
Action Diana Budisavljević: The largest operation to rescue children in the Independent State of Croatia during World War II

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Action Diana Budisavljević The largest operation to rescue children in the Independent State of Croatia during World War II

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*It was the most wonderful gift of my life –
a chance to save people from imminent death*

Diana Budisavljević, *Diary*, 14 June 1942

Until 15 years ago, a remarkable story of an extraordinary, brave and forgotten heroine remained almost completely unknown: the operation conducted by Diana Budisavljević, an Austrian woman who initiated and organized a large-scale rescue of around 10,000 children. She raised and delivered relief aid, participated in providing accommodation and kept the documentation of 12,000, mostly Serbian children from the concentration camps operated in the Independent State of Croatia¹. It was likely the largest private humanitarian action in occupied Yugoslavia and in Europe during the World War II and surely the grandest concerning the rescue of Serbs.

Diana was born in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1891, into the prominent merchant family Obexer. As many girls of her age, she trained as a nurse during the World War I. That is how she met Julije Budisavljević, a promising medical doctor from a respectable Serbian noble family from Croatia, who was working at the time in

the Innsbruck hospital. They got married in 1917 and two years later moved to the Croatian capital Zagreb, in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Julije² became a highly esteemed surgeon, while Diana led the life of a housewife.

ACTION DIANA BUDISAVLJEVIĆ - THE BEGINNINGS

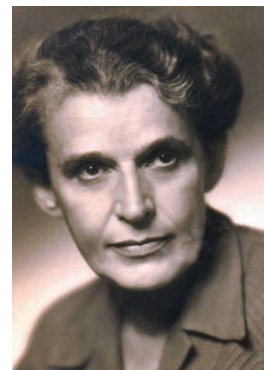
During the autumn of 1941, Diana found out about the suffering of Serbian women and children detained in the Lobar-grad camp³. She immediately recognized that the “Orthodox” population (i.e. Serbs) alone had no organized form of aid. Even though she initially wanted only to collect financial aid and considered herself unqualified to organize a larger-scale aid campaign, she became so deeply agitated by the situation that she decided to start a relief campaign, delivering food, clothing, medicines and money to help them. It was the beginning of a very complex private operation, known under the German title of “Aktion Diana Budisavljević”, launched in October 1941.

News about the campaign spread by word of mouth, Action grew quickly and gathered people willing to help. During its first months, the Action worked without the written permission of the authorities, except for the oral permission obtained through the local Jewish religious community allowing Diana’s Action to collect and deliver care packages to Serbian female prisoners and their children in Lobar-grad. It proved to be of no real significance because their work was obstructed, collected goods were often sequestered and not delivered to detainees. The seat of the Action was in the Budisavljević family’s flat in Zagreb, where people were bringing packages, money, food, etc., while Diana’s daughters Jelka and Ilse sewed clothes with their friends. In her diary, Diana wrote the following:

[...] it was my belief that the success of the Action is also that frightened Orthodox people in Zagreb realized that they too could help members of their faith, even if only a little. That brought them back some will to live. I knew that everyone would be even more frightened and feel more helpless if we should cease the work. (Budisavljević 2003, 26)

Through both personal contacts and Croatian state institutions, Diana tried to obtain official permission for her action’s work, especially in order to guarantee her own and her associates’ security and to facilitate the collection and delivery of aid. However, in February 1942 she received a written permit from the Jewish department of the Ustaša police allowing her to deliver packages for Serbian prisoners to the camps of Lobar-grad, Đakovo and Gornja Rijeka through the Jewish religious community (although it actually didn’t guarantee any protection or make Action’s work easier).

During the same period, Diana and her co-workers received reinforcement in two valuable allies: Prof. Kamilo Bresler⁴ from the Ministry of Associations and Social Welfare, who enthusiastically joined the Action, and soon after Dragica Habazin, a volunteer nurse with the Croatian Red Cross. Cooperation with Bresler and Haba-



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– Diana Budisavljević

zin was very successful and proved crucial in the upcoming operation of taking and moving the children from the concentration camps and their “colonization”.

