources that mention names of teachers and vicars in the final years of the war. The registry records from 1943 and 1944 mention the names of acting priests and their vacancies Tarczay, as well as Leinberger as a teacher in Hrastovac/Eichendorf (MU Garešnica *Knjiga krštenih...*; Benković 2012/2013, 31–39).

Through interviews with the living witnesses as part of the “Oral History” research, I have attempted to reconstruct the municipal life and work of church officials during the final days of evacuation. In the spring of 2020, I managed to get in touch with 90-year-old Heinrich Kaiser from Canada through correspondence and with the aid of his daughter as a mediator, and in his letters, he told me about his memories:

The last teacher was named Mosbruk (not sure about the spelling but that seems right). He came from Blagorodovac. When the partisans came into town he ran away and my dad thinks he went back to Blagorodovac. There was a second teacher, too - Leinberger. He immigrated to Ohio or Wisconsin; dad isn't sure which now. He was married to Eva Millar and her sister Elisabeth was married to Karl Schwartzpech. That branch of the family ended up here in Essex County of course. My father remembers getting beatings from Leinberger and did have the opportunity to meet up with him here in Harrow many years later when they came to visit the Schwartzpechs. Pastor Tarczay was from Antunovac. He actually had both parishes, Hrastovac and Antunovac, and dad thinks he just went back to Antunovac. These questions started an interesting conversation with my father. They left Hrastovac in October 1944, arrived in Austria on Feb. 15th, 1945, stayed about 1.5 years, and moved on to Dietzenbach in Germany where he and my mother married and my sister and I were born in 1950 and 1951. They immigrated from there in 1952.

As has already been mentioned, Tarczay, as acting (i.e., temporary) vicar in Hrastovac, did not join the evacuation and, instead, he continued to serve in his original parish of Antunovac until the coming of the new communist regime (Benković 2012/2013, 35). From the two mentioned teachers who worked in Hrastovac at the time, Mosbruk from Blagorodovac and Leinberger from Hrastovac, it is evident that it was Leinberger who followed the church parish into evacuation and eventually came through various ways to North America. Wilhelm Leinberger served as a teacher in Hrastovac between 1939 and 1944, as his signature appears alongside Tarczay's in the baptismal records of Hrastovac at that time. He was originally from Bršljanica, but we should not confuse him with Heinrich Leinberger, who served as vicar in Bršljanica at the same time, and who will be further mentioned in this research. The work of Wilhelm Leinberger is briefly mentioned in a family book with photographs (Englert et al. 2014, 50–53). There is currently no available data about Mosbruk in literature and other sources.

According to a report by Philipp Jung (s. a., 37, 49), who was born in 1940 in Hrastovac, the first evacuation went in the following manner:

The day of August 26th, 1944 arrived, when we had to leave Hrastovac. With my mother and her parents (father was fighting in the war), we traveled by carriage to the Banova Jaruga station. We remained in a barn until September 15th. Then we travel with a peasant carriage for four days to the town of Beška in East Srijem, and on October 10th we arrived in Ruma through Krčedin. Older women and mothers with children arrived with train wagons... the others traveled further in carriages towards Austria. The evacuation path of the Hrastovac group was as follows: with the train on October 9th - Ruma, then on October 18th, 1944 - Coburg/Bavaria, where they were placed with different families. On December 2nd, 1944 one group with carriages arrived in Austria, then in Ried in Traunkreis, the town that was freed by the Americans on May 5th. The transfer of evacuees into the neighboring town of Kremsmünster (Linz County) took place on August 10th, 1945, from where they were supposed to be repatriated back to Yugoslavia. However, they were stopped by a group of Serbian officers who warned them about the demise that awaits them on the other side of the border, so the transport returned back to Ried. They remained in Austria until August 26th, 1946. They ultimately ended up in Wilhelmshütte, the county of Biedenkopf in Hessen.¹²

12 "Es kam der 26.08.1944, der Tag, an dem wir Hrastovac verlassen mussten. Mit Mutter und ihren Eltern (Vater war im Krieg eingezogen) fuhren wir mit Pferdewagen von Hrastovac nach Banova Jaruga. Wir wurden bis zum 15.09.1944 in einer Scheune untergebracht, dann sind wir auf einen Güterzug verladen worden und vier Tage bis Beška (Ostsyrmien), danach Krčedin gefahren und am 09.10. kamen wir nach Ruma gefahren. Alte Frauen und Frauen mit kleinen Kindern kamen in Viehwaggons... der Rest fuhr mit Pferdewagen weiter nach Österreich." Der Evakuierungsweg dieser Hrastovac-Gruppe war: 09.10 Ruma, 18.10.1944 Coburg/Bayern, wo sie an verschiedene Familien zugeteilt wurden; am 02.12.1944 kamen sie nach Österreich, nach Ried im Traunkreis, das am 05.05. von den Amerikanern befreit wurde. Am 10.08.1945 kam es zum Transport von Evakuierten zum Nachbarort Kremsmünster (Kreis Linz), von wo sie

