

A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe

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Throughout modern European history, ethnic cleansing has been the single most important cause of mass flight. Therefore, the causes, mechanisms and consequences of ethnic cleansing deserve special attention in the study of refugees and refugee history. When the war in former Yugoslavia erupted, the western media adopted the term “ethnic cleansing” (in Serbian “etničko čišćenje”) as novel in their presentation of the atrocities committed there between 1991 and 1995. On track of the media, social scientists and historians picked up the term, and produced a large array of publications about ethnic cleansing that range from introductory articles to profound monographs.¹ The geographical area, time periods and cases covered grew rapidly.

Initially, most English language books about ethnic cleansing focused on former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe.² There is also an increasing number of publications on

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1 One of the first academic publications that used the term was Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing”, in: *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993), pp. 110- 121. Among these monographs are Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Benjamin Lieberman, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe*, Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2006. See for a typology of ethnic cleansing Stéphane Rosière, *Le nettoyage ethnique, terreur et peuplement*, Paris: Ellipses, 2006. An earlier version of this article was published in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. All data and sources used here have been explored for my book: *The Dark Side of Nation States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, New York: Berghahn Press, 2014 and the earlier German version that was published in 2011. Since then, a number of synthetic studies on refugee history has appeared. Noteworthy for its global perspective and crowning a long career is Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe since 1492*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. It is also worth reading older books, especially Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

2 See for example Terry Martin, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing”, in: *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998), pp. 813-861; J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999. Regarding Nazi Germany the focus was always on genocide, but books published in the 1990s showed the connections between Nazi resettlements, ethnic cleansing and the Holocaust. Most important in this regard was Götz Aly, *“Endlösung”. Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden*, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1995.

non-European cases such as India, Palestine or the Americas.³

The fashionable status of the term ethnic cleansing in the media and academia has had the advantage that empirical knowledge has vastly increased. But there is the drawback that sometimes the term has been overextended to cover any kind of inter-communal violence and time spans, when neither an ethnically exclusive definition of the nation nor modern administrations to carry out mass scale population movements existed.⁴ Both preconditions of ethnic cleansing came into being only in the second half of the nineteenth century. This does not mean one should ignore earlier periods. In certain parts of the world, there were already earlier incidents of “cleansing”, but they were driven by different, often religious motivations.

The danger of overstretching the term can be avoided if a fairly narrow definition is provided. Ethnic cleansing is always directed at a particular group that is defined through its nationality and/or ethnicity. The goal of ethnic cleansing is to permanently remove a group from the area it inhabits. The power of deciding who is a part of this group rests upon the state or the institutions that carry out the process of mass removal. Groups or individuals have usually no opportunity to declare a different ethnicity or to prevent their removal. Ethnic cleansing is always organized and therefore requires the existence of an effective administration. There is a popular dimension to ethnic cleansing, because there are actors needed to threaten with violence, to evict homes, organize mass transports and to prevent the return of the unwanted. Nevertheless, ethnic cleansing is a modern, rationally-planned administrative practice that needs to be steered from above. In this way, it can be distinguished from inter-communal violence. A third defining element beyond the motivation and the process is a spatial dimension. Ethnic cleansing always covers large areas and often large distances. The removal of a group is connected with a precise idea of the territory to which it can be sent and which is usually imagined as an external or “true” national homeland.

This spatial dimension is also a first way to distinguish ethnic cleansing from genocide, which often happened on the spot if there was no territory to which the enemy group could be deported. Another way of distinguishing between ethnic cleansing and genocide

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3 On India, see especially Ian Talbot’s chapter in Richard Bessel and Claudia B. Haake(eds.), *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. On Palestine and Israel see especially the work by Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

4 See as example for overstretching and unclear boundaries to other concepts Daniele Conversi, “Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing and Nationalism”, in: Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, London: Sage, 2006, pp. 320-333.

is the primary intent. The main goal of ethnic cleansing was the removal of a group from a certain territory, the main intent of genocide the destruction of an entire nation. Recent publications on the 1948 UN convention on genocide do not keep that distinction.⁵ In the 1990s began a trend of enlarging the scope of the term and the 1948 UN convention. If that continues, almost every modern war and many cases of inter-communal violence would have to be acknowledged as having genocidal dimensions. But acknowledgement is a normative goal, not a scientific one, and it might ultimately result in the conflation of the Holocaust. Also for analytical purposes, it is better to distinguish crimes and horrors apart. Genocide and ethnic cleansing, even if it escalated into mass killing, resulted in a different kind of victimization as well as numbers and proportions of casualties.

Another important component of ethnic cleansing is the attempt to replace the cleansed population with new settlers and thus to homogenize the population until it reaches the aspired ethnic purity. Taking into account the other side of homogenizing practices also allows us to look beyond the immediate removal of people which is often taken as the end point in studies of ethnic cleansing. Furthermore, one can distinguish variants of ethnic cleansing. If it is carried out over existing or newly erected state borders, it can be often termed “expulsion”, whereas if it is carried out within state borders, it is a “deportation”. Most cases of ethnic cleansing were based on international agreements, but there also was ethnic cleansing during wars or to reach a *fait accompli* in view of expected contractual solutions.

Origins and preconditions of ethnic cleansing

Although ethnic cleansing became a catchword, modern nationalism can be seen as a major precondition and obvious motive of ethnic cleansing.⁶ The older and normatively-grounded distinction between civic, or subjective, political, western and hence basically “good” nationalism and ethnic, cultural, eastern European and therefore “bad” nationalism is not helpful for the discussion. A major step towards ethnic cleansing was the Darwinist turn in the late nineteenth century. According to the biologist concept of the nation, minorities were perceived as harmful to the organism or body of the nation.

