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Everyday and private life of Serbian State Guard members in occupied Serbia 1942–1944*

Abstract: The topic of this article, mostly based on the materials of the Military Archive and the Historical Archive of Belgrade, is the analysis of the private and everyday life of members of the Serbian State Guard. As in similar formations, the life of its members was strictly conditioned by its character, which meant that privacy was largely under the control of superior officers and the Command itself. This was especially true during the occupation, when the occupying authorities played a significant role in controlling the overall activities of the Guardsmen.

Keywords: Serbia, Second World War, Serbian State Guard, Nazi occupation, everyday life, privacy, discipline, punishments

Introduction

Research on everyday and private life in occupied Serbia during the Second World War is focused primarily on the analysis of everyday life in the

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city and the everyday life of civilians.¹ Although in practice private and public are intertwined, everyday life was most often associated with the private sphere of life.² Little attention was paid to military everyday life in wartime and occupation conditions, which undoubtedly differed from civilian life in terms of the rhythm of time and life. It has only been addressed incidentally by researchers within broader thematic analyzes of resistance movements or collaborationist formations. Thus, some issues of the daily and private life of their members, such as nutrition or attitudes towards women, were opened, although not investigated.³ Military everyday life, as in the case of civilian life, seemed “insignificant” in the context of “great history” (the war itself, military organization and strategy, battles, actions of “great men”, revolutions...)⁴ Therefore, an answer is sought to the question of how the course of “great history” reflected on

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- 1 Милош Тимотијевић, „Град и окупација - свакодневни живот Чачка 1941. године“, *80 година од избијања Другог светског рата на простору Југославије и страдање града Крагујевца: нови помаци или ревизије историје*, ур. Дмитар Тасић, Лела Вујошевић. (Крагујевац: Центар за научноистраживачки рад Српске академије наука и уметности и универзитета – Београд: Институт за новију историју Србије, 2021), 289–315; Наташа Милићевић и Милош Тимотијевић, „Грамвај, фијакер и бицикл: саобраћајна свакодневица у окупираном Београду 1941. године“, *Токови историје* 2/2021, 39–64; Rade Ristanović, „Svakodnevnica prvih meseci okupacije 1941. u člancima beogradskih Opštinskih novina“, *Istorija 20. veka* 1/2014, 95–110; Дејан Зеџ, *Свакодневни живот у окупираном Београду 1941–1944*, (докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет, Одељење за историју, 2019); *Свакодневни живот под окупацијом 1941–1944. Искусство једног Београђанина*, приредили Наташа Милићевић и Душан Никодијевић, (Београд: ИНИС, 2011); Коста Николић, *Страх и нада у окупираној Србији: свакодневни живот под окупацијом 1941–1944*, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, 2002).
 - 2 *Приватни живот код Срба у двадесетом веку*, (Београд: СЛЮ, 2007); Сања Златановић, „Свакодневни живот“, у: *Мали лексикон српске културе. Етнологија и антропологија: 70 изабраних појмова*, (Београд: Службени гласник, Етнографски институт САНУ, 2017), 364.
 - 3 Коста Николић, *Историја равногорског покрета 1941–1945*, Књ. 1, (Београд: Српска реч, 1999), 210–211, 245–250, 279–284, 288–289; Бојан Димитријевић, *Ваљевски равногорци: југословенска војска у отаџбини у ваљевском крају 1941–1945*, (Ваљево: Историјски архив Ваљево, 1998), 170–175, 188–193; Горан Давидовић и Милош Тимотијевић, *Затамњена прошлост: историја равногораца чачанског краја 2*, (Чачак: Међуопштински историјски архив, Народни музеј – Горњи Милановац: Музеј рудничко-таковског краја– Краљево: Народни музеј, 2003), 94–112; 287–289; Љубинка Шкодрић, *Жена у окупираној Србији 1941–1944*, (Београд: Архипелаг 2020), 273–274, 307–377, 403–446.
 - 4 Let’s mention, for the sake of illustration, that the Royalist Resistance and its leader, the organization of the movement, the state of affairs, conflicts with the opposing movement, etc. have been studied a lot in recent decades.

the lives of people in the military ranks and their routine activities on which their physical, psychological and social survival depended.

“History (war)”, as Karel Kosik writes, “disrupts everyday life, but everyday life subjugates History, because everything has its own everyday life”.⁵ A new everyday life is created and a new tempo, rhythm and schedule of life is found in war and occupation conditions. New everyday life in war changes views and experiences according to events, phenomena in society or culture. Everyday life thus becomes, as theorists point out, the basis of society from which permanent structures can emerge through a complex and gradual process. The essence of this view is that life can be studied in its everyday situation, and human actors as beings plagued by doubts, fears and dilemmas that they must resolve in order to continue to exist in a certain society.⁶

However, the study of military everyday life, perhaps precisely because of its determination by the military structure, regulations and hierarchy, should also be approached as a field in which, as Michel Foucault points out, the microphysics of power manifests itself. Power, control and disciplining in military everyday life, as well as in society in general, are not only expressed vertically, but also horizontally. They permeate the military organization, but also spread to society. Power imprints its action on roles, positions, instances, and visible effects. Although it was visible and concentrated, it was also scattered. It looked like a web and was everywhere, even in the most trivial everyday practices.⁷ This is especially expressed in the military structured rhythm of time and life where subordinates, by the nature of a military organization, consciously accept hierarchy and face a system of micro-punishments, through which the most banal manifestations of their daily activities are monitored.⁸

Even if in terms of dynamics and changeability, the military routine of members of the resistance movement might be cognitively more interesting, for our analysis we have chosen the life of members of the Serbian State Guard (SSG). It is the most numerous collaborationist military formation in

5 Karel Kosik, *Dijalektika konkretnog: studija iz problematike čoveka i sveta*, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1967), 95.

6 Ivana Spasić, *Sociologija svakodnevnog života*, (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2004), 12-13, 53, 83, 129.

7 Spasić, *Sociologija svakodnevnog života*, 193-195; Rade Kalanj, „Michael Foucault i problem moći“, *Revija za sociologiju* 1–2/1993, 77-85; Vukašin Pavlović, „Mikrofizika i makropolitika moći Mišela Fukoa“, *Godišnjak [Fakulteta političkih nauka]* 2/2008, 7-27.

8 R. Kalanj, „Michael Foucault i problem moći“, 80-81.

Occupied Serbia in the Second World War,⁹ founded in February 1942.¹⁰ This formation, in terms of the form of the organization and the way of life of its members, most resembled the pre-war army. It was not called that, and it could not be turned into a regular army because the German occupation authorities did not allow it.¹¹ That is why the SSG was defined as a uniformed and armed unit that performed policing and border patrol duties. After the suppression of the uprising at the end of 1941, the SSG was supposed to maintain order and security, protect property, and fight crime. Nevertheless, in certain periods, it was organized into larger formations and used to fight against the resistance movement, primarily the communist one.¹² Its members were civil servants in the service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹³ However, at the same time, they were also under the strict control of the German occupation authorities.

According to the type of service, members of the SSG were assigned to work in the City State Guard (in the urban areas), the Field State Guard (in the entire territory of the country, mostly in rural areas) and the Border Guard (border service). In the Belgrade area, there was a special unit of the SSG, which was directly subordinated to the Manager of the City of Belgrade.¹⁴ The rhythm

9 It had 13,946 members at the beginning of 1943, and 17,452 a year later. Unlike it, the Serbian Volunteer Command had, for example, around 3,500 members in the summer of 1942, and there were around 8,500 legalized Chetniks – Бојан Димитријевић, *Војска Недићеве Србије. Оружани одреди Српске владе 1941-1944*, (Београд: ИСИ, 2011), 179; Небојша Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942-1944*, (Београд: ИСИ, 2021), 364-365.

