



Jože Rant

THE
SLOVENIAN
EXODUS
OF 1945

About the Author

JOŽE RANT

Jože Rant was born in Kranj on February 16, 1931, where he completed elementary school, and then during the German Occupation had to attend the so-called *Hauptschule* and then take his final examinations each year at the high school-*gimnazija* in Celovec [Klagenfurt, Austria].



He immigrated with his parents in 1948 to Argentina where he completed high school. He entered the Slovenian seminary and was ordained in 1956. He shined at teaching in Catholic middle schools, and at two of them was also their founder and first-rector. He taught ethics at the catechetical seminary in Morón, and wrote several handbooks for this subject. He was also a consultant at the Regional Catholic School Board, a reviewer of Synod proposals, and diocesan counsel to the Catholic physicians in the Diocese of Morón and elsewhere. Meanwhile, in 1961 he received his Ph.D. in Theology at the *Universidad del Salvador*; his mentor was Father José Adúriz S.J. and his thesis was on the Argentine philosopher Dr. Víctor Massuh (Rediscovered World).

In 1965 he made his first request to be demoted to the status of laity, and a second request in 1975, which was finally granted in 1976.

From 1975 until his retirement he taught as a lecturer on humanistic studies on the faculty at the Avellaneda National University in Buenos Aires, where he reached the rank of regular tenured professor in 1985. Until his retirement he was also the Chair of the department in Avellaneda and the director of humanistic studies in Buenos Aires. Both faculties published more than 30 of his handbooks for the students.

Meanwhile he also wrote several philosophical articles in Spanish. In 1991 he attained his second doctorate at the Universidad del Salvador under the mentorship of Father Ismael Quiles, SJ. The thesis for his Ph.D. in Philosophy: Achievements in Latin-American Anthropology. From 1975 to 1995 he also worked in the Dean's Office of the *Universidad Tecnológica Nacional*, where he later reached the position of Dean of Studies.

After a long period of separation from working with the Slovenian community (since 1963), he was invited in 1987 by the editor of Med-dobje, Andrej Rot, to start writing again in Slovenian. This magazine published more than 20 of columns, from philosophical articles to reviews of new books.

Because the state did not want to fund any research on scientific terminology, he resigned as president of the board and asked for retirement.

He then accepted work on the Zbornik Zedinjene Slovenije for the 50th anniversary of this umbrella organization of Slovenians in Argentina (published in 1998 with more than 800 pages). Then from the writings of his oldest brother Pavle and with the help of an anonymous mentor, he wrote and published the book “Pavle Rant: ‘What I Was’, A Contribution to the History of the Slovenian Political Refugees, Bs. As. 2003”. Despite the fact that he was not a historian by profession, he accepted the invitation by former classmates at the refugee high school in Austria to write this book, which he started in 2004, even though far removed from available sources.

He nonetheless hopes that this testimonial work with help expand sooner or later the Slovenian horizons that are still too narrow.

Plagued by failing health in the final years of his life, he died on August 23, 2007 - the very week that the Slovenian edition of this book was published.

The Slovenian Exodus of 1945

Jože Rant

Translated from the Slovenian edition
by Jerry G. Zupan

Rant, José Antonio

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Buenos Aires, 2007

The front cover of the jacket attempts to portray a summary of the book along with the history of the Slovenian political emigration of 1945. The dark-toned column on the left depicts a long column of refugees moving across the Ljubelj mountain pass. The upper right corner has a clear picture of the illuminated Teharje Memorial that stands as a hallowed remembrance of the victims of the postwar mass murders. At the center is a geographic outline of the present-day Republic of Slovenia. The composition is dominated by ultimate goal of the refugees of 1945: the proudly waving flag of the independent country of the Republic of Slovenia as of June 26, 1991.

*Published as a gift from a private donor
in grateful memory to all the victims
of the war and the revolution.*

Jacket and cover design by *Monika Urbanija Koprivnikar*

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Buenos Aires 2007



*In their distress they cried to the Lord,
He rescued them in their peril.
He led them by the right path,
So they reached a city to live in.*

Psalm 107, 6-7

To

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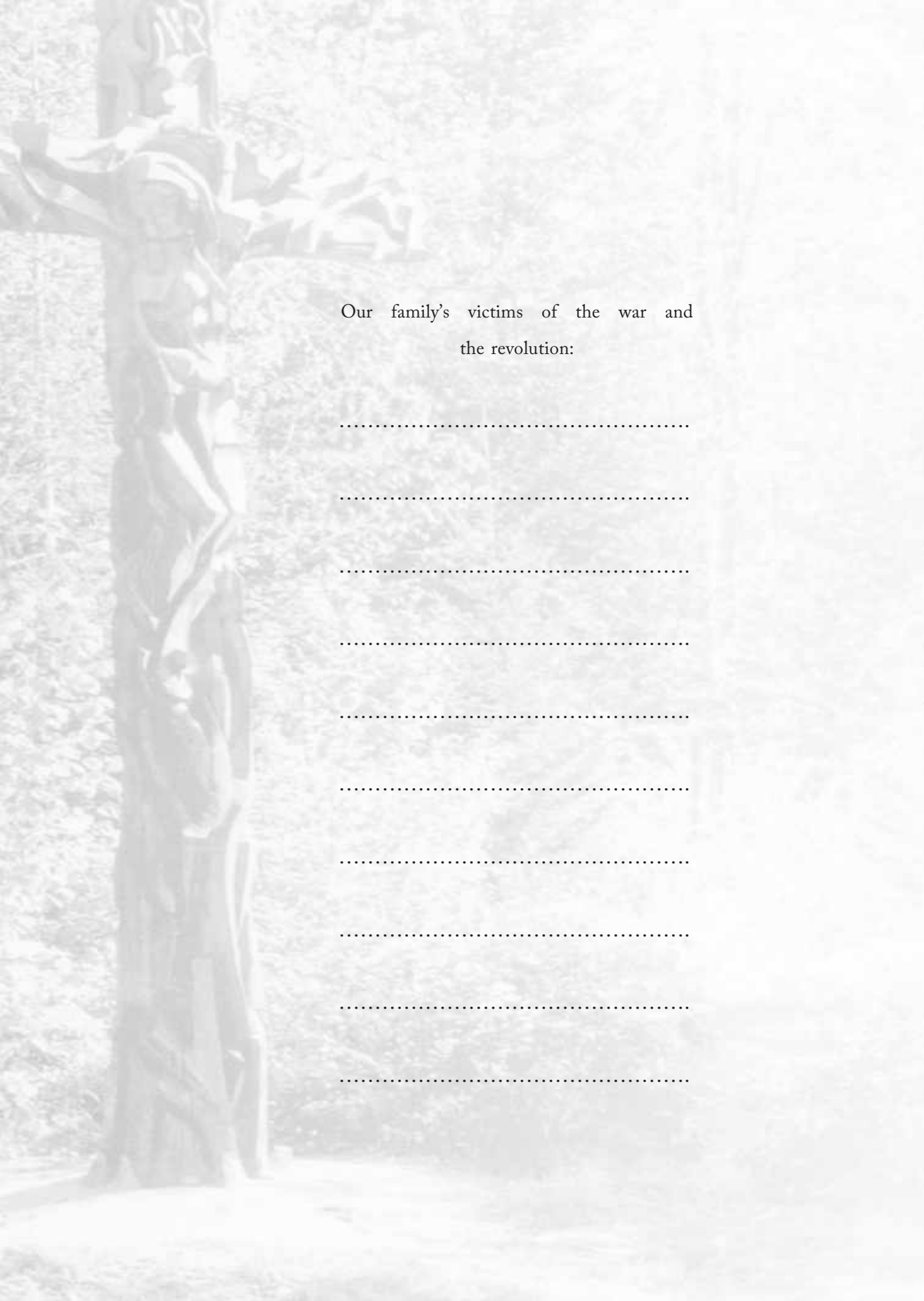
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from

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Place and Date



Our family's victims of the war and
the revolution:

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I am sincerely grateful to everybody who helped me with this work, above all for their advice on the sources or their comments on the initial draft. Of these I am especially grateful to Msgr. Dr. Janez **Zdešar** (Germany). I also express my special gratitude for his dedicated work to Professor Albin **Magister** who proofread the book. It is impossible to mention all the members of various organizations or individuals and friends who graciously gave me access to numerous books or even donated such to me.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Tamara **Griesser-Pečar**, who graciously granted me permission to use numerous sections from her work “*Razdvojeni narod - Slovenija 1941-1945 – Okupacija-Kolaboracija-Državljanska vojna-Revolucija*”, especially the quotations from sources that I was unable to access.

I thank the publishers and individuals who granted permission to use their photographs: Boštjan *Burger* (inž.), *Državna založba Slovenije* (Metod Bočko), the publishers of *Mladinska knjiga* (Matija Ivanič), *Arhivsko društvo Slovenije* (Andrej Nared), Prof. Dr. Mitja Ferenc, Marija Počivavšek and the *Muzej novejše zgodovine Celje (MNZC)*, *Slovenska Zaveza* (Justin Stanovnik, Dr. Anton Drobnič) for the photographs from *Zaveza*, and the consortium of the weekly newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija* for the photographs from its annual *Koledar-Zbornik*.

Of course this book would not have been possible without the person who dreamed of such a book a good many years ago, **Rudy Kolarič**, who also provided the financial support for this dream to come true. This dream was encouraged by our former classmates from the Slovenian refugee high school-*gimnazija*, which operated from 1945 to 1949 in the Displaced Persons camps in Peggetz near Lienz and then in Spittal (Austria), who then immigrated to the USA: in alphabetic order, **Srečko Gaser**, **Ivan Hauptman**, **Zalka Hirschegger-Likožar**, Dr. **France Jeglič**, and Dr. **Tine Meršol**. The task of keeping all of us networked fell in Argentina to another former refugee high school classmate, **Marjan Loboda**; I also owe him a special debt of gratitude for the numerous books he provided, for his advice and suggestions, and also for keeping me informed with news from Australia, Canada, and the USA.

I am particularly grateful to **Jerry Zupan**, for translating the book into English and for the English summary within the Slovenian publication, and for some corrections to the Slovenian text. I likewise thank **Prof. Maria Rosa Rapisarda** who proofread the Spanish translation and for the Spanish summary within the Slovenian publication.

J. R.

“The open admission of the truth... marks the culture of a nation”

John Paul II., *Centessimus Annus* 50

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About the Author

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Preface by the Author

The **primary purpose** of this book is first and foremost to be a reply to the question asked by many descendants of the large numbers of Slovenian immigrants: **why did their ancestors leave their native land in 1945** at the end of World War II? This was definitely not a case of economic emigration, as in the old Slovenian rhyme “*s trebuhom za kruhom*” [*the bread beckons the belly*]. The reply to the question is actually quite brief: **to save their lives!** Or, more accurately: because the Communist Party had taken over their country; this Party had been making plans for a revolutionary coup for a long time, long before the start of World War II, but in the middle of this war, as soon as Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the Party launched a Red Revolution, masquerading behind their cunning slogan, the duplicitous “Fight to Free the People”. [This Communist Party would and did kill everyone and anyone who stood in the way of its drive to power. The Slovenian émigrés of 1945 were the ones who miraculously slipped from their talons. So, although the reply is simple, the full tale is so complex that it needs a book such as this for the telling.]

The answer to the question must be based on factual details, presented as objectively as possible.

The form of this presentation serves the **second purpose** of this book: to acquaint the people of other nationalities with **what really happened in Slovenia during and after the World War II**.

The story would be incomplete unless a **third objective** was added: **what eventually happened to all these Slovenian postwar refugees?** Where did the main bodies of refugees go? Where did they settle down and make roots? How did they adjust to living in their new countries? And how did it happen that the majority endeavored to never forget their native land? For this reason, this work **traces the trek to a foreign land, the Vetrinjški tragedy, the life and labor in the refugee camps in the initial postwar years, the dispersal across the entire Western World, and the subsequent lives of these refugees in their dual characters: as immigrants and simultaneously as political émigrés who continued to yearn and work towards obtaining freedom for Slovenia and, during the last decade of the 20th century, nearly unanimously played an active role in enabling Slovenia to become an independent country.**

Granted, there already exist many erudite books on the general theme and shorter treatises more narrowly focused on its subtopics. However, the majority of these works have yet to be translated into English or Spanish, the languages now spoken by the majority of the descendants of those Slovenians who were forced to leave their country in 1945. This book is not a compilation of personal narratives penned by émigré survivors, or the “oral history” of émigrés selected for interviews, such as are found in the noteworthy book “Slovenia 1945 – Memories of Death and Survival after World War II” authored by Corsellis and Ferrar. Testimonial-style writings like these do not aspire to be achievements of some primary investigation through various archives and libraries, and even less to present some new historical revelations. It’s all about making a relatively brief work, composed on the basis of works listed in the bibliography

From what has just been said, it is understood that a written work is but some sort of summarization from a most diverse set of works, and therefore a book reflects traces of these sources. The credibility and persuasiveness of a work is in fact based on these traces.

This book attempts to describe events exactly as they occurred, that is **dispassionately (objectively)**. However, this never means that it must be **indifferent (impartial)**: a truthful and trustworthy presentation of events by necessity reflects only the facts, not every remotest possible explanation for it. Historical deeds, whether they are words or actions, occur but once: the truth cannot be anything but one! Multiple explanations might be proposed; however only one approaches truthfulness and thus the truth!

A clue to the objectivity of this work lies in the diversity in the authors cited in this book: from the so-called **historians for the Communist Regime** (Saje, Mikuž, Pleterski, Šnuderl, *et al.*) to the “**anti-Revolutionist**” historians (Martinc-Debeljak, Kos-Jeločnik, F. Grum, S. Pleško, J. Grum, *et al.*); **from professional historians** in the country (some from the book “*Temna stran meseca*”, plus Godeša, Mlakar, Griesser-Pečar, *et. al.*) to **former members of the OF and the KPS** (Bajt, Svetina, Vode, *et. al.*) —whose numbers in recent times have been steadily increasing.

The prospective reader was the criterion for every aspect of the design of this book: the summary, the structure, the sequence of the chapters, and last but not least, the style of the writing.

Jože Rant

Translator's Comments

The underlying principles for this translation were to keep the English text faithful to the original version in Slovenian and to reach the widest audience possible: from the serious historian to the casual reader. Comments by the translator were added to the text to facilitate comprehension for the reader who may be less familiar with Slovenian terms, history, or geography. The translator's comments are enclosed in square brackets [...], to be distinguishable from the author's comments which are enclosed in parentheses (...).

Following the wishes of the author, the Slovenian names of the regions of Slovenia were retained in the text, thus "Gorenjska" instead of "Upper Carniola"; the regions are few in number, and a map of the regions was included to aid the reader. Also, "the Party" (when capitalized), always refers to the Communist Party, and "the Regime" likewise to the Communist government in power in Slovenia from 1945-1990.

I am grateful to the author, Jože Rant, for all his time and effort expended to help me hammer out the details of this translation through a constant flow of email correspondence over a period of 13 months, until his untimely death from cancer. I am also deeply grateful to his associate, Marjan Loboda, for his months of hard work to ensure the translation's accuracy and faithfulness to the original Slovenian. Finally, I also thank Rudi Kolarič, who was the spirit of this undertaking, for his support throughout the process.

Jerry G. Zupan

1. A Question... and a Reply

Searching for their roots, offspring of the Slovenian refugees of 1945 kept asking the question that became the rationale for this book: **“Why did my parents, grandparents, or even great-grandparents have to leave their native Slovenia in 1945 [at the end of World War II]?”**

This relatively brief chapter gives a straightforward reply, simple and unequivocal: **If they had stayed, nearly all of them most probably would have been killed.**

There are **many reasons** for such an assertion:

1. For millions of persons, especially those living in a section of Central Europe and in all of Eastern Europe, **the year 1945** did not signify the end of World War II and a victory over Fascism and Nazism, but rather **the beginning of a new, even worse form of slavery: as subjects now under a communist dictatorship and a reign of terror.**
2. **The refugees of 1945 did not flee because they could have been accused of some wrongdoing!** This was asserted already on July 11, 1945 in a memorandum by the priesthood of the Ljubljana Diocese that stated that our refugees **“were not driven from their homeland by a conscience saddled with some real guilt”.**
3. **In Slovenia, the World War II was not merely** a tragic period of foreign occupation, **but moreover, also a period of a great split among the people and a civil war.** (Slovenian Bishops Conference - SŠK, Statement at the 50th Anniversary of the End of the War)
4. **The [Communist] Party exploited the fight for liberation [from Fascism/Nazism] in order to carry out a revolutionary takeover of the government, by unscrupulously taking advantage of the patriotism of many Slovenians, who were duped by its lies.** (*SŠK, ibid*)
5. **The Village Guards and after them the Slovenian Homeguard came into being “as a completely legitimate self-defense reaction against the murdering of the civilian population that was being perpetrated by the communist revolutionists. “At the forefront of everything ... there stands therefore the revolutionist agenda of the [Communist] Party, directed by a foreign country, to overthrow the government and set up a totalitarian communist regime.”** (*SŠK, ibid*)
6. **The Homeguards were not traitors to their nation,** because “the majority of the Homeguards wanted nothing other than a Slovenia that was free and democratic.” It evolved into a fight against the Partisans because the anticommunists were opposed to having a totalitarian communism rule over Slovenia. (*SŠK, ibid*)
7. Only this background helps explain the shocking fact that the **OF [Communist-led Liberation Front] murdered many Slovenians already during the war itself, and that after the end of the war, it slaughtered *en masse* and without any legal due process not only the captured Homeguards, but also many civilians** who were simply deemed to be potential opponents of the new communist regime. (*SŠK, ibid*)

Each of these reasons deserves some further elaboration:

1. The Slovenian democratic [i.e. non-communist] side created numerous resistance organizations as soon as Slovenia was occupied.

The democratic-sided political parties and organizations in Slovenia were caught up in the cause to resist the occupation forces already in the very first weeks of the occupation; this immediacy is a cold historical fact that cannot be trivialized. The **key principles of this resistance** were: 1. We Slovenians must survive the war with **as few fatal casualties as possible** and with as little material damage as possible. 2. We Slovenians must **challenge** the occupation **with resistance and revolt [uprising]**: the first phase will be both civilian resistance in the most diverse forms and also preparations for an armed uprising, and the second phase will be an armed uprising and liberation side-by-side with the Western Allies. 3. During the period of occupation, it is **necessary to draw together, and not to separate, the various parts of the body of the nation**, towards the common goal of achieving a Unified Slovenia [as a country].

The Slovenian democratic political parties, which for the most part decided on the path of initial passive resistance, were following the instructions from the Yugoslav Royalist Government in London. This represented the so-called 'European model' of resistance and revolt that was espoused by the majority of the European governments and political leaders of countries that had been occupied by the Nazis.

The very first Slovenian resistance organization to be formed after the occupation was the Slovenian Legion (SL), established on April 27, 1945 in the Craftsmen Hall [*Rokodelski dom*] in Ljubljana. The SL attracted primarily the young people from Catholic circles and organizations.

2. The Communist Party with its "confederates" began an "armed" uprising.

The Communist Party in foreign countries always **blindly followed orders from the Soviet Union**. Not surprisingly then, after the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 was signed, the Party **began collaborating with the Nazis and the Fascists**. The common goal of these three collaborators - the Triad of Great Evils of the 20th Century! - was to wage war against the democratic countries of Europe. Long before World War II began (as evidenced by at least two pre-war attempts), the Yugoslav Communist Party's intention was to overthrow Yugoslavia, launch a communist revolution, and establish a soviet republic.

Even **after Slovenia was occupied**, the Communist Party **continued to collaborate with the Germans; it did not change its stance until Germany attacked the Soviet Union** on June 22, 1941. In order to provide **a cover for its own revolution**, the **KPS [Communist Party of Slovenia] established the Liberation Front [OF]** and started its provocations, which the KPS called "armed resistance".

When the war started, approximately 1.4 million inhabitants lived on Slovenian soil, or Drava Province [*Dravska banovina*] as it had been officially named by the Yugoslav government of that era. At this time the **KPS had only 600 members, not even 0.005% of the population**. The miniscule KPS therefore had to search for "**associates**", and found a handful primarily among the Christian Socialists and the leftist Sokols [Falcons]. On the basis of this array of "allies", the OF claimed that it represented the microcosm of the entire Slovenian population. But later, once the Communist Party members had acquired solid control within the OF, they dumped all of these "allies" of theirs by issuing their so-called Dolomites Declaration on April 1, 1943.

The **first and foremost purpose** of the so-called National-Liberation War was therefore not to liberate Slovenia from three occupation forces, but rather to **carry out a revolution and establish a dictatorship by the Communist Party**.

3. The KPS [Communist Party of Slovenia] unilaterally claimed that all resistance against the occupation forces was subject to its exclusive control.

Already on September 16, 1941, the KPS decreed that the Slovenian National-Liberation Committee, which it itself had created, **“is the sole body to speak for, represent, organize and lead the Slovenian nation in all its lands in the fight against the occupier”**. They also proclaimed that any activity done by any organization outside the umbrella of the Liberation Front during the time of foreign occupation was detrimental to national liberation. Therefore a second decree spelled out this monopolization in even more detail: **any Partisan was permitted to kill on the spot any Slovenian person who did not belong to the OF and was found carrying a weapon.**

The KPS/OF thus **unilaterally and completely illegally** bestowed upon themselves the exclusive “right” to lead the fight against the occupier and to form a new government, and then accordingly set to work at it, using terrorism.

4. The Communist Security-Intelligence Service (VOS) inaugurates terror

The Communist Party unilaterally created the “Security-Intelligence Service” (VOS), which immediately began to assassinate the democratic political leaders and other persons of influence. **All this was happening even before there was any sort of armed resistance against the OF!** Boris Kidrič, who later became the first President of the [Communist] People’s Republic of Slovenia, stated in 1942 that **the moral and political pressure exerted by the international struggle for liberation [from the Fascists/Nazis] must also entail terrorism done by the Security Intelligence Service for [Slovenia’s] national liberation.**

Only communist hypocrisy and cynicism can equate concepts that are mutually exclusive, such as liberation and terrorism. **This demonstrates that the “liberation” of 1945, flaunted *ad nauseam*, was in reality only the beginning of “state terrorism” and a bloody regime, and did not signify freedom, democracy, pluralism, a nation of laws, personal freedoms, and the like.**

5. The first victims in the years 1941/1942

By the end of 1942 the VOS had murdered the persons like the following who possessed charisma and influence: Fanouš Emmer (*inž.*); industrialist Avgust Praprotnik; university students Jaroslav Kikelj and Franc Župec; priest, intellectual, and ideologue of the movement for an independent country of Slovenia, Dr. Lambert Ehrlich; Catholic organizer Ivo Peršuh; Catholic labor activist Fortunat Majdič; senior-level university student and member of the KA [Catholic Action], Lojze Grozde (in the process for Beatification); senior-level police official, Kazimir Kukovič; the former governor of the Drava Province and the highest-ranking civilian ruler in Slovenia, Dr. Marko Natlačen, and others. Throughout the country side they also killed a great number of township-level leaders, mayors, owners of large farms, priests, members of Catholic Action, and young men and girls who were influential among their peers.

Probably the most terrifying were the murders of entire families or multiple family members, even little children. To name just a few: 3 from the Benedik family, 3 from the Kolenc family, 2 from the Zavodnik family, 7 from the Jakopin, 4 from the Lončar, 4 from the Dolinar, 4 from the Fatur, 5 from the Grudnik, 4 from the Kozina, 4 from the Mravlje, 7 from the Mavsar family, and so on. The killing of Ivanka Novak, a pregnant teacher, shocked the public.

There are no proofs that any of these nearly 1,000 victims were guilty of anything that would have warranted a death sentence. In most cases they were savagely tortured before being killed. For many of these victims it was not even known, where they were – euphemistically

said – “buried”. The remains of victims that were dug up in 1944 showed evidence of horrible tortures before death.¹

What is noteworthy is that the VOS was killing only Slovenians, and not occupation troops.

6. Spontaneous Self-defense

The Partisans, with their attacks from ambushes and with insignificant acts of sabotage, represented minor annoyances yet open challenges to the occupying Germans and Italians, but the Partisans always retreated at the first sign of danger. This partisan tactic of withdrawal **forced the occupiers to take acts of reprisals**, but this could be done **only against innocent Slovenians**. Thus the **Slovenians**, especially those **in the countryside**, found themselves **in a crossfire**.

- a) **On the one side were the Partisans**, who were murdering individuals or entire families, **branding them with the derisive label “White Guard”, a term borrowed from the Soviet Revolution to denote counter-revolutionaries; but this labeling was being done long before there was even any armed opposition against the OF**. Using this label as a pretext, they were killing in the most savage methods imaginable not only influential individuals but their families as well, and oftentimes burned their entire property to the ground.
- b) **On the other side were the German or the Italian Occupation troops**, who were **carrying out their own brand of violence by taking reprisals against the same villages and the same families**, on the pretext that the villagers were either supporting the Partisans or were not turning them in to the authorities. So the occupation forces were burning entire villages to the ground, driving numerous persons away to confinement or to concentration camps, or else shooting them as hostages.

Without reservation, the claim can be made that the continuous and savage murder spree that the communist Partisans was perpetrating on innocent and patriotic Slovenian people was the catalyst that led to an armed reaction. There would have been no such reaction had the Partisans contented themselves with robberies, confiscations, and arsons. In time and in succession, two self-defense armed organizations arose: the **Village Guards (VS)** and the **Slovenian Homeguard (SD)**.