A second precondition of ethnic cleansing was the concept of the modern nation-state. Already in the Enlightenment one sees the conviction that a centralized, mono-linguistic

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5 See Martin Shaw, *What is Genocide?*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007

6 See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Program, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 133.



state would function better than the traditional empires. Second, the idea of popular sovereignty implied a different, much closer relationship between the state and the people it rules. There were no intermediary institutions like in feudal regimes, but direct accountability. If the people can hold their acclaimed or elected leaders to account, these leaders can ask for a different kind of loyalty. In the nineteenth century the idea of the nation-state was connected with the expectation that the problem of ethnic diversity would solve itself through assimilation, with all subjects of a state eventually becoming French, German, Italian, etc. The first concrete proposals of ethnic cleansing came up when the liberal (and later Marxist) expectation of assimilation was proven wrong.

By and large, one can apply the rule that the later the nation-state formation occurred, the more contested and violent it was. Especially after World War I, the French centralized nation state was seen as the model of how to run a state. This brought the state almost automatically into conflicts with its minorities and with other countries. The very term “minority problems”, which can be found in numerous international discussions and conferences about the post-World War I order, already signifies who was seen as the culprit for Europe’s major problems. Although additional conventions in the Paris peace treaties promised the protection of minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, the only minority right which was effectively put into practice was the “right of option” to migrate to the external nation state in case of border changes such as after the treaties of St. Germain, Trianon and Neuilly.⁷ Moreover, in the treaties of Neuilly and Sèvres paragraphs concerning protection of minorities were already combined with provisions for their “emigration”. On paper, the relocation was supposed to be voluntary, but the treaty of Neuilly was made compulsory when minorities resisted. Hence, over the course of time, emigration was given priority over protection in order to homogenize the newly created nation-states. Often this has been explained by a supposedly ethnic and violent character of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. But in 1918/19, the established western European nation-states avoided the acknowledgment of minorities all together. These double standards contributed to the desire of the newly created “minority states” to become “real”, i.e. homogenous nation-states.⁸

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7 See Eric D. Weitz, “From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations and Civilizing Missions”, in: *The American Historical Review* 113/5 (2008), pp. 1313-1343.

8 On the treaties and the resistance to them, see Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 236-264.

A third pivotal factor was the development of *population policy*. Already in the late nineteenth century, European states (the German Empire being the first one) began to manipulate the demographic structures of contested border regions. At this time, and later in the policy of various nation-states in the interwar period, the main means of homogenization was the settlement of additional groups. When the borders changed, these groups were the first to be targeted as unwanted and forced to emigrate. The ethnic engineering depended upon precise statistics, population counts and a clear-cut distinction between titular nation and minorities. Since the 1870s, these statistics were created all over Europe and were brought to perfection even in countries which were commonly perceived as backward. As various population statistics show, every single soul and even newborn children were counted according to their nationality. Around the turn of the century, especially the British insisted on “ethnological arguments” for drawing nation-state boundaries in post-imperial spaces such as South-Eastern Europe. In this way, national belonging was objectivized, and groups could be singled out for various measures. All of these factors can be summarized under the term of “European modernity”.⁹ The attribute “European” is important, for it was this continent where the first and so far most ethnic cleansing occurred.

Periods of ethnic cleansing

In the history of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century one can distinguish four major periods. The first one lasted from the Balkan Wars in 1912 to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Compared to later ethnic cleansing the number of removed people was limited. But this period resulted in an international consensus, that ethnic cleansing is a means to stabilize the international order and single nation-states. The second period began with the Treaty of Munich in 1938 and was continued under German hegemony over continental Europe until 1944. There were two kinds of ethnic cleansing, one under direct German occupation, the other one carried out by the countries allied with Germany. The third period of ethnic cleansing resulted from the postwar order of Europe decided at the Conference of Tehran and thereafter. This period, which brought by far the most numerous ethnic cleansing, also affected large areas beyond Europe, especially the Indian subcontinent and Palestine. The fourth period happened in the first half of the 1990s, but it affected only the former Yugoslavia and some contested border regions in the former Soviet Union.

9 This thought is a continuation of Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. See also Amir Weiner (ed.) *Landscaping the Human Garden*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

In terms of numbers and area the fourth period is of minor relevance compared to earlier ones. But it is important because it helped to create an international consensus against ethnic cleansing and even attempts to reverse previous flight and expulsion.

Some books on ethnic cleansing reach far back into the nineteenth century. Although it is true that hundreds of thousands of people were already expelled during the various wars against the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus and in the Balkan peninsula, several aspects of modern ethnic cleansing were missing. The persecution of Muslims mostly occurred during wartime, when people could still attempt to escape to the woods and then return to their homes. For a long time, the newly-created nation states in South-Eastern Europe were too disorganized to carry out a consistent population policy through settling and unsettling. Moreover, the various postwar migrations of Muslims were driven not only by push, but also by pull factors such as the Sultan's call to his Muslim subjects as *Mubacir* to come home to the country where they could freely practice their religion.¹⁰ The prominence of religion is a specific aspect of all the "wars against the Turks", a chiffre often used for all Southeast European Muslims. There are also other parallels between the *Reconquista* on the Spanish peninsula and the or Habsburg policy in the areas reconquered from the Ottoman Empire in Hungary in the eighteenth century. No Muslims stayed in the lands conquered by the Habsburgs, even converts were often driven out. The situation was more complicated in the Caucasus in 1860-64 and 1876-78, and in the Balkans, some Muslims were allowed to stay there. Nevertheless, around two million Muslims had to leave their homelands and turned the Ottoman Empire into the state receiving most refugees on a global level. The violence, massacres and expulsions were driven by a mixture of fear of and orientalist contempt for "the Turks".¹¹ In this way, the persecution of Muslims was decidedly modern and secular.

The first period of ethnic cleansing (1912-1925)

The Balkan Wars in 1912/13 brought three major changes. Henceforth, ethnic distinctions clearly prevailed over the Christian-Muslim divide. The conflicts between ethnically-defined Christian nations were as violent as the persecution of Turks. The ethnic cleansing

10 See Alexandre Toumarkine, *Les migrations des populations musulmanes balkaniques en Anatolie 1876-1913*, Istanbul: Isis, 1995.

