

Magda Bošan Simin

Why They
Said
Nothing?

or

Mother and Daughter on One and the Same War

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Translation: Rajka Marinkovic

Contents:

Introduction

Sentenced to Death

Court Prison in Subotica

Prison in Konti Street in Budapest

Szeged Csillag Prison

Yellow House-Subotica, Csillag-Szeged, Konti-Budapest

The Prison in Márianosztra

Márianosztra

The Prisons in Kalocsa and Kistarcsa

Sátoráljaújhely

The Camp in Bačka Topola

Despite Everything:

Army Fortress in Komarom

Collecting Centre – Komarom Fortress

Dachau-Allach

Concentration Camps

The Camp in Bergen-Belsen

How I Mourned Granny Paula

Departure to Fallersleben

Pilgrimage from an Arm-Chair

The Camp in Salzwedel – Liberation

When I Imagine Freedom

Women's Concentration Camp in Ravensbruck

Consequences

Postwar Life

Auschwitz despite Everything, Because War Wounds never Heal

References

Bibliography

Appendices

*We, the humans, creatures endowed with free will, independently
and with no impact of vires majores (or minores), we choose in our lives between
Good – righteousness, wisdom, love and knowledge, and
Evil – injustice, hatred, suffering and illness.
Neither Devil nor God has anything to do with it. They just offer support to our
choice.
Nevena Simin*

Introduction

When my mother Magda abandoned all her struggles and battles at the age of 83, she left behind some unpublished manuscripts and among them a document titled "Women of Bačka - Political Convicts in 1941-1945 War". "Women's Studies" from Novi Sad offered me to have it published. But, they said, it would be very interesting to supplement the manuscript with comments written by me, Magda's daughter, and equally important - a representative of the second generation of the survivors of the Second World War - on the same topic from two angles. I gave my consent. We arrived at an agreement easily: I would set out on the itinerary across Europe along which the Nazis and their allies arrested, beat, tortured and maltreated, and then transported as mere objects my Magda and hundreds of her war women comrades, political convicts; women...

While I was treading along Magda's war path and occasionally the war path of my father Živko, I was increasingly engrossed by my internal labyrinth, so that the words I am laying down here at your feet, I have plucked out from my wounded soul of the second generation of the victims of Holocaust who have survived.

Although for a longer part of my life I had believed that it is best for the health of a human being who has experienced something bad to forget everything, I am not sorry for having agreed to re-open all those evil doors within me. As the experience comes up and accumulates, new possibilities emerge and new reasons come up in the open. It is increasingly becoming clear to me how important it is to testify. For the sake of health of each individual victim and for the sake of restoration of health of humanity in

general. From my own experience I became convinced that war crimes cannot be subject to the statute of limitations, that wounds inflicted in such crimes cannot heal in victims' children, not even in grandchildren, nor in great grandchildren, and that they continue to envenom the posterity indefinitely. Testimonies must, therefore, be repeated incessantly, regardless of the fact that new wars outshine the old ones.

Notes to comments:

* Let me say a few words about my attitude to Magda's commitment to write a book-document about the war 60 years after the war, when she was 80:

The year was 2002, another concentration-camp anniversary was approaching, and Magda's war women comrades entreated and finally persuaded her to write yet another book, this time with real names, about all those places where they served their sentences during the war and about what was happening to them there. They agreed to attach lists of names to the text and any data anybody could remember, because time was passing, they were fewer every day, besides, the latest war in the Balkan had just ended, so "their" war would be forgotten and their suffering pushed into the dust bin of history. And yet many of them were still alive...

I tried to dissuade Magda, "Aren't you all fed up with the Second World War? You have gone over it again and again a million times! If anything needs to be written, write what has been happening to these women after the war, have they had families, did they bear children, made careers, where they lived, has freedom compensated them for war suffering?" I tried to convince her that this was much more interesting, because, having spent four years in the war, they were now all between 80 and ninety years old, six decades have gone by since their war. These figures speak for themselves, don't they? I should hope life deserved to be spoken of, I added "strong" arguments I could think of... Magda believed that my proposal was good and set to work diligently. The result can be seen in "Women from Bačka...": seven drab pages about postwar life of just a handful of women, and about the rest mere lists stating their postwar occupations and places of residence, and 35 much more impressive pages about the four-year long road from the arrest to liberation. This shows that 4 (years) are many times more powerful and greater than 60 or even 80 (years).

That's, I guess, how it works with the first generation of survivors. For them the war always overpowers the peace, the experience from the war always covers up peace-time memories. The second generation has a different schedule. That is the reason why I accept to testify about the consequences of the war on me. Because, although I was born five years after war trumpets were silenced, I am labeled and shackled by war wounds inflicted on my parents.

*When I told my friend Florika that I had accepted to give a personal tone and add comments to Magda's "Women from Bačka...", she got terribly worried, "Why would you want to do that? You had such a hard time getting rid of that war, why should you bring it all back to life?"

"Oh, well", I hesitated how to express it, "I'll see if it still hurts."

I also rehearsed the arguments in favour of the hypothesis that war crimes are not subject to the statute of limitations, that consequences persist, metastasize like malignant tumors, adding always new poison flowers to the sick trunk of life. And take victims long after the warring parties have "signed peace agreements".

I also accept to testify because now I know what a superhuman effort is needed to free oneself of the inherited war wounds; how many decades, how much tedious work on oneself it takes, how strong a will and how much knowledge is required to unburden oneself, to fully understand that poisonous internal battlefield and "clean and close the source of pain" for good so at least you stop transferring the war heritage on your own descendants.

I also accept to testify because of yet another heavy wound: while I struggled to overcome the war disease and get rid of it, numerous opportunities and chances in life just slipped by me ... No way I can EVER forgive the WAR!

* Most frequently I call my mother by her first name. The fact that she was a mother and gave birth to two children is just a small part of what her personality included and brimmed over with. She was such a person that it is impossible for me to think of her as a person determined by a single framework. She exceeded by far the notion of a mother, the notion of a woman, the notion of a journalist and editor, the notion of a writer, the notion of a witness, the notion of a comrade, the notion of a friend... She was too great for any of these separately. When I became aware of her uncontrollable greatness, I started to call her by her first name. MAGDA. Only that word could cover what she lived, worked, gave, personified. With love and great respect I look upon her in a gallery of great men

who need nothing but names and whose works, known and unknown to people, speak for themselves in God's presence.

** This manuscript is stratified: Magda writes first, then Nevena writes. Then Magda again, and then Nevena's comments.*

Magda begins her "Women from Bačka - Political Convicts..." with the story about arrests in 1941 and then about wartime prisons:

Sentenced to Death

After the initial mass operations of sabotage and diversions organized by illegal CPY (KPJ)¹ and LYCY (SKOJ)², in 1941 in Bačka, after setting the crops on fire, writing slogans on public buildings, dissemination of fliers and proclamations calling for rebellion, after the establishment of first combat squads and partisan groups, the occupier³ brought in numerous and well-drilled forces, a whole machinery of investigators, gendarmerie, police and army to fight against PLA (NOB)⁴. The power and proportions of these formations is nowadays well known, I will not speak about them on this occasion. In that massive attack of the enemy, in that offensive, some precious people, mostly experienced, battle-tested combatants from the time preceding the war, longtime workers in trade union, pupils' and students' movements, both men and women, fell victims.

This is quite understandable, since the police forces of former Kingdom of Yugoslavia almost completely put themselves at the service of the enemy and betrayed all combatants who had ever been arrested between the two world wars, even those detained as a warning. The police also submitted lists of participants of great strikes between 1936 and 1940 to the enemy.

Big investigation centres were established. In Subotica, the Yellow House, in Novi Sad – the so-called Army. There were smaller ones, too. In Bečej, the investigation centre was called Hotel Milo, and there were such centres in Sombor, Senta, Bačka Topola. Counterintelligence agents worked there, and the investigators were drilled in Gestapo schools. They worked very systematically, so

¹ KPJ – Komunistička partija Jugoslavije /Communist Party of Yugoslavia—CPY.

² SKOJ – Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije / League of Young Communists of Yugoslavia

³ The occupier – the army of one of the allies of Axis forces from Germany, Hungary, Italy or other countries; the term also refers to a certain extent to military formations and paraformations within Yugoslavia which sided with the Axis forces or simply resorted to plunder and personal revenge.

⁴ NOB – PLA – People's Liberation Army – the term includes Partisans, their harborers and illegal organizations which acted against the occupiers.

that in the first few months, i.e. in September, October and November 1941, they already had outlines on their lists of the organization of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Alliance of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia in Bačka. They tracked down even their helpers, members of the progressive movement, patriots.

The mentioned investigation centres became massive brutal torture chambers from where shrieks of pain could be heard night and day, so people skirted them at a great distance.

According to the verified list of the Historic Archives of Subotica, 102 women were taken into custody into the Yellow House. They were tortured and questioned there, and among them 24 of women and girls were sent to court prison in Subotica; they were later tried by military court in Subotica, sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from 6 months to 15 years. I was sentenced to 13 years of hard labour.

Among all the tortured women, the most respectable woman in Subotica – Lola Vol, was singled out and she was court-martialed together with a large group of men. They were sentenced to death by hanging. Lola Vol, a clerk before the war, was also a member of the illegal CPY for Subotica since 1938, she had associated for years with Otmar Majer on publication of a prominent magazine called “Hid” (The Bridge). She was also an elected member of District Committee of CPY for Subotica, a close associate of Sonja Marinković who was engaged in the establishment of a network of women for collecting red aid and people’s aid and dissemination of illegal material. On the rainy November day when she was carefully skirting puddles walking towards the gallows, with a smile on her face, Lola Vol asked the police officer who was escorting her, “Why are you shivering when I am not afraid?” She died on the gallows together with her seventeen comrades.

Several hundred women passed through Novi Sad Army at the time. In several groups they were sentenced by Military Court in Novi Sad and sent to serve their sentences in various prisons in Hungary, such as the Szeged “Csillag”, “Konti” prison in Budapest, and Satoraljaujhely. Four prominent women were singled out from among them and court-martialed to death by hanging.

The first among them was Grozda Gajšin, clerk, who threw a bomb at a German bookstore downtown Novi Sad and who had already distinguished herself in a large number of diversions. She was sent to Szeged Csillag where court-martial sentenced her to death by hanging. Her collaborator in the said operation, Nata Stankov from Novi Sad, was arrested together with Grozda and sentenced to 15 years of hard labour. She was sent to women’s prison Mariánosztra in Northern Hungary, to languish there among women criminals until the liberation. Grozda was hanged in October in prison yard in Szeged, together with our comrade from Sombor Erne Kiš. She acted like a true hero when she faced the hangmen. She shouted at them, “Long live Communism! Hang me, but hundreds will continue in

my place!” Persons were killed throughout Europe and the world shouting this slogan.

A prominent member of the people’s movement, member of the District Committee of illegal CPY for Novi Sad, Lilika Bem, was also sentenced to death. She had also worked for many years with Sonja Marinković, she was the liaison with Belgrade, and during the occupation worked on the organization of the uprising. She was hanged in October 1941 with 15 young people from Novi Sad.

Vera Pavlović and Gordana Ivačković were also sentenced to death together with Lilika. They were students, also prominent combatants in the progressive movement of Voivodina, but they were reprieved and sentenced to 15 years in prison and life imprisonment, respectively. Vera Pavlović was born in Bijeljina in 1921, but she grew up in Novi Sad with her father, senior financial inspector, and mother, housewife, born in Vršac. Gordana Ivačković, from Novi Sad, member of the leadership of illegal CPY of Voivodina, after she had been arrested, agreed to collaborate with enemy agents and betrayed her fellow combatants, which had tragic consequences for the movement in Voivodina, because she knew many people. This is the only case of direct betrayal among women from Bačka. Later, another two women from Novi Sad were court-martialed to death in Vac. They were sisters, textile workers, Sofija and Radoslava Skandarski, but they were also reprieved.

Legendary Sonja Marinković was also arrested, although not on the territory of Bačka, but in Pančevo pier. She had intended to cross over to Belgrade. In her secret activity and movements, she had no chance to hide, because agents throughout Voivodina and Belgrade knew her well. She had been arrested and tortured several times before the war. Besides, she unfortunately walked with a slight limp. She was conspicuous.

Sonja Marinković had graduated agronomy, she was known for her erudition and humaneness, but even more for having been a pleasant and outgoing person, who belonged to the intellectual elite of Voivodina. As a member of the provincial leadership of CPY, together with Žarko Zrenjanin, she was tirelessly engaged in many spheres of illegal and progressive movement, especially in collecting people’s aid for combatants in Spain and their families at the time of the Spanish Civil War, and at the time of the occupation, she was active in the establishment of diversion groups and organization of the uprising in our parts. Her whole family, father who was a judge, and brother Milenko who was also arrested later on, supported her in her efforts, enabling her comrades to meet in their comparatively safe middle-class home, near the Danube, in a beautiful street in Novi Sad which nowadays bears her name. After her arrest, Sonja was mercilessly tortured. On July 31, 1941, the German occupiers in Banat transferred her from Pancevo to Zrenjanin, Petrovgrad at the time, and, together with 90 comrades, shot near a wood called Bagljas. She refused to be blind-folded. She turned towards the firing squad and shouted, “Shoot, this is a Communist chest!”

How much humaneness and idealism at that wartime!

At this point, Irena Provc, tailoress, should also be mentioned. She was arrested in October 1941 in Bečej. She was killed among the first. She succumbed to appalling torture of agents – torturers during investigation. She betrayed nobody, she did not even tell them her own name.

At the time in occupied Bačka, the total of 97 comrades, men and women, were hanged and a number of them were beaten to death. Matko Vuković, several times arrested trade union worker from Subotica, succumbed to torture. A number of them were killed in Novi Sad Army.

Court Prison in Subotica

In the course of autumn 1941, 24 women were transferred from the Yellow House to court prison. They were a heterogeneous, but nevertheless a harmonious company. Each one of them was guided by the belief that she was facing the authorities of the enemy, that it was necessary to resist it in an organized manner, so like in all the other prisons, comparatively easily a collective was created along the lines of collectives of our comrades in prisons of prewar Yugoslavia.

At first we were put in solitary confinement, two in each cell, but after a few weeks we were transferred to two larger cells. There were 17 of our women and girls in one, and 7 in the other. Most of us were from Subotica, but some were from Senta and Bačka Topola. There were a few factory workers among us, like Kristina Sic and Viktorija Balašević from Subotica, or Erzebet Rekecki from Senta. There was doctor Ruža Blau Francetić who was born in Bačka Topola.

Ruža was a participant of progressive students' movement in Zagreb, and then in Bačka. She had a special background. She was arrested in April 1941, that is, before any of us, in Novi Sad, with a suitcase full of illegal press. She was nine-months pregnant and skillfully simulated birth pains, so they did not torture her and immediately took her to Novi Sad hospital. She remained there for another month and gave birth to son Saša. Thanks to the child, they let her go home to Bačka Topola, to her parents' house. But, as we shall see, Ruža developed full activity, especially helping Topola camp in-mates, so she was arrested again and tortured in Yellow House, and brought to court prison in Subotica. She was sentenced to a short term, so after she had been released from prison, she remained underground in Budapest, managed to cross over to join the Partisans with a group and became a partisan doctor on the territory of Croatia. In spring 1944, before the Jews from Bačka were deported, little Sasa was taken from Ruža's parents by a German whose family name was Gleser, who brought Saša to his home in Novi Sad, hid him there and saved until the liberation and the return of his parents from

the war. Gleser was the father of a Ruza's comrade and associate in the students' movement in Zagreb.

Young secondary-school students Edita Špicer and Lilika Bek were also in the collective in Subotica, but so was Jolanka Hajman, a chemist who had acquired two diplomas at German universities before the war – in chemistry and biochemistry. Jolanka had worked in sugar factory in Vrbas until the occupation. Involved in the general antifascist movement, she held a first-aid course in Subotica. One of the women who had attended the course and then were arrested was Boriška Malušev, a tailoress who had her own dressmaking shop in Subotica, and was married to a trade union worker with a long experience, Cvetko Malušev.

The already mentioned Viktorija Balašević had a long experience in political work. During the occupation, as a party courier, she traveled for months carrying illegal press from the party centre in Novi Sad to Subotica, and then due to a lack of sufficiently confidential and skillful persons, she took the same material to Bačka Topola, Senta, Ada, Bajmok where women also expected her. Together with her spouse Rokus Simoković she duplicated the propagandist material, which greatly endangered their safety. But Viktorija was never caught with the illegal material. When it started getting too dangerous for her, when mass arrests had already begun, with the help of old connections, she tried to reach Novi Sad with her husband and cross over to Srem to join the Partisans. However, hardly anybody from Novi Sad had ever done it. The leadership of the People's Liberation Struggle (NOB) believed at the time that it was possible to successfully fight the occupiers in this low land. All combatants were instructed to remain in their homeland which they knew best. Viktorija and her husband hid in Novi Sad for a while, then they were arrested and taken to Yellow House in Subotica with a cynical comment, "You can hide from us only under ground!"

After he was court-martialed, Rokus Simoković was hanged – together with Lola Vol – while Viktorija, after bestial torture, was sentenced to long imprisonment and passed with me the long road to German concentration camps and back.

Young Edita Špicer participated in setting grain on fire in the district of Subotica, like Lilika Bek and other members of our youth organization.

At first, house rules in this prison were very strict. There were no chairs in our cells, it was forbidden to sit on iron beds during the day, so we sat cramped on the floor by the wall, shivering with cold. But there were indulgent guards, especially among those who had served there in prewar Yugoslavia, so gradually house rules were bent. One of the old guards, uncle Buljovčić, was later even willing to take a message or two to relatives. The prison warden, a new-comer from Hungary, regime supporter, greedy for money, was liable to bribe. He gave permission to our relatives to bring us clean clothes and food every week.

Although we got very bad prison food, here, close to our homes, we had not even assumed what it really meant to be hungry.

Soon after arrival, we demanded to be allowed to have books, notebooks and pencils. We got them and that helped us immensely in our work⁵.

The winter 1941/42 was the hardest. The great initial defeat of the Soviet Army caused certain doubts in the collective. News arrived about big raids in Bačka, in Čurug. Žabalj, Novi Sad... News about mass executions of innocent people had a discouraging effect on us. Our relatives, fathers, brothers, were among the victims. My father, Aleksandar Bošan, lawyer, was also killed in Čurug and thrown under the ice on the Tisa. It happened in the first days of January 1942, on Orthodox Christmas, to be exact. It was very hard to get over such difficult atmosphere between prison walls. Somehow, we managed.

We agreed about sharing food in the first few days. We shared everything and shared alike. The parcels we received were very different in weight and content, because the financial status of our families was very different. There were two comrades with us who grew up in an orphanage and who, to their great regret, received aid from nobody. In the beginning, they received food from us very reluctantly. Those who received big parcels were not against sharing. Dušika Seneš who was severely sick set an example in this sense. She had had a sick gall bladder and was on a strict diet. Her relatives, a very rich Jewish family from Subotica, sent her very abundantly the best and varied food. Dušika was so generous that she never kept anything for herself. Edita Špicer also received big parcels. Everything was measured and divided into equal shares to give everybody equal chances to survive. The first war winter was especially severe, and there was no heating in the cells.

We developed political and cultural work. We held lectures, mostly in the sphere of development of society and dialectical materialism. Some lectures were written on toilet paper and sent to the other cell. Cultural life was especially well developed. The books our relatives handed us during visits played a great role. We got recently translated works by Romain Rolland, Roger Martin du Gard, then works of Erenburg, Zweig, Cronin, Sinclair and others. They brought us also popular scientific works from the field of medicine, philosophy, history and others. I must admit that anthologies of poetry were the most popular reading matter. We had an anthology of European revolutionary poets, translations of Villon's poetry, Joseph Attila, Adi and others. We had books both in Serbian and in Hungarian. Every evening we sang in a choir, despite very loud protests of guards.

⁵ Work – priority in the activities of prewar communists, and also imprisoned political convicts was education of masses of people (cultural work) and political literacy teaching of men and women (political work); both activities took place in the context of communist ideology.

We organized performances every week with the “Sparrow” as the central number, a few skits, recited poetry. One group started learning mathematics, others learnt chemistry, foreign languages, history, philosophy and other.

That is how the days were filled with purposeful work and less educated women got additional education. This lasted until September 1942 when ten of us who were sentenced to long terms were taken to Maria Nostra (also spelled Márianosztra in Hungarian) prison in Hungary. Later Duška Seneš joined us there.

Prison in Konti Street in Budapest

Before I pass on to the description of the situation in Maria Nostra, let us see what was happening in Budapest Konti prison where a large number of comrades were taken from Novi Sad prison, that is, from Army.

The first group of about 40 comrades from Novi Sad was brought to Konti immediately in autumn 1941, and the second group of about 15 women who were arrested later, arrived in Konti much later, in 1942.

Among the first was Milica-Beba Bursać, a textile worker. She had participated in strikes of textile workers in Novi Sad in 1936 and in 1940. She was a member of the first (Communist) Party cell of textile workers in Novi Sad. During the occupation she was a member of the District Committee of CPY for Novi Sad. She was very talkative, pleasant, generally popular. She was also an excellent organizer.

Vera Pavlović was also brought there. At first she was sentenced to death, then pardoned, she was a student of physics and chemistry, and a member of the District Committee of CPY for Novi Sad. She was also popular among all the comrades. Back in Novi Sad court prison, she had laid for three days on concrete waiting to be executed. They told her she had been pardoned on the third day. Her health had already been weakened at the time, so later everybody took care of her, but in Ravensbruck camp she succumbed to her illness and died just before the liberation.

Marta Husar, a medical student, was also there. She was also a member of the city leadership of LYCY in Novi Sad, participated in many youth and students' operations. A number of students of various Novi Sad secondary schools were also there, participants of the camping trip on Testera in 1940, workers and women from surrounding villages. Mila Brkić was there, an activist in trade union of clerks in women's movement for years. Her brother was hanged in Novi Sad in October 1941, and Julija Cimr, and agronomist, a party activist for years, whose husband, Venda Cimr, was also hanged at the same time.

A large group of women and girls from Budapest were also imprisoned in Konti. They were members of Hungarian Communist Party, participants of the Peace Party, strikes and demonstrations, trade union workers, women who printed political material... They were put together with convicted political prisoners from Yugoslavia.

Strict military rules were in force in Konti. Cells were cold, food very bad and scarce. It was possible to buy some food through the prison administration, and packages were received only as of summer 1943. Visits were possible only once in three months. It was forbidden to have notebooks and pencils, and books could be borrowed only from the prison library. Prison authorities' objective was to break prisoners mentally and physically. They punished them even for the slightest disorderly conduct. Once they punished one of the room seniors, Ibolya Mandel, worker from Novi Sad, just because one of the guards noticed through a peephole that Dragica Ranisavljević was writing something down in the corner of the cell.

But write we did, on toilet paper with pencil lead which was easier to smuggle in and hide. The strict rules persisted in Konti to the very end, so it was impossible to establish a general community, so communities were established only within individual cells. Contacts and distribution between cells were very difficult. There were two larger cells with six and more persons and a number of smaller cells with three women in each. Food was shared by collectives in the already described way, and intensive political and cultural work was organized. Apart from the young, there were elder and better educated women in each cell. Foreign languages were taught. Our women learnt Hungarian from the women from Budapest and vice versa. Russian was taught by Beba Koljadžinska whose father was a Russian.

A very nice comradeship developed, for instance, in the cell where Vera Pavlović was locked up with girls from Bačka. One of the girls was Mara Lučić from Čurug, who remembers that she immediately became fond of Vera, a serious but very forthcoming person who never stressed her high education but, on the contrary, always strove to be equal with the others. She always took part in heavy physical chores, cleaning and scrubbing the cell floor, taking the bucket out, bringing water. She did all that although she visibly tired easily due to disrupted health due to torture she had endured in the investigation prison. Vera would not let anybody replace her. Mara expected a great deal from Vera, most of all she was eager to learn. Vera was aware that there could be no common education in Konti, so she started teaching general education subjects in her own cell. She lectured on development of society according to Engels's work. Vera devoted much attention to her personal hygiene, so she required that others in her cell follow her example, not allowing anybody to become neglected and careless of their appearance. To become careless, she explained, meant to give up on the struggle for life and surrender to the mercy of the enemy. She liked her hair to be clean and tidy at all times, so Mara remembers how she lovingly combed her black curls.

At this point I would like to say a few more words about Vera. Her elder brother Mika had studied at the medical school in Prague with a scholarship of Matica srpska - the central cultural and publishing society from Novi Sad. He returned from Prague in 1939. Although she, too, was an excellent student who did not have to take final exams in Novi Sad Zmaj Jova High School, Vera used to say that she had got the most from her brother, both knowledge and views on the world. She acquired certain fundamental medical knowledge from him. When the police had started to shoot at the demonstrators in Belgrade for the first time and wounded, among others, Bosa Milićević from Žednik (near Subotica), Vera took on herself to take care of her in the hospital until the very sad Bosa's death in February 1940. When in 1941 a large group of young men from Novi Sad set out to sign up for the army to defend the country against Fascist invasion, Vera became the secretary of the city committee of the illegal LYCY organization and the secretary of the organization in Rotkvarija. There she had a group of young women whom she instructed to offer first aid. Some of the girls, like Incika Lustig and Gerta Kadelburg, were later sent to the same prison as she did – Konti. Despite the strictness of the rules, Vera became known as an exceptional person whose every word was fitting and carried weight.

Two of our women gave birth in the hospital of Konti prison. One of them was Latinka Ranisavljević whose husband was also arrested in Novi Sad, taken to Csillag prison, then to forced labour at the Eastern front where he barely made it (he became a pilot after the war). Latinka gave birth to a healthy baby girl to great joy of all her comrades in Konti; they called her Slobodanka (Freedom). In a general discussion held in all the cells, it was Vera Pavlović who came to the idea about the name and all the women agreed, the young mother included. After a certain time after birth she was allowed to give the baby to her parents (after the war Latinka gave birth to two more children, and nowadays she has six grandchildren and one great grandson. Fortunately, she will have more!"

Another woman who had a child in Konti was Ljubica Djomparić. Her, also healthy, but male child, was called Slobodan (Freedom). Ljubica also gave her baby to her parents. Slobodan nowadays lives in Novi Sad.

Szeged Prison, Csillag

The largest number of combatants from Bačka, the total of 754, passed through Csillag ("star") prison in Szeged. Out of that number, there were 45 women and girls.

As already mentioned, the first woman taken to Csillag was Grozda Gajšin, who was hanged there. In the course of that same autumn, women were brought from the investigation centre in Novi Sad, although they were from various villages and towns in Bačka. They were mostly workers, craftswomen, peasants,

several clerks and students. There was Katica Džigurski, born in a rich village family from Bečej whose two sisters Milica and Natalija were members of the progressive movement for a long time, so she was also involved in the struggle, to her parents' despair. Right there, in the prison, she learnt that her father was killed in the raid and that her mother died, so there was nobody to visit her any more. There was also Jovanka Pejović from Bečej, who could not get over her brother's death (he was shot).

In Csillag, there was Milica Grujić, alias Cica, a student of the teachers college in Sombor, seamstress Jelica Mirilov from Bačko Gradiste and a group of women from Bačko Petrovo Selo, Fransiska Pece, among other. Etelka Reco, the oldest among them, never spoke about the loss of her husband, a revolutionary who was killed for his ideals. Etelka had left a ten-year old unprovided-for daughter at home, who was rejected by the whole village because of the described circumstances, neighbours harassed her, and the teacher forbade other children to speak with her. Finally, the mother of Milica Cica Grujić, Mileva, took the girl home to Srbobran with her.

Women were put in a grey two-storey building which was next to the administration building. In Csillag they were completely separated from their male comrades from Bačka and had separate time for walks. They were court-martialed in June 1942 and sentenced to imprisonment from 6 months to 8 years.

Hygienic conditions in these cells were more than bad, even in comparison with cells in other prisons. Even the basic needs for personal hygiene were denied. Each person got one litre of water a day for drinking and washing. Straw mattresses on the floor were made of old and dirty sacks, torn, and the straw in them was shattered and full of dust. Cells were dirty, not whitewashed, full of bedbugs. Grated windows had boards hammered over them, so that air, least of all sun rays, could not penetrate the cells which were never aired. During the coldest winter 1941/42 the cells were not heated, so water froze in them. Meals, very meager in quantity, were prepared of very bad, rotten and stinking food. It was permitted to get packages only five times a year, and they could weigh two and a half kilos at the most.

Women guards were brutal and merciless. During visits convicts were allowed to speak only Hungarian, which prevented any closer contact, because our women still could not speak that language. As soon as a single word in Serbian was uttered, the guards would terminate the visit. Visitors were separated from the prisoners by a high wall of close-knit wire. Once, Anica Zurkovic's mother brought her two children to see her before she was transported to Maria Nostra. The guards did not allow her to utter a single word with the children, not even to say good-bye to them, but brutally and sadistically dragged her to the cell, shouting and cursing her.

The daily walk consisted of half an hour spent in a circle between three tall buildings, so it was stuffy there, too. There were a few seriously ill women suffering from tuberculosis, and medical help was just formal, both according to the manner in which patients were examined and according to the prescribed medication. When comrades bitterly protested and vigorously demanded that the ailing be given the necessary drugs, the answer was that drugs were needed by Hungarian soldiers, and not communists.

In the hospital of this prison Desa Jakšić from Novi Sad, already feeble and weak, laboured in agony, giving birth to her child. She had got married before she was arrested. Her husband Mile Jakšić, an old revolutionary, was killed in the meantime. Women who were skilful in sewing and needlework, like seamstresses Jelica Mirilov, Ljubica Prisić and Stanika Ergelašev, with greatest care and love, made baby shirts and other equipment for the baby, but Desa was feeble and with insufficient hospital care she could not give birth to a living baby. Childbirth almost killed her too.

Women guards envied the comrades on their dignified conduct. Once they admitted that they were not like other prisoners, i.e. like women criminals. What was the use of such acknowledgement?!

In accordance with the possibilities, political and cultural work was organized in cells. In each cell there were educated women who were capable of conversing about certain topics or books read before the arrest and the ones they received in prison. Since communication between cells was practically prevented by the brutality of women guards, collectives were formed separately in each cell.

In October and November 1942, when hundreds of comrades from Csillag were sent to the Eastern front to the curve of the River Don as forced labour, to clean mine fields and do all hard work instead of Hungarian soldiers, 15 women whose sentences had not expired, were transferred from Szeged to the Márianosztra prison.

Perhaps due to some administrative mistake, only Milica Grujić, alias Cica, remained in Szeged – until deportation to German death camps.

And now Nevena's comments on prisons:

**Yellow House-Subotica, Csillag-Szeged,
Konti-Budapest...**

Father, give me strength to understand...

In August 2005 I visited the buildings where prisons listed in the titled used to be. I followed in the footsteps of my mother Magda and her like-minded comrades along the road they were taken, dragged, tortured and sentenced to long years of hard labour. Magda and her comrades - women and men - were savagely beaten and many killed by enemy agents. A person wonders why? And somehow it turns out that all that torture was arranged because of the conviction of ones that the human race can use its entire human resources in a much better way, and the conviction of others that the world must not be a pleasant place for living to all its inhabitants. This latter party, the oppressors, demonstrated their conviction brutally, on thousands or millions of people. That is how things have operated in the past, and still do, so we are witnessing the trumpets of some new wars, new settlements set on fire, borders bursting, somebody's children killed...

But, that's enough of theory. There is work to do.

This is not how it chronologically took place, but according to the power of impression, the order was as follows: first, there was Budapest, the outstandingly beautiful capital of Hungary on the Danube.

In Budapest, in Konti street, I parked my car right across the street from the building where the prison used to be. In Szeged, too, when that site's turn came to be visited, I parked in front of the Csillag building. „Csillag" means „star". Ironic, isn't it? And that is about all my reaction to these two places came down to. I stood quite indifferent in front of Konti and Csillag. I stood watching these ugly huge buildings and waited for something to happen inside me, but silent fronts did not respond in any way. For me there was no mirror, nor telescope, nor microscope over there. Nor time-machine. Nothing. Just mute buildings.

Oh, well, they'll babble to somebody else.

But, the Yellow House knocked me down.

I am standing in front of the Yellow House in Subotica after 64 years. I do not want to enter and by looking at the walls and corridors which I have never laid my eyes on soften the feeling this building stirred up in me.

For me, it is still in 1941.

It is still the place where they beat people up.

It is the place where they beat up and tortured my mother together with tens of other women I have got to know later on as wonderful, warm, simple and wise women. Good women it was so easy to love.

The yellow House is the place where they beat up my mother, and decades later these beatings still pour all over me, my head, my brain and my heart...

How many open wounds have the Yellow House left on me and in me?

The earliest memories I have are mostly auditory. I remember being nervously silenced: Shhhh! Mommy has a headache! Don't run! Mommy has a headache, shhh! Be quiet, don't shout, Mommy has a headache! Shhh! Haven't I told you to be quiet and shut up, Mommy has a headache! That's exactly how my grandmother Milevka, my daddy's mother, hissed at me almost every afternoon after Mommy had come from work and painfully rolled up in a dark corner.

Magda got her unbearable headaches in the Yellow House. In order to make her say some names that the gendarmes would later use as an argument to drag more raw human flesh into the Yellow House for practising their formidable cruelty, they put, among other, paper bags with grated horse radish on my mother's head, who was just a twenty year old girl at the time. The bag would fall off when the paper got soaked with her tears, saliva and spittle⁶. For gendarmes Magda was not a sweet girl, a future mother, a human being with prospects to live to be 82. For them she was a bag on which they trained old and new methods of torture. I must say, though, that Magda paid them back in the same coin - she did not consider them human and such attitude enabled her to persist, moreover, it helped her to preserve unblemished respect for true humans. God only knows how she managed to distinguish with surgical precision humans from inhumans. This unbelievable

⁶ Such methods of torture and many others which were just indicated or even omitted in this manuscript are vividly described in her book „Until Sour Cherries Bloom“.

achievement could be an inexhaustible topic of doctoral theses that I would love to see, for my mother had an exaggerated respect for intellectuals and scientists. If for no other reason they could do something for her.

I realize that I have stepped into swampy slime with quicksand where my wrath flourishes with intellectuals and scientists who - despite history and their oaths - unscrupulously develop arguments in favour of new wars and create increasingly destructive devices by order of cruel characters who long to win absolute power on planet Earth and elsewhere. These clever and learned scholars do not care for Einstein's words which clearly state: intellectuals just solve problems, but genius prevents problems... Why do I say this?

Because at this moment, in the first decade of the third millennium, according to official statistics, up to two thirds of scientists (in conditionally speaking natural sciences) are engaged in projects of all kinds of world military (read: war) industries; they are solving „ordered“ problems. When will they finally wake up and become responsible to the gift they were granted and use it for the benefit of all people and not just of those who PAY?

But, let us get back to my Magda, for world greedy ones, the naive, my brave Magda and „minor“ matters which her and my life consisted of. Yes, Magda made a distinction between humans and inhumans in her surroundings to the very end of her life. To the end of her life, horse radish had never been brought into our house either. Nor had she ever, as far as I know, tasted it. She avoided, while she had headaches, even mustard, because it brought up memories of that terrible pain. Even now, when Magda has already left this world, it never occurs to me to buy horse radish and bring it home. I have tried it, of course, it's nice, my pallet liked it, I do not refuse it when I am offered, but 70 years were not long enough for that wound to heal...

Now that I have started with memories of headaches and horse radish, I should say that I think back of grandmother's „hissing“ with mixed feelings. For me grandmother Milevka was also a heroine of a special kind. The more time passes the more certain I am that she was a woman of exceptional strength of character and dedication to a system of values she considered right and which, according to her judgment, relied on ten God's commandments and a few norms she had acquired in her family. I am sure that it would be fair to write a separate book about such a personality, not mother and grandmother, but the

Fundamental Woman Courage, devoted to her duties, her son and grandchildren in a manner which spoilt generations of modern girls would not even be able to watch on film. I do not think that grandmother Milevka was a unique phenomenon in the Universe. There were many such women in her generation... Convinced that God had given her two hands to work with and give, with a slightly wild and free spirit, not much formal education, untouched by the notion that she could make her own choice between what is God's and what is Man's - she always found her own path, regardless of what it cost her personally. A man could be smashed against grandmother Milevka like a wave against a diamond cliff. But, all that love and warmth... I remember the way in which she committed herself without seeking motives, reasons, counter-favours. And how much strength I got from her. I can still hear her after all these years, affectionately caressing me on the head and tenderly telling me, „Granma's little liver." I still smile at such expression of love, but it also deeply moves me, again and again.

