

# A Story of Two Brothers: Kumpa and Vara

Filip and Pere Vlahov

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Perth, Western Australia



The SS *Otranto* on which Filip *Kumpa* Vlahov sailed into Fremantle on the 3 February 1914.

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## Filip and Pere Vlahov

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Filip Vlahov (b. 1875), my great grandfather and his younger brother, Pere (b. 1881) were born into a poor Dalmatian family in Šepurine on the island of Prvić. For hundreds of years, Dalmatia had been the prized goal of the Ottomans, Venetians, French and Hungarians who attacked the shores and islands and the rugged Dalmatian hinterland. At the time of Filip and Pere's births, Dalmatia was under Austrian rule.

### **Kriška and Matija**

The brothers were born in a small, dark stone house, tucked away in a congested part of Šepurine. Their father, Frane, whose legendary strength has become village folklore, was known by his nickname, *Kriška*. Stories told how he was the strongest and fastest worker in the fields and how he could lift a barrel full of wine and drink from it. One story tells how early one morning a neighbour's mule refused to step onto the deck of a rocking boat. The boat's owner began to get angry as did his passengers who were keen to begin the day's work in their fields on the mainland, but the animal refused to move despite the owner's efforts. At that point, *Kriška* stepped in to assist by picking up the whimpering beast in his arms, as if it were a lamb, and carried it onto the boat himself.

*Kriška* married Matija Kale from the island of Žirje. They had four children: two sons - Filip and Petar (Pere) and two daughters - Barica (b 1870) and Šimaka (b 1884).<sup>1</sup> During the 1870s and 1880s - during Kumpa and Vara's childhoods - Šepurine was at its economic peak.<sup>2</sup> The quality and quantity of its wine production brought in revenue like never before. The benefits of success and sound reputation were evidential everywhere: more children survived making families larger, new houses were built or an extra floor was added, skilled workers from nearby towns moved their businesses and families to Šepurine, people bought more land, had boats custom-made, commercial fishing began, sons were sent to train as blacksmiths, builders, stone masons, coopers, caulkers or carpenters. In 1868, a group of 118 villagers cooperatively purchased the entire island of Tijat,<sup>3</sup> Šepurine's first public school opened in 1877 and the Skroza *Ivićin*<sup>4</sup> family donated land on which a second, uncharacteristically large church was built in 1878.<sup>5</sup> During those prosperous decades, Šepurine was known as the *Golden Threshold (Zlatni Prag)*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The family was known by their father's nickname, *Kriškini*, meaning, "belonging to *Kriška*."

<sup>2</sup> Ljubomir Antić in Slavica Vlahov, ed (1998). Šepurinski Zbornik. Šibenik: Matica Hrvatska Šibenik, p.51

<sup>3</sup> The uninhabited, neighbouring island of Tijat had been leased to various noblemen or wealthy locals since the 1300s. In 1865, it was purchased by twelve Šepurine families. In 1868, another 106 families bought into the cooperative ownership. It was purchased from the Šibenik nobleman, Frane Draganić-Vrančić who inherited it via his mother, the Countess Margarita Vrančić who died in 1766. Don Krsto Stošić in Slavica Vlahov, ed (1998). Šepurinski Zbornik. Šibenik, Matica Hrvatska Šibenik, p.44

<sup>4</sup> Šepurine family nicknames have been included in italics. They were an important part of village life where many families had the same surname. Filip's individual nickname was *Kumpa*. His wife, children and grandchildren all carried the family nickname, *Kumpini*. Pere's individual nickname was *Vara*, therefore his family were known as the *Varini*.

<sup>5</sup> Ante Ukić (2005). Stanovništvo i obitelji otoka Prvića: Prvić u prvoj polovici 19. stoljeća. Zagreb: Vlast. Nakl., p.326

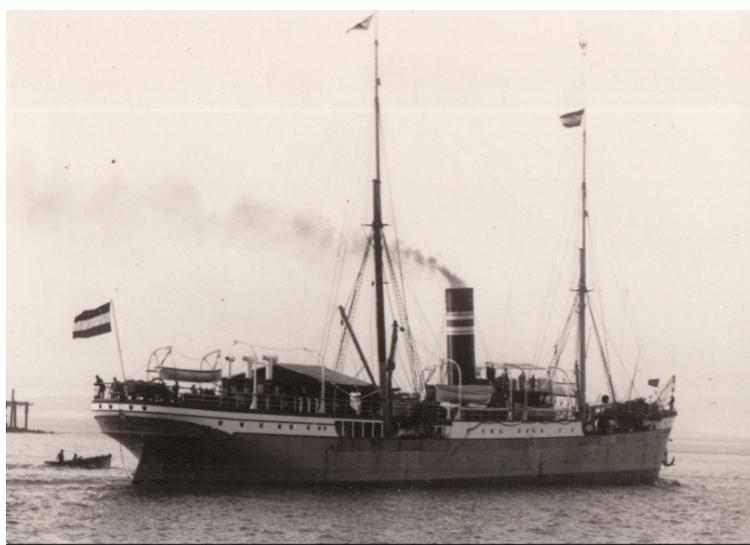
<sup>6</sup> Ante Ukić in Slavica Vlahov, ed (1998). Šepurinski Zbornik. Šibenik: Matica Hrvatska Šibenik, p.102