11 For the issue of colonialism and genocide see Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, Providence: Berghahn, 2008.

was more pervasive in total numbers and in regard to the proportion of minorities which were allowed to remain in their homes. The uprooting of unwanted minorities was combined with the resettlement of members of the titular nation. Especially near external borders, nation-states carried out a population policy to demographically secure these areas. Hence, one could argue that the Balkan Wars marked the beginning of organized ethnic cleansing. Over all, up to 900,000 people had to leave permanently their homelands as a consequence of these two wars.¹² In 1914, Greece and the Ottoman Empire took up negotiations about a voluntary “exchange of populations” across the Aegean Sea, which can already be seen as precursor of the Lausanne treaty.

The outbreak of World War I led to a preliminary decrease of forced migration between the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor, because the borders were now closed and all the countries involved had other military and strategic priorities. But ethnic cleansing continued in other areas of Europe and on a larger scale. The Russian Empire deported one million Germans and Jews, who were regarded as potential traitors. Similar attitudes and fears of further territorial dismemberment motivated the genocide of the Armenians in Ottoman Eastern Anatolia. In contrast to cases of ethnic cleansing, the Armenians were not expelled to their external homeland, but deported into the Syrian desert or semi-desert in the Anatolian highlands. This deportation into the void resulted in more than one million casualties, and was the first genocide in modern Europe. The Russian Revolution, the pogroms in the former Pale of Settlement and the continued fighting in a broad zone from Lithuania in the north to Thrace in the south of Eastern Europe motivated two millions to leave their homelands. Although this mass flight was not a planned ethnic cleansing, it further demonstrated how endangered minorities were.

The persecution of Jews contributed to the establishment of collective minority rights in the Paris Peace treaties.¹³ But these rights were only valid for the newly-created or expanded nation states in Central and Eastern Europe. Especially France carried out a very different policy in its newly acquired territories. In formerly German Alsace and Lorraine, the population was divided into four different categories, ranging from trustworthy French to Germans. Around 150,000 of the half million people belonging to the category “D” (which basically meant Germans) were pushed over the Rhine. Although this signifies that only a third of those presumed to be Germans were expelled, the French “épuration” in Alsace set negative standards for the interwar period.

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12 See for all numbers, Ther, *The Dark Side*, pp. 57-64.

13 See Fink, *Defending the rights*, pp. 193-208.

Under the guidance of the Western powers, another precedent was set at the Paris peace conference. In 1919, Bulgaria was forced to sign a peace treaty that included a convention about the “reciprocal emigration” of the Greek minority in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian minority in Greece. Paradoxically, this provision was a part of the stipulations about minority protection.¹⁴ The treaty of Sèvres set up a similar provision for Greeks and Turks living on both sides of the future border in Asia Minor. Initially the convention of Neuilly did not result in mass migration because the registration for emigration was on a voluntary basis. But the scenario changed with the arrival of the refugees from Asia Minor. The Greek government settled many refugees on purpose in the contested Greek borderlands with Bulgaria. This set off the local social and ethnic balance and added pressure for the so called *Slavophoni* to emigrate. When a commission of the League of Nations was called in to analyse the causes of the widespread local violence in 1925, it recommended that emigration should have priority over minority protection.¹⁵ Subsequently 102,000 Bulgarians or around half of the Slavic speaking minority left Greece, and 53,000 Greeks left Bulgaria.

By then, the Treaty of Lausanne had set an even more ominous precedent. Under the auspices of the international community of states, Greece and Turkey agreed upon the compulsory exchange of minorities. All Muslims had to leave Greece, all Christians had to leave Turkey with the only exceptions of Western Thrace and Istanbul. Although Turkey is often blamed for this first case of ethnic cleansing that covered almost the entire territory of two countries, it was Lord Curzon who set it on the agenda of the negotiations in Lausanne.¹⁶ Moreover, Lausanne should be seen as a continuation of the Treaty of Sèvres, which also proposed a mass migration over the future border. Only in the second half of the 1920s did mass flight and resettlement recede and the new order of nation states was stabilized. By then, the Treaty of Lausanne contributed to creating an international consensus that mass and compulsory population “transfers” were a last resort but a useful means to stabilize the international order of nation-states.

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14 See the respective paragraphs of the treaty in H.W.V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, Vol. V. Economic Reconstruction and Protection of Minorities*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 317.

15 See about this commission Stelios Nestor, “Greek Macedonia and the Convention of Neuilly”, *Balkan Studies* 3 (1962), pp. 169-184, here p. 181. See about the entire situation the recent and very thorough study by Elisabeth Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchanges in Greek Macedonia: The Forced Resettlement of Refugees, 1922-1930*, New York: Oxford UP, 2006.

16 See *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs 1922-23. Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace*, London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1923, p. 118.

Ethnic cleansing under the hegemony of Nazi Germany (1938-1944)

The second period of ethnic cleansing began with the Munich Treaty in 1938. This treaty symbolizes the appeasement of Nazi Germany, which was allowed to annex the borderlands of Czechoslovakia. But the significance and the consequences of the Munich Treaty go far beyond the case of the Sudeten Germans. The four major European powers basically decided upon a new peace order for Europe. In future, states and societies should be separated by ethnic boundaries. Minorities had the choice to emigrate or to assimilate. Minority protection as a central element of the Paris peace treaties was abandoned, and only the “right of option” was preserved. The groundbreaking character of the Munich Treaty is also shown by the fact that the four signatory powers stipulated additionally that Czechoslovakia and Hungary should agree upon a new border within three months. This new European order led to a first round of compulsory mass migrations, at first of around 190,000 Czechs,¹⁷ in 1939 of other nationalities in addition. Hitler’s ideas of “European security” for the Central and South-Eastern parts of the continent were based on similar premises: the creation of ethnic boundaries based on “exchange of populations” or one-sided population transfers.

Between 1938 and 1941, the German Empire vastly expanded the German *Lebensraum* by expelling Poles, Slovenes and other Slavic nations. There also was ethnic cleansing in the territories retrieved from France in the West. The Jews in the occupied areas suffered another and even worse fate: mass shootings, deportation and eventually industrialized killing in death camps. But the history of the Holocaust is left aside here in view of the specific attention it deserves. In Southeastern Europe, which at the time was mostly ruled or occupied by countries allied with Germany (Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria), Hitler’s ideas of European security were put into practice by bilateral contracts for population exchanges or one-sided population transfers. Those countries had to organize the ethnic cleansing themselves.