It is also true that grandma Milevka, „good as good can be and as solid as a rock", could not accept Magda as a daughter-in-law. She was tumultuously opposed to the marriage of her handsome son Živko, a Serb, with a Jewish, Hungarian as grandmother understood it, „endemically" infected with chauvinism which was infinitely nurtured in Srbobran between the Serb and Hungarian community. Perhaps there were too few Jews in Srbobran to form feelings about them, and since Hungarian was Magda's mother tongue, it was sufficient for grandma Milevka to „convert" Magda into a Hungarian and oppose her son's marriage with her. Nevertheless, she felt total compassion with Magda's pain when headaches attacked. She felt deep respect for the discipline with which Magda treated everything and although she did not approve of strictness towards small children, grandma vigorously silenced me when pain got out of hand. Grandma Milevka had a warm heart for Magda's status of an orphan whose mother and father and the whole family were killed in the war, some under ice on the Tisa, some in Auschwitz and in other ways. And she tried to spare her. And she managed to reconcile the irreconcilable: intolerance and compassion - towards the same person. So I got what was coming to me whenever I crossed the line of „peace and quiet" grandma had drawn for such occasions. I also remember that I got the rough end of the stick more often than my brother, because he was a less active child than me.

I think that this grandma Milevka's need to protect the young woman who suffered of headaches eventually provoked an understandable turn. When she finally told me, „She is ours, too!“ I knew that the fire in her heart had completely melted the ice in her brain.

But I consider that endless silencing and calming down one of my most painful, unhealed wounds the Yellow House has inflicted on me. Because even now - when I have already crossed the peak of my life and when I am facing the serious task of settling accounts about what I have accomplished, what I have failed to do and what I can still do in order not to leave it undone - even a mild word can stop me. For instance, „You don't need to wash the windows right now... The weather is not right for a walk... Perhaps we should postpone the job...“ Regardless whether I had decided and prepared for a small or big, important or unimportant job, I give up if anybody from my immediate surroundings shows even the slightest doubt that it needs to be done. Whenever any of these halting words are uttered, I feel as if „something“ has flown out of me. Now I already know that these are the moments when I „stop the machine on the spot“ as I learnt to do when I was a child. Then I realize that „it“ has happened again and I start „reinstalling“: I reconstruct my motivation to do what I had intended. My great-aunt Rozika, Auntie as we called her, a Hungarian from Stara Moravica, noticed this trait of mine to come to a complete standstill, and fortunately for me, started to „throw counter-spells“. As soon as she saw that I was giving up an intended activity, she would shout to me, «Ne hagd magad!». It meant, „Don't give up / Hold your ground!“ As her Serbian was truly funny, only this Hungarian formula resounds in me and it has the power to remotivate me and restart me all over again. When within sight, Magda would also be agitated by my "halting on the spot", and she also had a formula for me, „Finish whatever you have started!“ or „You have taken the task, there's no turning back“. This was equally effective.

In this struggle against the Yellow-House wound I did not come out as a winner. The older I am the harder this repeated effort of self-motivation gets. Start-stop, start-stop, stop, stop... I am afraid that I will become completely motionless... But I have not surrendered yet. For the sake of Auntie and Magda - I am not giving up.

I am standing in front of the Yellow House and reflecting on the fact that people in Subotica have not even changed the „nickname“ of this ugly building. For all of them it is still the Yellow House. They know instantly

what building you are talking about and they are ready to tell you where it is, what is in it and, generally speaking, they will pour out an abundance of data about it. For me, the data are quite irrelevant. I do not listen to them, because all I can see is that they did not even bother to paint it. It is still yellow and not even masked in any way to at least by colour disassociate it from the time of torture and beating. And I weigh whether to take a positive or a negative stand concerning this fact. Whether they have left it was it used to be out of malice, or simply out of lack of strength. Since we have not managed to get back on our feet since 1389⁷, I judge that it is a matter of a lack of strength and will of the citizens of Subotica...

I don't know, but the Yellow House I am watching live in 2005 appears to me as a pale cartoon of the unseen monster that has cast a dark shadow of misery on my childhood and youth. Only in my mature years have I managed to draw some useful morals from the cruel Yellow-House lessons, but in connection with that torture-house I have never been able to utter the popular consolation: „who knows why this is good (every cloud has a silver lining)". The essential evil which turns humans into inhumans belongs among experiences which should not happen to anybody. Neither the torturer, nor the tortured.

The Yellow House!

During all my years, whenever I thought of the Yellow House, the constant fellow traveler in the train of my life, I assessed and weighed whether I would have endured those beatings. So I tortured myself and suffered and punished myself for hours with that meaningless question. Suddenly, as if struck by high voltage, I remembered that nobody expected me to give an answer and make the decision. My life has a different course. The rails for it are set differently. The endurance and persistence required from me are not in any way related to physical beating and pertinent psychological torture. The methods of torture I

⁷ The year 1389 – Battle of Kosovo, the lost war with Turkish military force has introduced the phenomenon of celebration, even cult, of defeat. As a side effect, a custom was introduced to glorify a traitor as a hero, while a true hero is proclaimed a traitor whose „seventh generation“ of successors are cursed. Let's take the example of contemporaries from the time: Prince Marko and Vuk Branković. Turkish vassal Marko is celebrated in verse as a hero, and Brankovic, the only one who won the battle in Kosovo with his warriors, although the war was lost, was later proclaimed a traitor. More than 600 years have gone by since then, and for Serbs Marko is still a hero, and Branković is still a cursed traitor. This pattern is repeated in many variants. Historians have an explanation, but what's the use of it when the truth and a lie, as soon as they are born – switch places...

am exposed to are quite different in nature. This is my case:

I torture myself: 1) resenting the victim for having brought me into this world and stamped me with her wounds and scars; 2) regretting for being such a beast for having such thoughts; 3) admiring Magda's firm character; 4) hating her for her strictness with which she swamped me on every occasion; 5) admiring her stories, her narration, the voice which hypnotizes and draws one deep, deep into the story... And around and around, admiration, envy, pride, love, awe and, most terrible of all, the question "where am I in all that?" What have I done in my life that I can come up with before children, grandchildren and the rest of the humanity and say, I have endured it and have not subsided in the struggle for peaceful and prosperous future! How can one be a hero in stale drab everyday life? That is what bothers me, and then laughter seizes me, "What a fool you are, you wish to be tortured in order to be a human being!"

Disease!

Disease which started in the Yellow House in 1941. It lost its edge with time and, fortunately for my mental health, I have encountered the idea which advocates peace and development by non-violent methods. I have also met heroes of peace. Giants of spirit who have never raised a hand to strike, but just to salute, donate or bless. Frequent contemplation about non-violent methods have miraculously helped fizzle out my complex of unaccomplished heroism in places of torture. I am healing, it seems successfully, by Gandhi's model. But how many years I have wasted...

A few more words about this disease that disfigured the second generation of survivors of Holocaust, us, the children of survived camp in-mates. As I have already written, I was for a long time affected by some indefinite heroic act which will be recognized, accepted and unambiguous, because only the names of heroes are written in eternal books in golden letters! This concept had infected me to such an extent that it was never sufficient for me to be alive and healthy, to have a job, a family, to go to the market, to travel on holiday... Briefly, to have a normal life. As soon as I relax and amuse myself, the conscience starts screaming, "What are you doing, you irresponsible fool, there's no time for that!?"

That Yellow House in me, that contorted freak, constantly asked for more, more effort, distinguish

yourself, exert yourself, surmount these walls of normal, do SOMETHING! Finally, this wore me out completely, so there are long periods in my life in which I refuse to make any effort whatsoever. I just sit, read, play computer games... I am capable of going on like that for days. Not doing is my response to the sick urge to be senselessly heroic!

My poor Magda, she had no idea to what extent she had passed the Yellow House on to me, and she was strongly convinced that she had so nicely and wisely spared her children of her horrible experience from prisons and concentration camps. She could not have known that no person is immune to war disease and that the first generation of Holocaust victims, as experts say, need help to paste their tripartite lives (prewar, war and postwar) into one, that is, to bridge the cuts evil had cut into their lives. But the second generation, the generation of their children, need serious treatment. That, why not say it truthfully and openly (as I was told in Jerusalem and AMHA - the organization with enormous experience in helping the first and the second generation of survivors) majority of the second generation needs therapy, treatment and closed institutions...

This is not a topic for some parlour discussion.

I will give you an example which followed me and left me speechless for a long time.

One of Magda's comrades with whom she had lived through their wartime Golgotha, Marta Husar Doder, a heavenly creature in whose vicinity one could clearly feel how "that furnace radiates heat" and whom I loved dearly - got seriously sick several years ago. When she was already practically bed-ridden, her daughter moved her to London to live with her. Marta's daughter who had finished medical school, having chosen that profession following in her mother's footsteps and seeking better professional opportunities - had moved to London. But, wherever you go, you take yourself, and the syndrome of the second generation made serious cracks on Marta's daughter - she broke down in a ghastly manner. Let me say this: she never married, never had children, she linked her life to her mother and had a difficult time watching other people "warming" themselves from Marta's warm energy. Maybe that is why she took away and physically separated her weak mother from her war comrades who considered Marta a member of their families. When in 2005 Marta died in London from old age and illness, her daughter Cica, jumped out of a

window the very next day. She did not survive. The Yellow House and death camps took another victim 64 years later.

In such a brutal manner, the Yellow House still tends to strike a new blow.

I am afraid people might forget that.

The Yellow House!

I am standing in front of the Yellow House thinking of the dead heroes and the ones who survived. Every November 18 those who were in that torture house and have survived the war go to Subotica to pay respects to the memory of heroes who were shot in 1941. They were their comrades who shared their hopes, their strength, their conviction with a goal which was too distant. Time passes and every November 18 there are less and less survivors who have personal memories of that mass murder. My Magda does not go to that ghastly pilgrimage any more either. And I am afraid we will forget.

This is just one side of the heroes' medal. But there is also the other one.

For me the Yellow House is also a weird story about people who were forced to be heroic in order to maybe survive, a story about people who in those beastly living circumstances were ready for and capable of superhuman and supernatural deeds. They nursed each other's heroic wounds and - sang praise of the others, belittling themselves. This blind or forced humbleness (I could not make up my mind whether it was blind or forced, so let both epithets stand), this lack of insight into their own reality was somehow even insulting for me. Sonja was a hero! Raka was a hero! Lola was a hero! While I, Magda, testifying from immediate vicinity - am not a hero! Sonja, Raka and Lola were shot. Magda was not. For Magda, I guess, all those who had managed to survive the torture houses and then camps, did not qualify for the category of heroes. Perhaps because the survived Partisans - who had reached home earlier, restored their health and took hold of peacetime posts - constantly suspected them: "How come you have survived? So many have died, how did you manage to pull through?" As if the atrocities were not survived only by the strongest, healthiest and the most capable ones. "Freedom" immediately pushed the few comeback martyrs into the second-rate victors. Women who survived concentration camps were pushed even further into the background.

This is yet another sickness.

We, the children of these "how-did-you-manage-to-pull-through" fathers and mothers, were also pushed behind "the children of fallen combatants" and other most desirable categories of persons who have come out of the same war we are talking about. It did not hurt me personally, but my father Živko and my mother Magda "ate their hearts out" because of these sick insinuations, so I suffered because of it indirectly. This composite complex of Magda's of insufficient and inadequate heroism mixed with the guilty feeling for having survived while others from her family have not - haunted me and my brother and later was passed on in a certain sense to her grandchildren as well. This is because this complex was an abundant source of Magda's strictness to herself and her dear ones. She flooded and choked the sources from which council should have come about how to be a child, how to be a teenage girl, how to be a young woman. I received that type of council with delay. Like a beating, from grandmothers, aunts, neighbours, cruel peers. And never learnt. Just as I have never learnt to make minor necessary compromises in peacetime life. Nor have I known how to teach my child to do it. This wound still bleeds. It has never healed, not even into a scar.

Should I be more specific? As I remember it looking back at my own and her life, Magda thought of everything as an obligation, a duty that had to be done. She buried her entire prewar life, childhood and youth, numerous relatives, buffooneries, family stories, deep into her memories and threw away the key, in the sense that she had never let us in⁸. She wrote books about the war, because it turned out that she was gifted for it. And our life together, her third, postwar life, unfolded in front of my eyes in the following style: not a second should be wasted and there is no place for lame ducks! Lame ducks go to hospital and that's the end of it! On the other hand, my father experienced life as a gift and a feast. From the moment he survived Belgrade torture houses, slave labour in Mauthausen concentration camp and the liberation of the camp which took thousands of lives⁹ -his every day, to the

⁸ Only after she had written the book *The Dream of Youth* I found out who were our relatives and ancestors she had shared her prewar life with and what they were like. Until then I did not even know the names of our closest relatives on her side, and just knew the nicknames of a few.

⁹ Živko's life hung by a thread when Mauthausen camp was liberated. If it had not been for a comrade who had saved his strength, my father would have died there on the high bank of the Danube. When electricity was turned off in the camp fence, that man carried half-dead Živko on his hands to the nearest village, to the house of a doctor. They strove to bring him back to life for weeks. He felt the consequences until his early death (1970).

very last one, was a festivity. He worked himself to death electrifying Voivodina, building factories and numerous companies around Novi Sad, forcing young employees to finish schools and universities because "fatherland needs educated people"¹⁰... With the same or even greater zeal Živko was destroying himself in entertainment and merrymaking and he never had enough of comradeship and laughter. For him and such life, 24 hours in a day were too few¹¹.

However, these two utterly opposed parenthood conceptions in the same household left an indelible imprint on my experience of the world.

There is no remedy for that either, Yellow House, you terrible misfortune!

It is proper that I add another of my wounds to this list. It is not too severe, but it definitely originates from the Yellow House. On TV or in cinema I cannot watch scenes of violence of any kind, be it psychological, physical or any other. As soon as violence on film starts to get momentum, I get up and go to the other room. If I cannot leave, I cover my eyes. I cannot stand other people's suffering and pain, even when acted. I continue watching when by musical tones I judge that the "thing" is over. I am aware that this is nothing much, but let this weakness be also taken into account.

I blame the Yellow House for a wound which might have made my childhood and youth more miserable than anything else. Here it is: it was clear to adults what was happening to my parents, but I was just a child and did not understand their long periods of silence and estrangement. While they were nursing their war wounds, my parents were

¹⁰ Education of young generations was an imperative at the time of „reconstruction and development“ of the country devastated during the Second World War.

¹¹ To be perfectly honest, I've never gotten to know my father Živko well. He was away from home all the time. When he was with us, he just joked, tickled us, threw us in the sky, dragged us to group walks or outings, or kept us at a distance („Stand over there by the cupboard and not a step closer!“) while he was getting ready to go hunting, to some distant journey, ironing his trousers to make a sharp line „so you can cut yourself on it“ and similar. The only thing I clearly remember about him is the smell, a certain aftershave mixed with the smell of tobacco and his skin... All his clothes smelled, powerfully. Or it seemed so to me because I worshipped him. I wanted to be near to him all the time. He was magnetic for adults, too, his comrades told me that Živko was one of the rare ones loved both by men and women. Unfortunately, he went out of my life too soon, I was 13 and he was gone already. I know that Magda loved him, too, to the end of her life, but asked for a divorce while we were still children, because she could not stand his tumultuous way of life any more. And although I did not know him well, for the constructive elements he has impressed on me: the passion for joy, laughter, unrestrained companionship – with this testimony, I pay tribute to him.

not capable of occupying themselves with their children as customary in healthy families. So I felt rejected and unloved. I guess I needed more attention than my brother Nebojsa, because he did not have such feelings, and since nobody managed to bring what was going on closer to my understanding, this feeling gradually grew and exceeded its immediate cause, so I translated it into the feeling: "Nobody loves me". And I convinced myself that it was true. It was stupid and wrong, but it lasted throughout the best years of my childhood and youth. A long time passed before I started to understand what was going on with my parents. And why. But it was too late. Those war wounds of theirs brutally separated us, then moments of their or my strength reunited us. And those powerful reunions and separations were our lives. Why is this so important for me? Due to this seesaw "get out of my way - come here" my self-confidence suffered and I did not acquire the skill of getting along with the society and fitting in with peers. That is why I have experienced numerous unnecessary defeats in contacts with them and the rest of the world, of course...

But no, I am not ready yet to continue bringing it out in the open, Yellow House, my prison!

Oh, well, I need not list all my Yellow-House wounds right now. Other prisons and camps even more inflicted wounds on my life. Some of them I can bring out in the open and try to overcome. But the worst ones, the severest and the most painful ones, will have to wait until I rally gather new strength.

Magda continues following her war path:

The Prison in Márianosztra

Márianosztra is a medieval monastery turned into a prison for women. During the occupation there were hundreds of women there, sentenced for serious crimes, murder included. The prison was held and controlled by nuns. During autumn 1942, the first group of ten political prisoners arrived here from Subotica court prison, and I was among them. Not long after that, a large group arrived from Konti. During the very first walk, Vera Pavlović, the already mentioned student, recognized me. When she was pardoned from death sentence, she was put in Novi Sad prison and then Konti with other comrades. She remembered me from the students' movement in Belgrade in autumn 1940, when I worked in Voivodina students' restaurant and students' demonstrations from the time.

After we had managed to talk despite the violent protests of a nun who was on guard with rosary in her hand, our two collectives merged immediately with great mutual trust. Comrades who arrived later in groups brought from Konti and Szeged, joined us. In Márianosztra, there were, at the most, 150 Yugoslavs and about 50 women from Budapest, plus women arrested in occupied Erdelj. There were no common cells there. We were all in solitary – two or three per cell. Nevertheless, strong and good organization was established. In two and a half, up to three years spent in Márianosztra, this secret organization was never uncovered, although nuns suspected that it existed.

The very first group from Subotica immediately started the struggle with prison administration for the improvement of hygiene which was on the lowest possible level. The struggle for sufficient water, wash-basins, for the possibility to wash ourselves in cells, because nuns – hypocritical as they were – were horrified by the very idea of us washing in each other's presence. We demanded to be permitted to have shutters on barred windows under the ceiling opened, because despite the increasingly cold autumn weather, terrible stench spread through Márianosztra from contaminated and clogged sanitary installations. We demanded permission to receive packages from home, and notebooks, pencils and books, to be taken out to walk together, or to work together in workshops, in the field, in the garden, which was very important. This struggle went on the whole time we spent in Márianosztra. When nuns just suspected that something clandestine and forbidden was going on among us, severe punishments followed, acquired rights were abolished, common walks, common work, performances, were banned, and those among us who were considered dangerous communists by the nuns were relocated to solitary confinement on the second floor.

Cells had no heating in Márianosztra either. In the evening, that is, at four o'clock in the afternoon lights were turned off for reasons of economy, and numberless measures of exerting pressure by religious and political propaganda were introduced, especially with young comrades who the nuns believed were still pious and could be converted.

Despite everything, the united collective had joint illegal leadership consisting of representatives of all groups, one might say, a kind of a coordinating body. Its members were Vera Pavlović, Julija Cimr, Marta Husar, Beba Bursać, all from Novi Sad, and the authoress of these lines. From among women from Budapest – Ilonka Vamos, an experienced member of the Communist Party of Hungary, who had been arrested several times between two world wars and who died later on in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Like Sonja Marinković in Voivodina, Ilonka mostly worked on the organization of people's aid, and she, too, was slightly lame, so that she could not hide from agents. Each of the mentioned women comrades was in charge of one sphere of illegal work. For instance, all women informed Julija Cimr and Mila Brkic about the quantity and kind of food they received in packages on pieces of paper. Based on that, these two calculated how packages would be equally distributed.

Special care was taken about the ailing. Women Jehovah's witnesses, arrested for antiwar propaganda in Hungary, whom we had won over, helped us with the distribution of food between cells. Vera Pavlovic and I were in charge of writing Marxist lectures, appropriate leaflets and proclamations for holidays, and for copying news which reached us despite everything about the battles in Yugoslavia. Marta Husar who received most of these news from her family, was in charge of disseminating and distributing the leaflets and lectures between cells, and finally of collecting and destroying them. Everything was written secretly, sitting in the corner of cells on the bucket. We wrote on toilet-paper in block letters, so everybody could read them. Whenever an opportunity for joint work arose, we had oral lectures and talked about various books and films.

After the defeat of German troops at Stalingrad, we constantly negotiated with nuns on "alliance". Nuns were anglophiles. The nun who was deputy warden and whom we called after Hungarian Hejeteska, a middle-aged pretty woman who had become a nun after sudden death of her fiancé, came from a family with certain progressive tradition. Her grandfather, general Percel Mor from Bonyhad, served in Lajos Kossuth's army during Hungarian Revolution in 1848. Vera Pavlovic was the most successful in the negotiations. She was put in solitary confinement, allegedly because she was sick. In fact, she had a heart weakness, which was not at all contagious, nor had a harmful effect on her cell mates. Hejeteska often visited her, brought her tea and some drugs, and once made the remark, "You write to your mother with so much love that it surprised me, and she answers you in the same manner!" Of course, she herself censored the letters. "And they say that women Communists have renounced their families!"

Indeed, all kinds of stories were told in Hungary about Communists. In Márianosztra, they either did not take it into account or did not know that we, from the illegal antifascist movement in Yugoslavia, differed from Russian Communists. Just as members of other illegal movements in Europe differed. At the time, we were not aware of these differences, and we did not believe various rumours. In order to illustrate the mentioned remark of the head nun in Márianosztra, I will quote a few sentences from a letter of Vera Pavlovic to her mother and sister. The letter was published in a book by Zivan Milisavac called "Messages from Behind Bars":

"Dear and beloved Mommy and Olga, time has come that both you and I have longed for when I can write a long letter to you. When, leaning over the letter, I can forget the distance that separates us, when I can imagine that I am close to you and that I am talking with you... Mother, dear, how many times have I, pacing up and down this little room or lying on the bed, uttered the word "Mommy" or just thought about it. Then, clearer than any picture, your face would spring in front of my eyes, how you lived, and worked and took care of us, and on the other hand how little we have done to show our love and gratitude... Beloved Mommy, as concerning the content of the package, I absolutely rely on you, I will be more than satisfied with whatever you send, because I can imagine how hard it

is to get anything... Olga, dear, you must be a big girl by now. I must admit that I was very sad when I read that you have three bad marks. My dear Olga, you must know that knowledge is the only thing nobody can take away from you and only knowledge will serve you during your entire life. That is why, dear sister, learn and read. But learn so that you will know..."

The letter was not dated, but it was written in spring 1943. At the time, Vera's older brother Mika Pavlović was already a doctor of the Partisans.

While talking to Vera, the strict and lady-like Deputy warden considerably softened in her attitude to political prisoners she was entrusted with. Mila Brkić and Julija Cimr also manifested a great deal of political tact in talking to her, and the Deputy had a lot of respect for two women from Subotica, Boriska Malušev and Jolanka Hajman, as they were older than others and came from a city. The rules in the prison were somewhat alleviated, we were given more opportunities to meet while working together, at performances. But that did not last long. In March 1944, after direct occupation of Hungary by Hitler's troops, following orders from a higher instance in Budapest, a ghetto was established within the prison for prisoners of Jewish origin. A ghetto within a ghetto. Jewish women, 15 of them from Yugoslavia and about 50 from Hungary, were transferred to the second floor of the prison wing of solitary confinement.

Separate time was set for their walks and meals. But illegal work in the community continued, since it had always been clandestine. It lasted until the Jewish girls and women were deported to Gyűjtőfogház, in Kőbánya suburb of Budapest. They were supposed to be extradited to SS troops in order to be transported to Germany. It was generally known. When they were about to be taken away from Márianosztra, while they were standing lined up in the courtyard, and I was among them, the song "East and West are awakening" was heard from the whole prison building... That is how our comrades who stayed – although just temporarily – parted from us who were leaving. Nuns and women criminals were crying, even the Deputy was wiping tears. But Horti's government hesitated to extradite us to the Germans until autumn that year, so we were deported at the same time as all political prisoners from Hungary, men and women.

Newly arrested women from Bačka continued to be brought to Gyűjtőfogház individually, like Agnesa Sas who had managed to copy and disseminate illegal press in Bačka until 1943.

The contact with the People's Liberation Struggle had never been interrupted, because members of our families were also involved in the struggle. During visits and on hidden notes in packages, in toothpaste, in coded books, we received precious information about the situation at the front and the status of the struggle in Yugoslavia. That is how we got support to preserve human dignity and faith in the correctness of our struggle. Our women comrades were extremely happy to hear the news from the outer world, and the news about the establishment of the

National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia, in other words, of our Government, filled them with special enthusiasm while we were still in Márianosztra.

The decreased collective continued to live in the prison in Budapest, just as it lived in one form or another until liberation.

Nevena follows in Magda's footsteps:

Márianosztra

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty
Talmud

I am making my way through jammed Budapest having a terrible dilemma: should I continue to Márianosztra or simply turn back before I get completely stuck in the traffic jam? What can Márianosztra offer me, a person of the beginning of the third millennium, that will subdue the impressions that live in me? Can any building overshadow the memories of events which I have not participated in, but which have marked me and loaded a heavy cross on my back?

Should I continue or turn back? Do I really have to watch some ancient edifice? As a wise man once said: a brick vertically, a brick horizontally, the difference is just in the colour of the clay. In these words I seek an excuse to give up.

Indeed, I am well aware that meandering along the Danube in a sultry August afternoon, upstream, upstream, will draw to the surface war wounds and anecdotes in connection with that monastery in the north of Hungary. But nothing is happening. I stop for a cup of coffee and get a lungful of Danubian air. While watching the river which is much narrower here than in my Novi Sad, I am trying to pump up the memories to the surface. Nothing again. "You must finish everything that you begin!", suddenly I hear Magda's voice from a great distance helping me not to give up and continue the journey by seeking an excuse that it has no sense. And I hear her saying also, "You have accepted the task! There's no turning back!" This formula works. I am continuing.

And then, just a few minutes after I had passed a tiny place called Szob, right above the railway station to which in 1942 a train transported hundreds of women from prisons in Bačka and Hungary - I practically crash into a signpost:

Márianosztra!

Oh, Lord, it exists!

Let me say that this is exactly how the fact that Mariánostra was emerging from an ugly legend of a parallel world and becoming a fact of everyday life echoed in me.

I continue meandering. Just greenery, a house here and there.

My eyes became inattentive, and I increasingly become introvert. In my memory, Márianosztra is most powerfully linked to a scene from Magda's book "When Cherries Bloom". The scene describes the sound of evening prayers addressed to Virgin Mary. The nuns who kept the monastery and women's prison in the monastery prayed in the morning and in the evening, of course, and these prayers echoed throughout the edifice. In the course of all these endless years, I could almost hear them chanting, «Mi atyánk aki vagy a mennyekben» (Our Father, who art in Heaven...) and the other one devoted to Szüz Mária, Virgin Mary full of grace... Whenever Magda mentioned these prayers she would change her voice into chanting to Virgin Mary and I can still recall these tones in my mind quite clearly. I have always imagined the following scene: political prisoners squatting in their cells which are reached by the prayers of nuns who are also merciless prison guards. Even now, when I close my eyes I can hear them, those voices which come out from the church, amplified by the echo against the thick walls, into the courtyard, penetrating into cells and solitary confinement on the upper floors, droning, droning, droning... And the girls and women, majority of whom did not understand Hungarian, listened and thought of their own god and why he had thrown them into this locked up, cold and stinking hole. Or did they get angry with him? Perhaps they prayed, too, secretly even from themselves, because their Party¹² had informed the memberships how things stand with religion, and the membership then passed on this new stand

¹² The Communist Party of prewar Yugoslavia accepted the stand that religion was the opium for the people and like all sister Communist parties in the world „abolished“ God. However, the churches which are responsible for various interpretations of the spiritual plane of existence – all survived.

to sympathizers, sometimes with tolerance and sometimes without it ...

I missed a signpost and asked around how to get to the monastery. People were utterly indifferent. What I had expected, I had no idea...

I enter the courtyard of the church-prison and the first thing I see are the flags of the European Union and of the Republic of Hungary fluttering side by side. Great! For a short time this leaves me speechless, and don't make me say what I feel, because nobody will like it!... Bureaucratic rules..

Indeed, when I think twice, only after I had physically entered on my own two feet the courtyard of Márianosztra, I was slapped in the face with all its might by the fact that God's house and human prison coexisted under the same roof! That is what it was like at the time of Magda's imprisonment, and even before that. And here they are still, the church and the prison, stable like rocks, conjoined like Siamese twins. After the war, in 1948, the prison was converted into men's prison and political male prisoners were disciplined and isolated here at the time. It had all started in the 19th century when monastery buildings were sold to the state, almost all except for the church. The edifice had been built by King Ladislav in the 14th century as a foundation, and in the 19th, perhaps money became scarce... The state was only too glad to get this "gift" and solve the problem of the accommodation for women inclined to criminal action. So, for more than one hundred years, they have locked up sometimes women and sometimes men here. But a prison is a prison. And the church should be a church. To me personally it is repulsive that they are connected by the same courtyard, coexist on the same lot. And moreover, somebody has sanctified it, sprinkled holy water and God was addressed in it... Humans, humans, nothing is sacred to them... I mumble to myself all mixed up...

They would not let me into the prison part of the edifice, of course, but I might freely enter the church, if I pleased. And I did. I found a short history (background of the church and somewhere in the middle of the narrative I ran into an absurd sentence, "He who wishes to encounter saints, let him come to Márianosztra!" Although, perhaps it is not absurd, after all, most of the saints, great martyrs, suffered because of the delict of thought, and that is exactly what happened to Magda and her war

comrades! Later, too, during Soviet domination... A different opinion?! Who dared think?

I am standing in the courtyard of Márianosztra church thinking what it meant to the imprisoned women of Bačka in 1942 that their tall windows overlooked the Danube! I decide to go around the edifice and cast a glance. I tread absent-minded seeking a path to find a place from which the river can be seen, and then right in front of me emerge watch-towers and barbed-wire fence. I come to my senses and turn back. I feel terribly embarrassed and hasten back to where I came from. I pass by a van with bars. And only then do I fully realize that I entered the outer prison yard. I watch dumbfounded for a while, after the van passed, the iron gate is going down right in front of me. I won't make it!!!

It is happening to me again. I would not be capable of explaining what exactly "it" is, but I had a similar feeling when I passed through the gate of Auschwitz memorial camp in 1994. I felt as if it had not been the first time I was there, but this time I was out of their control! "I will come out!", I repeated out loud to the iron gate in Márianosztra the very same sentence I had threatened with the "lacey" iron gate in Auschwitz with the wrought sign «Arbeit macht frei» above it.

I am listening closely to my heart. Good, I am not panic stricken, the heartbeat is normal, the throat unclogged, the stomach peaceful. This episode in Márianosztra will not shorten my life by a single second... I breathe in, breathe out, then once again and return to the present, to the year 2005. I catch sight of the free steps that lead to the main church yard, take them, and between two rows of fragrant box-hedge I come out in the square, then without turning back, I hurry to the parking lot and into my car. It is true, there is no need for panic, but the visit is definitely over. I really do not need this!

Indeed, a different Márianosztra lives in me, and not these Siamese twins. And I readily slip into my memories.

Márianosztra!

I go back to mid nineties, to Novi Sad, into my kitchen where Magda, Miroslav Mandić and I are seated. Miroslav, who is more or less my peer, is one of wonderful Novi Sad "madmen" thanks to whom I love my native city. A poet and a writer, Miroslav had walked for ten years to the glory of literature and various writers of Europe. He had

walked with a pedometer??/ on his tennis shoes, he had walked every day except on Sundays. He always covered twenty odd kilometers plotting with his steps an invisible blue rose of wandering. One of these days I had covered the planned route with him. Ten books remained as the result of that walking accomplishment. He had planned to flood entire Europe with his steps, to walk across all the states from one monument to the other, to pay tribute to all European literary giants. But those were foul times, out of the tainted ashes in the Balkan a new war emerged, and Miroslav, resolute to persist in his intention and not give up on his ten-year pilgrimage to literature - was forced to narrow down his route until the plotting of the invisible blue rose with footsteps was brought down to a tour of Serbia's and Voivodina's highways and byways. He plays a part in my story because of Magda's experience with Márianosztra. She had never shared that experience with me or her pen, but it burst out with all its might thanks to Miroslav.

So, the kitchen. In the second hour of a pleasant chat, it turned out that Miroslav was imprisoned for a short time because of a thought-crime (after the war, of course, in the state of Yugoslavia). And then, the two of them, Magda and Miroslav, once they had discovered this common trait, forgot everything else, and, beaming, started questioning each other. "How many paces did your cell have?" As if 50 years had fallen off her back, Magda jumps up and measures across the kitchen with her paces the length and width of the solitary confinement in Márianosztra she had languished in 1942 and 1943. This is where the bucket used to be. This is where the bed stood. And the window on this side... Then the guest takes his turn, and stands up and measures across my kitchen his cell with his steps... I realize that I am a witness of something quite out of the ordinary. What are they so joyful about? Because they pulled through or because they can share an experience that "other ordinary mortals" do not have? Once upon a time imprisoned with no guilt, they used this old experience to understand each other and become close?! It all sounded similar to the tunes of numerous army stories I listened to from my friends, conspirators linked with the same secret.

In the described manner, for me Márianosztra is a mine of unbelievable knowledge. One afternoon in mid seventies while we were still living on the embankment by the Danube across from the Petrovaradin fortress, about ten war women comrades of Magda were sitting in our living room. They had gathered in our home from various towns. They were

preparing for some veterans'¹³ celebration, some of them will sleep over at our house, but first let them have coffee, so they can talk and ask one another how they were doing. While cooking coffee for them in the kitchen, I was listening to them and, judging by the amount of noise, I knew exactly what was going on in there. First, you could hear just individual voices. This meant that they were asking each other when they had arrived in Novi Sad and where they were staying, who had not come and why, what was happening with the children, husbands, jobs. Then two or three of them began talking all at the same time and immediately switch to a Serbian-German-Hungarian combination of languages as they always did when they dropped "serious" topics and turned to memories. Now they would shout each other down, I predicted while I stirred the coffee, and indeed, their voices became louder, they shouted each other down, here and there, laughter could be heard. They were talking about the war, I interpreted. When they reached Márianosztra in their conversation, the voices were clear, somehow victorious, like among teenagers who have outwitted strict parents and school janitors. Holding a tray with coffee cups in my hand I stepped in the room and at that moment the sweet-sounding pleasant voice of my favourite auntie Edita uttered the following sentence,

"Hey, kids, we had such a good time over there!"

I did not spill anything, but I was stunned.

Magda noticed my bewilderment and hastily, as if she were still the one who had to instantaneously resolve every problem in the "collective", even such a slight psychological one - started to explain, "We were young, we were strong, we took care of one another, we loved each other, we developed a strong collective! That's what was good, just that!"

Oh, well, I had got used to hearing all kind of unbelievable things from them, it was not easy to surprise me any more. But I am a hundred per cent sure that I would never use such a phrase to describe what I nowadays feel about common developments in cold and mouldy prisons. But, who cares what I feel, it is their experience. Only confusion is mine.

¹³ In prewar Yugoslavia, there was an institution called SUBNOR or the People's Liberation War Veterans' Association. Because of the name of the organization the colloquial term „veterans' celebration“ was formed to denote dates linked to war events on the territory of Yugoslavia. The term referred to the observation of events in camps throughout Europe where „our“ people were imprisoned.

Márianosztra!

In my mind, regardless of the edifice I have just visited that has somewhat disturbed and shuffled the images I had cherished??/ for 55 years, Márianosztra remains a synonym for women's collective. Women's Collective, with a capital W and a capital C.

To what extent these women had been and still are connected - is pure science fiction for me. I have witnessed a number of situations in which the Women's Collective started in a flesh operating at full speed. My jaw would drop and all I could do was gape with surprise.