RESCUE OPERATION OF CHILDREN FROM THE CAMPS

After the successful German-Ustaša offensive against partisans in the area of Kozara during June and July 1942, a large number of people were killed on the spot and the rest captured. Of approximately 70,000 mostly Serbian people who ended in various camps, more than 20,000 children were taken, mostly to the Jasenovac camp complex, where many of them were murdered. A large number of captives (men, women and older children) were deported to labour camps in Germany and Norway. Consequently, several thousand Serbian children (from infants to children aged 14) were taken away from their mothers before their deportation and left on their own with no care at all. They were dying of hunger and diseases in camps, while a large group of them were asphyxiated by Zyklon B.

While Action DB was providing supplies for the transports of internees taken to forced labour at the Main Railway station in Zagreb, Diana learned from the transported women that their children were left in terrible conditions in the Stara Gradiška camp. The head of transport for Germany, Hecker, was willing to help Diana in her efforts to save children from the camps and introduced her to the Wehrmacht's Captain Gustav von Koczian⁵. Diana informed them “that the Red Cross doesn't care at all about Orthodox children, that I started a fully private relief action and that my associates and I want to help the persecuted children.” (Budisavljević 2003, 58-59)

It was a great success for the Action DB because Diana's quick reaction attracted the much-needed support of the highest German officials in the NDH. The result was that the Ustaša, reluctantly, allowed Diana to remove the detained children from the Jasenovac camps (Stara Gradiška, Mlaka, Jablanac).⁶ Immediately, in the

beginning of July 1942, Action DB, the Ministry of Associations and the Croatian Red Cross organized transports of children. Wearing Red Cross uniforms, Diana and her associates, accompanied by volunteer nurses, took away the children whose mothers had already been sent to Germany, and then those whose mothers were detained and were willing to give away their children. Separation from their mothers was their only chance of survival; children who remained in the camps did not survive the war. Diana's diary contains a moving description of her first visit to the Stara Gradiška camp:

At first, a few rooms where children were laying in beds. [...] And then something terrible met us inside.

– Children in the camp farm building in Stara Gradiška, July 1942





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– Children with identification tags under their necks before the transport from Stara Gradiška camp to Zagreb, July 1942

Rooms with no furniture of any kind. Only chamber pots were there, and sitting or lying down on the floor were impossibly thin, little children. One could already see death in each child's eyes. [...] The doctor said they were beyond help. But the transport leader decided that we should take every child who could be moved somehow. A choice was made. Those who could still stand on their own feet were taken, while those who were stumbling, who no longer had the strength to stand, were left behind. And indeed the majority of these poor creatures died on the same day. (Budisavljević 2003, 71)

Before leaving the camps, the greatest care was taken to collect as much data as possible about the children for their identification and appropriate marking. The lists of transported and rescued children eventually became the basis for creating a large card file used by Diana and her co-workers to record the children's identity so that they could later be returned to their families. Unfortunately, during the first transports many paper cards placed around children's necks were destroyed or even eaten by the children. That created a serious problem of "nameless children", especially when it came to identifying a large number of smaller children who, naturally, could not provide any information about themselves. For some later transports metal plates with numbers were used, which significantly improved the identification process.

During July and August 1942, five large transports moved several thousand "Kozara children" (from infants to 14 years of age) from the Jasenovac camps to different hospitals and shelters in Zagreb and to the so-called state children's shelters

in Sisak and Jastrebarsko.⁷ They were travelling in cattle wagons for many hours and even days in poor conditions. Diana related the first transport of children in her diary:

I was alone with 62 children, who were lying down on the wooden floor, without straw, in a cattle wagon, without any food or drink. [...] The trip was terrible. All night, moaning and wailing could be heard. During the ride I couldn't move in the wagon if I did not want to step on someone. Bigger children were sitting on chamber pots constantly and smaller ones made themselves dirty. There was a lot of mud and threadworms on the floor. [...] I managed to get rakes, so that I could at least remove the worms. It seemed to me that before a child dies, the threadworms leave the body, and towards the morning, when some children were becoming weaker, whole balls of threadworms were leaving the body... by the time we arrived at the Decontamination station three children had died. [...] And in two other wagons there were dead; a horrible accusation against Hitler, who had taken away the mothers, and against the Ustaša who want to destroy the children of one nation [Serbian]. (Budisavljević 2003, 74-75)

Diana was actively involved in all the transports, with the invaluable support of her co-workers and the Red Cross volunteer nurses. Action DB was organizing shipments of food, clothing, coal and medicines for the institutions where children were accommodated and where Diana, her associates, volunteer nurses and many Zagreb women were personally involved in caring for the children. However, a great many children, especially the youngest, died during and after these long and tiring trips because of exhaustion or torture in the camps, malnutrition and diseases.