10 It was founded on the initiative of the collaborationist government of Milan Nedić, as part of the reorganization of the security and intelligence apparatus of the occupying military forces, which the Germans undertook in early 1942 in order to control the occupied territory of Serbia as efficiently as possible. Information about the new formation appeared in the daily press already at the beginning of January, and the organization was carried out in February 1942 – Muharem Kreso, *Njemačka okupaciona uprava u Beogradu 1941-1944.*, (Beograd: Istorijski arhiv Beograda 1979), 179-180; Milan Koljanin, „Struktura i delovanje policije nacističke Nemačke u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944“, *Istorija 20. veka* 3/2011, 151-152; Radosav Tucović, „Pravna obaveza ili kolaboracija? Uspostavljanje i funkcionisanje Uprave grada Beograda pod okupacijom 1941-1944“, *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2022, 345-360; Димитријевић, *Војска Недићеве Србије*, 155-158; Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942-1944*, 56-74; Небојша Стамболија, „Serbian State Guard in Occupied Serbia 1942-1944“, *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2022, 323-344.

11 Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji. Kvislinška uprava 1941-1944*, knj. 1, (Beograd: Sloboda, 1979), 286-287; „Уредба о устројству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 1-3.

12 Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942-1944*, 180-185.

13 „Уредба о устројству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 1-3.

14 Ibidem.

of their life is determined as much by the war conditions, hierarchy, the system of discipline through orders and punishments, as by the urban and rural environment, but also by life in and outside the barracks. There is new and complete knowledge about the SSG organization itself,¹⁵ which allows the focus to shift from its institutional and military aspect to the way of life of its members and the various forms of their daily practices in conditions of war and occupation. In research, we rely on, conditionally speaking, two types of sources. The first type is represented by the usual sources for this type of topic, such as numerous official files of SSG members, but also quite rare personal letters and memories. Data from personnel files are very short (basic biographical data, education, marital status, number of children, promotion by ranks and functions, personal and professional management...). They can only to a certain extent compensate for the conspicuous lack of autobiographical sources - memoirs and diaries of SSG members, so important for the reconstruction of everyday and private life. That is why some important elements, such as their personal experience of the service, their mutual relationships, body care, internal family relationships, etc., were missing from the analysis. On the other hand, we have less common sources for the subject, especially private life, such as numerous orders and punishments and various reports on the situation in their units. However, orders or punishments are often accompanied by a corresponding explanation, which provides a variety of information about the guards' routines as well.

Background and education

The military mechanism of the formation formed a new rhythm of work, relationships, activities and life of its members. In getting used to it, it was important whether the candidates had a professional military experience and participated in war events or were engaged in some civilian occupation. The first were aware of the kind of system they were entering and what they could expect, unlike candidates who had no professional military experience. The former, especially those who participated in the war conflicts in the summer and fall of 1941, had the opportunity to encounter violence and apply it, to fight against fellow citizens organized in insurgent military formations and to get used to the dynamics of war. The latter may have gone through military service in the pre-war period, but it was still a time-bound civil obligation. That's why some got used to it easier, while others had problems.

15 More about that in: *Стамболија, Српска државна стража 1942-1944* (Београд: ИСИ, 2021).

The conditions for admission to the SSG differed for future officers, non-commissioned officers and ordinary guards. According to the Nazi and occupying rhetoric, all candidates were required to belong to the "Aryan race and Serbian nationality" and to be physically and mentally healthy. Also, they had to be taller than 168 cm, under 30 years of age (the minimum age for future officers was 18 and 20 for non-commissioned officers and guards), of impeccable conduct, unmarried, childless widowers or divorcees. However, there was a difference in terms of education: officers candidates had to have at least a high school education, while guards and non-commissioned officers only had to be literate.¹⁶

However, in certain situations, the Minister of Internal Affairs,¹⁷ at the suggestion of the commander, could issue a waiver for a candidate, except for the requirement of belonging to the Aryan race. It primarily depended on the number of persons registered for calls to join the ranks of the SSG. According to the projection of the occupying and Serbian authorities, this formation should have had 16,000 members in order to meet its purpose, i.e., to ensure peace, public safety and the personal safety of citizens throughout occupied Serbia. It should be noted that the government took members of the former gendarmerie, police guard, armed detachments and border financial control, who were in active service, into the ranks of the SSG. Those who distinguished themselves in suppressing the uprising in the fall of 1941 and thus proved their "patriotism" and anti-communism had an advantage. According to estimates, there were about 7,500 of them. Practically, after their formal application, they were transferred into corresponding ranks and clerkships. They were also stimulated materially, through appropriate monthly salaries.¹⁸ The duration of the trainee service depended on their previous education. Thus, it lasted one year for candidates with a university degree, two years for those with a high school degree, and three years for all others.¹⁹

The structure of SSG members was influenced by two factors created by the war. The first was the taking into German captivity of a large number of conscripts from occupied Serbia, including active officers.²⁰ Another factor

16 „Уредба о устројству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 4-5.

17 After August 1942, the Head of the Serbian State Security took over the authority in this matter of command precedence from the Minister of Internal Affairs.

18 Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji 1941-1944*, knj. 1, 288.

19 „Уредба о устројству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 4-5.

20 Although between 200,000 and 375,000 Yugoslav soldiers and officers were captured in the April War of 1941, mostly Serbs, Montenegrins and Slovenes were taken prisoner. From

was the immigration of refugees under the pressure of anti-Serb politics, especially from the territory of the Independent State of Croatia.²¹

It is interesting that the members of the officer corps were on average 37 years and two months old, which was significantly more than the conditions prescribed. An analysis of 664 files of officers of the Serbian State Guard,²² who made up over 85% of all officers in 1943,²³ shows that in the newly created formation, although it was a direct successor of the gendarmerie, only slightly over 15.5% (104) of the officers came from the gendarmerie. Most of the officers came from the ranks of the infantry (187 – 28%). Among the remaining officers, who came from various military branches and services, most of them served in the artillery (82 – 12%), economic service (81 – 12%) or medical services (41 – 6%).²⁴

The vast majority of officers in the analyzed sample were of Serbian nationality (612 – 92%), which is expected considering the conditions. However, there were Slovenes (30 – about 4.5%) and Albanians (16 – 2%), but also Russians (6 – 1%). Their presence also shows that a certain number of candidates are exempt from the nationality requirement.²⁵

By place of birth, which is logical, there is a noticeable dominance of personnel born in the territory of the former Kingdom of Serbia, which was the absolute majority of officers (406 – 61%). A significant number of officers were also born in the territory of the former Austria-Hungary (195 – 29%). There were also from the area of the former Kingdom of Montenegro (49 – 7%) and from abroad.²⁶

Serbia itself, according to the estimates of D. Aleksić, approximately 100,000 people were taken, and not twice as many, as stated by other authors – Драган Алексић, *Привреда Србије у Другом светском рату*, (Београд: ИНИС, 2002), 313.

21 It is estimated that the total number of refugees was between 300,000 and 400,000, although the number rises to half a million. According to some other data, the number of those registered in mid-1944 was 241,000. More about that in: Slobodan D. Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941-1945*, (Београд: ISI, 1981).

22 The files that are in the Military Archives in the Nedić Archive fund - boxes 141, 142 and 143 were used for the analysis.

23 The number of officers in 1943 was 789 (Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942-1944*, 364).

24 There were also from engineering, air force, cavalry, judicial profession, police, automotive profession, navy, military clergy, music service, but also civil service and fire service.

25 The religious structure was in line with the national one. There were 93.1% Orthodox, 4.5% Roman Catholics, 2.2% Muslims and 0.2% others.

26 Fourteen officers (2.11%) were born abroad, of which 9 in Russia (1.36%), 2 in Albania (0.30%), 2 in Germany (0.30%) and 1 in France (0.15%).

An important fact from the point of view of everyday life is that a significant number of people with civilian education (100 – 15%) were accepted into the ranks of officers. This was the consequence of taking a large number of trained officers into captivity. Among the remaining analyzed officers, a large number of them (564 – 85%) had some kind of military education. Among them, slightly more than a quarter had graduated from the Lower School of the Military Academy, and more than half from other military schools.²⁷ Only 19 officers, or barely 3%, graduated from the Higher School of the Military Academy.