## The Wine Clause

In 1891, a single clause in a trade agreement between the royal governments of Austria-Hungary and Italy was the beginning of the decline of Šepurine's prosperity. The *Vinska Klauzula* (Wine Clause) allowed the importation of almost tariff-free Italian wine into Austria-Hungary, flooding the Austro-Hungarian market with which Dalmatian wine-makers could not compete, not even on local markets. Village economies collapsed and many families were on the verge of economic ruin.<sup>7</sup> In 1892, the bimonthly Split periodical, *Pučki List*, reported that the regular number of people migrating to America has turned into a never-before-witnessed rush.<sup>8</sup> Dalmatians left their hearths in their hundreds, settling permanently or looking for work in places such as America, Australia, New Zealand, Argentine, Chile, Uruguay, South Africa and German South West Africa.<sup>9</sup>

## Africa

In 1896, Kumpa married Matica Antić, one of four daughters of Ante and Matija Vlahov. In 1908, Vara married Matica's younger sister, Križanka.



The steam ship, Gertud Woermann II on which Kumpa sailed Hamburg, Germany to German South West Africa in 1906.

The couple lived together in their small damp house where Kumpa and Matica lost a son and daughter. Life was undoubtedly difficult and prospects were negligible. Their financial hardship worsened with the scourge of the phylloxera insect plague which had been devastating vineyards across western Europe since the 1860s.<sup>10</sup> Vines all over Dalmatia soon dried up causing more men to look for work abroad and more families to migrate. Kumpa looked to Africa.

In April 1906, Kumpa left his wife, Matica, and daughters, Milka (8½)<sup>11</sup> and Tomica (1½)<sup>12</sup> and travelled to Hamburg with five

others from Šepurine where they boarded the German steamship, *Gertrud Woermann II*, disembarking in

<sup>7</sup> Ljubomir Antić (2004). *Šepurina u dalmatinskom tisku 1876. - 1914*. Zagreb: Selbstveri, p.35

<sup>8</sup> *Pučki List*, 18 November 1892, Split in Ljubomir Antić (2004). *Šepurina u dalmatinskom tisku 1876. - 1914*. Zagreb: Selbstveri, p.34

<sup>9</sup> German South West Africa (*Deutsch-Südwestafrika*) was a colony of the German Empire from 1884-1915. Today, it is the independent state of Namibia.

<sup>10</sup> The aphid-like grape phylloxera devastated vineyards all over Europe from about 1860 to 1910 by feeding on the roots and gradually starving the vine of nutrients and water. Locally, it was known as the *žiloždera* - the root devourer.

<sup>11</sup> Milka Vlahov (1896-1874) moved to Srma when she married Luka Mijat in 1919. She had five children and became a widow in 1931, when her youngest child, Frane, was four. Two sons, were killed during World War II: Ante was a Partisan fighter who was executed by an Italian firing squad and Roko, who was killed in combat as a member of Ustaša army. Frane Mijat (1998). *Kronika Mjesta Srma*, self-published, p. 38

<sup>12</sup> Tomica Vlahov was known as *Bijonda* (Blondie) her entire life. She married Petar Kursar *Kirčev* from Šepurine. After she became a widow in her 20s, she moved to Šibenik and became a nurse working in Šibenik Hospital for over thirty years until her retirement. After she retired she moved back to Šepurine and lived in the house her father and uncle built.

Lüderitz in the German colony of South West Africa.<sup>13</sup> It is uncertain what Kumpa and his co-travellers did in the German colony but it's likely they witnessed horrific scenes of suffering, starvation and death of the indigenous people. It is estimated that between 1904 and 1907 as many as 85 000 indigenous people died either in battle against Imperial German forces, through forced labour, starvation or disease in enormous concentration camps such as the one known as Shark Island in Lüderitz Bay.<sup>14</sup>

The men from Šepurine may have worked in the diamond or copper mines but considering they were registered as farm labourers, they may have worked in the farming industry which Germany was keen to advance in the colony.<sup>15</sup>



The Vlahov brothers' house completed in 1911 is now falling into disrepair. The current owners of the house are three of Kumpa's grandchildren and one great-grandson

### A New House

By early 1909, Kumpa had returned to Šepurine. He may or may not have attended his brother's marriage to Križanka Antić in April, 1908 but he was there when his brother's first child, Valerija, was born in May 1909.<sup>16</sup> After Kumpa and Matica had another child, Andrija Paško, in November 1909, the brothers decided to build a new house on Vlahov family-owned land, near the new church. The two adjacent land parcels they decided on was large enough for a house, far more spacious than the old house, in addition to a large garden which they eventually surrounded by a dry stone wall.