A single telephone call was sufficient for that to happen. For instance, one of the comrades complained to another about some trouble she got into, lost her job, or did not receive children's allowance, or a drunken husband beat her up and threw her out - which did happen... The Women's Collective would immediately take action. All women comrades who could be of any help were alarmed on the spot, in person or by telephone, they met after work to elaborate tactics and strategy, assign hobs and tasks. The problem was most frequently completely solved in just two or three hours, in the morning of the next day at the latest.

How many times have I watched Magda transform from her silent, sleepy and slow self into a belligerent lioness making decisions in a flash and giving orders with a changed authoritative voice to some lazy bureaucrat who failed to do his duty and caused pain to her war comrade. Oh, yes, in such moments it would not be wise to stand in her way! I have watched her grab a sick child from the arms of its desperate mother, her comrade, carry it to a taxi and then to a hospital and "attack" a doctor until he found a bed for the child and declared when the treatment would begin. Then Magda would come home and collapse into her own bed completely worn out. Although years were passing by and she should have got accustomed to peacetime circumstances, she has never learnt to "slow down". She would always overstrain herself. She resolved all kinds of problems quickly, efficiently, and utterly unselfishly, of course. Exactly as her father who had been a "paupers' lawyer" and for the sake of the poor and oppressed got on the wrong side of power wielders at his own expense and that of his family, Magda squandered her strength to help the ones who did not know how to use the state and state institutions for their benefit.

That Women's Collective of hers interfered with my life, too, in all kinds of ways. I'll give just one personal experience: when I gave birth to Marko, due to post-birth complications I could not breast-feed him. I brought my baby home and Magda, naturally, came to my house to help me out. That was at least her intention, there is absolutely no doubt about it.

But the concern that the child was not breast-fed completely upset her "sense of reality" and she was utterly lost in time and space. She reached out for what she was familiar with: her women comrades! She grabbed the telephone and started calling them one by one: Novi Sad, Subotica, Zagreb, Paris, Belgrade, Bečej, Sombor, Israel, Skopje, and then all over again: Belgrade, Bečej... She put the same question to every one of them: how to sustain a baby without mother's milk? And then patiently and for a long time she listened to their answers. She made phone calls, then they called her, the telephone was constantly busy. Understanding nothing at first, I listened dumbfounded the uncontrollable flow of words and long pauses of listening. I listened to the vibrations of her alarmed soul increasingly "smelling" of war prisons and concentration camps.

While listening to her fear, I prepared on my own the baby's meal: the first, then the second, then the tenth, washed diapers, ironed them and did everything else that was necessary, because there was nothing that could drag her away from the phone, nor was it worthwhile to explain that there was no danger... It took two or three days to reach Magda and bring her back to the year 1980. I must say that it happened without any of my doing. She remained completely deaf to anything that I said. But three days and several ten telephone calls later she succeeded in getting through to Marta whose profession were new mothers and babies. And everything was settled... It would be better if I skipped saying how I felt while that incredible phoning lasted.

Here's another episode with Magda's Women's Collective. The year was 1999. We had some unexpected happy occasion in the family (surprisingly during NATO bombing of Serbia¹⁴), and Magda was, as customary ever since her return

¹⁴ I cannot resist: bombing of Serbia in 1999 lasted about three months; as the cause of this military operation, NATO stated oppression of the Albanian population in Kosovo by Serb authorities. During the three months of bombing, all three bridges in Novi Sad were destroyed, bombs were dropped on Novi Sad and Fruska Gora (Voivodina) every day and, indeed, we have never found out why they attacked the North of Serbia so fiercely because of its South. I don't believe a genius will ever be born who could explain that to me. Anyway, Magda did not want to

from German camps, calling her war women comrades to share her happiness with them.

During all this phoning, a wonderful story linked to Duška Seneš Rudič came out in the open. Duška is a unique person in the gallery of persons I have met as Magda's war comrades. She had lived with a very serious sickness since early childhood¹⁵; she struggled with this illness during years spent in concentration camps and carried it to peacetime life. Regardless of long and intense suffering, Duška had never given up, preserved her angelic soul, unquenchable cheerfulness and inexhaustible treasury of love for others. For our story it is important to note that due to her illness she had not stepped out of her home for years. In the mentioned year 1999, aware that her walking was limited to the space of her apartment and indeed increasingly around her bed, because of the strained circumstances we had all lived in at the time, she sent her clothes and footwear she no longer needed to her comrades.

A pair of Duška's winter boots reached my Magda who was very sensitive to cold. Magda took the occasion of the telephone call I have mentioned to thank and at the same time complain to the donor, "Duška, my dear, the boots are very good, but I feel like some poor cousin".

Magda liked to give and make presents, but she did not take it very well when she was given presents, it sometimes even made her angry, "You shouldn't have! Why spend money?", she would utter in a tone that must have made the donor think twice before ever giving her anything. Since she often scolded me whenever I brought her a small present from my voyages, I teased her, "You are developing the mentality of a deity, you'd like to be the only one who gives and nobody else should give you anything. That just won't do." That is why this tirade about a "poor cousin" addressed at Duška was at the same time reproof and sadness and complaint against the destiny that allocated to her, at the threshold of old age, an unnecessary decade of enforced poverty and indescribable distress on top of everything she had already gone through: at that moment

go to the shelter after the sirens were sounded. Every time, she would utter a juicy curse of rich bullies' mothers and doubledealing allies and go off to bed. She did not lie on her bed to die if a bomb hit our house, but – as she had been used to do in concentration camps – to save energy in order to survive this unnecessary misfortune. I also believed that there was no shelter which could protect me against a direct hit, so I did not leave the apartment after sounding of sirens, either. That is the reason, I think, why our home was a refuge day and night for many friends and acquaintances who were panic stricken.

¹⁵ Duška is not among the living either, she has departed to the place where there are no illnesses in 2007.

Serbia had been in an abnormal situation for nine years already. With hyperinflation in 1992/1993, poverty struck our family, too. In just two or three years, from the category of middle class we slipped down below the verge (of poverty). Besides, Magda had a very hard time accepting the dissolution of Yugoslavia - the state for the sake of which she had endured torture, concentration camps, hunger, loss of family members. She suffered most because of the collapse of the communist ideals which were for her the noble ideal of social justice and which would have lasted, she had believed, at least a thousand years, until the next "evolution" leap of the society. Everything she had believed in dissolved right in front of her eyes. Moreover, she felt especially aggrieved about the fact that, due to those great ideals - which had not even lasted their lifetime - she and Živko had missed the opportunity to provide for their own family. They could have, like many others who have used their positions and cloSenešs to power, but they were committed to the "development of society" to such an extent that they were concerned only with common interest, convinced that it was enough to give education to children, and we would then be able to take care of our needs on our own¹⁶.

Thanks to the mentioned telephone conversation with Dušika I heard something I wish to share with you at this time:

"You know that I have not found a single member of my family when we returned from the camp", Dušika started comforting Magda and continued, "The apartment was completely robbed, just some clothes remained. My mother's coat was among them. I wore it for years and whenever I put it on I had a feeling that my mother was hugging me. So, my dear Magda, whenever you put on my boots, I wish you will feel that I am heating your feet".

The mentioned event with the boots has a multi-layered background. Although their war destiny has tied up all these women into an inextricable emotional tangle, moreover into some sort of a close family relationship, each one of them had set out on the war path to Golgotha with different burden. For instance, Dušika Seneš came from a Subotica Jewish family which was quite well-off, her childhood, no matter how burdened with illness, had not imposed struggling with poverty and deprivation problems. Without any psychological embarrassment and stress she knew both

¹⁶ Unfortunately, in the Balkan it had never been sufficient - the Balkan despises school and brains, it appreciates only unquestioning (tribal) loyalty. Perhaps that is the reason why the war circle of misfortune revolves at a greater speed than in other parts of the world...

how to give and to receive. On the other hand, due to her father's belief that poor people should be defended even free of charge, who because of that, had moved with his family from place to place, my Magda was forced to spend whole semesters at homes of relatives around Voivodina. It was a practical solution so she would not have to change schools often. But the price was high: The syntagm "poor relative (cousin)" was too rich in meaning. That is why she was so hypersensitive and "prickly" whenever somebody tried to give her a present.

While I was a child, what really got me were her refusals to accept gifts. Sometimes guests brought chocolates for my brother and me, some fruit or a toy, but Magda did her best to return the gifts with such force that in time I started to believe that I was the reason: "She doesn't need it, take it to your children!" she would say taking the gift from my hands and giving it back to the donor. People would become confused and fidgety. Nervous protestations would begin, "Just take it and carry it home!", "No, no, no, it is for you!", "You shouldn't have!". "Come on, Magda, it's nothing...", and so on, and so forth, until Živko interfered and interrupted the unpleasant scene.

After decades this cramp loosened a little bit its grip around Magda's soul, but it had never disappeared altogether.

Many years have gone by before I realized that a human being must learn both to give and to take and that it is an inseparable part of social intelligence and social health. Plus and minus. Pure mathematics. But it was too late, I had already developed a habit of refusing presents people offered me. Who knows how many people I have insulted by my refusal? And what I have missed because of it...

Much later, I came across a cure for this wound. In his memoirs, a great sage called Dip gave the following advice to the grieving, "Nothing is yours, accept this truth and think of God!", and gave the following additional explanation, "Everything you have is just lent to you to use. When you depart, everything you believe you possess shall remain here, nothing will be going with you." Because Man is born naked with fists firmly closed, people shove things in his hands until he accepts them, but he nevertheless leaves this world with open and empty palms of his hands; he must even leave the body which was lent to him... However strange it may seem, observation of the phenomenon from this dimension has helped me to begin to

accept an offered hand or material gifts in everyday life. But, as I have learnt from Magda, I am still less moderate in giving and donating than in accepting. My exchange with people is still lame.

As an illustration I will relate how my cousin Dvora caught me "red-handed" with "guilty thoughts". My son Marko spent the school-year 1993/04 in Israel with a number of other Jewish school children from the Balkan. The civil war raged in our country and in a swift campaign the Israeli evacuated our children to safety. While Marko was in Israel (in a boarding school during week days and with relatives for weekends, mostly with Dvora), I took in a family which was forced to flee from Sarajevo. There were five adults of them. Once I traveled to Israel to see Marko and visit relatives and started apologizing to Dvora for the additional obligation to take care of my son. "Can you count?", Dvora asked me slightly annoyed. "You have taken in five completely unknown adults under your roof, and we take Marko on weekends. And he's our relative! And merely a child!" I thought of Magda, that is exactly what she would have done: belittling her own deeds, she would be ashamed for causing others an inconvenience. Indeed, Dvora gave me a big lesson about taking and giving!

Women's collective!

Let us go back to our topic. After several incidents similar to the given examples with Duška's boots or milk for the baby, I grew increasingly convinced that in her books Magda had not at all succeeded in depicting the power of collectives in prisons and camps as impenetrable communities where all members were equally treated, protected, accepted, taken care of. We talked a lot about it later and, ardent as I was, I remember attacking her, "When you were capable of building such solidarity in prisons and camps, how come you failed in peacetime? What about HERE AND NOW?" Sometimes, disappointed with politicians I used to meet while working as a journalist, repulsed by their contemptible personalities, their vengeful behavior, petty and whimsical demands - I would come home and nag Magda, "You and your collectives! You and your organizations! It's just mere greed, craving for and usurpation of privileges!" She patiently kept explaining to me that Man in war is one thing, and in peace something quite different, he changes his behavior, objectives and priorities. Plus their women's collective in prisons and camps of wretched Europe was a perfect survival providing machinery. There were, they say, such women's collectives elsewhere. Among men, the struggle for power smouldered

even in prison cells. They were dying but still they struggled who would be the leader, who is second-best. Male nature, perhaps, the chemistry of male body, hormones... "Forget the nature, it's utter nonsense, time has come for matriarchate!", I protested. It was all funny to Magda, "The rule of women would bring a different kind of monstrosities to Mankind. Only equality of diversities can bring balance and harmony".

Yes, that is how her head was cool and instantly ready to observe a booby trap in a conversation. Magda never swallowed my silly baits. Great masters had trained her well in prisons and camps of the Second World War. How many times has she shamed me with such prompt insights. Nowadays, when my turn has come to speak with ardent young people, I see more clearly how she had managed to do that. It is easy to be wise when your expectations from the world and life are shrinking. Nowadays when I practically need nothing, I understand that Magda had really lived to see Freedom! Freedom from the Yellow House and from Márianosztra and from concentration camps and from war and from the world. That kind of Freedom is accompanied by wisdom. I thank her for having shed light on it for me.

While I was writing down the previous lines, a flood of emotions surged in my chest. It is a mixture of gratitude and great sadness, love for Magda and distress that we had to endure it all, that our common life path had to be so murky, slippery and full of obstacles. I become overcome by "that special state of mine". While I dig deep into my war wounds, the oldest memories spring up, mix and altogether come out to the surface. I feel a heavy lump in my stomach, a dull pain surges through the lungs, chokes in the throat, and then compresses my brain and I feel as if thick, sticky fog surrounds my being, not just within, but also constricts and chokes me from without. Recently I have started calling this state the "Second World War sickness". I call it that when it seizes me while I am more or less well-balanced. When I am in an emotional misbalance and the indicator dangerously approaches "red" alert, I call it the "Second World War ulcer" and I wonder whether it is going to burst, or whether it will be me. And when I get a seizure of depression, I do not ask for names, I just double over, mope, avoid all contacts. For a day or two I do nothing, then I pick up fairy tales as a cure. When I reach out for books about saints, I know that I am close to overcoming another crisis.

Ciao, Márianosztra! I hope that I shall never ever, never in my born days see you again.

In her "Women from Bačka...", Magda continues the story about prisons which I will not devote a single line to. I do not underestimate them, but I have no feelings about them, no associations, nothing.

The Prisons in Kalocsa and Kistarcsa

The status of our women comrades, who were still under age at the time and in smaller prisons, was both better and worse than ours. There were either very few of them over there or they were completely on their own. Edita Špicer from Subotica, for instance, was all alone among a mass of criminals and prostitutes in a prison for minors in Kalocsa. Lilika Bek from Subotica was in a small group of comrades in a prison in Kistarcsa. However, due to a more tolerant attitude of the regime towards them, they managed to escape when Soviet troops started penetrating into Hungary.

On October 15, 1944, the warden himself, Dr. Bela Varnyu, signed release papers to the imprisoned men and women comrades. This was the sole such case in whole of Hungary of the time.

Sátoráljaújhely

The name of the town Sátoralja Újhely means a new town under tents, because this small town at the northern border of Hungary with Slovakia is surrounded by conical tent-like mountains. Men and women comrades were sent there from Bačka as of 1943 until 1944, because other prisons were crammed. The first group of our people arrived there from the prison in Vác in February 1943, then other groups started arriving so that in March 1944 there were 400 political prisoners from the territory of Yugoslavia and Hungary of the time. Those people of ours had joined the People's Liberation Movement in Bačka, re-established after the initial defeats and losses in the first war years. This means that they had either joined the struggle against the occupiers later or they were experienced combatants who had managed to stay hidden longer.

There were 25 or 26 women and girls at the most, from Čurug, Bačko Gradište, Djurdjevo, Deronja, Gospodjinci, Despotovo, Kać and other places. Most of them were from villages and had held hideouts for underground fighters and partisans, fed them, washed and defended... That is how Milos Jovin, a farmer from Čurug, and his daughter Danilka ended up in prison. On their farm they had three underground hideouts for partisans whom Danilka looked after with great devotion. For example, in front of a hideout she once left a big basket with eggs and put a hen to lie on them. Her sister Jecka Jovin also ended up in prison later

on, and five more children were left at home. They did not have a mother, she had already died.

Women were shut down in two big cells at the ground floor of the two-storey prison building. They all got along well and lived quite peacefully, because the house rules were somewhat less harsh than in other prisons in Hungary. Guards were benevolent and the convicts could even visit each others in cells, change places and plot. Things went on like that until March 1944 when Hitler's army occupied Hungary. When Germans eventually came and took over the prison, our comrades feared, they would probably shoot them all as communists. That is why the prominent members of the collective hurried to carry out their idea and organized an escape. The idea had existed for some time, but it was originally planned to carry it out at a later date, in May, when forests broke out in leaves. This idea had lived in all prisons of occupied Europe, but here it seemed feasible, because close by, in the vicinity of the border, were the slopes of Carpathian mountains, so the inmates assumed – as some visitors confirmed – Slovak partisan units operated. With his immediate associates, Milan Džanić, a prewar member of the illegal movement from Novi Sad, concocted the plan of escape, which seemed to have been quite rash and poorly prepared. That was the beginning of one of the great tragedies on the territory of Hungary at the time. Germans occupied Hungary on March 17, and the sign for rebellion and escape was sounded on the 22 of the same month. German army had already entered the town, but it had not taken over the prison yet.

The first minutes of the operation went successfully and according to plan. Some of the guards on duty were disarmed, the keys of cells snatched away, but to those young men of ours from Bačka, who had joined the movement out of honesty and nobility of mind, never occurred to liquidate them, but they just locked them in one of the cells. The cells were unlocked one by one for the comrades to leave them, but after a short time, one of the trustees who had happened to come by, freed the locked guards who sounded the alarm. The telephone line had not been cut as planned, so the Hungarian and the German army in the town were alarmed, and shooting began in the prison. Only a minor part of the prisoners – about 90 of them – managed to run out of the main gate to the street and start running up the steep street towards the mountain the Sátor. The others were already surrounded and chaos and massacre began.

Two women's cells on the ground floor were especially misfortunate. The women had known about the plan, but they had not been informed about the time of the escape. When they heard the shooting in the corridors, they thought that German soldiers were entering the prison, so they tried to put up barricades in their cells. When finally their doors were unlocked, they did not know where to go, so that just a very small number of women managed to pass through the gate to freedom. The others were forced to return to their cells where the tragedy occurred.

As already said, those who had exited the prison started running uphill in small groups to the forest line and partisans. But the escape was not successful. Many were caught that same day, and after six days they were all brought back to prison where they were tried later on. Many were killed along the way. In the prison itself, many people were shot, Danilka's father, Miloš Jovin, a peasant from Čurug, among them.

This event was described very convincingly by Živko Milisavac in his book titled "Šuma nije olistala" (The Forest with No Leaves). He wrote his book on the ground of testimonies of eye-witnesses who survived. I will quote here just a part of a letter sent home from the prison after this event by Desanka Pavlović from Novi Sad. She speaks of the breakthrough of her small group to the desired forest. The letter was published in Živan Milisavac's book "Poruke iza rešetaka" (Messages from Behind Bars):

"... the pursuit started immediately... I ran up the hill with the last atom of energy. Bullets plunged into the ground right in front of us, but we persisted and moved on dropping to the ground every now and then, until we managed to reach the other side of the hill, but some of us lagged behind. When we gathered, there were eight women and six men... Our unit set out into the night. We walked the whole night, but we did not know the territory and did not know which way to go. At dawn we found ourselves in front of a forester's house. Fourteen of us with an empty rifle and a bayonet broke into the house. There was just an old Slovak in the house. We made ourselves comfortable a little and just as we were getting warm, he suddenly disappeared. He ran away to the village to turn us in. We got ready to escape... Our intention had been to cross over by a village in the direction of Carpathian Mountains, but, we had moved in a circle all night long. It was snowing, we were freezing, and we were leaving a trail behind. We felt like hunted animals. In the morning a village cropped up in front of us. The inhabitants noticed us and informed the authorities. The manhunt had already begun, we were running in vain because the hill was surrounded. We were chased by peasants with hoes, spades and axes, armed gendarmes shooting. We ran like madmen and did not want to surrender. Finally they caught us. Two women were wounded, and one had one arm and one leg smashed. Two men were caught alive and four were killed, Kolesar Janko being one of them. They gathered us and took to a nearby village. They put us against a wall in the school yard and wanted to shoot us on the spot. But some agents came, changed their minds and loaded us together with the dead comrades on to a truck and brought us back to prison. When the truck entered the prison yard, a terrible sight came into view: naked, dead bodies of our killed comrades were lying on the ground. Side by side, in two rows, there were 40 of them. It was a terrible sight. The yard resembled butchery. They lined us against a wall..."

On April 6, 1944, eleven of our comrades were hanged at Sátoralja Újhly under the pretext that they were organizers of the rebellion. During the rebellion itself, about 60 comrades were killed, among them four women from Yugoslavia:

Ružica Batos from Čurug, Ivanka Erdeljan from Bačko Gradište, Ankica Radišić from Djurdjevo and Zora Savin, also from Djurdjevo. Marija Balog from Košice (Slovakia) was also killed together with them.

The Camp in Bačka Topola

This camp was established in the beginning of the occupation of Bačka. Thousands of camp mates – internees passed through it without ever been taken to court. Apart from members of NOP¹⁷, there were Jews, Gypsies, prostitutes, all kinds of petty thieves and others. Except for the fact that they could move around during the day in the space between the building and sheds in the camp, and that the regime was somewhat less severe at times, there was no big difference in the status of camp inmates and convicted men and women in civilian and military prisons in Hungary. Food was very bad, uncertainty great.

In the beginning, while members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia could still operate in Bačka Topola, that is, before the massive arrests in the autumn of 1941, the illegal organization in this town charged Ruža Blau Francetić to organize the aid to camp inmates. She organized a group of women who cooked in big kettles for the camp inmates every day, collected food and took all that to the camp where, thanks to the leniency of the guards, they were allowed to pass it over the fence. One of the members of the group which took the food was Djordje Bošan¹⁸, born in Subotica, who became a painter after the war. Later this aid was prevented.

When on March 17, 1944, Germans occupied their ally Hungary, they demanded the removal of the old administration and guards who were somewhat tolerant towards the camp inmates, and the camp was turned over to SS command.

In his book titled “The house of Terror”, Mladen Vrtunski wrote:

“From April 17 until May 15, 1944, more than 3,000 men, women and children passed through the camp which then acquired the status of a collective, transitional camp. New internees arrived every day and then again they were took to the railway station and deported to German concentration camps. The situation in the camp was desperate... Deportation was carried out in haste, because the

¹⁷ NOP – narodno-oslobodilački pokret - People’s Liberation Movement

¹⁸ Djordje Bosan, painter – Magda’s cousin with the same name and surname as her brother who graduated physics after the war and then went to live in Nis, married Bucka and had two daughters, Helena and Irena. When talking about them, we made the distinction between them by their professions or place of residence: Djordje the painter or Belgrade Djordje and Djordje the physicist or Nis Djordje. When Djordje the painter came back from the war, only his brother Vlada was alive, the rest of the family were killed by the war. Vlada lived in Zagreb, he got married and had two daughters. Djordje the painter took up residence in Belgrade and married Nada, they had no children. At this moment, only Djordje, the physicist, is still alive.

camp had to be emptied for the partisans, as they liked to stress in the administration. And more and more patriots were taken to Novi Sad Army every day and it was necessary to put them somewhere.”

Hungarian command had, however, already deported a group of Jews from Topola to Zemun and turned them over to the Gestapo which then took them to Belgrade Fair ground and liquidated them. This was at the time when Jews were still not massively deported from Hungary, so the Hungarian command of the camp had manifested its loyalty well.

Who were the expected partisans? They were the old and new combatants of the People’s Liberation Struggle from Bačka. They were brought from evil reputed already mentioned torture houses, still without a proper trial and sentence. There were new combatants among them as well, participants of a convoy who were preparing to cross the Danube to join partisan units in Srem, but were detected while still on the river bank or on the water. The leadership of the People’s Liberation Struggle in Bačka and Voivodina had radically changed its attitude towards the transfer to Srem where the conditions for armed struggle were far better. Numerous groups of people for transfer were organized. Some of them succeeded, some did not. A few bases in the houses of Bačka Palanka and its surroundings, used as gathering points of the combatants, were discovered, so the owners of these houses were also arrested.

That is how for instance Vera Kosovac, a young activist from Bačko Gradište was brought to the camp in Topola, having been arrested in spring 1944, at the time when Albert’s base in Kisač was revealed. There were women and girls, workers and students from Novi Sad there, and even quite young girls who were 15 or 16 when arrested. Seja Malešev was among the youngest, a high-school student from Novi Sad, who, because of her youth and frail health, hardly endured the challenges she had to face in the camp in Bačka Topola and later in Germany. She survived the war, but came out with a major disability.

There were also two teachers from Gospodjinci. One of them, Vera Eremić, was brutally tortured during investigation. She was hanged by the hands on her back, so she was not capable of doing anything with them for months. The other one was Vera Erdeljan, called Little Vera. Koledin sisters were also in the camp, both high-school students from Novi Sad, as well as sisters Milica and Buba Prodanovic. Melanija Krkljuš, a worker from Novi Sad, and Nada Kuzmanović, a student of the teachers’ college in Novi Sad were also in this camp. So was Vida Stojkov, a worker from Bečej, a youth and Communist Youth leader who had managed to spread and develop organizations in the field until 1943, but was arrested in a raid in Stari Bečej district. During arrest, she suffered a severe blow with a rifle butt and never recovered from it.

Women members of NOB and other categories of mentioned women started arriving in this camp in summer 1943, so that by the end of the year this camp was turned into a camp for women. This group of women created a collective and

organized political life in the camp. Since the People's Liberation Movement was spreading, smaller and larger groups of beaten up, tortured men and women started arriving from Novi Sad Army. It was the middle of May of 1944.

In many places people's liberation committees were already established, and numerous convoys were organized for Srem, some of which, as said already, were revealed.

In the first days of June 1944, around 400 internees were in the camp. We do not know exactly how many of them were women. We know, however, that in the course of four years of occupation, about 230 women members and associates of the People's Liberation Movement passed through the Topola camp. Among them fifteen were members of the Antifascist Movement from Hungary. They were interned from Hungarian investigation centres. Apart from them, there were also another ten women from Ukraine and Russia. They had been escorted by the Germans to forced labour in Germany, but they had tried to escape and had been caught on the territory of former Hungary.

A collective was organized in that period, too, and political work developed as part of it. The mentioned women from Hungary and Ukraine were included in the collective. Teachers Jelena Pataki from Novi Sad and Vera Erdeljan from Gospodjinci were in charge of political work and education, along with two secondary school students from Novi Sad – Nada Vojnović and Marta Štark. At the same time, Nada Kuzmanovic, a student of teachers' college from Novi Sad, was elected chief "supplier", and Vera Eremić assisted her.

Cultural events and entertainment were very successfully organized by Vera Kosovac. It is interesting that they even managed to organize a women's choir, with women from Russia and Ukraine who were wonderful singers as the main force of that choir. A hand-written newspaper "Woman Fights" was published. Sketches and other contributions for that paper were written by Jelica Jojkić from Vrbas, Vida Stojkov and others. Verbal news were also published in the camp with a rich content.

Due to victories of the Red Army at the fronts and its progress towards the borders of Yugoslavia, the command decided to evacuate the camp, so men and women were deported in two large groups on September 26 and October 8 to military fortress Komarom on the border with Austria. There they were handed over to SS troops and deported further away to Germany.

And now Nevena:

Despite Everything:

When a door closes, a window opens

A saying

I am still being rash! I have said that I have no associative or emotional links with the three latter prisons Magda mentioned in her "Women from Bačka - Political Convicts" mostly to provide her war comrades with a most comprehensive base possible on to which lists of real names could be added ... But, I have met in person many of the women Magda listed in these few pages. I have also met many of the mentioned men, too. Nowadays when I think of them, I am aware that I have things I would like to say, not about the prisons Magda has not been in but they have, but about those men and those women:

Those men and those women knew a lot about me and my whole family. Most of them followed closely what was happening to us and what we were experiencing. They enquired how we, children, were doing in school, at the faculty, at work; the women brought us small presents to give us joy, such as a jar of jam, "I cooked it myself, I know you like it"; or a silk scarf for my birthday. When I became mother, the gift for me stopped arriving, but they continued bringing little presents for my son. In fact, I was employed in a daily newspaper by a survivor from Sátoraljaújhely, Miroslav Štajner-Fric, who was unspeakably strict with me. He was so strict that in the beginning I believed that he hated me. But in fact he expected much more from me than from others; he looked upon me differently because of his background of a concentration camp inmate he shared with my parents, and partly because of my Jewish origin. But when I happened to have a problem of some kind, a health problem, for instance - he would move heaven and earth for me, contact everybody he knew, was worried beyond measure. Finally, when he retired, he admitted with how much concern, trepidation and pride he followed my journalist career. "Yes, but your love has almost driven me away from journalism", I told him, relaxed, after he had stopped tormenting me because of nervous expectations whether I would give a good account of myself at work.

Now I truly dare claim that many of the mentioned men and women proved to be real heroes of life. They manifested Generosity, Warmth, Concern, Love. They would offer me a shoulder to cry on when I needed it. They would devote their time to my small and big problems. With them I did not feel expendable, undesirable, a nuisance... In the homes of many of these men and women I felt like in my own home. At my aunt Žuža's¹⁹ in Belgrade, I sometimes felt even better ... I could go to their homes to eat, sleep, or simply rest. Warmth and love - that's what I got from them. They opened their homes to me in Subotica, Zagreb, in Belgrade, in Budapest. I visit their homes like the closest kin. This kinship was created in joint horrible experience of my parents and I have, by a great stroke of luck, inherited it.

Engrossed by thoughts about what all of them experienced, how great the courage, force, tenderness and love, solidarity, generosity, intelligence, wisdom, trust, persistence and joy of living they had to develop in order to survive the war wringer they were put through against their will and without mercy - I am capable of grasping their greatness. I am grasping the general human greatness and the heights it can reach. Unfortunately, such humaneness, such quality of masculinity and femininity nowadays, at the beginning of the 21st century, has no value whatsoever. Such irreconcilable fighters for life nowadays are not in the least appreciated. They are completely out, passé, obsolete. Nowadays, propaganda via numerous media, depicts only the picture of WOMAN's body and presents her as some easily replicable, two-dimensional being that can be erased by a single click on a remote control! Such a monstrous conception about the FEMININE in the system of values of the global village does not even make me sad any more. The monstrous conception of the MASCULINE does not make me sad either. Everything that is human according to what I was taught about it is not at all in demand in the market any more, only satisfaction for the senses which makes a big profit is appreciated. Only the senses and only profit! Oh, well, let them make their profit. I do not understand them anymore anyhow.

¹⁹ Magda was not in prison with Žuža Bek, married Marinković, but with Žuža's sister Lilika, so that is the reason why Žuža's name is not mentioned in Magda's document. The war had separated Bek sisters and sent them to different camps. But life after the war connected Magda and Žuža with such force that they became close in the manner in which only sisters can be. I am sorry my mother did not live long enough to write a special book about Žuža. Fortunately, the testimony of this exceptional and wonderful woman is recorded on video tape and stored in Spielberg's bank of testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

Because for me humanity is something else. It is something that soothed and healed my wounds, that filled and enriched my life. For me it is the women who accepted life, who cherished it in a feminine and motherly way, supporting its each and every tiny spark, taking care that it does not get extinguished. They knew the price of life and the price of humaneness. And they passed that knowledge on to anyone who wished to learn. Their voices, those tender hands they touched me with, those glittering eyes and looks full of love - have filled out my life vault to last even for a lifetime of my great grandchildren. Thanks to these women I consider myself an exceptionally rich person.

Sometimes I wonder what heights Magda's war comrades could have reached if the war had not hindered them, beat them, imprisoned, wounded them? What these women, each and every one of them separately, could have learnt, what they might have created and what they might have given? How enormous is the damage in billions and billions of dollars, euros - whatever - that the war had injured their health, set their homes on fire, devastated their country, forced them to fight for the very basic conditions for survival? If they had been given the right support, I wonder, what flowers would have bloomed in a garden their hands would have cultivated?

These are my questions for expert economists. Let them calculate the true price of wars. The price of what was not created because a war had destroyed the preconditions and conditions for its creation. These are also my questions for sociologists: would our civilisation have been healthier and the world a better place for living had not it been for war interfering every now and then with social organizations and systems? I do not want them to give me plain statements, every uneducated person can do that. I want assessments, graphs, indicators, projections of human civilisation without wars based on statistical evaluations. What would a community of responsible and mature human beings be like? I want scientists to make a projection of such a "course of development". Let them calculate that, and I will take their answers as flowers to the grave of my mother Magda, my father Živko and my grandmother Milevka. At that point, the Second World War just might finish for me, too, and for my descendants.

Magda continues writing about her war path leading upstream the Danube in 1944:

Army Fortress in Komarom

So, when the Soviet Army came close to the borders of the then Hungary, and the power in Hungary was taken over by extreme rightist organization of Arrow Cross headed by Ferenc Szalasi, his government decided that all political convicts and indicted should be transported into military fortress in Komarom and handed them over to SS troops. Shipments from all prisons and camps of Hungary set out towards the West. All our comrades were transported in crammed freight trains, in very bad conditions, in filthy wagons contaminated by cattle, with a minimum food. A single group of women arrived in Komarom in passenger coaches, but that will be described at a later point.

When a group of Jewish women from Budapest Dijtefogaz prison arrived in Komarom – I was among them – they were escorted through long dark corridors into a large underground room with triple bunk beds. A group of our women comrades from the camp in Bačka Topola and the prison in Satoraljaujhely was already in the room next door. That was on October 23, 1944. Belgrade had already been liberated for three days – on October 20 the occupying forces had left it), and on the day when we arrived in Komarom, they left Novi Sad (on October 23), so that our comrades were practically snatched away from the liberators. While the group was leaving Bačka Topola, they heard the roar of canyons in the distance.

So now there was the total of 200 women from occupied Bačka and the territory of Greater Hungary. We knew we had to get organized quickly, unite the existing collectives, in order to be ready for the difficult deportation to German death camps. Creating a new community this time was not at all easy. Women from different prisons and camps had not known each others, they had been arrested at different periods of the war. They were from the age of 16 to 60 and more. Besides, the comrades from Satoraljaujhely were tormented and deeply saddened by the unsuccessful break-out from the prison there, so they had very hard discussions among them who was guilty for the failure and deaths of comrades.

Having also come from Budapest, Zora Rakoši happened to be with us, who was the sister of Macsas Rakoši whose name was known to all these women or they had at least heard something about him. This fact and Zora's authoritative attitude, but also the efforts of the more experienced among these women, contributed to the creation of the community despite everything. Hungarian

soldiers – guards, quite lenient, did not prevent communication between the two large underground cells.

Zora Rakoši, born in Ada near the river Tisa, had been a member of the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia for a long time before the war. A seamstress by trade, for a time she very successfully worked among textile women workers in Sarajevo and Belgrade. During the occupation, having returned to Bačka, she had worked as a member of the underground here and in Budapest, where she was arrested and very cruelly tortured. She was over thirty years old. With light blue penetrating eyes, she had an enormous power of persuasion, so automatically she became the head of the illegal leadership of the collective, until signs of her mental derangement began to show. In the beginning we only knew that she was very worried about her son who was staying with her brother in Moscow.

Vida Stojkov from Bečej played a special role in the creation of a broader community in Komarom. She was not arrested until 1943. She informed us that the underground leadership in Bačka had already been receiving reports on the situation in German death camps – we who had been in prison for a long time knew very little about that – that nobody, if left alone, without protection and support, could survive over there.

So, it was necessary to try to provide warm underwear and a warm dress for every woman for the forthcoming winter. Distribution of food was not a problem any more, because we practically received no parcels from home, and prison food was like in the army, in fact quite good in our opinion. Distribution of underwear and clothes was on the agenda. We managed to even increase the stock of warm winter garments. Girls who were clever with their hands were busy all the time. They took the top bunks in the large cell, kept each others company all the time and were joyful. Among them Sofija Vuksan Sojka was especially talkative and had a good sense of humour, so she knew how to keep their spirits high. They tore rugs and knitted pullovers of the yarn, sew warm skirts and trousers from prison blankets, since many women were arrested during summer and arrived in the prison in light summer dresses. Soldiers, our guards, either did not see or did not wish to see what was happening with prison inventory.

The day of October Revolution, November 7, was approaching. We always celebrated it, regardless of circumstances. Preparations for a big performance were under way, and the festive speech was to be given by Kata Stojaković, a housewife from Bačka Palanka, mother of Black George, Commander of Bačka-Baranja Partisan Unit based in Kata's house. They appointed me to write the festive speech, because it was believed that she would not manage on her own. That is when I learnt that Kata was arrested when Klara Fejes, my first comrade from the youth movement in Kikinda, was killed in her house. It was a terrible shock for me, so I had a long conversation about Klara with the elderly woman.