Unlike officers, candidates for guards and non-commissioned officers of the Serbian State Guard deviated significantly from the stipulated conditions. This was also influenced by the fact that the recruited guards had to remain in the service for at least three years and to serve in the places where they were assigned.²⁸ This type of commitment has had a strong impact on the profile of the applicants. Thus, for example, based on a representative sample of 123 personnel files of the Serbian State Guard of the Belgrade City Administration,²⁹ the average age when guards entered service, was almost 29. At the same time, only the trainee guards were close to 22, while all the other guards were over thirty years old.

Another important characteristic of this group is that the vast majority of trainee guards did not serve in the army - as many as 78%. This is somewhat surprising, because one would expect them to have some kind of military experience for this type of service.

However, it is no surprise that more than half of the guards (52%) were natives of the former Austria-Hungary, that is, the area covered by the Independent State of Croatia. Although it is not certain when they came, it is realistic to assume that a large number of them were those who fled to Serbia to save their lives.³⁰ The structure of their previous occupation is quite expected. More than half were in the gendarmerie or the police, and nearly ten percent came from the former army or professions related to armed protec-

27 For example, the Lower School of the Quartermaster Academy, the Infantry NCO School, the Artillery NCO School, the Air Force NCO School, the School of Reserve Officers and others.

28 In case they end their service before the end of three years, they should have returned half of the money they received during their previous service („Уредба о устройству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 3).

29 This archival material is located in the Historical Archive of Belgrade, in the collection of the Special Police Department. A total of 1,464 files have been saved.

30 In our sample, almost two-thirds of the members born in the territory of the former Austria-Hungary (64.5%) had some “armed” profession listed as their previous service, mostly the gendarmerie.

tion (foresters, field guards, Chetniks, volunteers...). Of the other professions, the highest percentage came from the ranks of farmers (around 14%), workers (around 10%) and students and pupils (close to 5%), and the least number of candidates came from the ranks of craftsmen (carpenters, car mechanics, shoemakers, blacksmiths, waiters, etc...) and civil servants. It should also be mentioned that all guards and officers were literate. However, this was true mainly for the guards of the Belgrade City Administration (only their personal files were preserved), and not for the whole of Serbia. It can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that in the interior of Serbia, especially in the ranks of the Field Guard, there were also those who did not have any education, that is, who were illiterate.

All accepted candidates underwent military training in accelerated courses, which were canceled after they had fulfilled their purpose. From the fall of 1942, classes were conducted only in the Permanent School in Belgrade. At those classes, members of the SSG not only trained in military-police work, and learned military discipline, but also went through a process of indoctrination. That is, they were taught what their national and political tasks were, what their role looked like in achieving the goals of the Government of Milan Nedić and the future of Serbia, but also how to fight against the “communists” or partisans, who were perceived as the greatest enemies.³¹

Everyday work: the example of a guard

It is not easy to describe the daily work routine of a, in many respects, specific armed formation in irregular conditions. Members of the SSG officially, as authorities, took care of maintaining public security in Serbia under the German occupation. Their work routine, after all, as with all military formations, differed depending on their branch, specialty, and area in which they served. Some guards served in rural, others in urban areas (cities, towns and boroughs) or on the border (until the end of 1942, when the border service was separated and subordinated to the Minister of Finance). In the following, we will try to reconstruct the work routine of guards in wartime and occupation conditions, which brought with it specific dynamics.

First, we give a reduced, but prescribed working routine. Guards in rural and urban settlements were organized into a system of stations. The number of guards in the stations varied depending on the place, security, and the period of occupation. Their daily work was adapted to rural or urban specifi-

31 Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942–1944*, 170–173.

ties. So, for example, the guards in the Field stations usually started their working day by adjusting their equipment, attending to their personal hygiene and a short exercise. Those assigned to patrol got up much earlier to prepare. The patrol usually consisted of 2-3 guards and a patrol leader, in the rank of a senior guard or non-commissioned officer. These patrols entailed strenuous and lengthy all-day hikes. As a rule, patrolling was supposed to last twenty-four hours. The other guards at the field station were engaged in the maintenance of the premises for their accommodation, the circle, the garden and the premises for the accommodation of animals (if they existed).³² Guards in urban settlements had a similar system of patrols consisting of four guards, who patrolled parts of the city under their jurisdiction.

However, this similarity is only apparent, as the city guards were much more protected. Members of the resistance rarely disturbed the security in the cities and thus the work and life of the guards. It was more difficult to enter and exit cities. In addition, there were numerous occupation troops there. Unlike them, guards in rural areas were much more exposed to attacks by partisan and royalist members of the resistance, as well as by various criminal groups. Not only were their weapons seized, which was important for further resistance, but they were often killed in clashes.³³

In various instructions, the guards were asked to be almost ideal soldiers and representatives of the government, on which, considering the frequent contacts with the population, the reputation of the government depended. However, the guards often had a problem with poor physical condition, work and moral discipline, attitude towards the population. Unlike the members of the Serbian Volunteer Corps (Volunteers) or the Communists, the Guards did not have a strong ideological orientation and indoctrination. Its members were mostly anti-communists, but they were not pro-German and pro-Nazi like the volunteers who were recruited from the membership of the pro-fascist movement ZBOR.³⁴ At the same time, they did not possess the fanaticism of the communists and their willingness to give their lives in defense of the interests of the collaborationist government. Also, the fear factor should not be underestimated, especially with guards who worked in isolated stations and checkpoints. They were aware of their own small numbers, modest equipment and

32 В. М. Ц., „Спремање за извршење службеног задатка“, *Гласник Српске државне страже (Гласник СДС)*, 3/1942, 187-198.

33 Димитријевић, *Ваљевски равноторци*, 106-107; Димитријевић, *Војска Недићеве Србије*, 334-335.

34 See more in: Славиша Перић, *Српски добровољачки корпус 1941-1945*, (Београд: Славиша Перић, 2018).

inferiority in relation to the units of both resistance movements. Furthermore, members of the gendarmerie, from whose ranks most of the guards came, already at the beginning of the uprising found themselves under attack from the resistance movements, primarily the communist one. All this significantly influenced their combat value to be poor. This is what the command of the Serbian State Guard tried to solve with the established system of supervision, warning and punishment. The state of discipline speaks eloquently of the fact that out of the analyzed files of members of the SSG Administration of the City of Belgrade, more than 30% of them were under some form of punishment. Most of them were sentenced to barracks prison, and as high as one in four were dismissed from the service.³⁵ There were also repeated punishments, which testified to their weak influence on the behavior of the guards. So, for example, the guard-trainee Jakov Popović was sentenced three times to twenty-seven days in prison “for neglecting his duty and insolent behavior with citizens” and once to 45 days in prison for confiscating and selling someone else’s bicycle.³⁶ Others, as evidenced by post-war data, carried out not only arrests and injuries, but also “torture-abuse” and rape. Some data speak of 72 and others of 117 women raped by members of the Serbian State Guard.³⁷

The situation was even worse in the interior of the country. Among the various examples, the Žiča County Field Guard station and its members stood out: “...The commander of the station, although he used to be a good gendarme, now only thinks about saving his neck and feeding his family. In the office, he keeps his grain on the floor and dries it. Also, he keeps 5 copies of posters of the Commander of Serbia as a last warning to the Serbs, instead of sticking these posters on the municipal building and the station. The floor of the office in the barracks is dirty and has not been cleaned since moving in. On the windows of the office, scraps and pieces of bread, fruit and paper are kept. The commander of the station was unshaven, did not clean his rifle after returning from duty, and his pants were wrinkled... The barracks are not designed to defend against attacks, there are no trenches, and no other means that the guards would use in case of an attack on the barracks. Only 3 guards are sent on duty, instead of 5. Only two-hour ambushes are held, and houses and grounds are not searched. The station commander instinctively feels that the forest is full

35 Istorijски arhiv Beograda (IAB), Uprava grada Beograda (UGB), Specijalna policija (SP), Dosije pripadnika Srpske državne straže Uprave grada Beograda.

36 IAB, UGB, SP, 105/p-950.

37 Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942-1944*, 251, 258.

of bandits, so he does not have the courage to enter it..."³⁸ This image may not be the most common, but it testified to a lack of work discipline and an insufficient sense of belonging to the military organization and respect for its rules.