By the beginning of 1911, the lower level of the new house was finished consisting of one large open room for sleeping, a *konoba*<sup>17</sup> of equal size, a small kitchen for summer use and a hearth built in the roof space beneath a small roof window for winter cooking. The tiny window, known as a *humar*, allowed smoke to escape and let in some light. Almost as soon as they moved into their new house, Matica gave birth to a son,

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<sup>13</sup> Staatsarchiv Hamburg; Hamburg, Deutschland; *Hamburger Passagierlisten*; Volume 373-7 I, VIII A 1 Band 177; Page: 1053; Microfilm No: K\_1794.

Travelling with Kumpa were Tome Kursar *Grgičin* (b 1865), Lovre Paškov *Turtin* (b 1864), Mate *Bile Skroza Ivičin* (b 1880), Mate Vlahov (b 1875) and Zore Vlahov *Batalo* (b 1876)

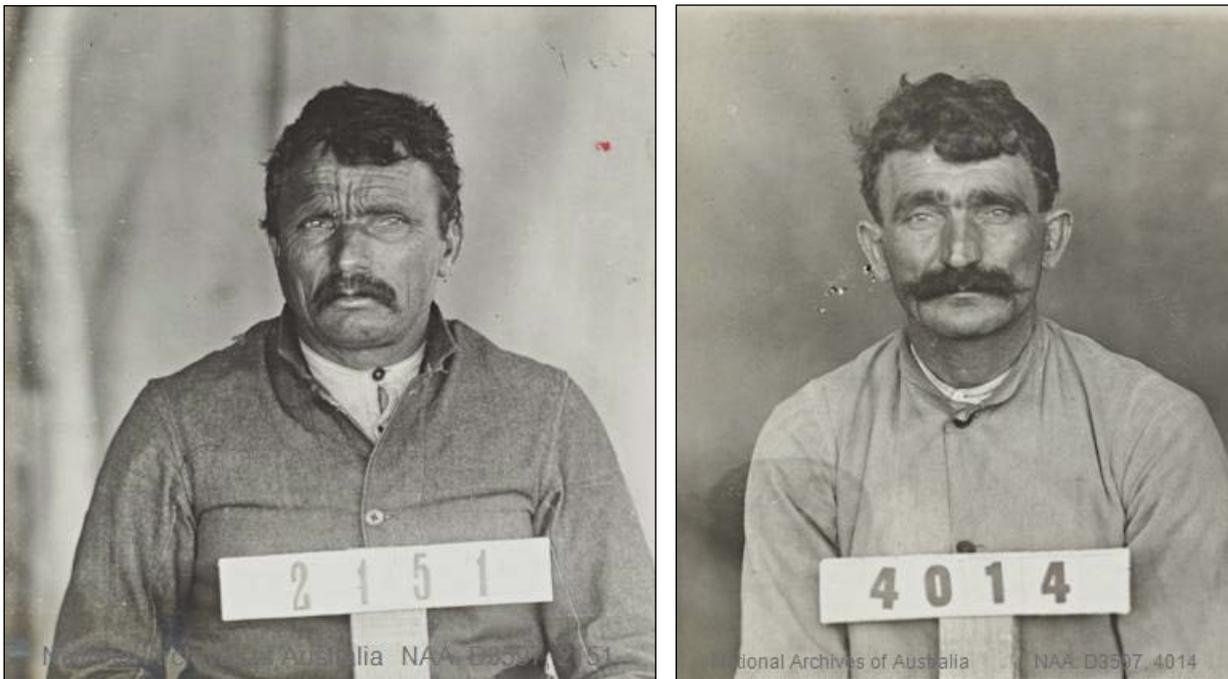
<sup>14</sup> Norimitsu Onishi & Melissa Eddy. (2021, May 29) A forgotten genocide: what Germany did in Namibia, and what it's saying now, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/28/world/europe/germany-namibia-genocide.html>

<sup>15</sup> Onboard the *SS Gertrud Woermann II* were 209 sheep destined for the colony. Staatsarchiv Hamburg; Hamburg, Deutschland; *Hamburger Passagierlisten*; Volume 373-7 I, VIII A 1 Band 177; Page: 1053; Microfilm No: K\_1794.

<sup>16</sup> Marija Valerija Vlahov, born 1909, passed away as a child, possibly while Vara was in Western Australia during World War One. She was buried in the communal section of the Šepurine Cemetery beneath slab No 8.

<sup>17</sup> There is no direct English translation of the Dalmatian word, *konoba*. It is a blend between a cellar, a workshop, a "manshed" and a place for friends to gather. In northern Croatia, where the soil is soft, cellars are built under houses, or at least partially underground, and is used for storage, keeping wine, oil and winter supplies. In Dalmatia, the houses are built on rock, so a *konoba* is built at ground level with a wide door. It was and still is, used for keeping wine in barrels, olive oil, often in vessels made of solid rock called *Kamenice*, which kept it cool, work tools etc but a *konoba* was also a place for friends to gather, to drink, play cards, and sing. Even today, an open *konoba* door is an invitation.