At the time, Granny Kata, however, could not have known, just as I had not known that, as a very experienced and skilled party activist, Klara had been sent from Banat to Bačka because she was Hungarian and had command of Hungarian language. She was in charge of party equipment, found a printing machine, paper, stencils and paint for printing in an underground base in Vrbas, where the first volume of “Free Voivodina” was published, and magazine “Truth” and numerous leaflets were printed.

We experienced a number of difficult moments in Komarom. Among our comrades brought to this fortress were two brothers of our Marta Husar. Nikola Husar was wounded during the uprising in Satoraljaujhely, so he was in the hospital in Komarom. Marta managed to visit him. Later, he succumbed to his wounds. Their brother Imre Husar managed to return home from the camp after liberation. Marta also learnt in Komarom that her mother and sister succeeded in joining the partisans.

Our performance on November 7 turned out to be a big festivity and a political manifestation. All the women gathered on beds of one of our underground cells. Kata Stojaković who had a high reputation among the elderly and the young, spoke very movingly, in her own words. In the end the choir started singing, with the women from Ukraine and Russia who had arrived from the camp in Topola taking part in it. They had beautiful voices especially adjusted for part-singing. In the end we sang Lenin’s funeral march. Two hundred women joined in and the song gradually grew and filled the whole fortress, reached the cells where men were and reinforced with their strong voices echoed until the dead of night.

That very night, whether because of that song or with no connection with it, they took us out into the long underground corridor, put us in a line and handed over to SS officers.

Two days later they lined us up again, this time with all our parcels, bundles and suitcases, and took us out of the fortress. And there, between dense two rows of SS officers, soldiers and gendarmes around whose legs well trained and well fed German shepherds constantly fidgeted, under a shower of roaring lashes, we passed to a long train standing in open field. They also took out and stuffed into railway carriages a large group of men, our comrades, and also a large group of Gypsy men and women.

Still standing in the station, behind barred windows of sealed railway carriages, we saw the arrival to a parallel railway track in Komarom of a large group of our comrades who we had left in Márianosztra several months before. It was the second large group of women political convicts from Bačka, which was also just a few days later handed over to the SS officers and deported from Komarom to German death camps. We had hoped we would get together with

them, but we never did. That group had a different destiny from ours. More about it later on.

Nevena writes in autumn 2005:

Collecting Centre - Komarom Fortress

Do not draw devil on the wall – he will appear!

A saying

Márianosztra has really shaken me up. From the bottom of the "swamp" it lifted so many impressions that cannot be wrapped up into words, whirled up such bitterness that its content cannot be analysed, provoked the feeling of helplessness, even shame... And now everything is whirling and rolling in me... So how can I drive now to the next station, to Komarom?

I am sitting in my car, not starting the engine and - in the attempt to defend myself from growing nausea caused by inexplicable emotions - I shift "the battle to the intellectual level" and think that the war is like a theatre play with millions of actors. There is always an enemy, there are allies, the front, land behind the front, civilians and only after it is clear who has won - it is possible to definitely determine who is the good and who is the bad character in that play. Then I decide that most probably this uncertainty gives unfaded attraction to war until its very last day, to the final victory of one, to final defeat of the other party. I am thinking about the Second World War, too, about the fact that this war, although a half-dead beast in 1944 (on its edges it was already lost and defeat was gradually crawling into the heart of the command of the defeated party), was still capable of devouring, smouldering, snatching away, murdering. Yes, that is exactly what this war in 1944 reminds me of: a voracious multiheaded beast, and my impression about Komarom Fortress from Magda's books as one of the jaws that continued to grab, devour and swallow millions of unfortunate people, while the limbs, the tail and the body of the dragon were dropping off, writhing and disappearing.

Perhaps that image, so powerful in my mind, is preparing me to drive to Komarom after all in August 2005, since I have already reached Márianosztra. So, late in an

August afternoon, here I am behind the steering wheel with a new goal. I am setting out from Márianosztra a little bit further upstream the Danube. To catch a glimpse of the Fortress.

A fortress overlooking the Danube.

Yet another fortress overlooking the Danube! I am driving slowly. During a big part of my youth, between my age of 13 and 27, we lived "straight across" the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad. In the building from postcards, I teased those empty-headed snobs among my companions who would have "sold their mothers and fathers" if they could distinguish themselves in anything that would draw attention...

Yes, the quay of raid victims, as it is called nowadays... My every morning started with the view of the Danube and the fortress, I spent many evenings alone or with friends watching the river and the edifice with the clock - symbol of Novi Sad. That clock is a special story, its big hand points to hours and the small one points to minutes. How many fantasies I had about a civilisation which does not pressure people to frantically run around. And wondered what were the thoughts and ambitions of the builders of the fortress clock when minutes were not important for them? Many times, sitting on my terrace, watching across the water, down the bridge, to the fortress, I imagined how fantastic it would be if we set up a cableway from my sixth floor to the tower with the clock, so one did not have to go all the way round.

Perhaps it is due to these numerous hours spent with such a view, fortresses on rivers strike me straight at the heart. And they always attract me to visit them. Fortresses on the Danube are especially irresistible for me. There is the one in Budapest, Kalemegdan in Belgrade, then there is the beautiful edifice in Hungarian Visegrad by the foot of which I have, this time, passed at maximum permitted speed in towns. I have no time for it now, I have a different aim ahead of me...

This irresistibility of fortresses made it easy for me to decide: yes, immediately after the visit to Márianosztra, I will "drop by" Komarom, regardless of the whole day drive in August heat and regardless of the irritating experience with the prison gate of the monastery/prison. And regardless of the fatigue which will, I know, torment me in the days to come.

So I am slowly winding along the road, left, right. The sun is slowly losing the intensity it has followed me with since early morning.

While driving I am wondering how come it has not occurred to me before that the war path of four-year torture my Magda endured lies along rivers and a lake. It started on the bank of the Tisa, more precisely in the Čurug swamp, for a short while it twisted towards Palić near Subotica, and then consistently led upstream the Danube: Budapest, Sob, Márianosztra, Komarom. Magda was arrested on the bank of the Tisa, tortured by Palić Lake, was imprisoned above the Danube and then, for obscure reasons, when her homeland had already been liberated, she was snatched away from the Danube near Komarom and transported with thousands others to concentration camps in Germany.

And here it is. Komarom Fortress.

Nowadays, Komarom is mostly visited by tourists. Like any other fortress. These dinosaurs elevated above rivers do not have the function they were built for. Neither for watching, nor for combat. But they serve well for great gatherings, and as collective centres they are unequalled. That is the reason, I guess, why Komarom Fortress was chosen to collect tormented thousands, because once driven into the space of the fortress, its catacombs and underground cells, unfortunate convicts from Balkan and Panonian prisons had nowhere to go but directly into cattle railway cars and from them to death factories.

I walk around the fortress and vividly imagine immense masses of tattered, thin people with all kinds of luggage emerging from cells and then thronging together before entering the train. They are being squeezed together, packed closely against each other. I am almost starting to squirm to avoid being jammed against some cardboard suitcase. My sensitiveness has grown so high that I imagine I can feel the stench of unwashed bodies and stale clothes held in damp prison cells.

My mind is becoming increasingly feverish. As a maniac, it sends to the screen of my consciousness images, emotions, thoughts that had been lost in the darkness of space half a century ago... I am "watching" that shipment, the bare cattle car Magda and her women comrades will enter. We have seen such scenes many times on film, but now, under the hot sun, I am "watching" this scene with exceptionally clear eyes. I feel the horror of this act

with my whole body and painful pins and needles of restlessness are passing through my nervous system, so I am starting to shiver. I must sit down and continue as if under coercion to "watch": They are shoving the tormented ragged people into the train. It is clear that they will be driving them for days, stinking, hungry, freezing, squeezed. So they can hand them over in the end to an ugly DEATH. Immediately, or a few days later.

I am almost compelled to scream: What's the catch? What's the purpose of the whole organization? Why squander all that money? It cost: the administration, gendarmes in several countries, freight carriages, food, water, guards, food for the guards, dogs, food for dogs, telegraphers along the railroad, attentive eyes which are supervising all that. Expenses are piling sky high. Why? Just to send them up some chimneys? Into smoke? Into nihility! What kind of a mind speculates in this manner?! And the war is already lost?!

I am "watching" this shipment and wondering also: If at the end of the journey a few among the transported unfortunate people could serve for something, they used them as slaves, and if they could not find any utility value, monsters sent them directly to gas chambers. These chambers also cost money. The construction of concentration camps consumed time, money, labour power... Could not they have behaved more rationally, to select for transportation only the ones they could use, and the others...? I refuse to even utter the words.

Can the whole organization which produced such a crime be justified by the idea about the pure race? Did they intend to make God happy by doing it?! What kind of purity is it if it is stuck into the blood of tens of million of victims in the first generation, that has ruined the lives of several hundred million in the second generation, generated life with insurmountable barriers for billions in the third generation!

But justifying war waging by God's need is not a specialty of Hitler and his Nazis. I recall wars in the course of centuries and millenniums in which on both sides of the front frightful warriors ready for the worst humbly kneeled in front of God's servants, the clergy, to be given absolution in advance, because they would kill, rape, disfigure, set on fire, rob, destroy. Moreover, they knelt with their heads bowed to be given a blessing to kill, rape, rob, set on fire, destroy, justifying these crimes in advance. This crooked, evil alliance of warriors and

priests continued after the Second World War. Like in a film, I see hands lifted to bless over the heads of warriors and I watch the lips which in many languages utter God's name to justify devil's deeds. For how long?

Komarom Fortress.

Looking down at the Danube, into its peaceful eternity, I wonder for much longer will people swallow the hook with frantic ideas which always begin as a gross national investment, in the sense of people's money, people's emotions, redirecting national objectives, and ending up wading in blood? Why after long 60 years nobody has calculated yet how much money, property and most of all how many human lives, have been devoured by this idea about the pure Aryan race?

Suddenly a terrible thought occurred to me: that sick mind which produced the idea about pure race caused an uncontrollable infection which permanently contaminated the mind of the human race. Nowadays that is how people treat water, air, forests, ore, land, animals and other people, of course. What I mean to say is that this mental infection has developed into chronic incurable forms. The human race is irreversibly infected by madness of arrogant behavior towards everything it comes into contact with. The question-statement: why kill one Jew when you can kill them all! - developed into the automatism: why cut one tree when you can destroy all forests?! Factories increasingly produce goods which will endure to be used only once - like Hitler's which took a man, used him once and then threw him away! That crazy, arrogant legacy, the way I see it now in Komarom, is very lively and creative among people. This terrible disease of squandering and destroying resources of all kinds has progressed to such proportions that we are not just totally deprived of any sense of gratitude for the goods we have inherited, but the very notion that our great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren will want to eat, drink, breathe, move around... has died out.

That is the type of thoughts that spring up in my mind when I think of Hitler's death factory "this" shipment packed into cattle cars in Komarom would go to.

I role these two words in my mouth, over my pallet, the tongue. Death Factory! A single syntagm unites concepts which personify the creation of a new value and annulment of life...

I cannot prove it, of course, but once set in motion

the machinery in this direction of thought gains momentum and - high up over the mighty Danube which rolls its waters regardless of everything - I am trying to understand Hitler as the founder of the extremist philosophy of a consumer society: everything you can use two or more times, use just once and throw it away! And if you do not need it - use it and throw it away! Without thinking about consequences!

I continue developing my hypothesis. I admit it has firmly grabbed me and won't let go while I am watching the indifferent Danube. This is what I think: the virus of frantic spending has been created as a by-product in concocting a pure race, but this by-product - it seems - had the true potential to acquire global proportions and spread around the world as mental plague. If I am at least within range of a shot from the truth, if it is in fact virosis hitlericus, that disease will sooner or later destroy us and the idea that started the Second World War will come true just as its founder had predicted. Although it is, of course, impossible to predict how many pure Aryans will be left to rejoice at the final solution.

Suddenly a counterpoint: to obscure associations generated by the monstrous idea on final solution, my memory responds with rhymes by Branko Miljković:

"Will freedom ever be able to sing
As slaves used to sing about it?"

I laugh out loud and see that in a twinkle I was seized with an impulse to mock at absolutely everything, war and peace, slavery and freedom. For pure self-defence.

But I begin a new sequence: what cosmic irony! In a war people put all their thoughts, all their feelings, all their energy into stopping the war and establishing peace, they spend unsparingly supplies of enthusiasm, hope and expectations calling for peace, praying for peace in all religions of the world and in all languages of the world, singing odes to peace, writing poems about freedom.

But when peace comes, oh dear god, when freedom finally comes, when everybody starts breathing freely, something happens. The cosmos carousel swirls around, and as soon as they get drunk, eat their fill, take their baths and have a good night's sleep, people begin to remember the war and what it was like, start singing about heroic deeds, retelling heroic war stories, writing plays, painting thousands of kilometres of paintings on topics about the war (any war), composing war music, even cartoons celebrate

violence and destruction, making horror war films, fascinated with arms and war history, even lying in order to adjust the past to their greed and love of power, and why not say it frankly, they do all that as if they are calling for a new war with all their might and all their strength. At the time of peace, people pursue war policy on all levels - global, local, individual.

It seems that Freedom has neither ear nor voice to sing sweetly as slaves have sung about it. Freedom sings beautifully only about war, as if it did not know a single verse about peace worthy of attention...

Going round in circles, getting nowhere: war and peace, peace and war, war and peace...

Man Sings After the War - I suddenly remember the title of a poem by Dusan Vasiljev who could not come to terms with peace after war, the First World War, but anyway. Vasiljev was also profoundly disappointed with peace after war...

A sentence uttered on some occasion by Albert Einstein also occurs to me; it reads something like this: if just two per cent of people (in an "infected" area) do not want war - war cannot break out.

I pull myself together! That's enough with such thoughts! It's a beautiful day. The sky is blue with just a few tiny clouds which are forming a face with blue, blue, sky-blue eyes.

I pull down a curtain on the event which is more than half a century old and the consequences of which last unabated and continue to poison me, but NOW I can at least rest from them. I watch the Danube. So much life-giving water, and so little wisdom in people who could live by that water comfortably, pleasantly, wealthily. If only they knew how. If only they wanted to. I watch the Danube.

How did we ever go astray into that war street, Lord?

Magda on 1944 :

Dachau-Allach

The journey was very hard. They squeezed two hundred of us into three railway carriages, plus a rather large group of Gypsy women, so there were almost eighty of us in each carriage, or even more. The carriages had not been cleaned of dirty hay and cattle excrements, so we had to clean them after we had been already closed. Women squeezed first into one part of the carriage, then into the other, while a few comrades cleaned and threw the dirt through openings between boards on the floor or through the barred window. Only after that bundles were arranged for women to sit on. Gypsy women accepted our order. Neither then nor during other journeys was there enough space to lie down, we sat with our legs bended, and at night it was the worst. The most horrible was the bucket which was thrown into the carriage, because they rarely opened the door so we could empty it. During the following journeys, they did not open the door for three days at a time. We got by the best we could.

After a three-day journey from Komarom, we arrived in Dachau.

Immediately after leaving the railway carriages, men, our comrades, were driven away to the central part of the camp, and we, the women, were taken another four or five kilometres on foot to the regional camp called Allach. We were put in a large barrack there with no beds, but just straw spread on the floor.

At first, living in the camp seemed bearable to us. On the straw of the huge barrack it was comfortable and warm. We were seized with some sort of naive joy, not just because of the straw, but also because of apparent freedom we enjoyed within the camp grounds. We could go for short walks in front of the barrack, go out even at night and watch the stars! Majority of us had lived for years in solitary confinement in prisons where it was impossible to see the sky through high barred windows, least of all the stars. The night in solitary, especially in winter, lasts longer than the day.

But the illusion did not last long. Our life was bearable because the camp administration did not care about us. This was just a transitional station for us, so two weeks later they lined us up and took us away. And yet, a few important things happened even in Allach.

In Allach there was an infirmary with five or six hospital beds. French and Italian doctors, prisoners-of-war, worked there. They allowed Marta Husar, our physician, to work with them and put a few of our women who fell ill during the journey into the infirmary. I was frost beaten too, and Marta took me to the infirmary with fever, almost unconscious. I could lie down there for two or three

days in comparatively good conditions and recover with slightly better food. But, that, too, lasted just a short while.

At Allach we were joined by a small group of comrades who had stayed longer than others in the camp in Bačka Topola and were then hastily taken away in front of the advancing Soviet troops. A large part of the way they had traveled on foot in a tedious forced march, so the few things and the little food they had had, they had thrown away and arrived in Allach in a miserable state, exhausted and with practically nothing to wear. There were some difficulties with providing clothing for them. Some women asked, “How can clothing and underwear be shared in the collective when we have already shared them in Komarom and when nobody has enough?” Nevertheless, this was resolved in the end. Everybody realized that these comrades of ours had to be equipped for winter.

Due to the difficult journey, one of the girls started expectorating blood in Allach. It was Vida Karić from Ada, who was brought to Topola camp in the last moment before the liberation. She was in a very sad state, she could not clean her clothes of blood. She tried to isolate herself in a small room, so she would not disturb her comrades by coughing. She was found there by Seja Malešev. It was a big shock for us, and there was no way to treat her. She was not deported from Allach with our group, but remained together with a few other women who were deported later on to women’s camp Ravensbruck. With the help of comrades, Vida somehow managed to recover to the extent to survive camps and return home, but she remained seriously disabled for as long as she lived.

A large group of Jewish women from Budapest was also brought to Allach. From the border to the camp they were forced to walk and arrived with feet in wounds. A number of our women committed themselves to bandaging and rebandaging of their wounds. This lasted for days. They had also thrown away their possessions, but we really could do nothing to help them as far as clothes were concerned.

Before leaving Allach, from French and Italian nurses and doctors we got some medicines and sugar which we kept solely for the sick. We got a package of food from a camp clerk. He was Walter, a German – a convict, who in the course of years secured certain privileges by working in the office. At the bottom of the package he hid a large map of Europe which turned out to be necessary to us at the end, after the liberation.

When they loaded us into carriages for cattle, we were given food for two days, and traveled for five days. Some of our guards, soldiers of Wehrmacht, proved to be human after all. Along the way, wherever they could, they bought some food for us or stole the left over beets from the fields. We were nevertheless starving. The longer we traveled the clearer it was that in the north of Germany brutally rough life lay ahead.

Nevena, 2005:

Concentration Camps

One can see best with one's eyes closed...

After my return home from Komarom and my first pilgrimage along Magda's war path, it literally took me months to psychologically prepare myself to visit concentration camps in which, during the second World War, millions of unfortunate people were starving and slowly dying, and with them my Magda and her war comrades - women political prisoners. I read Magda's books all over again, found maps of Germany and Austria to mark camps and other horrible places on them. I even contacted friends in Berlin telling them I wished to go there, seeking advice what was the cheapest way to travel. They told me to take such and such flight, they did not even give you coffee, but who cared, it did not last long. All these preparations were taking an awful long time, stretching like melted cheese on Bačka noodles. Weeks went by, turning into months.

And - I failed to persuade myself to take specific action in order to actually go on the trip. In 2005 - 60 years after the end of the War in which Germany had been defeated and Serbia had been in an alliance with the victors - the "wheel of fortune" had turned and it was impossible to travel to Germany from Serbia without a visa. In order to get a visa, it was necessary to queue in the street. Queue where? In Belgrade, under the sky - clear or murky, in the rain or wind, from dawn, in front of the Embassy of the German state. And then, when they let you in, a clerk behind a window demanded that you tell him the reason why you wished so badly to go nowhere else but to Germany. Well, how was I supposed to tell some indifferent and arrogant clerk who looked upon all applicants condescendingly as if they were all a potential threat to Germany and addressed people mostly with disgust, how was I supposed to tell him that I was going to see where his people had tortured and murdered my folks?! Had any other reason been at issue, it would not have been so repulsing to me. But in order to visit the remains of camps where so many members of my family had been killed that we had not dug any graves until I was twenty when my grandmother Milevka died, and soon after that my father Živko followed, I just could not do it.

And I did not have to. Because German camps are in me.

They paved almost all the roads of my life. Just as some rivers dig out their beds through canyons, hills and valleys, concentration camps have dug out canyons, deep valleys, tunnels, curves and caves in me. Ravensbruck, Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Fallersleben, Mauthausen, Auschwitz, these rivers of horror have forced their way through me with such force that there were times when I thought they would smash me apart into tiny bits and pieces. There is no curse, no abuse so terrible as any of these names. They are cursed, cursed to the end of times. And indeed, I do not wish to see any of them with these living eyes. Ever.

Besides, I have encountered these death factories in various ways. At geographically distant locations from their actual addresses, and these encounters were sometimes vivid in most peculiar ways.

But, for the sake of truth and for the sake of this text, and perhaps for the sake of this testimony - I did visit one of the memorial camps and what happened to me over there, what I experienced and endured over there, was more than sufficient to follow Magda's path of suffering to the very end, and - indirectly, through her - my own path of agony. But, more will be said about it later on.

At this point I cannot proceed if I do not say this: ever since early childhood taking an oath was a sacred thing for me. And I have never lightly either made a promise or taken an oath. Among other, I have sworn to myself never to learn German language and never to set foot in any concentration camp. Memorial camp?! My foot! Ha! When I was a small child these two things were somehow inextricably interwoven: German language and German death camps.

And yet, Magda tried to impress the "matrix of German language" in my memory. Quite unsuccessfully. How did she go about it? I have almost forgotten: many times in the morning, while we were still living in Zeleznicka street by tram tracks, Magda would wake me and my brother Nebojsa in the morning, with sunrays dancing against dust particles would wish us good morning, and then washing would follow, morning exercises and then a short language lesson or about something else. "Nobody can take away from you only what you know", Magda used to quote her father's words, and that was the only inheritance we had from him, and it was passed on to him by his great-grandfather, and it was left to great-grandfather by great-great grandfather, and these words were passed on to him by his father... Physical

exercises agreed with me, I gladly engaged in sports, and learning was also a challenge and gave me joy.

But German...

It did not take root. Unfortunately, the mentioned firm decision of a child had proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for me to learn that language then, and later in life as well. And I needed it so many times in my life. It failed to cling to me even after I had stopped feeling any repulsion. Due to that mental barrier set up in childhood, I might have made an even greater damage and prevented myself from learning other languages, too.

And as far as concentration camps are concerned, I ought to clarify the context for that vow which I have never recalled, not even when I excluded German language from it, convinced that the decision involving it was simply a childish lack of understanding.

For me concentration camps were not some abstract lesson in a school text-book. People who had survived camps came to visit us, called us often on the phone asking for mother or father, we received letters from former campmates, and from time to time certain official invitations would arrive to gatherings on the occasion of anniversaries, at some prison or at some concentration camp. I used to make coffee for these people, brought them water to drink, prepared sandwiches or heated lunch for them if they were hungry, made beds for them to stay overnight if they had traveled from distant places, associated with their children, knew what was happening to them. This was our daily family routine and most frequently our social life. As soon as some of these men or women entered our house, the following sentence would follow, "We were together in Bergen Belsen, do you remember when...". Encounters with concentration camps were in this way, my everyday life. Each of such sentences had a story behind it, ugly and painful, full of suffering and unjustifiable cruelty. Sometimes this story was told in bright or even humorous tones, sometimes it was accompanied by tears, but I had learnt to listen and distinguish the delicate vibration of the soul which spoke about pain, suffering, experienced horror, lack of understanding and bitterness which occupied the speaker's heart. Since I have never looked at people's shoes, clothes, hats or fashionable details, in the course of childhood and early youth I developed a considerable degree of empathy, so nobody can deceive me with false smiles or false tears.

Each of these stories that I heard either as new or old, just reaffirmed my motives to swear that I would never ever set foot on the grounds of any of those monster camps.

Let me illustrate with just one example. Why, for instance, I never want to set my eyes on Mauthausen?

Mauthausen - for me, it meant nightmares, screaming, sweating and frequent changing of bed linen. When this was happening regularly, I was little, a baby and a very small child. My father - a deity of warmth, joy and strength during the day - as soon as he fell asleep, "returned" to Mauthausen. He would scream and sweat heavily, so that not only the sheet under him would be wet, but even the mattress. Sometimes such alarm would be sounded twice or even three times during a single night. Then Magda would change his clothes because he was completely exhausted and helpless, and granny Milevka would change bed linen. Such night alerts were so noisy that I often woke up, although I slept very soundly.

How soundly do I sleep? I will illustrate it with an incidence from 1999: I overslept the night NATO bombing of my Novi Sad; my son woke me up to get up from bed and stand in the doorway, in case the house tumbled down²⁰...

But, Mauthausen, the commotion around the house, the agitation and pain - that I could not oversleep. That is "my" Mauthausen, my "eighth passenger" and I truly do not want to see it until the end of time.

Now Magda:

The Camp in Bergen-Belsen

We arrived at the railway station in Bergen-Belsen late in the evening and set out on foot for another five or six kilometres. We were crossing a sand waste land beaten by a heavy wind. We entered the camp in complete darkness in the dead of night, unable to distinguish anything. We were welcomed by SS officers and Polish women Capos, camp policewomen with whips. With abhorrent shouts, "Los! Los!", they forced us into a barrack and made us climb immediately into

²⁰ I take after my father in this. My Živko also used to sleep soundly when he was young. He overslept bombing of Belgrade on April 6, 1941. He was alone at home, his mother Milevka had already gone out on some business, and neighbours shook Živko awake to ask him what, in the name of God, was happening?

triple-decker beds. But Jewish women were already in them; they screamed of fear that they would be sent out of their bunks. Beaten by whips, we groped in total darkness in the barrack looking for empty bunks. Some of the bunks collapsed wounding the women who were already on lower decks. We squeezed somehow into the ones that held three or four of us per bunk and somehow spent the night “sitting” leaning one against the other.

That is how we were welcomed in Bergen-Belsen. That is how SS officers started applying on us the methods by means of which millions of people in camps had been transformed into creatures without reason. We had strong intention to resist them.

At dawn on that December 19, 1944, the camp appeared in front of our eyes in all its dreadfulness, atrocity, monstrosity, abomination. The roof of our barrack was leaking, like of every other barrack around it. Damp sand penetrated every crack, crevice in the wooden floor, walls and beds. A heavy odour of dampness spread all over the place.

The women we found in the barrack and with whom we later reached an understanding and reconciled, were in an indescribable state of misery and filthiness. They were locked up together with their little children.

Every morning SS officers organized a “zell apel²¹”. They would take us out of the barracks, line us in long lines and count us. Sometimes we stood at “apel” for hours, regardless of rain, snow or wind.

On the second or the third night, we had to tie up and turn in all our clothes and blankets for disinfection by water vapour, although we did not have lice yet. We spent the night squatting in beds completely naked in the December night.

One day they took us to give us a bath. We stood under warm showers, happy, suspecting nothing, we even washed our hair. Afterwards they forced us out into a freezing corridor to wait there lined up for our clothes which were taken to be treated in vapour again without our knowledge. A horrible night! We stood for almost an hour or more, completely naked and barefoot. At first, our hairs and mouth were steaming, then the bodies started freezing, felt as if they were decomposing and disappearing. Such baths were repeated several times.

Our Vida Stojkov got sick. She was our first seriously sick comrade. She could not and did not want to go to the showers again... Nobody was allowed to stay in the barrack. If anybody stayed behind, they would immediately be taken out by SS officers and sent to the crematorium. The comrades put Vida on a bed in the darkest corner of the barrack, covered her with blankets, straightened out the bed so nobody could suspect that there was a living soul lying there. We all went

²¹ Zell-apel – roll calling

out of the barrack not suspecting that anybody else would remain behind. When we were about to start, an elderly woman, we called her granny Ševa, refused to go. Her name was in fact Milena Ševa and she had been arrested at a farm in Silbaš together with her son. It seems that they had tortured or killed him right in front of her eyes. She could not say. Because of enormous sorrow for him, she had become mentally deranged back in Topola camp. Ever since, all the way to Bergen-Belsen, women looked after her and took care of her, especially the young ones, the students from Novi Sad who were always in a good mood... But there was no time to fix her up like Vida. Women SS officers came in and started driving her out with whips and beating her. She struggled and screamed, and Vida heard it all from her corner. In the end Granny Ševa hit a German woman. The latter ran out and returned with SS officers. They pushed her out and dragged her away. She never came back. That is how Granny Ševa became the first concentration camp victim from our group.

We did our best to take all necessary and possible measures of hygiene. We washed ourselves in cold water. Our women comrades scrubbed one latrine and all day long one of us stood guard in front of it watching that nobody else but our women entered it. Nevertheless, the women started to fall ill. After Vida, Agnesa Sas was bed ridden for a long time. The little sugar and drugs we had – the present from Allach – we gave them in small rations to recover. After some time, all the women started moping and lying all day long on beds. Fear was spreading among the older ones. Rumours started that it would be good to step forward and speak to camp authorities and demand that Serb women from Yugoslavia be separated from Jewish women, because this camp was made for Jewish women. But that was not true. There were women prisoners from all nations of Europe in the camp. Besides, there were Jewish women from Yugoslavia and Hungary among us, too, and they would probably have been killed. Vida Stojkov, a nice and humane person, warned me about these rumours. At first, I was speechless. But, after a discussion with the most responsible among us, we decided to address the camp commander. But not with such a stand. We will demand to see the commander and demand that we, political convicts, be treated as prisoners of war and be given a separate barrack where we would be able to maintain basic hygiene.

The commander of the camp came during one of the “apels” and was very surprised with our demand which was presented to him by Marta Husar in good German language. He yielded. In order to hide his weakness, he kicked up a row against Communists. However, three days later, they took us to a newly constructed, big and healthy barrack. At one end of the barrack, a bathroom was built with concrete floor and a long row of taps. An iron stove stood in the middle of the barrack, in which we could build a fire if we had anything to burn in it. There was also a long table and benches. Everything was somehow lighter, more comfortable, so it seemed that things would be better.

But soon, the illusion vanished. We had no means to fight lice which spread around the camp. Serious hunger settled in. The soup made of beet used as cattle

feed, which had at first been somehow dense and tastefully cooked, became increasingly thin. Shipments of new people were arriving from all over Europe, from evacuated camps in the East. At least ten thousand people were crowded in the camp at that time, then this number doubled, and then quadrupled. Food reserves were becoming scarce, and they were increasingly stolen. Everybody who was given a chance stole. SS officers and Capos and camp inmates in kitchens. In the end there was no salt.

Thousands and thousands of women camp inmates roamed around the camp with a single thought on their minds – to steal, to provide slightly more food for themselves! Women looking utterly as savages, started attacking and snatching away cans with beet right in front of the kitchen where it was distributed for the barracks. In that struggle and fight, not once was a can overturned and spilled out. The women would then pick up the beet with their plates right there from the ground or slurped the soup directly from the ground, crawling on their stomachs. In such a situation we organized a Rota - women on duty who took turns to go to the kitchen heavily guarded to defend the three cans which belonged to our group. We distributed the food on our own. When camp inmates from the other part of the barrack, and there were about 150 of them from various countries, saw how well organized we were, they asked us to distribute food to them, too.

We also distributed bread among ourselves and the small piece of margarine we sometimes got. Women on duty brought a certain number of army loaves of bread, and each one had to be divided into 12 portions. Nada Velicki was especially good at it. It is great art to cut an army loaf of bread into 12 equal shares.

They started taking us to the forest to bring firewood, or to clean various premises. Once they wanted to take a group of our comrades to take clothes off corpses, but, although risking greatly, they refused. On that occasion Duška Seněš reproached a Polish woman for her inhumanness and her role of a capo in such a tone that the other woman was truly shaken up.

A large group of Budapest Jewish women arrived in the camp once. They were forced to walk all the way, because there were no more trains for them... By the time they reached us, they were walking corpses. Their entire bodies were covered with wounds. They could not eat any more, and there was no room for them in the barracks. The next day they were all taken to the crematorium. On the eve of New 1945, we organized a big festivity which was attended by some women from neighbouring barracks. They were French from their Resistance Movement, a Czech woman, also from a resistance movement, and others. They actually addressed us, because news about our barrack had spread. All the beds were occupied by women, all the way up to the ceiling. A French woman called Michelle filled us with enthusiasm the most with her wonderful voice. She sat on the highest bunk in the barrack and accompanied by hundreds of voices sang French folk and combat songs.

One morning, at “apel”, a group of SS officers, out of 250 of us at that moment, selected 100 younger women for labour, and I was among them. On that same day, we were stripped naked. Instead of our clothes, we were each given a calico, thin dress and a small overcoat with no lining with a square cut out on its back. They left us only our shoes. We still had a little time left until departure, so capos allowed us to go back to our barrack. Our comrades watched us in shock and gave us other clothes. That is how all reserves of clothing in that big collective disappeared. The women who remained and we who were leaving, had nothing else but what we were wearing at that moment.

After our departure from Bergen-Belsen, typhoid started to spread around the camp. In the beginning two or three persons died each day, later up to two thousand. Our comrades were relocated by force into different barracks, the big collective disappeared. Minor groups still stuck together, but after great hunger moved in, and typhoid spread among them too, they had no strength even to visit each other. They, too, were dying. Whoever managed to survive one type of typhoid, fell victim of the other. In front of all barracks, there were piles of corpses; nobody buried them any more.

English liberators arrived in the camp on April 15, 1945. But they did not even dare enter it. Appalled and shocked by what they saw, but unable to do anything to help, they in fact immediately continued, and the camp waited for another few days for the arrival of special sanitary units. Unfortunately, as a consequence of a pile of cans of food left by the first group of soldiers in passing by the very gate, with the best intention to help the camp inmates, approximately another 11 thousand persons died during those few days.

The agonizing evacuation of the camp began.

In the vicinity of that concentration camp was a large camp of prisoners of war of Yugoslav army officers about whom our women had known nothing. These men, sparing no effort, entered the camp, sought our women who were still conscious and carried them on their arms to the nearby town of Bergen to hospital. Among these officers was Cvetko Malušev from Subotica, who found his wife Boriška seized by typhoid delirium and also carried her to the hospital. Later, our comrades who survived were sent to recover in a resort called Steinhude.

Mentally deranged, having left a small group of comrades who had worked in tailoring shop isolated from everybody – Zora Rakoši died of typhoid. Ilonka Vamos from Budapest, a permanent and reliable member of the underground leadership of our collective from Márianosztra to Bergen-Belsen, also died of typhoid. A number of women from Yugoslavia and Budapest also died of typhoid; their names will be listed later.

Nevena:

How I Mourned the Death of Granny Paula

Nobody enlarged by decreasing

Like I said while commenting on the previous chapter, I clashed with concentration camps often in the course of my life. Apart from the conversations with our house guests, books or films, I came face to face with Bergen-Belsen in Israel, in Jerusalem. I encountered other camps, too, but Bergen-Belsen made an extremely strong impression on me and started an avalanche in me.

It was in the year 1989. The energy of that event is still so vivid in me that I can still feel it with equal intensity. I will tell it as precisely as I understand it. For some time by then, in Yugoslavia, war had already started to spread its "odour"²²: from some dark gaping hole it had lifted one of its hideous faces and started to spread its tentacles. An indescribable fear reigned among people, a severe feverishness, a forthcoming thunderstorm and some tremendous tumult were constantly in the air. People suddenly started to wonder who they were, who they belonged to, which side to take, what they should think, quarrels and senseless debates had arisen about who had done what and how much harm to somebody else. Normal people, brought up in the spirit of civil society and mutual tolerance, joyful, pleasant and friendly, suddenly started shrinking from others, started to look at each other suspiciously and greeting each other in lower voices until they stopped greeting each other altogether. Smiles disappeared and all our contacts turned into endless and senseless debates. In one of such debates, in order to avoid having to uselessly take sides, which would later turn into an obligation, I said that "their" historic

²² When Josip Broz Tito died in 1980, it was as if some celestial coffin had slammed the cover shut over Yugoslavia. Dissolution and rotting started immediately. Why did it happen? I can only give my own opinion: we had not completed our 'Yuga' as nowadays, when it is no more, almost all of us from Vardar to Triglav like to call it. Perhaps for the sake of some folly of theirs, greed or blindness, various domestic and foreign political elites would not let it be completed. And certain groups saw an extremely convenient opportunity for unobstructed and quick getting rich by dismantling and destroying Yugoslavia. I do not need specific facts and names of these wrong doings, because it is more than obvious that we are all suffering the consequences. We have learnt the hard way how true the wise saying is that nobody has become greater by decreasing, so this could not have happened to former Yugoslav republics either, so they had left a state just to become statelets.

mutual disputes (interethnic debates²³) did not concern me, because after all I was Jewish! Indeed, if it was necessary to declare oneself, and for forty years it had been unnecessary, I said defiantly that I was a Serb and Jewish mixture and I could do as I pleased, I could be a Jew and from now on that was what I would be, but, by God, I could also be a Serb, I could, if I chose, be also a mutant, or as before a citizen of the world. I did not have to account for follies of all Balkan and other nations through history... Then I heard the most peculiar sentence in the too long suffering of Jews among other nations of the world, when my colleagues told me, "we envy you!"²⁴

Having got out of the "tight spot" by being Jewish on the mentioned occasion, but later, too, it helped me to avoid stepping into quicksand and take sides - I suddenly felt a strong wish to find out whether I was truly a Jew or what I was. And, as if forced to do it, in pursuit of an answer to this question, I went to Israel. I spent a month there at the time and I truly cannot say whether I discovered more of that "Jewish chip" in me than I had carried inside me before. I do not know because neither then nor now, twenty years later, do I believe that ethnic origin is more important than life ²⁵, it is just such a small part, just one of the numberless particles in a spectre... Although it serves as a perfect pretext for brutes to start and wage wars and carry out their plunders...