However, it is important to mention that in numerous cases the lack of discipline and efficiency was a consequence of the presence of a large number of members of the royalist resistance movement (Chetniks) in the ranks of the SSG. One of the most common ways the Chetniks supplied themselves with weapons and manpower was by disarming and "capturing" guards. Most of these conflicts were some sort of arranged "performances". Isolated village stations or columns were mostly selected for such actions. Most of the time, the guards did not put up any resistance, and the reports indicated a much larger number of attackers.³⁹

This was also noticed by the Germans, who at the beginning of 1943 demanded "the transfer of smaller stations to larger units" and stricter control of SSG officers.⁴⁰ In the same year, with the change in the war situation, there were frequent escapes of guards and their departure into the forest, in most cases to the units of the royalist resistance movement. For the sake of illustration, in July 1943 alone, 205 non-commissioned officers and guards and 4 officers escaped,⁴¹ and in August 1943, 159 non-commissioned officers/guards and one officer escaped.⁴² As many as 278 guards and NCOs and 6 officers were found in the warrants for fugitive members issued by the SSG Command in September 1943.⁴³ This testified to the inability of SSG members to be what they were meant to be - a true force capable of pacifying the occupied area.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the guards, albeit more as an auxiliary force, participated in offensives and pursuits of partisans. Then

38 Vojni arhiv (VA), Nedićeva arhiva (NdA), kutija 144, fascikla 4, br. dokumenta 31.

39 For example, it is stated that a group of "200 DM", in mid-January 1944, attacked the Field guard station in the village of Tešica in the Moravian region. On that occasion, the guards were captured, and the weapons were taken away. One village station of the Serbian State Guard had 15-20 guards. There is no particular military logic for 200 people to attack ten times less guards who were poorly motivated to fight (VA, NdA, 91-1-13). Also, in the same period, a group of "400 DM" is mentioned, which on January 16, 1944 in Zaječar disarmed the city guard and took away their weapons (VA, NdA, 91-4-22).

40 VA, Nacionalni arhiv Vašington (NAV), T-501, r. 248, s. 1236-1237.

41 VA, NdA, 145-5-1.

42 VA, NdA, 146-2-1.

43 VA, NdA, 146-2-2. Milan Borković, citing German sources, states that only in the first 15 days of September, 778 members of the Serbian State Guard and 640 members of the Serbian Border Guard deserted, which seems a bit excessive - Борковић, *Контрареволуција у Србији*, књ. I, 194-195.

they were gathered into larger military formations, as in the case of the unsuccessful offensive in mid-November 1942 in the Toplica region, in which over 600 guards participated,⁴⁴ or the offensive in mid-June 1944 with around 800 guards in the vicinity of Aleksinac. This last battle was the biggest independent military undertaking, and at the same time the biggest military defeat of the Serbian State Guard. However, among the guards there were also those who distinguished themselves in battle. A large number of them, despite their military failure, were praised for their behavior during combat.⁴⁵

Be that as it may, the work routine of the guards, in addition to low morale, indiscipline and poor efficiency, was also characterized by the willingness of individuals to perform their duties well and be praised for it. This did not, as it seems, boost motivation and strengthen discipline. After all, the lack of motivation and discipline was due to the absence of faith in the goals of the struggle.

Material status

The material status of SSG members was one of the most significant factors in their daily and private lives. In principle, it was solved through salaries, which were prescribed by the Decree on the Organization in 1942, and later by budgets. Each member, after being accepted into the service, was classified as a civil servant in the corresponding salary grade. They received a certain sum immediately after being accepted into the service for preparing and procuring the most urgent personal needs.⁴⁶ Preparation included, among other things, a suit and shoes, that is, a uniform, which became homogeneous only from the end of 1942. It was made of low-quality green cloth, which reminded members of the SSG of the material from which sacks were made. Apart from the fact that it quickly fell into disrepair, they were ashamed to wear it.⁴⁷ This further affected the morale of the guards and their authority among the population.

44 VA, NdA, 21–1–120.

45 VA, NdA, 146–5–20.

46 Trainee guards received 1,000 dinars, non-commissioned officers 1,500 and officers 3,000 dinars.

47 In an Order of the commander, it was written: “I receive reports from certain officers, in which they state that they are ashamed to wear the uniform they have now. It is not a shame, in this time of war, to wear a uniform made of war-quality cloth. Every officer needs to be aware of the situation in which he lives and works, to have understanding and to adapt to these wartime circumstances, and this command takes all possible measures to improve the position of officers in every respect...” (VA, NdA, 145–2–34).

The salaries of SSG members were initially higher than those of civil servants. Thus, for example, the lowest-ranking officers received on average between 25% and 100% higher salary compared to lower-ranking civil servants in the Commissariat for Prices and Wages (3,100–3,300 versus 1,500–2,500). This ratio was 30% higher for the newly hired trainee guards compared to the lowest salaries of the mentioned officials (2,200 vs. 1,500 dinars).⁴⁸ In addition to their salaries, members of the SSG also received a special service allowance due to the dangers of their work, as well as a family allowance for each child. They had the right to a pension, free rail travel, and treatment in state hospitals.⁴⁹ These rights were not something specific to this formation. They were, apart from the special allowance for service, and occasional special family allowances, common to all civil servants.

Salaries across ranks in Serbian State Guard

RANK	1942	1943	1944
General (III/1 and II/2 civil servant salary group)	7,000–8,000	8,000	8,000
Colonel (IV/1 and III/2)	6,000–7,000	6,703	6,775
Lieutenant Colonel (IV/2)	5,300–6,000	5,674	5,785
Major (V)	4,800–5,300	5,056	5,164
Captain (VII and VI)	4,200–4,800	4,294–4,593	4,333–4,679
Lieutenant (VIII)	3,900–4,200	4,022	4,199
Sublieutenant (IX)	3,600–3,900	3,770	3,807
Sublieutenant Trainee (X and IX)	3,100–3,300	3,211	3,280
Senior Sergeant (Ia officials salary group)	2,900	3,027	2,647
Sergeant (I)	2,700	2,808	2,449
Corporal (II)	2,500	2,557	2,278
Lance Corporal (III)	2,300	2,429	2,124
Guard Trainee (III)	2,200	2,000–2,200	1,499–1,752

Source: *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 1-3; *Службене новине*, 1. 1. 1943, 111-112, 116-118; *Службене новине*, 1. 1. 1944, 112.

48 Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, knj.1, 291.

49 „Уредба о устројству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 1-3.

It is interesting that the average salaries did not increase between 1942 and 1944. Even in 1944, they were even less than prescribed by the Decree on the Organization. The decrease, apparently, occurred with the increase in the number of the members.⁵⁰ At the same time, thanks to the conversion of periodic raises into permanent ones, in 1943 there was an increase in the average salary of civil servants by about 30%.⁵¹ That same year, there was also a large increase in inflation and a jump in the prices of basic foodstuffs, which affected a drastic drop in the purchasing power of all officials. The prescribed prices were three to four times higher than at the beginning of the occupation, and on the black market the prices were up to sixteen times higher than what was prescribed.⁵² Although the average salary of an officer in 1943 was 4,466 dinars,⁵³ it was only slightly higher than the comparable average salary of a civil servant of the same group (VI), persons with an academic degree, two children and ten years of service (4,244 dinars).⁵⁴

If the officer - captain of the mentioned group VI was married and lived outside the barracks, his salary was not nearly enough to meet the basic needs of the family. They needed 8,159 dinars in March 1942 for supplies at prescribed prices, for which hardly anything could be obtained. Already in December 1942, the required salary at prescribed prices amounted to 11,226 dinars.⁵⁵ That is why most of them were supplied on the black market, where prices were constantly rising. The real value of wages was best seen in the average prices of products on the black market: in April 1943, a kilogram of prunes cost 100 dinars, a kilogram of apples 100, a kilogram of potatoes 80, a kilogram of pork 600, a kilogram of lard 1,200, a liter of milk 120 dinars, an egg 20 dinars...⁵⁶ The competent institutions estimated that in March 1942, it was necessary to set aside 19,725 dinars per month to provide for the family at real prices, which is slightly more than four average officers' salaries. A year later, more than fifteen salaries were needed (1943 - 69,802), and already in June 1943, that

50 Their number increased by a little more than a quarter compared to 1943.

51 Nataša Miličević, „Činovnici u okupiranoj Srbiji 1941-1944”, *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2018, 77.