7. The justifiable right for units armed for self-defense

Resistance against the Partisan terrorism, first in the form of the Village Guards, arose completely spontaneously, as pure self-defense, because **the occupation authorities did not want, did not know how, or were unable to provide for the security of the inhabitants.**

On the issue of the legality of the VS, many rightfully point to the **Hague Convention**, which covers the topic of military occupations in its **Articles 42 to 56**. “For the circumstances in Slovenia, in light of the creation of the Village Guards (MVAC) and the Homeguards, Article 43 is the most significant, which states: **‘Because legitimate authority has passed to the hands of the occupier, the latter must undertake everything within its power to renew and guarantee public order and security, as far as possible...’**”²

1. *V znamenju Osvobodilne fronte* [The Mark of the Liberation Front] and *Bela knjiga* [The White Book]; *Matica mrtvih 1941-1942* [The Roster of the Dead 1942-1942], 9-74

2. Urbanc (Sources)

This legitimate form of collaboration was practiced internationally in Occupied Europe 1941-1945; these cases in every instance included weaponry that was provided by the Germans, in formats from armed police and even to army detachments who had taken an oath, such as in Greece and in Czechoslovakia. The Hague Convention explicitly permits an oath of loyalty, of course with neutrality *vis-a-vis* the occupier.

Dr. Urbanc correctly states that we encounter a **paradox** in judgments about collaboration: **in Slovenia it was deemed a crime, whereas elsewhere it was accepted as legitimate, normal, and even laudable.** All the high officials who collaborated with the Germans during the occupation of the Channel Islands were later awarded by England with titles of nobility, whereas in Slovenia they were awarded with bullets by the VOS assassins or with massacres in Teharje or in Rog.

In any event, [all the legitimacy granted by the Hague Convention aside,] **for the majority, whether speaking about the VS or the SD, any question about one's personal decision to defend oneself was simply an ethics issue, namely, was the person being true to his conscience.**

8. The first mass murders in 1943

Italy surrendered in September of 1943. The Allies ordered the Italian Army to hand over all its weapons and equipment to the Partisan forces. Because rumors were circulating at the time that the Allies were going to land on the Slovenian coastline and break across Slovenia into Central Europe, the anticommunist forces (Village Guards and Chetniks) were making preparations to aid the Allies in this venture according to their means. The communist Partisans however had already in advance made an agreement with the Germans to jointly resist any Allied invasion. The Village Guards found themselves in a very unfavorable position face to face with the Partisan forces that were now armed with Italian heavy weaponry. The Partisan forces *en masse* did not aim their weapons at the Germans [as the Western world was made to believe], but on the contrary at fellow Slovenians, the Village Guards and the Chetniks. The largest group of Village Guards had fortified itself inside the ancient Castle Turjak in *Dolenjska* [*Lower Carniola*].

In these Partisan attacks against their garrisons, many Village Guards were captured and driven away to Jelendol and Kočevje, where they were **executed en masse**. When Castle Turjak finally fell after several days of battle, the Partisans killed almost all the wounded on the spot and then herded around 800 captured Village Guards to Kočevje and Novo Mesto. In Kočevje they staged **a parody of a courtroom trial** against 21 key prisoners and sentenced 16 of them to death. Every one of the remaining prisoners was then murdered in secret, except for a **handful that succeeded in escaping**.

9. The Slovenian Homeguard

After the tragedy that befell the Village Guards when the Italian Army surrendered, there was true anarchy in the Slovenian territory formerly occupied by the Italians. The people were abandoned to the merciless and cruel rampaging by the Partisans. Many at this time sought safety by fleeing into the city of Ljubljana, which had been immediately occupied by German troops to maintain order. Helping to maintain this order were the Slovenian police – the Municipal Guards – who were under the jurisdiction of a native civil administration that was headed by the newly-appointed mayor of Ljubljana, Leon Rupnik, a former Yugoslav Army general. According to a directive given by Gen. Rupnik, Captain Suvajdžič was able to increase the number of Municipal Guards to nearly 1,000 men by incorporating the surviving Village Guards, and the German commander immediately granted it recognition as an anticommunist military

detachment. This Municipal Guard and some VS garrisons in the vicinity of Ljubljana (Sv. Urh, Orle, etc.) prevented the Partisans from breaking into Ljubljana and carrying out their planned slaughter of 20,000 of their opponents in the city.

Once the Germans occupied Ljubljana Province, the Slovenian anticommunists were left with **only two choices: either join the communists** and thereby cast aside their ideals and place their own lives in jeopardy, **or accept weapons from the occupier to be able to defend themselves.**

The decision to accept weapons from the occupier was at first not acceptable to the Slovenian Covenant (SZ), or the Slovenian Legion (SL), or the leaders of the Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS) whether in the homeland or in exile. However the majority of those directly affected by the circumstances saw this as their only way out, whereby they could save themselves from certain death.

If there could be said to be any common ground at all with the Germans, it would be in the fight against Bolshevism and the sovietization of Slovenia. In this aspect, the Slovenian Homeguard (SD) was simply an extenuation of the Village Guard (VS), even though over time it became more organized, less self-defensive, and more on the offensive. The leaders of the anti-revolutionists viewed the Slovenian Homeguard as the Slovenian component of the Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD), and the Democratic Parliament in May of 1945 renamed the Slovenian Homeguard into the Slovenian National Army (SNV).

The Germans were chagrined that they were unable to force their own stamp on the Homeguard phenomenon; the best they could do was to continuously place increasing restrictions on the activities of the Homeguard: **“Thus the Slovenians remained one of the rare European nations that did not have their ‘own’ SS units** – as a part of the joint European battle against Bolshevism.”³

10. The Germans thwart the armed uprising planned by the democratic side

Towards the end of 1944 and in January 1945, the **Germans imprisoned a large number of anti-revolutionist officers, thereby fatally undercutting the preparations being made for an armed uprising by all the democratic [non-communist] forces under the umbrella of the JVvD [Jugoslav Chetniks].** As a result of the mass arrests, the anti-revolutionist camp, composed of various organizations and factions, now even more than ever **lacked a unified command**, the key element of success in wartime, to which all the various military units would have submitted themselves.

11. Various armies withdraw through Slovenia away from the advancing Red Army

The number of those who were moving across Slovenia away from the advancing Soviet Army units probably ran into the hundreds of thousands. Serb military units (Ljotić's Serb Volunteer Corps, Nedić's Serb National Guard, and some JVvD-Chetniks) arrived already towards the end of 1944. They were followed by Croatian units (Homeguards, Ustashi). Then these were joined by a part of the Russian Liberation Army of General Vlasov, the Cossack Mounted Corps, the Circassians, and others. All of these remained in Primorska for several months. Some of them surrendered to the Western Allies, and others continued the retreat towards Austria.

³. Mlakar (Sources)

As of the start of 1945, tens of thousands of German soldiers began to arrive, likewise trying to reach at least the Austrian border. Many of these did not succeed because they were captured by Tito's Yugoslav Army (named the Yugoslav Armada, JA, as of March 1, 1945) and were killed in great numbers. The almost 500 gravesites uncovered in Slovenia as of November of 2006 bear witness to these postwar mass killings.

The Slovenian anti-revolutionists found themselves in the midst of this frightful confusion: the politicians as well as the new Slovenian National Army (SNV), which consisted of the Homeguards, underground Legion members, and Slovenian Chetniks. **Any sort of military uprising was now out of the question.** All that could be done were notable political moves: a parliament, comprised of Slovenian representatives that were elected in the last free elections, convened on May 3, 1945, in secret on account of the occupier, and named a democratic government; but all these moves could no longer change the circumstances in the field.

In the east, Russian and Bulgarian soviet troops broke into Prekmurje and into Slovenian Styria as far as Maribor. In the west, the 4th Yugoslav Army, armed by the Western Allies, blocked the path of retreat to Italy.

12. The Vetrinj Tragedy

Thus, **only the worst option remained: withdraw towards the north,** across the Ljubelj mountain pass, into the reconstituted country of Austria. In the last few weeks of the war, this was the option that the political leaders feared the most, and which Dr. Šmajd called "the worst" salvation: to give the impression that they were retreating together with the German Army as if they were a part of it.⁴

But the Homeguards still had to use their firepower to open the route across the bridge at Borovlje, which was in Partisan hands. After the Homeguards crossed the Drava River, they were forced to hand over their weapons to the British soldiers. The British segregated the civilian refugees and the SNV **into two camps on the plains of Vetrinj.**

The British made promises to take the SNV to Palmanova in Italy. However, with lies and deceit, **the British double-crossed the Slovenian political and military leaders: the British, having given their military word of honor that they were driving the Slovenian soldiers to Italy, in actuality were handing them over to the Titoists.** The Homeguard military leadership refused to believe the first Homeguards and Chetniks who escaped from the initial transports, until the physician Dr. Janez Janež re-appeared in Vetrinj on May 30th, the day after the British had transported him out.

On the following day, Dr. Valentin Meršol was informed by British Lt. Ames that he had orders to remove on June 1st from the camp 2,700 Slovenian civilian refugees and hand them over to the Titoists. Being president of the civilian camp committee, Dr. Meršol protested violently against these orders. He was backed by Canadian Major Barre. After the pair confronted Major Johnson, he relayed to them the **decision that no longer would anybody be handed over by force.**

The English treachery at Vetrinj is **public knowledge today thanks to quite a few foreign eyewitnesses and newly uncovered documents.** The North American Command (Eisenhower) and the British Command (Alexander) had both decreed that all refugees were to be driven to Italy. But the commander of the 5th Corps, Gen. Keightley, sabotaged Alexander's directive. The chief culprit for the handing over of the SNV to Tito was the Chief of Staff of the 5th

⁴ More on this in Chapter 11 (Preparations by the Anti-Revolutionists for the End of the War) and Chapter 12 (The Retreat Across Ljubelj)

Corps, Toby Low, the future Lord Aldington. The British 5th Corps had received on May 17th an order from the British 8th Army that stipulated that no agreements were to be made with Yugoslav commanders about a withdrawal [of Tito's forces] from Carinthia. However, Toby Low had already met on May 15th with Tito's representative, Colonel Hočevár, and on May 19th, contrary to orders, with Colonel Ivanović. At this meeting they resolved that the Partisans would withdraw from Carinthia, and to all appearances, they also reached an agreement on the handing over of all the Yugoslavs.⁵

It appears that **British personnel at Supreme Headquarters for the Mediterranean Theatre cannot be completely absolved of any blame**, perhaps including Field Marshal Alexander himself, as is indicated from a defensive reply by the Chief of Staff, Gen. William Morgan, dated July 31, 1945, which states that the returned Yugoslavs had fought together with the Germans, that for this reason they were treated as enemy personnel, and that thusly categorized, **according to orders by the Supreme Headquarters**, they were handed over to the Yugoslav Army units.

On the other hand, the **North Americans** (U.S. State Department) already on August 8, 1946 lodged a **formal protest** to the commander of the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean, Marshal Alexander, in which it stated that the USA does not condone the British behavior, since these acts were contrary to Allied politics.

13. Postwar massacres

The exact number of Homeguards that were massacred is still unknown. The Yugoslav-held lists of names, which were still in existence as of 1985, have disappeared. In **1964** already, the émigrés in **Buenos Aires** composed a document of names that sets the tally at **11,750**. **Mlakar** later pointed out that **this list did not contain the names of those who had remained at home and were subsequently imprisoned**. The **Institute for Modern History** in Ljubljana **by the end of 2005 has identified nearly 13,000 Slovenians who were killed in Slovenia after the war**. **Jože Pučnik**, the president of the Commission of the State Committee for the Investigation of Postwar Murders, estimated that from **14 to 18 thousand Slovenians** were killed in Slovenia after May 9, 1945, [the ending date for the war in Europe]. To date, nearly 500 postwar execution sites in Slovenia have already been identified. They contain the remains of around 13,000 Slovenians and tens of thousands of Croats, Serbs, Germans, Russians, and other nationalities).

* * *

After all that has been said, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Slovenian refugees of 1945 **had to leave their homeland to foreign lands if they wanted to stay alive;**
2. If the British would have returned all the **civilians**, the **Titoists would have murdered them too, just as they did with the civilians who had been returned together with the Homeguards.**

⁵ Mitchell (Sources)

2. Slovenians and Slovenia

The first inhabitants

The territory of present-day Slovenia was inhabited already in the **Paleolithic Era**. The oldest proof is the cave *Potočka jama na Olševi* in the valley *Savinjska dolina*; the most remarkable evidence of habitation inside this cave was the discovery of a needle made of bone. A bone with drilled holes discovered in the subterranean cavern *Divja baba* is considered to be the oldest flute in Europe.

The so-called **Lake-Dwellers** of the Ljubljana Wetlands (*barje*) had an indigenous culture. Into the shallow swamps they drove piles, atop which houses were erected. They used wooden dugouts (hollowed out logs) for hunting, access, and defense. **The oldest wooden wheel on earth**, fashioned between 3,350 and 3,199 B.C. was uncovered at the edge of Ljubljana Wetlands in 2003.

Artifacts from the Bronze and Iron ages are more plentiful. The bronze vessel known as the *Vaška situla* [from *Vače*] bears testimony to the grave of some 5th century B.C. person of note. The graves of princes at Novo Mesto, the excavations in *Posočje* and the fortifications above *Vir pri Stični* also date to the Iron Age.

In the 3rd century B.C. the Celtic hordes subjugated the inhabitants of the Iron Age culture. But the Celts never established their own country. The Nordic kingdom with its seat at *Gosposvetsko polje* [Saalfeld] was in actuality a feudal state. The Celts surpassed all other tribes in the forging of wrought-iron, which enabled them to create a strong army of knights in suits of armor and helmets. They also introduced into Slovenian lands their sepulchral culture, long swords, many sorts of jewelry, and also their magical “supernatural” world.

Over the next 500 years the **Romans** left their strong marks in Slovenia. The first cities, which have lasted to the present day and age, developed along these Roman roads: Emona (Ljubljana), Celeia (Celje), Poetovia (Ptuj), and many others. In actuality, Roman history about Slovenian lands became the history of current Slovenian cities. This urbanization was of course helped by a blossoming economy, stability of government, and the construction of a network of roads. The necropolises at *Šempeter* in the *Savinjska dolina* valley indicate that wealthier Romans, lovers of leisure and art, lived here at one time.

In the 6th century A.D., Slavic hordes travelled along these same Roman roads to lay claim to Slovenian lands.

“On the Sunny Side of the Alps”

Today’s Republic of Slovenia is bordered on the north by Austria, on the west by Italy and by 46.6 km of the Adriatic Sea, on the south by Croatia, and on the northeast by Hungary. The physical area of the country encompasses **20,273 km²**. The Maribor-Koper highway, completed in 2004, making almost a perfect diagonal line across Slovenia from northeast to southwest, is 233 km long, while a diagonal from northwest to southeast (from Jesenice to the Croatian border) is only 205 km long.

This **“Land on the sunny side of the Alps”** is often called **“the green treasure of Europe”** because forests cover more than 50% of its area. To poets and writers, Slovenia is **“a ring on Europe’s finger”** (Valentin Vodnik), **“an image of Paradise”** (France Prešeren), **“Paradise**

below Mt. Triglav” and “a land that God blessed with both hands, where a happy people will dwell” (Ivan Cankar), and also “an oyster, saddled with a painful malady at the bottom of the sea, that compressed all its agony into a pearl” (Onton Župančič).

Such a small area marks the confluence of **four different races and cultures**: Slavic, Germanic, Roman, and Turkish-Tatar (Hungarian). It is a land along whose borders four languages are spoken. It is a predominantly Catholic country, with tiny pockets of Lutherans and Calvinists, Jews, and even Muslims in recent times. There are also a few settlements of Gypsies. A tiny percentage of the population list themselves as non-believers, agnostics, or skeptics; there are also a few atheists, mostly a legacy of the communist regime.

Geographically, Slovenia has **four different types of terrain**: Alpine, Dinaric, Pannonian, and Littoral (Coastal). The highest mountain, **Triglav** (2,864m) and the famous glacier **lakes of Bled and Bohinj** are in the **Alpine** terrain, where 28 peaks exceed 2,500m in height. This sector also has the highest waterfall in Slovenia, Čedca na Jezerskem (130m). The **Dinaric**, or southeastern, sector contains the lake with the largest surface area, the appearing-disappearing karst lake *Cerkniško jezero*; this sector also contains the famous underground caves, more than 6,500 in number, of which the most famous is the Postojna Cavern; however the Škocjan cavern is the only Slovenian natural point of interest, which UNESCO has placed on its list of world treasures. A part of this terrain contains Kočevski rog, where virgin forests are still visible. To the northeast appear hills that lead to the spacious Hungarian steppe, to the **Pannonia** land mass, which has along its rim 16 health spas (the thermal springs at Čatež) and mineral springs (Radenci, Rogaška Slatina). To the west unfolds the **Littoral** (*Primorska*) terrain with its own characteristics: climate, distinctive architecture and settlements, indigenous trees and fruits. It ends at the northern Adriatic islands and their seaside cities.

Each of these four land masses also has its own climate: mountain, mid- European continental, Pannonian, and coastal Adriatic. In just a few hours you can travel from solid ice at Triglav to seaside beaches, a mere 120km apart by air. In Slovenia, the sloping land also creates watersheds: the Soča River in the west flows into the Adriatic Sea; all the other rivers – most notable the Drava and the Sava – are tributaries of the Danube River that eventually empties into the Black Sea.

Slovenia also has distinctive **flora** and **fauna** (ex. Alpine *edelweiss*, or *očnica*), gold-horned mountain goats (*kozorog*), elk, bears, wild boars, wolves, and the world-renowned blind subterranean “man fish”.¹ In Slovenia you can find high-altitude mountain pastures, low-level hills with vineyards, and seaside Mediterranean gardens with palm trees and tropic fruits (Vipava).

The distance from the Adriatic Sea to the capital city, Ljubljana is only 75km by air, and to its second-largest city to the north, Maribor, only slightly more than 150km. From atop Mt. Triglav the naked eye can capture the entire extent of the Slovenian domain: from the sea to the mountains of Styria. Because the land is predominantly mountainous, Slovenia is strewn with hilltops, and atop almost each knoll stands a church however small; 2,800 per a recent tally, or one per 710 inhabitants today! Many castles grace the landscape. Many traces of the colonizations by the Venetians, Celts, Romans, and ancient Slavs have been preserved. Numerous settlements are tastefully scattered through the country sides: 180 with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, around 80 small cities, and 12 cities with more than 12,000 inhabitants. The majority of cities are small. Even **Ljubljana**, the largest city and its capital, has only around 300,000 inhabitants, and thereby ranks among the smallest capitals in Europe.

¹ “Proteus” actually is not a fish, but a unique species from the family of primal “amphibians” (*proteidae*), a link between fish and salamanders; its most notable evolutionary trait is its retention of external gills.

Slovenia is also a **land of crossroads**. She was crossed by all pre-Roman roads (ex. the *Jantar* [Amber] Route to the Baltics) and by the Roman roads across the Ljubljana Basin (or Gap), known already to the Romans as the gateway to the Balkans and to Central Europe. The waves of barbarian hordes (Huns, Goths) also rolled through here into Italy. The Slovenian Alps were crossed by both Caesar (hence, the Julian Alps) and Napoleon. All railway transversals cut through Slovenia, going from west to east and north, and the reverse: Trieste-Villach-Vienna; Trieste-Gorizia-Jesenice-Ture; Trieste-Zidani most-Vienna-Warsaw; the famous “Orient Express” London-Paris-Ljubljana-Beograd-Istanbul. Presently situated outside the borders of Slovenia, but adjacent to it, is Trieste, an Italian enclave on Slovenian terrain, a port for Central Europe that had always been coveted by the Italy and Germany. In days of yore, all commercial goods had to pass through Slovenia, from Central Europe to the Balkans and from the Balkans to Trieste, in its day and age the largest “Central European port for the landlocked countries” (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary), a title that the Slovenian port city of Koper is trying to win at present.

Slovenia has a well-developed lumber industry, whose products are predominantly furniture and cellulose. Almost all its mines, including the pure silver mines in Idrija, lie deserted today from exploitation. Its steel and iron industry is vibrant. Slovenia makes parts and assembles automobiles, trucks, motorbikes, refrigerators, and other household appliances such as telephones, air conditioners, and computers. It has also preserved the famous crafts trades (embroidering, knitting, weaving; wood artifacts, *et. al.*). The horse-breeding farm and riding school at Lipica is world famous.

One of the chief sources of income is the widespread tourist business, made possible by a well-developed infrastructure and an ample supply of qualified personnel.

In mid-2005, the average annual income per capita was approximately 10,100 Euros.²

Settlements and First States

Slovenians never had their own kings or famous warlords or rich castles. Slovenian history is the history of a simple people, a small race, whose fate was always in the hands of others. Hence, events in Slovenia did not have any special influence on the European cultural stage, even though Slovenians were always a part of this stage. But this people, though small in number, did prove their hardy will to keep their identity and thereby soon developed into a nationality, despite their feudal servitude during the Middle Ages and despite their almost complete subservience as of the 16th century to the Habsburgs in the inland areas and to the Venetians along the coastal areas.

The term “remnant” in the biblical sense can also be applied to the Slovenians: they are almost the only ones of the Old Slavs who retained this primal word in their race’s name³;

² See *Delo*, 6/9/2006. Many search engines on the Internet, such as www.najdi.si, can locate numerous facts about Slovenia; there are excellent websites, such as www.burger.si and www.mojaslovenija.si

³ It is generally accepted that the name Slav, Slovenian, comes from the word “slovo” (simply a phonetic word), while others hold that it comes from some geographical name with the root “slov”, supposedly for the people who settled along the river “Slova” or “Slovy” (Marko Snoj, *Slovenski etimološki slovar* [Slovenian Etymological Dictionary], *Mladinska knjiga*, Ljubljana, 1997). From an anthropologic-ethnologic perspective, the former explanation is more plausible; for example, Slavs use the name “Nemec” (lit. “one who does not speak”) to denote a foreigner, whereas the Germans [called *Nemci* by the Slavs] call themselves “Deutsche” because they consider themselves able to explain. In closing, I offer the example the Indian tribes in Argentina: the Mapuche are “the lords of the earth” (mapu-che), others are not; the ancient Selknam (Onas) in Tierra del Fuego are “people”, or “persons”, others not; the (Wichis) in the north are “people”, others not.

however, the area where its language predominates today, which extends even beyond the borders of present-day Slovenia, is still but a fragment of its ancient territory, which was approximately three times larger than it is today. The Lombards, who had settled on the Hungarian plains, on Easter Monday in the year 569 decided to push into Italy, which shared its border with them along the Soča River; by agreement, they permitted the Avars and the Slovenes to settle their lands, which “will remain forever in their ownership if the Lombards do not return in two centuries.” The Lombards did not return, but of this Avar-Slovenian population, only the Slovenians began to inch towards the west, settling down in the former Lombard regions, then spreading along the valleys northward across Danube River and as far as Vienna.⁴

In the last century several hypotheses have arisen as to the origin of the Slovenians.⁵ However, then as now, the most common opinion among Slovenian historians is that the Slovenians came from beyond the Carpathian Mountains.⁶ Of course, neither Slovenian history nor the history of Slovenians began with their settling in the Eastern Alps. However **the historical importance of this settling is the fact that it gave the land, on which Slovenians live today, a distinct linguistic identity which this region still holds to this day**, even though the land area has shrunk considerably.

The settling by the Slavs began primarily in the final decades of the 6th century and ended in the beginning of the 9th century.

The tract covered by today’s Eastern-Tyrol and Carinthia was already called the land of the Slavs at the end of the 6th century. The Slovenians here had their own duke, Valuk, and were living in a demarcated Slav region (“Marca Vinedorum”), but they were under the lordship of the Avars, who in 595 defeated the Bavarians. This Avar territory extended westward as far as present-day Northern Italy, and had its hub in the Pannonia plains. An Avar invasion around the year 623 triggered the resistance of Slavic tribes north of the Danube, at the head of whose ranks stepped a Frankish merchant **Samo**, who became the ruler of the **first known Slav state; centered in Czech and Moravian territory, it extended as far as the Karavanke Mountains to the south**. Avar power was weakened for 4 decades after their unsuccessful siege of Constantinople, so the Slavs on the lands of latter-day Karantania joined Samo’s alliance. After Samo’s death (658), the Avars regained their power over the greater part of Slav central Europe, but not over Valuk’s Slovenians.

Karantania (or Korotan) preserved its **independence almost to the middle of the 8th century**. The Karantanians, ruled by Count Borut at the time, were being mortally threatened by the Avars, and asked the Bavarians for help. The latter did come to their aid and the Avars

⁴ The Latin term for Vienna is “*Vindo bona*”, that is, the city of the Wends

⁵ Some writers, mostly in recent decades, argue on behalf of the so-called **Venetian Theory**, which claims that the Slovenians possess a 4000-year-old history, and that during the period of the Roman Empire, the Venetian territory extended from Vindeliccia below the source of the Danube River to the middle of the Pannonia plain, from the Danube River to the end of Istria, and until the arrival of the Croats, it extended across all of present-day Croatian-speaking lands. Thus the Slovenians would be the aboriginal inhabitants of their land. At least two facts support this theory: many western historians hold that Venetian texts are translatable according to the Slavic languages; linguists agree that of all the Slavic languages, Slovenian is closest to the Venetian. Some (Tone Brulc, *Meddobje*, XXXII-1998, 1-2, 124-135, especially 131) offer additional reasons: Ex. The fact that the percentage of the negative RH-factor in the blood of Slovenians is much greater than in other European races: approximately 32% with the Basques, 5-6% with the Indo-European races, about 15% with the Slovenians. -See also on the Internet the website: <http://veneti.cib.net> – Some other theories abound (Scandinavian, Etruscan, *et. al.*).

⁶ For this entire section, see *Ilustrirana zgodovina Slovencev [The Illustrated History of the Slovenians]* (Sources) and Kos (Sources).