Branko, in January 1911.<sup>18</sup> The bothers obtained permits from authorities and neighbours for an additional storey to accommodate an expanding family but for many reasons expansion was never realised.<sup>19</sup> By the time Kumpa's youngest son, Frane, was born in June 1914, he was working halfway across the globe.<sup>20</sup>



Left, Filip Vlahov, known in Šepurine as *Kumpa* and his brother, Pere, known by his nickname, *Vara*, Photo taken in 1915 on entry to the Holsworthy Concentration Camp holding their photo identification numbers. NSW NAA: Series No: D3597, 2151, 4014

## Western Australia

It is likely that Kumpa and Vara ran out of money before the house could be finished and that financial hardship was why Kumpa made the journey to Western Australia where a substantial number of fellow villagers were working on the goldfields. Along with four others from Šepurine, he set out for Naples to board the *SS Otranto*<sup>21</sup> and on the 3rd February 1914, Kumpa disembarked at Fremantle Harbour.<sup>22</sup> With him was Petar Ukić *Parin* who was returning to Fremantle and who, no doubt, led the way.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ante Branko Vlahov, (1911 - 1944), the author's grandfather.

<sup>19</sup> The original hand-written permits are in the author's possession.

<sup>20</sup> Frane Vlahov (b 1914) died in 1930 when he was 15 years old.

<sup>21</sup> Built in 1909 in Belfast, Ireland, the passenger vessel, *Otranto*, was owned by Orient Line and operated the route between the UK and Australia via the Suez Canal. On board were 900 third class berths. Its maiden voyage was on 1st October 1909. In 1914, it was commandeered as an armed merchant cruiser. In 1918, the *Otranto* was almost cut in half while colliding with the *SS Kashmir* killing 431 men. The vessel was wrecked and broke up off the Scottish coast. Peter Plowman (2009). *Migrant Ships to Australia and New Zealand 1900-1939*. Wellington: Rosenberg Publishing, p.100

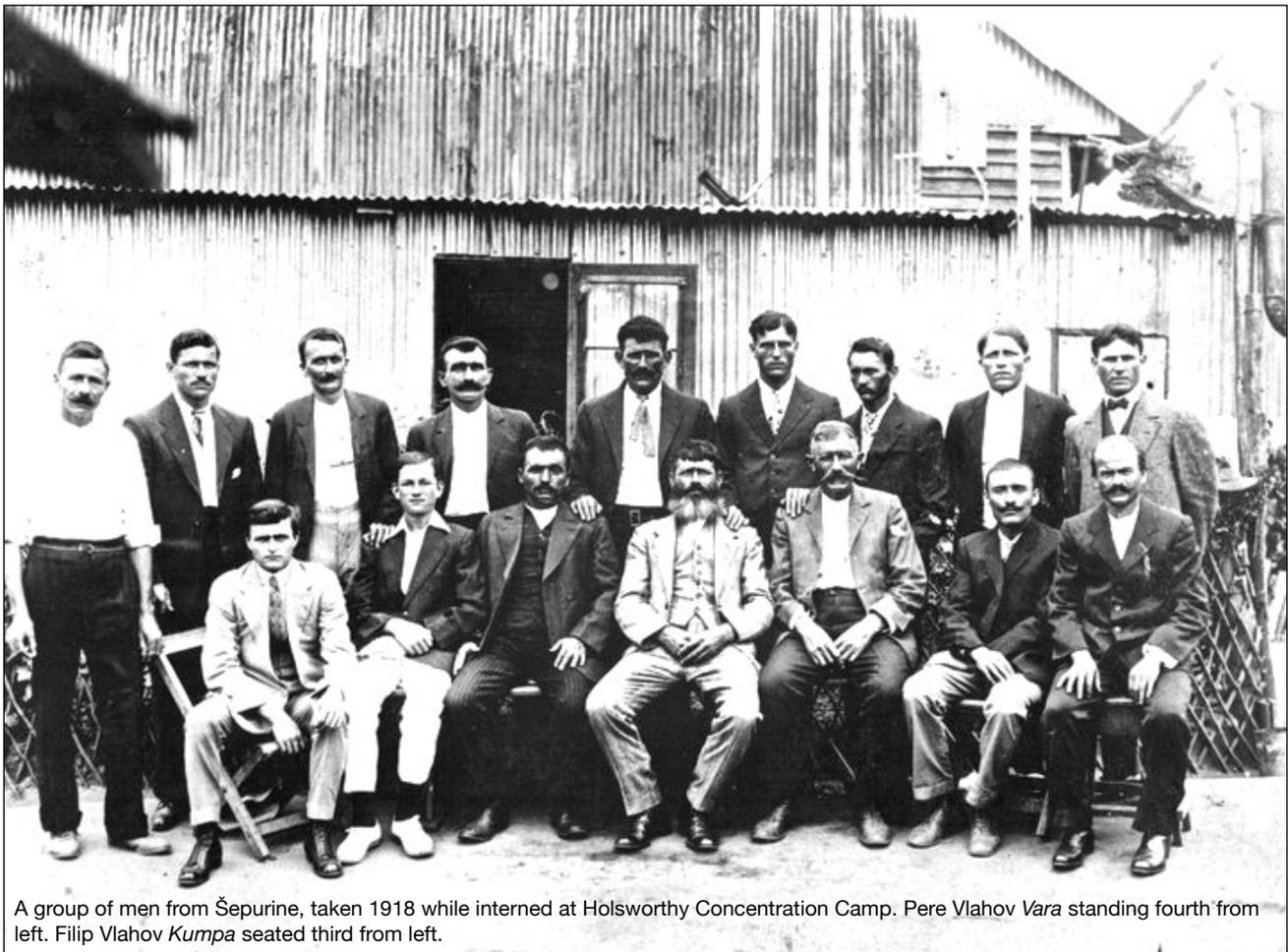
<sup>22</sup> Apart from Petar Ukić *Parin*, the others travelling to Fremantle with Kumpa were Andrija Rade Vlahov, *Sidin* (b 1873), Filip Antić *Čagaljov* (b 1868) who was married to Kumpa's sister Barica, Krste Ukić *Ivanov* who was only 21 when he disembarked. NAA. Passenger Schedule Fremantle, *List of Passengers disembarking at Port of Fremantle, 3rd Feb 1914*