Faced with a great lack of capacity to provide accommodation for the children in Zagreb, and for fear that the Ustaša might return the children to the camps, Diana and Bresler agreed to relocate the children. In August 1942, Bresler obtained permission from the Ministry of Associations for "colonization", i.e. to move the children, as "refugees", from the overcrowded shelters and hospitals into the care of families. Children were allowed to be resettled only to Catholic Croatian families through the Catholic charity Caritas, which took over the campaign. Younger children were sent mostly to Zagreb families, while older ones were sent to villages, where they could help peasants with their labour. From Zagreb alone, around 5,000 children were resettled in this way.

The fate of these several thousands of rescued children varied greatly: some of them were returned to their families during or after the war; others were adopted by Croatian families. Some foster parents preserved children's identities, while others changed their identities and raised them as Croats and Catholics (approximately 2,000 Kozara children in Zagreb never found out their true origins). Certain children thought of their new families as their own, while others were treated as free labour and servants.

However, for some children the suffering did not end when they left the camps and were placed in state institutions outside Zagreb. In the notorious "Shelter for children refugees" in Sisak, children were left on their own in the worst conditions;



that concentration camp logically had the highest mortality rate. Bresler and Diana, therefore, organized another transport in October 1942 in order to save children and bring them to Zagreb. In Jastrebarsko, children had much better medical care, and mortality was much lower. Children there were cared for by Catholic nuns, who reeducated them in a Catholic spirit. Simultaneously, in the Gornja Rijeka camp, boys were instructed in the Ustaša ideology and were required to wear their small uniforms; many eventually died of typhus, while the rest were saved by Action DB.

– Diana Budisavljević wears the Red Cross uniform and registers children before a transport, July 1942

– Children from Stara Gradiška camp at the Disinfection Station, Zagreb, July 1942

ORGANIZATION OF THE ACTION DB

In the course of time, Action DB became more complex and demanding, recruiting more people who were ready to help, obtaining financial resources and collecting the supplies.⁸ It was a group of devoted humanitarian people, mostly dedicated women citizens, who sewed clothes, attended to the children day and night together with the volunteer Red Cross nurses, and procured everything they needed – food, clothing, medicines, packages for the camp inmates, etc. Action DB also financed medical and transport expenses and paid for the funerals of the former camp inmates. It saved hundreds of women and older children from ending up in Ustaša concentration camps when Germans returned them to the NDH.

Diana was personally involved in all aspects of her action. Tirelessly and with extraordinary courage she approached all the relevant people, important officials of the Ustaša, Germans and dignitaries of the Catholic Church⁹ alike, in order to obtain support for saving as many children as she could and to find accommodation for them. For this she had strong assistance from her co-workers as well as from members of her family: her daughters actively helped her, while through her husband she was acquainted with the important people whose support she needed. Her

husband was concerned about the great danger they were in, especially because of his Serbian origins, as Diana explained:

It was understandable that my husband was afraid for me and for himself, and did not agree with my work. But I wanted to help as much as was possible. Since no one else wanted to take the risk, I had no choice but to take all the responsibility myself. My point of view was that my life is no more valuable than the life of innocently persecuted people and that, if I am able to help others – here I was primarily thinking of children – my life was so rich that I have to take the life events as they will be. (Budisavljević 2003, 32)

Diana's Action could not be registered as a humanitarian organization for the entire duration of the war, so it was obliged to cooperate closely with the institutions of the State and the Church. Key factors of institutional support for Action DB were: 1) the Jewish Religious Community, which mediated in buying and delivering goods to Serbian detainees in the camps; 2) the Croatian Red Cross, especially the volunteer nurses and Diana's close associate, Dragica Habazin, who helped with the transports and cared for the children; 3) the Caritas of the Archdiocese of Zagreb and the Catholic Action – charitable organizations of the Catholic Church involved in accommodation and resettlement of the children.