⁷ The plan by the RS to mint the image of the Duke’s Rock on their coinage caused quite a stir among

were defeated, however the Karantanians were made subjects of the Frankish kings. To guarantee fealty, Karantanian hostages, among them Borut's son Gorazd and nephew Hotimir, were taken away to Bavaria, where they accepted the Christian faith.

Until the year 820, the Karantanians had some sort of **indirect democracy**, in which the **feudal freeholders [counts] elected their own duke and then ceremoniously enthroned him on the Duke's Rock** [*Knežji kamen; a.k.a Duke's Chair, Duke's Throne*], which lay on a field in front of the church *Gospa Sveta v Krki* (today's Maria Saal, Austria). One of the counts, dressed in peasant's garb, sat on a pedestal, which was a fragment from an ancient Roman column, and questioned the people about the duke: Will he be a just judge? Will he strive for the welfare of the country? Is he a free man? Will he protect widows and orphans? The people responded in approbation to the questions. After the elected prince promised to fulfill all this, he handed over to the count-peasant an ox and a mare that he had brought along as payment for the right to rule. The serf then alighted from the Rock, the people gathered around the prince and led him three times around the stone throne, as they sang: "Honor and glory to God the Almighty, who created heaven and earth and gave our country a count and lord of our own choosing. *Kyrie eleison...*" The last prince, or rather duke, that was thus enthroned, and in the Slovenian language at that, was the Habsburg Ernest the Iron [officially: Ernest, Duke of Inner Austria] in **1414**. In this pre-feudal organization "we can see the oldest legal Slovenian governmental creation ever known to us" (B. Grafenauer).⁷ The contractual character of this installation at the Duke's Rock at the plains of Gospa Sveta dates even back to pagan times. The ceremonial rite in front of the duke's throne that was added later has German and feudal roots. Nevertheless, this ancient Slovenian concept about democracy made its way into the fundamental principle among world democracies: power is granted to rulers by the people!⁸

Austrian extremists. The infamous Carinthian regional governor Jörg Haider expressed an intention to transport the Duke's Rock from the local museum to the seat of the Carinthian regional government. He stated at this same time that the issue was about a "unique Carinthian monument" and that Carinthia is "the oldest historical-political entity" among Austrian territories, having become an independent duchy already in the year 976 (see *Sv.Slov.*, 11/17/2005, No. 45, p. 6) – *Delo* (11/24/2005, 19) published an article "*Karantanija ni bila prva slovenska država*" [*Karantania was not the first Slovenian state*] by Dr. Peter Štih, in which he states that this matter was just a historical myth that began in 1788-1791 with Linhart's "*Poskusom zgodovine Kranjske in ostalih dežel južnih Slovanov Avstrije*" [*An attempt at a history of Carniola and the remaining territories of the southern Slavs of Austria*]. "The Karantanians were a Slavic people who spoke a language which evolved later into Slovenian, and since the ceremony at the Duke's Rock was also done in Slovenian, it was not difficult to Slovenianize the Karantanians and the Duke's Rock." "Today we know that we cannot equate the Karantanians with the Slovenians (...), we cannot even consider them to be the ancestors of the Slovenians, for they [Karantanians] were only one of them [i.e. multiple ancestors of the Slovenians]".

⁸ Many historical sources report **the existence of a Slovenian nobility** (ex. a certain Treurezent around the year 1200); others speak of **Slovenian as being the colloquial and the official language in the 13th century** (Ulrich Lichtenstein). – Numerous articles mention the **rite of installation**, which aroused amazement already in olden times. (*Švabsko zrcalo*, 1161; Otokar of Styria, beginning of the 14th century; John, Abbot of Vetrin, around 1340, *et. al.* – Enej Silvij Piccolomini (Bishop of Trieste, later Pope Pius II, founder of the Diocese of Ljubljana 1461, died 1464) wrote in his book *De Europa*: "No other nation can provide a similar example of the symbolism of a state." – The French philosopher, lawyer, and entrepreneur Jean Bodin in the 16th century in his book *De republique* marked this Karantanian manner of choosing one's own prince as the first Middle Ages democracy in Europe and wrote that "there is nothing in the world similar to the Carinthian ducal ceremony." – Bodin's work was reviewed by Thomas Jefferson when he was the president of the committee in Philadelphia to compose the Declaration of Independence (1776); Professor Felicijan in 1967 discovered that Jefferson had made handwritten notes in the margin of Bodin's description of the Carinthian ceremony. (Debeljak b/l, 5)

In 838, the German king granted to Prince Pribina the **administration of a portion of Lower Pannonia, where the Zala River empties into Balaton Lake**. Until his death (861), Pribina supported the Christianization efforts of the Salzburg archdiocese. However, at the request of the Moravian prince Rastislav, in the year 863 the Byzantine Emperor Michael the Third sent the brothers **Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius** as missionaries to the Slavs. Pope Hadrian II wanted to settle the religious situation in Pannonia, for which he had to receive an assurance from Pribina's successor, **Count Kocelj**, that he would support an independent administration with Slavic liturgy. Kocelj did in fact break with the German priests and established Slavic liturgy. Methodius became Archbishop of Greater Moravia and Lower Pannonia. After the Moravian Count Svetopol and the Germans were reconciled in the year 874, the Germans seized Lower Pannonia and deposed Count Kocelj, which marked the end of the last independent Slovenian duchy. Kocelj's accomplishment was that "in that fateful moment after the death of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, he saved their Slavic printed and spiritual work; he saved their priceless spiritual heritage." (Prof. Grivec)⁹

Christianization

With the baptism of Gorazd and Hotimir, the Karantanians became Christians in the middle of the 8th century. The greatest credit for this belongs to the Irish missionaries, above all St. Modestus. The Pannonia region accepted Christianity from the two great Greek missionaries, the brothers St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who were proclaimed in the second half of the 20th century as the co-patrons of Europe. Slovenians remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church, thanks to an almost unbroken subservience to the Salzburg archdiocese, and to Cyril and Methodius, who despite being Greeks, acknowledged the supremacy of the papacy.

The Freising Manuscripts [*Brizinski spomeniki*]

Written proof that the Slovenian language is more than a thousand years old comes from preserved documents, the so-called **Freising Manuscripts, which are dated between 973 and 1040**, that is, in the late 10th or the early 11th centuries. The documents, which most probably came from the bishop of Freising's estate in Carinthia near Spittal ob Dravi, include two penitential formulas and a short sermon about confession.

Feudalism

Feudalism in the Middle Ages spawned the creation of monasteries, religious centers that fostered manuscripts and the first libraries. New cities were founded, such as Kranj (the former Chreina) and Kamnik (1228), Škofja Loka and Piran (1274), and Celje (1451).

The Counts of Celje posed a strong threat to the Habsburgs. One of their establishments, the monastery at Pleterje, still stands today. But the lineage of the Counts of Celje died out in 1456, and all that remains of their castle today are ruins.

By the end of the 15th century, Slovenian land was already divided into three territories: Carinthia, Styria, and Carniola. This division left deep roots and for a long time impeded unification of the people.

⁹ For this entire section, see Debeljak, b/1, 1-15

¹⁰ See Vasle (Sources)

Turkish Invasions

The first Turkish incursion into Slovenian territory occurred in the year 1396; larger invasions began in 1415, however the Turks never did capture Slovenian land in its entirety. As of 1468, the invasions became continuous and with greater numbers of troops. In 1472 they pillaged and kidnapped people throughout all of Carniola, Lower Styria, and a part of Carinthia. Such attacks were repeated in the years 1478, 1483, 1491, and 1493. The last raid in Carniola occurred in 1494. The invasions left strong vivid impressions through stories and legends (*Kralj Matjaž/King Mathias*). Jurčič's tale *Janičar [The Janissary]* is the most translated book in Slovenian literature. These invasions left their marks on Slovenian architecture, as is evidenced throughout all of Slovenian lands by the fortifications that were constructed to encircle the churches atop hills.

Protestant Reformation

The **first Slovenian book** was printed in **1551**, Trubar's (Lutheran) Catechism. A noteworthy point of interest is that Trubar's dedication of the book was addressed to "**Dear Slovenians**" and not to Carniolans, Styrians, Carinthians, and the *Primorci [Slovenians along the Adriatic Coast]*!

The first publishing company began operating in Ljubljana already in 1575. By 1584 the entire Holy Bible was translated and published in Slovenian (the Dalmatin Bible). The first Slovenian grammar, *Articae horulae*, was published in the same year.

The Protestant Reformation did not make inroads among the people because it was connected too closely to the nobility. This ruling class held many privileges: ex. the precept "*cuius regio, eius religio*" was accepted in the Peace Treaty of Augsburg; this gave a feudal lord the right to force his subjects to accept his own religion under penalty of banishment. Yet it was a Habsburg, Grand Duke Charles, who in 1572 granted freedom of conscience and religion to the nobility in Graz and their subjects; in 1578 he had to extend this right to the rest of the cities in his territory.

Catholic Reformation

Grand Duke Charles (1564-1590) considered the concessions that had been given to the Protestants to be extortions. Therefore, as soon as the foreign-political climate improved, he began to operate against them. His son and successor, Ferdinand, was even more ruthless. In 1598 he ordered all Protestant churches closed, banished their preachers, and banned Protestant religious services. In the following year he decreed that Protestant townspeople must either return to the Catholic Church or emigrate. Grand Duke and Emperor Ferdinand in 1628 issued a similar decree to the nobility. Tomaž Hren, Bishop of Ljubljana, played a key role in the Catholic Reformation in Slovenia.

After the Lutherans were expelled from Habsburg lands, the Catholic Reformation then granted permission for usage of the Dalmatin Bible, but without its preface. Only two Slovenian books were published during this period, and then none for the next 60 years.

Peasant Revolts

Peasant revolts, numerous and massive, spanned several centuries. The first ones began already in 1476 in Carinthia, and centered in the *Zilja* valley. The largest was the so-called Croatian-Slovenian revolt of 1572-1573, whose leader was a Croat, Matija Gubec, but whose commander was a Slovenian, Ilija Gregorič. On February 8, 1573, the army of the Styrian noblemen routed Gregorič's forces, and on the following day at Stubica the army of the Croa-

tian noblemen defeated the core of the rebelling peasants. Gregorič initially escaped, but was later captured and executed in Vienna. At St. Mark's Square in Zagreb, the nobility fastened Matija Gubec on a white-hot iron chair, placed a white-hot iron crown on his head, and finally quartered him. Despite this, the revolts did not completely cease but recurred at Tolmin (1627), in the valley *Savinjska dolina* (1635), and at Tolmin with the Great Revolt (1713).

Given the circumstances of the eras, the peasant revolts had no chance of success, since power was still held in the hands of the nobility throughout all Europe, and an alliance between the peasants and the middle class townspeople had not yet materialized.

Numerous monuments throughout Slovenia commemorate these revolts. The peasant revolts are yet another proof that Slovenians were willing to defend what was theirs.

The Enlightenment

In the 17th century, the **first university**, or school of higher learning with the right to grant doctorates, was founded in Ljubljana by the **Jesuits**.

The **Philharmonic Society** was founded in **1701**, and shortly afterwards the **Science Academy** (*Academia Operosorum*), the forerunner of the present day Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In the 18th century, Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Joseph II were devoted to rapid economic development and to the beginning and development of education. The arts, primarily painting, blossomed in the Age of Enlightenment. A unique Slovenian art form developed in this era: colorful scenes were painted on the front panels of bee-hive boxes; these represented some sort of visual testimony on the spirit and life of those times.

Within the circle of Baron Žiga Zois, Slovenia experienced a rebirth of nationalism, which ultimately solidified national identity. This era saw the first Slovenian newspaper, *Novice* [*The News*], and the first Slovenian drama/theatrical script "*Matiček se ženi*" [*Young Matthias Is to Wed*] by Anton Tomaž Linhart.

Springtime of Nations

In the year 1848 almost all of Europe was caught up in the wave of "the Springtime of Nations". This non-bloody revolution also seized the Slovenian lands. Destined to have a permanent niche in the memory of Slovenians is **France Prešeren**, who in his admittedly small, but exceptional book *Poezije* brought Slovenians to the peak of European literature.

A political movement began brewing among Slovenian intellectuals in Vienna and in Ljubljana, which led to the first Slovenian political program.

Development of the Slovenian language

A new phase in Slovenian literature began in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁰ The perfecting of the alphabet grew ever more accelerated. New forms of grammar and spelling became standardized. The written language grew increasingly more uniform.

The Slovenian language possesses a variety of distinctive features: it is one of the rare languages that still possess a dual case for nouns, adjectives, numerals, and verbs; the individual forms of speech encompass all three genders, even though in the last decades they are fast disappearing. Nouns and adjectives have 6 grammatical cases. Its alphabet has only 25 letters; it does not contain the letters "q", "w", "x" and "y", which are accepted only in foreign words.

¹¹ See, for example, Dr. Rado Lenček, *Lepote slovenskega jezika* [*The Beauties of the Slovenian Lan-*



1. Map of Slovenia



2. Map. Slovenian settlement

Atlas, DZS, 70



3. Map. Slovenia under the occupation

Atlas, DZS, 71

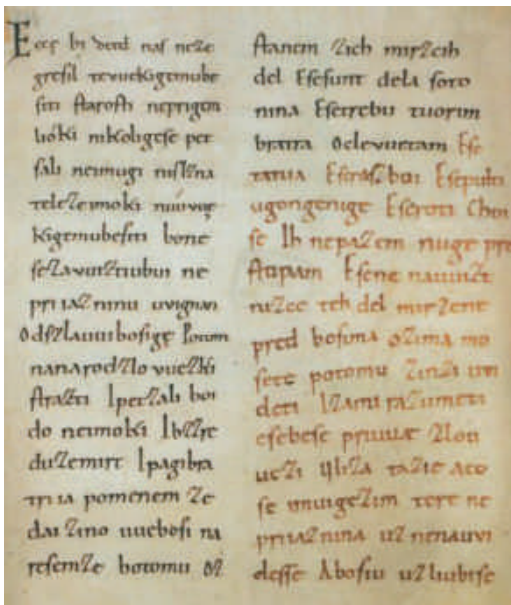


4. Ducal Enthroning Ceremony (Gojmir Anton Kos)
DZRS, 1995



5. Duke's Stone

Razgl. NUK



6. Freising Manuscript



7. Dalmatin Bible

DZRS, 1995



8. Map. Natural geographic terrains of Slovenia

Atlas, DZS, 7



9. Map. Slovenia in Europe



10. The Alpine terrain covers a major part of Slovenia. High mountains and hills intersected by valleys. Photo of the southern face of Mt. Črno prst (1843m)

Atlas, DZS, 7



11. The Karst terrain has distinctive surface and subterranean formations. Photo of Marinska Jama Cavern in Matarskem Krasu in SW Slovenia

Atlas, DZS, 7



12. The Pannonia terrain covers E Slovenia. It encompasses the plains along rivers and hills. The photo shows the SE Pomurje with the River Mura.

Atlas, DZS, 7



13. The Slovenia Coastal (Primorska) terrain encompasses the land along the Adriatic Sea and its hinterland. The photo shows a part of the island between Ankara and Debeli Rtič.

Atlas, DZS, 7



14. The Ilyrian Stele in Ljubljana
IZS, MK, 209

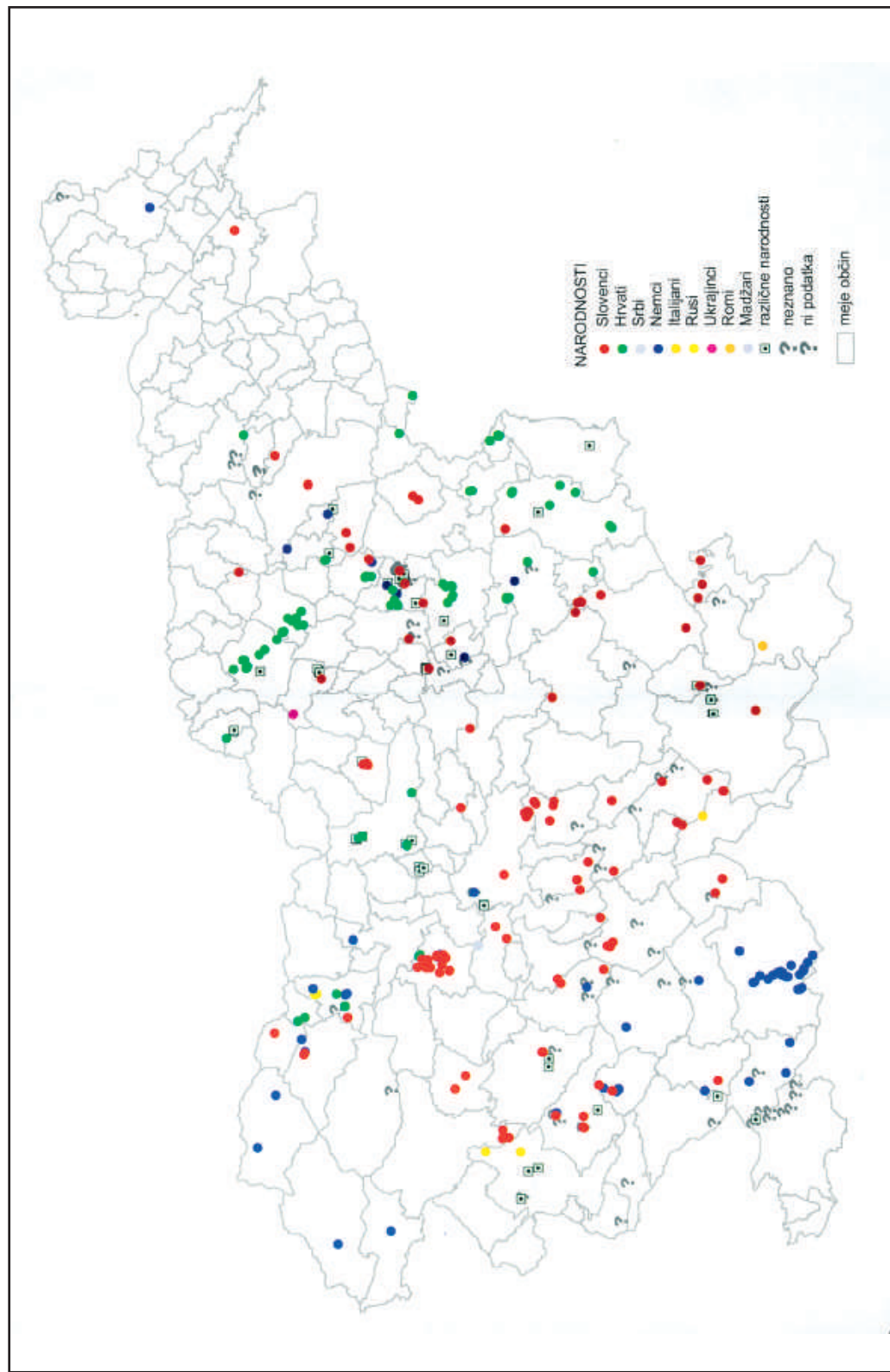


15. Library in the Ljubljana Seminary
IZS, MK, 186



16. Cistercian Monastery in Stična

IZS, MK, 36



17. Map. Mass graves in Slovenia identified by nationality



18. Aerial view of Ljubljana

www.burger.si



19. Ljubljana, Prešeren Square and the Castle

author's personal collection



20. The Castle overlooking Ljubljana
www.burger.si



21. Prešeren Square *www.burger.si*



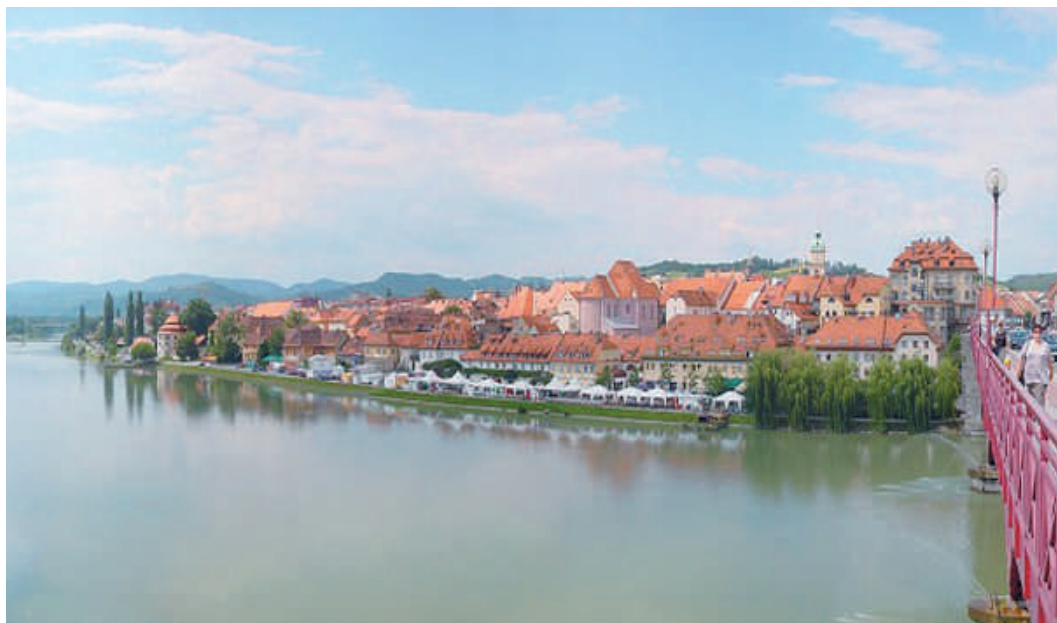
22. State Assembly Building *www.burger.si*



23. Ljubljana Municipal Square
www.burger.si



24. Ljubljana, Old City Section
www.burger.si



25. Maribor

www.burger.si



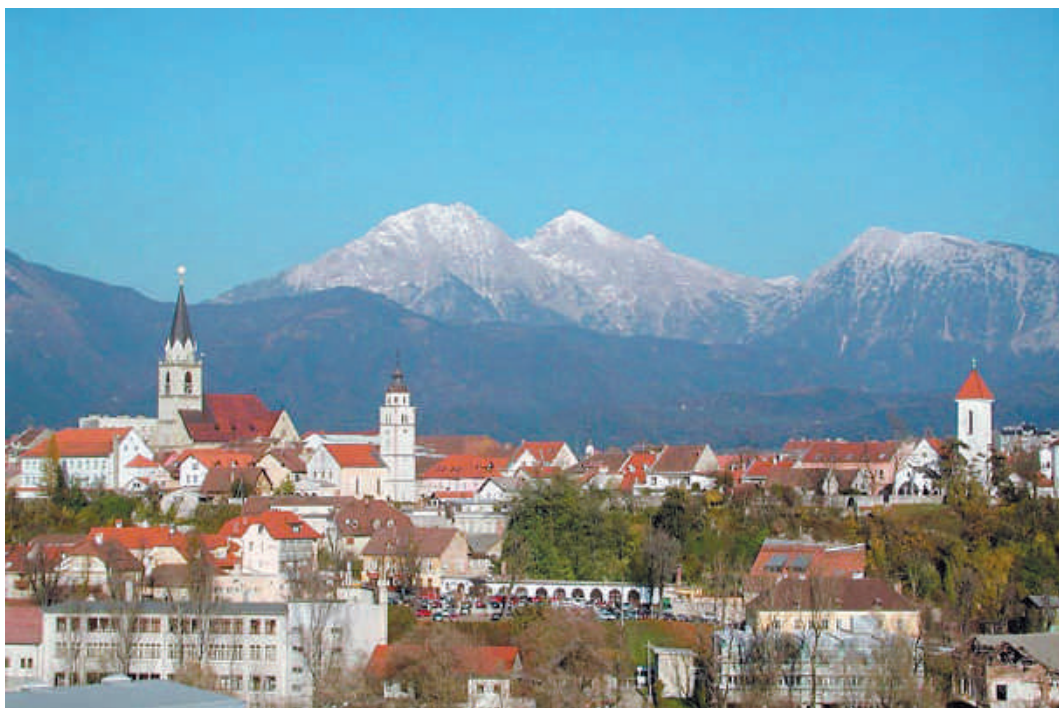
26. Maribor

www.burger.si



27. Celje

www.burger.si



28. Kranj.

www.burger.si



29. Koper.

www.burger.si



30. Murska Sobota.

www.burger.si



31. Novo mesto.

www.burger.si



32. Dual kozolec (drying rack for grasses)

author's personal collection

33. Ceramic Oven, Gorenjska style

author's personal collection



34. God's Corner (Bogkov kot)

author's personal collection



35. Postojna Castle.

www.burger.si



36. Škofje Loka Castle.

www.burger.si



37. Kamen Castle.

www.burger.si



38. Snežnik Castle.

www.burger.si



39. Dobrovo Castle.

www.burger.si



40. Lendav Castle.

www.burger.si



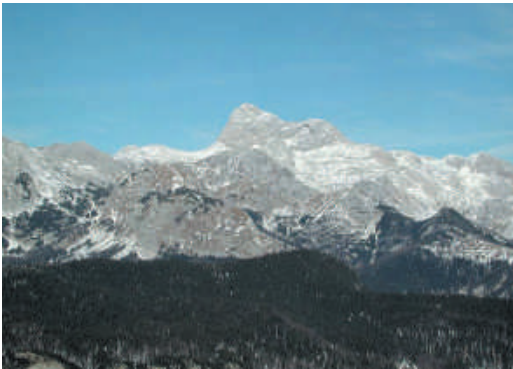
41. Kamnik-Savinska Alps.

www.burger.si



42. Robanov kot.

www.burger.si



43. Mt. Triglav, southern face.

www.burger.si



44. Julian Alps.

www.burger.si



45. Lake Bled.

www.burger.si



46. Lake Bohinj.

www.burger.si



26th June, 1991: Celebrating of the announcement of the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Slovenia in Republic Square in Ljubljana.