During the second wave of the evacuation from Hrastovac, Konrad Kehl, who was 44 at the time, leaves the country on November 6th, 1944. In his memoirs, Kehl describes his life in Hrastovac from his childhood, through World War I, his time in the military, family memories, and the five years he spent in Canada (1926-1931). He then goes on describing wartime events and especially being captured by the Partisans, and in the end, he describes his evacuation:

Lieutenant W. from Hannover immediately came and told us, "The war is lost for Germany. Millions are on their way to Germany. You, the Volksdeutschen [name for Germans outside of the Reich] will end up in misery if you stay here, and you will be deprived of all your rights. Come with us today and use the last opportunity you have!" ... We embarked on our journey at 10 a.m. on November 6th, 1944... First we arrived in Banova Jaruga, and from there nine days later we traveled for Zagreb. From there we passed through Vienna, Breslau (Wroclaw) to the town of Namslau in Silesia, when we arrived on November 17th (Trautner 1964, 23-26).¹³

Here is how Kehl describes the refuge way to Germany:

We arrived in Silesia, but we set off westward in January 1945. American troops came in April and took over the town of Dornheim, forcing us to move further to Arnstadt, to a barrack camp... after that the Russians came.¹⁴ We were supposed to be transported to Russia in September, but since we spoke Serbian, we remained in Germany. A Russian committee arrived on September 25th... all Slavs were allowed to return to Yugoslavia, but the Volksdeutsche had to stay in Germany. On November 18th we went to the train station into the American zone, through Württemberg, and towards Stuttgart. We arrived in the town of Wahlheim, Ludwigsburg County (Trautner 1964, 31-48).¹⁵

wieder nach Jugoslawien zurückfahren sollten. Durch Intervention von "serbischen Offizieren," die den Zug stoppten, mit der Vorwarnung, was sie hinter der Grenze erwartet, ging der Transport zurück nach Ried. In Österreich blieben sie bis zum 26.08.1946. Sie endeten schließlich in Wilhelmshütte, Kreis Biedenkopf in Hessen."

- 13 "Sofort kam Oberleutnant W. aus Hannover... und sagte: Der Krieg ist verloren für Deutschland. Es gehen Millionen nach Deutschland. Ihr Volksdeutschen werdet hier elend zugrunde gehen, nie ein Recht haben. Kommt alle mit. Heute ist die letzte Gelegenheit! ... Am 6. November 1944 um 10 Uhr Vormittag... wir fuhren bis Banova Jaruga, dort blieben wir 9 Tage. Am 15 November ... fuhren wir in Richtung Agram (Zagreb). Von dort über Wien, Breslau, Namslau wo wir am 17 November ankamen."
- 14 Some zones were exchanged between the Allies in the summer of 1945.
- 15 "Wir kamen mit unseren Wagen und Pferden nach Windischmarkowitz (Schlesien)... es war Januar 1945 als wir von Schlesien weg nach dem Westen fuhren... Im April kamen die amerikanischen Truppen und besetzen Dornheim... wir mussten in ein Barackenlager nach Arnstadt... danach kamen die Russen... Im September... sollten wir nach Russland transportiert werden, weil wir serbisch sprechen konnten... blieben wir in Deutschland. Am 25 September kam eine russische Kommission... alle slawische Menschen dürfen nach Jugoslawien, die

Konrad Kehl and his family remained in Stuttgart until 1952, when he moved to Windsor, Canada, where many members of his family already lived.

It is evident here that the evacuation was accomplished in an organized manner but with different waves and different directions. At first, families with children were transported to East Srijem, from where they were put on trains or carriage convoys through Hungary and Burgenland when they reached Austria. The second and final wave of Hrastovac residents' evacuation was expedited via the recommendation of the German command and was implemented independently by the remaining residents, who were taking the railway route through Zagreb and, contrary to the first wave of evacuation, they arrived in Silesia. Some of them later reached Upper Austria, and after the war, they were relocated into the Western zones of divided Germany. Most of Hrastovac and the Ilova valley residents ultimately arrived in Hessen, Offenbach County (Weisskirchen, Seligenstadt, Heinberg, and Dudenhofen), where some of them were included in the work of the Protestant aid committee for Germans from Yugoslavia (HIKO, no. 150). Some of the evacuees moved later to Canada during the 1950s, particularly the province of Ontario, Windsor County.