52 *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda Jugoslavije*, XII-3, (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1978), 788; Николић, *Страх и нада у Србији...*, 146.

53 „Државни буџет за 1943. годину“, *Службене новине*, 1. јануар 1943, 111–112, 116–117, 139–140.

54 Наташа Милићевић, *Српско грађанство у окупираној Србији 1941–1944*, (докторска дисертација у рукопису, Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет, Одељење за историју, 2016), 171.

55 *Ibidem*, 208.

56 *Ibidem*, 205.

sum had grown to an incredible 106,268 dinars, i.e., more than twenty-three times the average officers' salary.⁵⁷

The government tried to improve the nutritional status of SSG members in several ways. First, in the fall of 1942, it introduced its own production under the control of district commands.⁵⁸ Also, an important novelty was the introduction of food cards, which began to be implemented on April 1, 1943. Each member of the Serbian State Guard was to receive 200 grams of oil or fat, 500 grams of meat, 150 grams of sugar, 500 grams of beans and 6 kg of flour per week. This was significantly higher in energy value compared to ordinary citizens and amounted to 24,225 calories per week, i.e., 3,460 calories per day.⁵⁹ However, the problem was that the prescribed ration card could not be implemented because there was not enough food. According to the testimony of a contemporary, the diet "...was absolutely miserable: corn bread, beans, gerschla. It was a daily diet, there was very little fat and meat". He believed that the Serbian State Guard "was fed much worse than both the civilian population and the Chetniks".⁶⁰

The government tried to improve the poor financial position of SSG members by increasing family allowances. Compared to the budget from 1943, when 11.8 million dinars were reserved for family allowances, in 1944 that amount was increased to as much as 90.8 million dinars.⁶¹

Guards and non-commissioned officers were in a particularly difficult position. Their salary, already low, during 1943 suffered not only a formal reduction, but also a complete drop in value. This is evidenced by the fact that a first-year guard-trainee with a salary of 1,499 dinars in 1944 could buy 2.5 kilograms of pork, 10 kilograms of apples or 1.3 kilograms of lard.⁶² It would be expected that unmarried guards and non-commissioned officers, who as a rule had to live in the barracks, were in a somewhat more favorable position, because they were fed in the canteen. Officers and married non-commissioned officers, as well as all married members whose families were not at the place of duty, joined them occasionally, for a certain period of time, "as required by the service". Barracks meant "all buildings where units are housed".⁶³ If there

57 Свакодневни живот под окупацијом 1941–1944, 24, 28; Милићевић, *Српско грађанство у окупираној Србији 1941–1944*, 208.

58 VA, NdA, 145–1–9.

59 VA, NdA, 145–2–19.

60 Петар Мартиновић, *Милан Недић*, (Београд: „Никола Пашић”, 2003), 358.

61 „Државни буџет за 1943“, *Службене новине*, 1. 1. 1943, 107; „Државни буџет за 1944“, *Службене новине*, 1. 1. 1944, 112.

62 Милићевић, *Српско грађанство у окупираној Србији 1941–1944*, 205, 208, 210–211.

63 „Ред у касарнама Српске државне страже“, *Гласник СДС* 4–5/1943, 332–335.

were no government buildings, the “best village houses”, schools or gymnasiums were used as barracks.⁶⁴ The stations in the field initially had a capacity of 10–15 guards. In addition to accommodation, food and firewood were provided, but they were very poor. In the barracks, there were not enough beds or the prescribed straw beds, but the guards slept on the floor. There wasn’t even enough firewood, so people were freezing.⁶⁵ In November 1942, the commander of the Kraljevo region wrote in a report: “Not a single unit obtained the projected quantities of potatoes and beans, although the deadline for obtaining them had long passed, because they did not receive any help in this regard from the county heads and mayors...”⁶⁶ Petar Martinović Bajica, however, states that “the monthly salary could not even cover half of the monthly expenses”. Because of this, it sometimes happened that the people “gave food, blankets and laundry to the Serbian guards”.⁶⁷

The solution to the problem of poor supply was sought in the formation of their own economies at the stations or barracks, in which wheat, corn, potatoes and cabbage, but also poultry and livestock were produced. Land was cultivated by guards “with the help of additional militia and possibly detainees”, while the public security service was not allowed to “suffer in the least”. If there was too much land, it could be distributed evenly among the married guards, with the condition that they cultivate it themselves.⁶⁸ According to some data, at the beginning of 1943, the most land was cultivated by the district command in Kruševac, as much as 14 hectares, the command in Zaječar district (11 hectares and 85 ares) and the command in Užice, around 7 hectares. Other economies were much smaller, and in the Leskovac, Požarevac and Morava districts, land was not cultivated at all. The two mentioned commands, which stood out for their good economies, were also successful in cattle breeding - the guards from Kruševac raised 19 pigs and 12 cattle, and the guards from Zaječar raised 30 pigs.⁶⁹ Stations in towns, where it was not pos-

64 VA, NdA, 144–3–13.

65 VA, NdA, 144–4–20.

66 VA, NdA, 144–4–31.

67 Мартиновић, Милан Недић, 358.

68 VA, NdA, 26–12–53.

69 The total value of the food that was obtained in this way, for all commands, was worth almost two million dinars at the time, of which the Kruševac District Command contributed 1.2 million, and the Zaječar District Command contributed 460 thousand dinars (VA, NdA, 145–1–9).

sible to have land for cultivation, were supposed to provide the necessary provisions in time at the markets and by purchasing directly from the peasants.⁷⁰

Marriage

One of the conditions for joining the Serbian State Guard was related to marital status. We have already stated that, according to it, the candidates had to be unmarried, divorced or widowed without children.⁷¹ The Serbian collaborationist government considered, as follows from the mentioned condition, the marriage and family of SSG members to be factors that made it impossible to properly serve the regime. That is why it demanded from the members as much commitment as possible to the interests of the service. This was not, it was believed, possible if there was also care for the wife and children. On the other hand, it was also important for the authorities to avoid additional financial payments to wives and children in the bad economic situation in which the country was, which they were obliged to do by law. Although these attitudes were expected in the existing war situation, they ran counter to existing conservative views of the family that promoted it as an ideal.⁷² In addition, the work of members of the SSG was very risky, so a family could be left without a breadwinner. Then the government had to take over the financial care of the widow and children,⁷³ which it also tried to prevent with the aforementioned marriage condition. And those material benefits were never large enough to cover the costs of supporting widows and children, their education, etc. It was also necessary to avoid the population looking at the neglected widows and children of fallen members. Thus, as in some earlier times, the government, while considering the reputation of the soldiers, also took into account its own reputation and authority among the population.⁷⁴ It was not at all pleasant for any government, including the Serbian government under occupation, if its soldiers, especially lower-ranking officers with lower incomes, could not support their families.

However, the problem was that not only married candidates but also those with children applied for the service in a much larger number. It can be said that it is not a surprise. For many candidates who were married, it was impor-

70 В. М. Ц., „Како треба да изгледа једна пољска станица“, *Гласник СДС* 1-2/1943, 45-49.

71 „Уредба о устројству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 1-3.

72 Љубинка Шкодрић, *Жена у окупираној Србији 1941-1944*, (Београд: Архипелаг 2020), 265.

73 Стамболија, *Српска државна стража 1942-1944*, 68.

74 Миле Бјелајац, „Приватност у униформи“, *Приватни живот код Срба у двадесетом веку*, ур. Милан Ристовић, (Београд: СЛЮ, 2007), 510.

tant to have a job to support their family. Therefore, the motives for them joining the ranks of the Serbian State Guard were, among other things, of a material nature. Under the pressure of reality, the government had to give up the aforementioned marriage and family condition. It did not have time to wait for more desirable candidates to apply. Even, as evidenced by the reports of the district chiefs, the number of candidates who applied in February 1942 was extremely low.⁷⁵ This was also influenced by the requirement that the candidates commit to remain in the SSG for the next three years.