²³ In three interconnected offices in my editorial office in the Dnevnik daily, a distinctly mixed group worked, each one of them from a mixed marriage in various combinations of Serbs, Croats, Czechs, Romanians, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Slovaks, Bosnians, Montenegrins and only one whose both mother and father were „pure“ Serbs. Serbian was the „mother“ tongue to all of us, the language we communicated in and the language we earned our daily bread with, but suddenly everybody „went Serb“, in other words, in the most typical tradition of this space, they divided into two camps, in this case, the ones who passionately justified political moves of Slobodan Milošević and others who furiously opposed them. In the beginning it all had a form of teasing and quibbling, but people had unambiguously reacted to some internal unintelligible call, and also to vicious war-mongering propaganda which was at first skilfully implemented quietly and on the sly, and then with increasing intensity. And almost all my colleagues, although qualified by their very profession to recognize and understand propagandist campaigns, swallowed the hook and threw themselves with full rage into the „Serb-Serb“ clinch. They quarrelled and reproached each others for fabrications from distorted history of the Balkan people, separating more and more profoundly and more and more closely to the point of no return. I did not want to take part in this.

²⁴ „The affiliation to these nations will do you very little good“ – my girl friend from work Milena teased me, having in mind the suffering and staggering of both Jews and Serbs through centuries and millennia.

²⁵ „The culture in which you grow up, the upbringing your family gives you, the school that you finish – that is what is decisive for a man“, Magda used to say. „And the friends that you grow up with“, I teased her, and she would light up with happiness thinking of her war comrades.

And of course, I immediately decided that in Israel I would collect some material, stories for my newspaper, and not be just an idle, "lazy" tourist...

In the very first week of my stay, relatives took me to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum, because it is a place which must not be left unvisited in Jerusalem.

Bright sunshine, a longish ride and we arrived on the spot. Then we passed through an unattractive door which was pointed out to us as the entrance for ordinary visitors. So I entered.

Its architecture is a combination of a factory hall and a camp barrack: it is enormous, high, dark, grey, bare. Concrete, and the specific, irritating drone of non-acoustic giant halls. Ordinary visitors go to a narrow gallery elevated from the ground about three or four meters, I do not remember exactly how high. From there, one looks down at the hall floor on which are objects/plates with inscriptions: Auschwitz, Ravensbruck, Mauthausen, Jasenovac, Bergen-Belsen, I think 14, or perhaps 16 biggest ones, I do not remember the exact number. But they are all there, all Nazi death factories got their small lots of land in this hall and plates with their names. By the plate saying "Bergen-Belsen" a ceremony is going on. A rabi and a few civilians. The rabi is chanting a prayer for the disappeared members of the family whose remaining members are here, close together around him. They are lighting candles, putting flowers on to the plate, crying.

Hey, what kind of a museum is this?! Interwoven individual destinies and documents about evil times which had involved hundreds of millions of people! My mind is feverishly working: I momentarily realize that this museum exists for the sake of individuals, their pain, their suffering, their individual loss. Individual destinies are the ones that are tragic.

And finally, in that bare gallery with a metal railing, while watching with tears in my eyes that mutilated family, I see with crystal clarity that a number of my close and distant relatives were killed in some of these camps, mostly in Auschwitz. Data about them, too, are processed, classified, stored in this very Yad Vashem. And, with a delay of several decades, squeezing the cold metal of the railing at the gallery, I begin to weep for my great grandmother Tereza, granny Paula, uncle Palika, great aunts, uncles, great uncle Pista, numerous aunts I have never met because Auschwitz had devoured them before I was

born. I suddenly see in my mind's eye a black-and-white photograph of my granny Paula, a beautiful woman from Bačka, side by side with her sweetheart, Aleksandar, my grandfather. That photograph is, I think, from the time of their wedding, when she was 17, and he was over 20 or 25. I contemplate how her indescribable beauty and his roguish charm were no protection; the beast of war devoured them both... I remember other photographs, five or six of them - that is how many survived the war devastation. That beauty, according to Magda's words, talented for artistic works of various kinds, granny Paula, in fact that young woman from the photograph, fills my mind's eye. I think of the carpet she had made with her own hands, which now lies by my bed so that I can step on it in the morning, where it is warm. I also recall the oval picture of a needlepoint with Magda's face on it at the age of 12, which was embroidered by Paula as a birthday gift to her firstborn daughter. She also gave her Tolstoy's "War and Peace", because that was the right age to read it, so Magda bought me "War and Peace" for my 12th birthday, too... I recall other stories, fragments of somebody else's memories, and my incapability to feel some true connection and closeness with them who are my own flesh and blood. I realize how deprived I am for the lack of the relationship with these two, and of large, joyful, noisy family gatherings, the support one gets in a large family, of the feeling of safety, self-confidence, foundedness, acceptance, kinsfolk's love...

Who can make it up to me? Nobody.

What can compensate for it? Nothing.

And who needs the data about the disappeared and the killed - which I have allegedly come to get from this museum? I do not need any of it. Because right here, struck by the names of death factories, I become aware of the proportions of my loss. I have lost before I was even born. Dachau, Mauthausen, Ravensbruck, Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz - ripped off an enormous part of my life before it had even begun.

And the strikes at my soul in Yad Vashem are not over yet. That year, when I first visited Israel, as part of the same museum complex, Museum of Children was opened. I recommend with all my heart to every human creature to visit this museum. I do not insist that it be visited by those who are capable of killing, but I recommend it to those who are silent and with their silence enable evil to develop and flare up into a war in their surroundings. Therefore, especially to those good, naive, tolerant human

subjects, who would not hurt a fly, to them I recommend the Museum of Children in Jerusalem, so they would face the results of silence of earlier generations of tolerant, good, naive human subjects...

What will these good people find there?

From bright sunshine they will enter into the darkness of a room the dimensions of which cannot be easily determined. They will walk very slowly, one by one, one after the other, along boards that bend a little under their feet, so the visitor would feel slightly insecure. The path meanders by two windows in which on different heights and distances, like stars in the sky, bulbs in the form of candles burn. And a man's and a woman's voice, taking turns, will articulate names and family names of victims. Nothing else: this and that - 3 years old, this and that - 11 years old, that and that - 6 months old... This walk along boards through a galaxy of children killed in death camps goes on, and on, and on. I do not know whether in real time this lasts 3 or 5 or perhaps 10 minutes. Or more. The mind stops there, the heart is in your throat and it is all pure horror.

How many potential teachers, cooks, beauties, nuclear physicists, geni of all kinds, musicians and actors, story tellers, caring mothers and fathers, good friends have been killed? Their lives were interrupted. And although I had been warned in advance about the way this department of Yad Vashem was organized in, there was no way I could have prepared for it. I was in tears. I heard people in front of me and behind me sobbing in this march-past. It was of no importance that I did not hear the names of children from my family, I wept for all the children in the world.

What terrible world are they living in? The world in which life is destroyed so arrogantly and so easily, with ironic pretexts. What kind and how big a profit can be put on the balance on the other plate of which are millions of killed children? White, black, yellow, red, mixed, whatever? People, good and noble, how much longer shall we let sick, war loving human scum rip the thread of life? This question terrifies me so utterly because, having come out into the bright Jerusalem sunlight, I suddenly realized the proportions of this fact: the Second World War killed not just millions of Jewish children, but also numberless children in Africa, Asia, on islands, in both Americas, it raged all over Europe killing the children of Germans, Italians, Dutch, French, Spaniards, Englishmen, Belgians, Russians, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, Czechs,

Greeks, Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Macedonians, Albanians, Slovenes, Poles... of all nations the territories of which it swept over... To all those children a talking monument was built in Israel.

Magda:

Departure to Fallersleben

A group of a hundred women, and I with them, arrived after a three-day journey, in the middle of January 1945 in Fallersleben, into the armament and ammunition factory. We entered the factory grounds also in the dark, as into Bergen-Belsen camp, and we were immediately taken to the night shift. During that very night, a gigantic press cut the forefinger on Marta Husar's left hand. She came up to me holding the wounded left hand in her right hand. And I was embittered. How could they have sent us to work immediately after a three-day tedious journey, without sleep and exhausted?! The foreman allowed me to escort Marta to the clinic, where she bravely endured surgery, thanks to which the Italian doctor showed special sympathy and dressed the wound properly. From that day Marta was tortured by the dilemma how she would operate with that mutilated hand, if she lived until liberation and completed her studies? Marta's hands were already well known to us as good physician's hands. If she only lay these hands on a painful spot, a person immediately felt relief.

We lived in the factory building, in somewhat better conditions, but the food was similar as in Bergen-Belsen.

According to rumours, "V-2" arms were produced in the factory, the great Hitler's hope in fighting allies, but in everyday bombing attacks a large part of the factory halls had already been destroyed. Only the hall where we were deployed still worked.

Everybody was sabotaging. Frenchmen – camp inmates – let defective parts pass the quality check. In our department, Italians and Frenchmen – camp inmates and prisoners of war - allegedly repaired machines every day. Hours and days passed.

There was only one German – foreman and engineer – in our entire hall.

Working in an armament and ammunition factory was the biggest problem for our conscience. We had no time on the first night upon arrival to reach an agreement what to do, taken by surprise by the place where we would work. We

were desperate. This is how this event is described in my war diary “When Sour Cherries Bloom”:

“I am standing next to the machine again and despairing. Am I to make even the thousandth part of the cursed machine which sends death to our side of the front? Is a bullet I make going to pierce through a stomach, the lungs, pierce the skull of a single combatant?”

Around me are girls working with the same dilemma, in the same despair. Hands are moving, but production is interrupted. Wrong parts are being cut off, forms and matrices are changed, raw material is mixed with half finished and finished products, and the German leaves his glass cabin, goes around and explains, nervous already! He has never had such ignorant workforce!

I am sitting at a machine, a grinder, which polishes the edges of glittering metal cones into which the sensitive complicated parts of armament, maybe “V-2”, are mounted.

I am polishing and polishing again the already completed cones, then I throw them into the crate on the left hand side of the machine, so next shift will polish them all over again and I contemplate what to do to that machine, enormous and powerful, whose secret I do not know... It must not work at all.

I am not capable to think of anything. Polish women inmates come to get finished cones to mount them on their tables. There are no cones. Polish women beg us not to ruin them. They have nothing to do, a whole long table is empty, a whole line of women stand idle, the steel chain passes by with nothing on it. And I do not care what will happen to them, and I do not care what will happen to me.

It is necessary to break the head of the grinding machine. I pick up a cone and start banging the head with it with all my strength, but it holds. I shake up the machine strongly so that its base shakes and with desperate, ultimate effort, I push and knock out the belt from the transmission with my feet.

Finally, it stops!

The German notices the standstill, out of his mind with rage and amazement he steps out of his cabin, sets up the ladder, climbs it to put the belt back, exerts all his effort to put it back in place, bent as a drawn bow. One wrong move threw him from the height to the concrete floor. He falls on his back.”

Furious, the German stepped out and brought an SS woman officer who slapped me powerfully. But that was it. They did not shoot me. The very next day the foreman transferred me to another job, to carry pipes to the warehouse, but two weeks later, after this “uncivilized” labour, a hundred of us women were thrown

out of the factory to outdoor jobs, to clear ruins. We were relieved. Our work will not contribute to the success of the Germans!

In the factory, the hardest thing for us were the great air-raid alerts. There were three signals. The first sounded the danger of bombing, the second that air-planes were above the city, and the third that they were above the factory. While we were working, they took us to bunkers after the third alert had been sounded. But while we were sleeping or resting in the barrack, they drove us out with whips at the first signal. We sometimes sat in bunkers for half a night, freezing on the concrete floor. It was the worst if the alert was sounded during dinner or supper, especially while bread was being distributed. Women SS officers grabbed the opportunity to interrupt distributing food. Lack of sleep and rest exhausted us the most, especially because we had decided to replace our sick comrades at work. Women SS officers did not care who was coming to work as long as the number was correct. So we were utterly confused, when it was daytime and when night, when today ended, and when the next day began.

We were more afraid of bunkers than of bombing. What if they suffocated us all with gas in those long corridors with low ceiling? Once, the following happened: we were sitting in a long row on the floor of a bunker when electricity went out. We were suddenly in total darkness. Will they suffocate us now, we thought, but then we started singing Lenin's dead march. The song grew stronger and suddenly, joined in by all the camp inmates, women from Poland, Russia, France and Italy, having filled the entire underground space, it started to echo. It was an unforgettable, festive occasion. Several guards who were with us in the bunker, were stunned into silence and started to shout with a delay... Then lights were back on and the end of the alert was sounded.

They kept us in Fallersleben only for two months. Withdrawing in front of liberators' troops, SS officers dragged us further on. They forced us to walk or put us in cattle train carriages. A group of women from the Netherlands joined us in a rather strange way. We were already sitting in a cattle carriage with our bundles when SS officers reopened the door and threw another thirty odd women in. In complete darkness it was impossible to make a new sitting arrangements, so we spent the whole night wrestling and pushing the newly arrived women, until they recognized us at dawn by our song again. They were Dutch women arrested because they had participated in anti-fascist movement and because they had concealed Jews. We quickly came to terms with them. They stayed with us until liberation.

After our arrival at Fallersleben we were vaccinated against typhoid. Partly thanks to that none of hundred of us died in Germany, we all returned to Yugoslavia and Hungary, although some of us suffered from lung and heart diseases, and some had ulcer. All Dutch women also survived.

Nevena:

Pilgrimage from an Arm-Chair

War culture in the heart of mankind.

After I had physically visited some of the prisons in which Magda's humaneness and physical endurance were tested by the war, I am still tormented by the awareness that the agreement with the editor included concentration camps. I do not deny it, we have agreed that I tour the camps as well, physically, on my two feet... I find consolation in the fact that it was clever of me to partly accomplish my mission by visiting Israel and Yad Vashem, but still I reproach myself that it was not the real thing. Then I try to find motivation in the saying that the longest job is the one you never begin and Magda's formula about an accepted task...

I still hesitate for months. Should I not go, despite my vow, but mostly because I have already opened my war wounds, should I or should I not go?

No, I won't! I definitely give up on the journey to Germany, to the surroundings of Berlin which I marked on the map as a possible destination. Apart from the aversion I feel to queuing for a visa, I decide that nowadays there is nothing to see as a tourist on a pilgrimage around death camps following in the footsteps of Magda's suffering.

And, as if by some miracle, a TV channel is presenting a series about concentration camps.

I am sitting in an arm-chair, at home in Novi Sad, I do not need any visa and I will not be tempting my overstrained nervous system. And I am watching: gates, barracks, crematorium, barbed wire, watch-towers, all that still standing on barren land, because nothing will grow on it. They are also presenting scarred old films shot by arrogant guards about tormented prisoners in order to humiliate them, and in order to convince themselves that these were not worthy human beings. And I am listening to the voice which interprets and explains photographs of unfortunate people deprived of everything human in them. And again figures are pronounced about tens, hundreds of thousand or millions. As if the figures no matter how enormous, mean anything in themselves.

Then scenes with camp inmates are replaced by shots of well-fed, fully dressed tourists who are walking around that ground contaminated by death.

Everything is clear as day, as if I were there myself!

God loves me, I appease my conscience which is molesting me for avoiding the undertaken obligation. He loves me also - I continue in the same sense - for having remained true to my word and refused to travel. This is a compromise: I am traveling and yet not traveling. And everything is crystal clear - I have seen it all. Pilgrimage around concentration camps - from an arm-chair!

The only thing that cameras cannot register is the smell of old death and the painful fluttering of indescribable suffering of hundreds of thousand of people which still hovers above these places.

And THAT is the last thing I need...

Magda:

The Camp in Salzwedel - Liberation

In the camp near Salzwedel, there were also thousands of inmates. We were put together with the Dutch women in a barrack with no beds, but just spread straw, like in Allach. That suited us just fine.

It could be felt that Hitler's Germany was counting its last days. Once they took us all out to a clearing, with all our belongings, and we stood lined up for hours. Then they sent us back to the barrack. We learnt from a capo who was on duty that we had been selected for gas chamber and cremation, but then the camp commander changed his mind. In fact he persistently tried to get his superiors on the phone, but there was nobody to answer his calls. Rout had started. We practically got no food whatsoever any more.

News spread that there was no electric power supply in the whole city, so there could be no power supply in the wire surrounding the camp. We decided that a group of three would slip through the fence, go to the city and try to find prisoners of war from France over there. We had heard that there were some. We intended to ask them to help us escape from the camp and prevent SS officers from liquidating us at the last moment and of their own accord. It was decided that the members of the group should be Ljubica Prodanovic who spoke French quite

well, a girl from Budapest, Agi, who was the only among us who spoke English, and I, because I spoke German and French.

We found Frenchmen as soon as we passed through the wire and they took us to the camp of French prisoners of war. The heads of the camp, however, were not at all happy to see us, they probably had no place to hide a hundred women in, because German guards still dropped by to control them. They turned us over to the Yugoslavs about whom we knew nothing, saying that it was their duty to help us. The camp of our prisoners of war was on the other side of the city. When we reached them the following day and stated our request, they, too, were just as confused and reserved as the Frenchmen. They offered us food and drink, but we took only a small piece of chocolate and a few biscuits both from the French and ours. We were starving, the risk was too high.

We were drinking a little hot coffee when a soldier, an enormous man from Šumadija called Crazy Ćira, dropped in and shouted, "They're coming!"

Prisoners of war of all nations were on guard at the roads leading into the city expecting liberators, and they arrived that very morning. Everybody jumped up from around the table where, according to our opinion, a too abundant breakfast remained, and the three of us ran up to Crazy Ćira from Šumadija and asked him to take us to our camp.

A column of American reconnaissance tanks was already moving down the main Salzwedel road. All drivers were Negroes. Having left them behind, we three hurried, almost ran, towards our camp, afraid that our comrades might be liquidated. But they were not. The camp commander had decided to turn over the camp to liberators in person, and the mass of camp inmates of many thousands of people poured out of the gate towards the city. Our comrades were also walking down the road headed by one of the Frenchmen whom we had met first. At my request that man had gone to our camp that morning and taken a large package of sugar and biscuits and given it to Marta Husar after saying a password. Every woman was given a large spoonful of sugar and a few small biscuits which gave them strength for that day.

The situation in the city was already chaotic. A mass of camp inmates and prisoners of war broke into all the shops with goods. Silk and velvet were lying in the streets. But we touched nothing. We, a hundred women, were marching down the road towards the barrack of the Yugoslavs singing. People spoke about it for weeks in the city.

On the grounds of the camp of Yugoslav prisoners of war there were several empty barracks where German workers had lived until recently. We occupied one of these barracks. Americans put thousands of other camp inmates in huge German army barracks at the outskirts of the city. We did not want to go there.

A few Frenchmen who visited us all the time made an effort to make life easier to us. They showed us a sugar factory near by from where we carried over several sacks of brown sugar. We burnt everything we were wearing.

From the city we brought a considerable quantity of cloth and on machines of former German workers, we sew a skirt and a blouse for each of us. One of the Frenchmen, called Macek, was in fact a Pole and understood Serbian excellently. He managed to persuade American city command to allow him to bring the food which officially was distributed for us on a small truck to our camp. We cooked on our own. In the beginning just plain rice boiled in water.

The camp was liberated on April 15, and for May 1st we organized a big celebration on the grounds of Yugoslav barracks. Not just prisoners of war we had found there, but also many others from the surroundings who were working in villages came to be our guests. The celebration was magnificent, with good food, songs and folk dances.

In the middle of May we decided to go home. American command did not allow it, saying that we should wait for Yugoslav repatriation commission. We did not wish to wait, because that American command was not at all inclined to us. One day we left our barrack and started towards the railway station in Salzwedel. That was the gathering point of Russians from surrounding places who were brought to work. Trains full of prisoners of the Soviet Army were passing through the station, because there was an agreement among the allies that they should be the first to return home. We mixed with Russians asking them not to betray us to the Americans, and in the first train we crossed the bordering river Elba.

We were on our way home...

We arrived in Subotica after traveling for two weeks, by train and on foot, on June 4, 1945.

Nevena:

When I Imagine Freedom

Each action causes reaction, and each reaction causes new action.
The cosmic law on cause and result

They set out on their way home... On foot, singing...

Yes, that is the image that settled down in my memory, born from Magda's voice which narrated the tale about a hundred women rising up to the surface into freedom after four years in a sea of darkness.

That is why, when nowadays I imagine freedom, it means walking in the middle of a road. I am aware that it is an adopted image of Magda with her comrades returning on foot from Germany, marching in the middle of a road, singing. For me, for a very long time, that was the real content of the concept of FREEDOM. Who knows how many times the two of us, on our way back from somewhere, walked down the middle of a street, and I watched Magda's beaming face, her eyes sparkling, and waited for her to begin singing - she would take me by the hand, swing it in the rhythm of our footsteps and start singing some lively march. This was while I was still a child, when cars had still not completely occupied roads and streets. But even nowadays, whenever I let myself go out to the middle of a road and start striding along it, my heart starts to sing. I believe that this is the reason why I choose to cross roads where it is forbidden, because of the magnificent feeling of freedom that the middle of a road has always succeeded in arousing in my heart. And it seems to me that because of that feeling I have always longed to fly by that noiseless kite over fields, rivers, hills, high up in the sky and below clouds... I tried to persuade others to experience that freedom, "Try it! Feel it!" But it is easier to persuade people to get drunk with alcohol, tobacco, heroine, hatred, than with freedom.

To be honest, that feeling of freedom and defiance does not bring relief. It just sparks for a short time while I am marching in the middle of a road. Then it dies out.

Very fortunately, I have also experienced the feeling of freedom with the quality of relief. Quite unexpectedly, it happened to me: I was struck by liberation of

psychological coercion of war. That is what I mean when I say relief. Yes, after the experience I will testify about now, those "signals from the subconscious" that force you to feel and do things against which your whole being rebels, disappeared completely...

It was in the year 1991, July/august. I traveled with a large group of people to India, to Rajasthan. And it happened that I encountered face to face, or rather with a fist in the stomach, with death camps which festered in me from the day I was born. I can confirm from my own experience that wherever a man goes, he takes himself along with him and may God help him on that way, because he knows not when some monster will emerge from the darkest corner of his insides, to torture, strangle, tempt him... In the desert of Rajasthan, "my Second World War" emerged in front of me. It was an astonishing, then awakening, and finally and above all a healing experience. I think that the experience about which I wish to say a few words was possible most probably because I was so far away from everything I know, in a different culture, in a different climatic area, among people of a different race and of a completely unknown language, who radiated humaneness quite new to me²⁶. As if I were on a different planet. That is why, I think, the experience I wish to testify about, was possible.

But let me first say the following: indeed, until that August, until the age of forty, I had not at all been aware that in me, beside the known war wounds, there was a deeply concealed reservoir of frustration connected to the Second World War. It turned out that all kinds of things were growing inside me and when that monster emerged on the surface, it caught me completely unprepared. At that moment in India, the monster at first acquired the form of hatred and wrath against Germans.

Additional explanations are necessary before I proceed with the description of this experience.

I have never hated Germans, or any other nation, as names, a nation, history, culture or anything similar. I was taught not to at home. In her book "Until Sour Cherries Bloom", my Magda, still vulnerable from the War, wrote a miraculous sentence about Germany, which I will paraphrase

²⁶ That is the region where solely vegetarians live. Their radiation is quite different from the one we are used to receive from people in Europe. I became aware of that only after we had disembarked from the airplane in Frankfurt. I experienced the radiation of people-meat-eaters almost as a blow.

here: "That big country of poets, painters, composers, philosophers, showed to us only its concentration camps"... Magda's capability to separate the good from the bad even at the time of the greatest evil, channeled to a large extent my feelings and my attitude to the world. In that sense, the above mentioned hatred was some indescribable bogey which would be (sometimes, not always) activated with the word 'Germans' or 'German' (language), and Nazism/war/camps would automatically be linked to it. That evil spirit, as I see things now, was a response to something which, when the boil burst I named 'the Second World War complex'.

The Second World War complex swelled up in me in the following environment: we grew in Yugoslavia with victorious tales about the war, the complex of victors was implanted in us, the allies did this, the Partisans did that, we played "Partisans and Germans" and knew who were the good guys and who were the bad guys, while real life was taking a completely different course, Germany confronted and came to terms with its monstrous past, started to cure itself and gradually rose from the ashes. In the process it had big help of political and financial world elite, and it grew, recovered and grew rich right in front of our eyes. And we remained haughty, arrogant and, along with all that, poor - capital did not like Marxists and avoided their countries. Moreover, young people from Yugoslavia were trying to escape to that very Germany - to work, earn money, to be able to afford a better life either over there, or at home - if they returned. What a complex situation! It all hurt me terribly and festered inside me. I considered such an outcome an extremely unjust historical trick, because during a large part of my life I had failed to see war as an endemic infection of humanity, as a most deadly disease. I failed to realize that both individuals and nations bear consequences for every, absolutely each and every move they make, each and every decision they take, and that there are no deserved rewards that last for ever regardless of deeds and misdeeds, and that deeds and misdeeds reshape destinies every day, sometimes momentarily. They failed to teach us that both at home and in school. Architects of new Man switched God, destiny, causes and consequences all off. Click!

So it happened unexpectedly: in the days when Yugoslavia started bursting along its seams under the gusts of civil war of the nineties, my eyes opened in India, in Rajasthan, and the boil burst. Perhaps this episode had begun practically at the airport when we landed in Delhi at half past twelve at night. After having looked at ten odd

Yugoslav passports, a policeman looked me squarely in the eyes and asked, "What are you doing here when war is starting in your country?!" Regardless of everything I experienced and saw, that question vibrated in me throughout my stay in the country which is the mother of all nations.

Let us go back to the story because of which I am mentioning my Indian experience, the immediate cause was trite. I was at some sort of pilgrimage in a biggish mixed group of seventy odd Central Europeans, mostly people from former Yugoslavia and a few Austrians and Germans. About a month long journey had isolated us from cities where white people or European way of life could be encountered, which was sufficient to change completely our point of view. This was the second framework for what followed.

Towards the end of the journey, certain extra expenses of our stay appeared. When I realized that "they" (German and Austrian members of our group) would elegantly pay the debt on the spot, while I had NO money, and none of our Yugoslav group had ENOUGH either, at first I was panic stricken not knowing how to resolve this, then I was overcome by wrath, and finally I was seized by hysteria. I saw red as I have already written about, it suffocated and choked me and would not let me breathe. And that is when the "boil" burst. That was exactly what happened - the wrath that "after everything that had happened" they HAD, and I "after everything that had happened" did NOT was the sting in the putrid spot and "pus" burst out with all its might. For three days I disintegrated into tiny particles, I wept convulsively, fever shook me, I was torn apart "as if I were dying" and "the Second World War waste" gushed out of me. I honestly do not know what I talked about in my sleep, but they told me afterwards what could be understood and that I kept repeating, "Magda has forgiven them, but I can't!" They tried to isolate me and closed the door so the rest of the group would not hear incoherent words, took me out at night for walks in the yard, washed my face and poured water over me, but that I do not remember, all I do remember is pain, excruciating pain.

And just as that great washing out of war waste from me had started in an absurd manner, it ended equally grotesquely. After three days, the tempest died down, everything had gone out. All of a sudden clarity, tranquility, lightness...

Then I felt an irresistible desire to go out in the street. With light steps, pushing my way through the middle

of a road with pedestrians, camels, an elephant, rickshaws and motorcycles, through strong India's odours, I went to the nearby marketplace and bought various fruit. Then I turned back to our lodgings. I met people from my group on the way back and I gave each one of them a piece of fruit, a banana, a mango, an orange, whatever of the fruit with skin happened to be in my bag. When I arrived in my room and looked at what was left in my bag, it occurred to me that all the people I had given fruit to on the way from the marketplace to my room had been the very same Germans and Austrians because of whom all that great big crying had begun three days before. Then I burst into laughter and could not stop. Mister Coincidence shuffled the cards in the very way that enabled me to get the burden off my back, moreover, to wash out all the remaining bitterness, and complete the recovery with laughter.

And I was healed. After three days of "dying with the ecstatic ending", the sun started shining in my heart of darkness and I felt that THE LOAD HAD DISAPPEARED. I knew that it HAD DISAPPEARED. I was finally FREE. As if the Second World War and all that waste had been "surgically removed" from me. This was a tangible feeling, like touching silk or smelling a rose.

What joy! All at once - peace. Peace.

And just another thing in connection with this. When I arrived in Novi Sad and went to work, the first thing that I said to my friend Daca Nikolic was that for me the Second World War was over. "Great", she answered resignedly, "Right on time, just when the idiots are starting a new war!" "Oh, no, my dear", I remember exactly the words I uttered, "I am done with wars for good! In my family, there is neither a single male nor a female head to be sacrificed at the altar of a new war."

Indeed, from my family (my brother, his wife and two minor sons, myself, my mother and my minor son - that is it), nobody took any part in Yugo-wars, nobody was called up, nobody kidnapped, or asked to go to war in any way, either with a gun or a pen, or a voice. We were free. Marginalized - yes! Both my brother and I were fired from our jobs, but we were free. Moreover, not for a moment have I felt the urge to join in either professionally, physically, emotionally, or in any other way. Not for a moment have I "heard" the war trumpets which turned several thousand people into war PRs, murderers, criminals, butchers, robbers and bandits, and millions of others into victims. I was truly free.

The wars in the Balkan in the nineties lasted long enough for me to seriously wonder: what is the origin of my immunity to the call of war? Did the three-day anguish and weeping in Rajasthan desert truly and utterly wash out the war disease from me? Is the cure really that simple? I wondered over and over again, and nowadays it seems to me that perhaps I know yet another part of the answer: the previous war had taken everything from us - a large majority of family members and property and left literally just enough of us not to be extinct. Maybe that is what made us deaf for the new war trumpets.

Let me add just another thing in connection with this experience: it turned out that my comrades and friends had known how severely ill I was of the Second World War complex. They did not call it that, but they knew. And they were infallibly there for me whenever a crisis overcame me. These crises were especially powerful when I was very young, they tore me, I even had suicidal ideas, perhaps it was a youthful hysteria, but in these moments, some of my peers were always by my side. From a distance of several decades, it is interesting to fathom how we nursed and cured each others, without any part of adults. We, the second generation, the children of civilian victims who have survived the Second World War tolerated each other's hysterical and paranoid seizures, tantrums of wrath and asociality, outbursts of stupidity, weeping, aggression, depression, foolish reactions. For each other we were a shoulder to cry on, a physician and therapy. When I was shaken up by crises, at least two of my peers were there for me all the time, stopped by my house to take me to school, took me back home from school, took me for walks along the Danube like a zombie, sometimes simply got me drunk to stop the pain. I paid them back with my shoulder and my time when somebody else from our crowd was in a crisis and I was strong and stable. Yes, my friends knew. Perhaps awareness of that shocked me even more than the other awareness that I was seriously infected with the war disease. Although it was obvious from the very beginning that all my friends were suffering from war disease too, some of them from mild, and some from severe forms - many years have gone by before I realized that.

The truth is brutal - I truly do not know a single soul who did not lose two thirds or half of their family in a war, in the first, second or third generation of ancestors. And I know some people who are at the same time the first and the second and the third generation of civilian victims of various wars. In this sense, we are all

full of scars and wounds. Perhaps that is why we are liable to new war infections...

After the complicated healing experience in Rajastan, I started by far more attentively reflecting on folk proverbs and sayings. Now I know exactly what it means when in a family, more precisely in a family tribe, only as many members remain to prevent its extermination. I know exactly how this reflects on the member who survives, what kind of psychological and social "mutation" can be caused by it, how that creature "develops" as a social being, how his/her social ambitions and reactions differ from those cherished by persons with large families in their background. Unfortunately, all the wars waged since the Second World War around our beautiful planet have left behind in many families only just as many members to prevent their extermination. I somehow feel great empathy for them, for the people who will be deprived of love, support, self-confidence and origins. And, not completely insignificantly, they will always lack material goods, too, because small families can never have as much as big ones, because inhumans mostly first take away property or set it on fire and then kill the owners of the robbed goods. And I wonder to what extent these new millions of people deprived of their roots will additionally distort civilisation which is already intolerable as it is.

Magda also wrote:

Women's Concentration Camp in Ravensbruck

We must go back in time to see what happened to the group of women from Bačka who had remained in Márianosztra in summer of 1944. When Jewish women were separated from the others and taken to Budapest prison Gyitefoghas, only 60 women were left in Márianosztra. All those among them who had been sentenced up to three years were set free and allowed to go home, so only "old timers" sentenced to a number of years of hard labour were left behind. Alog with Vera Pavlović, Beba Bursać, Mila Brkić and Julija Cimr, Danica Puškar from Novi Sad was also elected into the underground leadership, to care about the matters of the community. The health of Vera Pavlovic, our favourite medical worker, had deteriorated back in Márianosztra, and Kova Šeguljeva from Čurug also got sick. This exceptionally gentle and sweet creature suffered from severe anemia, and probably her lungs were also damaged. Jelica Isakov from Kula and Peda Rajčetić from Žabalj also fell ill, so that all the other comrades took special care of them in the developments that took place later.

In the beginning of November 1944, eight gendarmes were sent from Budapest with the order to escort the political women prisoners from Márianosztra to Komarom on foot. However, the mentioned deputy prison warden was a woman who did not hide her inclination towards our women and did her best to prevent or postpone their deportation. She detained the gendarmes in Márianosztra for a week. When she received strict orders from Budapest to stop postponing the deportation, she came up to the cell of Mila Brkić with an excellent idea: “You have money deposited with us”, she said. “You certainly won’t get it until the end of the war. If you agree, I will rent two railway carriages so you won’t have to go to Komarom on foot!” With everybody’s consent that is exactly what she did. And that was the only shipment of prisoners who arrived in Komarom in civilian carriages. By doing this she did them a great favour and saved many lives. We saw shipments with feeble people who had thrown away all their possessions during the tedious march and become seriously ill. But, from Komarom to the camp in Ravensbruck these comrades of ours had a very difficult journey, for seven days and eight nights. Their escorts were not regular soldiers of Vermacht, but members of SS formations who manifested extreme cruelty.

During the entire agonizing journey, they were given water only twice and they were allowed to step out in front of the carriages into open air just once.

On December 1, 1944, at a cold dawn, their train arrived at Firstenberg station. A long line of women set out on foot to cover another five or six kilometres to Ravensbruck concentration camp. Although they were all worn out from the long exhausting journey, the cold, hunger, but especially thirst, they all helped their older and ill comrades who could hardly walk. Vera Pavlović’s strength was already failing her.

They finally arrived to the mighty, three-meter high wall with barbed wire on top, and to the enormously heavy gate which readily opened to receive them. Members of the SS in helmets were standing all around.