Action DB launched special funds under the auspices of these institutions: the "A child back to the mother" fund (under Caritas) provided support to mothers who were being reunited with their children, and two funds under the Croatian Red Cross were set up to deliver food packages for the camps.

Connections were maintained with the International Red Cross (which provided milk, medicines, vitamins, etc.), the illegal Slovenian Red Cross, the ambassadors of Sweden (Mr. and Mrs. Wohlin) and Switzerland (Mr. and Mrs. Kaestli), members of the Third Reich in the NDH, and others. Furthermore, Diana's Austrian origins and her native German language certainly played an important role in her Action's success, since it gave her access to high representatives of the Croatian institutions and the German army. The army played the crucial role by allowing the child rescue operation. According to the sources available, Diana maintained contacts with several dignitaries of the Wehrmacht, who in one way or another opposed Ustaša atrocities. It seems that they respected Diana and her humanitarian action, and though they did not actively support her, they gave her a degree of protection. Maybe that is one of the key reasons why the Budisavljević family was left largely untouched during the war by both the Ustaša and the Germans, besides the family's renown and distinguished status.

Organized as the private initiative of Diana Budisavljević, "until the end of work [the Action] remained independent from the official institutions of the NDH (although it actively cooperated with the Jewish religious community and Caritas, and with individuals from the Ministry of Associations and Ministry of Health) as well as from the Communist Party (though her collaborators were supporters or members of the party)." (Tutunović-Trifunov 2012, 90) Its work was based mostly on

oral promises and insufficiently binding official permissions which allowed them to collect food and other goods for the camps. Diana and her co-workers occasionally worked without authorization by the Ustaša authorities, or in some cases despite the disapproval of the Germans, and at times faced raids and confiscations of their goods by the Ustaša and the Gestapo. Furthermore, 11 associates of the Action were killed during the war. Faced with certain changes Action DB soon took a new course, as we can read in Diana's memories:

From the autumn of 1942 it was no longer possible to retrieve the children from the camps, and Prof. Bresler was suspended [from the Ministry but started to work for the International Red Cross], so my Action had taken on the task of arranging the card file so that we could get in touch with the children's parents, who had been on forced labour in Germany. So we were able to respond to 3,000 to 4,000 inquiries from Germany. The Red Cross in Zagreb alone asked for information about approximately 1,500 children. Besides that, we received around 1,000 inquiries from different parts of our homeland. Additionally, people were coming on a daily basis to ask for children. Diana Budisavljević, *The review of the Work of the 'Action Diana Budisavljević'* (Tutunović-Trifunov 2012, 73)

Diana and her associates compiled the card file using the transport lists and other available sources on all the children in transports passing through Zagreb. The files were enriched with photographs of the children which Diana obtained whenever it was possible. Of all the card files of children saved from the camps, the Action's was the most extensive and most reliable. It contained 12,000 registered children, of whom Action rescued, in calculations of both Diana and Bresler, at least 10,000.¹⁰

AFTER THE WAR

Following the liberation of occupied Yugoslavia in 1945, a new Communist regime took over the government from the King in exile. Representatives of the new Yugoslav security service (OZNA) confiscated the children photo albums belonging to the Action DB and a few days later Diana was obliged to hand over the card file to the new Ministry of Social Policy.¹¹ In this way her efforts to identify children and return them to their families partly failed, since the data ended up in the hands of incompetent people. Diana was deeply resentful, especially after her offer to help the Ministry of Social Policy was refused. Instead, the relevant state bodies took over the process, which proved not to be entirely successful in the next decades. Soon afterwards Diana refused the offer to be involved in the City of Zagreb Red Cross considering her Austrian nationality and that her work was "undesirable for the higher structures" since the discontinuation of the work on the Files and of Action DB. (Budisavljević 2003, 170).

Upon the request of the authorities, Diana submitted a report on her work – *The review of the work of the "Action Diana Budisavljević"* in 1947. Afterwards, she locked the remaining documents, her correspondence and her diary in a wooden crate in

— Serbian boys from Kozara dressed in Ustaša uniforms at the Stara Gradiška camp, July 1942

the attic of her home. She lived in seclusion in Zagreb, almost forgotten, and never again spoke about her Action, not even in her own family circle.