The Slovenian written language is etymological, but it has its own distinctive set of rules for pronunciation; this enables Slovenians to more easily understand other Slavs, but not the reverse. The Slovenian language, whose power centers on the verb, is capable of constantly developing new expressions in response to rapid scientific-technological advances, but remains true to itself and preserves its innate beauty.¹¹

Growth of a nationalist consciousness and demands for statehood

Slovenian statehood has its **roots** foremost in the **Karantanian duchy** and partially in **the duchy of Count Kocelj**.

The centuries of Turkish invasions undoubtedly had a great influence on national consciousness, because the Slovenian people had to defend themselves almost on their own. The peasant revolts, which grabbed hold of almost all of Slovenia, were exceptionally significant; these revolts undoubtedly added another ingredient to the people's congealing consciousness of possessing some common origin and common fate that was different than the social class into which they had been relegated.

Another influence was the **autonomy of the Venetian Slovenians**, who inhabited the westernmost part of Slovenia, in the hills along the edge of the Venetian plains. Here from time immemorial they had their own court, administration, taxes, army, and an assembly that convened once a year around stone tables under linden trees in two communities or parishes (Tarčent, Mersa). This pair encompassed 38 townships and 36 or so Slovenian clans. This "state within a state" was tolerated by the Venetian *doges*, until the French destroyed the Republic of Venice and perforce the autonomy of the Venetian Slovenians.

Napoleon in the years 1805 to 1809 annexed a large part of Slovenian land and Dalmatia. With the Schönbrunn Peace Treaty, signed in Vienna in 1809, Austria ceded to Napoleon the Slovenian lands east of the Soča River (Gorica [Gorizia], Trieste, Carniola, western Carinthia and Eastern Tyrol) and a large part of Croatia. The French emperor fashioned these German, Slovenian, and Croatian lands into the **Illyrian Provinces (Ilyria)**.¹² Its administration, though subordinated directly to the Parisian government, was entrusted to a Minor Council [*Mali svet*]. The French abolished the class system and slavery, disbanded medieval guilds, abrogated the privileges of the three social classes and proclaimed equality of citizenship. They lowered the tithe, but heaped heavy taxes. They conducted official business in French but they did permit the use of the native language – which had not been permitted under Austrian rule. They were very concerned about education: they established numerous secondary schools [*gimnazija*] and lyceums [*schools for girls*]; the cities of Ljubljana and Zadar each had a university-level central school. The Illyrian era can understandably be regarded as another step on the path towards Slovenian statehood, especially because Austria later retained the **Kingdom of Illyria**, despite partially changing its borders, and the Austrian emperors called themselves Illyrian kings as well.

The pressure for a Unified Slovenia received a huge impetus in the year **1848**, when the Slovenians demanded a Unified Slovenia to replace the centuries-old partitioning of its regions (Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, Primorska, Styria). At this time the poet Simon Jenko composed the long-lasting Slovenian national anthem *Naprej, zastava Slave* [*Onward, Slavic Flag*].

guage], ZSS 1969, 44-49

¹² The French introduced the name Ilyria on the basis of a false notion that the southern Slavs were the descendants of the Old Testament Ilyrians. Valentin Vodnik maintained in his *Narodna zgodovina* [*National History*] that the Slovenians were the aborigines of their territory.

¹³ Rant P. 1990, 32 – The communists, of course, had always been interested in internationalism.

Slovenian politicians, in particular within the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), were preparing and creating a draft for a nationalist platform already before the First World War and achieved it during the course of this war. But after the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Francis Ferdinand, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, it immediately became obvious to Slovenian politicians that any dreams of achieving Trialism, namely changing the dualist monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a triad Austro-Hungarian-Slav Empire, were forever gone, so **on August 16, 1916, the National Council for All Austrian 'Southern Slavs' ('Jugoslavs')** was established in **Ljubljana**.

On **May 30, 1917**, the president of the Yugoslav Caucus and president of the majority Slovenian People's Party (SLS), Dr. Anton Korošec, read before the Parliament in Vienna the text of what is known historically as the **May Declaration**:

"The undersigned delegates, who are members of the Yugoslav Caucus, declare that they are demanding, according to the principle of nationalities and Croatian state rights, that all territories of the monarchy, inhabited by Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbs, be united the under scepter of the Habsburg-Lothringian dynasty into one autonomous state entity that will be free of every nationalist domination by foreigners and be based on democratic principles. They pledge all their power to accomplish this demand to have a single nation."¹³

In the following months, more than 200,000 Slovenians signed the May Declaration. For the most part, the signatures were obtained by Slovenian wives and girls going from door to door, because their men folk were in the army.

On October 17, 1917, under the chairmanship of Dr. Korošec, the National Council (in Croatian, *Narodno vijeće*), which represented the joint government of Slovenians and Croatians in Zagreb, formed a constitutional convention, which the manifesto had given birth to.

This National Council of SHS on **October 29, 1918** assumed reign over Slovenian territories and seceded from Austria, and in Ljubljana on the same day the **autonomous country of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs was proclaimed**, in other words, freedom from Austria's grasp. On October 30, 1918 the National Council for Slovenia established the first Slovenian government, named the **National SHS Government for Slovenia**, which the National Council at Zagreb ratified on November 1st.

According to the last point of the 14-Point Peace Plan of the U.S.A. President Woodrow Wilson, the nations of the former monarchy should progress towards freedom and autonomy. In November of 1918, the representatives of Serbia, the National Council, and the Yugoslav Committee met in Geneva to negotiate this point. The Geneva Declaration was signed on November 9th, but Serbia never ratified it. And thus on December 1, 1918, a confederation (so-called unification) came into being, known as the **Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians**, but in which the nationalities were not guaranteed their individual rights. For this reason the majority Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS) did not vote for the first, so-called "Vidovdan" Constitution [St. Vitus Day Constitution], since it was inaugurating Serbian centralism and hegemony. Of the Slovenian political parties, the representatives of the so-called "progressive" or liberal parties (the

Therefore it is understandable what even as late as April 28, 1984 *Enotnost* wrote as follows about the role of the SLS and Krek in their resolve to create a new country: "From our Slovenian perspective, the May Declaration was a true disaster." (reports Janez Juhant, *Idejna diferenciacija slovenskih katoličanov: krepitev liberalizma in komunizma* [Ideological differences among Slovenian Catholics: to the benefit of liberalism and communism], Na poti, 26)

¹⁴ The plebiscite was without a doubt conducted under unfair auspices; given the century after century of

Independent Peasant Party and the Yugoslav Democratic Party) voted in favor of it. This initial Serb orientation, deliberately calculated of course, caused much friction for almost the entire period of the existence of the Kingdom of the SHS, or rather, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Serbian centralism ultimately led to a dictatorship by the Serb King Alexander on January 6, 1929. On October 3 1929, the state changed its name [from the Kingdom of SHS] to **Jugoslavia**. The usage of Slovenian and Croatian nationalist symbols was banned. Slovenia became one among the several so-called “provinces” (*banovina*), named the *Dravska banovina* [after the *Drava* River]. This led to the ever-increasing resistance by nationalists. Only after the **assassination of King Alexander** in Marseilles on October 9, 1934 did Croatia and Slovenia begin to receive somewhat more freedoms and rights, especially after the Slovenian Peoples Party joined the JRZ coalition (Jugoslav Radical Alliance), which swept the 1938 elections, receiving 79% of the vote in Slovenia. However, this promising development was shattered when the Axis powers occupied Yugoslavia.

Unrealized desire for a Unified Slovenia

By joining the Kingdom of SHS, the Slovenian dream for a Unified Slovenia remained unrealized because the Slovenian land within this Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians shrunk to a mere **15,036 km²** and did not include the Slovenian minorities in Austria, Italy, and Hungary.

As far back as 1866, Austria, having suffered a military defeat, had been forced to cede to Italy the so-called **Slovenian Venetia** (a part of the territory called Venezia Giulia).

A **plebiscite** was held on October 10, 1920 in Zone A in **Carinthia**, with 96% voter participation. The inhabitants of 33 of 51 townships voted in favor of joining Austria (59%) while only 18 townships voted in favor of joining Yugoslavia (40%). Thus in October of 1920, Slovenia lost almost **all of Carinthia**, the cradle of the first Slovenian state.¹⁴

A **section of eastern Slovenia**, which belonged to the Hungarian monarchy within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was occupied by Yugoslav troops at the end of the war; however, the border was not delineated until the Treaty of Trianon on July 4, 1920. A portion of Slovenian land remained **under Hungary’s control**.

Countering Italy’s claims, Yugoslavia demanded that the borders be drawn according to the criteria of nationality, but Italy insisted on the terms of the [secret] London Pact, in which the British in 1915 had promised to Italy a large part of Slovenia (Primorska, a part of Notranjska) as an enticement to enter the war on the side of the Allies. In the end, the USA’s proposal was accepted, the so-called Wilson Line (Treaty of Rapallo, November 11, 1920), a partial satisfaction for Italy but a complete detriment for Slovenians [who were transformed into citizens of non-Slovenian countries by the stroke of a pen]. Italy was given ownership of **a large part of the Littoral (Primorska), along with Trieste, Istria, Gorica, and Gradiška, and also a part of Carniola, the judicial district of Trbiž, and the township of Bela peč**. This territory, named the Julian March, encompassed 350 townships with 901,364 inhabitants, of whom 38% were Slovenians and Croats.

In all these territories with Slovenian minorities, official measures aimed at **denationalizing** grew **steadily worse**. For instance, in **Italy**, Slovenian language courses disappeared from

forced Germanization, the result could have been far worse. The question remains whether this plebiscite was truly valid.

¹⁵ See Eviction: K. Stuhlpfarrer, 9-20; V. Sima, 21-53; B. Entner, 55-73 (Sources) and M(iloš) S(tare), *Povejmo in dopovejmo* [Let us say it and make it clear], *Svobodna Slovenija*, Buenos Aires,

the school curriculum already in 1923. In 1928, Slovenian print was banned in magazines, as well as in all intellectual and cultural institutions. Many Slovenians in *Primorska* understandably emigrated, a small portion to Slovenia, others to South America, especially Argentina (around 23,000). Not surprisingly, these oppressive measures spawned a resistance movement, called **TIGR** (Trieste-Istria-Gorica-Rijeka); in 1930; 4 of its members (known as the “*Bazovica* Victims”) were sentenced to death, and 9 in 1941.

The situation was not much better in **Austria**, which was not fulfilling the constitutionally guaranteed right of bilingualism. Matters grew even worse after 1938 when Austria was annexed to the German Reich. In 1941, the Nazis destroyed the strongest bastion of Slovenianism, the St. Hermagoras Publishing House (*Mohorjeva družba*). The insatiable Nazis also resolved to deport all 45,000 Slovenian inhabitants. By the end of 1941, 178 families (917 persons) were forced to leave their homes and move to Germany, where these families were then split apart.¹⁵

Triple Evil: Nazism, Fascism, and Communism

Pope John Paul II, in a speech during his visit to Croatia in 1998 for the beatification of Cardinal Stepinac, said the following: “The newly beatified person symbolizes the entire tragedy of the Croatian nation in Europe in this century, which is characterized by the triad of great evils: Fascism, National Socialism (Nazism), and Communism.” At the start of 1941, Slovenia as well had to suffer under this triple Grand Evil. First to arrive were Nazism and Fascism, with the occupation and dismemberment of Slovenia among Germany, Italy, and Hungary. Next came the Communist revolution and dictatorship, extremely vicious and bloody in the beginning years, which lasted from Germany’s attack on the former Soviet Union all the way until 1989. Despite a brief temporary period of slightly loosening its grip, the Communist Party wielded its power with a tight fist all those years, joined hand in hand with pan-Serbian centralism, which wanted to suffocate the Slovenian language and Slovenian national identity.

The Independent Republic of Slovenia

While still under the German Occupation and in the midst of the communist revolution, the democratic camp on **October 29, 1944 created the National Committee**, in which all the pre-war political parties were represented. Its jurisdictional scope extended to all Slovenian territories. In **April 1945 it created the Slovenian National Army**, an incorporation of all the democratic-minded [non-communist] military units. Just before the end of the war, the National Committee convened an **Assembly of all pre-war political representatives in Ljubljana; on May 3rd this assembly proclaimed an independent United Slovenia within the framework of a federalized Yugoslavia**, made preparations for a provisional administration, assigned national symbols (coat of arms, flag), etc.

Two days later, **May 5, 1945**, the so-called National Liberation Army (NOV) under the direction of the Communist Party, did **something similar** by convening an assembly in Ajdovščina. The Party claimed its right to call for Slovenian independence on the basis of its having sent “people’s” representatives (that were handpicked by the Party) to attend the assembly in Jajce (Antifascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia – ASLOJ in Slovenian, and AVNOJ in Serbo-Croatian), as it had also done to a similar assembly in Kočevje in 1943 and one in

5/20/1965, 1

¹⁶ Shortly before the 60th anniversary of both of these governments, some sort of change could be discerned in the former Regime’s daily newspaper *Delo*. In its Saturday supplement dated May 5 2005,

Črnomelj in 1944. Even in the present day and age, some pro-revolutionist political parties in Slovenia subscribe to these undemocratic roots, dictated by the KPJ and KPS.¹⁶

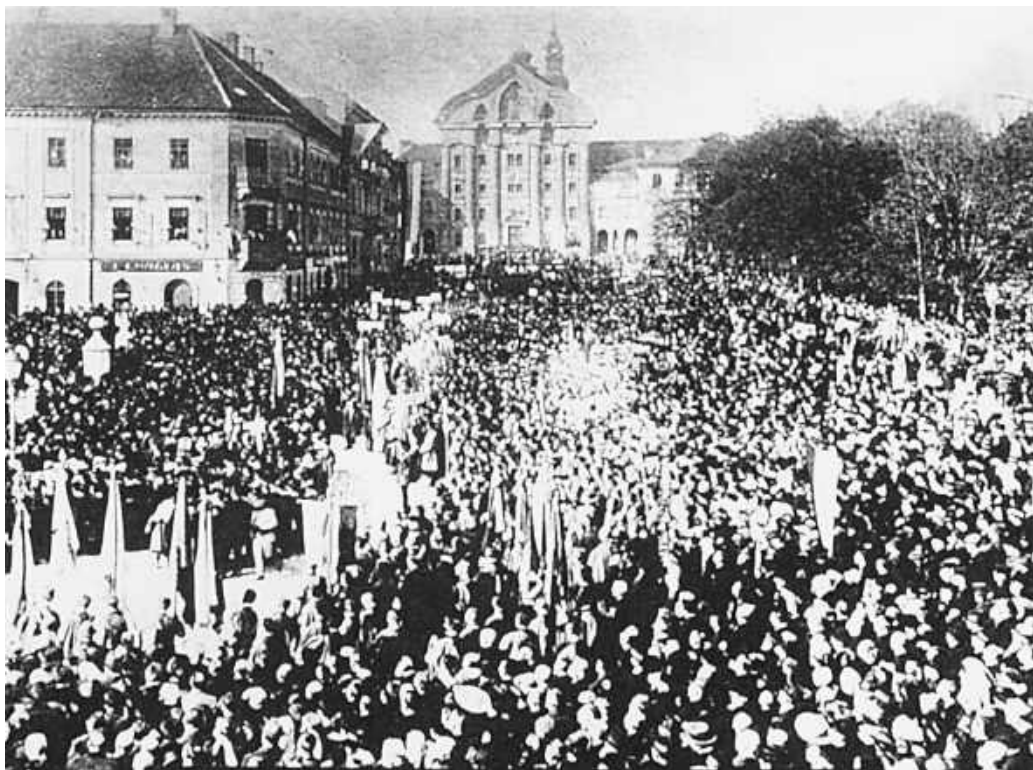
As it played out, the year 1945 saw the establishment of the communist so-called Peoples Republic of Slovenia. Yugoslavia may have had a federalist structure in theory; however, Slovenian self-determination was quite restricted in theory, in practice even more so, because the Party never had any intention of fulfilling its wartime promises made to Slovenia about obtaining greater independence, its own Slovenian army, etc.

Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989), a strong group of Slovenian intellectuals resisted a new attempt towards greater centralization and Yugoslavization. Due to favorably changing conditions in Europe, this led to the first free elections, and then on December 26, 1990 to a plebiscite on the issue of independence, which was approved by more than 90% of the voters. On February 14, 1991, the LRS Coalition adopted the resolution to secede, rendering possible the proclamation of the independent Republic of Slovenia on June 25, 1991.

This of course did not fulfill the ages-old desire for a Unified Slovenia, even though in comparison with the former *Dravska banovina* [*Drava River Province*], Slovenian land in the years 1945-1975 increased spatially by one third, or by one quarter in terms of its current linguistic geographical extent. With the Peace Agreement signed in Paris on February 10, 1947, a part of the Littoral (*Primorska*) was returned to Slovenia, and on October 5, 1954 (finally settled on October 1, 1975 by negotiations between Yugoslavia and Italy) the so-called Zone B of the former Free Trieste Territory (STO) was returned. On the other hand, a Communist Party directive in 1945 ceded a part of Slovenia to Croatia; the definitive boundaries of this parcel ceded to Croatia have yet to be settled, and above all the unrestricted access of the Republic of Slovenia to the open Adriatic Sea.

All in all, on June 25, 1991 the people's will for an independent Slovenia was realized. On May 1, 2004, the Republic of Slovenia was accepted as a full member of the European Union. Under the EU, the artificial state borders became somewhat loosened, and in this light, it is perhaps possible to speak of a Unified Slovenia in the European Union.

Janko Prunk wrote an article "*Katera vlada je prva vlada*" [*Which government was the first government*] wherein he speaks about the first Slovenian government of 1918, but makes no mention of the government of May 3, 1945, which does receive acknowledgment by other, more independent historians (ex. Helena Jaklitsch, *Zadnja meščanska demokratična vlada* [*The last middle class democratic government*], and *Tretji dan – Krščanska revija za duhovnost in kulturo*, XXXIV, May-June 2005, No. 318-319, pp. 66-73, under section entitled "*Resnica za spravo*").



Demonstration at Congressional Square in Ljubljana, Oct. 29, 1918

IZS MK, 304

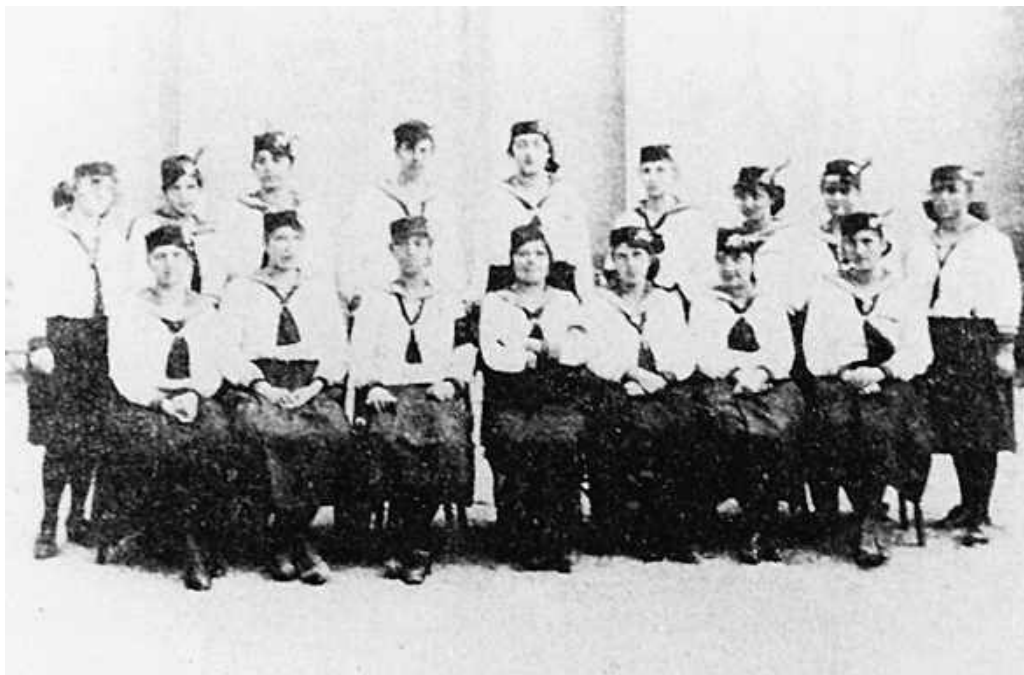


Dr. Anton Korošec *Pernisek, No. 1*

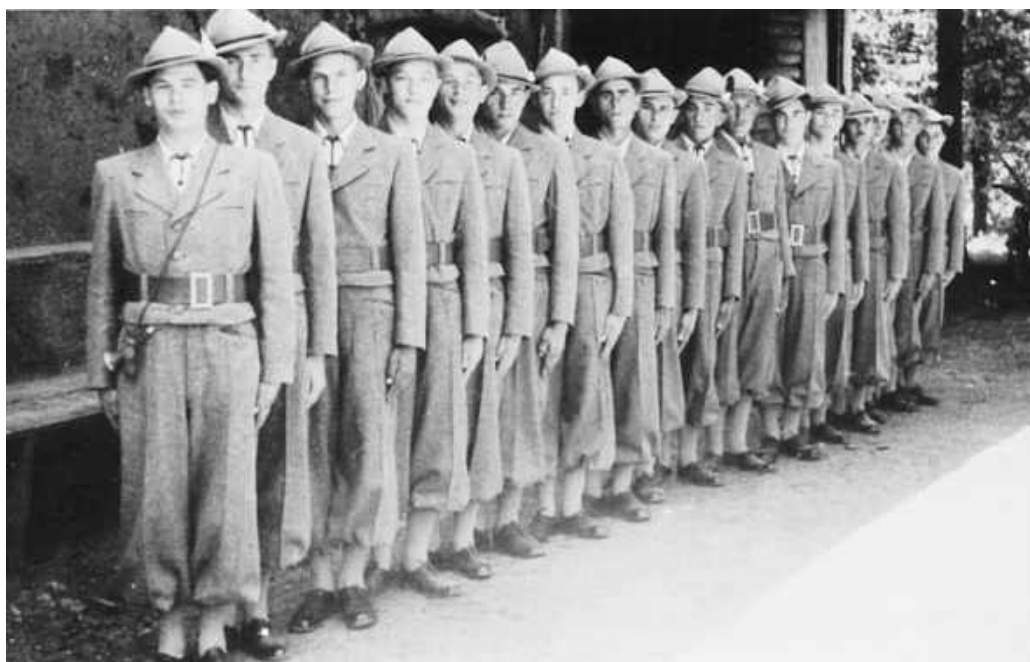


Dr. Marko Natlačen, President of the
Orels, 1921

Pernišek, No. 35



Senior officers and directors of the Orel Club, 1919-1920

Pernišek, No. 23

Young Men's Alliance [Fantovska zveza] from Brezovica near Ljubljana

Zaveza, 7, 22

3. War and the Occupation of Slovenia

1. Pre-war Yugoslavia

A Triad of Great Evils in the 20th century

1. Bolshevism

Even before World War I came to an end, a revolution broke out in Russia in February 1917 whereby the czar was deposed. Its first president, Kerensky, a Social-Democrat, was overthrown by force by **Lenin** in **November, 1917** (called the “October Revolution”, according to the ancient Julian calendar that was still in use in Orthodox-dominated Russia). In 1922, **Stalin** became the General Secretary of the Party, a move that let him seize complete control in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

2. Fascism

Attempts at communist revolutions surfaced in Germany and in Hungary, and in 1919 in Italy too. In Hungary, after a short-lived rule by the Red revolutionary Béla Kun, dictator Admiral Horthy attained control of the government in 1920; when Hitler came to power in 1933, Horthy threw his lot in with Nazi Germany and remained in power until 1944.

In Italy, Benito **Mussolini** with a few ten-thousands of his “Blackshirts” marched into Rome on October 28, 1922. This march led to his being appointed President of the government. His movement, **Fascism**, was in essence utterly nationalistic, with a demand to dominate the country. He found devotees among the Nazis (National Socialism), also among people in England, Belgium, Rumania, Spain, and elsewhere.

In 1936 Hitler and Mussolini signed a pact, known as the “**Rome-Berlin Axis**”. **Japan** joined this pact a few years later after it attacked the U.S. at Pearl Harbor on **December 7, 1941**. This forced the USA to enter the war against the Axis forces.

3. Nazism

After the First World War, Germany was ruled by a coalition with the socialists in the majority (“Weimar Republic”). This government was unable to solve the severe social and economic difficulties that grew even worse after the Financial Crisis of 1929. Meanwhile, demands for stability by the public and support from big business enabled National Socialism to grow quickly in popularity.

Nazism propounded the physical and intellectual superiority of the so-called Aryan race, which allegedly was dominant in Germany. After several election victories, Adolf **Hitler** in 1933 became Chancellor of the Reich (head of the government). The fire in the government capitol building, the Reichstag, was blamed on the communists. Hitler used this incident as the excuse to begin the persecution of socialists and communists, who were then sent to concentration camps. After the death of the Germany’s President Hindenburg, Hitler assumed complete dictatorship in 1934.

German-Bolshevik Cooperation (1914-1918, 1918-1933, 1938-1941)¹

To all outward appearances, the USSR’s focus appeared to be internal, but in reality, via the **Comintern** it was meddling more and more in the internal affairs of other countries.² Some sort

¹ See Eiletz S. and M., especially 289-291

² The Comintern, the Russian abbreviation for the 3rd International, was created in 1919, and for political

of **cooperation between Germany and the Bolsheviks** was apparent already during World War I (1914–1918). After the Peace Treaty at Rapallo (1920), Germany ignored the isolation that had been forced upon it at Versailles and leaned toward the Soviet Union until 1933. For instance, as early as 1919, German General Hans von Seeckt began secret negotiations with the USSR to help Germany create and arm a new army: the USSR provided Germany with airplanes, heavy artillery, poison gas, trained pilots, military experts, etc.; in return, Germany would help the USSR in training the Red Army. Germany, despite being banned from manufacturing weapons for itself, did so on Russian soil, and officers from both countries trained jointly. Between 1928 and 1933, more than ten thousand German engineers and other professionals were working in the USSR.