They brought them to a clearing to count them. But, there was no room for them either in barracks or in enormous tents. The camp was overcrowded with women slaves and corpses. At that moment, there were 60 thousand unfortunate women there from all over Europe. During the terrible war, according to published statistics, 92 thousand women died in that notorious camp. Smoke was rising from the crematorium. The administration of the camp finally “admitted” our women from Bačka, who had stood and waited for a long time on the mentioned clearing. They were forced to throw all their clothes, shoes and covers on a pile, even the dishes, army cans, which were given to them in Márianosztra and which they had carried with great effort from the railway station to the camp. Completely naked, they were subjected to general inspection. None of them had lice, which was very important to note; then they were forced to take cold showers. If any of them withdrew from the shower, women SS officers whipped them. After bathing and

waiting for a long time, they were given old and filthy rags worn by who knows which dead camp inmates.

Then the worst began. Poorly dressed, with their hair still wet, they were forced out to “appelplatz” and stood or hopped there in December night until the morning in drizzling snow and icy cold wind. It was so terrible that some of the survivors believe that it lasted for two days instead of one. After numerous complaints and pleas addressed at the guards, when it started to snow heavily, they were finally driven into a tent where about two thousand persons had already been squeezing. They had to squeeze in there, too.

The tent leaked and had no floor. It had not been properly put up so water poured down under the feet of half-dead women, tormented by dysentery and other illnesses. A hideous picture appeared in front of our women: hundreds of women in incredibly filthy rags, with eyes blurred, standing or lying on the ground, more precisely in thin mud. In some places water and mud reached up to their ankles. It was almost impossible to pass through the thick crowd. Our women finally managed to find a slightly elevated spot where they piled up some dry weeds. They placed their sick comrades in the middle of this asylum, and all the others gathered around them.

In the afternoon of that day, women guards brought buckets with beet soup in front of the tent. But our comrades did not have their cans any more. The guards distributed only several half-litre pots. And that was for all of them.

After three days of incessant requests and complaints, women guards showed pity on our women and took them to a barrack in schtraf block two. It seemed that immediately before the arrival of our women, previous inhabitants of the barrack had been sent to gas chambers and the crematorium. The barrack was still full of traces of their bodies and was full of bedbugs, windows were broken. Many of the women got sick there. Beba Bursać remained on her feet the longest, although she suffered from serious arthritis. She guarded and protected the sick. After a fight of internees in the barrack, Vera Pavlović's eye-glasses broke. She could not even turn around any more. Beba found a hand-cart and dragged her to the clinic. In a similar manner she dragged another two sick women - Kova Šeguljeva, then Sofija Skandarski. She tried to find a connection in the camp administration. She bribed nurses with the little bread and margarine she got. But despite everything, the three mentioned comrades did not live to see the liberation. Beba dragged Ana Benka from Bački Petrovac to the clinic, too. She managed to recover and return home from the camp.

Some commission of Germans selected in Ravensbruck a group of forty of our women to work in an armament and ammunition factory in Spandau. Spandau is a suburb of Berlin. On the way there, in cattle railway carriages in December cold, Jelica Mirilov and Mara Lucić fell ill and sank into torpor. Fortunately, after a short time on the sick list, they recovered. They were all placed in a big factory

hall transformed into a dormitory where other internees already slept. After the first “zelapel” they were divided into two work groups, and one was immediately sent to a secluded part of the factory where shells for cannons and bombs of various sizes were made. The rest of the factory had already been bombed. German foreman explained what they were supposed to do, but with the same doubts as our group in Fallersleben, they did not wish to work and tried to damage and break down the machinery. The machine tool Rada Skandardska was assigned to work with had just been repaired, so the engineers told her to handle it with care until she mastered it. But as soon as they turned their backs, Rada jerked the machine so violently that it broke down completely. They threatened they would shoot her, but Rada remained indifferent. Her sister Sofija Skandardski had remained in Ravensbruck seriously ill, Rada knew she would die, so she thought she might die as well. However, the German foreman saved her. He said in the office that the machine was very old and that was the reason why it was “kaput”.

Mira Vlaškalić was also skillful in destroying a part of her machine.

Mara Lucić was supposed to furbish certain screws on bombs, but she pushed the machine on purpose so hard that it made protrusions and recesses and the bombs could not be put together properly. They threatened they would shoot them all. In Mara Lucić’s presence Germans said, ”Since women from Yugoslavia arrived, we have 90 per cent of waste!” Nevertheless, they were not shot either. They probably realized that the war was finished for them.

Our women were unable to keep clean here either. Lice started to spread in their hair and in clothes. They were all very feeble. Stanika Ergelašev from Srbobran got severely ill and caught typhoid. She was the first among our women. She was transferred to the isolation room, which was in fact just a part of the big dormitory separated by wooden boards. In April 1945, frantic evacuation of this labour camp started. The sick women were taken back to Ravensbruck. Our women practically carried their sick comrades to the railway station.

The commander of Spandau camp, an SS officer, decided to withdraw with all his men together with the camp inmates. He started on foot at the head of the column towards the West, probably towards Hamburg. Like most of the likes of him, he did not want to be taken prisoner by the Soviet Army.

Our comrades, however, had agreed to escape from the column. They succeeded, especially because they were yoked to pull the carts with things and food for the SS. Mara Lucić and Kristina Švind both remember taking turns in pulling the cart. At twilight, when the column had arrived to a large field estate, they managed to hide and the next day set out all alone in the opposite direction, towards the East, home!

A smaller group of our women was transferred from Ravensbruck to a Siemens factory of optical devices close by. Magda Rac and Galja Rakoši, both

from Subotica were in that group. Galja's eye sight was not good enough to work with these sensitive lenses. They wanted to send her back to Ravensbruck immediately, but she asked a forewoman not to, fearing the terror and chaos of Ravensbruck, so the forewoman took pity on her and assigned her to minor odd jobs.

When the factory was evacuated, a small group of our women was nevertheless sent back to the horror of Ravensbruck. Franciška Pece, a peasant woman from Bačko Petrovo Selo was sent back with this group to die there. Franciška had become a legend of that part of Bačka together with her husband Ferenc Pece. She had organized a movement of agricultural workers in her village, and May 1 celebrations. Her husband died before the war from consequences of police torture. When she was arrested, she had left her little girl at home completely on her own, and she could not get over it. In prisons and concentration camps, it was the hardest for mothers who had left their children unprovided for behind. She passed away tormented and worried by these heavy thoughts.

A third group of our women, of about thirty five women from Bačka, was sent from Ravensbruck to Genschagen to work, which was, like Spandau, in a suburb of Berlin. They produced airplane engines in this factory. Vera Golubičić from Novi Sad was also in the this group. According to her testimony, women also tried to sabotage work over there, but they succeeded only partly. They worked at a conveyor line where the performance of each individual was immediately noticed and each wrong move was immediately punished.

From there, they were evacuated in April to Sachsenhausen camp. The front was getting closer and they were included in the known "death column" in which hundreds, maybe thousands of women were forced to march towards the North West, to Lebach. Many of them died on the deserted road. On May 2, American tankers caught up with the column and the forced march was interrupted. The Americans left the women to Soviet soldiers who put them up and fed them in Brandenburg and then sent them back to Yugoslavia from there.

A group of 38 women from Bačka was selected from Ravensbruck to work in an ammunition factory in Dortmund. At the time there were about five thousand camp inmates working there 12 hours a day in two shifts. Many of our women could not endure the tedious labour and were sent back to Ravensbruck. The others often asked to be put on a sick list or even inflicted minor injuries on themselves in order to avoid working. They were very worn out because they were taken to work through underground tunnels, so they never saw daylight. The evacuation of this factory started on March 2. Our women were sent to Bergen-Belsen camp where they, too, were affected by the great typhoid epidemics.

About ten women of ours who had remained in Ravensbruck were evacuated on March 4, 1945 further to the north to the by then already to us known notorious

Bergen-Belsen camp, where they were infected by typhoid. They were completely unaware that in that same camp there was already a large group of our Yugoslav women who were also infected by typhoid. Beba Bursać, Danica Puškar, Desanka Miladinović-Abisinka, Iлона Pataki and others were in this small group. Like women previously brought there, they experienced the horrible agony of the camp, massive deaths of typhoid and weakness.

Yugoslav officers who were searching for our women all over Bergen-Belsen, shouted their names in all the barracks until they finally found them and carried the ones who were still alive to the hospital in the city.

Nevena rounds up:

Consequences

"Be very careful if you make a woman cry, because God counts her tears.

The woman came out of a man's rib.

Not from his feet to be walked on.

Not from his head to be superior, but from the side to be equal.

Under the arm to be protected and next to the heart to be loved."

Talmud

When the longed for freedom finally arrived, they were supposed to live in peace. How did these women cope with the war in them? How did I look upon their shifting for themselves and what consequences did their failure to find their way have on my soul... These are all phenomena for thick volumes. Instead to "philosophize, speculate, theorize", I will report on an episode that has shaken me up from head to toe.

It happened in late sixties. At our home, in the biggest, living room, a few Magda's war women comrades had gathered. They were talking. A topic was brought up in that conversation which made me prick up my ears and listen attentively what, in the name of the world, were they talking about? And here it is: they were chatting about the war, recalling what an enormous effort they invested into keeping camp barracks clean. Everything, they said, could somehow be taken care of, but lice drove them crazy. Although it was not my habit to interfere in their conversations fearing I would hear something that would not be digestible at all, this time, perhaps because I felt sufficiently experienced in women's affairs, I asked what

they did when they had their period.

"There we were lucky", they tell me, "we were spared..."

At first I did not understand what they were telling me, and then...

"Nature interrupted?!", I almost laughed, but immediately after that the meaning of the uttered words simply stunned me. "How is it possible that I have never heard that before?" Then I attacked my Magda, "You have written about camps and prisons, you have a book about it, and yet you have never written that they tortured and starved you until they interrupted your menstruation cycles! How could you have kept it a secret?" The reason for that silence stunned me: she was ashamed to write that "feminine" word. That brave woman capable of taking brutal beating without giving away a single name, she who, with a few other equally brave twenty-year old girls, practically took care that several hundred women be provided for in unbearable conditions, she who invented ways how to turn a collective into an organized machinery for survival - such Magda felt "feminine" shame to utter in the presence of men a word such as "menstruation".

Let us dwell upon this story a little bit. Concentration camps have been my everyday topic, I have read books about them, seen a number of films about this topic, attended many intimate conversations with the camp inmates who have survived, kept company of peers from the category of the second generation, but I had never heard until then that killing of everything that was human in women internees had gone that far. These were the sixties, the years of breaking many clichés and taboos that made this "feminine" shyness even less understandable. Perhaps I had not listened carefully enough, I immediately shifted the "guilt" to my superficiality for having missed such an important fact. But no, the mistake was not mine. This topic was passed over in silence. It was supposed to be taken for granted that a body exposed to deprivation and enormous psychological and physical strain reacted by shutting down its functions one by one!

I recalled the news that by experimenting on camp inmates, Nazi physicians proved that long starvation affected brain functions, even character traits of the starved person. That is how we have lived to see scientists who are studying the activities of the brain, nervous system, physiological processes, etc. nowadays using the

results of research of Nazi monsters, but I do not have to deal with the morality of science and modern scientists at this point, regardless of the fact that even they, at least as far as I knew at the time, had not mentioned publicly the interruption of feminine nature. The rape in war conditions, as a par excellence male topic, had been much more interesting for public discussion. But I was upset and tortured why Magda had never spoken about it? The very fact that in concentration camps they had been degraded to the level of interruption of bodily functions, for me, was the crown of monstrosity of the entire insane idea about the creation of a world in which a single "pure" race would rule, while everybody else they would "mercifully" allow to live would serve them...

I would not settle down and started probing and searching, especially since among the women inmates who had survived there were physicians, so I imagined that at least for them this topic would not be strange. Whether the topic had been unpleasant for them or not, they had not made it public.

In other words, they passed it over in silence.

Why did they pass it over in silence?

And then, bit by bit, the ball started to roll in quite an unbelievable direction: after the war Magda and other women were asked to testify about camps and how they had survived by MEN! Or mostly men. The positions of power, in party committees or editorial boards of publications where testimonies from the war period were collected, were occupied mostly by men. So, while writing reports and then books, Magda had turned on the "female censor" to take care that none of the "shameful" words appeared from under her pen. Other women did the same, the ones who came out of the war as barren women, because they had, for instance, remained buried in freezing November soil for a whole day "until a roundup passed", so postwar doctors took out of their insides everything that was female, or something else inside them got permanently ill in memory of the four years spent underground, in prisons and concentration camps. Why, in the name of the world, were they all silent about it? If the inhumans had not been shy to beat them, torture them, tear them to pieces, use them as easily replaceable and expendable slave labour force, to starve them, felt neither shame nor guilt to do all kinds of unscrupulous experiments on living people, their bodies and brains - how can their victim be ashamed to say, "The conditions they held us in were a crime against my very nature!" We are not speaking

simply about health, we are speaking about nature itself.

I completely lost control. I shouted with fury and horror. But all those women in the room unanimously took Magda's side. This is a topic which is not discussed in men's presence! AND THAT'S THAT!

Oh, all that patriarchal up-bringing! Murder, atomic bomb, tanks, bomber planes, step-mines, snipers, concentration camps, plunder and robbery, war loot: these are not shameful words, one can speak about them without any hesitation, but menstruation, no, no, women, you know what the Bible says about that... Unclean! What a brilliant and practical male fabrication, you can torment a woman all you want, change her nature and then make her keep her mouth shut because that nature is unclean! Extraordinary achievement of civilization!

Indeed, when I think of that episode now, a few decades after that discussion, of my anger and lack of understanding for their shame, I am aware that what wrenched my heart was that these unfortunate women were hiding the fact that camp treatment had changed them to such an extent that even their physiology failed, but they were ashamed to say in men's presence what proportions that inhuman treatment had. In my eyes and in a certain way, they have become accomplices in that segment of the crime. Moreover, I was so incredibly angry because, in the course of all that shouting and quarreling, I gradually realized that their shame had poisoned me and my attitudes to life.

But those were different times. From today's perspective, that feminine shame cannot be understood to the end. That sealed bottle has been opened just recently, tampons, sanitary napkins are openly advertised, and also special treatment of skin during that monthly period, pills which ease menstrual difficulties and similar. But at the time when Magda was not capable of speaking up about the crime against female nature, everything was much more mysterious, secretive, certainly not a topic for an open conversation, least of all in public, and in no way between different generations.

Unfortunately, the attitude of our mothers towards "female" issues, their frustration because of rigid up-bringing mixed with their experience with concentration camp treatment - all that affected many of my peers, the second generation of survivors. One of my girl-friends (member of the second generation, of course) was so frustrated during puberty that she once whispered to me

that she would never have children, because if she walked out in the street with a big stomach, everybody would know that she had been with a man! I understood her perfectly and I did not need any further explanations, because I had very similar feelings, as many of my other girl-friends with whom I whispered on corners about babies, possible pregnancy, motherhood and fatherhood and with whom I exchanged fantasies about the life we would build. Although I cannot completely recall my emotions from the time of my puberty, I remember that I made a decision that I would not get married and never have children, because of the mentioned shame and embarrassment, of course. When shame and embarrassment went up in smoke, I continued to believe that I would never give birth, but I invented a new excuse: the world is such a horrible and such an unjust place for living, why give birth to new victims?... This decision of mine has not proved to be sufficiently firm, I did give birth, although a little late, when I was over thirty years old. But my girl-friend from the beginning of this story, like many others - never dared do it. She remained alone, she did not know how to overcome that feeling of shame and intimately become involved with people or enter into marriage. Perhaps she would have endured marriages had she been able to make the first move... Now she is in her late fifties and still shy when "feminine" words are mentioned.

Magda brings the document to a close:

Postwar Life

In postwar decades women from the described prisons and camps did not rest on their laurels as part of the public thinks. On the contrary, they all worked as professionals. None of them, which is very characteristic, was assigned a professional political post in state or party agencies.

As known, among us there were many women and girls from villages and workers from cities with elementary education. Our society after the war was either unable or did not realize the need to educate them, just as it did not educate many men combatants loyal to this country and its successful development. Our women on the local level took part in political life of their environments, in local administration, in veterans' and women's associations; for instance, they assisted in the reception of colonists in Voivodina, but many of them were quickly pushed out of public life in the places where they lived. Nevertheless, some of them were sent to teachers' and other colleges. Majority of them, however, educated

themselves, relying on their relatives who had survived or on very meagre scholarships, many of them starving to achieve it, or continued starving and suffering from all kinds of shortages.

When one has all that in mind, it can be concluded that, considering all the war atrocities and postwar shortages, what our women have achieved is not little.

Some of them, for example, immediately after the war worked day and night and unselfishly in military hospitals tending wounded soldiers from Batina and Srems front and earned the title of nurses. This was the case, for instance, of Nata Starčev Divljak and Gertruda Šer Galac, both from Novi Sad. Some of them, although worn out by the war, went to the first volunteer work drives, to Brčko-Banovići railroad, like Nada Velicki Ivačković from Novi Sad.

We had three doctors who became famous in whole of Serbia and our country for their professional knowledge, capabilities and philanthropy. One of them is Marta Husar Doder who has become one of the heads of the Gynecological Hospital in Belgrade.

After her mother and sister had returned from armed formations, with their support, Marta completed her studies in postwar hard times. Despite the cut-off forefinger on her left hand, Marta cured, helped women at childbirth and operated thousands of women from whole of Serbia and Yugoslavia. She devoted special attention to women from the country who came to her, because she knew that if they had taken the trouble to come all the way to Belgrade to ask for her help, it must be a severe and untended illness. She treated and helped her war comrades. As a professor of Medical School in Belgrade, she educated a large number of new young physicians. She was also known for her popular articles on medical issues in Belgrade press. Her brother, Imre Husar, who had returned from concentration camp, also became a physician, specialist for lung diseases. Married to a physician, Marta educated a daughter also to be a physician. A whole dynasty of physicians grew around her. Today, she is very sick, living with her daughter in London.

Another of our physicians is chief physician Eva Đeneš Arsenić. She is one of the Budapest girls who had spent practically the whole war with us. After liberation of Bergen-Belsen, she fell in love with a Yugoslav officer, married him and came to live in Belgrade. She became a highly esteemed specialist and a master for diabetes. She, too, has a son who is a physician.

The third physician is Ruža Blau Francetić who, as said before, had entered the war with a physician's diploma. As a highly esteemed Partisan physician on the territory of Croatia, she was assigned to a military hospital in Zagreb where she settled down with her husband who had also returned from the war. She immediately took her son Saša from Novi Sad. In a strange way she became known throughout the country for her humane and kind attitude towards

everybody who addressed her. Like Marta, she took great care of her war comrades and their children. As she was a general practitioner, she took the seriously ill patients and comrades personally to the best specialists in Zagreb or recommended them. Her home in Zagreb became a shelter for people from Voivodina. Apart from her first son to whom she had given birth guarded by gendarmes in Novi Sad hospital, she had two more sons, the second of which also became a physician.

Among our women were two associates of „Boris Kidrič” Institute of Atomic Physics in Vinča: Jolanka Hajman and Eva Cuker Čavčić. Dr. Jolanka Hajman, a chemist and biochemist from Subotica, acquired two diplomas in German universities before the war. Not young any more, she did not marry after the war, but devoted her life to her profession. In laboratories of Vinča Institute she worked on heavy water programme. And others. She taught at the Technological Faculty in Belgrade. Very strict, but just – students feared her a little – she educated generations of young scientists.

Eva Cuker Čavčić graduated after the war, also alone, with no support of the family she had lost, hungry most of the time. She worked in Vinča on the programme of heavy water and stable isotopes.

As an engineer of agronomy, Julija Cimr worked in the Ministry of Agriculture until she got seriously ill. She came back after the war with her health seriously broken, and a weakened nervous system. She could not get over the loss of her husband Vendo Cimr, who was killed, so with her thoughts confused, she retired and died quickly after that.

Nata Stankov, who had been tried together with Grozda Gajšin for having thrown a bomb at a German bookstore in Novi Sad, graduated agronomy and worked in the Executive Council of Voivodina until her retirement, and after that she mostly devoted her time to her children and grandchildren.

Olga Fajt Koljedzinski graduated at the Faculty of Economy in Maribor. She gave birth to two sons.

Radojka Protić Palov from Ada became a doctor of biology and worked in the Institute of Agricultural Studies in Novi Sad.

Živka Stanković Panić from Novi Sad became an engineer of technology – food department, and worked in Belgrade.

Dara Vardić, a pharmacist, who had abundantly helped the underground movement with drugs, worked in her profession in Novi Sad.

Dobriła Radojev from Novi Sad graduated law and spent her entire working life in Belgrade Bank.

Dara Počuča from Novi Kneževac with her family of colonists from Northern Bačka, had first been interned to Sarvar camp in Hungary, along with 16 thousand of her compatriots. Then they let her go work on a farm, but there she was arrested and deported to Ravensbruck. After the war she became an engineer of agronomy.

Branka Vasić Džigurski from Čurug graduated at the Economic College and worked in Novi Sad.

Mirjana Ilijin from Gospođinci graduated at the Foreign Trade College.

Dobriša Koledin Baković became a scientific associate in minig. . Her sister Dragica Koledin Stevanović, from Novi Sad, became a doctor of biology and worked in Belgrade. Novosađanka, postala je doktor biologije i radila je u Beogradu.

Ljubica Prodanović Buba, whom I remember especially well from the cellar cell in Komarom for having tenderly looked after the confused Granny Ševa, became a mechanical engineer and worked in military industry in Belgrade.

Jelica Krkljuš Habijan became a technician of civil engineering and spent her entire working life climbing buildings in construction in Novi Sad, Belgrade and Slovenia. She was also married to a professional and moved often with her children and family and worked in several cities of Yugoslavia.

And yet, most of us became education workers, kindergarten teachers, elementary and secondary school teachers, professors of different fields. We all completed relevant colleges and faculties after liberation.

Kristina Švind Šepšei married a primary school teacher Ištvan Šepšei and became a nursery-school teacher in Novi Sad.

Sofija Vuksanov Sojka also studied to be a nursery-school teacher and worked in Novi Sad and Belgrade, where she moved with her husband and son.

Milica Marković, the widow of war secretary of the Communist Party for Voivodina, Svetozar Marković, became a teacher in Zrenjanin and Novi Sad. Living in strained circumstances all the time, she raised her and Svetozar's two children, a son and a daughter.

Dragica-Seka Ranisavljević Vojnović graduated at the Department of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. At first, she was the editor of children's shows of Radio Novi Sad, and later she became the principal of an elementary school in Novi Sad. For a time she was appointed assistant secretary of education of the Autonomous Province of Voivodina, and she was also a member of the first Executive Council of the City of Novi Sad.

Desanka Pavlović also studied at the same Department of the Faculty of Philosophy and then became a teacher in Novi Sad and Belgrade where she became assistant principal of a school.

Latinka Miškov Stanković from Bačka Palanka became a professor of philosophy and taught in a high school in Bor, where she later became the principal. She had and brought up a daughter.

Among the education workers were also two women from Subotica, Galja Rakoši Tikvicki and Olga Braun Sentđerđi. Galja taught German and Russian in Belgrade, and Olga taught Serbian in Subotica.

The case of Nada Velicki Ivačković is interesting. She studied at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology. Since she graduated with excellent marks, provincial authorities assigned her to Kikinda, to organize a school for nursery-school teachers, where she became the first principal. When she moved to live in Novi Sad because of her family, she started teaching at the school for nursery-school teachers there. The school soon became a college, and Nada its assistant director. She brought up and educated two sons. She worked hard until she got seriously ill and died after a long sickness.

Coka Stojanović Šećerov from Novi Sad became a professor of mathematics and she taught at Belgrade University.

Dušica Paroški Knežević was a teacher who taught mathematics.

Ljubica Prišić Berberski from Vrbas became a primary school teacher and worked in Belgrade.

The case of Milica Grujić Babić from Sombor is also interesting. After the war, she completed a school for primary school teachers, married an army officer and moved a lot with him. She worked as a primary school teacher in several cities, Novi Sad, Titovo Užice, Kragujevac and Kraljevo. After the war when there was a shortage of highly educated education workers, our energetic, agile and capable Milica was at first in Kragujevac, then in Užice, appointed district head of education, and she discharged the duty excellently according to general assessment.

Latinka Štrbački Ranisavljević, whom we all remember for the difficult giving birth in Konti prison in Budapest in terrible conditions, also became a primary school teacher. Her husband, Živko Ranisavljević, a pilot, like many other officers was transferred often, so she, with her three children, worked in several cities in Slovenia, then in Belgrade. There she was the head of the Centre for Work with Parents of the Children's Care Alliance. Latinka has six grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Two prewar primary school teachers from Gospođinci, Vera Eremić and Vera Erdeljan, after liberation continued pursuing their profession, the former in Surčin, and the latter in Novi Sad.

Nada Kuzmanović Šoti became a teacher of Russian and Serbian and taught in Novi Sad.

Budimka Stefanović Žikić became a primary teacher in Sombor.

Countless are the children our war comrades have educated and set on the road to science.

Immediately after the war, some of our women took care about children in homes. One of them was Dušika Seneš Rudič who worked in a home in Subotica, but she has never got over the loss of her own little girl who was killed in Auschwitz while she was in prisons and camps. The home of this pleasant and wise woman became a favourite meeting place of her war comrades and others.

Klara Bem Isijanov, sister of Lilika Bem who was executed, worked after the liberation in a children's nursery in Novi Sad. She was always in a good mood, talkative, ready to help others. All the old friends gladly visited her.

There were also journalists, publicists and writers among us. Mara Lucić Dudvarski, once a peasant, completed high school, then graduated literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. She became one of the editors of the education programme of Radio Novi Sad. She also wrote stories for children.

The writer of these lines, Magda Bošan Simin completed while working the Pedagogical College in Novi Sad, the Department of Serbo-Croat and Literature of the People of Yugoslavia. She was appointed Programme Director, and later Editor-in-Chief of Radio Novi Sad for cultural and entertaining shows of the programme in Hungarian language. She has written about ten novels and other books.

Agnesa Sas was appointed editor of Radio Yugoslavia in Belgrade, and when that radio station stopped broadcasting, since she spoke a few foreign languages, she became an editor of the renowned publishing company called „Yugoslavia”. Because of her knowledge of foreign languages, she was also elected member of an international committee in charge of Dachau memorial. This committee was supposed to take care of financing and programme concept of that memorial camp.

The role of Malušev couple is significant. As we have seen, Cvetko Malušev found his wife Barbara-Boriška infected by typhoid in Bergen-Belsen camp and carried her out of the camp on his arms. They never separated ever since. After their return to our country, they first settled down in Novi Sad, then they moved to Zagreb, where Boriška became the editor and language editor of Radio Zagreb

programme in Hungarian. After that she worked for years, side by side with her husband, on the publication of the illustrated weekly „Magyar Képes Újság” – at the time the only printed media in Hungarian in Croatia. Their editorial office in Gundulić Street, in the heart of Zagreb, became the base and point of support for the people from Voivodina who went there on business or to symposiums and conferences. Along with Dr. Ruža Blau Francetić, many remember them for warm and sincere welcome, assistance and advice in that big city and cultural centre.

Dragica Dinjaški Jauković completed School of Commerce in Belgrade and became the secretary and journalist of the “Borba” daily. Then her husband, Radovan Jauković, as an expert in economics, was invited to work in Geneva in the OUN Economic Commission for Europe. She did not work over there, but took care of her son and represented her country among the people whose company they kept. She received numerous Yugoslavs in her home. Our Galja from Subotica, played such or a similar role while her husband Geza Tikvicki was the ambassador of Yugoslavia in Hungary.

Ksenija Jovelić, former prisoner of the infamous Yellow House, also became a journalist in Belgrade.

Our women have indeed experienced all kinds of destinies. For instance, Marija Horvat, an ignorant peasant woman before the war, graduated at the College for Social Workers, and in her native town of Čakovec became a generally known social and political worker. She was often a delegate in various committees of the Assembly of Croatia.

Henica Štajner Karaoglanović worked for many years in Belgrade as an official of the Republican Board of veterans’ association.

Pava Dudvarski had a special life. She was released from prison quickly, succeeded to join the Partisans, but got ill there. She was treated in Italy, and then, when she returned and practically until she died, she worked in Belgrade for the Army.

The case of Vida Stojkov Brčín was also special. Having completed right schools, she became an official in the Federal Executive Council. After retirement, when her health was already considerably damaged, she managed to write a book about women of Bečej during the war, “More than Life”. The book was so valuable and received so well in Bečej that it was translated into Hungarian, so Vida got Žaki Jožef award for the book. She died in Belgrade of a severe form of cancer.

Lilika Bek Krmpotić, arrested as a very young girl, became an esteemed official of the Executive Council of Voivodina. She had two children who graduated at the University of Novi Sad and both emigrated to Australia.

Irena Lustig Vajnman, also arrested while she had been very young, worked in Radio Novi Sad. When she retired, she moved to Vienna with her husband.

Mara Kolarski Kranjec, from Novi Sad, graduated at the school of commerce in Belgrade and for a short time worked as a clerk, but later completely devoted herself to her family, husband and daughter. Many other women did the same, who due to the state of their health or for other reasons devoted themselves completely to their families.

Our women, former workers who took their posts by machines in factories after liberation again, belong in a separate chapter. They did it because they had no other qualifications and because they considered it to be quite normal and natural. That was the case with Balašević, once a very meritorious party activist and successful courier in the underground. After an unsuccessful marriage with a teacher from Šumadija, she returned to Subotica with two little daughters and got a job in the bicycle factory in Subotica.

Kristina Sič Kopunović, a former worker in «Fako» stocking factory, as a mother of three still worked in the stocking factory in Subotica.

Eržika Rekecki Šilić from Senta found a job in a textile factory in Novi Sad.

Desanka Miladinović Abisinka worked as a polisher in a furniture factory in Novi Sad. There were others, similar to them.

For instance, Sofija Radoc Simić, a school janitor in Novi Sad, took care and educated her three sons by doing hard physical work which included carrying large baskets full of coal and wood to classrooms in her school.

Our country, Yugoslavia, did not succeed in building socialism our women had hoped for, and many other people had dreamt about. Because of great postwar poverty, it could not establish a society of approximate social justice. This became evident not many years after the liberation.

Our women workers, except for those whose husbands earned comparatively good salaries, found themselves in especially hard situation when they had to send their children to school. They did not have enough to provide them with food, let alone provide clothes for school. This was happening eight to ten years after the war. Kristina Sič Kopunović, who had grown up in an orphanage, who had no family at all, and whose husband earned a minimum pay, found herself in a particularly difficult situation. At the time there was not even any humanitarian aid of international organizations (UNRA's aid had by then ceased to arrive). Dušika Seneš Rudič from Subotica, a woman with a heart of gold, warned me about the difficult situation our workers were in, because she knew the circumstances very well. She had already been helping them for quite some time. For us who had been the first to learn about these problems and did our best to help comrades who

were worst off, it was quite a shock. As if we were personally responsible for their poverty and the problems of the whole country. Beba Bursać, who could not work after the war because of a serious disability, told me once, “When I went on strike in 1940 in Ristić’s factory, my salary was higher than the salary of textile workers nowadays.”

Perhaps I dare mention that at that time I arranged for Kristina and Viktorija to get an apartment, because they had lived with their children in conditions degrading for a human being. I raised the issue in leading city institutions in Subotica, because they did not recognize former political convicts from this city as combatants of the People’s Liberation Struggle, and did not wish to help them. The people from these leading institutions were not the only ones. Many of the high political officials in Voivodina authorities at the time shared this opinion. The People’s Liberation War Veterans’ Association followed the official policy of the authorities which made a distinction between active combatants who had won freedom with arms in their hands and those who were imprisoned by the enemy. But this distinction did not always take on tragic proportions.

Some time after that Viktorija also got a scholarship of some kind, and with a great effort – she was not young any more – completed secondary commercial school and got a somewhat better job. She supported her two daughters through school on her own. One of them acquired secondary, and the other one university education. Kristina’s children have completed secondary schools.

A large majority of women comrades, except severely disabled veterans, had children and supported them through education in more or less difficult conditions. They became aware that only knowledge pulls foreword both an individual and society as a whole. Among these children, but also among grandchildren, there are nowadays many university educated people of various professions. There are also many with secondary education. I do not dare list their names because I might omit somebody.

Although they mostly lived in poverty - it is known how education and even health workers are paid here – many of our women were traditionally clever in handwork, decorating their homes and making nice clothes for themselves and their children. They sew, knitted, crocheted, embroidered. Jelica Mirilov, for example, for as long as her health allowed it, constantly made clothes for her family. Seka Ranisavljević Vojnović still makes clothes for herself and for her son’s family. Kristina Švind Šepšei has made her home beautiful with her embroideries, and she has also taught her daughter to embroider. Vida Stojkov Brčin was making tapestries after her own sketches practically to the day she died. Her home in New Belgrade was full of tapestries and paintings. In the meantime, her husband Đura Brčin created an orchard in Belegiš above the Danube, which was admired even by professionals from Voivodina and Belgrade. A retired army officer Đura Brčin wanted everything he did to be the best. When he was young, he planted a forest in his village in Lika, on barren rocky land, that was admired

by the whole district and called Đura's forest. Couple Brčin and their son had really something to show to their visitors.

A number of our women had a gift for drawing. One of them was Ružica Batos Rajčić, a former village girl from Čurug (she shared the name with Ružica Batos who was killed in Satoraljaujhely), and another Gizela Jenei Nemet, a photographer from Subotica, who also loved to write poetry. She wrote poems in the difficult days in Márianosztra to dispel gloomy thoughts. If they had had a possibility to be educated and develop their talents, they would have won greater success and public recognition, because they were truly gifted. Julija Baji, a worker from Klisa before the war, still writes poetry and occasionally reads verses at various celebrations.

But we also had a known artist among us – Helena Sivč, a member of the Visual Artists' Association of Voivodina. Helena was born in Ruski Krstur, and was arrested as a student of the secondary school for primary teachers in Sombor, twice – in 1942 and 1943. After the second arrest she was tortured a lot. She was in Szeged prison for a short time, but acquired plenty of experience of what life of a convict meant. After the war she became a professor of visual arts in Moša Pijade High School in Novi Sad. Always smiling, sure of herself in her demeanour like other of our women war comrades, Helena was accepted and loved by children. She had several one-man exhibitions in Novi Sad and Ruski Krstur. She paints in water-colours, tempera and oil, mostly flowers and landscapes.

Our women peasants and housewives who survived and went back to their farms also deserve respect. They took in their relatives and children who had survived, took care of them and put them through school. Persa Čobanski was among them, who had kept members of the underground in her house in Vrbas, leaders of the People's Liberation Struggle in Bačka, until she was arrested by the enemy.

One should also stress our comrades who have tirelessly and voluntarily worked in this long postwar period in various sections of former political convicts and solved life problems of their war men and women comrades, although they had no formal obligations to do it. Most of all Seja Malešev was like that, arrested during the war as a very young girl and disabled for life. She gathered her women comrades all the time, especially the ones from the camp in Topola – where she had also been – taking care about their needs and problems which they often had with the local administration. Seja very actively cooperated in the collection of data about the women for the book written by Mladen Vrtunski "The House of Horror". Although very ill, she still takes care of others.

Dragica Ranisavljević Vojnović has for years been the secretary of Women's Section for the prisons Konti, Márianosztra and others. The following women also distinguished themselves in the work of that and other sections: Jelica Mirilov Đerić, Kristina Švind Šepšei, Nada Kuzmanović, Radoslava Skandarski, Jelica

Krkluš Habijan, Eva Cuker Čavčić, Dragica Dinjaški Jauković, Mara Kolarski, Zora Lučić Nedeljković and others. They carried the burden of organization of our gatherings, excursions and journeys, collection of data for various articles, papers and lists of women comrades.

All women comrades who are still alive are retired, ill and old. Every person has only one life, whatever they could they have done for the society and for their children. But they still like to be together, remember the beauty and value of human relations which have kept them alive in the hardest days of their lives.

I know that this documentary review is not complete. Nevertheless, I have tried to list as many persons as possible – protagonists of the mentioned war and postwar developments. There are almost one hundred of them in the text. But, behind every name and family name in the lists that follow, stand persons – women who had decided in difficult war developments to take a decisive step and opposed deliberately the advancing evil.

Nevena draws her comments to an end:

Auschwitz Despite Everything, Because War Wounds Never Heal

I testify, therefore I exist!