7. The Parish Mali Bastaji

After the final abolition of the Military Frontier in 1881, part of Moslavina fell under the civilian authority of Croatia. After the colonization period, the new colonists arrived from South Hungary into villages inhabited by Serbs: Mali and Veliki Bastaji.¹⁶ Starting from 1885 they were arriving mostly from Bikala, Mekényes, Csikotosa, Kaposszekco, and Barcs in South Hungary (Lendl 1941, 28). Veliki Bastaji, along with the bodies of local governance and the Orthodox and Catholic churches, remained an important regional area in the vicinity southeast of Daruvar. Mali Bastaji developed into an exclusively German Protestant village. A few years later, several Lutheran families moved into the neighboring village of Miletinac, north of Mali Bastaji. Although these groups had somewhat better conditions for settling in than those in Hrastovac, the beginning of colonization was difficult, and many residents had to take loans so they could build their houses to improve their material welfare. At the turn of the century, a wave of workers went to the USA, returning to Bastaji after 3-5 years of working in America.

Volksdeutsche müssen in Deutschland bleiben. Am 18 November führen wir nach Bahnhof in die amerikanische Zone... durch... Württemberg... Richtung Stuttgart. Wir kamen nach Wahlheim Kreis Ludwigsburg.”

16 From the Latin root, bastion: “fortress, stronghold.”

During the initial years, religious life was, just like in Hrastovac, reduced to a few visitations by a vicar from a larger parish (Osijek or Slatina); weddings were performed by the vicar from Hrastovac, and in exceptional situations baptisms were performed by Orthodox priests from Veliki Bastaji. Religious lectures and classes were also given by educated, literate laypeople. However, the confessional German school was unable to start holding classes for almost 20 years, and the determining role in the final establishment of religious life had the mission of St. Chrischona from Basel, as well as its vicars and preachers - so-called "Levites." In cooperation with the colporteurs of the *British Bible Society*, Bibles and Christian literature were also able to reach believers in Bastaji at the time. The first place of worship was built between 1907 and 1908, when the first vicar, Adam Merny, came to town, but he preferred to use of "Hungarian" language in teaching (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 195–196). He remained in town until the end of the war when, following after many other Hungarian pastors, left for Hungary in 1920.

In the difficult time of World War I, for which some of the men from Bastaji were mobilized, the office of vicar was taken by Ferdinand Dully from Nova Pazova. Until he took that office as vicar and teacher, he and his wife ran the *Syloah* orphanage, which was initially operating in Nova Pazova. During the attempts to relocate this institution into the new Danube Swabian settlement of "Ciganka"¹⁷ near Virovitica, in the autumn of 1919 the orphanage was robbed, probably by the deserters from the Austro-Hungarian army, the so-called: "Green Cadres," so that the care for the orphanage had to be replaced again to Nova Pazova (Hudjetz-Loeber 1984, 69–70; Wild 1980, 277). With Ferdinand Dully ordered classes in the German language started, and his work led his parish into a decade of spiritual and cultural renewal. In 1932 he was transferred into the German Protestant settlement of Dubrava (Koenigsfeld) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then as the vicar to Bastaji came Karl Mittermayer and he stayed there between 1933 and 1935. He took on the work of Dully with an emphasis on the youth work. Three years later he was also appointed as the head of the orphanage in Nova Pazova, which he took care of together with his family and which he led through the later period of evacuation and integration in Germany after 1944 (Kemle 1987, 10–13; HIKO, no. 107).

In September of 1935, Jakob Abrell came from Nova Pazova to Mali Bastaji as the last vicar of Bastaji.¹⁸ His ministry was characterized by starting a choir, but also by strong opposition to representatives and activities of the nationalist movement of so-called "Erneuern" or "Restorers" and the KWVD group, which

17 Today, Josipovo near Sopje.

18 Jakob Abrell, born in 1896, served as vicar in Stari Jankovci from September 1st 1924 until 1930, after which he was teacher for religious education in the municipality of Nova Pazova until 1935 (HIKO, no. 143).

founded a branch in Bastaji in 1936 (Oberkersch 1989, 292).¹⁹ The reason for this struggle lies in the fact that the Restorers attempted to alienate the youth from the church community, which they considered not to be nationalistic enough in terms of the German national-socialist ideology. Bethke (2009, 520–525) describes this conflict as it was described by one of the KWVD's representatives in the following way: "Local preacher's (Abrell) attitude toward the *Movement* is incomprehensible and sad," and "Pastor Abrell was 'our greatest opponent' for the KWVD branch there. Abrell was especially keen on comparing KWVD to communism."²⁰ The same claim was made later on during a hearing by the representative of the German nation's community in the NDH, Branimir Altgayer: "The Protestant preacher Abrel who had (until that point) been an opponent of the 'Kulturbund' and caused it many grievances, particularly in terms of organizing the youth" (Geiger 1999, 619). Due to the shortage of ordained preachers and as the request made by Senior Anton Walter, at the end of 1941 Abrell was allowed, by the bishop, to start performing all functions as an ordained minister.²¹