Hitler’s primary arena for ethnic cleansing carried out by Germans was the territory annexed from Poland. The initial idea was to push out the Polish population and to replace

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17 Jan Gebhart, “Migrationsbewegungen der tschechischen Bevölkerung in den Jahren 1938-39, Forschungsstand und offene Fragen,” in: Detlef Brandes et al. (eds.), *Erzwungene Trennung. Vertreibungen und Aussiedlungen in und aus der Tschechoslowakei 1938-1947 im Vergleich mit Polen, Ungarn und Jugoslawien*, Essen: Klartext, 1999, pp. 11-22.



them with German “resettlers”. This also was a major motivation for the various treaties with Italy, the Baltic States, the Soviet Union and Romania about the resettlement of German minorities. When Hitler announced the first “*Heim ins Reich*” (home to the empire) plans in the summer of 1939, he still wanted to appear as a peace loving statesman, who created a new European order through ethnic boundaries. As it turned out, the various German resettlers, who numbered around half a million,¹⁸ were mostly transported to the “Warthegau”, the main area annexed from Poland in 1939. Shortly before and immediately upon their arrival, Poles were driven over the border to free apartments and farms for the German resettlers. All in all, around 365,000 Polish citizens had to leave their homelands between the fall of 1939 and spring of 1941.¹⁹

Compared to the original plans of the Nazis, the numbers of people actually removed were small. The situation was similar in northern Slovenia, where, according to the plans of Reinhard Heydrich, 260,000 Slovenes were supposed to be pushed out, but eventually only 30,000 had to leave. The reasons for the limited ethnic cleansing were mostly practical. The Nazi authorities in the main part of occupied Poland, the *Generalgouvernement*, did not know what to do with the arriving expellees from the Warthegau and West Prussia. Since they could not provide shelter, food and jobs, the occupation administration repeatedly protested against further mass migration. The second reason was the priority to keep the war economy intact and to prepare the impending attack on the Soviet Union. The third reason was the priority of the destruction of the European Jewry, which reached another dimension after June 1941. However, the Holocaust and mass ethnic cleansing of other European nations was often linked in practice, for example in trains that carried Jews to the killing sites in the East, but then were also used to transport Poles and other groups for forced labour in the West.

In addition to the people pushed over the border of the *Generalgouvernement*, the German authorities deported 475,000 people from the Warthegau for forced labour. According to the various versions of the *Generalplan Ost* (General Plan East), the German government planned to remove up to 45 million people in Eastern Europe, 10 million in the annexed Polish territories alone. Had Germany won the war, some of these plans would have been put into practice. Moreover, the expulsion of Poles was accompanied by mass killings. Already during the attack on Poland, around 50,000 civilians were shot, resistance against

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18 See about the numbers and ethnic cleansing during and after World War II the excellent collective monograph by Pertti Ahonen et al., *People on the Move. Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath*, Oxford: Berg, 2008, here p. 19.

19 See about this case of ethnic cleansing Maria Rutowska, *Wysiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kraju Warty do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa 1939-1941*, Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2003.



the subsequent expulsions carried the death penalty.²⁰ Hence, the ethnic cleansing had a genocidal aspect. This is especially true for later cases such as in the area around Zamość, where the Nazi authorities deported around 110,000 Poles in 1942/43 in order to create an Aryan strip of settlement that reached from East Prussia to the Carpathians.

Aside from its extreme brutality, the Nazi ethnic cleansing was specific in its selection criteria. Not only the people who were removed but also the resettlers who were supposed to replace them were screened for racial characteristics. This turned out to be an obstacle for the planned Germanization of the annexed Polish territories and ultimately even slowed the ethnic cleansing of Poles. The countries allied with Germany were less picky and, except for the Jews, used primarily national criteria of selection. Comparing the policy of Germany and its allies, one could label the Nazi policy as a racial and not ethnic cleansing. Even that may appear as euphemistic in view of the mass killing of Poles. But still a distinction should be made. In the case of the Poles and other Slavic nations, the Nazis mainly targeted the social and political elites, not all classes, genders and ages, as was the case with the Jews. Nevertheless, it is not easy to draw a line between genocide and ethnic or racial cleansing perpetrated by the Nazis. There was a gradual difference on the level of intent and a difference in the results, especially if one looks at the victim rates. But that should not be used to downplay any of the individual and also collective suffering.

The German policy of ethnic cleansing had far reaching repercussions. Already in 1940, a consensus emerged in Poland and Britain that the attempted Germanization of Western Poland would need to be reversed, and that there was no future for a German minority in Poland. The British journal *Fortnightly* wrote in 1940 with reference to the ethnic cleansing in Western Poland: “Hitler has burned his boats... He is daily establishing precedents which cannot be forgotten when the reckoning comes.”²¹ The ethnic cleansing also destroyed the social connections within the local societies. A peaceful coexistence of Germans with Poles in Poznań or other previously mixed cities and rural areas was precluded after the experience of German occupation.

In terms of numbers, the re-ordering of Europe through ethnic cleansing was much more effective in the areas ruled by the countries allied with Nazi Germany. As already mentioned, the Munich agreement contained a provision about the creation of an ethnic boundary between Slovakia and Hungary. This was put into practice in the First Vienna

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20 See Czesław Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands in Polen 1939-1945*, Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1988.

21 Cited from Matthew Frank, *Expelling the Germans. British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 42.

Accord (or Dictate, depending on the national viewpoint) in November 1938. Italy and Germany (France and Britain had dropped out due to rising tension with Nazi Germany) assigned parts of southern Slovakia to Hungary. More than 100,000 Czechs and Slovaks had to leave from there.²² Once more, the arrival of refugees disturbed the local balance in the places of arrival. In late 1938 and early 1939, at least 50,000 Czechs were forced to migrate from Slovakia to the Czech Lands, which were soon occupied by Nazi Germany.

