

THE LONG ROAD HOME

85 YEARS SINCE THE NAZI OCCUPATION
AND THE DEPORTATION OF SLOVENIANS

EXILE

This year marks the 85th anniversary of the tragic events that profoundly affected the lives of many Slovenian families. Following the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941, Slovenian territory was occupied and divided among Germany, Italy and Hungary. Seeking to annex the occupied territories to their respective states, the occupiers immediately began implementing harsh policies of denationalisation.

Germany occupied Lower Styria, the Meža Valley, Upper Carniola, the northern part of Lower Carniola and the north-western part of Prekmurje. The first measures were aimed at erasing everything that was Slovenian: place names and personal names were Germanised, associations were dissolved, Slovenian books were destroyed, and the publication of Slovenian-language newspapers and other printed materials was prohibited. German was introduced as the official language in public institutions. These measures were soon followed by further acts of denationalisation, including the arrest and deportation of prominent Slovenes committed to preserving their national identity and their family members, as well as the settlement of German colonists in the occupied territories.

To carry out the mass deportations, the occupation authorities established several collection or “resettlement” camps in Lower Styria and Upper Carniola: at the Melje military barracks in Maribor, at Rajhenburg Castle in Brestanica, and at the Diocesan Institutions in St. Vid near Ljubljana, as well as numerous collection centres. Mass deportations began in June 1941 and continued systematically throughout 1942. Among the deportees were many teachers, priests, intellectuals, immigrants from Primorska region, and other prominent figures of Slovenian cultural, social, and economic life. The deportations took place in three waves, and Slovenes were forcibly relocated to the territories of Serbia, Croatia and Germany. In the process, all their property was confiscated.

These cruel events left a deep mark on the personal and family lives of countless individuals. On this anniversary, we respectfully commemorate all victims of occupation violence and forced exile. Their suffering, courage, and unwavering loyalty to the Slovenian nation remain a lasting reminder and a valuable part of our shared historical heritage. Their memory obliges us to preserve the truth about these events and to pass on the values of freedom, human dignity, and national identity to future generations.



*Group of deportees in Rajhenburg, 8 November 1941
(held by MnZC)*



*Rajhenburg deportation camp
(held by MnZC)*

*List of deported persons
from Lower Styria
(held by MnZC; photo: Egon Horvat)*



*Order on the population
census in Lower Styria
(held by MnZC)*



*Marking of confiscated
property of Slovenian
families
(held by MnZC)*



*Entrance to the Rajhenburg
deportation camp
(held by MnZC)*



*Arrival of deportees at Maribor railway station
in early July 1941
(held by MnZC)*



*Arrival of the third transport of Slovenian
deportees in Arandelovac, 1941
(held by MnZC)*

THE FIRST WAVE of deportations took place from early June to mid-July 1941. In 17 transports, the occupation authorities deported approximately 6.800 Slovenes from Lower Styria and parts of Upper Carniola to the territory of Serbia, while around 380 Slovenian priests, together with their family members, were relocated to the territory of Croatia.

In Serbia, the General Committee for the Settlement of Slovenes was established at the end of May 1941. Responsibility for the deportees was later assumed by the Commissioner for Refugees. The first reception centre for Slovenian deportees was in Arandelovac, after which they were dispersed to numerous locations across Serbia: Aleksandrovac, Arandelovac, Arilje, Brus, Čačak, Čuprija, Gornji Milanovac, Gruža, Guča, Ivanjica, Jagodina, Kamenica, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Lazarevac, Mladenovac, Paraćin, Požega, Preljina, Rekovac, Smederevska Palanka, Topola, Trstenik, Užice, Valjevo, Varvarin, and Veliko Orašje.

A smaller number of deported families were settled in rural areas with wealthier households, while the majority remained in towns, where they lived in special colonies. There they established their own committees and organised communal kitchens. Although Slovenian deportees were warmly welcomed in Serbia, they had to find employment in both rural and urban areas in order to survive. Provision was also made for the elementary education of their children.