With the coming of war and the establishment of the NDH, as well as increasingly frequent attacks of Partisans on the surrounding German villages, the circumstances for the residents of Bastaji became increasingly dangerous. Oberkersch describes the attacks and fighting around Mali Bastaji in the spring and summer, especially on June 5th, 1942. Three local Germans were killed and 16 of them were deported, three of which have been released, and the rest of them have never returned. Abrell's role in this attack is emphasized in the chronicles, "Local defenses were unable to stop the Partisans... and the local church building (house of prayer) where the vicar was desperately defending himself, was burned down."²²

19 "Kultur und Wohlfahrts Verein der Deutschen" was a strong nationalistic German group in Croatia with sympathies towards the Third Reich, and the Restorers were the same, except their emphasis was on Vojvodina and on their desire to take control over Dunabu Swabian organizations, which they have successfully done in 1939. The KWVD branch in Bastaji was founded on May 26th in Mali Bastaji.

20 "Unverständlich und bedauerlich ist das Verhältnis des Ortspredigers (Abrell) zur Bewegung." und: "Für die dortige KWVD-Ortgruppe war der Pastor (Abrell), Anfang 1939 'unser grösster Gegner.' Insbesondere schreckte Abrell nicht davor zurück, die KWVD mit dem Kommunismus gleichzusetzen."

21 A copy of an extract from negotiation documents from the regional church council on September 18th and 19th, 1941 in Zagreb (HIKO, no. 143). The license involved wearing the mantle.

22 "Der Ortsschutz... konnte die Partisanen... nicht abwehren... Das Gemeindehaus, das evangelische Bethaus, in dem sich der evangelische Pfarrer verzweifelt verteidigte, gingen im Flammen unter." Oberkersch's reports from homeland books differ in terms of reports about the deceased. Oberkersch (1989, 424–425) mentions that that day: "15 Menschen aus Bastaji verschleppt wurden ohne jemals zurück zu kommen." ("Fifteen people were taken away and they never returned again.").

Bethke and Heppenheimer also mention Abrell's leading role in the defense of the settlement against Partisan attacks (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 220–226; Bethke 2009, 525). Therefore, the evacuation of the settlement was just a matter of time. After being called to Osijek to report as the representative of the German ethnic group in the NDH, Abrell and his family left Mali Bastaji in 1942. Until their evacuation in November 1944, he served as vicar for the Osijek Parish. Senior Anton Walter and he visited Lutheran congregations in Slavonia, where he served and provided them with pastoral care. He even visited the remaining members of the congregation in Mali Bastaji on May 2nd, 1943 and baptized five children here (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 220–226).

7.1. *The History of Evacuation of Bastaji*

After a long and severe attack on the village on August 18th, 1943, it was clear that the residents would not be able to endure much longer.²³ The military circumstances became rapidly worsened for the troops in Moslavina, particularly in the autumn of 1943. The Partisans were becoming more and more determined in their attacks on towns with German population in Western Slavonia (Calic 2014, 147–149). This is why in 1944 evacuation was organized for areas around Daruvar, which was carried out in several phases and groups.²⁴ First, all the ablemen from Daruvar have been mobilized to the army. Then a group of evacuated residents from Bastaji, along with those from Miletinac and Špišić Bukovica, was sent to their first post in Lovac municipality, near Vukovar in Srijem.²⁵ According to evacuation plan, Lovas was evacuated with all local Germans. Most of them went with carriage convoys, and only the weakest traveled by train to Osijek, through Hungary and Austria (from November 7th), until all the groups finally reached upper Austria at the end of November (Braunau am Inn, Wildshut and St. Pantaleon). A smaller number of them were transported by train from Vukovar to the region of Rostock in the far north of Germany.

Thanks to the German background of their ancestors, the residents of Bastaji who entered into Soviet-controlled zones in the summer of 1946, have not been deported to Yugoslavia, where they would surely face tragic consequences. They managed to take a train towards Hessen, into the ancient province of their an-

23 The town was attacked by four Partisan units (Ivković et al. 2010, 330–331).

24 “Kein Teil der ehemaligen deutschen Volksgruppe im gesamten donauschwäbischen Siedlungsgebiet konnte so geordnet und zahlreich in Sicherheit gebracht werden wie die Deutschen aus Kroatien” (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 235). (“Not a single part of the former German Volksgruppe in the Danube Swabian areas was so neatly and numerically evacuated as was the case with Germans from Croatia.”).