My Magda, as a true heroine in the antique sense of the word, did not permit herself to complain about minor everyday hardships, nor did she want to describe "real life" in her writings, with everyday "small" rises and falls, with yearnings that arouse senses or petty wishes which might just make life miserable for one's fellow creatures. The way Magda looked upon these things, that was good only for people who did not know the full value of life and who did not have a valid goal! A person who knew what he/she wanted did not pay attention to minor obstacles and pathetic insinuations. He/she just disregarded them and wasted no effort on explanations, clarifications, arguments. A man had more important things to do in life! But everyday, peacetime life, at least the way I experienced it, brings out to the surface wounds inflicted in wars and these wounds "nibble" at life, bit by bit, reducing it to some wretchedness and misery due to which you just writhe and eat yourself up... And you cannot forget that concentration camps are, after all, a large part of your life. Magda's life, too, and she has passed

them on to me like some bleak endowment with no instructions what I am to do with it and how I am supposed to cope with it. And that is the reason why I want to end my remarks on Magda's "Women from Bačka - Political Convicts" with Auschwitz as a symbol of war crime against humanity, a crime of any war against all humanity. I had the opportunity to experience Auschwitz literally as such a symbol. And that is what I will testify about now.

In the year 1994, I gave in and broke the vow I had formulated in childhood in connection with concentration camps that I would never ever set my foot in any of them. Never say never, my Granny Milevka warned me on every happy or unhappy occasion, laying considerable stress on both "nevers". Indeed, life is long, full of surprises, so mine surprised me in the mentioned year 1994. I was officially and personally, I, Nevena Simin from Novi Sad, Serbia, invited to go to Auschwitz, to the convocation of the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the camp and the fiftieth anniversary of dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima (it was in fact eight months later, in August 1995). Due to the circumstances that took me over there, as well as everything that happened to me in Oswiecim, I believe, there is sense in writing these words which, despite the "cured complex of the Second World War" made my heart bleed all over again. I felt again the excruciating pain and, I think, this is good because one must not become insensitive to evil that befell one. One must talk, talk, talk about it. And that is what I am doing.

So, after all - Auschwitz.

Auschwitz, 1994, December.

I do not know what I have done to deserve this experience, how the stars positioned themselves above my head so I got personally invited to this gathering, only I from the whole country of Serbia which had already lost two wars and was well under way to lose the third one in a row; from Serbia which was isolated, under economic blockade, proclaimed to be criminal and genocidal, the country which should be locked up and the key to it thrown away. Yes, it is important to set the framework for the lines that follow and to say these very terrible words about the country of Serbia, because in Auschwitz I have fully, down to the tiniest grotesque detail, learnt the hard way the true meaning of the saying: history is written by victors!

But, let us stick to a certain order in this presentation.

The invitation arrived from America, from a Buddhist organization which, for the fiftieth anniversary of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, conceived a gathering of various individuals who have something to say about war from their own experience. About any war. Either from the angle of a victim or from the angle of an oppressor, either as a member of the first or of the second generation. On the list were Holocaust, the atomic bomb disabled, victims of Nazi in vivo experiments, veterans of the War in Vietnam, the disabled from Cambodia which was the most densely sowed with pressure-activated mines, North-American Indians, Mexican and Latin-American peace fighters, victims of civil wars in Africa. I was looking at the list and could not believe my eyes. A gathering of victims of wars from all over the world. A God's mixture of priests was also on the list: rabbis male and female, Christian priests from Europe and Japan, Buddhist priests from Asia and America, Lamas, some strange titles I cannot interpret. It was also written that a group of pilgrims would be formed which would set out on a journey on foot from Auschwitz to Hiroshima and visit especially the countries which had recently been stricken by war. It was also stated when the Convocation would begin and when it would end, what topics would be on the agenda, the method of work in groups - small and big, the accommodation in such and such youth hostel, meals would be vegetarian, come, you were welcome. I was recommended to be a participant of the Convocation by a group of American women who had presented a peace performance in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia, and I had been their hostess in Novi Sad for a short time on one Sunday morning. We had spent together about 3 hours until the departure of their train to Vienna. And that was what qualified me?!

As soon as I forgot to be surprised, a dilemma appeared: should I accept the invitation or not? I hesitated because I still did not know whether I was the only one from war-infected Serbia who was invited, it seemed even the only one from the entire Balkan. And then, the signature: Paula, I do not know the family name, I did not even care to look at it. Paula!!!

Paula! Paula! How, in the name of the world, it happened that, in that American organization, a Paula happened to be in charge of communication with participants of the programme? A woman with the same name as Magda's mother, my granny Paula, Pirika as she was called out of love, but in her birth certificate she was Paula. And she was devoured by that very Auschwitz, together with thousands of other Jews from Bačka who were, in the end of

summer 1944, while cannons of liberators were already roaring at the borders, extradited by Hungary to Hitler's Germany, and sent directly from the train, where the damned railway ended - to gas chambers?! Defeat was already approaching, the end of the war could already be felt in the air, so the Nazis had abandoned the frantic pedantry to first take personal data of the victims and then send them to gas chambers. They did not give up on the killing, just the administration... So in connection with granny Paula, the youngest uncle Palika, great grandmother Tereza, sister-in-law Vera and her young son Đurika and many other members of our family we have not found no written data, all that remained are testimonies of people who have seen when they were loaded into the train like cattle. Afterwards administrative problems began to proclaim them officially dead...

It was hard to believe: Paula was calling me! To Auschwitz?! I am no tearful fool, I know that there are many women called Paula in the world, it is just one of numerous women's names. But, human mind is free to link data as it pleases, so mine summed up "Paula plus Paula plus Auschwitz" and obtained an odd result that made me decide to accept the invitation.

The quest was broken.

And I am not sorry because of it.

When the time of departure came closer, I went through great pains to find money for various visas, for the journey and also for the seven-day stay at the Convocation. I cannot describe how ordinary people in Serbia lived at the time, millions of souls from whom their very last coins had been squeezed out to enable a handful of inhumans to engage several hundred cut-throats to force recruited soldiers and reservists to wage war, to burn down villages and cities, to plunder, to kill. Although I have experienced all that, I can hardly believe myself that such things have happened, that practically the whole country was turned into a concentration camp: we were locked in from the outside and from the inside with just enough of resources not to die all of hunger, despised by the whole world and oppressed by our power-wielders. In order to leave the state "concentration-camp" and visit Auschwitz concentration camp memorial it was necessary to rack one's brains, to be resourceful, to beg at various offices and windows, to search for friends who had managed to collect and save some. I broke out of the encirclement with extreme difficulties...

While I was traveling in the empty train to Poland I had more than 24 hours on my hands to think up how Kafka would have described my case. Or some other genius, Zamyatin or Bulgakov, maybe. Yes, they would have been closer to the target, I thought, because they had had the former a vision and the latter an experience to what extent a so-called political elite was capable to despise and oppress its subjects. But that would not have been a complete picture, I thought, an author would have been lacking who could have shed some light on this situation from a greater distance and who could have added a considerable portion of responsibility of the international surroundings and who would have - hopefully - diagnosed the illness of this civilisation which does not care about people at all, but is interested only in "progress" and is preoccupied only with profit. By criticizing the civilisation I by no means intend to grant amnesty to Serbian power-wielders, Croatian power-wielders, Bosnian power-wielders, army, police, greedy individuals and people with capital (wherever they were) who out of a single dinar in that Balkan war pot made millions of German marks, English pounds, Swiss francs, American dollars, who were buying gold ingots and golden chains²⁷ thick as a wrist and boasted with their newly made wealth...

But enough of that digression because history and perhaps some other sciences will deal with it, as they always do after wars end, and look upon individual destinies condescendingly, because for these sciences, too, people are just mere expendables, collateral...

But let me go back to my story: I managed somehow, by unbelievable maneuvers, to provide everything I needed for the journey and set out. And here I am where I never wished to be, in Auschwitz/Oswiencim.

December. Cold, black frost. It is windy. From the bus station I go directly to the camp memorial because I am an hour and a half late for the first gathering. The group was formed the day before. According to the programme, the participants are inside, in one of the barracks. And I, with my luggage, coming from the train and the bus, am supposed to pass on my own below that ghastly gate above which stands the sign "Work Liberates" (Arbeit macht frei).

I do not remember anything in my life that paralysed me with such power.

²⁷ 'Kajla' - golden necklaces worn as a status symbol of the nouveaux riches

I am standing in front of that gate and widening my eyes until I am blinded. Silence oppresses the ears. There is not a living soul in sight. Time has stopped and I am moving neither foreword nor backward, only the steam of my breath is blooming and dissolving, blooming and dissolving.

After what seemed like a hundred years I took a long breath of cold air, braced myself and stepped forward. I passed. Twenty odd steps after that, as if I were somebody else, I turned around, threatened the gate with my whole arm and shouted out loud: "I will come out!" That cry of mine dispelled the evil apparition, brought me to my senses and returned me to the year 1994. My heart still leaps when I remember that moment out of time.

Why is this journey important to me? This journey to Auschwitz, to the camp memorial in Polish town of Oswiecim which abhors that monument to evil and would be more than happy if all that could be torn down and covered up by bulldozers? My stay there is important to me for several reasons, but the first I wish to stress is linked to the saying: History is written by the victors! In other words, when time covers developments with a crust of oblivion, the past becomes liable to changes, just like the future. Or let me put it more directly, I have personally experienced in what way NOW affects the PAST. Deceiving time, seductive, merciless. That is what I am talking about at this point. I was invited to the Convocation as a representative of the second generation of victims of Holocaust. Therefore, as an indirect victim of the Second World War. But, 50 years have gone by. In the meantime, Serbia has changed its status from a state ally of the victors in the First and, of course, the Second World War it has passed the road to the defeated party in civil wars of the nineties in the Balkan. And although I can take no "merit" whatsoever for that, on the contrary, I believe that this fact was decisive for the determination "where I belonged" in Oswiecim in 1994: they put me in a room with three German women, daughters of SS officers who held Auschwitz concentration camp.

No, I did not complain. Why should I? To be perfectly honest, I did not immediately realize that I was accommodated according to the latest international status of the country I came from. It was, according to what I think now, a simple misjudgment of the organizers who - when speaking of Americans - have little feeling for European historical subtleties. So they put a "victim" with "executioners", because Serbia of the end of the twentieth

century was identified²⁸ with Nazi Germany from the middle of that same century, so I, a "Serb", was put in a room with the "SS".

Let me say this right away, that ill-considered gesture of the organizer enabled an unusual, I could say exceptionally rare experience.

I talked for hours with one of these unfortunate women to whom evil destiny has assigned fathers who were executioners. Two of them had no desire to "mingle", and I did not search for reasons. The third, however, sought my company. She was a little older than me, quite a nervous person with hardly noticeable tics, but an essentially pleasant and gentle human being, one of the women who at first sight inspire you with a wish to protect them. I am sorry but I forgot her name, like the names of the other two, but her name is not important for this story²⁹. When she realized that my relatives were killed in that very camp and that her father might have been the one who had given the order for the execution of my folks or carried it out, she started apologizing excitedly. What can I say, but that after a few of her sentences, the compassionate machinery in me started working and I told her the mildest possible words I could: "It was not you who did it, there is no need whatsoever to apologize!"

Then she started thanking me for not blaming her. I had a difficult time to pacify her at least to the extent for her voice to restore the normal timbre. After that, with numerous interruptions and much sniffing, she told me how her life had turned into a nightmare when she had become aware that she was a child of an SS officer from Auschwitz concentration camp. My suffering and wounds seemed almost benevolent in comparison with the hell that inhabited her soul. She traveled around the world, attending various meetings where survived camp inmates or

²⁸ Let experts speak about the shameless exaggerations in the mentioned identification of war-infected Serbia in the Balkan with Nazi Germany, I am speechless. Perhaps I am just a little bit curious to see in some 30 or 40 years how analysts and historians will justify that heroic exploit of Western propagandist machinery to identify an ugly and bloody local civil war with an incredibly brutal war of global conquest.

²⁹ I had that name, like everything else, in the notes I had made during the journey. But when I came home and determined that my story did not interest anybody, that not a single newspaper or radio station wished to publish either a report or a reportage from Auschwitz, I threw away the notes out of pure despair. But it was still early for such stories. Moreover, the authorities of the time did not even let the pilgrims from Auschwitz to Hiroshima pass through Serbia, regardless of the fact that all their papers and visas were in order. They crossed the border near Subotica and reached the first night's lodging near Srbobran, but from there these „loathsome spies“ were excorted by the police back to Hungarian border.

their children gathered and apologised. Then she told me with amazement: "People always react as you did now! They console me that it was not me who had done it and that there was no need for me to apologise". She could not understand why we were forgiving her. And I could not understand what she had expected, what reaction she had wished to provoke. That was our topic for three or four days until we thoroughly talked it over. She also told me that she spent a lot of time in humanitarian voluntary work. She had also visited Israel in the arrangement of certain organizations which had looked for voluntary work for Germans in the newly founded country of the Jews. She hoped that she would at least partly make amends for the wrong suffered by the Jews in the Second World War.

None of my three roommates had dared have families of their own; they did not have children so the "evil" seed would not crop up in some of the descendants. They lived their every year, their every month, day and hour with that terrible burden that their parents had been Nazi criminals.

"It is hard for victims", I told my roommate on several occasions, "but it is hard for the children of criminals, too. You must become your own friend!", I tried to convince her, "the bad conscience for deeds you did not do will destroy you!"

We spoke for a long time, about everything she felt and about what I felt, we exchanged experiences, the torture we endured. In many ways it was similar, except in that one drastically different detail - I did not feel guilty because of anything, and she felt that she needed to share the guilt with her parent. For her, the second World War could not end. What a misfortune!

So who is a greater victim in the second generation, a child of an executioner or a child of a victim? Who can give an answer to that question?

And who can give an answer to another terrible question: what will be happening to the third generation? When the wounds inflicted on grandmothers and grandfathers lose every recognizable form, but the war heritage passed from one generation to another maintains its deadliness, virulence, capacity to diminish the chances of, overshadow the joy of life, pollute the zeal for living and blacken that tiny new life?

For me the journey to Oswiencim, to Auschwitz camp memorial was a completely new experience, but I saw that

for the majority of other participants it was just one in a row. Routine. In a way I am glad that I was completely new, so I could participate in the events with great concentration. First, I was very surprised that the organizers had brought both parties - victims and criminals - to the same place. It is true that both victims and criminals, as I have said, were gathered from the entire world, from different wars. Once my impressions had settled down, I realized that the main intention had been to show that in wars all the people were victims, regardless what side they happened to be on. I reflected about this a lot later on...

And what was even more important for me, I was able to light a candle for my granny Paula and other killed relatives right on the spot where they were killed, and I was able to do it in the presence of people who had also come to pay tribute to numberless victims of Holocaust. That was the second time in my life that I cried for granny Paula...

But let me put on paper at least a part of what can be conveyed:

One of the speakers and a moderator of one of the workshops over there was a man who had participated in the massacre of the inhabitants of village My Lai in the Vietnamese-American war. His testimony shook me up down to the deepest profoundness of my being. A veteran, a warrior, a huge man. He spoke and cried, cried over the destiny of the people he had killed, and cried for himself because the leaders of the country in which he had by coincidence been born put him in a situation to become a beast. A man in early forties, strong as an ox, but emotionally unstable like a baby! A ruined man. He is touring the world and telling people how hard it is to help veterans from Vietnam to "patch up their souls". Who knows in how many places and in front of how many people this war veteran had cried...

There was also a priest who had organized divine service for SS officers in Auschwitz at the time when the "factory" had been in full swing. I have neither fine nor angry words for him; may God forgive him if he can... I think that he was the only participant of the Convocation out of whom hypocrisy gushed out. How skillfully he used God to justify the abuse of his profession even after fifty years! Along with that priest who had been in Auschwitz during the war, the organizers managed to find a repairman who maintained crematorium furnaces. I do not know exactly what he said he

had been doing, but I did not ask them to translate for me, because I was still trying to take down the stands of the previous speaker... All I can remember regarding that person is that he guided us, all 150 people, through the camp, from one furnace to another, explaining, explaining and crying. He had cried, too.

On the whole, at that Convocation, we all did a lot of crying, at different times, at different places. We also sang, but about that later on.

I also saw with my own eyes, at a distance of two metres so that I could almost touch him - a disabled victim of the atomic bomb from Hiroshima. The man survived the atomic bomb by some miracle, he was at the border of its range, deformed from within and from without, but convinced that God had let him live to go around the world and testify about his wounds, his injuries, his deformity. He was doing it for 50 years. Since he could not travel on his own, as it was very complicated to keep his body alive, a companion, mostly a member of his family, always traveled with him, to put cream on him, give him drugs, hold him in front of the microphone, lead him to his seat. What a life and what will he had! One truly feels the urge to face God and ask: what is the sense of so much suffering?

The memory of that disabled man is still fresh. I can recall it at any moment quite clearly, hear that voice, flat, neither sad nor wrathful, and contemplate on the reasons of human greed, brutality, arrogance, in general and in particular on the indifference of victors and wrath of the defeated. His case, so to speak, has made a much deeper impression on me than all those tons of hair, clothes, suit-cases, eye-glasses and shoes exhibited in memorial barracks behind thick glass. The objects left after hundreds thousand killed adults and children cannot be compared to 10 minutes of live testimony of a single victim who has squeaked through the war. I am speaking of impressions and emotions, not of value judgments and reason.

A Buddhist priest from Cambodia is also still fresh in my memory. As a superior of a monastery, when the war had become unendurable and a threat to the survival of the nation, despite the ban by the authorities, he left his monastery and "step by step" started on a pilgrimage across the devastated country sown by pressure-activated mines. He was followed by monks from his monastery and later from other monasteries they passed by on their way. This expedition which was joined by both monks and civilians,

forming a procession several ten kilometres long, finally contributed to the end of the war. This was a "step by step" walk to peace in a country which had proclaimed that God did not exist, shut priests in monasteries, and preached pink communist future. We have seen the result on film: every fourth Cambodian below the age of 25 was disabled, victim of pressure-activated mines, without one, two or even three limbs. The International Society for the struggle against manufacturing of pressure-activated mines still sends, approximately once a year, material in roundish, to me strange, Cambodian script. As far as that priest was concerned, I remember that he spoke for about quarter of an hour about a visit to armament factories in the USA, which made my hair stand on end. He had personally headed a delegation of Cambodians to stand face to face with workers who manufactured pressure-activated mines. The former showed pictures of their mutilated children with no limbs, and the latter lamented that they would have no way to feed their own children if they stopped the production... This crazy civilisation makes one's head burst!

Let me just also mention an Indian, a big two-metre tall man, who not for a second parted from his drum, a tom-tom or whatever, I do not know what the instrument is called in his language. When he was given his 15 minutes to address the participants of the Convocation, he spoke concisely in accordance with his cultural tradition, in simple words with plenty of metaphors, symbols and humour. He spoke about the arrogance and the convenience due to which his people was shut up in reservations and then exhibited as beasts. These were one of the most uneasy, disheartening, saddening 15 minutes in those seven days. The speaker did not fail to say that his people was becoming extinct, stressing that it was one of human races that would quickly disappear. I felt as if I had listened to a hundred-year old who complained that his heart was twitching, and I knew that perhaps the next day he would not be there anyway. A whole human race was dying out and what were we doing about it?

That very Indian grabbed every opportunity to get outdoors, in the open, under the sky, to beat his instrument and sing simple, easily singable Indian songs which we joined in and gamboled around him clapping to the rhythm he set. One of these "concerts" was absolutely surreal. A Japanese had also arrived at the Convocation, a rainmaker as I immediately called him, a man who went from village to village in dry days and beating his drum sang to call rain. Since there were Buddhist priest and their

followers among us, who had brought all kinds of percussion instruments with them, they all joined the Indian and the Japanese rainmaker in the yard in front of the youth hostel and started improvising their common music, each on his instrument. Many of the rest of us joined this extraordinary band in open air, clapping our hands and singing simple syllables. I do not know how long it lasted, I know only that the rhythm of that song and beat seized us all and became like the air we breathed. Then the giant Indian made a "point": Where are you from? And you? And you? When we all listed the countries and continents from where we who joined that strange dancing chorus had been, we turned out to be as if engaged by UNICEF. "You see, we could nicely live with each others if it were not for the greedy in this world!", he said calmly and continued to sing.

This singing, however, of "five races and a hundred nations" was still less strange than chanting of Buddhist mantras within the camp, at the spot where the ill-omened railway tracks ended, at the spot where the undesirable inhabitants of European countries were transported to be suffocated with gas, then cremated in furnaces and from there "sent up" through chimneys in smoke. At that very spot, at the end of the railway tracks, two days before all the participants of the Convocation had gathered, a Buddhist ritual of a nine-day fast had started.

About ten members of the mentioned Buddhist organization who had worked on the convening of this Auschwitz-Hiroshima gathering, had a special programme: several hours of daily prayers and mantras right there at the end of the railway tracks, within the barbed-wire fence of the concentration camp. Nine days in a row. And a strict fast to go with it, just water. At 5 and 10 degrees below zero Celsius. When they returned after prayer, they appeared more transparent every day. On the ninth day of their ritual we all joined them, sang simple mantras together and then, in a procession went to the Oswiecim municipality hall to present to the mayor of that Polish town the herald who would travel to Hiroshima for eight months to the 50th anniversary of the dropped atomic bomb.

I have a very clear memory of that man, a petty clerk, who was haughty when he came out of the building to meet us jammed in the courtyard of the municipality building, because we could not all fit into their ceremonious hall. I remember that he was in great hurry to recite the words of phony welcome and that, just ten minutes later when he realized that the message written in his own hand would

travel to his colleague, the mayor of Hiroshima, he started shaking with excitement. In front of our very eyes his haughtiness melted away in the presence of the miracle of human simplicity: the man who would lead the pilgrims from Auschwitz to Hiroshima, from December 1994 until August 1995, stuck out his hand, took the Mayor's speech and said without any pathos, "Mr. Mayor, I will personally deliver this message to your colleague in Hiroshima!" I was close enough to see tears. Afterwards we commented how easy it was to touch a human heart.

Auschwitz, Convocation, 1994. There is more!

In the middle of the nineties, Serbia was a "hot" ugly story from front pages of world media, and although it never entered my mind to officially address the gathering, Paula put me in the agenda. "Your 15 minutes", she said and handed me the timetable. What should I tell them? I turned over some sentences in my mind and rejected them - they would not understand this, that was interesting to nobody but the Serbs, this had already been said... There and then I faced the problem of creation of a specific kind: how could one tell foreigners what had happened in Yugoslavia, especially in Serbia, in the nineties, particularly tell it in a way that would give them a more wholesome picture than the official black-and-white one they were swamped with by their media? An elderly American woman who said she was a trade union worker helped me to draw up the outline, by instantly rubbing my nose, "Don't you people in the East know that capitalism is good only for capitalists?"

With these words she gave me the cue and I bravely started my speech for those Earthlings of all kinds from that very drawer: "War is business. In Yugo-war, Slobodan Milosevic became enormously rich, Franjo Tudjman became rich beyond limits, Alija Izetbegovic became rich³⁰ and several hundred crooks, around them became rich. The rest of us - we are all losers!" This was understood by everybody, more than excellently, although I had spoken in most general terms and eternal symbols and described simple scenes such as empty stores and supermarkets, changed pace of people in streets because nobody was in hurry any more - no jobs, hyperinflation, queuing, living in the conditions of grey economy and grey zone, and the most horrible of all - thousands of young men hiding in dark apartments so

³⁰ The three listed presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia&Herzegovina and many others who became rich in the war thanks to the mentioned leaders - died, either of bullets or disease, and we are all still drudging along. It seems we will never see better days - they have stirred up so much evil..

military police wouldn't arrest them and send to war... When I finished, the giant Indian grabbed me, lifted me up and loudly kissed me, saying: "Thank you, sister!" After my speech, everybody wished to speak to me. To hear how we were doing, what we were undertaking, how we were getting along, what we were feeling... The old story with exciting fresh details along the following lines: No news in the West. But, it hurts. The soul hurts. War.

I committed a few "incidents" at that Convocation, which I remember with great satisfaction. After the showing of a documentary film about suffering of camp inmates we sat in the cinema hall for another half hour. Moderators asked us to concentrate on the pictures we had seen and contemplate on courage. Human courage and its manifestations. Then they asked us to say out loud who had taught us personally to be courageous. All kinds of famous men's names were heard, from Socrates to Einstein. I listened and listened to these known historical names and suddenly I had had enough of that. I yelled: "My mother Magda!". After that we learnt many names of fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles and other ordinary people who had been models of virtue to participants of the Convocation and taught them courage in everyday living.

Another incident - I'll use that big word - was shocking even for me. It was our last evening, everything was over, we had worked hard for seven days, 12 and 14 hours a day, in small and big groups, and then we were supposed to put a crown on the whole event. We devoted the last hour of the programme to the impressions the camp memorial had left on us. It was inspiring for me in a very special way, perhaps because of those sonorous Buddhist mantras. Then in one moment, I could not hold still any more. I stood up and said very loudly, "Auschwitz proves that God exists!" All hundred and fifty people who were present were simply dumbfounded. The silence was unpleasantly thick for a few seconds. "What do you mean?", the woman rabbi from New York, who was the first to catch her breath after my words, cautiously asked me. "This isn't an act of God, but of people. What ever evil deed people do, God doesn't let the wrong-doers hide all the traces. That is why it always comes out in the open when people become addicted to Evil", this is how I explained the vision I had had for a moment as crystal clear and true. And all the people present sighed with relief.

So much for that. This is what I wished to say, following the war path of my parents and other ancestors and remembering their and my own war wounds, about

Auschwitz as a symbol of consequences of all wars. And about war in general as a hereditary disease of human race.

I wish to end this text with a quotation of Simon Wiesenthal, the tireless hunter of runaway Nazis, who had ended his worldly journey and mission in the end of 2005 and moved to "heaven", the "sky", to "eternal hunting-grounds". Once they asked him why he continued to work so tirelessly in favour of the victims of Holocaust. He answered: "When I go to heaven and meet millions of Jews who died in camps, I will tell them 'I haven't forgotten you'."

May his memory live! And I thank him!

And my Magda, my father Živko, my grandmothers Milevka and Paula, grandfathers Aleksandar and Greta, Tela, Baća, my adopted mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, may their memory live, and I thank them! I will not forget you, because I wish to remember your strength, your capability to survive and wisdom to separate good from evil. I wish to remember your love, to draw my strength from it to love and understand the people I still share this world with. We shall meet again, somewhere in cosmos, and we will begin a new cycle of our life together, with less obstacles, in greater harmony and understanding than the one I testified about has given us.

The References Magda used to write “Women from Bačka – Political Convicts in 1941-1945 War”:

1. **Magda Simin:** „Dok višnje procvetaju” – ratni dnevnik /When Sour Cherries Bloom – War Diary/(„Vojvodina u borbi”, Novi Sad, 1958. godina)
2. **Živan Milisavac:** „Poruke iza rešetaka” /Messages from behind Bars/ (Edicija „Vojvodina u borbi”, Novi Sad, 1968. godina)
3. Mladen Vrtunski: „Kuća užasa” – hronika logora u Bačkoj Topoli /House of Terror – Chronicle of the Camp in Bačka Topola/ (SUBNOR Srbije, Beograd, 1970. godina)
4. **Vladislav Rodbart:** „Ne zaboravi druga svog” – o zatvoru Čilag /Don’t Forget Your Comrade – On Csillag Prison/ (Institut za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine, Novi Sad, 1976. godine)
5. **Živan Milisavac:** „Šuma nije olistala” – hronika o pobuni rodoljuba u Šatoraljaújhelju /The Forest did not Break out in Leaf – A Chronicle on the Rebellion of Patriots in Sátoraljaújhely/ (Institut za istoriju, Novi Sad, 1983. godine)
6. **Dr Danilo Kecić:** „Žene Vojvodine u ratu i revoluciji” /Women of Voivodina in the War and Revolution/ (Institut za istoriju, Novi Sad, 1984. godine)
7. „Sećanje učesnika radničkog pokreta i NOR-a Subotice” /Memories of Participants Labour Movement and People’s Liberation War from Subotica/ (Društvena organizacija „Monografija”, Subotica, 1985. godine)
8. **Vladimir Rodbart:** „Jugoslaveni u mađarskim zatvorima i logorima” /Yugoslavs in Hungarian Prisons and Camps/ (Institut za savremenu istoriju - Beograd, Institut za istoriju Vojvodine - Novi Sad, Novi Sad, 1988. godine)
9. **Milenko Beljanski:** „Zatvor u Kaloči” /Prison in Kalocsa/, Sombor, 1989

Bibliography

The following bibliographical data are published about Magda and Nevena in „Enciklopedija Novog Sada“ /Encyclopedia of Novi Sad/:

Simin Bošan, Magda - Journalist, publicist, writer, wrote equally in two languages – Serbian and Hungarian. Born in Senta in 1922; her father was Aleksandar Bošan (born in Ada) and mother Paula (born Šrajer in Čonoplja). She attended high school in a few towns in Voivodina; in 1944, in Kikinda, just before the final exams, she was arrested and thrown out of school, but took the final exam and passed it in Subotica in that same year. Due to the anti-Jewish law on „Numerus Clausus” passed on the eve of the Second World War in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, S.B.M. could not enroll at the faculty in Belgrade. In September 1941, during the occupation of Bačka, she was arrested by the gendarmes of fascist Hungary, and the military court in Subotica sentenced her to 13 years of hard labour. The horrible experience from that period of her life and its opposite - her life strength and optimism are the most significant inspiration of her literary engagement.

In 1955 she graduated from the Teachers' College in Novi Sad, Department of Serbo-Croat Language and Literature of the Peoples of Yugoslavia. She spent most of her working years as the Editor-in-Chief and Editor in Radio Novi Sad. She participated in the work of the Council of Serb National Theatre, Sterijino pozorje Festival and other cultural institutions in Novi Sad. She was a deputy in the Federal Peoples' Assembly of Yugoslavia, on its Cultural and Educational Board, during the 1963-1967 term.

Among other, she received the October Award of the City of Novi Sad in 1971; Labour Medal with Golden Wreath in 1975; Charter of the City of Novi Sad in 1984; the Life Award of the Society of Writers of Voivodina in 1999.

Printed works:

»**Dok višnje procvetaju**« (When Sour Cherries Bloom) – autobiographical novel about war years (1958, »Edicija Vojvodina u borbi«, Novi Sad). »**Mire a megyfa kivirágzik**« - Hungarian edition of the same novel (1959, »Forum«, Novi Sad). The second enlarged edition in Serbian language of »**Dok višnje procvetaju**« (1980, »Mladost«, Zagreb)

»**Izdanci na vetru**« (Sprouts in the Wind) – novel about education of children of killed combarants in Voivodina (1964, »Progres«, Novi Sad). »**Névtelenek**« - Hungarian edition of the same novel (1966, »Forum«, Novi Sad).

»**Pomračenja**« (Eclipses) – novel about the time of Information Bureau campaign against Yugoslavia, the very first on this topic in Yugoslavia (1972, Matica srpska, Novi Sad)

»**San mladosti**« (The Dream of Youth) – autobiographical novel, and a description of life of Jewish families in Bačka before the Second World War (1983, »Dnevnik«, Novi Sad).

»**Egy ifjúság álma**« - enlarged Hungarian edition of the same novel (1988, »Forum«, Novi Sad).

»**Kamen na ramenu**« (Rock on the Shoulder) – novel about a hero who survived slave labour in Mauthausen and what happened afterwards (1988, »Dnevnik«, Novi Sad)

»**Beleške iz Izraela**« (Notes from Israel) – travel novel (1990, »Dnevnik«, Novi Sad). The edition was supplemented and enlarged and titled »**Priče iz Izraela**« (Stories from Israel) (1998, »Dnevnik«, Novi Sad), translation of this novel to Hungarian »**Izraeli családfa**«, (1999, JMMT, Novi Sad).

»**Gálék**« - novel about the life of poet Laszlo Gal (1994, »JMMT«, Novi Sad).

»**Porodica Gal**« (Gal Family) – enlarged edition of the same novel in Serbian (2001, Matica srpska, Novi Sad)

A number of her short stories and memories were published in various magazines and newspapers in Voivodina, in both Serbian and Hungarian. She also wrote numerous radio plays for children and documentary plays for radio and television. They were broadcast on Novi Sad Radio and Television, and some of them on Budapest Radio.

Assisted by Ištvan Bošnjak, she edited the book »**Örök álmok**« - selected works of her father Aleksandar (Boschan Sándor) who was killed in 1942 in Čurug raid (2002, JMMT, Novi Sad).

Unpublished manuscript: **Ženska staza** (Women's Path), Novi Sad 2004.

Simin, Nevena - Journalist, writer; born on January 15, 1950 in Novi Sad; her mother was Magda (born Bošan) and father Živko Simin. She completed her education in Novi Sad where she graduated Yugoslav literature at the Philosophic Faculty in 1974. She

worked in the Dnevnik newspaper and publishing company from 1975, mostly in the cultural section of the daily.

She was the editor of »**Dečji dnevnik**« (Children's Daily) supplement 1986-1992. In the section titled »**Kulturna ekologija**« (Cultural ecology)(1989-92) – until suspended from work and sent on a six-year long forced leave, she studied subtle culturological properties, but also those linked to mentality, age and others, in people in the period of growing tensions, dissolution of the country and resulting civil wars. Based on these articles, she edited a book called »**Osmeħ za nepoznato drvo**« (Smile for Unknown Tree - manuscript).

Practising yoga in the system »Yoga in Everyday Life« of Paramhans Svami Maheshvarananda, she wrote a treatise on mutual influences between Western and Eastern spiritual practices titled »**Ponovo zajedno**« (Together Again, published in the »Dnevniku« daily in 1991 as a feuilleton).

She wrote plays for the radio. After folk short stories, she dramatised the following: »**Čardak ni na nebu ni na zemlji**« (Castles in the Air), »**Baš čelik**«, »**Vilin vez**« (Fairy's Embroidery), »**Grbo i kralj đavolski**« (Hunchback and Devilish King), »**U laži su kratke noge**« (Lies are Short-Lived), a play with science-fictional thesis »**Nerazjašnjena epidemija**« (Mysterious Epidemy), for children »**Rodendanski poklon**« (Birthday Present) and many others. In 1988, Pozorište mladih (The Theatre of the Young) from Novi Sad staged her play »**Zlatoruni ovan**« (Golden-Fleeced Ram) directed by Jelena Sitar.

With Rastislav Durman and seven children, she told the story on puberty »**Zagonetni znak**« (Mysterious Sign) (»Dnevnik«, 1987). The same two people and thirteen children created the material for a fantastic story on the 'lapis philosophorum' »**Kamen**« at the literary workshop of Children's festival in Šibenik in 1987 (published instalments in »Dečji dnevnik« Children's Daily supplement in 1990-91).

In 1994, she conceived, published, translated and edited on her own the anthology concept of the collection of stories »**Iz Tame ka Svetlu**« (From Darkness Towards Light), collected at the lectures of Paramhans Maheshvarananda, who is stated as the author. From lectures of the same Yoga, she edited a brochure »**Na točku rađanja i umiranja**« (At the Wheel of Birth and Death) in 1995.

For the Drama Program of Novi Sad Radio and Novi Sad Television, she translated from Hungarian numerous radio plays, cartoons and films.

Since 1997 she is working on Internet and participates in the formation of Internet market in Yugoslavia. She was the editor of on-line magazine called »**Artmagazin**« until 1998, and since 1999 of the web site called »**Human-net**«.

Since 2002 she has edited the monthly for professionals in the media called »**Link**«, participated in independent radio production on the projects: »**Okolominutno radio-pozorište**« (Around-minute Theatre) and »**Zdravo, kako si danas**« (Hello, How Are You Today) and others.

In 2004 she translated the book **“Games to play with babies”** by American author Jackey Silberg. **“Games to play with babies”** is a collection of practical instructions for young parents who have a newly born child. After the same idea, a serial of five-minute TV shows was created in coproduction of Media Art Service International and TV “Ranonija”.