When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, this collaboration ceased, but only for a while. These two outwardly mortal enemies on **August 23, 1939** reached a **pact (Ribbentrop-Molotov)** in which they ratified a military and economic alliance **between the USSR and Germany**. According to an economic pact reached on February 10, 1940, the USSR was supplying Germany in limitless ways; in one year alone Germany received from the USSR 900,000 tons of petroleum and almost a million tons of wheat. With this aid, the **USSR helped Hitler's Germany invade and occupy France!**

German-Italian-Soviet Conquests

Hitler immediately began to demand **ever more "living space"** (*Lebensraum*) for Germany in Europe. First, Germany annexed the **Rhineland** on March 7, 1936. With an orchestrated coup in Vienna, Hitler annexed **Austria** on March 12, 1938 and via a plebiscite incorporated it to the Reich. Pressured by Germany, Great Britain and France on September 29, 1938 signed the Munich Pact with Germany, and immediately afterwards Germany seized the Czech **Sudetenland**. On March 15, 1939, Germany forced **Czechoslovakia** to sign unconditional capitulation; as German forces occupied the country, the West made no move to interfere. Germany forced the president of autonomous **Slovakia** to request status as a protectorate; the Western Great Powers and the USSR immediately recognized the new country of Slovakia.

On Good Friday in April 1939, Italy attacked **Albania**. Wanting to get his hands on Rumanian petroleum, Mussolini already in May of 1939 started making plans to attack Yugoslavia. However, since Hitler in the autumn of 1940 sent a military mission to Rumania in order to train the Rumanian army, Mussolini attacked **Greece** instead (October 28, 1940), but in one month the Greeks had pushed the Italians back into Albania. According to the Balkan Pact, the Yugoslav government was obligated to help Greece; it found a sort of accommodating solution by remaining neutral in public while helping Greece in secret. Hitler, fearing the British would become entrenched in that area, crossed Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria to come to the aid of Italy against Greece.

Immediately after the Soviet-German non-aggression pact was signed, Germany attacked **Poland** on September 1, 1939. When Germany occupied Warsaw on September 17, the USSR

reasons was formally (publicly) dissolved in 1943. It was subsequently replaced by the Cominform, which was created in 1947 in Warsaw, and whose seat was supposedly in Beograd. The Cominform was dissolved in April, 1956.

then invaded Poland and annexed a large part of the country without firing a shot.³ On November 30, 1939, the USSR attacked **Finland**, which resisted valiantly but ultimately was forced to sign a peace treaty (March 13, 1940) in which it ceded the western shores of Lake Ladoga to the USSR. In June of 1940 the USSR occupied and annexed **all three Baltic countries** (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

On account of their pacts with Poland, France and Great Britain were compelled to declare war on Germany (September 3, 1939), but they did not engage their 110 divisions, assembled at the Maginot Line, even though the Germans at this time had only 23 divisions in the Western Europe. This enabled Germany to quickly defeat Poland, which waited in vain for help from the West. Then Germany continued with its war of conquest: on April 8-9, 1940 the German *blitzkrieg* (lightening-fast war) was unleashed against **Denmark**, which immediately surrendered, and then **Norway**, which resisted for several days. On May 10, Germany attacked **Netherlands, Belgium**, and began its offensive against **France**.

Mussolini now joined the war against France. When the Germans marched into Paris on June 14, 1940, Marshal Petain offered a truce. Just 4 days before the truce was signed, General De Gaulle, who set up a government-in-exile in London, urged the French to resist (*la résistance*), something that the Yugoslav King Peter did not do either before he fled or while he was in exile! Next, Germany began its air attacks on Great Britain. All this while, Germany was also aiding Italy in Northern Africa; Italy had annexed Ethiopia already in 1936, a deed that, regrettably, was given recognition by the League of Nations based in Geneva.

Jugoslavia attempts to save itself through negotiations

Jugoslavia attempted to save itself through various negotiations. In **1937**, its foreign minister Stojadinović signed a non-aggression pact with **Italy**. When France fell, Yugoslavia immediately **recognized the USSR** and the two countries reached an **economic agreement**. A non-aggression pact, or more properly a mutual aid agreement, was never signed; they were still negotiating this in Moscow even as late as the night of April 6, 1941, the day before Germany attacked Yugoslavia. The USSR obviously had closer ties to Nazi Germany than to Slavic Yugoslavia. **Immediately after Germany attacked Yugoslavia, Molotov** no longer recognized the legitimacy of the Yugoslav ambassador, which signified that he was **recognizing the German seizure of these countries** – as he had done earlier with the ambassadors from Belgium and Norway.

In order to improve its situation, Yugoslavia signed a pact with Hungary in December of 1940. After Mussolini's defeat in Greece, Hitler wanted Yugoslavia to remain neutral (like Switzerland), but this concept was not in tune with British interests. Therefore **Churchill** attempted to create a **military alliance among Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia**. Meanwhile, Bulgaria joined the Tripartite Pact on February 28, 1941.

Historians today almost unanimously agree that even Churchill would not have been so insistent on preventing Yugoslavia from joining the Tripartite Pact had he known that Germany was already making plans to attack the USSR.

Slovenians did not have it easy in pre-war Yugoslavia. In 1918, the decision to become a component of Yugoslavia was indeed a salvation for Slovenians, despite the fact that the Serbs

³ The Red Army captured many Polish divisions. Approximately 27,500 POW Polish officers were killed, 4,500 of them at Katyn near Smolensk, the rest were driven away to Siberia and Kazakstan; at Churchill's insistence, they were handed over to the British, who used these men to form the famous Gen. Anders Division, attached to the British 8th Army.

did not keep their word about an equitable administration of the country. However, Slovenians suffered the most under the dictatorial regime of King Alexander and even further after his death. Slovenia's key leaders were placed under arrest. The government outlawed the strongest political party, the Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS), plus various Slovenian cultural organizations and all Catholic organizations, particularly the youth-oriented organization *Orel* [Eagle] that had served as strong counterweight to the liberal youth organization *Sokol* [Hawk]. Despite all this Serb persecution, the majority of Slovenians wanted to defend Yugoslavia and rescue it from German occupation.⁴ The vast majority of Slovenians were anti-Nazi and pro-Western Allies.

2. War

Attack on Yugoslavia

At the start of 1941, Yugoslavia was almost completely surrounded by neighbors who had joined the Rome-Berlin Axis. Germany was thus able to compel Yugoslavia as well to **sign to join the Tripartite Pact (March 25, 1941)**. Some historians believe that Germany would have honored the pact at least for a while, because the pact offered them a safety buffer in the south, at least until the Germans suffered a major defeat at the outskirts of Moscow at the end of the autumn of 1941.⁵

But already on **March 27**, two days after Yugoslavia signed the pact, a *coup d'état* was launched in Belgrade. The government of Dragiša Cvetković fell, the regent Prince Paul was dismissed, and Peter II (1923-1970), still a minor, was proclaimed king. The new government, organized by Gen. Dušan Simović, did not recognize the pact. Germany's response was to bomb Belgrade on April 6 and launch the occupation of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav government along with the king immediately flew to Athens.

Without declaring war, the Germans **on April 6 invaded Yugoslavia along its entire border, simultaneously from Rateče in Upper Carniola [Gorenjska] to Caribrod** (southeast Yugoslavia), where the Bulgarians joined the attack. The Germans who broke into Slovenia from Carinthia marched in the direction of Dravograd-Celje-Novo mesto, and those who broke across the Gorenjska Alpine mountain passes of Podkoren and Ljubelj headed towards Kranj. In Lower Styria [Štajerska], one part of the German army headed towards Maribor, and the other part towards Ptuj (and from there into Croatia towards Varaždin and Zagreb). In the northwest, the Italians moved jointly with the Germans up to Rateče-Kranjska gora, while the contemporary Yugoslav-Italian border remained relatively peaceful.

Italy as well had been making its own preparations to attack Slovenia and Dalmatia, although its target date was not until April 15. But when the commander of the XI Italian Corps of the 2nd Army, General Mario Robotti, learned that the Yugoslavs were retreating from the Germans, he decided to invade as well. He wanted to reach Slovenia's capital before the Germans, so he sent a motorized column that sped into **Ljubljana** where it unfurled the Italian flag from the castle on **April 11 at 17:30**. Small German motorized units were the first to occupy the key areas in Gorenjska on Holy Saturday, April 12, but immediately withdrew. The

⁴ See also *Ključne značilnosti* [Key Characteristics], 7-16

⁵ On this topic, see Vauhnik, 181-182; in conjunction with this see also Dr. Frida Pogačnik, *Na razpotju, Ob 20-letnici pristopa Jugoslavije v Trojnem paktu, dne 25. marca 1941* [At the Crossroads, On the 20th Anniversary of Yugoslavia Joining the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941], ZSS 1961, 31-51, especially 48-49.

poorly-equipped Italians in the meantime occupied some parts of Gorenjska, but they were forced to leave after Italy **signed a treaty with Germany** (Vienna, April 21-22 1941) wherein **Hitler's proposals for the partitioning, issued on April 3 and 12, were accepted**, although part of this border was subsequently modified.

On April 9, what was left of the Yugoslav Army withdrew from Gorenjska and almost simultaneously from the western border too. There were somewhat more numerous battles in Štajerska, however nothing could stop the German advance, not even the destruction of the bridges across the Drava River.⁶ In any event, the **Serb generals had no intention of defending Slovenia; their sole objective was to slow down the German advance enough until they could dig in along a line south of the Kolpa, Sava, and Danube Rivers, where they intended to wait for the aid promised by the English.** However, on account of the rapid German advances, the British as well were forced to withdraw quickly from Greece, and one month later even from the isle of Crete. Anyone familiar with the "top-level" politics of the Great Powers is hardly surprised that England, despite its own utter powerlessness, would promise to come to the aid of Yugoslavia in return for Yugoslavia declining to join the Tripartite Pact.⁷

By calling for the creation of an Independent Croatia, the Croatian ultra-nationalist Ustashi split the country of Yugoslavia in half and thus dealt it a fatal blow.

A significant number of Germans lived in Slovenia, particularly in Štajerska, Kočevje, and Gorenjska. For this reason, Yugoslavia contained many "fifth columns" that had been working on behalf of Germany all along; Germany thus knew already before the occupation all about the life and activities of every influential Slovenian.

Slovenian reaction to the attack

The aerial bombardment of Belgrade dealt a heavy blow to all Slovenians because the president of the SLS Party, government Minister and priest, Dr. Franc **Kulovec**, was killed during the attack. The newspapers had reported (incorrectly) that Yugoslavia and the USSR had signed a Friendship Treaty (April 5, 1941), but this contained no clause for military assistance. The Slovenians resigned themselves to their fate; they were convinced that the Yugoslav Army was not going to defend Slovenia and that the Germans were going to occupy it. But they had not figured on the possibility of being occupied by Italy.

Several years before the war, Yugoslavia had begun to construct along its border with Italy the so-called **Rupnik Line** (named after Gen. Leon Rupnik); its purpose was to stop any incursion by tanks. But in actuality all this was in vain because too few military troops were deployed in Slovenia to defend the line. Stationed on Slovenian territory was the Ormož Detachment of the Yugoslav 7th Army, along with its Drava Division in Štajerska, the Triglav Division southwest of Ljubljana, and the Triglav Alpine Detachment in Gorenjska. Deployed at each of the two front lines, one facing Germany and the other Italy, there were 4 regiments, one independent battalion, and 4 artillery battalions. However all of these were insufficiently equipped and had no means of movement and no air support. Granted, the government did mobilize its military reservists. A secret mobilization had begun "already" on April 3rd, but the public mobilization did not begin until the day after the attack, thus it was in actuality impossible to actualize.

⁶ About the deployment of the Yugoslav Army and about the course of the war, see NOV 35-48; Mikuž I, 30-44

⁷ See Martinc 1951, *Zgodovinska osnova Narodne osvobodilne borbe v Sloveniji [The Historical Foundations for the National Liberation Fight in Slovenia]*, KZS 1951, 95-126, especially 113-114

The response by **university and high school youth** was more significant: students from Primorska established the Soča Legion, and liberals joined with Catholics to establish the University Legion [*Akademski legija*], which attracted 700 volunteers. But the military commanders of the Ljubljana Division did not know what to do with these youths. The majority was sent without any equipment towards Croatia, but many became stranded in Dolenjska. Those who succeeded in reaching Zagreb were funneled into [army] Camp Zrinjski. The Ustashi, who by this time had already taken control of the government, shot some of them, and kept the rest in confinement.⁸ On April 9, the Yugoslav Army decided to withdraw from Slovenia, and on April 10 Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia. Slovenia was now left completely on its own. The National Council [NS, *Narodni svet*] therefore resolved that Slovenia had become “sovereign” and would negotiate independently with the invaders.⁹ On April 12, governor Natlačen announced to all Slovenians that Ljubljana would soon be occupied. He begged for order and peace, and warned them not to attack the German minority. He ordered all state and local administrations to continue to function.

According to Ivan Ahčin, a debate surfaced those days within the NS whether it should “proclaim an autonomous government for Slovenia or only manage temporary governmental services in Slovenian lands”.¹⁰ The latter position prevailed.

Despite the fact that Ljubljana was already occupied by the Italians on April 11, a delegation from the National Council (Natlačen, Pucelj, Dr. Gosar) on April 12 travelled under an Italian pass to Celje to confer with the Germans. Its intent was to convince the Germans to occupy all of Slovenia. Gen. Lanz refused to discuss this matter because on that same day Field Marshal Keitel had already signed the directives for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. As it turned out, Natlačen’s failure was in effect a success for the Slovenian nation, because the portion of Slovenia that was relegated to Italy was able to salvage its ethnic identity to some degree.¹¹

The Activities of the KPJ and the KPS

In March 1941, the KPJ [*Communist Party of Yugoslavia*] did a complete about-face, changing overnight from an ultra-pacifist party into a dedicated nationalistic-patriotic party: it decried the presence of the Germanophile government in Belgrade and denounced any policy of negotiating with the Axis whatsoever, but simultaneously advocated reliance on the USSR, which at this stage was still Hitler’s ally! Whenever the KPJ mentioned the Western allies during this time, it referred to them as “imperialists”.¹²

After Germany and the USSR signed their non-aggression pact, the members of the KPJ were given a special task: they were directed to “disorganize the Yugoslav Army, to collect war

⁸ Narte Velikonja, a writer, through the mediation of the Croatian Minister of Culture, rescued them from Croatian prisons.

⁹ Mikuž I, 50-51

¹⁰ Ivan Ahčin, *Spomini na začetek naše tragedije* [*Memories of the beginning of our tragedy*], ZSS 1961, 129-136, quotation from 132

¹¹ In the opinion of Mikuž (ibid.), Natlačen’s attempt can be explained by the fact that he hailed from *Vipava dolina*, which had been ceded to Italy by the Treaty of Rapallo, and thus he feared a repeat of the Italian persecution against the Slovenian minority in their newly occupied territory. It is also true that he rightfully wanted to keep the totality of Slovenia within a single country. As far as Kos is concerned (I, 106), this was the “most statesmanlike act in the brief period of the existence of the NS [National Council]”, something that even the revolutionist [communist] side understood, and he cites Mikuž (I, 51) to support the latter claim.

¹² See Kos, I, 49

material, and via their secret organizations to push the political parties into a governmental panic. They must offer every possible help to separatist organizations: the Ustashe, Macedonians, Albanians, and Montenegrins.”¹³

The Central Committee of the KPJ met in Zagreb on March 27, 1941 and issued a leaflet, which included the following text: “The nationalities of Yugoslavia are the victims of British agents, who with their provocations are leading our nation into a war of annihilation. (...) The entire nation (more properly: all the people) must rise up against those elements that want to work against the desires of peace-loving citizens, (...) and are forcing them to work for the goals of the imperialists. We do not want an imperialist war and we refuse to become a tool of British imperialists! The nationalities of Yugoslavia are aware of the looming grave danger of being pushed into the war by British agents. (...) **We are adamantly opposed to Yugoslavia joining the side of British imperialists...**”¹⁴

In brief: 1. The Party was bent this entire period towards fracturing the state, while the majority of Slovenians were working to convert the government into a democratic, federal and socially-just nation, in which Slovenian would be one of the autonomous parts; 2. The Party deliberately killed this golden opportunity by launching its communist revolution during the wartime years of 1941-1945.¹⁵

When the occupation of Yugoslavia began, the communists at first did not know what to do, so they exhibited different types of behavior: in some places they actually confronted the Yugoslav Army directly (for example, Kragujevac). But universally, they tried to get their hands on as much weaponry as possible. In Slovenia the Party urged the Yugoslav soldiers to drop their weapons, and many communists marched under a red flag to welcome the Germans.¹⁶ Later on, they greeted the occupiers with arms raised upward and extended in the standard Nazi-fascist salute. They were giving the Germans the names of all Slovenians who were patriots, and above all, leaders.¹⁷

3. Slovenia Dismembered by Three Occupiers

Of all the Yugoslav and European nationalities, Slovenia was the only one to be dismembered, and among three countries at that. In fact, all three occupiers had the same intent: to incorporate this newly obtained territory into their own countries as quickly as possible and to de-Slovenianize its population as rapidly as possible. To this end, the Germans and Hungarians behaved utterly more ruthlessly than the Italians.¹⁸

¹³ Vauhnik, 193

¹⁴ Martinc 1951, 115 – Notice that the Party was opposed entering the war on the side of the British, but not against entering the war on the side of the German-Nazis. The key fact is that the KPJ did not oppose the occupier until the Germans attacked the Soviet Union! Velebit admitted that until Germany attacked the USSR, the communists regarded the English as their greatest enemies: “They were worse than the Fascists and the Nazis, for they were the bearers of world imperialism. However, as it turned out, the Soviet Union became the ally of the English. This is why we communists had to change our direction. They became our allies too.” (B. Nežmah, *Mladina*, 3/18/2003). In his biography on Tito, Velebit tries to rationalize this reproach (see Eiletz, 2006, 174)

¹⁵ As maintained by Martinc 1951, 123. – A closing comment states that the article is essentially “a synthesized summary of the initial chapters of a book” entitled “*Komunistična revolucija v Sloveniji*” [*The Communist Revolution in Slovenia*]. However, the author never completed the book.

¹⁶ Martinc 1951, 117 (testimony by the late Gaser) and 115-116.

¹⁷ Mikuž I, 45-48 presents a completely fabricated version of “historical facts”

¹⁸ For the entire section, see Mlakar, 11-20

1. German Occupation

The Germans annexed Gorenjska, Štajerska, Mežna Valley (a part of Carinthia that was left to Yugoslavia in 1920) and Zasavje – in other words, the wealthiest parts of Slovenia.¹⁹ They immediately formed their own civil bureaucracy: Štajerska was relegated to the Gauleiter of Styria, Dr. Siegfried Üiberreiter, and Gorenjska was relegated to the Gauleiter of Carinthia, Dr. Friedrich Rainer (his deputy Franz Kutschera directed the civil bureaucracy until December 1941).

The responsibility for maintaining order belonged first and foremost to the Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst), whose task was to use any means necessary to hunt down opponents of the German Reich. The infamous Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei -Secret State Police), a political organization that had absolutely no restrictions on its actions, was responsible for the most of the Nazi cruelty perpetrated against Slovenians.

At a conference in Graz already on April 8-9, the Germans decided to **dissolve all Slovenian organizations** and confiscate their assets, to be handed over to the so-called Styrian State Union (Steirischer Heimatsbund). They resolved to renew “the German character of Lower Styria”. In the same vein of thought, they resolved that nationalist-minded Slovenians must be treated as enemies of the state. Logically then, all nationalist-minded Slovenians must be expelled from Lower Styria, and from Carniola, any individual who might pose a distinct threat to the Germans. They explicitly mentioned the need to expel teachers, priests, bureaucrats, professionals, and educated middle class; their property was to be confiscated, and the Church’s property as well. The Üiberreiter made a statement in Maribor that Lower Styria had room only for Germans, all others must leave.

The effects of these resolutions were immediately apparent. First they **arrested thousands of Slovenians** and sent them to Serbia and Croatia for resettlement; the sole exceptions were any intellectuals and priests who resided there already in 1914. From Gorenjska they expelled 184 ordained priests and 78 members of religious orders. Only a handful of aged priests were left behind, yet even these were not permitted to use the Slovenian language in liturgical ceremonies. By December 1941, only 121 of 608 priests still remained in Lower Styria.²⁰ The Nazis had expelled 91% of the Slovenian priests, 84% of the engineers, 66% of the professors, 45% of the physicians and pharmacists, 22% of the teachers, and 6% of the merchants, industrialists, innkeepers, and tradesmen. The goal had been to remove 220,000 to 260,000 Slovenians, but due to the sudden reversals in Germany’s military fortunes, “**only**” slightly more than **50,000 were displaced**. The Italian-occupied Province of Ljubljana received an influx of 17,000 persons, either who crossed into this occupied zone on their own, or who already there, did not dare return to their native parts of Yugoslavia. Thus, a total to 80,000 Slovenians had been driven out of the German-occupied zone of Slovenia.

This total was not the final figure. Later on, the Germans were also sending ever-increasing numbers of Slovenians to **concentration camps** (Ger. *Konzentrationslager* or KZ), such as Dachau and Buchenwald. Although precise totals of inmates in these camps are available, it is

¹⁹ For the data under this subsection, see Mikuž I, 62-72; NOV 48-67; Kos I, 94-97; Griesser-Pečar, 31-47

²⁰ The Germans gave permission for a few German priests to assume the pastoral duties in the occupied territory. The author, from personal experience in at least one instance doubts that this benefited souls and the Slovenian people, but it did benefit the NOB, with whom several of these priests collaborated. Archbishop Vovk himself describes the difficulties had with one of these German priests (Vovk, 81-87 and 107).

difficult to ascertain the exact number of Slovenians, because the Germans tallied Slovenians from Carinthia as Germans, those from Primorska as Italians, and the rest as Yugoslavs.²¹

The Germans immediately **closed all the schools**. Later, they did re-open the elementary schools. In Gorenjska, they opened only one “upper-grade” school (*Hauptschule*), located in the city of Kranj, but not a single high school, while in Štajerska only a single high school from a total of five was left in operation. For starters, all Slovenian students had to repeat one grade. Since this was wartime, the schools began to operate more and more off-schedule; in fact, absolutely no classes were held during the 1944-1945 school year because the Germans were requisitioning school buildings as barracks or hospitals. Not a single word in Slovenian was permitted to be uttered in school: if the teacher caught anybody, the punishment, in addition to after-class detention, was also physical, such as a beating, a whack across the fingers with a ruler, and the like.

Although the occupied territory was not officially incorporated into the Reich, as had been originally intended, the Germans nonetheless gradually began to **apply German legislation** here. Thus, for example, contrary to international law, approximately 150,000 men and women were drafted into the German army or quasi-military organizations.

Three types of German citizenship were applied in the occupied territory. The first, granted to some, was **immediate citizenship**, the second was citizenship granted **by formal request**, and the third was simply **conditional citizenship**, which **could be revoked**. Those who applied for citizenship had to know the German language, so in the first year the Germans set up numerous classes. According to the census of November 29, 1942, only 12% of the population was fluent in the German language, which proved how little of Štajerska was German and how difficult it would be to try to Germanize it.

Were it not so deplorable and degrading, the German efforts at **racial profiling** would have been a true tragicomedy. The population was classified into 4 categories: 1. Predominantly Nordic and Westphalian races; 2. Evenly-mixed races; 3. Unevenly mixed races; 4) Predominantly foreign and undesirable races. A special department, an offshoot of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, the shock troops of the Nazi Party) by September 1941 had “racially examined” 312,252 individuals in Lower Styria and concluded that the racial composition here was favorable. In Gorenjska the department examined 63,334 individuals and concluded that 27.5% belonged to the Nordic race, 25.5% to the Dinaric race, 14% to the Western race, and 10.5% to the eastern Baltic race or others.²²

After Italy capitulated in 1943, the Germans **extended their occupation into those sections of Slovenia that had been under the Italian occupation since 1941**. In actuality, at first they ensconced themselves only in the city of Ljubljana and secured the railroads leading towards the Italian Front, then gradually and steadily extended their control over more areas. They re-instated the former provincial administration for Ljubljana Province, and attached this territory to the newly-created “Operational Zone for the Adriatic Coast” (*Operationszone Adriatisches*

²¹ There are many articles about this. See, for example, Vinko Lipovec, *V dachauskem taborišču [In Camp Dachau]*, ZSS 1973-1975, 106-114, and Andrej Tišler, *Ko nisem bil človek [When I was not a human being]*, ZSS 1969, 114-128

²² All who were “racially examined” were given the so-called “*Ahnenpass*” (a sort of ancestral review). The author still has possession of his. This racial examination was utterly comical: measuring skulls, hands and fingers, feet and toes, blood-letting from a finger (the blood was supposed to flow, not form a droplet) etc.

Küstenland), which included the Italian territories of Videm (Udine), Gorica, Trieste, Rijeka, Pulj, and the Croatian Coast (Kvarner Bay area). On October 1, 1943 the Supreme Commissioner, Friedrich Rainer, issued an order that the existing administrations in these territories should continue to operate as before. However, the Germans rigged the township administrations by assigning their own advisors to the administrative precincts; these “advisors” were also given the right to issue directives autonomously. The majority of the officials in the former Italian administrations had moved back to Italy, and since there were no Slovenian officials, in some places only a third of the townships were operational (Gorica). In the Slovenian part of Istria, initially only 6 of 9 township administrations were operational, and later only those in the cities. It is noteworthy that in Primorska, the mayors were Slovenians.