25 Today, this is a border area between Croatia and Serbia.

cestors in the region of Offenbach (Obertshausen, Weisskirchen, Büdingen, and Seligenstadt), where over the years they were joined by other evacuated residents originating from Western Slavonia, Moslavina, and Bilogora (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 242–245).

8. Smaller German Protestant Branches in the Ilova Valley

8.1. *Kapetanovo Polje*

This settlement that is situated northwest of Pakrac in the ownership of Josef Reiser was colonized by German Protestants from “Swabian Turkey” between 1873 and 1882, who were later joined by German Catholics from border areas of Bohemian and Bavarian forest areas. They reached an agreement with the landowner in 1891 (Wild 1984, 358; Benković 2012/2013, 37). According to the first census after colonization in 1890, the settlement was inhabited by 204 Protestants (Lutheran), 163 Catholics, and four Jews, making the population 95% German (Wild 1984, 358; Benković 2012/2013, 37). In 1891 the last German regional religious school was established in the settlement, and two years later it was given an operating license by the Croatian government, and it remained until the German settlers went from here in 1944 (Lendl 1941, 48; Oberkersch 1989, 113, 123).

The school was also used as a place of worship, and the settlement, along with the neighboring Stržičevac which did not have a church or a school, became the first branch of the Hrastovac parish, whose vicar, due to distance, seldom visited the parishioners.²⁶ After World War I, the branch eventually fell under the parish of Pakrački Antunovac (Wild 1984, 358). Current sources mention two names in the period of World War I: Ferdinand Dully as a Levite/teacher, and around 1921 Robert Gustav Ruthki as a teacher. At the beginning of the 20th century, Italian Catholics from the Furlania (Friaul) province colonized the settlement, and their descendants remain there until today. Reverend Michael Walter, who ended up in Austria after the evacuation, was their last teacher and pastor. The only currently available report about the evacuation is the one by Johann Reidel from Canada:

Johann Reidel was one of the few villagers in Kapetanovo Polje who could read and write in German and Croatian. As per Johann's daughter, Christine very few Kapetanovo's ethnic Germans could speak Croatian or Serbian. The German Army ordered a 24-hour evacuation notice after the Partisans threatened the town. They left Kapetanovo Polje on the 1st of February 1944. As a group leader of the Kapetanovo Polje refugee caravan, Johann Reidel took the safety of all expellees to his heart. This caravan was the only refugee

26 Korpiaho (1998, 91) mentions that Johannes Haas, teacher from Hrastovac, visited Protestants in Kapetanovo Polje around 1886.

colon that was not bombed by the British air force, even though the planes flew low overhead but they passed by. The route zig-zagged via Pakrac, to Surtchin in Slovenia?? (Sic)[Srijem], from there to Budapest in Hungary and west to Vienna in Austria. From Vienna, the trek led to Linz in Austria and their destination at Dorf an der Pram. Herwig's aunt Christine recounted that they slept under the wagons in rain and snow during the six months route between Kapetanovo Polje and Austria. There were up to 2,000 people in that caravan at times. Good horses and good wagons survived the flight while others perished. Kapetanovo Polje's refugees mostly settled first in Austria at Dorf an der Pram near Scherding. The local farmers needed workers and the refugees were desperate for any kind of work in order to survive. Austrians made the refugees more welcome than destroyed Germany did. The Reidel-Pimiskern household remained a center of gravity for contact during those times. Many Kapetanovo's returning soldiers sought the news of their family's whereabouts. Herwig still recalls the trickle of gaunt faces coming and going desperately hoping for news about their loved ones. Herwig in turn desperately hoped that one of those faces would be his own dad, denying the fact that his father was killed back in 1942. Johann Reidel wrote the account on the 5th of August 1945. On the 5th of September 1951, the Reidel and Pimiskerns and other families left Dorf an der Pram for Canada (Pimiskern 2009).

Many German Protestants from Kapetanovo Polje settled, in Austria in Dorf an der Pram, where they arrived on November 5th, 1944 (Pimiskern) and partly in Germany and overseas as well (Canada, Argentina, USA) (Pimiskern and Pimiskern). It is unclear by what date did the last pastor serve in Kapetanovo Polje, and one (Internet) source contains and shows a photograph mentioning the village teacher Pimirskern, who was killed on April 20th, 1943 (Pimirskern).

8.2. *Branches and Settlements with a Small Number of Protestants*

The remaining Protestant church branches were settled in the remaining villages or, as was the case of the Kutina municipality, were part of congregations in mixed towns and cities. For pastoral or educational care, they are dependent on the main parishes or branches. Strižičevac was the neighboring municipality with a few German Protestant families, without a church and under the care of Kapetanovo Polje and Pakrački Antunovac.