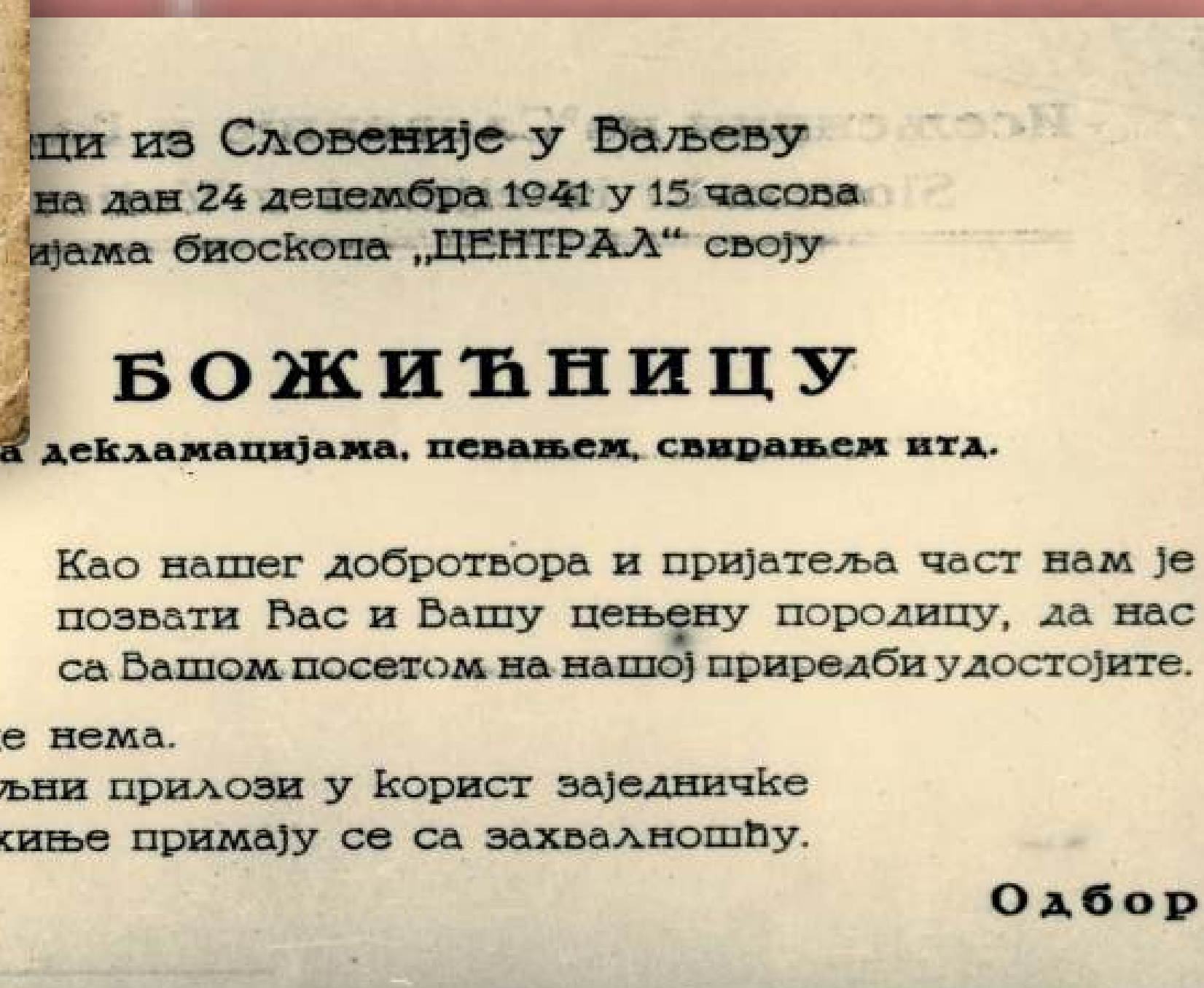
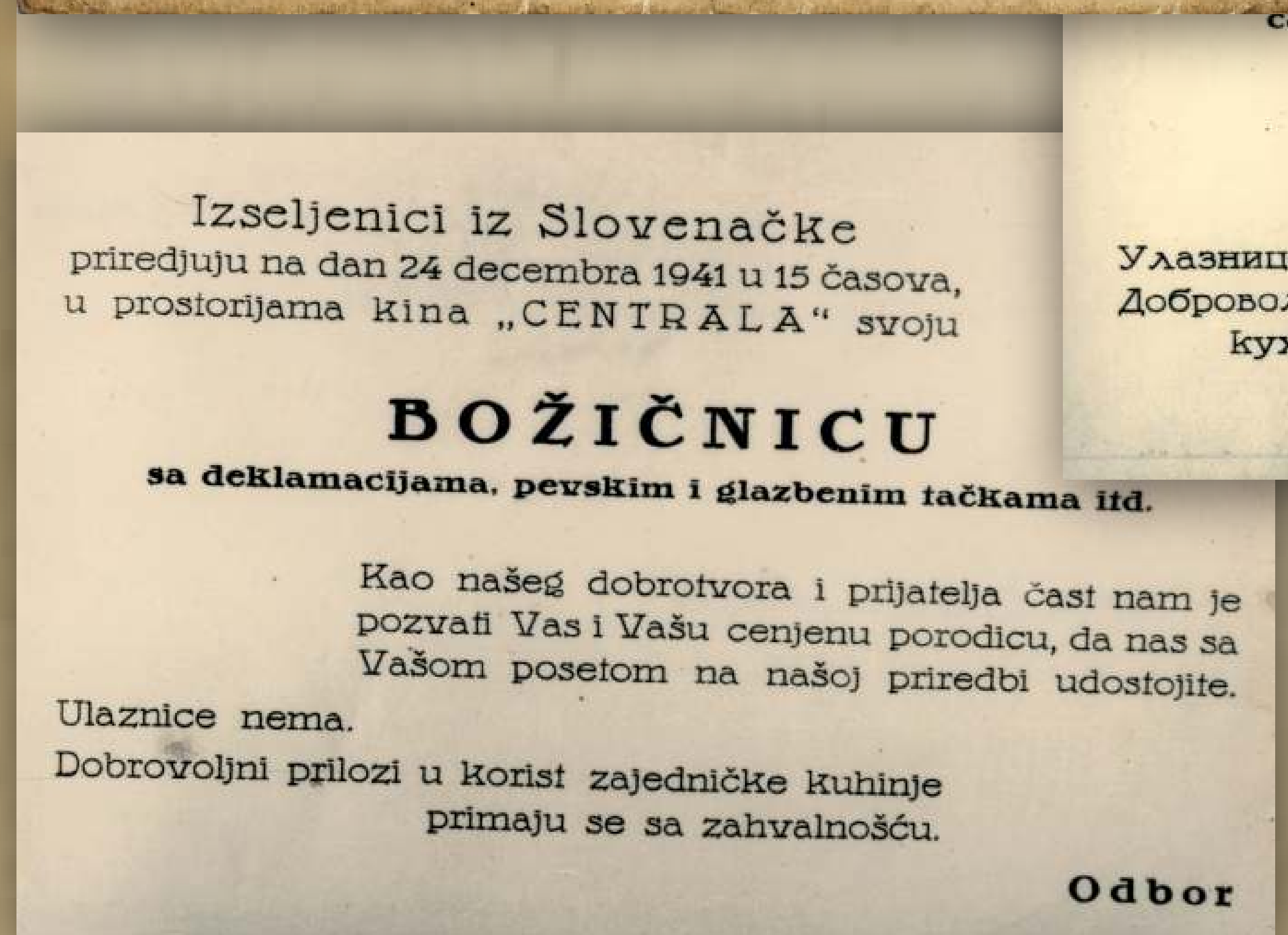
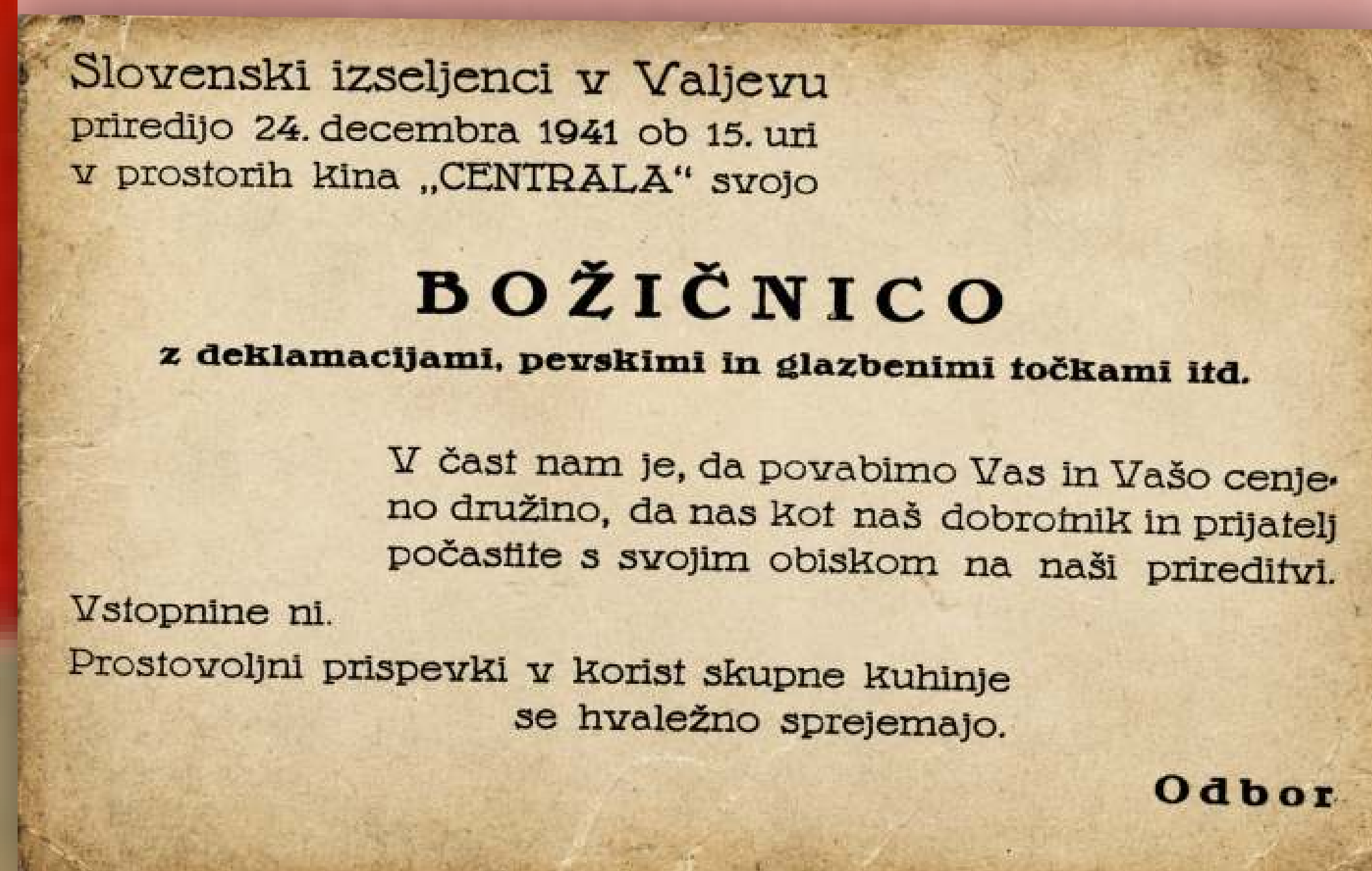
The Slovenian deportees soon became involved in the resistance movement. In November 1941, they formed the Ivan Cankar Partisan Company, which joined the Partisan forces in Serbia. At the end of 1944, the deportees in Serbia, as part of the 5th Slovenian Battalion, were incorporated into the 1st Krajina Shock Brigade, which fought on the Syrmian Front.