In any case, the government did not apply the marriage condition, but it did not change it during the occupation. This is indicated by the fact that of the total number of officers, whose files we analyzed, more than two thirds were married (479 – 72%). Although more than half were without children (359 – 54%), 176 of them (26.5%) had two or more children. The rest, 119 of them (19.5%) had one child.

The situation with the lower ranks was significantly different. Of the analyzed guards and non-commissioned officers of the SSG of the Belgrade City Administration, slightly more than a third were married (36%). The percentage of married members was lowest among the youngest by rank - trainee guards - which is expected considering their age. Hardly ten percent of them were married. The share of married members grew with rank, which makes sense considering their age.⁷⁶ It is also interesting that more than three quarters were without children (76%), and out of those who had children, the majority had one child (13%).⁷⁷

The authorities may not have been able to influence the marital status of SSG candidates, but they tried to indirectly and directly influence the marriage and choice of spouses of unmarried guards. According to the regulations, a member of the Serbian State Guard could only marry a woman of Aryan origin, of Serbian nationality, with the permission of the Commander (for guards and non-commissioned officers), that is, the Minister of Internal Affairs (for officers). Obtaining a permit not only depended on the assessed qualities of the future wife, but also on the authorities' insistence that no more than one-third of members could be married.⁷⁸ This was a problem for all those who exceeded that number. Thus, another, additional obstacle for marriages was created. Despite this, marriages were approved. Between October 1941 and late

75 VA, NdA, 1A-2-29.

76 Of the lance corporals, 20% were married, 52.08% of corporals, 79.44% of sergeants, and 96.25% of senior sergeants.

77 Of the analyzed sample, 7.38% had two children, and 3.28% had three or more children.

78 „Уредба о устройству Српске државне страже“, *Службене новине*, бр. 18, 3. 3. 1942, 3

November 1942, 67 officers received marriage licenses from the Minister of the Interior. The most popular were daughters of merchants (19), followed by civil servants (14), gendarmes and police officers (6), officers (4), teachers (4) and restaurant owners (3). Only seven girls came from families whose fathers' professions can be said to have been rich (industrialists, rentiers and landowners).⁷⁹

Marriage without a permit also entailed dismissal from service. This, for example, happened to trainee guard Nikola Kovačević, who got married on April 30, 1944.⁸⁰ This kind of intervention in marriage politics is not new. As we indicated, it existed before in the army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁸¹ It was a direct interference in the private life of SSG members, who had to choose between their wives and service.

General Stevan Radovanović, the first Commander of the Serbian State Guard, did not dispute the importance of marriage in the life of its members. He wrote about it in the official newsletter of this military formation - the Gazette of the Serbian State Guard, so his views can be taken as official on this issue. For General Radovanović, "marriage is the best barrier that protects a person from the vice of fornication". Officers and guards should get married only after 26 years of age. Until then, especially young officers should keep their sexuality under control and avoid women such as "singers, actresses, landladies and their relatives..." They could, he warned, be the bane of young officers and their lives and health. The young officer should, he emphasized, "preserve his purity for his future marriage, which he enters into in order to receive and nurture his child - his replacement". General Radovanović writes: "The most natural and best sexual intercourse takes place in marriage". In any case, he emphasized the importance of male sexuality, as a normal phenomenon; he did not recommend its complete renunciation, but it was to be carried out in marriage. Underlying these traditional views is the elevation of marriage and the creation of healthy offspring. At the same time, women, especially some of the mentioned professional groups, were perceived as dangerous for the entire life of officers due to their somewhat freer behavior, which deviated from the existing social norms.

Although, in Radovanović's opinion, "a woman is evil, we cannot live without her. It's bad with her, but even worse without her". That is why it is necessary to take care of the moral image of the future wife, her state of health, ma-

79 VA, NdA, 144-5-12.

80 IAB, UGB, SP, 85/k-619; Ibidem, 85/k-625.

81 Миле Бјелајац, „Женидбе официра српске и југословенске војске. Планирано стварање елите 1881-1941”, *Годишњак за друштвену историју* 1/1995, 19-38.

terial position and dowry, the reputation that she and her family have in society. General Radovanović believed that officers and guards should be guided more by reason and less by heart. He did not deny the importance of love in choosing a wife, but it should not be the main motive in that choice. Because, he pointed out, “a marriage without love, just like a marriage based on an account, is neither good nor happy”. It would be best, he advised the guards and officers, if “the girl has some dowry which doesn’t have to be big, but it should be at least enough so that the newlyweds can establish their own house and with whom the officer will have a better life than that he had as a bachelor”.⁸²

In contrast to these visible restrictions, SSG members experienced great pressure from their parents to choose a life partner. It was not always seen, but it was often practiced. An excellent example is the preserved letter of captain Vojislav Radovanović addressed to his father, the aforementioned General Radovanović, who was his superior officer at the same time.⁸³ Young Radovanović was in love with a nurse of humble origin, whose grandmother was Jewish. A much bigger problem than her humble origins was that she was not a pure Serb, but someone who also had Jewish blood. His parents wanted him to marry another, an officer’s daughter, from a good family. Vojislav Radovanović agreed to at least get to know the latter, but he did not like her at all. She immediately struck him as “stupid, tactless and ill-mannered”. And not only that, according to Captain Radovanović, she is “the worst provincial snob who exudes stupidity and wants to represent some princess”. General Radovanović asked his immediate superior commander at the post of duty in Jagodina to control his son. Young Radovanović complained in a letter to his father that he felt “trapped” and threatened to resign since “the commander and the father have nothing in common and the commander was not allowed to use what he knows as a father and the father was not allowed to use the power of the commander”.⁸⁴

In the end, we should once again return to the beginning of the story of marriage. In wartime conditions, the authorities expected the deaths and injuries

82 Стеван М. Радовановић, „Какви треба да су и шта треба да раде припадници Српске државне страже“, *Гласник СДС* 8/1943, 496–500.

83 Vojislav S. Radovanović was born on February 5, 1916 in Ćuprija. He graduated from the Lower School of the Military Academy in the 60th class and served as an officer of the Machine Gun Squadron of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment of the Royal Guard until the beginning of the April War. He met the war in the rank of lieutenant, and in 1942 he was promoted to the rank of captain. In the Serbian State Guard, he served as adjutant of the Morava District Command for most of the time (VA, NdA, 143-3-16).

84 Arhiv Jugoslavije, Državna komisija za istraživanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (110), dosije br. 356, II-A, Letter from Vojislav Radovanović to Stevan Radovanović. Based on the content analysis, the letter was most likely written in the middle of 1942.

of married members of the SSG, which often happened. Although it took care of the widows, the government, due to the lack of sufficient material resources, transferred its obligation to the population as well and encouraged charity drives to help families. One such drive in the form of a large charity concert was held in February 1944 in the Kolarac endowment. The entire profit was distributed to the families of the fallen guards.⁸⁵ Special problems were caused by the application of collective fines for residents of places where a member of the SSG was killed. Thus, due to the murder of sublieutenant Milivoj Ječinac in the village of Šarbanovac near Knjaževac, the locals had to pay a fine of 200,000 dinars in favor of his family.⁸⁶ The residents of Belanovica and Poljanica also had to pay a fine for the same reasons in the same amount. The inhabitants of these two last-mentioned villages were also obliged to feed 200 members of the SSG of the Kragujevac district for three months.⁸⁷ The punishment was due to the belief that they did not report the presence of communists, which led to the death of the guard.⁸⁸ These collective reprisals produced a great resistance of the population towards the Serbian collaborationist authorities.

Hygiene and health

In the reports of the Serbian State Guard, it is stated that its members have a big problem with maintaining hygiene. This problem is common to all situations of war and occupation. Even members of the SSG, who had a special medical service whose task was to take care of hygiene in the barracks, the health of its members, vaccinations, physical fitness and condition of the soldiers, could not avoid it. Medical doctors, in order to prevent disease in the units, planned periodic visits to the units.⁸⁹ However, the state of hygiene was poor, especially in the barracks where most of the guards lived. The barracks often lacked beds, so people slept on the floor, which was not well maintained. Superior officers punished soldiers for not caring about the cleanliness of the room. Because of this, for the sake of illustration, Corporal Mirko Delić was sentenced to five days in prison.⁹⁰ In addition, there was a lack of firewood in

85 „Војничко и културно деловање Српске државне страже“, *Српски народ*, 4. 3. 1944, 4.