2. Hungarian Occupation

Although Prekmurje (*Slovenska krajina*) was initially occupied by German troops, it was handed over to the Hungarians upon an agreement reached on April 16.²³ After a few months of military rule, the Hungarians on August 15, 1941 established a civilian administration, wanting first of all to re-establish the situation there as of 1919.²⁴ On December 16, 1941, this annexed territory was formally incorporated into Hungary. The Hungarians did not repair the destroyed bridges across the Mura River, so Prekmurje remained effectively cut off from the other Slovenian areas.

The Hungarians categorically refused to acknowledge the existence of Slovenian ethnicity. In their view, the Slovenians in Prekmurje were “Wends” – somewhat in the same manner as some Austrians even to this day regard the Slovenians in Carinthia as the “Windische”. The policy of Hungarianization was extremely tyrannical: they converted all geographic names and surnames, disbanded all Slovenian institutions, burned Slovenian libraries, dismissed all Slovenian teachers and replaced them with 160 Hungarians. They expelled 121 families that had been brought by the Yugoslav authorities after the First World War to settle along the Hungarian river at *Dolnja Lendava*. Any intellectual who was not a native of Prekmurje was deported to Štajerska or Croatia. They transferred all Slovenian priests to remote Hungarian parishes. They confined all Jews, and then the Germans “exterminated” them. As of 1942, they conscripted Slovenians into the Hungarian Army and then sent them to the Russian Front.

3. Italian Occupation 1941-1943

The Italians were awarded the southern sections of Slovenia, namely Ljubljana, Notranjska [Inner Carniola], Dolenjska [Lower Carniola], Suha Krajina [Dry Carniola], and Bela Krajina [White Carniola], or approximately one third of Slovenian lands.²⁵ High Commissioner Grazioli took the reins of power in Ljubljana on April 18. Aware of how Italy had oppressed the Slovenian minority in the section of Slovenia that had been awarded to Italy in 1920, the people were rightfully afraid of the Italian occupation. However, the Italians wished to win over the Slovenians by indulgent politics and behaved overall differently than the Germans and the Hungarians.

²³ NOV, 72-72; Kos I, 97; Griesser-Pečar, 51-52

²⁴ They attached the Murska Sobota area to the administration of Vas megye (*Železna županija*), and the Spodnja Lendava area to the administration of Zala megye (*županija Zala*).

²⁵ For this subtitle see Mikuž I, 52-62; NOV 68-72; Kos I, 98-100; Griesser-Pečar, 48-50.

The Slovenian political leaders who remained in the country decided to follow a course of loyalty towards the Italian occupier, because they rationalized that Slovenian ethnic interests overall would be better safeguarded under the Italians. This opinion led the National Council to ask Commissioner Grazioli on April 18 that all of Slovenia be placed under Italy.

On April 25 the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, summoned the former governor [the *ban*, Natlačen] for a personal conference.²⁶

On April 30, Grazioli notified Dr. Natlačen of the following developments: that Mussolini had decided to create the **Province of Ljubljana**, which would be annexed to Italy but receive a special legal status; and that the representatives of the Slovenian people should approve this statute and greet Mussolini with a special speech. **Dr. Natlačen with some of his aides had already prepared a welcoming speech, but the commissioner's secretary Ruffino handed him a typewritten text that included a declaration of loyalty. Natlačen and his aides were permitted to make only a few corrections.**²⁷

The statute creating the new province was promulgated on May 4, 1941. It stated unequivocally that the occupied territory was a part of the Kingdom of Italy; that Italy would respect the ethnic character of the population, its geographic assignments, and the special needs of the province; and that "Il Duce" would appoint the High Commissioner. It was obvious that the Italians had hurried with this statute, because their real fear was that Germany would expand its territory, mostly because the Slovenian communists were actually holding pro-Reich demonstrations to change the borders.

The Commissioner was to have an "**Advisory Council**" ("*Consulta*") at hand. Its 24 members were comprised of representatives of political and economic circles, with the former governor as its head. The KPS would eventually claim that this Advisory Council was the first instance of collaboration with the occupier, whereas the democratic side was convinced that it was acting in accordance with international law and patriotic ethics. Nevertheless, not even the council members themselves were comfortable with it, because in reality it was just a camouflage for Italian duplicity.

Dr. Natlačen by his own desire traveled on May 26 to Rome where he had an audience with Mussolini and then with Pope Pius XII. Long beforehand, on May 18 already, he had composed a memorandum entitled "**The Tragedy of the Slovenian Nation**".²⁸ What actually transpired was quite different than what was later reported by the official Italian news agency, whose articles led the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London to draw false conclusions and riled the British as well. Dr. Alojzij Kuhar explained the entire affair in writing to Bishop Rožman.²⁹

²⁶ Dr. Natlačen wrote about this conference in his report to London. Dr. Natlačen described to Ciano the harsh fate of the Slovenian nation and assured him that the borders set by the Germans were untenable from any rational, political, economic, and ethnographic viewpoint. He advised that Italy should administer at least all of former Carniola. However Ciano replied that the Germans had fixed the boundary and that it was impossible to change it. Dr. Natlačen also reported to Ciano about the inhumane treatment of Slovenians by the Germans and begged him for Mussolini's intervention, because sooner or later the Germans would occupy Ljubljana too.

²⁷ Note the differences in the text between Saje, 39-40 and Griesser-Pečar, 69-70

²⁸ Griesser-Pečar remarks (73) that the official Regime historical commentators in Slovenia even to this day have yet to acknowledge the true significance of this memorandum. The reason is probably that if they did, then the communists would have a difficult time of maintaining their slander that Dr. Natlačen was a collaborator, and would no longer be able to justify his assassination (liquidation) by the communist **Security Intelligence Service (VOS)** in October of 1942.

²⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 76, quotes part of the text.

In Rome on June 8, Grazioli formally introduced the “*Consulta*” to Mussolini, whereupon governor Natlačen expressed his gratitude for the acknowledgment of Slovenian autonomy. In a private audience, Natlačen asked Mussolini to intercede with the Germans to stop their plan to resettle 300,000 Slovenians. In a personal audience with Pope Pius XII, Natlačen informed the pope about the German tyranny in Slovenia.

The Advisory Council fulfilled the role of its title: it brought to Grazioli’s attention the fact that the sabotages were being perpetrated by the communists, and protested against the arrests of innocent people, and substantiated the fact that the Italian military government was incapable of suppressing the advancing revolution. Natlačen and Pucelj resigned from the Advisory Council on September 10, 1941 on the grounds that they could not bear co-responsibility for the blindness of the Italian administration. Other members of the Advisory Council followed their lead and also resigned. Slovenian **political life now began to shift ever more towards the underground.**³⁰

The Advisory Council held 5 meetings in all, the final one on November 5, 1941. As of the 3rd meeting, Grazioli increasingly ranted against the activities of “dark elements”. At the final meeting, Grazioli complained about the changed political situation. He stated that since October 6th, the Italian authorities in response to various attacks had been forced to kill 59 communists, capture 58 of them, and destroy the areas where the attacks had occurred.

The Italians left open the Slovenian schools, the University of Ljubljana, scientific institutions, and the Opera and the Drama theaters. They likewise did not interfere in Church affairs. They accepted more than 20,000 refugees from Gorenjska and Štajerska, plus refugees from other parts of Yugoslavia. Directives were published in both languages; in the beginning the Slovenian came first, and later it came second. They released all prisoners-of-war and even allotted a small pension to former military officers.

However, even the first commissioner, Emilio Grazioli, stated: “We attached this province to Italy and we will see to it that its inhabitants will likewise become Italian as quickly as possible.” They tried to introduce Fascism immediately, starting with the children’s organization “*Balilla*” in the elementary schools and the Lictor Youth [*lictor = bearer of the fasces*] (*Gioventù Italiana Littoria-GIL*) in middle schools. At the university, they were unable to establish the Fascist University Youth (*Gioventù Universitaria Fascista-GUF*), but they did establish the Organization of the University of Ljubljana (*Organizzazione Universitaria di Liubliana-OUL*); the group remained in Slovenian hands, although under an Italian commissioner; with this trade-off, the students prevented the university from being closed.³¹ These Italian attempts to instill Fascism yielded absolutely no success, because all Slovenians were ill-disposed towards the Italians: the oldest folk already since the Austro-Hungarian times, and everybody on account of the de-Slovenianization that had occurred in the Slovenian Primorska between the two World Wars.

³⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 79-80

³¹ Four young men from KA [Catholic Action] asked the rector of Ljubljana University, Dr. Milko Kos, for permission to accept the leadership positions that had been offered. Kos replied that he “would not deem it fitting and proper if you and your comrades declined the nominations to the board of a Ljubljana general educational organization”. The dean of the Technical Faculty, Milan Vidmar (*inž.*), covered his back in his own way: through his brother Josip, who was the president of the IOOF, he received the OF’s consent to speak with Grazioli and to “collaborate”, which he himself admits in his “*Spomini*” [*Memories*] (*Obzorje*, Maribor 1964). For Milan Vidmar, such a contact with the occupier was considered just a ruse, but for young men like Župec, Kikelj, and others, such a contact meant death on the allegation that by this they were collaborating with the occupier! (See Zvonko Grahek, *Moje življenje in doživetja v vojni dobi 1941-1945* [*My life and experiences in wartime 1941-1945*], *Pogledi*, No. 84-85, Feb. 2006)

There was absolutely no possibility of any form of Slovenian cultural expression in the German-occupied Štajerska and Gorenjska, so the **Province of Ljubljana assumed the role of being the center for Slovenian culture.**³² In fact, the Province of Ljubljana became the font of all ethnic-Slovenian cultural, military, and political activities, until Italy's capitulation on September 8, 1943, at which time the Germans moved in to occupy this territory too. Had Germany annexed Ljubljana Province in 1941 already, perhaps the development of resistance by the various sides might have evolved differently, and the sweep of communism might not have been as great; but then again, quite probably Slovenian life would have come under the heel of an even greater oppression.

In 1942 the Italians **began shooting hostages** as a response to the assassinations by the Security Intelligence Service (VOS) of the Liberation Front (OF). Within a 9-month period the Italians killed more than 100 hostages in the city of Ljubljana alone, and the situation in the countryside was far worse. The Italians also sent approximately 35,000 individuals (adults and children) to internment camps (the Isle of Rab, Gonars, Monigo-Treviso, Chiesanuova, Padua, the Isle of Lipari³³). Many of these Slovenians perished in these camps, including 4,700 on the Isle of Rab alone.

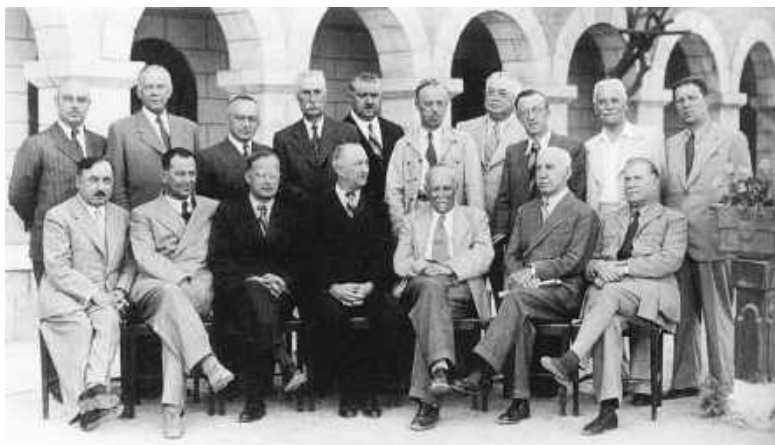
³² To achieve this, many notable cultural icons groveled before the Italians, but later of course they denied it: poet Oton Župančič; the first president of the Slovenian Communist Parliament in 1945; the director of Theater Drama group *Golia*; stage manager J. Vidmar; the president of the IOOF; *et. al.*

³³ See Viljem Bečaj, *Spomin na Liparske otoke [Remembering the Isles of Lipari]*, ZSS 1968, 287-289



Italian Occupation
Troops in Ljubljana

Podobe
MNZS, 119



Jugoslav Royal
Government-in-exile

Podobe Ssi, 206



Hostages

Podobe GMK, 231



The retreating Yugoslav Army destroys the Borovnica Viaduct on the Ljubljana-Trieste RR bridge
Podobe MNZS, 29



Bridge in Maribor destroyed by the retreating Yugoslav Army
Podobe MNZS, 29



The Allies bombed Jesenice three times
Podobe GMK, 193



Unnecessary
Allied bombing of
Maribor
(29 times, 47%
of the buildings
destroyed

*Podobe
MNZS, 191*

4. Pan-Slovenian Resistance against the Occupier

The most fitting phrase to describe the situation in Slovenia immediately after the German-Italian-Hungarian occupation is the one coined by Zdešar and used ever more frequently: the pan-Slovenian resistance against the occupier. The KPS must be excluded from this resistance categorization since it initially cooperated (**collaborated!**) with the Germans until Germany attacked the USSR.

1. Pre-war Ideological-Political Mindsets in Slovenia

When the war started, the most powerful political party was the **Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS)**, pro-Catholic, which represented nearly 65% of the population. Next in line came the **liberal** groups (approximately 25%) and the **socialist** (5-6%). In the first years of the Kingdom of SHS, the **Communists** worked within the Socialist Party, then within various others, but when the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), created already in 1920, was reoriented in 1937, the communists began to work outside the socialists and even against them.¹

1. Pro-Catholic

After the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII, the Catholic social movement swept across Slovenia too. At the end of the 19th century Slovenia experienced its own form of “*Kulturkampf*” that ultimately resulted in a “**separation of spirits**”. Slovenian Catholics began to lay emphasis on bringing everything, including public life, into harmony with Catholic teaching. In 1892, **Bishop Missia** of Ljubljana (later Bishop in Gorica and the first Slovenian Catholic Cardinal) summoned the **1st Catholic Convention**, which was followed by 4 more (called by Bishop Jeglič of Ljubljana).

After the 1st Catholic Convention, the Slovenian nation split definitively into two ideological directions: one was known as the “Catholic” side, sometimes also called “conservative” or the derogatory “clerical” side, since it was led in large measure by priests due to the lack of lay intellectuals; and the other direction was known as the “liberal” or “progressive” side, which attracted free-thinking intellectuals and the majority of urbanites.²

The Slovenian Catholic movement achieved many successes. Its powerful influence yielded significant results in many sectors of society, especially in education, cultural life, the upbringing of youth through the gymnastic organization **Orel** [Eagle], and widespread publishing. The 1st Catholic Convention already saw the creation of the **Catholic Nationalist Party**, later renamed the **Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS)**. Its first lay leader, **Dr. Ivan Šušteršič**, took up the cause of universal voting rights to replace the outdated method of divisions by social class. After the

¹ There are many sources available on the pre-war states of mind, ex. Škerl, 69-80; Kos I, 56-91; J. Juhant, *Idejna diferenciacija slovenskih katoličanov [Ideological differences among Slovenian Catholics]*, in *Na Poti [On the Journey]*, 21-36; *Ključne značilnosti [Key Characteristics]*, 17-31; et. al.

² The Marxist jargon was the first to introduce into Slovenia totally inappropriate expressions; ex. the bourgeoisie, middle class political parties, and the like, even though the majority of the Catholics were workers and farmers.

SLS won this proposition, the Slovenians for the first time won the majority in the Carniola regional assembly. The SLS attained and maintained this numeric supremacy because it was the only one of all the political parties that consistently and actively fought to obtain the most fundamental of political rights for the Slovenians in the old Austria, and later for equal rights in the new Yugoslavia. Though the Slovenian Catholic movement did not succeed in reaching all its proposed goals, it nonetheless did more for the Slovenian nation than any other social-political movement, and in this respect it achieved the successes that placed Slovenians in the family of developed and civilized European nations.

Even among Catholics there was no unanimity. The most significant rifts surfaced with the encyclical **Quadragesimo anno** by Pope Pius XI. Those Catholics leaning more to the left leveled the criticism that it was advocating fascist corporatism and that it was sympathetic to Nazism and Fascism, because it spoke against class warfare. During the period of the Spanish Civil War, for example, professor Edvard Kocbek, writing in the magazine *Dom in svet* [*At Home and In the World*], began his discussion against the encyclical with the claim that all heresies were simply the display of ordinary spiritual heroism by people of conviction, who were but following their own conscience in making a decision for a greater and better truth; he also wrote that Fascism was more dangerous than Communism, a statement that today seems almost ludicrous but continues to be defended by some.

Among the Catholics leaning towards the “right”, an intense and bitter rivalry developed particularly among university students, between **Catholic Action** (Prof. Ernest Tomec) on the one side, where the orientation was more towards strictly religious activities, and on the other side, the *Stražarji* [*Sentinels*] (Prof. Dr. Lambert Ehrlich), so named in light of their magazine *Straža v viharju* [*Sentinels in the Storm*], who were oriented more at preparing themselves for positions of leadership within society in the near future.

Difficulties also surfaced within the union of workers organizations, called the Yugoslav Labor Union (JSZ), founded in 1907 by a priest Dr. Janez E. Krek [one of the great Catholic social reformers]; this organization was characterized later by Bishop Gregorij Rožman in 1931 as being a pro-Marxist group. In the following year [1908], the JSZ stated in its mouthpiece newspaper *Delavska pravica* [*Workers Rights*] that it did not accept the papal teachings on class structures as the solution for social problems, and began to expound Marxism.³

2. Liberals or “Progressives”

Liberalism was imported into Slovenia in the second half of the 19th century primarily by Slovenian students who attended the universities in Vienna, Graz, and Prague. The liberals considered themselves “progressives” or “progressive-minded”. In philosophy they argued for positivism and free-thinking, in politics for the Yugoslav monarchy, in economics for unrestrained freedom, and in production and marketing for the absence of any social responsibilities. Liberalism was embraced by the majority of intellectuals, urbanites, teachers, large landowners and landlords, but it never was able to make inroads among the remaining majority of the population.

³ Kos, I 56-78; Dr. F. Žakelj wrote articles about Dr. Ehrlich (ZSS 1962, 152-158) and about Prof. Tomec (KSS 1962, 159-169). – Much later, the two communist front-liners, Kardelj and Kidrič, maintained that the JSZ and the so-called *Križarji* [*Crusaders*] (a Catholic youth movement imported from Germany after World War I) were the ones who introduced the concept of a combined Workers and People’s Front, and that they were fighting against the SLS, Fascism, and the Vatican.

The liberals were visible in almost every type of organization. Following the example and teachings of the Czech Tyrš, they had their own physical fitness organization *Sokol* [Hawk]. They published a daily newspaper *Jutro* [Morning], an afternoon newspaper *Slovenski narod* [Slovenian Nation], and a weekly *Domovina* [Homeland] which were quite venomous against the Church and religion. They developed a theatrical and opera hall in Ljubljana called *Glasbena matica*, the *Slovenska matica* publishing company for scientific books, and as some sort of counterweight to the Catholic publisher *Mohorjeva družba*, the *Tiskovna zadruga* and the *Vodnikova zadruga* [Printing Cooperative and the Vodnik Cooperative] and the more leftist *Akademsko založba* [University Publishing House]. They began to construct **National Homes**, initially intended for the general public (the first hall, in Ljubljana, was regarded as a bastion against Germanization), but the halls soon fell into the exclusionist hands of the liberals and became rivals against the Catholic **Cultural Homes** or **Peoples Homes**.

At the start the Kingdom of SHS, there were three Slovenian liberal parties: the **Jugoslav Democratic Party (JDS)**, the **Independent Peasant Party** (later the Slovenian Peasant Party), and the **Nationalist Socialist Party**. These Slovenian parties grew ever more factionalized, until at the time of the dictatorship of King Alexander they were forced to merge into the **Jugoslav National Party (JNS)**.

During the entire period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the liberals were arguing for centralism and even unitarianism, that is, the assimilation of three nationalities into one!⁴

An important split in the liberal camp occurred in 1929 at the start of King Alexander's dictatorship with its creation of the "knightly organization" ***Sokol of the Yugoslav Kingdom***, which drew into itself all the existing *Sokol* groups but failed to draw all their former members. The new *Sokol* organization retained the old secularist ideology of Tyrš, but its creation placed enormous pressure on youth both inside and outside school, since now it was the only gymnastic organization that was sanctioned and permitted by the government, for the government had simultaneously banned the Catholic-oriented gymnastic organization *Orel*. In response, in 1932 the Catholic bishops of Yugoslavia denounced the state-sponsored *Sokol* for its atheistic orientation, its attacks on the Church hierarchy, and above all its godless upbringing of the children. A second break among the liberals occurred in 1936, when the **leftist faction of the "democratic" *Sokols***, which began leaning more and more towards Marxism, began to publish their own newsletter under the same name. When this leftist faction won the elections in the Ljubljana district, the parent leadership refused to recognize it, and handed over the district instead to the people on the JNS slate. The leftist liberal faction, on the advice of the KPS, moved into open conflict with the JNS party. This break also spread across its membership. The leftist faction created the **Society of Friends of the Soviet Union** and thereby ultimately aligned itself with

⁴ This was revealed when the Slovenian liberals voted in favor of the first Yugoslav Constitution, which ran counter to the Slovenian drive for autonomy, or again, when during the Alexandrian dictatorship they united into the JNS party and supported organizations that were hostile to Slovenians and Catholicism (*Orjuna, Narodna odbrana, Zveza bojevnikov*). Even the poet Oton Župančič at the time allowed for the practicability of Slovenians abandoning their language and becoming just a "tribe". – Yet two instances showed that some liberals were drawing away from such Yugoslavianizing: first, the Declaration of Autonomy in 1920, where 20 of the 43 signees were liberals; then "*Kulturni problemi slovenstva*" [Cultural Problems of Slovenianism] (1932), an essay in defense of Slovenian ethnic existence written by a leftist liberal, Josip Vidmar.

the KPS. They expanded their leadership (Feb. 1941), and later, after the occupation in 1941, became one of the several groups that amalgamated into the **Anti-Imperialist Front (PIF)**.⁵

Before the First World War, most capital was in the hands of German financiers, who were liberals. Catholic priests, such as Janez Ev. **Krek**, began to establish native-owned cooperatives, which dealt quite a heavy blow against the foreign exploitation of this capital. With the advent of the Kingdom of SHS, the Slovenian capital in liberal hands obtained greater freedom. It took financial control of all industry, banking, and credit institutions. On behalf of the workers, the liberals established the **National Labor Union**, but it attracted very little of the labor force, which remained predominantly in either the Catholic or the socialist unions. The leaders of the liberal parties never succeeded in making any inroads in the mainstream strata of Slovenian society.

3. Socialists (Social Democrats)

Socialism was introduced into Slovenia in the middle of the 19th century by seasonal laborers from France. Socialism *per se* was antipathetic to the Faith in Slovenia too, but not so much the socialists as a political party. However, the socialists were not proponents of Slovenian nationalism and were predicting that the Slovenian race would disappear into the “nation” of Southern Slavs.⁶ For this reason the socialists did not join the movement in 1917 for the May Declaration. For the same reason, at the 1920 plebiscite in Carinthia they did not campaign for the pro-Yugoslavia side; here they were heavily influenced by the author and communist Lovro Kuhar (Prežihov Voranc). Although the **Jugoslav Socialist-Democratic Party (JDSD)** contained many workers in its membership, the socialists could wield a modicum of influence only in the city of Maribor, in the mining-area of Trbovlje, and in the industrial city of Jesenice. In all, they attracted maybe 5% of the Slovenian population. In the end, the party split completely; the larger part joined the Croatian and Serb socialists in the **Socialist Party of Yugoslavia (JSS)**, which was later dissolved by the dictatorship of King Alexander. Factory workers had their own **Trade Commission** [*Strokovna komisija*], which until 1930 was the most powerful syndicate in Slovenia. Just before the Axis attack on Yugoslavia, the political leaders of the JSS were quarreling with the KP, and for this reason the majority of socialists joined the **National Council (NS)**.

4. Communists

In the start of the year 1920, the communists were working within the **Jugoslav National Democratic Party**, which had two factions: the right wing was reformist, and the left communist. In March 1920 the left wing seceded and established the **Workers Socialist Party for Slovenia (DSSS)**. At their congress in Ljubljana on Nov. 4, 1920, the DSSS joined the **Socialist Workers Party of Yugoslavia (SDSJ)** but retained partial autonomy thanks to a statute accepted that same year at the Congress in Vukovar, where the **Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ)** was established. For its basic platform the KPJ proposed: the establishment of soviet republics

⁵ The process that led to this rift among the liberals began much earlier: when the **Triglav** club at Ljubljana University broke off from the “old-timers” (1926); when it “turned to the left” (1930); when it left to join the opposition against the pan-Serbian dictatorship (1932); and when the government disbanded the *Triglav* club after it had fallen into the hands of the Party (1934).

⁶ Pavel Fajdiga, *KPJ in Jugoslavija [The KPJ and Yugoslavia]*, ZSS 1973-1975, 178-195, especially 179.

and a federation of Danubian soviet countries, the establishment of a peoples army and special communist armed units to safeguard the revolution, the nationalization and socialization of production, and so forth.