Fortunately, Diana, unlike some of her co-workers, was not interrogated or arrested on account of her Action. The impact of the Action DB could not be denied in the post-war period and was glorified as a triumph of victorious Communists. The regime insisted that they were the only rescuing actor in Yugoslavia during the war. Consequently, the independent action of a member of Zagreb's elite ("bourgeois"), who was an Austrian woman (*Volksdeutsche*¹²), a "collaborator with the occupying forces" (i.e. the Germans and the Ustaša regime) and with the Roman Catholic Church, was ignored. Furthermore, Diana was not a member of "Anti-fascist Women's Front" nor of any other *National Liberation Movement* (NOP) organizations, like some other women involved in humanitarian work during the war. Suspicion was cast, too, on her husband Julije, left untouched by the Ustaša and the



Germans despite his Serbian ethnicity.¹³ All these factors made Diana Budisavljević an unsuitable choice for public memory. The new authorities were certainly fully aware that only if they suppressed all memory of Diana's Action would they succeed in maintaining their own exaggerated and constructed narrative.

During the second half of the last century Diana was rarely mentioned in the scientific literature or in journalism, and even on the rare occasions when she was, her role was greatly minimized and downplayed. Nevertheless, Diana continued to engage in humanitarian work as long as she could. Due to the grave deterioration of her health during the war, and because of the extreme conditions she had endured, she never fully recovered from the consequences of her activities. In 1972 she moved with her husband to her native Innsbruck, where she died in 1978, in her late eighties.

DIARY AND THE CARD FILE

In the course of 1945, Diana wrote her *Diary* (under the title *Report on Work of the Action of Diana Budisavljević*) based on her daily written stenographic notes kept during the war. Diana's granddaughter Prof. Silvija Szabo discovered the war-time diary of her grandmother in 1983 and she decided to translate it from Diana's native German into Croatian after she noticed in a newspaper that Diana was inaccurately mentioned as a mere Communist Party activist working for the Red Cross.

The *Diary of Diana Budisavljević 1941-1945* first saw the light of day when it was published in 2003 in Croatia, along with relevant documentary material from Diana's personal archive, provided by Mrs. Szabo. However, the original of the *Diary*, along with what remained of Diana's personal archive, are still in the possession of Mrs. Szabo. According to her, she removed parts of the *Diary* concerning Diana's private affairs, her personal remarks and even entire episodes. The full text has never been printed in any language and even the Croatian State Archive doesn't own the *Diary* in its original, integral form, but only this censored version, and copies of the documents¹⁴.

Nevertheless, the *Diary* represents "a remarkable historical document of a short but brutal period in Croatian history, written from the perspective of a woman who found the strength and courage to think freely, act freely and provide an active civil resistance to the fascist Ustaša regime in extremely difficult war conditions." (Mataušić 2016, 49)

Publication of such an invaluable historical source stirred public curiosity and elicited a more intense and significant interest in Diana's rescue operation because for the first time it revealed a hidden truth about the operation to rescue the children of Kozara, Kordun and Banija from death camps in the NDH.

The Action's original card file is considered lost, with only some remnants and copies surviving. Four of original five albums with photographs of children rescued from the camps were eventually found abandoned decades after the war in the attic of the School for Social Work and are now stored in the Croatian Historical Museum in Zagreb.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Action DB was practically completely unknown in former Yugoslavia and abroad, and the *Diary* emphasized Diana's undeniable and prominent role in launching and running such a significant humanitarian activity. It proves the grandeur of this woman, risking her own life in order to save "her children" from the imminent death. Diana obviously cultivated "a profound attachment to her husband's nation, a nation that was in desperate need of help in that very moment. Diana Budisavljević did as much as she could, not only through her work but also by testifying about that work." (Koljanin 2007, 207)

She received a series of posthumous honours in Serbia and her native Austria, in the form of medals and state orders; documentaries and films are being made, and parks and streets carry her name. Museum exhibitions, theatre performances and books now constantly promote her story in the republics of former Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

The Croatian historian Nataša Mataušić considers that Diana's "heroic and progressive" resistance "should have a place in Croatia's positive historical heritage". (Mataušić 2016, 49) However, at present we see certain revisionist tendencies among the part of the Croatian public, forces who are trying to minimize the victims of the Fascists in the NDH, negate brutal atrocities and even to attribute the rescue of the children to the Ustaša regime.