*Kitchen of the third transport of Slovenian
deportees in Paraćin
(held by MnZC)*



*Deportees in Zaječar;
Anton Ingolič and
Janko Orožen
in the photograph,
25 September 1941
(held by MnZC)*



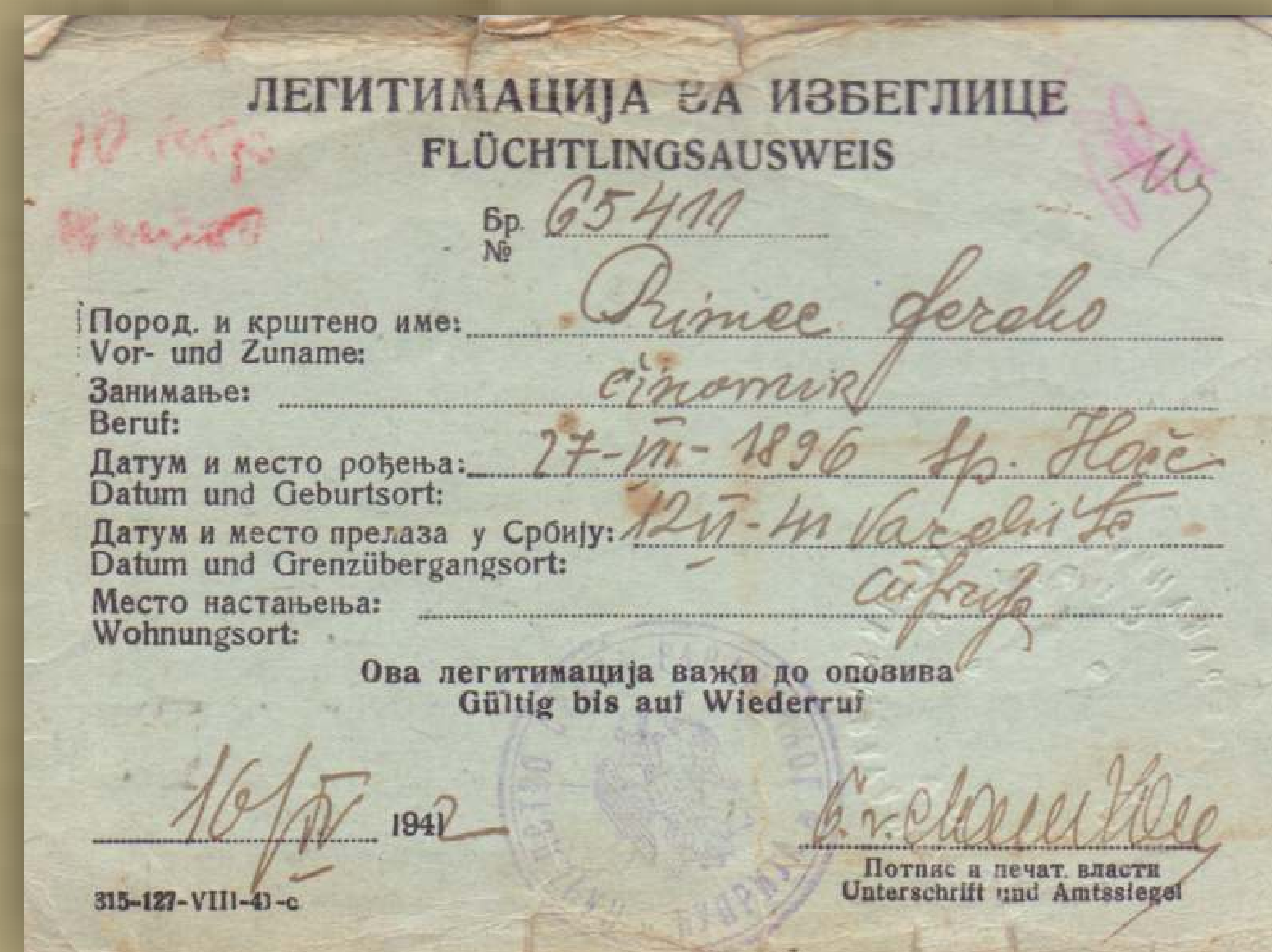
*Invitation of the Slovenian
Deportees' Committee to
a Christmas event in Valjevo, 1941
(held by MnZC)*



*First deportees from Celje
(held by MnZC)*



Hop picking at a hop plantation belonging to the brewery in Jagodina, 1942
(held by MnZC)



Group photo taken on Pentecost, 13 June 1943, Paraćin
(held by MnZC)

Identity card of deportee Ferdo Primc, 16 April 1942, Čuprija
(held by MnZC)



Men's choir of Slovenian deportees, conducted by Josip Šegula, 14 June 1943, Valjevo
(held by MnZC)



Slovenian youth in exile, 10 September 1944, Valjevo (held by MnZC)

Food ration cards for bread, valid from 25 June to 15 September 1944, Valjevo
(held by MnZC)



Fighters of the Slovenian battalion before departure for the battlefield, Šid
(held by MnZC)



Colony of Slovenian deportees in front of the communal dining hall on the anniversary of their arrival (including inhabitants of Celje), 21 June 1942, Kruševac
(held by MnZC)



Funeral of a deportee, Paraćin
(held by MnZC)





*Arrival of deportees in Bjelovar, 2 September 1941
(held by MnZC)*

*Slovenian deportees in Bjelovar
(held by MnZC)*



*Residents of Celje in exile. Anton Mužič, son of Slovenes from the Primorska region, is first from the right, 1941, Bjelovar
(held by Anton Mužič)*



*Deportees Marjana and Dora Petelinšek, Donji Mihaljevec
(held by MnZC)*



*Borovnik family from Frankolovo in the village of Marinkovac, municipality of Ivanić Grad
(held by MnZC)*

THE SECOND WAVE of deportations took place from mid-July to the end of September 1941. In 21 transports, the occupation authorities deported approximately 9.960 Slovenes from Lower Styria and parts of Upper Carniola to the territories of Croatia and Bosnia. Among them were mainly those who had settled in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria after 1914, predominantly Slovenes from the Primorska region.

The Croatian authorities at the time had already established the State Directorate for Reconstruction in June 1941, whose task was to organise the expulsion of Serbs from Croatia and to administer the property of deported Serbs and Jews. They intended to resettle Slovenian deportees into their homes, although this was often opposed by the local population.