Despite its closeness to Bršljanica, the town of Kutina was under the care of the parish municipality of Pakrački Antunovac. There was at first no school, but only a church building that was built with financial support from Germany and factory owner Daniel Rich. In 1914 a school was built as part of the church, and a bell tower was added in 1927. Before World War II the municipality had a little under 100 believers, but without a pastor of their own (Wild 1980, 358–359).²⁷

27 See also: *Evangelička (luterska) crkva u Republici Hrvatskoj*. „Crkvena općina Kutina“ <https://ecrh.hr/kutina/> (accessed on September 24, 2020).

In 1942 the Germans left Kutina as part of relocation together with the residents of Bršljanica and Mlinska (Oberkersch 1989, 388). Thanks to Edgar Popp and Franjo Peci, church work was partially restored after World War II, but only after the democratic changes in the 1990s, and with the help of a Finnish mission, the church was restored and today is a parish church. Miletinac was connected to Mali Bastaji, and there were also groups of German Protestants in the towns of Bjelovar, Daruvar, Velika Pisanica, and Blagorodovac (Župančić 2020a).

9. Pastors from the Ilova Valley Before and After Relocation and Evacuation

9.1. Abrell Jakob (Bastaji)

The evacuation path of the last vicar from Mali Bastaj, Abrell Jakob from Osijek, went into Upper Austria. In the first known lists of addresses of vicars from Yugoslavia, his name appears at the very top: he resided in Ingolstadt, Aventinstrasse number 60 (LKAS, *Popis župnika...*). Among 15 other Lutheran and Reformed vicars from Yugoslavia (among others, as part of church senior Karl Peter from Srijem is mentioned, as well as Ferdinand Sommer from Bosnia and Herzegovina), Abrell was mentioned even before the establishment of the *Protestant Aid Committee* (HIKO) in a Christmas card that was published in the Protestant church bulleting for the Urach church municipality in December 1946. In 1947-48 he was still residing in Ingolstadt, but at a different address (Donau 2, Preissingerstrasse 2, Bavaria, US-zona) (EZAB, *Popis župnika...*). He immediately joined the work of HIKO through distant pastoral care and preaching, but not under its jurisdiction. Due to an illness connected with a war injury, in September 1956 the 60-year-old preacher filed a request with the HIKO and with Bishop Franz Hein for a recommendation for an early retirement, which was subsequently approved (HIKO, no. 143).

9.2. Friedrich Johann (Mlinska)

Originally from Novo Selo near Vinkovci, he worked as a teacher and preacher in Gornja Mlinska from October 29th, 1941 until the end of the school year. On June 12th, 1942 he was “recalled.” According to available sources, he continued working as a Protestant religious education teacher in Styria, Austria (Bentz 1984, 109).

9.3. *Leinberger Heinrich (Bršljanica)*

He was born on February 11th, 1880 in the German Protestant settlement of Adoltsdorf in Croatia-Slavonia. In 1900 he began serving as a lay preacher. He attended the mission school in Katovice and was ordained in 1906. Between 1907 and 1912 he served as a missionary in Pleternica, near the city of Požega in Slavonia, as well as in Antunovac. From 1912 until 1920 he served as preacher in Branjevo, Bosna and Herzegovina, and from 1920 until October 1942 he served as vicar in the Zagreb municipality, as well as vicar in Bršljanica (Leinberger, *Službeno svjedočanstvo*). After the relocation, he arrived in Krummaw on the Danube, where he served as vicar of the Protestant church AV and HV in Austria until the end of the war.²⁸ Starting with August 1st, 1947, he was appointed as vicar for refugees in Leibnitz near Graz (Styria), in camps of Wagna and Peggau (Leinberger, *Dienstbestätigung...; Erlass an dem Flüchtlingsgeistlichen*). He was retired in 1955 and went on to live with his family in Marchtrenk near Wels in Austria, where he held Bible study lectures in the camp of Linz-Wegscheid until his death on September 6th, 1963.

9.4. *Leinberger Wilhelm*

Originally from Bršljanica, he was the last teacher in Hrastovac which conducted religious ceremonies, and, along with Pastor Tarczay, he was included in the registry books until 1944 (MU Garešnica: *Matične knjige...*). In 1944 he joined the evacuation from Hrastovac and, according to witness testimony, he ended up in the USA, and there is no record of him nor do any sources say that he participated in helping refugees.