Given the number of participants, contributors, and rescued children, and the achieved results, Action DB signifies one of the most complex and unique humanitarian operations during World War II. It was a private and independent action led by a woman who was personally involved in all its various aspects, who successfully initiated an elaborate organization and managed to build a wide network of dedicated humanitarian people and co-workers, without which the operation would not be possible. ■

(1) The Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna država Hrvatska - NDH) was established following the occupation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers in April 1941. Never truly independent but directly subjected to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, NDH was governed by the Fascist Ustaša organization, which carried on a systematic, genocidal process of mass internment and extermination of "undesirables": Serbs (who formed 1/3 of the State's population), Jews, Roma, and political opponents. Out of 22 concentration camps which operated on its territory, two of them, Jastrebarsko and Sisak, were solely children's camps. The largest and most infamous of all was the Jasenovac concentration camp complex of five subcamps ("the Auschwitz of the Balkans") with its "unlimited capacity for destruction". 60,234 children up to 14 years lost their lives as victims of the Ustaša, Germans, and others in the NDH, with the majority of 42,791 (71.04%) Serbian children. While the exact number of Jasenovac's overall victims is heavily disputed among the researchers, the number and identity of child victims is confirmed: 19,432 children who lost their lives in the Jasenovac concentration camp complex: 11,888 (61.18%) Serbian, 5,469 (28.14%) Roma, 1,911 (9.83%) Jewish and 164 (0.85%) unknown children. (Lukić 2000, vol. 2, 4)

(2) Dr. Julije Budisavljević (1882-1981), professor of Surgery at the Faculty of Medicine and founder of the Clinic for Surgery in Zagreb. Forcefully retired by the State during the war, he continued with his work in his apartment's office. Reactivated after the war.

(3) The Lohor-grad camp was a collection camp situated in the former castle of the Keglević family near Zlatar. It housed female detainees and their children, mostly from Bosnia, a great majority of whom were Jewish, followed by Serbian and a small number of Croatian communist women. The camp was hugely overcrowded, and detainees were faced with unhealthy living conditions, hunger and infectious diseases, and many died there. The camp operated from October 1941 till August 1942, when Germans transported Jewish women and children to Auschwitz, while the Serbian ones were sent either to forced labour in Germany or to Belgrade, Serbia. Only a small number of prisoners were released.

(4) Kamilo Bresler (often misspelled as Brössler or Bressler) (1901-1967), pedagogue and head of the Department for Family and Children Welfare in the Ministry of Associations of the NDH. Pioneer in social work and in institutional, organized state social care. He played a crucial role in Action DB: in transportation and organization of accommodation for the children in state shelters and hospitals and billeted in homes, and acquiring food, medicines, etc. for them. Bresler left several important texts: 1) *Rescuing the Kozara children in 1942*, dedicated to the "initiator of the salvation of Kozara children" - Diana Budisavljević; 2) *About the children camps in NDH (an Ustaša-German instrument for the destruction of Serbian children)*; 3) *The Schematic review of taking out children from the scaffold of Jasenovac* (a review of 53 children transports, children camps, Zagreb shelters, adopted children, for in total 14.192 children).

(5) Captain Gustav von Koczian (Baron von Koczian-Miskolczy) (1877-1958). When approached by Diana, he intervened and exerted pressure on the highest Ustaša military and police authorities. Koczian's role was essential in obtaining written permission for her rescue operation. He was a confidant of General Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, Hitler's Plenipotentiary General in the NDH who was critical in particular of the atrocities committed by the Ustaša regime against the civilian population. In the published Diana's *Diary* and in some of the literature, Gustav von Koczian was often wrongly referred as *Albert von Kotzian*.

(6) Thanks to Bresler's great contribution, children were withdrawn from the authority of the concentration camps and placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry, i.e. of the state. Bresler took it upon himself to secure their relocation and to find accommodation at several locations.