The first Vienna Accord was followed by the second one in the summer of 1940. This time a presumably ethnic boundary was set up in Transylvania, which was contested between Hungary and Romania. Around 370,000 Romanians and Hungarians who lived on the “wrong” side of the new border had to get out.²³ Formally, the migrants took advantage of the “right of option”; de facto most were forced to emigrate. In September 1940, Bulgaria and Romania concluded the treaty of Craiova, which set up a new border in the contested Dobruđa: 61,000 Bulgarians who lived north of the new border and 100,000 Romanians who had resided in the southern Dobruđa took part in an compulsory “exchange of populations”. A similar solution had already been proposed by the British ambassador in Bucharest briefly before the outbreak of World War II.²⁴

The ethnic re-ordering of space continued when Nazi Germany attacked Yugoslavia in April of 1941. Nazi Germany was assisted by revisionist Hungary and Bulgaria. In the recovered Hungarian territories in the Vojvodina, at least 25,000 Serbs were immediately expelled to German occupied Serbia. Bulgaria, another state greatly diminished by the Paris Peace treaties followed the Hungarian example. At least 110,000 Serbs were pushed out from Vardar-Macedonia, a similar number of Greeks had to leave the Bulgarian zone of occupation in Thrace.²⁵ The ethnic cleansing by the revisionist countries, and after June 1941 also by Romania in formerly Soviet occupied Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, had two components: one was retrospective and targeted the elites which had been settled by the interwar nation states that had profited from the Paris peace treaties. Hungary and Bulgaria basically removed everybody who was sent to the borderlands by the Czechoslovak,

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22 See Martin Vietor, *Dejiny okupácie južného Slovenska 1938-1945*, Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Akadémie Vied, 1968, p. 42.

23 See about the various forced migrations in wartime and postwar Romania Dumitru Șandru, *Mișcări de populație în România (1940-1948)*, București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003

24 See about this proposal Frank, *Expelling the Germans*, pp. 36-37.

25 See about these statistics Joseph Schechtman, *European Population Transfers 1939-1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 407; Björn Opfer, *Im Schatten des Krieges. Besatzung oder Anschluss – Befreiung oder Unterdrückung? Eine komparative Untersuchung über die bulgarische Herrschaft in Vardar-Makedonien 1915-1918 und 1941-1944*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005, pp. 264-265.



Yugoslav, Romanian and Greek government. The second element was proactive and future oriented. Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania removed all people, who could have guided irredentist national minorities in the future. The ethnic cleansing in the German sphere of influence was connected with destitution, mass violence and killings. The number of affected people would have been much larger had there not been the priority of attacking the Soviet Union. That is true for Nazi Germany and its allies in Central and South-Eastern Europe, who had all devised plans for an almost total removal of minorities from their territories. Although the cleansing remained limited, it created a permanent climate of fear and terror.

Another zone of violent conflict was the former South-East of Poland, where Ukrainian and Polish underground units fought each other with great brutality since 1943. As a result, around 400,000 people escaped or were expelled until 1944, when a contractual solution was found under Soviet domination (see below). There was no direct German involvement in this case of ethnic cleansing, but the Holocaust set a negative example of how to deal with unwanted minorities, and Hitler's ideas of an order of homogeneous nation-states in particular influenced the Ukrainian nationalist underground.

A special case in the German sphere of domination was the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska). There the goal to remove all Serbs resulted in genocide. In early June of 1941, Nazi Germany and Croatia had agreed upon a chain of ethnic cleansings. Croatia would take in 170,000 Slovenes that were supposed to leave the parts of Slovenia which had been incorporated into the Reich; in turn, Croatia was allowed to remove as many Serbs. But matters spiralled out of control already in the summer of 1941. The fascist Ustaša, who governed Croatia, were not able to organize the uprooting of the unwanted population and the transports. Consequently, the Croatian state mobilized criminals and the most radical nationalists to drive away the Serbs through maltreatment and symbolic killings.²⁶ Churches filled with people were set on fire, people who could not swim chased into the river Drina, where it marks the border with Serbia. The expellees arrived in Serbia plundered, maltreated and malnourished. Because the German authorities in Serbia could not handle this humanitarian disaster and were afraid of a strengthening of the Serbian resistance, they closed the border. Subsequently the Ustaša turned the transit camps for Serbian settlers into concentration camps. According to reliable calculations made by Croatian and Serbian historians, a minimum of 330,000 Serbs was killed 1941-44 in the Independent State of Croatia, many of them in death camps.²⁷ Just to compare:

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26 See about the ethnic cleansing in Croatia Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001, pp. 380-416.

27 See Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, p. 738.



in 1991-95, there were approximately 100,000 victims on *all* sides of the war in Bosnia Herzegovina.²⁸ Around the same number of Serbs was expelled to Serbia. These proportions and the mass killings demonstrate that this case of ethnic cleansing escalated into a genocide. All in all, Hitler's vision of European security resulted in the ethnic cleansing of at least two million people in the countries allied with Germany.²⁹

In creating a new European order, Nazi Germany was initially assisted by the Soviet Union. But in spite of all the recent literature on Soviet ethnic cleansing one should not forget that Stalin's priority rested upon social homogenization and persecution. The deportations of various minority groups between 1936 and 1941 were either based on military considerations and security paranoia or on the destruction of the social elites of the newly acquired western territories. Most affected were the Baltic countries and the former eastern territories of Poland, from which the NKVD deported 330,000 people. However, fewer than two thirds of the deportees were Poles, which demonstrates again that a social selection had priority over a national one, although in view of Stalin's anti-Polonism, one can also see a combination of the two criteria.