The Yugoslav communist leaders relocated from Vienna to Paris in 1936 (Secretary Milan Gorkić, Rodoljub Čolaković, Sreten Žujović, Josip Broz Tito, and Franc Leskošek). In 1937 Gorkić was summoned to Moscow, where he was imprisoned and accused of being a British spy. **The entire CK-KPJ was suspended and all its members had to remain in Paris pending disposition by the Comintern.** Stalin handpicked the leaders of the KPJ. According to the KPJ account, Josip Broz Tito was named in 1937 to head the KPJ (aliases: Otto, Rudi, Timo, Walter or Valter); another source, Eiletz 2006, claims that this did not occur till 1939.⁷

The main goal of the KPJ was to carry out a social revolution. To achieve this, the Party tried to increase its own ranks and infiltrate the Catholic, liberal and socialist organizations. It was adept at exploiting public dissatisfaction and used this to create demonstrations and strikes. The Slovenian Communists attracted their membership from the ranks of the intellectuals, or the “salon/parlor communists” as they were called. The working class never had much representation at the top levels of the Party. For example, the Executive Committee of the OF (IOOF) contained only two laborers, all the rest were intellectuals.⁸

As far back as 1920, the Slovenian Communists had been clamoring with increasing insistence to have their own independent party. Finally on April 18, 1937 (according to the KPJ as the source), a founding meeting was held under the chairmanship of Edvard Kardelj to create the **Communist Party of Slovenia (KPS)**.⁹ The KPS retained its name until 1952, when it was changed to the **Union of Communists of Slovenia (ZKS)**.

In terms of numbers, the communists did not represent many people.¹⁰ In the elections for the Constitutional Assembly in 1920 they did receive 58 delegates out of 417, a low 14% but enough to have it ranked the third largest party at the time, although after that they always

⁷ Eiletz 2006, 58 and 163 footnote 453; Eiletz's source is Pero Simović, *Tito agent Kominterne [Tito, Komintern Agent]*, Beograd 1990, 67

⁸ In the first Yugoslavia, the communists in Slovenia tried twice to overthrow the government by force. On April 24, 1929, a lawyer Dr. Milan Lemež (born in Maribor 1891) organized a march on Ljubljana which left 14 people killed and 30 wounded. Some sources claim that Dr. Lemež died during this episode, but according to *Enciklopedija Slovenije* he died in 1971 in Ljubljana. – When the Alexandrian dictatorship was proclaimed, the communists in October 1929 again called for an uprising, but the government responded with its police: only a handful of Party members were able to escape into Austria, the rest were imprisoned, including Tito.

⁹ By profession Kardelj was a teacher, then a student at Moscow University, next a lecturer at this university, namely, on how to prepare a revolution.

¹⁰ The *Enciklopedija Slovenije* under the entry “*Komunistična partija Slovenije*” [*The Communist Party of Slovenia*] (vol. 5, pp. 232-238) contains the following details: In 1920 its membership fell from 12,000 to a few dozen. **From 1933 to 1941 there were only 600 members in Slovenia**; or, to put it in another way, of 1.2 million inhabitants in the Drava Province [*banovina*] **only five hundredths of one percent were communists** [5 of every 10,000 people]! After the occupation, the number of members increased to 1,300 within 204 cells. By the end of 1941 the OF had 2,100 partisans, of which one-fourth were Party members. In 1942 there were 1,200 members; in September 1943 there were 1,700 members and 600 candidates in field-intelligence organizations, and 1,200 members and 500 candidates in the National Liberation Army (NOV) and the Partisans Detachments of Slovenia (POS). In May 1944 the number of members increased already to 8,373, of whom 3,497 were in the NOV and the POS. It is claimed that around 5,000 Party members lost their lives during the war (but few “heads”, or Party bigwigs). In 1949 the membership in the KPS swelled to 38,000 Party members and 7,700 candidates, but in 1954, due to expulsions (the undisciplined, the religious), the number reached only 49,000. In 1965 there were 70,000 members in the ZKS, but ever fewer workers and more officials and administrators. Then the

received substantially fewer votes. But they never gave up. Whenever the Beograd government banned a communist organization, the organization resurfaced a short while later under a different name, or a banned Party newspaper would continue publishing under a different banner. Their clever *modus operandi* stemmed from various factors: they continuously received instructions and orders from the Comintern; theirs was a close-knit organization; and they had no qualms about using whatever means were necessary to accomplish their goals.¹¹

The 7th Comintern Congress issued a directive to all their Parties in Europe to start creating **People's Fronts**. According to the directive by the Comintern, the key slogan would be **anti-fascism**. From this point forward, the Party branded as a fascist anybody who did not subordinate himself to the People's Front. The Slovenian Party members faithfully carried out this instruction.¹²

In 1939 in the city of Celje, the communists convened a meeting of members of People's Fronts which was attended by around 100 people. They established the **Union of the Working Peoples of Slovenia (ZDLS)**, but the government refused to grant permission for it to convert into a political party.

Prior to the Hitler-Stalin Pact (Aug. 1939), the KPS had been agitating against Hitler, but after the pact, upon orders from the ComIntern, it began to attack English and French Imperialism. The pact of course had confused many a communist, therefore in the first three months after the occupation of Yugoslavia there was almost no discernible activity by the KPS, although it was using this time wisely. **Kardelj** later made excuses for this period of dormancy, claiming that **prior to the German attack against the USSR, there were no "objective conditions for resistance against Hitler's Germany."**¹³

Before World War II, the activism of the KPS was most evident at Ljubljana University, where they were trying to attract gifted students to their cause. In 1940, they created the **Society of Friends of the Soviet Union** because enthusiasm for a **People's Front** had waned after the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The Yugoslav regime had not sanctioned this society, but Partisan sources claim they had collected 18,000 signatures which the president of the preparatory committee Josip Vidmar handed to the new USSR ambassador to Yugoslavia. This popular success was made possible only due to the so-called **Cultural Bolshevism**, which these cultural activists started with the magazine *Sodobnost [Contemporary]* in 1933.¹⁴

statistics relate the following figures: 68,343 members (fewer young people) in 1968; 74,000 members within 2,912 basic organizations in 1974; 110,000 members within 5,195 organizations in 1978; 126,437 members within 6,324 organizations in 1982, the year of the 9th Congress; 121,095 members in 1986; and only 25,000 members remaining in 1991: **thus, in one decade, their numbers decreased by 80%!** – Pavel Fajdiga relates somewhat different figures according to Party sources, *KPJ in Jugoslavija [The KPJ and Yugoslavia]*, ZSS 1973-1975, 178-195.

¹¹ **The difference between the prewar "Yugoslavian" dictatorship and the postwar Party dictatorship is so vast that it is possible to question if any comparison is even justifiable.** – See Eiletz 2006 (*Skrivnost Kominterne/The Secrecy of the Comintern*)

¹² The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) had a tremendous impact on the state of Slovenia's internal affairs and the later civil war. The "Cankar Brigade" of 537 Slovenians, mostly communists, fought in Spain. From this group, 231 were killed in battle in Spain, and 49 during World War II. The most famous of the "Spanish fighters" in the Slovenian Revolution were Bebler-Kreft, Kveder, Rozman, and Semič (Daki).

¹³ Kardelj 1946, 128-129.

¹⁴ A significant factor for this was a book with a Marxist viewpoint written by Kardelj (pseudonym Sperans) "*Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja*" [*The Evolution of the Slovenian Nationalism Question*], although there are serious doubts that Kardelj was really the author of this book. – For the entire topic, see *Vir*, all of Part I; Kos I, 84-91; Griesser-Pečar, 27-29.

On October 27, 1990 the KPS issued a public renunciation of its Bolshevik and revolutionist practices and a condemnation of all wrongdoings committed by the Party in the past. However, it did not identify any specific wrongdoing – which is tantamount to no condemnation. The Party then changed its name first to the Party of Democratic Restoration (C. Ribičič), then to the United Left, and continued with further renames.¹⁵

2. Various Democratic-side Opposition Movements

The distinction between **resistance** and **revolt** is crucial. Resistance is the “**devising of projects, making preparations, planning, and organizing civilian resistance**”.¹⁶ The Slovenian democratic [non-communist] side, as political parties or other groups, delved into resistance movements immediately, in the first weeks of the occupation, which the Communists did not do. This fact cannot be trivialized, much less overlooked. The democratic political parties and groups extricated themselves “from the paralysis and demoralization caused by defeat and surrender that characterized the situation in the other countries and peoples of occupied Europe, and stepped into world of resistance activity” (*ibid*). The list of resistance movements by the democratic-minded Slovenians is extensive:¹⁷

1. The Catholic-Peoples side:

1. The **Slovenian Legion (SL)** was to have been founded at a meeting on April 27, 1941.¹⁸ Its range covered almost all of Slovenia: Ljubljana territory as well as Gorenjska, Štajerska, and Primorska. By the end of 1941 it already had around 5,000 members. Its director was Rudolf Smersu, its organizational chief was Dr. Albin Šmajd, and its military chief was Lt. Colonel Ernest Peterlin.¹⁹

¹⁵ Enciklopedija Slovenije, 1.c.

¹⁶ Zdešar 2004, 83

¹⁷ This is how already in 1967 the Regime’s own historian Franc Škerl introduced “The opponents of the Liberation Front in 1941” [*Nasprotniki Osvobodilne fronte v letu 1941*] (Škerl, above all 74-170); Bučar, 75-76, writes that Glavač’s National Legion was established already before the occupation; Kos I, 107-113 writes about the Slovenian underground and states that Gosar and Šolar joined up with the National Legion in autumn of 1943.

¹⁸ Škerl, 85, cites Martinc 1952, 207, but (intentionally?) erroneously transcribed the month as May 29, 1941 instead of April 29, 1941.

¹⁹ On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the SL, Smersu wrote in *Vestnik* (XII-1961, 4, 68) that the SL was established in April 1941. He states that the Italian troops broke into Ljubljana on Easter Sunday itself, April 13, and that already on the following day “some representatives of Slovenian Catholic youth organizations” gathered at his home. Everybody “concurred that it will be necessary to immediately organize secret units that would – of course with the help of military experts – from a military perspective prepare the nation for the moment when our overt stand against the occupier on behalf of our nation and the allies would be necessary, beneficial, successful, and unified, with the fewest casualties.” Not even Škerl dared to contradict these assertions, although this meant for them [the communist/Regime side] that the SLS party had accepted Mihailović’s position of “passive waiting”, accepted “a Slovenia within Yugoslavia” and waived its consistent position concerning an independent Slovenia, everything of course only with the intent that the “anti-revolutionist” concept for the SLS becomes a reality. – From Smersu’s probate, his daughter Marjeta Smersu Boltežar published in *Svobodna Slovenija* (June 2 2005, 20, 2) his writing “*Slovenska Legija, prva protiokupatorska bojna skupina na Slovenskem*” [*The Slovenian Legion, the first anti-occupation fighting group in Slovenia*], in which Smersu again maintains that the SL was established on April 27, 1941 and names the founding members.

2. **Prebujena Slovenia** [*Awakened Slovenia*] was established in June 1941 by Ivo Peršuh. Because its program was identical to the SL, it merged into the Slovenian Legion already in December 1941.
3. **Straža** [*The Sentinels*] was a university student club, established already before the war by Dr. Lambert Ehrlich. The club joined the SL as a group, but left it in the middle of 1942 due to differences about the programs.
4. The **Slovenian National Movement** had a professed military character, but ideologically it was quite diverse. It was directed by Fanouš Emmer. It was composed of former "Youths" (the youths [from the secondary schools and the universities] within Catholic Action), Sokols (members of the liberal organization Sokol), and the younger Yugoslav Army officers.
5. **United Slovenians** appeared in the middle of May 1941 and attracted the so-called Catholic middle (Dr. Andrej Gosar, Dr. Jakob Šolar). This group remained self-contained; it never joined either the other Catholic groups or the later Liberation Front (OF).

2. Nationalist-Liberal side:

1. The **Sokol Legion** was formed from members of the pre-war Yugoslav National Party. It was organized similar to the SL, however it was led by a Sokol wartime council (Albert Kramer, Avgust Praprotnik).
2. **New Yugoslavia** or **Young JNS** arose as an opposition to the older leadership of the JNS (president Jože Rus, secretary Andrej Uršič).
3. The **Independent Democratic Party** was politically insignificant and was constantly vacillating between joining into the OF or remaining independent.
4. **Ancient Rights** [*Stara Pravda*] came into being in April or May of 1941 under the leadership of Črtomir Nagode (*inž.*), and it culled a strong group of liberal intellectuals. In August 1941 they decided to join the OF, but were expelled already in January of 1942 for demanding that the OF, which touted itself to be a coalition, must be run more democratically.

The Main Purposes of Resistance

The fact that immediately after the invasion at least 9 resistance groups sprung up from the democratic side **proves that the occupation drew the Slovenian people together into political harmony**. The groups were united in spirit from their judgment on what were the Slovenian national interests during a period of occupation. These common interests were straightforward:²⁰

1. We Slovenians must strive to come out of the war as a people as unfragmented as possible, to keep the number of fatalities as low as possible, and to keep the physical damage as small as possible
2. We Slovenians must not accept the occupation as some unalterable fate, but as a challenge: resistance first, then revolt. The first phase will be a civilian resistance of the most diverse scale and preparations for armed revolt; the second phase will be an armed uprising and liberation side by side with the Western Allies.
3. During the occupation it is necessary to stay together and not divorce members and segments of the national body, for the sake of the common goal of a Unified Slovenia.

"The Slovenian democratic political parties therefore as a whole decided on civilian unarmed resistance, that is, on the "European model" of resistance and rebellion..."²¹

²⁰ Zdešar 2004, 85

²¹ Zdešar 2004, *ibid*; see also Bučar 29-33.

This sort of resistance of course can have many forms. It can be simply **symbolic**: by symbolic gestures it shows the occupiers that they are dealing with a nation that is not intimidated. It can be **polemical**: by various forms of protests they would show the occupier that they do not regard themselves defeated, and would therefore circumvent the occupier's directives in various ways. Resistance can also be **defensive**, but still non-fighting; this means organizing permanent underground groups and making preparations for armed resistance. The fact is that this form of civilian resistance was accepted in 1939 by the majority of European governments and political leaders in countries that were occupied by the Nazis. An **organized and coordinated uprising** did not occur in the western European countries until 1943.²²

In fact, this model of resistance conformed to the instructions that the democratic-oriented resistance movement was receiving from the Yugoslav Royal government in London.

3. The National Council

Because all contacts with the seat of the Yugoslav government in Beograd were severed, the governor Dr. Marko Natlačen already on the afternoon of April 6 summoned to a meeting the representatives of all recognized political parties and proposed the establishment of a **National Council** [*Narodni svet/NS*].²³ He based the need for an NS on the wartime conditions, which demanded that all political parties collaborate on important decisions "in order to preserve peace and order, and so that the entire nation be uniformly informed about important resolutions".²⁴ This National Council was set up then and there on the same day.

The representative from the SDS Party proposed that the KPS should also be included, but the NS rejected his party's suggestion on the grounds that "it was necessary on principle that only spokesmen for organized and recognized political parties should be represented in the National Council."²⁵ The NS held several meetings. It intervened at the Yugoslav Army Command in order

²² For this entire section, see Zdešar 2004 – At this point an important historical fact deserves mention. From London, Gen. De Gaulle immediately after the occupation of France urged Frenchmen to *resistance* against the occupier, but this did not as yet mean an armed uprising, but a rebuttal to Petain's signing of the surrender and to the government at Vichy. When the Allied troops were approaching Paris in August 1944, they intended to bypass the city and rush towards Germany. However, on August 16 the Paris police force mutinied against the German authorities. At that moment **Gen. de Gaulle promptly forbade an armed uprising**, because any sort of fighting in the city would profit nothing and be extremely dangerous. **But his directive was not in accord with the goals of the French communists**, who till now had collaborated in the resistance movement, but never held exclusive control of the leadership, unlike the KPS. The communists wanted to utilize this so-called "revolutionary situation" to their own benefit, so the Paris commander of the communist-revolution armed forces ordered a general mobilization. De Gaulle's supporters had no choice but to take up their weapons too. The German commander of Paris, Gen. von Choltitz, quickly called for a cease fire, but the communists violated it already the next day. So von Choltitz notified Gen. Eisenhower that Hitler had given an order to burn Paris. Eisenhower decided to let the French General Leclerc to move towards Paris and liberate it, which he did on August 24th.

²³ Concerning the National Council, see Saje, 25-48; Mikuž I, 48-52; Kos I, 102-107; Griesser-Pečar, 58-67

²⁴ See Saje, 25

²⁵ The rejection was understandable, taking into consideration the paltry number of Party members and the banned status of the Party itself. But the question remains if this decision was politically proper. In any event, governor Natlačen ordered the Chief of the Ljubljana police, Dr. Hacin, to destroy the lists of communists, and ordered the gendarmes and policemen to release all political prisoners. According

to prevent the destruction of important economic targets, especially the bridges. As it turned out, it succeeded at rescuing the steel mill at Jesenice, the mines at Trbovlje, and the larger factories; however it was unable to prevent some panicked masses from ransacking military warehouses and supply vehicles. It appealed to the civil population to refrain from resisting the invaders with weapons and from denouncing their fellow countrymen to the occupiers.

The NS also discussed **whether the NS should proclaim itself to be the independent rulership for Slovenia, or should it only manage the affairs of the moment.** The latter position prevailed. Even so, during the night of April 10, governor Natlačen met with the commanders of the Yugoslav troops in Slovenia, generals Pandurovič and Lavadinović, informed them of the reasons for the creation of the NS, and proposed that the army in Slovenia be renamed as the **Slovenian National Army**, which the two generals refused. Despite this refusal, the governor called upon all soldiers and officers to not desert the Yugoslav Army but to remain at their current posts. He issued a directive on the establishment of the so-called **Slovenian Legion**, which was to preserve order in those areas that had not yet been occupied by the invaders, and urged all residents of Ljubljana with firearm skills to join the police units.²⁶ The **commander of the II Italian Army headquartered at Sušak**, to which the 11th Corps belonged, **on April 13th forbade any creation of a Slovenian Legion.** The NS did not want Slovenia to be partitioned, and very mindful of Italy's oppression of its Slovenian minorities, went to negotiate with the Germans, though unsuccessfully.²⁷

The NS stopped operating legally [above ground] on April 17, when the Fascist Commissioner Grazioli assumed power, and from this day forward its activities were underground.

Once the SLS and the JNS reached an entente, all political parties in the NS (including the Socialists) held firm all the way to the end of the war on the principle of the continuance of the Yugoslav state, whereas the KPJ was continuously insisting on a new, communist Yugoslavia. This difference alone was so grave that any collaboration between these two camps was *a priori* impossible. Even later negotiations, especially those in 1943 and 1944, always failed time and again due mostly to the communists' intransigent demand on monopolization.

4. An Effort for Unified Action: the Slovenian Alliance

The National Council, created on the very day the war began, in time completely ceased to operate. Lengthy discussions among various groups finally led to the establishment of the **Slovenian Alliance [SZ, Slovenska Zaveza]** on April 14, 1942. The most divided opinions centered on the dilemma, whether they should bring the communists into the Alliance or should they themselves join into the Liberation Front (OF), which the communists had created and controlled with a tight fist. The liberal parties, especially Nagode's group as it was called, held talks with the OF, but they parted ways on account of the issue about the continuity of Yugoslavia, because the communists clung to the agreement reached among the communist parties

to Bučar, this decision [to exclude the KPS from the NS] was probably wrong, even though it was very probable that even after its admission, the Party would have continued to work for its selfish interests and for acquiring its monopoly on the resistance.

²⁶ This Slovenian Legion is unrelated to the aforementioned underground resistance group with the same name.

²⁷ It is interesting that even the Regime historian of the NOB, Dr. M. Mikuž (I, 55) gives positive marks on this course of action, even though without any proof he dares to claim that the NS wanted to draw Slovenia into the Tripartite Pact.

of Yugoslavia, Austria, and Italy in 1934, which granted the right to autonomy and even to secession from imperialistic countries.²⁸

Even the SLS and the liberals had differing opinions about the future of the country. In the view of the SLS, the liberals were first and foremost proponents of the pre-war centralist and unitarian Yugoslavia. But despite all differences, the two sides finally held talks in September of 1941. The SLS under the directorship of Dr. Natlačen and the JNS with Dr. Albert Kramer as its head convened in October. The two parties accepted a program to side with the Yugoslav government in exile. The agreement is known as the **London Points**: 1. Renewal of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; 2. Establishment of a Free Slovenia as an autonomous partner and with equal rights as the other partners; 3. Collaboration by all parties in determining the internal organization of Yugoslavia; 4. Resolving of issues concerning common affairs (foreign policy, and so on); 5. Structuring Yugoslavia into a single economic zone under a democratic, social, and administrative system; 6. Making efforts to include Bulgaria; 7. Recognizing Yugoslavia as the backbone of a future Balkan Alliance. They sent this program to the Slovenian Minister in the Yugoslav government-in-exile, Dr. Miha Krek, and on November 23rd Alojzij Kuhar announced it over Radio London.

The purpose of the Slovenian Alliance was to establish a non-communist underground. The SZ resolutely rejected anybody who would collaborate with the enemy. Just as adamantly it stuck to its position that nobody was allowed authorize a one-party liberation of the nation, limited to its own ideas and its own methods. For this reason the SZ excluded those who were not prepared to subordinate their political party interests to the welfare of the nation. This was directed obviously at the communists.

Although the SZ was established in Ljubljana, its extent covered all Slovenian lands. Yet it failed to draw all the political parties in Primorska, which had its own National Council in operation since 1939. Because it was utterly necessary to include representation for Primorska, the SZ allowed their National Council to join in.

The SZ was bringing together the now-underground political parties and resistance groups but not their leading representatives, on the grounds that the latter had compromised themselves by collaborating with the National Council and the Advisory Council. The SZ still hoped that it would later draw in the communists too, although at the moment they saw more reasons not to do this. For example, the OF in the beginning won much sympathy among the people by stating that their sole objective was to fight against the occupier. However the OF leaders soon showed a different face. The KP was acting as if it were the sole true force within the OF. The militant acts of resistance by the Partisans, launched from time to time, were poorly prepared, many a time done with no regard for the civilian population. Some attacks were totally inane (severing electric or telephone wires and so on), but these acts were attaining the KPS's long-range terrorist objectives: the occupier had now begun shooting hostages and burning down settlements.

As a result, the battle lines had shifted dramatically. **The fight against the occupier was becoming more and more a battle between the communist Partisans striving for a new, Soviet Slovenia on the one side, and on the other side, all the former political forces working towards their goal of continuance.** When the Communist Party took an ill liking against any influential individuals, it started its attacks against them with mudslinging and denunciations, and ended with murders. Anybody not in line with Party thinking was called a White Guard,

²⁸ On this topic, Sirc 1989

a fifth columnist, and thereby regarded as a national traitor. Anybody who deigned to work in the un-surrendered Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD) was sentenced to death.

Despite this, the Slovenian Alliance continuously made efforts to reach some sort of an entente with the OF and the KPS – but each time to no avail. The Slovenian Alliance recognized Mihailovič's army as the sole legal army, so as of December 1941 it supported Mihailovič's deputy for Slovenia, Major Novak.

The structure of the SZ was simple: at the topmost level presided the 3-member **National Committee**, plus **three committees** for operations: political, economic, and cultural. The representatives of these committees comprised the Executive Council for the National Committee. In principle all these members should have been elected, but given the circumstances, this proved impossible.

Due to wartime conditions, the work of the SZ was growing increasingly difficult, especially after Italy surrendered and Germany occupied Ljubljana Province. In actuality, all that still remained was the upper leadership.

The greatest difficulty for the SZ was the issue of resources, especially for its military directorship. Collecting money was extremely difficult, and not much was gathered.

The essential principle of the SZ was that collaboration in any fashion with the occupier was not permitted. However in practice it is not easy to act in accordance with theory.²⁹

²⁹ Mikuž I, 298-340, presents a different view, as summarized by its subtitle, "The Slovenian Bourgeoisie United in Counter-Revolution" [*Kontrarevoluciji združene slovenske buržoazije*]. He dwells on the year 1941 and the beginning of 1942. However, **a counter-revolution presupposes that a revolution was already going on at this time!** – In similar fashion, NOV, 187-258, under the title "*Začetki narodnega izdajalstva*" [*The Beginnings of National Treason*], which in its summary of the first year of the NOB claims that "This was a revolutionary army of the Slovenian working people" (256)

5. Armed Resistance

Three different groups in Yugoslavia began a militant resistance against the occupier. Chronologically, the first was TIGR, followed by the un-surrendered Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD), and finally the Liberation Front (OF).

1. TIGR (Trst-Istra-Gorica-Reka)

The first anti-occupation organization

TIGR [Trieste-Istria-Gorica-Rijeka] began its resistance against the Italian authorities **already between the two World Wars (1922)**. The founding of TIGR was neither the work of political parties nor of groups with an international outlook, and especially not the communists. TIGR had its roots among the enslaved people of Primorska, chafing under the Italian yoke for many long years. It accepted everybody, without regard to their political or international convictions. After Italy surrendered, the majority of TIGRs did join the Partisan NOB. However, the Party ordinarily refrained from speaking about the TIGR organization.

The TIGRs had to wait until the 1990s before they could hold a commemoration in Slovenia on Mala gora pri Ribnici in Dolenjska. Mala gora now has a monument memorializing the date May 13, 1941, when the Italian occupiers tracked down the TIGRs Danilo Zelen, Ferdo Kravanja and Anton Majnik. Three policemen joined by 34 Italian carabinieri and soldiers advanced against these TIGRs, hiding in a hunter's hut. Zelen and Kravanja were severely wounded. When the Italians broke into the hut, Zelen shot himself, Kravanja was taken away to the hospital in Kočevje, and Majnik succeeded in escaping. Later, Kravanja escaped too, from the hospital in Ljubljana. Majnik and Kravanja later went to join the Partisans. Majnik was shot in November 1943 under unclear circumstances, and Kravanja was killed in action in October 1944.