(7) "According to the "List of children affected by the war", 25 trains with 12,861 children, who were in the care of the Croatian Red Cross, i.e. the team of Diana Budisavljević activists, were taken to the Disinfection Station of the Zagreb Railway Station between 27 March 1942 and 8 January 1943. The convoys of children showed all the drama of the rescue of 10,536 boys and girls." (Ivanković 2014, 339)

(8) Diana's collaborators were: Dr. Marko Vidaković, Đuro Vukosavljević, Ivanka Džakula, Vera Černe, Ljubica Becić with her daughters, Verenka Kogoj, Dr. Desanka Ristović-Štampar, and many others.

(9) The role of the Catholic Church and of the Zagreb Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac, and their relations with the Ustaša, their role in conversions of the Serbs, are controversial. Since many of the persecuted Serbs were converted to Catholicism, Diana asked for Stepinac's help. Initially deaf to her pleas, from 1943 he helped in rescuing and providing housing for the children. However, the Catholic Church was interested in massive conversions. Stepinac himself, among other things, converted some of the Kozara children in Jastrebarsko. (Zarić 2018)

(10) In Diana's own words, Action DB, "active mainly on behalf of children" succeeded in "saving about 10,000 children from concentration camps". Diana Budisavljević, *Correction of the Report made by Dr. of engineering, Marko Vidaković as of May 15, 1945, about The Internal Yugoslav front (UIF)*, (as quoted in: Mataušić 2016, 66 and Tutunović-Trifunov 2012, 55). According to incomplete data, Prof. Bresler mentioned in his memories more than 24,000 women and children located in 5 camps during July 1942. Out of 12,623 children taken from the Ustaša camps and transported to other locations, 2,854 of them died already during transports as well as in the new shelters (approximately 30-40 children per day). (Lukić 1977, 446)

(11) I.e. a cabinet consisted of 25 drawers with cards, 5 notebooks of searches for unidentified children, 1 notebook-register of children with distinguishing marks, 1 register of childrens' photographs and 5 volumes of their photographs.

(12) I.e. ethnic Germans living outside of Germany.

(13) Julije's brother, Srđan Budisavljević, was a highly distinguished politician, a minister in the Royal government of Yugoslavia and later a member of the Regency Council, which represented the Yugoslav King Peter II in exile until Yugoslavia became a Republic. Julije was related to Jovanka Broz (née Budisavljević) (1924-2013), who was, from 1952, the wife of the lifelong Yugoslav president, Marshal Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980). In Jovanka's memories *My Life, my Truth* she showed the greatest appreciation for Diana: „Diana Budisavljević was the wife of my cousin Julije Budisavljević. [...] And in the Second World War she saved who knows how many thousands of Serbian children from the Ustaša camps. She was a grand human being. There will be no humanist like her for a long time. And she was a beautiful woman. We met after the war. They [Diana and Julije] were visiting us [Jovanka and Tito].” (Broz 2013,141) Jovanka was also present at the funeral of Srđan Budisavljević in Zagreb (1968).

(14) The Diana Budisavljević fund, a gift of Mrs. Szabo to the Croatian State Archive (Hrvatski državni arhiv - HDA) "contains copies of different documents (mostly inventories of perished and vanished children and women during Second World War); copies of documents about Action D. Budisavljević; parts of the translation of her Diary concerning the Action; card files of persons and institutions mentioned in the Diary and materials concerning the publishing of the Diary." - http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/details.aspx?ItemId=L_4898 (accessed 23 September 2018)

(15) A unique and rich collection of archive material concerning the work of Diana Budisavljević and her "Action" is preserved in the Museum of genocide victims (Muzej žrtava genocida) in Belgrade, Serbia. Dragoje Lukić was a distinguished and lifelong researcher of children persecution in NDH; himself a Kozara child saved by Diana, he left his extensive archive to the museum. Personal fund of Dragoje Lukić contains and gathers in one place, originals and copies of valuable sources, such as personal documents of Diana and her associates, their official correspondence with the institutions and individuals, documentary photographs, transport and other lists, card files, official documents, manuscripts (including the copies of manuscripts by Prof. Kamilo Bresler), etc.

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