The Soviet Union changed its policy after the attack by Nazi Germany. Now it began with punitive and clearly ethnic deportations, which at first affected the Volga Germans. The Soviet ethnic cleansing peaked in 1944 with the deportation of various Caucasian nations and the Crimean Tatars. But these measures were retrospective, based on accusations of treason and collaboration during the war. In contrast to the policy of the European nation-states, the deportations were not based on the utopia of ethnic homogeneity. This might also explain why, in view of the size and the population of the Soviet Union, and even more so compared to social cleansing, the Soviet ethnic cleansing remained limited. Including the deportation of minority groups in the late 1930s, Stalin removed around 2.1 million people on ethnic premises.³⁰

The ethnic cleansings in the period between 1938 and 1944 amounted to some six million people and changed the ethnic map of Europe forever. The expulsions and deportations added to the already existing nationalist hatred, caused tremendous suffering, and made a return to the status quo before 1938 almost impossible. Another and maybe the most important result of all these "wars in the war" was that it confirmed the consensus of

28 For the numbers see Ther, *The Dark Side*, pp. 221-222.

29 The number is based on the following single national cases: 500,000 Serbs, 540,000 Romanians (however, 220,000 refugees from the territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 could temporarily return), 280,000 Czechs and Slovaks, 120,000 Greeks, 150,000 Hungarians and 60,000 Bulgarians. Special cases are the 200,000 German settlers who came from the prewar territory of Romania, and the Jews from the countries allied with Germany who are dealt with below.

30 On the ethnic deportations, see the comprehensive volume by Pavel Poljan, *Ne na svoje vole. Istoria i geografija prinuditel'nykh migracii v SSSR*, Moscow: Memorial, 2001.

the Allies that peace in Europe could only be secured if it was based on ethnically homogenous nation-states.

Ethnic Cleansing and the Postwar European order (1944-1948)

This consensus was officially expressed by Winston Churchill in his speech on the future of Poland. In December 1944, he stated in the House of Commons: «There will be no mixture of populations to cause endless trouble. ... A clean sweep will be made.»³¹ The British premier pointed to the “success” of the Treaty of Lausanne and the manageability of large scale population transfers. As Matthew Frank has shown, this speech and the following decisions taken at the conferences of Yalta and Potsdam were the result of a longer process of discussion. The principal decision to remove the German minorities from postwar Czechoslovakia and Poland had already been made in 1942, when the British government declared the Munich agreement of 1938 null and void.³²

Yet, this reversal only encompassed the border changes made then under the pressure of Hitler. The second element of Munich, that minorities should either assimilate or emigrate, remained intact. At the Tehran conference in 1943, the Allies decided to move Poland’s borders westwards. The Poles who lived east of the future Polish-Soviet border were supposed to emigrate to postwar Poland, while the Germans should be pushed out from the territories allotted to Poland as compensation.³³ In 1944 and 1945, the Allies continued to discuss the precise location of the Polish borders, which would determine the number of Poles and Germans, who had to be removed. The result of these diplomatic deliberations, like in earlier cases, was an escalation of the territorial and demographic range of ethnic cleansing. While the plans of 1943 foresaw the transfer of between five and seven million Germans, in 1945 it was clear that at least 12 million should be removed.

31 Winston Churchill, “The Future of Poland. A Speech to the House of Commons, December 15, 1944”, in: Charles Eade (ed.), *The Dawn of Liberation. War speeches by the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill C.H., M.P.*, London: Cassell, 1945, pp. 290-300, here p. 296.

32 For a perspective more on the East Central European governments in exile, see Detlef Brandes, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung. Pläne und Entscheidungen zum “Transfer” der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005.

33 See about the interdependence between the ethnic cleansing of Poles and Germans my dissertation Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene. Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945-1956*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998.

These huge numbers aroused questions of the British and the US government about the feasibility of such unprecedented population movements.³⁴ But Stalin claimed that most Germans had already run away from the Red Army and that a very limited number was left in Poland. In addition, the main victor of World War II in Europe created a contractual solution for the Poles who still remained in the vast areas annexed by the Soviet Union. In September 1944, the communist puppet government in Lublin concluded “evacuation treaties” with the Ukrainian, the Belorussian and the Lithuanian Soviet Republics about the reciprocal exchange of minorities. Subsequently 1.5 million Poles were moved westward, and 480,000 Ukrainians were moved from postwar Poland to the Soviet Union (another 150,000 who resisted were deported within Poland in 1947), whereas the number of affected Belorussians and Lithuanian was rather small.³⁵ All in all, 2.1 million Poles originating from the Eastern territories arrived in postwar Poland – so far the largest single ethnic cleansing. The arrival of the Polish “repatriates”, as they were called in the spring of 1945, was often the starting point for expelling Germans.

Prior to the Potsdam conference, the Red Army, Poland and Czechoslovakia attempted to create a *fait accompli* concerning the Germans. Especially near the postwar borders at the rivers Oder and Neisse, Germans were pushed out en masse from April to July of 1945. Simultaneously, the return of those who had fled from the approaching Red Army was prevented. The masses of expellees added to the chaos in the British, American and Soviet zones of occupation, which already had been flooded by war refugees (often both groups are lumped together, which is incorrect in view of motivations and the process of forced migration). The untenable situation motivated the Allies to limit and control the ethnic cleansing at the Potsdam conference. At the same time, they legalized the process by deciding upon the “transfer” of all Germans who lived in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The stipulations for an “orderly and humane” transfer never materialized, however. The living conditions of the Germans still residing in Poland and Czechoslovakia and the organization of the transports improved only little after the British and American occupation authorities concluded agreements with Poland and Czechoslovakia in the beginning of

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34 Frank, *Expelling the Germans*, p. 122

35 The ethnic cleansing of Poles is documented extensively in Stanisław Ciesielski, *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski 1944-1947*, Warszawa: Neriton, 1999. For the “evacuation” of Ukrainians from Poland see in English Orest Subtelny, “Expulsion, Resettlement, Civil Strife. The Fate of Poland’s Ukrainians, 1944-1947”, in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (eds.), *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

1946.³⁶ But even afterwards, many people arrived sick, maltreated and badly traumatized.