Works published after the publication of the Encyclopedia of Novi Sad: essay »**Duhovno tumačenje bajki**« (Spiritual Interpretation of Fairytales) (Esotheria, 2006, Beograd)
Manual: »**Deljanje novinarskog stila**« (Polishing Journalistic Style)(Edition »Link plus«, Media Art Service International, Novi Sad 2007)

Appendices:

List of women imprisoned in Court Prison in Subotica from November 1941 until September 1942:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Balašević Viktorija, worker from Subotica | 13. Merković Marica, worker from Subotica |
| 2. Baš Kata, student from Subotica | 14. Molnar Marija, worker from Senta |
| 3. Bek Lilika, student from Subotica | 15. Rakoši Galja, student from Subotica |
| 4. Blau Francetić Ruža, physician from B. Topola | 16. Rekecki Eržebet, worker from Senta |
| 5. Bošan Magda, student from Senta | 17. Seneš Magda-Dušika, housewife from Subotica |
| 6. Hajman Jolanka, chemist from Subotica | 18. Sič Kristina, worker from Subotica |
| 7. Jenei Gizela, photographer from Subotica | 19. Stilinović Marija, student from iz Subotica |
| 8. Jovelić Jagoda, student from Subotica | 20. Špicer Edita, student from Subotica |
| 9. Kovač Rožika, clerk from Subotica | 21. Takač Marija, worker from Senta |
| 10. Lendvai Draginja, clerk from Subotica | 22. Terek Piroška, worker from Senta |
| 11. Levei Ica, worker from Senta | 23. Vojnić Giza, worker from Subotica |
| 12. Malušev Boriška, seamstress from Subotica | 24. ... Ljubica, worker from Subotica |

Among them, the following were transferred to Márianosztra prison in November 1941:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Balašević Viktorija | 7. Malušev Boriška |
| 2. Bošan Magda | 8. Merković Marica |
| 3. Hajman Jolanka | 9. Rakoši Galja |
| 4. Jenei Gizela | 10. Seneš Dušika |
| 5. Kovač Rožika | 11. Sič Kristina |
| 6. Levei Ica | 12. Vojnić Giza |

Bek Lilika and Špicer Edita were transferred to the juvenile prison in Kistarcsa and Kalocsa, respectively.

The comrades sentenced to shorter terms in Konti prison in Budapest and mostly set free from there. A few of them were directly transferred to Komarom:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Belić Ačanski Damjanka, student from Srbobran | 16. Medurić Zorka, peasant from Turija |
| 2. Cvejić Mira, student from Vrbas | 17. Markov Julka, housewife from Bačko Gradište |
| 3. Dragin Danica, student from Bečej | 18. Markov Sretenka iz Bačka Palanka |
| 4. Erdeljan Živka, housewife from Kovilj | 19. Paroški Dušica, student from Turija |
| 5. Jojkić Jelica, peasant from Turija | 20. Pejak Katica, krojačica iz Silbaš |
| 6. Jojkić Julka, housewife from Turija | 21. Petrović Julka, housewife from Bačko Gradište |
| 7. Jovanović Milica – Miculjka, student from Novi Sad | 22. Prodanović Ljubica, student from N. Sad |
| 8. Kolarski Mara, student from Novi Sad | 23. Savin Zora, housewife from Đurđevo. Set free in Konti, she was arrested again and killed in Satoraljaujhely |
| 9. Krkljuš Jelica, student from Novi Sad | 24. Srećkov Milica, seamstress from Čurug |
| 10. Kuzmančev Nada, student from N. Sad | 25. Šer Gertruda, student from Novi Sad |
| 11. Latinski-Gložančev Julka, housewife from Bečej | 26. Šijački Kajka, clerk from Bečej |
| 12. Lučić Zora, student from Novi Sad | 27. Trbić Marija, shop'assistant from Bečej |
| 13. Malić Zora – Joja, student from Bečej | 28. Trbić Stojanka – Koka, seamstress from Bečej |
| 14. Milanov Milica, student from Silbaš | |
| 15. Miškov Latinka, student from Bačka Palanka | |

Women from Bačka who were interned in Konti prison in Budapest, then transferred to
Márianosztra:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Andrić Milena, worker from Novi Sad | 21. Mandel Zora, worker from Novi Sad |
| 2. Apić Evica, peasant from Žabalj | 22. Nemet Marija, worker from Novi Sad |
| 3. Batos Ružica, peasant from Čurug | 23. Pavlović Vera, univ. student from N. Sad |
| 4. Benka Ana, professor from B. Petrovac | 24. Pecić Evica, peasant from Žabalj |
| 5. Berger Komloš Šacika, clerk from Novi Sad | 25. Popov Zagorka, peasant from Žabalj |
| 6. Brkić Mila, clerk from Novi Sad | 26. Rajčetić Persa, peasant from Žabalj |
| 7. Bursać Beba, worker from Novi Sad | 27. Rižički Milandinka, peasant from Žabalj |
| 8. Cimr Julija, agronomica iz Novi Sad | 28. Ranisavljević Dragica-Seka, student from Novi Sad |
| 9. Čonkić Persa, peasant from Žabalj | 29. Skandarski Sofija, worker from N. Sad |
| 10. Čerpes Justa, worker from Maribor | 30. Skandarski Radoslava, worker from N. Sad |
| 11. Dinjaški Dragica, student from N. Sad | 31. Šećerov Mirjana-Coka, student from N. Sad |
| 12. Drakulić Draga, peasant from Žabalj | 32. Štajner Henica, student from Novi Sad |
| 13. Grbić Kristina, peasant from Žabalj | 33. Šeguljev Kovinka, teacher from Čurug |
| 14. Grbić Jecka, peasant from Žabalj | 34. Šučov Drenka, peasant from Žabalj |
| 15. Husar Marta, univ. student from N. Sad | 35. Štrbački-Ranisavljević Latinka, student from Novi Sad |
| 16. Ivačković Gordana, univ. student from Novi Sad | 36. Vajs Vera, clerk from Novi Sad |
| 17. Komloš Edit, student from Novi Sad | 37. Varga Mica, worker from Novi Sad |
| 18. Lucić Mara, peasant from Čurug | 38. Vezilić Stana, peasant from Žabalj |
| 19. Mandel Ibolja, worker from Novi Sad | |
| 20. Mandel Estera, worker from Novi Sad | |

The second group of women transferred in the end of 1942 from Konti prison to
Márianosztra:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Armbruster Irma, worker from N. Sad | 8. Kuzmanović Nada, student from N. Sad |
| 2. Bem Klara, student from Novi Sad | 9. Kadelburg Gerta, student from N. Sad |
| 3. Baji Julka, worker from Novi Sad | 10. Koljedzinski Olga, student from N. Sad |
| 4. Čobanski Persa, peasant from Vrbas | 11. Lustig Irena, student from Novi Sad |
| 5. Dejanović Kaća, textile worker from Novi Sad | 12. Maksić Mara, student from Novi Sad |
| 6. Đomparić Ljubica, clerk from N. Sad | 13. Švind Kristina, student from Novi Sad |
| 7. Jojkić Mara, peasant from Turija | 14. Vlaškalić Mira, milliner from N. Sad |
| | 15. Velicki Nada, student from Novi Sad |

A group of women who arrived in Márianosztra in 1943 from Army and court prison
in Novi Sad:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Cuker Eva, student from Sombor | 6. Puškar Danica, student from N. Sad |
| 2. Dejanov Saveta from Bačko Gradište | 7. Stefanović Budimka, student from Sombor |
| 3. Grujić Biserka, student from Sombor | 8. Špajdl Mancika, housewife from Sombor |
| 4. Herić-Cvetić Ljubica, worker from N. Sad | 9. Tucakov Zorana, student from N. Sad |
| 5. Marković Milica, worker from N. Sad | |

The group of women imprisoned in Csillag prison:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Bartok Olga, worker | 5. Dreksler Margita, clerk |
| 2. Babić Sofija, artisan worker | 6. Džigurski Kata, student from Bečej |
| 3. Čere N., peasant | 7. Ergelašev Stanika, artisan worker from Srbobran |
| 4. Dudvarski Pava, peasant | |

- | | |
|--|---|
| 8. Farago Alisa, clerk from Novi Sad | 23. Marinković-Stokić Jagica, worker |
| 9. Farago Ana, clerk from Novi Sad | 24. Paroški Radojka, clerk |
| 10. Gložančev Marija, worker | 25. Pece Franciška, peasant from Bač. Pet. Selo |
| 11. Grujić Milica, student from Sombor | 26. Prišić Ljubica, artisan worker |
| 12. Isakov Jelica, student from Kula | 27. Pejović Jovanka, artisan worker |
| 13. Ilin Maca, peasant from Kula | 28. Rus Marica, seamstress from Bačko Gradište |
| 14. Jakšić Desa, artisan worker from N. Sad | 29. Starčev Nataša, clerk from Novi Sad |
| 15. Kopčanski Irena, teacher | 30. Siriški Ankica, artisan worker from Turija |
| 16. Klajn Klara, clerk from Novi Sad | 31. Sekulić Nevenka, artisan worker |
| 17. Mirilov Jelica, seamstress from B. Gradište | 32. Stankov Nata, worker from Novi Sad |
| 18. Medurić-Krkleš Anica, peasant from Turija | 33. Šeguljev Jelica, artisan worker |
| 19. Miladinović Desanka-Abisinka, worker from Novi Sad | 34. Tanasijin-Živković Draginja, peasant |
| 20. Malić Zora, textile worker from N. Sad | 35. Tucić Milena, artisan worker |
| 21. N. Mariška, peasant | 36. Zurković Anica, worker from Srbobran |
| 22. Milić Sofija, artisan worker | 37. Živković Smilja, artisan worker |

Among the listed women, the following were transferred to Márianosztra:

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Ergelašev Stanika | 6. Kopčanski Irena | 11. Pece Franciška |
| 2. Farago Ana | 7. Medurić Anica | 12. Starčev Natalija |
| 3. Grujić Milica | 8. Miladinović Desanka-Abisinka | 13. Siriški Ankica |
| 4. Isakov Jelica | 9. Mirilov Jelica | 14. Stankov Nada |
| 5. Klajn Klara | 10. Malić Zora | 15. Zurković Anica |

Women comrades from Sombor sentenced to shorter terms in Kalocsa prison.

Some of them were arrested again after they were set free from Kalocsa and were sent to various prisons:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Braun Sentđerđi Olga, student from Sombora | 8. Pavkov Ljubica, seamstress |
| 2. Buzadžić Nada, učenica | 9. Pušin Zagorka, seamstress |
| 3. Buzadžić Milanka, domaćica | 10. Radišić Vera, seamstress |
| 4. Gradinac Trifunov Slavka, seamstress | 11. Radojević Šarčanski Mirjana, seamstress |
| 5. Kapusta Jovanović Milica, worker | 12. Selak Milena Beba, učenica |
| 6. Maširević Matić Jugovica, seamstress | 13. Čirić Ksenija, učiteljica |
| 7. Nastasić Opačić Jugovica, učenica | |

Women from Bačka who were transferred from the prison in Komárom to concentration camps Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Fallersleben and Salzwedel in November 1944:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Aćimović Jovanović Smilja, student from Novog Sada | 6. Arsenin Jelena (baba Roda), babica iz Novog Sada |
| 2. Andrić Katica Jeja, peasant from Deronja | 7. Berić Dara, peasant from Đurđevo |
| 3. Andrić Popadić Anka, peasant from Deronja | 8. Bokšić Savin Mica, Đurđevo |
| 4. Antić Ružica, housewife from Novog Sada | 9. Božić Jeliborka, student from Bečeja |
| 5. Arsenin Mila, housewife from Novog Sada | 10. Bošan Simin Magda, studentkinja iz Sente |
| | 11. Bosak Vera, Novi Sad |
| | 12. Braun Olga, student from Sombora |

13. Cuker Čavčić Eva, student from Sombora
14. Čalenić Milanka, student from Novog Sada
15. Čuruški Tinka, peasant from Kovilja
16. Danilov Ivanka, peasant from Bačke Palanke
17. Danilov Mirjana, peasant from Tovariševa
18. Dovijarac Marinković Ružica, student from Novog Sada
19. Deneš Arsenić Eva, studentkinja, rodom iz Budimpešte
20. Despotović Olga, Novi Sad
21. Erdeljan Vera, učiteljica iz Gospođinaca
22. Eremić Vera, učiteljica iz Gospođinaca
23. Farago Ana, službenica iz Novog Sada
24. Glavaški Ivanka, worker from Bečeja
25. Glavić Jovanka, peasant from Čuruga
26. Grujić Ivanka, student from Novog Sada
27. Hajman Jolanka, hemičarka iz Subotice
28. Husar Doder Marta, studentkinja iz Novog Sada
29. Horvat Marija, housewife from Nedelišća
30. Ilić Ilin Kristina, iz Zmajeva
31. Ilijin Mirjana, iz Gospođinaca
32. Ignjatov Dana, peasant from Paraga
33. Jojkić Jelica, peasant from Turije
34. Jovin Jecka, peasant from Čuruga
35. Jovin Danilka, peasant from Čuruga
36. Jurišić Ljubica Buba, iz Novog Sada
37. Krstić Jelica, peasant from Srbobrana
38. Kostić Slavka, worker from Novog Sada
39. Kobiljski Kočović Ljuba, artisan worker from Novog Sada
40. Kosovac Vera, peasant from B. Gradišta
41. Koledin Dragica, student from N. Sada
42. Koledin Dobrila, student from N. Sada
43. Kuzmanović Dragica, student from Novog Sada
44. Koledin Vera, pekarka iz Kovilja
45. Kuzmanović Nada, student from N. Sada
46. Kadelburg Gerta, student from N. Sada
47. Krkljuš Popara Melanija, iz N. Sada
48. Kostić Berić Darinka, iz Đurđeva
49. Karić Vida, službenica iz Ade
50. Lustig Vajnman Incika, student from Novog Sada
51. Lančuški Olgica, peasant from Sivca
52. Markov Bosiljka, iz Perleza
53. Miškov Nata, housewife from B. Palanke
54. Moljac Desa, iz Novog Sada
55. Marić Jovanka Sela, službenica iz Deronja
56. Milovanov Lepčević Mica, službenica iz Novog Sada
57. Mojsilov Vera, seamstress iz N. Sada
58. Milutinović Milica, peasant from Novog Sada
59. Malušev Marton Boriška, seamstress iz Subotice
60. Mandel Zora, worker from Novog Sada
61. Mandel Ljubica, worker from Novog Sada
62. Mandel Estika, worker from Novog Sada
63. Malešev Mileva-Seja, student from Novog Sada
64. Malešević Veselinov Mara, peasant from Rumenke
65. Nestorović Slavica, housewife from Novog Sada
66. Oberkirš Štefanija, student from N. Sada
67. Pašćan Zora, peasant from Rumenke
68. Pavlović Desa, student from Đurđeva
69. Pantić Julka, peasant from Nadalja
70. Popnovakov Mila, housewife from Vrbasa
71. Puštrić Mira, housewife from Vrbasa
72. Prodanović Milena, student from N. Sada
73. Prodanović Ljubica, student from N. Sada
74. Pisarev Emilija, iz Despotova
75. Pisarev Grozda, iz Despotova
76. Pataki Ilona, profesorka iz Novog Sada
77. Pankov Živka, peasant from Grabova
78. Petrović Draginja, iz Bačke Palanke
79. Panin Milić Jela iz Despotova
80. Petrović Gačaš Katica
81. Popić Vukobrat Draginja iz Kaća
82. Rakoši Šer Zora, krojačlica iz Ade
83. Radivojević Zagorka, housewife from Novog Sada
84. Raletić Seja iz Šajkaš Sentivana
85. Raletić (Sejina majka), housewife from Šajkaš Sentivana
86. Radonić Milka, iz Tovariševa
87. Rajić Zorka, peasant from Tovariševa
88. Rajić Desanka, selanka iz Tovariševa
89. Rajić Milica, peasant from Tovariševa
90. Stanković Gavanski Milka, iz N. Sada
91. Savin Branka iz Đurđeva

92. Stanković Panić Živka, student from Novog Sada
93. Sremac Roksa, peasant from Paraga
94. Stojaković Katica, housewife from Bačke Palanke
95. Stojaković Marija, iz Bačke Palanke
96. Stojkov Brčnin Vida, worker from Bečeja
97. Sas Agnesa, službenica iz Vrbasa
98. Stejić Batos Evica-Micka, peasant from Čuruga
99. Seneš Rudić Magda-Duška, housewife from Subotice
100. Stražmešterov Marić Anica
101. Štajner Karaoglanović Henica, student from Novog Sada
102. Ševa Mara, peasant from Siriga
103. Šukić Vemija, peasant from Begeča
104. Šebe Malešev Vera iz Novog Sada
105. Šijakov Mara, peasant from N. Sada
106. Teodorović Dobrila, seamstress iz Novog Sada
107. Tavrdžić Kristina iz Bačke Palanke
108. Tucakov Kanurić Katica, peasant from Čuruga
109. Terzić Markov Bosiljka, iz Zrenjanina
110. Todorović Milačić Mara, iz N. Sada
111. Tomić Marija iz Gračaca
112. Tomin Milić Jelka iz Despotova
113. Tankof Kosić Mila iz Begeča
114. Vukojević Milica iz Novog Sada
115. Vojnović Nada, student from N. Sada
116. Vujkov Ruža, worker from Novog Sada
117. Vujkov Nada, worker from Novog Sada
118. Vlaškalić Radojka, housewife from Novog Sada
119. Vlaškalić Draginja, seamstress iz Novog Sada
120. Vuksanov Knežević Sofija-Sojka, student from Novog Sada
121. Velicki Ivačković Nada, student from Novog Sada
122. Vajs Štajner Verica, službenica iz Novog Sada
123. Vlaškalić Ružica, iz Novog Sada
124. Vojnić Ljubica iz Novog Sada
125. Vojnić Soka iz Novog Sada

Women from Bačka who were deported from the prison in Komarom in November 1944 to Ravensbruck camp in Germany and from there to labour camps in Spandau, Dortmund, Genshagen and the camp of Siemens optical instruments factory:

1. Aćimović Vezilić Stana, peasant from Žabalj
2. Albert Mara iz Kisača
3. Anđelković Šučov Drenka, peasant from Žabalj
4. Alimpić Pajić Gordana from Silbaš
5. Andrić Milena, worker from Novi Sad
6. Armbruster Irma, worker from Novi Sad
7. Baji Hribar Julija, worker from Novi Sad
8. Balažević Barta Viktorija, worker from Subotica
9. Balog Irena from Novi Sad
10. Beljanski Kovačić Milena, worker from Sombor
11. Benka Ana, professor from Bački Petrovac
12. Begečki Draginja, peasant from Nadalj
13. Beljanski Marija, peasant from Čurug
14. Berček Rajkov Anka, peasant from Čurug
15. Bjelić Vlaškalić Mirjana, worker from Novi Sad
16. Borković Pejak Katica, artisan worker from Silbaš
17. Brkić Petrov Mila, clerk from N. Sad
18. Bukvić Begečki Zora, peasant from Nadalj
19. Bursać Milica Beba, worker from N. Sad
20. Buzadžić Milanka from Sombor
21. Buzadžić Nada from Sombor
22. Cimr Julija, agronomist from Novi Sad
23. Cvetić Herić Ljubica, worker from N. Sad
24. Čekić Čupić Jelka, peasant from Čurug
25. Čekić Milena, peasant from Čurug
26. Čerpes Justa, clerk from Maribor
27. Čopić Siroški Ankica, artisan from Turija
28. Čordarov Čonkić Velinka-Lela, peasant from Čurug
29. Čupić Anka, housewife from Čurug
30. Čupić Tapavica Mara, peasant from Čurug
31. Čupić Milosava-Draga, peasant from Čurug
32. Danilov Žabaljac Mirjana, peasant from Tovariševo
33. Despotović Olgica, student from Novi Sad
34. Draganić Tepavac Jelica from Čurug
35. Dražić Vida from Čurug

36. Dudaš Kata, peasant from Bački Petrovac
37. Dozet Hinić Mara, worker
38. Dudvarski Lucić Mara, peasant from Čurug
39. Đerić Mirilov Jelica, seamstress from Bačko Gradište
40. Erdeljan Dejanov Saveta from Bačko Gradište
41. Erdevik Jevrosimov Jecka, peasant from Čurug
42. Eremić Vera, teacher from Gospođinci
43. Fajt Koljadzinski Olga, clerk from Novi Sad
44. Gajinov Rusov Živka, peasant from Turija
45. Garić Vukadinov Vuka, worker from Bačko Gradište
46. Glavić Jovanka from Čurug
47. Golubičić Belić Vera, student from N. Sad
48. Gradinac Trifunov Slavka, student from Sombor
49. Grba Zeremski Smilja, peasant from Turija
50. Grinberger Sekelj Ibolja, artisan from Novi Sad
51. Grinberger Katarina, worker from N. Sad
52. Grujić Biserka, student from Sombor
53. Horvat Marija worker from Čakovec
54. Grujić Milica-Cica, student from Sombor
55. Ilić Žemba Kristina, worker from N. Sad
56. Ivačković Gordana, univ. student from Novi Sad
57. Jauković Dinjaški Dragica, student from Srbobran
58. Jarić Isakov Jelica, student from Kula
59. Jaković Jakovljević Ljubica, student from Ada
60. Jeremić Sekulić Grozda, peasant from Čurug
61. Jovicki Vukica from Bačka Palanka
62. Kalik Bakajin Grozda, peasant from Nadalj
63. Karić Vida, clerk from Ada
64. Karimanović Belić Leposava, student from Novi Sad
65. Kosanov Darinka from Nadalj
66. Kovačev Olga, worker from Vrbas
67. Korčok Marija from Bački Petrovac
68. Kojić Vema, housewife from Bačka Palanka
69. Kolarski Kranjec Marija, student from Novi Sad
70. Lazić Bogdanović Vida, housewife from Novi Sad
71. Laušev Milica, peasant from Nadalj
72. Letić Savka, peasant sa Čenej
73. Maletić Jelena, peasant from Čurug
74. Marić Stevka, housewife from N. Sada
75. Matić Miškov Dobrila, peasant from Kovilja
76. Maksimović Radosavljević Ljubica from Čurug
77. Markov Bosiljka, worker from N. Sad
78. Matić Maširović Jugovica, worker from Sombor
79. Medurić Marija-Baba Mara, peasant from Turija
80. Medurić Srećkov Ranka, peasant from Čurug
81. Medovarski Marija, peasant from Bački Petrovac
82. Milić Pala, peasant from Kovilj
83. Miškov Đomparić Ljubica, clerk from Novi Sad
84. Miladinović Desanka-Abisinka, Novi Sad
85. Mihajlović Draginja-Seška, peasant from Novi Sad
86. Mirković Kovinka, peasant from Nadalj
87. Naumov Siriški Anđelka, peasant from Nadalj
88. Nenadov Anđelka, peasant from Žabalj
89. Nemet Marija, worker from Novi Sad
90. Oberkirš Štefanija, student from Novi Sad
91. Ognjanac Momčilović Jelka, housewife from Novi Sad
92. Palinkaš Marija, peasant from Bački Petrovac
93. Panin Marija from Silbaš
94. Pantić Ljubica from Nadalj
95. Pataki Ilona, professor from Novi Sad
96. Paunović Krstić Branka from Ravno Selo
97. Pankov Mila from Novi Sad
98. Pavlas Mira from Novi Sad
99. Pavlović Vera, univ. student from N. Sad
100. Pavkov Ljubica, worker from Sombor
101. Pećnik Anka, peasant from Lalići
102. Perž Podlesek Sidonija, born in Murska Sobota
103. Popov Ružica from Čurug
104. Popara Ninkov Danilka from Čurug
105. Počuča Dara, worker from N. Kneževca
106. Prodanović Vera from Novi Sad
107. Protić Pavlov Radojka, student from Ada
108. Preradov Ljubica from Nadalj
109. Pece Franciška, worker from Bačko Petrovo Selo

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| 110. Puškar Rajković Danica, student from Novi Sad | 131. Šijakov Milica from Bačka Palanka |
| 111. Radoc Simić Sofija, peasant from Futog | 132. Šotić Dobrila, worker from Novi Sad |
| 112. Raletić Kristina from Šajkaš | 133. Šeguljev Koviljka, teacher from Čurug |
| 113. Radojev Dobrila from Novi Sad | 134. Špajdl Mancika, housewife from Sombor |
| 114. Rajčić Batos Ružica, peasant from Čurug | 135. Štark Marta, student from Novi Sad |
| 115. Rac Komar Magda, clerk from Subotica | 136. Tikvicki Rakoši Galja, univ. student from Subotica |
| 116. Radišić Kosana from Čurug | 137. Tavrđić Milica from Bačka Palanka |
| 117. Ris Balaštik Blanka, bron in Croatia | 138. Tucakov Zorana, student from N. Sad |
| 118. Sekelj Levei Ilona, worker from Senta | 139. Turk Tavrđić Slavica from Bačka Palanka |
| 119. Srdanović Jojkić Mara, peasant from Turija | 140. Uhlarić Grujić Miluška, peasant from Bačka Palanka |
| 120. Srećkov Rajčetić Persa, peasant from Žabalj | 141. Vasin Topolski Jelena from Čurug |
| 121. Skandarski Sofija, worker from N. Sada | 142. Vasić Džigurski Branka from Čurug |
| 122. Skandarski Stojković Radoslava, worker from Novi Sad | 143. Vardić Dara, pharmacist from N. Sad |
| 123. Stajić Pantić Jovanka from Nadalj | 144. Veličković Milutinović Milica from Novi Sad |
| 124. Stojšić Pantić Kata from Nadalj | 145. Vojnić Soka, housewife from N. Sada |
| 125. Stanimirov Mirosavljević Kovinka from Nadalj | 146. Vojnić Ljubica, worker from N. Sada |
| 126. Stanimirov Bukinac Anđa from Nadalj | 147. Vučić Ergelašev Stanika, artisan from Srbobran |
| 127. Stanković Miškov Latinka, student from Bačka Palanka | 148. Žikić Stefanović Budimka, student from Sombor |
| 128. Sekulić Draginja-Seka from Nadalj | 149. Živojinović Živković Milena, student from Ada |
| 129. Sremac Nada from Novi Sad | 150. Krista from Subotica |
| 130. Šepšei Švind Kristina, student from Novi Sad | 151. Cilika from Subotica |
| | 152. Mariška from Subotica |

Women from Bačka who were killed in armed conflicts or died in concentration camps:

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| 1. Dejanović Katica, seamstress from N. Sad. Set free from the prison in Márianosztra, but did not reach home. She joined a combating unit in Subotica, and was killed near Bolman. | 7. Radišić Ankica from Đurđeva |
| 2. Berger Komloš Vera-Šacika, student from Novi Sad. After she was set free from prison, she joined a partisan unit where she was killed. Po oslobođenju from zatvora prebacila se u part from anske jedinice gde je i poginula. | 8. Savin Zora from Đurđeva |
| 3. Komloš Edita, student from Novi Sad . | |
| 4. Surdučki Mara from N.Sada. U drugom pokušaju uspela je da pobegne from logora u Bačkoj Topoli i da se prebaci u Srem, u part from ane. Ubrzo je poginula. | |
| | <u>Umrle u Bergen-Belzenu i Ravensbriku:</u> |
| | 9. Antonić Ljubica, housewife from N. Sada |
| | 10. Albert Mara from Kisača |
| | 11. Arsenin Jelena, babica from Novi Sad |
| | 12. Armbruster Irma, worker from N. Sada |
| | 13. Begečki Draginja, peasant from Nadalja |
| | 14. Čupić Milosava-Draga, peasant from Čurug |
| | 15. Despotović Olga from Novi Sad |
| | 16. Farago Ana, službenica from Novi Sad |
| | 17. Glavić Jovanka from Čurug |
| | 18. Grinberger Katarina from Novi Sad |
| | 19. Jovicki Vukica from Bačke Palanke |
| | 20. Kadelburg Gerta, student from N. Sada |
| | 21. Kovačev Olga, worker from Vrbaša |
| | 22. Kojić Vema, housewife from Bačke Palanke |
| | |
| <u>Poginule u pobuni u Šatorlajuhelju:</u> | |
| 5. Batos Ružica, peasant from Čurug | |
| 6. Erdeljan Ivanka from Bačkog Gradišta | |

23. Korčok Marija from Bačkog Petrovca
24. Laušev Milica, peasant from Nadalja
25. Medurić Mara, peasant from Turije
26. Milačić Todorović Nada from Novi Sad (umrla u logoru Buhenvald)
27. Milić Pala, peasant from Turije
28. Moljac Desanka from Novi Sad
29. Oberkirš Štefanija, student from N. Sada
30. Palinkaš Marija, peasant from Bačkog Petrovca
31. Pantić Ljubica from Nadalja
32. Pataki Ilona, profesorka from Novi Sad
33. Pavlović Vera, studentkinja from N. Sada
34. Pece Franciška, peasant from Bačkog Petrovog Sela
35. Pećnik Anka, peasant from Lalića
36. Petrović Draginja from Bačke Palanke
37. Prodanović Vera from Novi Sad
38. Raletić Kristina from Šajkaša
39. Sekulić Draginja-Seka from Nadalja
40. Skandarski Sofija, worker from N. Sada
41. Sremac Roksa, peasant from Paraga
42. Stojaković Kata, housewife from Bačke Palanke
43. Šer Rakoši Zora, seamstress from Ade
44. Šeguljev Kovinka, učiteljica from Čurug
45. Ševa, Mara - Baba Ševa, peasant from Silbaša
46. Vlaškalić Ružica from Novi Sad

Women from Bačka who died after the War:

1. Andrić Mileva (1991)
2. Apić Evica (2001)
3. Batos Stejić Evica-Micka (1993, Novi Sad)
4. Bek Krmpotić Lilika (2000, Novi Sad)
5. Belić Karimanović Leposava-Lepa (1997)
6. Bem Isijanov Klara (1988, Novi Sad)
7. Blau Francetić Ruža (2003, Zagreb)
8. Božić Jeliborka (Bečej)
9. Buzadžić Milanka (1987, Sombor)
10. Buzadžić Nada (Sombor)
11. Bursać Milica-Beba (1992, Novi Sad)
12. Cimr Julija (1999, Beograd)
13. Crnojački Julka
14. Cvetić Herić Ljubica (1989, Novi Sad)
15. Čalenić Milanka (2002, Novi Sad)
16. Čobanski Persa (1983, Novi Sad)
17. Čonkić Čordarov Lela (1995)
18. Čonkić Persa (Bačko Gradište)
19. Čupić Anka (1989, Zagreb)
20. Čuruški Tinka
21. Dejanović Jovanović Milica-Seka (1990, Novi Sad)
22. Dovijarac Marinković Ružica (2000, Arandjelovac)
23. Dudaš Kata
24. Đomparić Miškov Ljubica (1998, Novi Sad)
25. Džigurski Natalija (1949, Bečej)
26. Džigurski Vesović Katica (1997, Bečej)
27. Erdeljan Živka (Kovilj)
28. Erdeljan Dejanov Saveta (1995, Novi Sad)
29. Erdeljan Vera
30. Eremić Vera
31. Gavanski Milka (2000, Novi Sad)
32. Garić Vukadinov-Vuka
33. Gložančev Latinski Julka (2001, Bečej)
34. Gradinac Trifunov Slavka (Sombor)
35. Grbić Čonkić Jelena-Jecka (2002, Žabalj)
36. Grbić Bajac Kristina-Tina (2002, Bečej)
37. Grujić Ivanka (Novi Sad)
38. Grujić Babić Milica (1999, Beograd)
39. Hajman Jolanka (Beograd)
40. Hinić Mara (2003)
41. Ilić Žemba Kristina (1996)
42. Ilin Maca (1986)
43. Ivačković Gordana (Austrija)
44. Jaković Jakovljević Ljubica
45. Jojkić Babić Jelica (1993, Novi Sad)
46. Joveljić Jagoda
47. Jeremić Sekulić Grozda (1989)
48. Jovin Borišev Danilka (Žabalj)
49. Jovin Jecka (Čurug)
50. Kapusta Jovanović Milica (1990, Sombor)
51. Karić Vida
52. Koledin Stevanović Dragica (2001, Beograd)
53. Koledin Vera (2003)
54. Kopčanski Knežević Irina (Beograd)
55. Kovač Rožika (From rael)
56. Krklješ Medurić Anica (1993, Vrbas)
57. Krkljuš Popara Melanija-Mela (1999, Novi Sad)

58. Krstić Paunović Branka (2001, Beograd)
59. Lendvai Draginja
60. Lucić Dudvarski Mara (2002, Novi Sad)
61. Maksić Mara (1948, Novi Sad)
62. Malešević Mara (1995)
63. Malić Stankov Zora-Joja (1990, Bečej)
64. Malić Zora
65. Malušev Barbara-Boriška (1986, Zagreb)
66. Mandel Estela (1990, From rael)
67. Mandel Zora (1961, Novi Sad)
68. Marić Stevka (1997, Novi Sad)
69. Marinkov Stokić Jagica (1993, Novi Sad)
70. Markov Bosiljka (1966, Novi Sad)
71. Marković Milica (1995, Novi Sad)
72. Medurić Zorka (1961, Novi Sad)
73. Merković Šafer Marica (Novi Sad)
74. Miladinović Desanka-Abisinka (1980, Novi Sad)
75. Mirilov Đerić Jelica (1998, Novi Sad)
76. Mirković Kovinka
77. Miškov Matić Dobrila
78. Momčilović Ognjanac Jelka (1996, Novi Sad)
79. Nenadov Anđelka (1979)
80. Ninkov Popara Danilka (2003)
81. Odobašić Ivanka (1989, Sombor)
82. Panin Marija-Maca (1990, Novi Sad)
83. Pankov Mila
84. Pantić Bukinac Jovanka (2001)
85. Pavlas Mira (Zrenjanin)
86. Pecić Dragica (1999, Žabalj)
87. Popnovakov Mila (1996, Vrbas)
88. Popov Kazimir Zagorka (1992)
89. Preradov Ljubica (Nadalj)
90. Prodanović Ljubica (1985, Beograd)
91. Prodanović Ščekić Milena (2002, Beograd)
92. Pušin Zagorka (1990.)
93. Puškar Rajković Danica (1962)
94. Radišić Vera (1992)
95. Radoc Simić Sofija (1998, Novi Sad)
96. Rajkov Berček Anka (1999, Novi Sad)
97. Sas Agnesa (1985, Beograd)
98. Savin Bokšić Milica (2002)
99. Sekelj Levei Iona-Ica (1994, Senta)
100. Sič Kopunović Kristina (1985, Subotica)
101. Siriški Čopić Ankica (1996, Vrbas)
102. Siriški Naumov Anđelka (1996)
103. Srečkov Jajagin Milena (Novi Kneževac)
104. Sremac Nada
105. Stanimirov Miroslavljević Kovinka (Ruma)
106. Stajić Pantić Jovanka (Zemun)
107. Starčev Divljak Nataša (1998, N.Sad)
108. Stojaković Marija (1999, Novi Beograd)
109. Stojkov Brčvin Vida (1996, Beograd)
110. Šečerov Stojanović Miroslava-Coka (1993, Beograd)
111. Šer Galac Gertruda (1992, Beograd)
112. Šijakov Čupić Kajka (1995, N. Sad)
113. Šotić Dobrila (1995, Novi Sad)
114. Špajdl Mancika (Sombor)
115. Štajner Karaoglanović Henica (1985, Beograd)
116. Štark Marta (From rael)
117. Tanasin Živković Draginja-Keka (1990, Novi Sad)
118. Trbić Beljanski Stojanka-Koka (2001, Bečej)
119. Tucakov Kanurić Katica (1996, Čurug)
120. Vajs Štajner Vera (1980, Beograd)
121. Vardić Dara (Novi Sad)
122. Velicki Ivačković Nada (1995, Novi Sad)
123. Veličković Milutinović Milica
124. Vezilić Aćimović Stana (1987, Novi Sad)
125. Vilovac Vukica (1980, Novi Sad)
126. Vlaškalić Radojka (1995)
127. Vojnić Prčić Gfrom a (1985, Subotica)
128. Vojnić Ljubica
129. Vojnić Soka
130. Vojnović Nada (2002, Novi Sad)
131. Vujkov Nada (1998, Novi Sad)
132. Vujkov Čuha Ruža (1988, Novi Sad)
133. Zurković Miličević Anica (1988, Novi Sad)

The lists were made in Novi Sad in summer 2003.

Since that year 2003 when Magda and her comrades completed the list, to the moment of publication of this manuscript, many women mentioned in this book died. May their memory live!

And let me add one more thing – my friend and, I can freely say, sister Nada Marinković has helped this story to become a book and reach you, reader. I thank her.