9.5. *Tarczay Andreas (Antunovac)*

Andreas Tarczay was the former senior of the Upper Croatian Seniority of the German Protestant Church, vicar of the Pakrački Antunovac parish, and he was the acting vicar in the Hrastovac parish. In a multi-ethnic and linguistic region such as Western Slavonia and his field of work, he was the right person for Protestant Hungarians, Slovaks, and Germans. In one of their reports, the Young Christians' Associations from Saxony (Sächsische Jungenschaft), who visited the region in 1927, provide a good picture of this Lutheran vicar and senior: Andreas von Tarczay is a vicar of Hungarian descent and, according to his own words, a good German, good Hungarian, and a good Czech, who advocates the interests of all. At home he speaks Hungarian, he is also a "medical doctor" for the village,

28 Today, Češki Krumlov in Czechia.

speaks 13 languages, and has a theoretical and practical interest in all kinds of scientific fields (Bethke 2015, 210). After the war ended, he appeared in the Zagreb church municipality, where he began his preaching ministry. Though, it was evident that his theological orientation became riddled with communist ideology (he would begin worship services with the words, “Comrades, Amen”), the church board - the presbytery - invited vicar Edgar Popp, the son of the former, and murdered Bishop, to take over and lead the parish (Benković 2012/2013, 35). This fact was also confirmed in an interview with Mrs. Ingeborg Popp. She said that Tarczay had the ambition of taking over the church municipality in Zagreb after the war, but it soon became evident that he was aligning with the communist authorities. The congregation did not appreciate that, so they thanked him, and soon after that he left (Župančić 2020a).

Tarczay’s further fate is not completely clear: it is certain that he never continued serving as priest in the newly constituted Lutheran Church in Croatia and that he remained in the country with his family, which is evident in an excerpt from an interview with his granddaughter Sanja Tarczay (Silobrčić 2014):

Your last name, Tarczay, is pronounced, Tarcaj, right? Yes, Tarcaj, but my family’s actual last name is, Goldberger. Hills of gold. One of my ancestors wanted to become a doctor at the Austro-Hungarian official place. In order to achieve that, he had to belong to the nobility and have a Hungarian last name. He was a good doctor so he was awarded an aristocratic title for his merits and he changed his last name. He was admitted to the court. We have been Tarczay ever since. There is a street with our name in Budapest today. My grandfather was a Protestant priest in Pakrac, he spoke 11 languages. My dad was deaf, so was my mom. Dad was deaf from the consequences of the typhus fever, and Mom from meningitis. It was probably ruined by Streptomycin that was used to treat them. They obviously had a strong allergy to that antibiotic. I do not really know much about my family.

9.6. *Walter Michael (Kapetanovo Polje)*

Walter came from Bečmen in Srijem, and he had his education as a preacher in the German Protestant Church of Yugoslavia. He was part of the Kapetanovo Polje branch even before 1940 (Wild 1980, 358–359). Since January 1st, 1945, after the evacuation, he was temporarily hired by the Protestant Church in Austria as a pastor for the refugee camp near the parish municipalities of Linz and Gallneukirchen. Starting with 1950 he served as preacher and teacher in Lambach and the city of Stadl Paura (Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt 1950, 32; 1952, 52).

9.7. *The Returnees and Others*

A very small number of elderly people remained in the Protestant villages in the Ilova valley, and after the very end of the war, there were some attempts made, partly individually and partly encouraged by Austrian or Soviet authorities, to return Germans to Croatia and the Ilova valley (Oberkersch 1989, 465). A handful of residents of Mali Bastaji and Hrastovac, who was immediately sent away to the Krndija concentration camp where most of them eventually died (Ivković 2010, 332, 397–399). No one from mentioned pastors was involved in the return attempts, nor was there any or even possible exchange of information between those who remained in their former homeland and those who fled and were evacuated during the first post-war years.

Conclusion

Unlike the early German Protestants in the regions of Croatia-Slavonia, as well as those in Nova Pazova and municipalities in Srijem, the Protestants in the regions of Moslavina, Bilogora, and the Ilova valley were unable to develop a strong and thriving Protestant environment (milieu), or even a German intelligentsia for several reasons (Oberkersch 1989, 391).