Stalin has often been accused of having been the mastermind behind these unprecedented ethnic cleansings. But all the “Big Three” agreed that Europe’s postwar order should be built upon homogenous nation-states. This consensus was especially strong concerning the German minorities and their dissolution through compulsory migration. In its own sphere of influence, the Soviet Union pursued an ambiguous policy. When the Red Army occupied Transylvania, a region where mass ethnic cleansing had occurred 1940-44, it stopped the Romanian army and paramilitary units from taking revenge against Hungarians. Around three quarters of the 400,000 Hungarians who had fled from the front in the autumn of 1944 were allowed to return. The Red Army and Tito’s National Liberation Army stopped widespread revenge against Hungarians and mass expulsions in the Vojvodina in early 1945. The country most fiercely advocating ethnic cleansing in Central Europe in 1945/46 was Czechoslovakia³⁷, which was still ruled by a mostly non-communist government.

For all that, the Soviet Union actively supported ethnic cleansing when it served its strategic aims. An example was the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, where the “evacuation” of the minorities and the deportation of the Ukrainians remaining in Poland in 1947 helped to get rid of the Poles in the Soviet Union, who were likely to put up most resistance against the Sovietization of the newly acquired Western territories, and to weaken the nationalist Ukrainian underground, which violently fought against the Red Army and the NKVD. The removal of the Germans also made Poland and Czechoslovakia dependent on the Soviet military protection against German revanchism and thus preceded the Cold War setup.

In Europe alone, the ethnic cleansing between 1944 and 1948 uprooted around 20 million people. Many more were to follow in some of the British colonies, which became the main arena of ethnic cleansing in 1947/48. Around 12 million Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were removed when India and Pakistan were separated. Again, the European concept of a modern nation state was pivotal. Pakistan was supposed to be a Muslim state, and the separation only made sense if the population was homogenized at least in religious terms. There had been partition plans for Bengal already in 1905, when Lord Curzon had served as viceroy. After World War I, he proposed a neatly drawn borderline for Poles and

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36 On the way ethnic cleansing of Germans was carried out in Poland, see the profound documentation by Włodzimierz Borodziej and Hans Lemberg (eds.), *“Unsere Heimat ist uns ein fremdes Land geworden...” Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neißة 1945-1950. Dokumente aus polnischen Archiven, Bd. 1 – 4*, Marburg: Herder Institut, 2000-2004. On the ethnic cleansing of Germans from Czechoslovakia see various works by Tomáš Staněk, among them *Odsun Němců z Československa 1945-1947*, Prague: Academia, 1991.

37 On Czechoslovak policy toward the Hungarian minority, see Štefan Šutaj, *Maďarska Menšina na Slovensku v Rokoch 1945-1948*, Bratislava: Veda, 1993.



Ukrainians, and in 1923 he chaired the Lausanne conference. This example shows that although Europe was the main area of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century, colonial thinking and practices had an impact on Europe.

The British had also proposed the partition of Palestine between Jews and Arabs in 1937. Then the plans to move around 200,000 people, most of them Arabs, failed due to Arab resistance. But the Israeli-Arab war of 1948 created another opportunity to follow up on these earlier proposals. Again, the idea of a modern nation-state could not be reconciled with the existence of a substantial ethnic minority. In both areas, there also was a long tradition of inter-communal violence which let appear ethnic cleansing as a final means to create a stable nation state and lasting peace.

This consensus was, however, shaken because of the massive suffering and chaos created by the post-World War II ethnic cleansing. Although Germany had few sympathizers in 1945, the British and American public were appalled by the news from the areas of expulsion and the extreme misery in their zones of occupation. At the very least, the practicability of ethnic cleansing was questioned. The beginning of the Cold War also had a pivotal impact. The Western powers (re)discovered the discourse of human rights and distinguished their ideas of Western civilization from Communist rule. Another important issue was the prevention of future genocides. Although population transfers were not viewed as immoral or let alone genocidal in the immediate postwar years, the UN convention against genocide in principle covered many aspects of ethnic cleansing, the singling out of one particular group for persecution, its removal from the territory it used to inhabit and the destruction of material property and culture. This is one of the reasons why ethnic cleansing eventually diminished in the postwar period.

In Europe there were only few incidents such as the “Septembrianá” in Istanbul, when a massive pogrom forced the remaining Greeks in Turkey to leave, or after the partition of Cyprus when Greeks from the North of the Island and Turks from the South fled over the new border. But there was no more ethnic cleansing on the scale seen in postwar Europe or India. As a result of the 1968 movement, the awareness for human rights issues and for the suffering of minorities further increased in the 1970s and 1980s. Due to the long period of peace in Europe after 1945 the specters of war also had receded into a distant past. The greater was the shock when the breakdown of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia opened up another period of ethnic cleansing in the 1990s.

Epilogue: Ethnic Cleansing in Yugoslavia 1991-95

In the “Wars of Yugoslav Succession”,³⁸ the republics striving for independence insisted on the existing boundaries of federative Yugoslavia, while Milošević and his allies aspired to change these boundaries by violent means in order to carve out a sphere of power as big as possible. Ethnic cleansing was a means to crush actual and potential resistance and to secure contested territories.

Now the international context was radically different. There was no consensus for ethnic cleansing anymore, but growing opposition against it. This is also true for non-Western states which are often criticized for their human rights record. Moreover, Milošević was no new Hitler, as some Western intellectuals suggested in the heat of the debate about the atrocities committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. So far no master plan was detected in Belgrade that foresaw the ethnic cleansing of “greater Serbia”. There is even some counter-evidence against plans of total cleansing, such as the continuing existence of ethnically mixed areas in Serbia proper like the Vojvodina and the Sandjak, and even within the war zone in northern and eastern Bosnia, such as the enclave of Bihać. When political power was undisputed, the authoritarian regime of Milošević tolerated the existence of subordinated minorities and of ethnic mixture. Of course, radical nationalists such as Vojislav Šešelj were very outspoken about the removal of all minority groups from contested areas already in 1991, but the political elites which then carried out the ethnic cleansing in the breakaway parts of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina only came to power briefly before or during the war. Hence, an explanation of this case of ethnic cleansing needs to focus on the course of events in 1991/92 and the subsequent escalation of violence to ethnic cleansing in various contested areas.³⁹

In spite of all the suffering, one should keep an eye on the proportions of the war and the ethnic cleansing it involved. Calculations by the Research and Documentation Center (Istraživačko dokumentacioni centar) in Sarajevo reduced the number of casualties to around 100,000.⁴⁰ Moreover, among the war victims, Bosnian Serbs are only slightly under-represented compared to their proportion of the entire population. But they were mainly victims of a different kind. While the Muslims in Bosnia suffered by far the most civilian

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38 See for this term Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, pp. 139-184. The best book about the conflict in former Yugoslavia and also about the actors of ethnic cleansing there is Holm Sundhaussen, *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten 1943-2011. Eine ungewöhnliche Geschichte des Gewöhnlichen*, Wien: Böhlau, 2012.