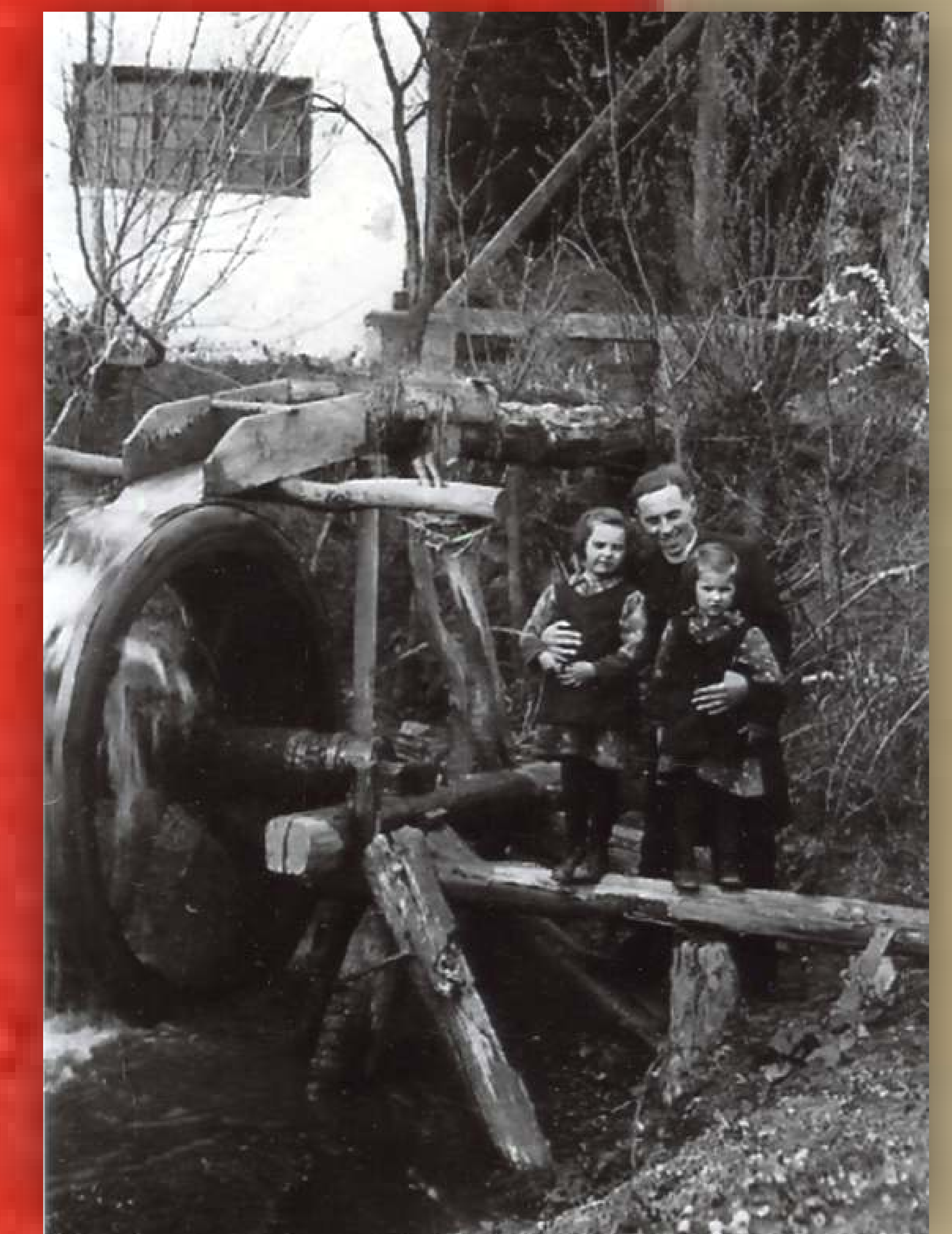
Almost all transports of Slovenian deportees arrived in Slavonska Požega, while one transport was directed to Petrinja. From there, they were dispersed to numerous locations, including Banja Luka, Bjelovar, Bosanska Gradiška, Hrvatska Dubica, Hrvatska Kostajnica, Derventa, Đurđenovac, Osijek, Petrinja, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Sarajevo, Valpovo, and Visoko.

In these places, the deportees mostly lived in shared accommodation, with their care organised by the local authorities. Some were also settled in rural areas. Living conditions in Croatia were very difficult, as there was a shortage of food, clothing, footwear, and other basic necessities of life.