<sup>23</sup> Petar Ukić *Parin* first arrived in Fremantle in October 1908 returning to Dalmatia in September 1912. Later, his daughter Ruža (Rose) married Kumpa's son, Andrija Paško (Andrew).

Kumpa's brother, Vara joined him in Western Australia by the end of 1914, leaving his young wife and daughter in the new house they shared with Kumpa's family. Arriving with little luggage, little money and no English, the brothers each made their way to Kalgoorlie where they met fellow Dalmatian Croatians and were employed on the woodlines at Lakewood and Kurrawang, felling timber which was used to reinforce the mine tunnels or to feed the gold industry's roasters.

### War and Internment

In August 1914, Britain, and consequently Australia, declared war on Austria-Hungary and the brothers, probably having little idea what was happening in Europe became "enemy aliens", a term used by the Australian Government. Citing the War Precautions Act of 1914, and their general dislike of working with



A group of men from Šepurine, taken 1918 while interned at Holsworthy Concentration Camp. Pere Vlahov Vara standing fourth from left. Filip Vlahov Kumpa seated third from left.

foreigners, the mining unions persuaded the Australian Government to arrest Austrians as a way of ridding themselves of non-British labour.<sup>24</sup> Together with hundreds of others, Kumpa and Vara were arrested in their camps on the woodlines and sent to Rottnest Island, 23 km off the coast of Fremantle where they were housed in crowded tents near the Bathurst Lighthouse, together with hundreds of Germans.<sup>25</sup> They slept on the bare ground all through the winter. Fresh water was scarce, and sanitation consisted of open pits near the tents.<sup>26</sup> By the end of 1915, there were 1104 men interned on the island: 426 Germans and German-Austrians

<sup>24</sup> ALIENS IN THE MINES. (1916, August 19). *The West Australian*, p.7. [www.nla.gov.au/nla.newsarticle26988824](http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.newsarticle26988824)

<sup>25</sup> The camp was on the site of the present-day *Caroline Thompson Chalets*.

<sup>26</sup> Gerhard Fischer (1989). *Enemy aliens: internment and the Homefront experience in Australia 1914-1920*. St Lucia Qld., University of Queensland Press., p.188-194

and 678 others, mostly Dalmatian Croatians,<sup>27</sup> among them thirty men from Šepurine, including Ivan Marinko Antulov who was only twelve years old.<sup>28</sup>

In November 1915, the Australian Government closed the Rottneest camp and transported its 1104 internees to the Holdsworthy Camp in Liverpool, NSW, known then as the German Concentration Camp.<sup>29</sup> The camp's harsh conditions were exacerbated by a lack of proper sanitation, while extortion and corruption were rife and, in what was essentially forced labour, the internees built prison huts, guard towers, a railway to Liverpool and bridges in the local area.<sup>30</sup>



Left: Kumpa's wife, Matica with her two youngest sons, Frane (left) and Branko.  
Right: Vara's wife, Križanka with her son, Ivan, and daughter Andjelka. Circa 1925

At the end of the war, the government's policy was to deport most internees back to Europe; however between the end of the war and deportation the pneumonic influenza began to spread through the camp.<sup>31</sup> By that time, the camp's medical staff had returned to civilian life leaving only a few guards to watch over hundreds of sick internees.<sup>32</sup> Those still in camp were inoculated in May but by June the internees succumbed to the flu. Of the three ships repatriating the German internees in 1919, two boats were returned to Australia because so many were sick and the prisoners were re-interned. By the time the third ship, the *SS Kursk*, arrived in Durban, South Africa, 98% of passengers and crew were infected with at least twenty

<sup>27</sup> Of the Slavic internees, there were two Czechs, two Serbs, one Hungarian, one Pole; the rest almost all from Dalmatia. Alexandra Ludewig (2019). *War time on Wadjemup: a social history of the Rottneest Island internment camp*. Crawley. WA. University of WA Press, p. 73

<sup>28</sup> Ivan Marinko Antulov (b 1901) migrated to Western Australia in 1912 with his father, Jakov. Jakov was back in Dalmatia at the time of internment. NAA, Series No: C440, Item No: 851857, *Register of World War 1 Internees in NSW*.

<sup>29</sup> Holdsworthy is sometimes spelt Holsworthy.