39 There are numerous books about the former Yugoslavia, most of them written during or briefly after the war. For an in-depth analysis with including a pre-history and a comparative perspective see Cathie Carmichael, *Ethnic cleansing in the Balkans: Nationalism and the Destruction of Tradition*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

40 Unfortunately the IDC and its webpage do not exist anymore. But the number of ca. 100,000 has been verified by various sources.

victims, the Serbians mainly lost military combatants and people shot by their own troops in beleaguered cities. That shows the asymmetry in the warfare, in which well-equipped Serbian soldiers and paramilitary units went into action against a Muslim population that could hardly put up armed resistance thanks to the way the Yugoslav army was dissolved and because of the international weapons embargo on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Another difference between previous periods ethnic cleansing and the former Yugoslavia is that there have been attempts to reverse the effects and to repatriate the refugees. However, that policy has only brought limited results because many refugees did not see a future in the Republika Srpska (the part of Bosnia-Herzegovina which is administered by Serbian parties). The sobering conclusion is that once the ethnic balance of an area has been violently changed, a return to the status quo ante is very difficult.

There were new and horrible proportions of this most recent case of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century. The refugees in Bosnia-Herzegovina numbered up to two million, almost half of the population. Most of the displacements were carried out in 1992 in a very short amount of time. This further demonstrates the increasing asymmetry between military might and civilian population in twentieth century Europe. However, the Serbian military power should not be overestimated. In 1991/92 Milošević had problems mobilizing people in support of his policy and draft dodging was rife.⁴¹ These problems and the general vacuum of power strengthened paramilitary units like the infamous “Arkan Tigers”, led by Željko Ražnatović, who did most of the dirty work of ethnic cleansing. Another factor in the mobilization was Serbian nationalist propaganda that revived the memories about World War II. The auto-victimization supported a very aggressive nationalism. Interviews with combatants after the war have shown that a major motive was the defense of the family or the neighborhood, which according to propaganda was endangered by supposedly neo-fascist Croats and Islamist Bosnian Muslims.⁴²

A close look at the worst and most violent areas of ethnic cleansing also points to the validity of a bottom up perspective. The first major massacre of the war in Croatia in 1991 occurred in Glina, the same city where the Ustaša first burnt an Orthodox church full of people in the summer of 1941. Also in Eastern Bosnia, the expulsion and mass killing of Serbs during World War II had been especially horrendous. Moreover, the area around

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41 See about the problems of mobilization and the policy of demobilization Valère P. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

42 See Natalija Bašić, “Die Akteursperspektive. Soldaten und „ethnische Säuberungen“ in Kroatien und Bosnien-Herzegowina (1991-1995)”, in Ulf Brunnbauer, Michael G. Esch, and Holm Sundhaussen (eds.), *Definitionsmacht, Utopie, Vergeltung. „Ethnische Säuberungen“ im östlichen Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006, pp. 144-168.



Srebrenica was the zone of fiercest military confrontation during the hot phase of the war in 1993. The Bosnian army temporarily regained large areas and persecuted the Serbs living there. Chasing out minorities cut off the support from enemy military units who, especially on the side of the Muslims, fought with a guerilla “hit and run” strategy.⁴³ Nevertheless, most of the ethnic cleansing in 1991 in Croatia and in 1992 in Bosnia was pre-emptive. Especially in northern Bosnia and along the most important railway routes and roads to Serbia proper, the purpose was to achieve a lasting military and political domination.

In terms of time, one can distinguish a first phase of ethnic cleansing in late 1991 and 1992 which was supposed to mark the territory of the break-away regions of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even after military domination had been achieved there was a lot of violence including rape and mutilations. These crimes were often carried out in public in order to induce the remaining minority population leave. A second phase in 1993 was more connected to the military situation and strategic aims. The rest of the remaining minority population and the “enemy population” in still contested areas was expelled in order to fortify the frontlines and to prevent guerilla attacks. In this second phase, Central Bosnia and parts of Herzegovina were raged by the new Croat-Bosnian war. After a period of relatively stable frontlines a last round of ethnic cleansing occurred in 1995. Most affected was the Krajina in Croatia, where the Serbs were expelled by the Croatian army, and again Eastern Bosnia, where the Serbs aimed at dissolving the remaining Muslim enclaves in order to get as much territory as possible at a future peace conference. It was there, where the worst massacre of the war occurred, the genocidal killing of 8,000 Muslim men in and around Srebrenica. However, the fact that women and children were spared death marks a difference to numerous Nazi crimes during World War II. By this ultimate crime against humanity, the worst one of this war which was later persecuted as a genocide by the ICTY, the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs wanted to demonstrate that Eastern Bosnia is theirs. In spite of the international outcry, this strategy worked. The Dayton peace agreement allotted Srebrenica to the Republika Srpska.

Will the international condemnation of the atrocities in Yugoslavia prevent future ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts like in Srebrenica? In Kosovo NATO intervened to preclude a repetition of the Bosnian scenario. However, the West did not prevent the persecution and exodus of the Serbian minority, and the pogroms that occurred in 2004. Incidents like the war in Rwanda point to an even more pessimistic reading. Since ethnic cleansing is not accepted on the level of international politics any more and is difficult for an individual state to organize because of its spatial dimension, the way out might be more mass killing on the spot, that is to say, genocide.

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43 See the precise analysis of the war including ethnic cleansing in *Balkan Battlegrounds. A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, Vol. I, Washington D.C., Central Intelligence Agency, 2002, 142 ff.