First, the settlements and parishes were developed relatively late; in the second half of the 19th century, after the introduction of freedom of religious confessions in Croatia. The formation and establishment of parishes lasted until the beginning of the 20th century.²⁹ There was also a lack of vicars and teachers who would be also integrated into the surrounding culture. Many Levites from the Chrischona mission performed multiple tasks, and they were often replaced. They were also several periods of vacancies of sometimes years without a pastor, where the parishes and their branches were unable to make spiritual or cultural progress. It is also evident that, for the headquarters of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, this part of Croatia was not a priority or a mission field in the period before the demise of the Danube monarchy: partly due to the isolation of the region, but also due to a wish from Croatian authorities for more autonomy in church-related issues. During the initial years of the Yugoslav state after 1918, there was evident discrimination towards education in minority languages which was a big obstacle for the German Protestants. Between 1929 and 1939 German Protestants managed to enjoy a brief decade of rebuilding, and then a short time of big recognition in the NDH. These periods were too short to form a class of educated officials and academic ministers which would have a stronger impact

29 By that time in Croatia, only Nova Pazova, Vinkovačko Novo Selo, and Zagreb were able to establish and maintain church life.

on the German community. Besides, the majority of German peasantry had no interest in sending their children, after they finished elementary school, to gymnasium or universities, even though there was a German (Lutheran) gymnasium in Zagreb. In 1938 Mato Božičević (2010, 120–121), Croatian chronicler of the region, concluded that: “It is typical for residents of Hrastovac that in the last 70 years only one student was allowed by his parents to attend high school.”

Second, because of the difficult economic conditions, the first years of religious work for the churches did not allow for bigger cultural or educational development. The elementary school and classes were important to the residents, so that is why they were primarily building schools, but they lacked funding for teachers, so the Chrischona school had to take over the payments during that period. Insisting on holding classes in the German language, for example in Hrastovac and Kapetanovo Polje, put an additional limitation on the residents’ already modest material assets.

The third reason was the dispersion and ethnic and confessional mixture in the settlements and parishes in the region. Out of all Protestant municipalities in the region, only a few of them were purely German, such as Hrastovac and Mali Bastaji, which were fairly distant for the time and separated politically and administratively. Despite great efforts, especially undertaken by church authorities, to help German Protestants connect, it was still difficult to homogenize the communities throughout such administratively divided regions as the Ilova valley, which was later reflected in different paths taken during relocation and evacuation (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 145).

Eventually, every settlement that originated from Hessen had its own special and distinctive history. So, the Mlinska branch had already been evacuated in 1942. The 15 km distant main municipality of Hrastovac got evacuated in 1944 in two waves and different directions, with multiple residential spots in different areas throughout the Empire’s territory at the time (Hoffmann et al. 1990, 102; Kirche und Volk 1942, 81). Moslavina, Bilogora, and Western Slavonia were becoming increasingly unstable regions for the German population in World War II. Almost all pastors, teachers, and vicars, except for Tarczay, were forced to relocate and they continued their work in the Protestant churches in Austria and Germany. In the end, the residents ended up in the following places:

- Bastaji: Lower Austria, Vogtland/Sachsen and Mecklenburg; and later, Hessen.
- Mlinska: Wartheland (occupied Poland), Austria (Styria); later, Hessen
- Hrastovac: Upper Austria and Silesia; later, Hessen, Canada, and the USA
- Kapetanovo Polje: Dorf an der Pram and overseas
- Bršljanica/Selište: Warthegau and Upper Austria.

The history of settlement, church organization, and relocation of German Protestants from the area of Bilogora and Moslavina has long been neglected in domestic historiography due to political reasons, while in German scientific research it remained on the margins of the history of German refugee history after the World War II. However, due to the adequate care for archives and nurture of memories and the written word by societies and associations of exiled Germans, we have today enough traces to illuminate this period of origin, development, and survival of Protestant churches in Croatia.

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Vatroslav Župančić

**Njemački evangelici u područjima Moslavine i Bilogore, II. dio:
Iseljnja, evakuacije i dušobrižnici**

Sažetak

Članak istražuje naseljavanje njemačkih evangelika na područja Moslavine i Bilogore nakon donošenja Protestantskog patenta i konfesionalne liberalizacije u drugoj polovici 19. stoljeća. Isprva se istražuje regionalno porijeklo doseljenika (kolonista), a zatim se prati razvoj njihovih crkvenih zajednica i župa. Nakon toga, opisuju se konkretna naselja s njemačkom evangeličkom apsolutnom ili relativnom većinom te povijesne okolnosti u kojima se odvijalo njihovo crkveno organiziranje. Na kraju, kroz izvore, literaturu i govornu historiju (intervjue) istražuju se procesi preseljenja i evakuacije njemačkih naseljenika i evangelika s ovih prostora te sudbine njihovih pastora i propovjednika tijekom i nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata. Zbog opsega istraživanja, članak je podijeljen na dva dijela. U prvome je dijelu naglasak bio na naseljavanju, konfesionalnoj pozadini naseljenika te osnivanju dviju prvih velikih župa u ovome kraju, a u ovome dijelu opisuju se ostale župe i filijale, njihov razvoj te etape odlaska, kao i opis djelovanja njihovih posljednjih duhovnih radnika.