<sup>30</sup> Gerhard Fischer (1989). *Enemy Aliens*. p.200-201

<sup>31</sup> Also known as the Spanish Flu, it caused the deaths of at least 15 000 Australians between 1918-1919, at a time when Australia's entire population was approximately five million. National Museum Australia (2021). *Defining Moments: Influenza Pandemic*. NMA. <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/influenza-pandemic>

<sup>32</sup> Gerhard Fischer (1989). *Enemy Aliens*. p.228

dead.<sup>33</sup> Over one hundred died during the summer and autumn of 1919, including at least 23 Dalmatians, among them Jakov Paškov *Turtin*<sup>34</sup> and Tome Vlahov *Ivanov* from Šepurine.<sup>35</sup>

### Deportation

On the 18th September 1919, Kumpa and Vara and hundreds of others were transferred to Sydney Harbour for deportation on the *SS Frankfurt* bound for Marseille, France.<sup>36</sup> On board ship, Kumpa and possibly Vara and others, contracted the Spanish flu. The ship stopped at Durban, where the brothers were taken to a South African quarantine camp while the *SS Frankfurt* continued on its way to Europe. While convalescing, the brothers occupied themselves, each crafting a wooden box with a hinged lid, crafted from hand carved pieces of various southern African woods, decorated in floral and geometric patterns. Both boxes survived and have been passed down to family members.<sup>37</sup>



The box made by Vara while he was in quarantine in South Africa in 1919. Kumpa made a similar decorative box now in the possession of his granddaughter, Hedviga Ukich.

Eventually the brothers were picked up by another vessel and made their way back to Croatia. Kumpa's health had been damaged and he never fully recovered. Vara,



Vara and his nephew, Andrija Paško Vlahov *Kumpin*, felling timber in the south-west of Western Australia. Circa early 1930s. Right, Vara's son, Ivan Vlahov *Varin*

<sup>33</sup> Criena Fitzgerald (2021). *For a better life: Yugoslavs on the Goldfields of Western Australia 1890-1970*. Perth, Criena Fitzgerald, p. 145

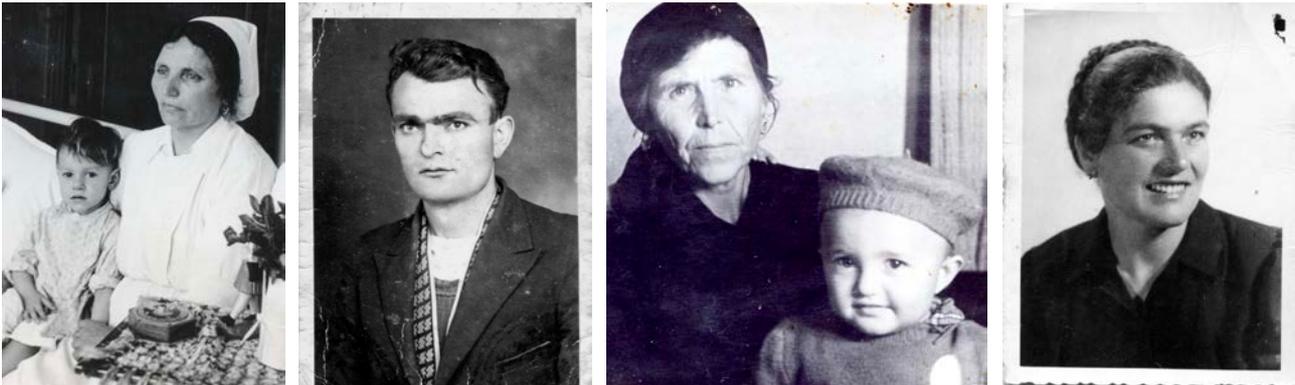
<sup>34</sup> Jakov Paškov (b 1882) was the son of Love Paškov who was with Kumpa in German South West Africa.

<sup>35</sup> National Australian Archives: MP1565/1 box 1, *Nominal Role of Deceased Internees*.

<sup>36</sup> National Australian Archives: D1918, *Deported Aliens*

<sup>37</sup> Vara's box (pictured) is in the author's possession; Kumpa's is with granddaughter, Hedviga Ukich.

younger and healthier, set to work on the family's land while his wife gave birth to a daughter, Andjelka in 1920 and a son, Ivan in 1923. When the Australian Government repealed the 1920 Enemy Aliens Act in 1925, both Kumpa and Vara returned to Western Australia, either out of necessity or eagerness<sup>38</sup> They returned in 1926 bringing with them Kumpa's 16-year-old son, Andrija Paško, (Andrew) with them. They found work cutting timber in the southwest of Western Australia and clearing land for farming. Kumpa's health continued to deteriorate so he returned to Croatia in the early 1930's. In his later years, suffered what was likely an arthritic condition which caused his fingers on both hands to be permanently curled. Young Andrew stayed with his uncle, Vara. In the mid-1930s, Vara sponsored his own son, Ivan, to come to Australia. Vara probably had optimistic plans for his son, nephew and himself but, unfortunately, Ivan died of tuberculosis in 1942 and was buried in Karrakatta Cemetery. He was only nineteen years of age.