86 „Стрељани због мучког убиства ппор. Српске државне страже“, *Ново време*, 10. 11. 1942, 3.

87 VA, NdA, 144-4-32.

88 In the mentioned villages, a certain number of people who were labeled as “communists” were also shot.

89 VA, NdA, 144-2-25.

90 IAB, UGB, SP, 69/d-358.

the barracks, which led to colds and other respiratory infections. To that should be added bad clothes and shoes, which quickly deteriorated. The shoes, for example, were made of rusty leather, which caused the soldiers' feet to be constantly wet on rainy and winter days. In the event of a chase, they injured their soles by tripping over stones or roots due to their worn and broken shoes. The Gazette of the Serbian State Guard wrote about that in a humorous manner. The story "Janko and Marko" follows the adventures of two guards and their friends with their shoes. One of them, in order to make his shoes last as long as possible and to always be ready for service, decided to shoe them. However, already during the chase, Janko's "brokvica" (a nail with a large head) fell off and injured his foot. The lesson of this story is that shoes should be stored in the prescribed manner and taken to the master immediately after they are torn.⁹¹

Members of the SSG were also faced with numerous diseases due to poor maintenance of personal hygiene. It seems, judging by the advice published in the official Gazette, that many soldiers did not know how to take care of the cleanliness of their bodies in an adequate way. The tips were full of details on how to monitor every part of the body, from the hair, face and teeth to the legs. To illustrate, it was pointed out that guards should wash their hair at least once a month, or even better, if possible, once every seven days. It was somewhat indicative of infrequent hair washing. The importance of daily foot washing was especially explained. "Dirty feet, especially those that sweat", it said, "caused the skin to become soft, which makes it unable to withstand long walks", which is essential in guard work. That is why the importance of daily foot washing was pointed out. True, the author was aware that due to war-time conditions, the guards did not have enough soap and powder to be able to bathe regularly and change their clothes regularly, every week. Therefore, he suggested disinfecting linen and clothes in order to avoid the transmission of lice and the possibility of infection, above all, with spotted typhus.⁹²

In any case, due to neglect of hygiene, milder and more serious diseases appeared. Their greater expansion could reduce the combat readiness of the army. Among the milder diseases, milder skin diseases, shoe wounds, milder external purulent changes, and scabies were more common. Diarrhea, typhoid and spotted typhus and malaria were among the more serious diseases.⁹³ Spotted typhus and malaria had the character of an epidemic, so it is no coin-

91 B, P. П., „Јанко и Марко“, *Гласник СДС* 12/1943, 716–725.

92 Ibidem.

93 VA, NdA, 144–4–21.

cidence that these infectious diseases spread to members of the SSG.⁹⁴ There were also frequent rheumatic-neuralgic diseases without fever, minor diseases of internal organs, mumps, fatigue, etc.⁹⁵ The guards, in any case, knew the most basic rules for preventing the spread of infectious diseases and providing first aid. They learned about them in courses from brochures, which were issued for this purpose by the Health Department in 1942.⁹⁶ However, it is questionable how much they managed to implement it in practice.

In addition to uncleanliness, two other enemies of guards' health were highlighted - venereal diseases and alcoholism. Venereal diseases, already widespread in the population, were also a frequent occurrence among members of the Serbian State Guard. Mostly young people eager to enjoy themselves, they were regular visitors to prostitutes and "free women", who were also carriers of infections. Many guards ended up in hospitals. The commander of the District Command of Leskovac recorded at the end of October 1942 "that lately a large number of guards have been seeking for medical help for venereal diseases". In order to prevent their spread, he ordered "that the commanders of the detachments and other units inform all their guards that anyone who presents himself for medical help from a venereal disease will be dismissed from the service".⁹⁷ There were also dismissals of guards for arbitrarily leaving the venereal ward of the Military Hospital. Often the same guards were already punished for indiscipline and vagrancy.⁹⁸ The aforementioned threats did not help as the disease continued to spread among the guards. In May 1943, the SSG Command ordered that those guards who end up in the hospital due to venereal diseases be categorized depending on the type and severity of the disease, and those guards whose treatment required a long hospital recovery to be dismissed from service, as they were unusable.⁹⁹

Alcoholism was also a serious problem for SSG members. Alcohol was readily available and frequently consumed. It was especially dangerous for soldiers who carried weapons. Because, "an armed man, such as a guard", wrote the author in the official gazette, "under the influence of alcohol, can be far more dangerous than an ordinary man, so it is understandable that he is despised and underestimated far more than an ordinary man. This ruins the rep-

94 More in: Наташа Милићевић, „Заразне болести у окупираној Србији 1941-1944“, *Војноисторијски гласник* 2/2020, 112-139.

95 VA, NdA, 144-4-21.

96 VA, NdA, 26-12-56.

97 VA, NdA, 26-12-36.

98 IAB, UGB, SP, 75/z-471.

99 VA, NdA, 145-3-2.

utation of the Guard among the people and turns the people away from the Guard, which has very bad consequences in every way...”¹⁰⁰

In moments of leisure

According to sources, guards had a rather narrow choice of activities that they engaged in during their time off from military duties. In the barracks, entertainment consisted of gambling and drinking alcohol. Both phenomena took off during the occupation. During 1943, they were also accompanied by unpleasant scenes. So, for example, gambling very often ended with “insults and fistfights...”¹⁰¹ Although gambling offered a kind of fun and enjoyment, it was also a vice. At the same time, many of them went into debt, which further undermined their financial position. This phenomenon was also common among officers in Serbia in the 19th century.¹⁰² As in the past, the SSG Command threatened to severely punish gamblers. First, they were threatened with being sent to the Disciplinary Court, and then with being fired and sent to work in a mine. Confiscated gambling money was to be “delivered to the Red Cross to help refugees”.¹⁰³ For example, let’s mention that corporal Dragutin Zagorac was sentenced to fifteen days in prison for playing cards for money.¹⁰⁴

Earlier we hinted that frequent use of alcohol led to illness. Now we want to point out that alcohol, in addition to its destructive potential, also brought some enjoyment to the guards. Its introduction into the barracks and its use in the canteens was strictly prohibited, except on Easter, Christmas and All Souls’ Day, which was the Patron Saint Day of the Serbian State Guard. However, like gambling, the enjoyment of alcohol was extremely widespread. It was accompanied by a kind of relaxation for the consumers, but for those who had an awkward temper, it could lead to arguments and fights. Wine and brandy were enjoyed, which even the owners of the private buildings where the barracks were located sold to the guards. The SSG Command, considering the reputation of the service, constantly issued orders to ban it from the barracks and severely punish those who consume it, and even dismiss them. De-

100 Бранко Ј. Станковић, „Опхођење официра према подофицирима и стражарима и подофицира и стражара према официрима, њихов поступак према народу и однос са властима“, *Гласник СДС* 4–5/1943, 317.

101 VA, NdA, 145–2–28.

102 Милић Милићевић, „Официри“, *Приватни живот код Срба у деветнаестом веку*, приредили Ана Столић и Ненад Макуљевић, (Београд: CLIO, 2006), 749.

103 VA, NdA, 145–2–28.

104 IAB, UGB, SP, 75/z-467.

spite this, it was difficult for the military authorities to implement the orders, and the soldiers found a way to get alcohol.¹⁰⁵

Compared to leisure time in the barracks, going outside the barracks provided guards with much more time for fun and pleasure. According to the rules of the service, permission was required for every exit from the barracks. Obtaining permission did not mean that soldiers and officers could behave as they pleased. They could do whatever they wanted and planned within the framework of social and military rules. Some were visiting their parents or friends, others were seeing their girlfriends, others were just going for a walk or a movie. These motifs of pleasant leisure are rarely noted and practically remain under the radar. It is much more common in the sources that soldiers and officers spent their free time in taverns, inns and brothels. This type of their activity was accompanied not only by the use of alcohol but also by various outbursts, which is why it was recorded. It is noticeable, at least in the sample of the SSG Administration of the City of Belgrade, that it is mainly about unmarried guards. Some, like guard-trainee Nikola Komlenić, were repeatedly disciplined for their behavior in bars. Thus, in mid-November 1942, he was “drinking in the Surčin tavern, making a mess and fighting”, and already in August 1943, after leaving his guard post, he found himself in the “Kod Mladena” buffet.¹⁰⁶ Going out without the permission of superiors, as with the aforementioned Komlenić, was not a rare occurrence. The same example also shows that repeated behavior, as well as punishments, had no effect, at least in his case, on changing offences. In addition, it is also interesting that he was not fired from his job, although drinking and debauchery were forbidden.