*Frančiška and Franc Špacapan, Slovenes from the Primorska region deported to Lekenik in Croatia
(held by granddaughter Bogomira Puncer)*

*Sisters Bremec and the Slovenian priest Janko Kotnik, Radoboj near Krapina
(held by Nada Jež Bremec)*



*Group of Slovenian deportees with signs indicating the places to which they were deported
(held by MnZC)*

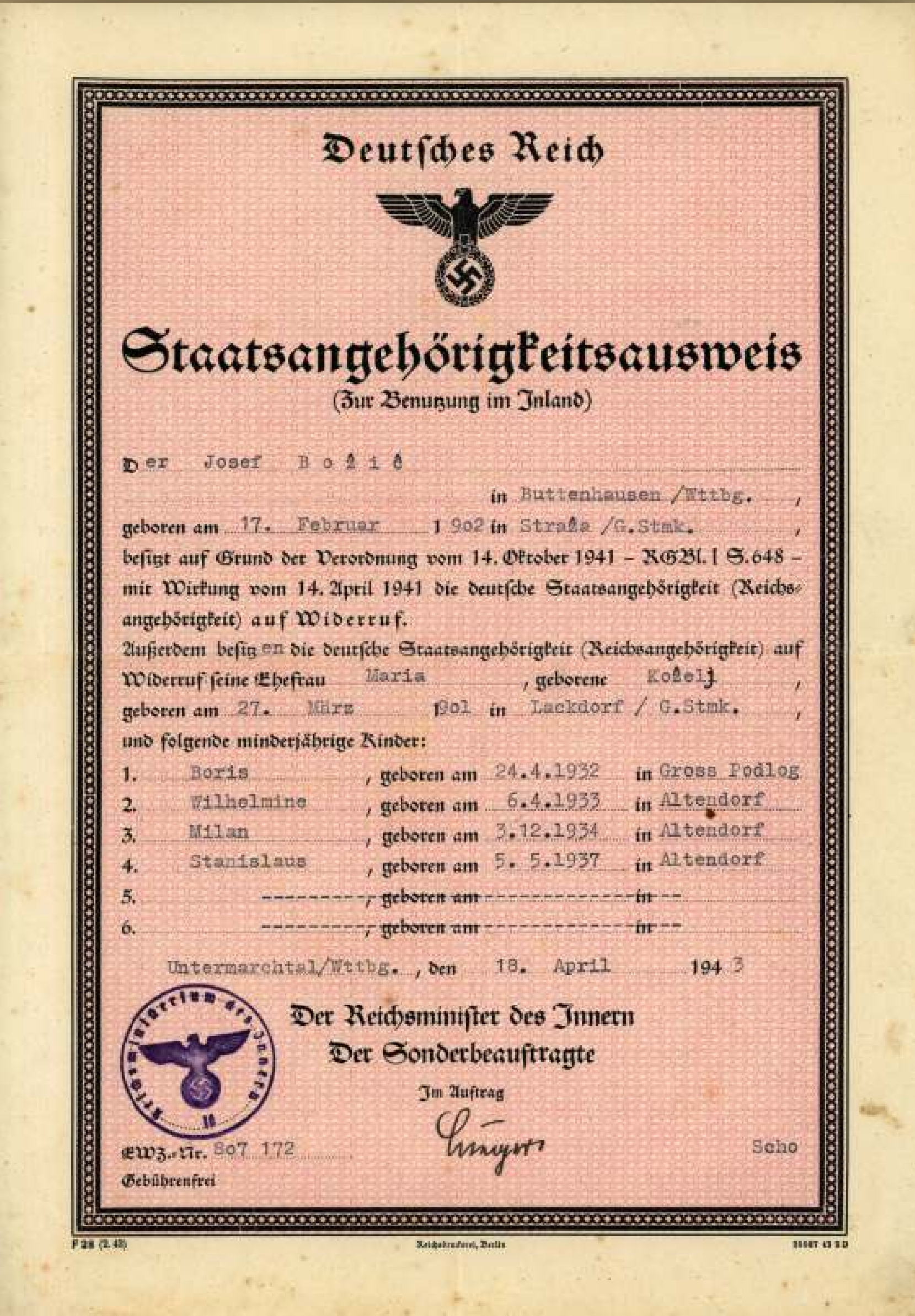




Deportees from the Obsotelje and Posavje–Brežice area in the Rajhenburg deportation camp, November 1941 (held by MnZC)



Documents of the Božič family during their deportation in Germany (held by Vilma Marija Ekselenski, photo: Egon Horvat)



Certificate of citizenship of the Božič family (held by Vilma Marija Ekselenski)



Metal identification tags of the Božič family, also known as “dog tags” (held by Vilma Marija Ekselenski, photo: Egon Horvat)



Notice on state-political measures in the border area, 20 October 1941 (held by MnZC)

THE THIRD WAVE of deportations took place from the second half of October 1941 to the end of July 1942. With intermittent pauses, it was divided into four phases. In 62 transports, the occupation authorities deported approximately 37.000 Slovenes from the Posavje and Obsotelje regions.