L to R: Kumpa's daughter Tomica *Bijonda Kursar Kumpina* nee Vlahov with a young patient, Kumpa's son Branko Vlahov *Kumpin* (author's grandfather), Branko's wife, Milka Vlahov *Kumpina* nee Antić-Poluš with her granddaughter, Lena, Vara's daughter, Andjelka Mišurac nee Vlahov *Varina*.

## World War II

Back in Croatia, Vara's only surviving child, Andjelka, married Stipe Mišurac *Bijondov* and had a son, Ante, whom they named after the baby's paternal grandfather. During World War II, while her husband was fighting with the Partisans against the NAZI army's offensive, Andjelka and her son joined the steady flow of refugees, first to Italy and then to the British-Yugoslav displaced persons camp in El Shatt, near Suez, Egypt, where her four-year-old son died of cholera. She returned to Croatia a childless widow, never remarrying.<sup>39</sup> While Vara was still away in Western Australia, his wife Križanka moved into her parents house to look after her elderly mother. After the war, Andjelka moved in with her mother and worked in the sardine factory in Prvić Luka.

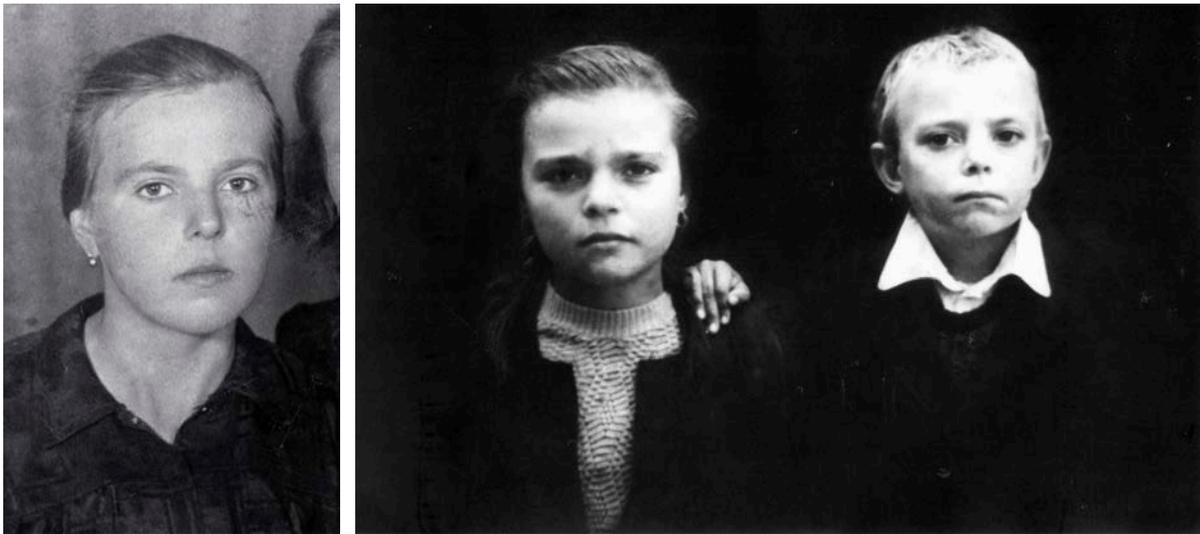
After surviving the Italian occupation of Šepurine, then the Ustaša period, the impending NAZI occupation proved too much for Kumpa and thousands of others. He left Šepurine as a refugee with many others, and was picked up by American patrols in the Adriatic and taken to the island of Vis, where there was a British base. From there, the refugees were transported to one of the camps set up by the allies on the Italian

<sup>38</sup> The 1920 Enemy Aliens Act prohibited Germans, Austrians, former Austrian subjects, Bulgarians, Hungarians and Turks from entering Australia for five years from 2 December 1920. It was repealed (with the exception of Turks) in 1925.

<sup>39</sup> Andjelka's husband, Stipe Mišurac *Bijondov* was died in combat near Velika Popina, Lika, Croatia on 6th January 1944, the same year his four-year old son died in the El Shatt refugee camp. Dane Berović (urednik) (1978). *Žrtvama do pobjede i slobode: Zbornik poginulih boraca, žrtava rata Šibenske Općine od 1941-1945 godine*. Šibenik. Općinski Odbor Subnor-Šibenik.

peninsula after Italy's surrender in September 1943.<sup>40</sup> As the camps became overcrowded, the Allies began moving large groups of refugees to El Shatt in Egypt. Kumpa was among the 39 647 who were transferred to El Shatt along with his eldest daughter, Milka Mijat, and with Vara's daughter, Andjelka. When Kumpa left Šepurine as a refugee, he left behind his wife, Matica, his son Branko and his family. He never saw his son again.

Branko was a handsome man, large dark eyes, wide shouldered, with a cheeky sense of humour. He married Milka Antić-Poluš whose parents were displeased with the union for a number of reasons, among them was



Branko and Milka's children.  
Left to right: Karmela, Hedviga and Ante - *Kumpini*

that Milka was two years older than Branko. Also, her family considered themselves better off - her father had been the village leader, he was literate and Milka's younger brother, Slavko, was going into the priesthood which brought additional prestige to the family.