The daily and private life of members of the Serbian State Guard was under the strict control of superior officers and the Command. Control was imposed by military discipline of guards, regulations and orders, but also by punishments. This is normal for the functioning of military units. The goal was to create a formation that can successfully respond to the intended tasks, primarily ensuring peace and security on the territory of occupied Serbia. The military everyday life of the members of the SSG was not static and unchanging because of this, but under the pressure of the reality of the civil war, life and work

105 VA, NdA, 145-5-18.

106 IAB, UGB, SP, 85/k-628.

in a rural or urban environment and life in and outside the barracks, it had a specific dynamic and changeability that deviated from military regulations.

The composition of the members of the SSG showed that it did not include only desirable candidates, who had military or police experience, were unmarried, divorced or widowed without children, under the age of thirty, nor candidates who were genuine and fanatical anticommunists and advocates of the policies of Milan Nedić's government. Although the largest number of officers came from a military background, only a small percentage of them were from the ranks of the former gendarmerie. This required additional specific knowledge, for example, in combating various types of crime. An even bigger problem were guard recruits, who overwhelmingly were without any military training. This was also reflected in their work routine. Short military-police courses where they were trained for work tasks and familiarized with the ideological and political goals of Milan Nedić's government did not help much. Members of the SSG were underequipped and ideologically undeveloped, in contrast to the members of the Serbian Volunteer Corps and the communist-oriented resistance movement. Most of them, especially those in rural and more isolated areas, saw attacks by members of the resistance movement and feared for their lives. The imposition of discipline through the mechanism of orders, punishments or praise did not bring much success, because there was a fairly large number of disciplinary offenses for arbitrary behavior, mistreatment of the population (illegal repression, theft, blackmail, rape...), as well as frequent desertions. This testified to the loss of the power to enforce prohibitions and penalties, thereby preserving the authority's reputation.

First, there was pressure on individuals to join the ranks of the SSG, and then forced mobilization, especially in the final year of the war. This, in turn, implicitly testified to the unappealing nature of this service, which in March 1942 offered not only higher salaries than those of other civil servants, but also provided food and accommodation for unmarried members. However, this type of stimulus quickly lost its importance with the worsening general economic situation and wartime scarcity. The direct consequence was the increasingly difficult financial position of SSG members and the increasingly poor selection of candidates. Many of them could not support their families, despite the help of the authorities.

A special form of control and disciplining of the SSG members was in the sphere of privacy, where there was direct and indirect interference in the choice of future spouses. Continuity with the pre-war privacy surveillance policy in the ranks of the army and gendarmerie was thus maintained. This was also true in regard to the attitudes towards the body, bodily pleasures and sexuality, where

the government tried to control the combat readiness of the formation and its own reputation among the population through a surveillance system. However, problems were myriad, which is verified through repeated punishments for poor hygiene, excessive consumption of alcohol and use of sexual services of prostitutes, i.e. the spread of venereal diseases. This testified not only to the poverty of war or the need to escape from the reality of war with limited forms of entertainment, but also to the loss of meaning for the goals of the struggle.

Summary

Military everyday life, unlike civilian life, has a specific dynamic in wartime occupation conditions. This is also the case with the most numerous collaborationist military formation in occupied Serbia in the Second World War - the Serbian State Guard, founded in February 1942. The lack of diaries and memoirs of its members is compensated by personal files, but we lack a personal experience of the service. Also, we lack knowledge about the ways in which they overcame existential fear for their own lives and the lives of their families, took care of their health, etc. Officially, the guards, as authorities, took care of maintaining public security in Serbia under the German occupation. Some of them served in rural areas, others in urban areas or on the border. However, the guards often had a problem with poor physical fitness, work and moral discipline, attitude towards the population, and often their combat value was low. Their material status, resolved through salaries, was significantly higher than that of other civil servants only in the first months of their existence due to the stimulation and danger of the job. Most of them were barracked, but those who were married lived outside the barracks with their families. Their salary was insufficient to cover their basic needs. Special attention was paid to controlling their private lives, requiring them to be unmarried and childless. However, under the pressure of reality, the government neglected that condition. That's why it tried to influence the choice of spouses of unmarried members, who had to get a marriage license from their superiors. Through prohibitions and fines, the authorities controlled the members' bodies, especially personal hygiene, bodily pleasures (sexual urges and alcohol consumption), as well as very limited forms of entertainment and leisure. It should still be said that the government continued its pre-war policy of interfering in the private life of its military and police officers with these forms of power display. To conclude, although the life of the SSG members was difficult, due to lack of resources, they did not manage to be the main force among the collaborators for maintaining security.

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- *Službene novine*
- *Srpski narod*
- *Novo vreme*
- *Glasnik Srpske državne straže*

Резиме

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СВАКОДНЕВНИ И ПРИВАТНИ ЖИВОТ ПРИПАДНИКА СРПСКЕ ДРЖАВНЕ СТРАЖЕ У ОКУПИРАНОЈ СРБИЈИ 1942-1944.

Апстракт: Тема овог чланка, углавном заснованог на материјалима Војног архива и Историјског архива Београда, јесте анализа приватног и свакодневног живота припадника Српске државне страже. Као и у другим сличним формацијама, живот њених припадника био је строго условљен њеним карактером, што је значило да је приватност у великој мери била под контролом претпостављених старешина и саме Команде. То је додатно дошло до изражаја у условима окупације, када су и окупационе власти играле значајну улогу у контроли целокупног деловања стражара.

Кључне речи: Србија, Други светски рат, Српска државна стража, нацистичка окупација, приватност, свакодневни живот, дисциплина, казне

Војна свакодневица, за разлику од цивилне, има специфичну динамику у ратним окупационим условима. То је био случај и са најбројнијом колаборационистичком војном формацијом у окупираној Србији у Другом светском рату - Српском државном стражом (СДС), основаном фебруара 1942. Недостатак дневника и мемоара припадника СДС надокнађен је персоналним досијеима, али је изостао увид у лични доживљај службе, као и начине на које су превазилазили страх за сопствени живот и живот породице, водили рачуна о здрављу и сл.

Припадници СДС су званично, као органи власти, бринули о одржавању јавне безбедности у Србији под немачком окупацијом. Неки стражари су служили у руралним срединама, други у урбаним срединама или на граници. Међутим, често су имали проблем са лошом физичком спремом, радном и моралном дисциплином, односом према становништву, а њихова борбена вредност је углавном била ниска. Ради стимулације и због опасности посла, њихов материјални статус, решен кроз плате, био је само у првим месецима знатно виши него код других државних чиновника. Већина припадника СДС била је касарнирана, али они који су били

ожењени живели су ван касарне са својим породицама. Њихова плата није била ни приближно довољна за основне потребе. Посебна пажња придавана је контроли приватног живота припадника Државне страже, од којих се захтевало да буду неожењени и без деце. Међутим, власт је под притиском реалности занемарила тај услов, али је зато покушавала да утиче на избор супружника код неожењених припадника, који су морали да од надређених добију дозволу за брак. Власт је преко забрана и казни контролисала и тело припадника, посебно личну хигијену, телесна уживања (сексуалне нагоне и алкохол), као и врло оскудне облике забаве и доколице. Треба рећи да је власт овим облицима испољавања моћи наставила предратну политику мешања у приватни живот својих војних и полицијских службеника. Да закључимо, иако је живот припадника СДС био тежак, они због недостатка ресурса нису успевали да буду главна снага међу колаборационистима за одржавање безбедности.