Prior to deportation, the deportees were registered at the Rajhenburg deportation camp, where they were issued personal documents. Each family was assigned metal identification tags, known as “dog tags,” which bore their assigned number. As they were no longer addressed by their personal names, these tags had to be worn around the neck.

The deportees were resettled in approximately 400 camps of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle organisation across various German regions, including Lower Silesia, Brandenburg, Hanover, Thuringia, Saxony, Baden, and Württemberg.

Their homes, meanwhile, were settled as part of the policy of Germanisation by around 13.800 Germans from Kočevje (Gottschee), as well as from Bukovina, Bessarabia, South Tyrol, Bosnia, and Dobruđa.

The camps were established in youth hostels, holiday homes, castles, monasteries, and spa buildings. Adult family members were required to perform various types of work in industry, mining, railways, agriculture, construction sites, and domestic service. German-language schooling was organised for children in the camps.

Many families were repeatedly transferred between different camps during their internment. Hygiene conditions and food supplies were extremely poor, making life for the deportees exceptionally harsh.

Information for residents on protection and conduct during air raids (held by Vilma Marija Ekselenski)



Branka (fourth from left), Lado (seventh from left) and Franc (eighth from left) Logar in the Günzburg camp, 1942 (held by Lado Logar)



Словенско културно просветно друштво
„ФРАНЦЕ РОЗМАН“
и Градски одбор А.Ф.Ж.-а у Крушевцу

ДАЈЕ СВОЈУ

ПРВУ ПРИРЕДБУ

у суботу 21 априла 1945 године у 8 часова у вече, у сали
ОМЛАДИНСКОГ ДОМА са следећим програмом:

ПРВИ ДЕО:

ПРЕШЕРНОВА ПРОСЛАВА

1) ЖЕЛ СЛОВЕНИ — рецитирају — Хр. Дурић
2) ГОВОР —
3) Франце Прешерн: „ПРИ СМЈЕ“ — Меланковић хор
4) Франце Прешерн: „БРАЋА“, „Посланица“ — Вера Трумп
5) А.Ф.Ж. — (као песно)

6) СЛОВЕНСКИ БРАЋ — рецитирају — Хр. Дурић
7) КЛЕДИ МЕСЕЦ —
8) НАЈ ПА ТИ ЛЮБИЧ —
9) Жива слава — СРБИЈА ПРИМА СЛОВЕНЦЕ —
10) Жива слава —

ДРУГИ ДЕО:

1) „Словенски песни“
„Вечери моравних песама“
„Словени вистава“ —
12) „ДРУГОЈ АРМИЈИ“ — рецитирају — Милана Тини
13) „Вече на језику“ — песна Меланковић хор
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ТРЕЋИ ДЕО:

ИГРАНКА

УПАЗНА ЦЕНА 100 ДИН. — Приход од уплатица иде за рањенике и
пострадале криваце.

Пројекат намета вршиће се на блајини Омладинског дома од 3 до 7 часова увече.

Аматерски ансамбл „СЛОБОДА“ — Крушевац

[illegible]

A black and white photograph capturing a winter scene on a snowy street. In the foreground, two horses are harnessed together, pulling a large, dark, covered cart. Several people, dressed in heavy winter coats and hats, are standing around the cart. Some individuals are holding bicycles. The background features bare trees and a building, suggesting a rural or urban setting in a cold climate.

At the end of the World War II, Slovenian deportees began returning to their homeland. Some set off on the long journey home on foot, while others returned in organised transports. Deportees who had been sent to Serbia and Croatia during the war returned to Slovenia by the end of August 1945. The return of deportees from Germany was organised by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Through reception centres in Bamberg, Amberg, Detmold, Biberach and elsewhere, Slovenian deportees began returning at the end of June 1945, while some only returned home in 1946 and 1947.

narodno Oslobojilaški Odbor u
potpisuje, da su sve gore navedene stvari koje imenovani lina sa sobom, njegovo
vlastito.

SMRT FAŠIZMU - SLOBODA NARODU!!

Sebeljar:
Sebeljar

Podat

ODBOR JEDINSTVENE NARODNO OŠTOVODINE FRONTE

pusnica - Polna dovolilnica št. 194.

za vrmler slovenskih Izselencev u domovino,
i člana u središnem Federalnem Izvornem, Ministar
stro unutarnjih poslova Izr. 1977 od 86. maja 1945

o t f n e e a Ana

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izpob-čidant most

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kole u iznosivom
jedno u iznosivom

Marjanova maj. 1945

Association of Deportees of Slovenia