Branko and Milka had three children: Karmela (b 1932)<sup>41</sup>, Hedviga (b 1935) and Ante (b 1940).<sup>42</sup> Branko was a hospital orderly, working in Šibenik Hospital with his sister, Tomica (*Bijonda*) the nurse. When the NAZIs occupied Šibenik, Branko was still working at the hospital and became an informant for the Partisans.<sup>43</sup> He was captured and sent to Dachau Concentration Camp just north of Munich, Germany. While out of the camp on forced labour, Branko and several others escaped. He stealthily walked some 550kms from Dachau, through Germany and German-held territory to Zagreb. He contracted typhoid along the way and died in a Zagreb hospital. Relatives, living in Zagreb during the war saw him and eventually relayed the story of his escape and his passing to his family. Branko died without seeing his wife, Milka, his children or his parents.

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<sup>40</sup> The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was established in November 1943 by a 44-nation agreement but largely funded by the United States. Australia was one of the initial signatories.

<sup>41</sup> Karmela Franić nee Vlahov (b 1932) is the author's mother.

<sup>42</sup> Hedviga Vlahov married Selmo Ukić *Parinov*; Ante Vlahov married Zvizda Kursar *Trkešina*

<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Marković Indo (1973) *Nepokorena Mladost*. Šibenik, self-published.

Milka and her children, together with Kumpa's wife, Matica escaped the NAZI occupation of the central Dalmatian islands by fleeing Šepurine in a boat under the cover of darkness. The escape boat, filled with women and children, was picked up by American patrol boats and taken to the island of Biševo where they were processed and assigned to the Santa Maria di Leuca UNRRA camp in southern Italy. By that time, Kumpa, had already been transported to El Shatt. Milka and her children and their *Baba* Matica were in the last small group of refugees who remained in Italy until the war's end. They were repatriated in November 1944 on the SS Ljubljana embarking in Monopoli, Italy and transferring in Split to a smaller vessel that took them to Šibenik.<sup>44</sup> It wasn't until May 1945, after Dachau Concentration Camp was liberated by the Americans and Marko Antić *Šimerin* returned to his home in Šepurine, that Milka learned the fate of her husband. Marko Antić *Šimerin* had been in Dachau with Branko and had passed through Zagreb on his way home to Šepurine and learned what happened to him, when he died and that he had been buried in a communal grave in Zagreb's Mirogoj Cemetery.<sup>45</sup>

### Death and Legacy

By the end of the war, Kumpa was physically broken. His family had lost a son, two grandsons and two members of Vara's family. They faced extreme poverty and starvation. His son, Andrew, would send supplies from Australia but often the packages were raided, confiscated or simply disappeared. Branko's widow, Milka, made leather sandals from bull and cow hide which she would sell in the village. Often, the sale of sandals was their only source of income.



Kumpa Vlahov *Kumpa's* funeral in March, 1954 in Šepurine. The second pall-bearer on the right is Selmo Ukić *Parinov*, who married Kumpa's granddaughter, Hedviga. Behind him is Zdravko Franić *Kletov*, the author's father, who married Karmela.

<sup>44</sup> Mateo Bratanić (2016). Hrvatski zbjegovi u Italji of 1943. do 1945. godine, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*. 48 (1). p 161-196. Retrieved from <https://hrcaj.srce.hr/clanak/250045>

<sup>45</sup> Told to the author by his grandmother, Milka Vlahov nee Antić-Poluš and by Marko Antić *Šimerin* in 1986

In 1948, Vara returned to Croatia. He was getting old, but he and Križanka worked their fields, made their wine and olive oil until they no longer could. Their daughter, Andjelka cared for them both until their deaths.

In Australia, Kumpa's son, Andrew and his wife Rose (nee Ukić Parin) had six children that survived into adulthood. In the mid-1950s, Andrew sponsored two of his brother children who migrated and settled in Perth. Branko's son, Ante and Karmela's husband, Zdravko Franić *Kletov* arrived in Fremantle in January 1956. Ante was only 16 years old. When Karmela and her daughter, Lena (2) arrived in Fremantle in April 1957, the reunited Franić family moved into a shed that had been adapted into a simple dwelling which they rented from Roko and Vera Antulov *Fingerovi* in Osborne Park. Later, they rented an acre of land and an old house in Macdonald Street, Osborne Park, from Victor and Millie Vlahov *Čučovi*, and began establishing a market garden. In May 1965, Hedviga's husband, Selmo Ukić *Parinov* arrived in Western Australia, and lived with Karmela and Zdravko until Hedviga and their sons, Zoran (b 1955) and Edo (b1960) migrated to Perth in August 1966.

Today, there are no living descendants of Vara and Križanka Vlahov, but there are over one hundred living descendants of his brother, Kumpa and his wife Matica. Some of their descendants remained in Croatia, others move to Zemun, Serbia immediately after World War II, some now live in Queensland, Melbourne, New Zealand but the vast majority live in Western Australia.

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