"TIGR represents what the Partisan phenomenon would have been, had there been no communist dictatorial stranglehold on Slovenian resistance against the occupier.... For them [TIGR], the end did not justify the means. They were patriots."¹ The postwar Communist Regime did not permit any celebrations to commemorate the organization TIGR, **the first Slovenian and in fact also the first European anti-fascist armed resistance**. "We understand why not," said the EU deputy for the NSi party [*Nova Slovenija*], Prof. Lojze Peterle, "because in some way it had chipped away the Party's self-proclaimed monopoly on the leadership in the fight against the occupier."

TIGR began as a resistance against Italian chauvinism, and thus it was anti-occupation by its very nature.

¹ From a speech by the president of the RS, Janez Janša, on Mala gora, April 27, 2005, *Delo* 4/28/2005

2. The Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD / the Chetniks)

Colonel Draža Mihailović on Ravna gora

The first Yugoslav armed resistance against the occupier began already before the Yugoslav Army's formal surrender, signed on April 17, 1941 in Beograd. **Colonel Draža Mihailović of the General Staff** along with a group of Serb officers and soldiers did not want to surrender. He retreated to the area of **Ravna gora**, some 50 to 60 km southwest of Beograd. Here the decision for armed resistance was reached. Mihailović began to assemble Chetnik units and first of all tried to prepare a redoubt, primarily in Serbia and Montenegro. The majority of his troops were comprised of nationalist and monarchist Serbs.

King Peter II soon recognized Mihailović's Chetniks as the **Jugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD)**. It was immediately **recognized by the Allied governments too, including the Soviets**. In the beginning the **Chetniks and the Partisans launched a few joint actions against the Germans**. The Comintern even ordered Tito to reach an agreement with Mihailović. After **three talks** the final result was an **irreconcilable and permanent separation**.²

One important reason for the separation was **Mihailović's position that it is not fitting to change the social order in the middle of a war**, a concept that was at odds with the Communist Party's goal, already defined long before the war started.

After the Germans withdrew from the town of **Užice**, the Partisans occupied it at the end of September and established the so-called "Užice Republic". Author W. Roberts claims that during the night of November 1-2 1941, the Chetniks attacked the Partisans but were repulsed after heavy fighting; according to Roberts, this was the **start of the civil war in Serbia**. Author **Bajt** rejects Roberts' version and states that the attack happened just the opposite.³

At the end of November the Germans with the help of Serbian troops (followers of Nedić, and followers of Ljotić) drove out the Partisan political and military leadership, which withdrew into Novi Pazar, an area bounded by southwest Serbia, southeast Bosnia, and Montenegro.

The attempt to establish "republics" had no success in Croatia, except in Bihać the end of 1941.

The **KPJ immediately began to smear Mihailović and his Chetniks by alleging they were collaborators and traitors**. This was quickly contradicted in Slovenia by Lojze Ude, a well-known backer of the OF and later one of its leading members. Among other things he wrote: **"To reproach Mihailović as being a traitor is senseless and unjust. It is illogical impossible to take an *a priori* hostile stance against a member of the government, who is, like it or not, the sole internationally-recognized representative for Slovenians too."**⁴

² Kos I, 139-140. At the first talks (September 19, 1941), Mihailović and Tito spoke about their plans, but did not reach any agreement on the more important issues. The same happened at the second talks (October 30, 1941). At the third talks (November 14, 1941), **Mihailović declined to collaborate with Tito**. His reason was that **the time was not yet ripe for larger-scale military ventures, which would yield small successes, but induce harsh reprisals against the civilian population. The British advised likewise because even they themselves were not ready for large-scale military ventures like this** (Concerning the British advice that armed fighting should wait, see also DLRJ, II, 360). – Concerning the relations between the JVvD and the OF, from the KPJ viewpoint, see Šnuderl, 92-98.

³ Griesser-Pečar, 216-217 op. 46; Bajt, 342; Bajt's claim is more credible, because Roberts himself states that the Partisans three days earlier had wrested a metal foundry from Chetnik hands; the government in exile in London ordered the Chetnik attack, however the telegraph operator betrayed this information (see Griesser-Pečar, 216)

⁴ Ude, 47

Despite this, in the middle of May 1942 the main headquarters of the Slovenian Partisan troops issued a statement which claimed that **there was no Mihailović Army in Slovenia**, that **Mihailović had become an ally of the occupiers**, and that **the Partisan authorities would shoot anybody who was a member of this army!**

The beginning of the Chetnik movement in Slovenia

In Slovenia there was no serious Chetnik resistance until the spring of 1942.⁵

The Royalist Yugoslav Government in London named Gen. Mihailović the Supreme Commander of the Yugoslav Army (November 14, 1941) and in January of 1942 its Minister of War too. All armed units were to place themselves under Mihailović; this would include the nearly 300 Yugoslav officers and 700 junior officers who had been captured as POWs by the occupiers and had settled in Ljubljana Province after their release from imprisonment. At the **end of October 1941, Colonel Jaka Avšič and Major Karel Novak** travelled to **Ravna gora**. Mihailović **named Avšič as his representative in Slovenia, and Novak as his deputy**. Avšič describes in his memoirs on the year 1941 how the former governor Natlačen had informed them that financial means were available for them to purchase weapons and equipment, as well as other forms of support. However in January of 1942, Avšič with around 80 officers formally crossed over to the OF.⁶

At the start of 1942, the OF expelled Nagode's group, **Stara Pravda** [Ancient Rights], because it was advocating recognition of Mihailović.⁷ **After Avšič deserted to the OF, Mihailović named Major Novak as his representative in Slovenia**. This major took too much time in establishing military groups. This delay allowed the communists in the meantime to get rid of around 500 senior and junior officers by various stratagems.⁸ In the spring of 1942, the Italians round-ups seriously depleted the ranks of the National and the Sokol Legions, and the Slovenian Legion in the field. These setbacks should have made it all the more obvious for the need to set up Yugoslav Army units all the more quickly. However it was already July when Novak succeeded in finally deploying the first resistance groups between Novo Mesto and the Gorjanci Mountains. These units called themselves "Chetniks" and were under the supreme command of Gen. Mihailović. When the Germans occupied Ljubljana province, these Chetnik units numbered about 300 men.⁹

⁵ Kos I, 203-207; Griesser-Pečar, 220-252

⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 221, refers to Jaka Avšič's work "*Iz spominov na 1941. leto*" [From my memories on the year 1941], *Ljubljana v ilegali II*, Ljubljana 1961, 416-420.

– This crossover group of former Yugoslav Army officers had to sign an agreement with the OF, in which they acknowledged the Partisan units as the sole people's army; they acknowledged that the OF had the right to investigate the trustworthiness of all those who wanted to join the Partisan units; they obligated themselves to take a course of ideological re-education, which was led by the Partisan ideologist Boris Zihlerl, who in this role was second only to Kardelj. Of course the OF did not accept the majority of the officers into their ranks because it did not trust them, but it had succeeded in at least drawing them away from the non-Partisan armed groups.

⁷ Concerning this development, Sirc 1989

⁸ The ploy was typically communist: they mailed postcards (!) that invited the officers to join the Partisans and to report to them by April 2, 1942. These postcards obviously had to pass through the hands of the Italian postal censors, so the Italians imprisoned almost all of the addressees and sent them to internment camps.

⁹ Janez Grum in a letter to Griesser-Pečar (Griesser-Pečar, 222 op. 60) rebuts the claim that they numbered around 600, and presents reasons.

The growth of the Chetniks in Slovenia was slow for several reasons: 1. Even though Mihailović in January 1944 partially relented on the issue of federalism, the JVvD was oriented to Serb centralism, whereas the majority of Slovenians before the war supported the nationalistic SLS and favored an autonomous Slovenia; 2. The officers with their Serb-Yugoslav training did not know how to relate to the youth, the majority of whom were raised Catholic; this explains why they [Chetniks] had more of a following among former Yugoslav Army officers and the liberals; 3. The person of Major Novak himself was a factor: from a personality described as being too egotistic to the accusations of having contacts with the occupier.¹⁰

Around the middle of 1943 the communists started calling the **Chetniks “the Blue Guard”** as a derogatory term, a repeat of their pattern in 1941 when they applied the label “White Guard” to all Catholic resistance units, and in fact to any Catholic individual whatsoever who refused to join the communists.

The Styrian [Štajerski] Battalion

The first small unit, with credit due in part to Major Novak and in part to Francé Glavač, departed on May 17 1942 from Sv. Urh nad Dobrunjami, a place about 4 km from Ljubljana.¹¹ Already on May 24th, the Partisans succeeded in surrounding the Chetnik camp and attacked it simultaneously from all sides, but without success. According to the author Korošec, the OF demonstrated by this attack that its goal was not to fight against the occupier.¹² The Chetniks set up their first base camp at Šentjošt near Novo Mesto. At first they posed as Partisans and called themselves the **Styrian Battalion**.¹³ The Styrian Battalion actually fought jointly with the Partisans against the Italians three times. It took the Partisans 6 weeks before they realized their mistake, after many of their couriers deserted and even an entire Partisan unit vanished (the 1st patrol of the 2nd battalion of the Dolenjska Detachment, 16 men) because it joined up with the Styrian Battalion. But two battalion members soon deserted, and near Šentrupert the battalion command sentenced to death and shot a third person who had also planned to desert. In mid-June the Partisans occupied this area, where they savagely tortured then murdered 14 persons, including the pastor Nahtigal and the parish assistant priest Cvar, on charges that they were organizing a Blue Guard on behalf of the JVvD.¹⁴

On **July 11** the Partisans **attacked the Chetnik unit** in the area of Zajčji Vrh and Dolž, and on July 16 the Chetniks ambushed the Partisans, who had 17 killed in action. **Some historians regard this battle as the start of the civil war in Slovenia.**¹⁵ The Chetniks withdrew from Št. Jošt to Sv. Ana, where the Partisans again attacked but once again were repulsed.

¹⁰ Kos I, 203-207; Griesser-Pečar, 223-225

¹¹ Korošec 1993, 70-71.

– The Church of Sv. Urh is approximately 3 to 4 kilometers from Ljubljana, and it stands on the slope of Dobrunje Hill, which can be considered an extension of Ljubljana's Mt. Golovec.

¹² Korošec 1993, 48

¹³ According to Korošec, this pretense was necessary, otherwise they would have been killed by the Partisans, who had standing orders to destroy all units that did not belong to the OF.

¹⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 226; also 222, footnote 72, which cites the Slovenian Archives under the codeword Ivan Cankar, fasc. 7, 242/IV

¹⁵ **This hinges on the Partisan view, which is of course debatable: if they themselves attacked, it was proper; but if the Chetniks attacked, then this meant the start of a civil war.**

– Kos I, 205; it is not mentioned by other historians who set the start of the civil war elsewhere (Bučar, Griesser-Pečar, et. al.)

These failures convinced Major Novak that it was impossible for small units to assert themselves against the Partisans. For this reason, he made an arrangement with the Italians in Novo Mesto for military aid, provisions, and treatment of the wounded. With this, the Styrian Battalion stepped out of the underground. It began to call itself **the Legion of Death**, while the Italians called it "*Milizia volontaria anticomunista*" (MVAC). **The leaders of the democratic parties were uneasy about this arrangement because they had regarded this unit as being primarily underground and anti-occupation, so it could be differentiated from the Village Guards, who had to operate as "legitimate self-defense units".** Novak's decision was probably influenced by news about similar arrangements in Croatia, Bosnia, and Dalmatia, but **in no way can it be confirmed that Gen. Mihailović himself had endorsed such a change.**

At the end of 1942 the Legion of Death numbered 1,721 men in 3 battalions, who were deployed at 16 bases.

In actuality it is difficult to count the Legion of Death as being part of the JVoD. Its leaders had many disagreements, about objectives as much as discipline. The liberal officers did not trust the Catholics, who wanted above all to fight against the communists, whereas the Yugoslav officers appeared to be more focused on molding the group as the Yugoslav Army in Slovenia, which would in all matters follow Mihailović and the London government. In his report to London, Major Novak stated that the Italians, on a secret tip from the communists, had uncovered the location of his headquarters at the end of August 1942 and imprisoned many of his associates. He himself had escaped and was in hiding in the Gorjanci hills, where he was trying to convince the members of the Legion of Death to return to the underground, but then the Partisans uncovered this location, so he was forced to return to Ljubljana, where he stayed continuously in a hiding place.

Novak's deputy, Captain Lesjak, was treacherously murdered on November 3, 1942 in Bizovik. He had gone there to convince the members of the Village Guards to cross over into the underground. More likely than not, he was killed because he was under suspicion of having contacts with the Partisans; he had stated that from there he was going to go visit "those on Orle", that meant, the Partisans.¹⁶

Other Units

In February 1943 Major Novak initiated a new underground group of Chetniks in the **Polhograd Dolomites** Mountains, near a base of the Village Guards in Zaplana, and then, wanting to extend his activities into Gorenjska, he re-deployed the troop to a location near the German-Italian border. He created three detachments: Gorenjska, Notranjska, and Primorska (or Soča). With the endorsement of the Slovenian Alliance [SZ], some men were sent to Primorska but soon returned because they did not receive sufficient political support on the other side of the border; the SLS of course was not able to operate there.

Contacts by Major Novak with the Allies, the Italians, and the IOOF

The **British** parachuted three Slovenian radio-telegraph operators to the Chetniks. One of these, Božnar, was supposed to report also to Minister Krek. But **Major Novak demanded** that all reports had to go through his command. He also demanded that the **Slovenian Alliance**

¹⁶ Janez Grum, *Ustrelitev kapetana Lesjaka [The Shooting of Captain Lesjak]*, *Vestnik* 1987, 3, 161-164; Griesser-Pečar, 228 (according to AS II, fasc. 67)

(SZ) **subordinate himself to him** on the grounds that he was Mihailović's political representative. Standing in **opposition to the major** at the time were not only the **SLS leaders** but also Kramer, who represented the ranks of the JNS and was also a member of the Slovenian Alliance. The SZ had promised to send soldiers to Novak on the condition that he listens to the **War Advisory Board**, which was comprised of Colonel Vladimir Vauhnik, Lt. Colonel Ernest Peterlin, and Colonel Anton Klinar. Needing manpower, Major Novak, instead of waiting for the men that he had been promised by the leadership of the SL (the Legion that contained the majority of resistance fighters), issued an order that the Village Guards at Št. Jošt should cross over into the underground. This led to the break between the major and the SL, which did not send more men.

Major Novak supposedly made contacts with the **Italians**, because several officers had deserted him after the base detachment of around 80 men came through the Ljubljana wetlands into Iška vas. In the summer of 1943 Novak maintained contacts with the Italian General Gambari, commander of the 4th Army Corps. The latter permitted the Chetniks to settle in Otočec near Novo Mesto. This contact proved important during the collapsing of the Fascist regime: in the presence of the president of the Labor Chamber of Ljubljana Province (Dr. Alujevič), Major Novak spoke with Gambari on August 26, 1943 and posed the following questions: is Gambari prepared 1. To lead the surrender negotiations; 2. To give information about the German troops in Italy; 3. To arm the nationalist fighters; and 4. To have the Italian Army support the invasion by the British and the Americans. Gambari replied that he would forward items 1, 2, and 4 to Rome; he personally was prepared to cooperate with items 1 and 4. He already possessed a fundamental consent for item 3. They agreed that Novak would contact the Allies and then they would determine the next steps.

The next meeting took place on the following day, August 27, 1943, as the Germans started a partial occupation of Ljubljana province, that is, still before the announcement of Italy's surrender (September 8, 1943). Gambari expressed his preparedness to negotiate with the Allies if some Brit would be present; likewise, that he would support the nationalist [non-communist] troops and fight alongside them against the Germans. He forecast that the Italian troops would be withdrawing from the Kočevje area, where Novak could march in. Here is where Novak first wanted to deploy his base Chetnik detachment, the Ortnek troop, but he sent them to Grčarice instead. He demanded the Italians hand over their rifles, machine guns, and ammunition, which in the end Gambari actually did; Rudolf Žitnik drove everything to Grčarice three days before the Partisan launched the attack against the Chetniks.

In August of 1943, Major Novak also asked for **talks with the IOOF**, supposedly in the name of the London government, but more probably on his own initiative.¹⁷ **This talk would have been hardly surprising, since in those days almost everybody was holding talks with everybody else.**¹⁸

St. Sava Congress in Serbia

The Yugoslav government-in-exile under Purić's presidency, along with King Peter II, publicly repudiated the parliamentary session of the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation

¹⁷ Gambari was searching to make such a contact too, even before the Fascist collapse. It is true that Gambari at long last received Vladimir Krivic, representative of the NOV in Slovenia and secretary of the CK-KPS in Ljubljana.

¹⁸ See the previous chapter about the talks between the SLS and the OF.

of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and its resolutions, which it called “terrorist activities”.¹⁹ As some sort of response to AVNOJ, Mihailović’s leadership convened the so-called St. Sava Congress in the village Ba near Ljug in Serbia, held January 12-16, 1944. Representatives from almost all the pre-war legitimate political parties were present at the Congress, however the majority was Serbs. The lone Slovenian representative happened to be one of those people who had been forcibly deported to Serbia, and he was a complete unknown.

The Congress **stressed that Mihailović was the only one resisting the occupier**, thereby tying down several German divisions in the Balkans. His army was loyal to the king and the constitutional order. The party delegates decided to eschew any selfish activity until the political issues be resolved, and resolved to establish a “Jugoslav Democratic National Union”. They approved the plan for the renewal of the Yugoslav state, though with an expanded territory. **The postwar demand would be at minimum for the country’s borders to be what the Yugoslav delegation had claimed at the peace conference after the First World War. Yugoslavia would be a federal, constitutional, parliamentary monarchy under the Karadjordjević dynasty. The Congress also denounced the activities of the KPJ for attempting to take over the government and for starting a civil war. They called upon the KPJ to place itself under the JVVd.** They appointed Topalović, a Serbian social democrat, to be the president of the Yugoslav National Democratic Union, which they called the St. Sava Government.

The Slovenian democratic political parties were unacquainted with this congress until the beginning of 1945, as they were preparing to establish the government of the National Committee for Slovenia.

New Chetnik Combat and Intelligence Units

After Italy’s surrender to the Allies, the Chetnik group that had moved to Turjak Castle and to Zapotok in 1943 marched together with the Village Guards across the Ljubljana wetlands to the Ljubljana city-limits checkpoint, where everybody except Lt. Col. Dežman surrendered to the German guards. Later, this group of around 40 to 50 Chetniks, together with 700 Village Guards, became the nucleus for the 1st Homeguard Battalion.

Mihailović’s war council in Ljubljana wanted the units of the Village Guards and the Chetniks to be re-organized into the “Mountain Division of the Slovenian National Army”, which would head towards the sea and there link up with the invading Anglo-American forces landing at Trieste. This plan of course was never carried out.

The only Chetnik unit to remain in the field after Italy’s surrender was the small number of men of the **Notranjska Dolomite Detachment**.

On September 20, 1943, Major Novak resigned as the commander of the Yugoslav Army and quit the Slovenian Alliance. Novak’s replacement was the former Yugoslav military attaché in Athens, Colonel **Ivan Prezelj** (Andrej), elevated to the rank of general by Mihailović on June 29, 1944.²⁰

¹⁹ Kos II, 92-93. Although this event belongs chronologically to a later period, it is mentioned here on account of its connection to the activities of the JVVd. In any event, the term “St. Sava” was altogether politically incorrect, since it does not denote communality among the other nationalities within Yugoslavia. The author JR states that in his book in Slovenian, he correctly translates the Serbo-Croatian “narodno vijeće” into the Slovenian “ljudski svet”.

²⁰ Kos II, 130, states that this occurred in September of 1944, but Griesser-Pečar states that this happened on June 29, 1944. – Novak’s behavior aroused much ill-will in the military and civilian circles of the underground. After the Germans learned the location of his headquarters, they arrested him and kept him in confinement in Bled. Upon release, he went to Trieste, and then to Venice and Rome; on Mihailović’s orders, he returned twice from Rome to Primorska in order to establish a permanent radio contact with the main Chetnik Command in Serbia and the Yugoslav government in Cairo. He achieved the first, broadcasting from Opatija, and the second, from Gorica.

Because the anticommunist camp was preoccupied with organizing the Homeguard, several months passed before Prezelj began anew to organize Chetnik units. In the meantime Major Novak organized a Chetnik **unit in Primorska**, and even a second one in **Goriška Brda**.

In the spring of 1944 the **Soča Detachment** came into being, encamped east of Gorica. On June 15, an elite Partisan troop of the Army of State Security (VDV) attacked it but was forced to withdraw.²¹ The **Primorska Detachment** was established in the vicinity of Rovte and Sv. Trije Kralji.

In the beginning of 1944 the **Dolenjska Detachment**, numbering approximately 50 men, was reorganized under the leadership of the Homeguard 1st Lieut. Janez Grum. On March 1st a skirmish occurred with the Partisan VDV in Metnje nad Stično, where 6 Partisans and 1 Chetnik were killed in action. Having been betrayed, the Dolenjska Detachment was attacked in March 1944 at Orle pri Ljubljani by the Germans and apparently also the Homeguards. The Chetniks quickly withdrew from Orle towards Čatež and Trebnje.

In Dolenjska, due to internal disagreements, the group split into the **Notranjska Detachment** (commanded by Saje) and the **Dolenjska Detachment** (commanded by Marn). After the Homeguard commander in Dravljje, Milko Piriš, transferred to the underground, they created a **Gorenjska Detachment**, which was comprised mostly of members of the Slovenian Legion. The attempt to establish a unit in the Gorjanci Mountains met with failure; the Germans imprisoned its intended commander Dežman and drove him off to Dachau.

Jugoslav nationalists wanted to celebrate St. Vitus Day right in the middle of Ljubljana in 1944, but they were betrayed and many Chetniks fell into the hands of the Germans, which deeply hurt the Chetnik movement.

Janez Marn and the “Black Hand”

Janez Marn is a chapter by itself.²² Marn posed as the “Black Hand”, which liquidated several VOS couriers and field agents. Marn often sent a trusted courier Drago Prijatelj to “XY”. On October 4, 1944, the Partisans of the Šlander Troop attacked the [Chetnik] Gorenjska Detachment at Zgornji Zalog pri Cerklje. Marn’s troop, which was in the vicinity, did not come to their aid but withdrew towards Komenda. Nine Chetniks of the Gorenjska Detachment along with its commander, Capt. Franc Jerebič, were killed, along with the military chaplain, Rev. Lojze Duhovnik.²³ Bitenc, the superior commander for both units, from that point wanted nothing more to do with Marn or (until April 6, 1945) with Gen. Prezelj either, because the latter did not want to get involved in this matter. The Germans demanded that Bitenc legalize his groups, so he crossed the Polhograd Dolomites into Ljubljana. The Chetnik headquarters staff had assembled at Dobrova near Ljubljana and was expecting Marn to come to report. Instead, the Germans

²¹ VOS had been renamed later to the VDV.

²² In the beginning, he belonged to Kocbek’s circle of Christian Socialists. Probably for this reason he was an active Partisan since February 1942, and even became the commander of a battalion. The Partisans grew suspicious of him on account of his contacts with Chaplain Lavrih in Dobropolje. For this reason he went into hiding when Italy surrendered, but the Partisans found him and took him away to their general headquarters. Nothing happened to him because Kocbek came to his defense. He went to Ljubljana and became close to the group of editors of *Slovenski Dom*, a special part of Rupnik’s circle. In the beginning of 1944 he gathered together some Partisan deserters and other fugitives in hiding and with them joined the [Chetnik] Dolenjska Detachment. During the preparatory work for this detachment, he came into contact with someone that Janez Grum called “XY”; this “XY” obtained from the German HQ staff a letter that protected Marn from the inevitable attacks by the Germans themselves.

²³ S. Vidic, *Odstrte zavese II*, Ljubljana 1994

(SS) appeared on October 28, 1944 for the purpose of capturing Prezelj. The members of the HQ staff escaped by burrowing themselves deep inside some hay.

Jože Melaher – Zmagoslav [Conqueror]

Melaher created a noteworthy Chetnik unit in Štajerska.²⁴ The Gestapo imprisoned Melaher in October 1942, but he succeeded in escaping. He went into hiding and began to assemble Slovenian deserters from the German Army. He finally made contact with Ljubljana towards the end of 1943. At that time his unit was already strong (**220 men** in March **1944**, and nearly 500 at its peak), armed mainly with captured German weapons. They did not fight against the Partisans, but time and again against the Germans in Slovenske gorice, on the plains of Ptuj, and in Haloze.

His group devoted much effort at **propaganda**: it wrote about the German occupation and also about communism and what was really behind the OF. They published the sheet “*Kri in Zemlja*” [*Blood and Land*] with the subtitle *Informational Newspaper of the Slovenian troops in the JVvD*.

Melaher’s group was a true fighting resistance group. By the end of the war it **lost at least 121 soldiers** in battle. It accepted anybody who was against the Germans and the communists.

Melaher was **subordinated to Major Bitenc**, the operations chief of the Slovenian Chetniks for Gorenjska and Štajerska. But it was not until the **summer of 1944** that his Chetniks **formally enrolled into the JVvD**, specifically as the 3rd Brigade of the Slovenian troops under the command of Gen. Prezelj.

In **late autumn of 1944 the Partisans nabbed 5 of Melaher’s Chetniks and horribly tortured them**. From then on the Partisans attacked smaller Chetnik units with increasing frequency. The Chetniks fought back, and had much support from the populace at this.

In **November 1944** Melaher’s Chetniks **attacked 3 German Police Detachments** (at Sv. Jurij, Sv. Trojica, and Sv. Peter). On Christmas 1944 they attacked the seat of the Gestapo at the Maribor train station. The attackers included 12 British prisoners-of-war who had escaped from German prison camps, and later on even two North Americans, who beforehand had been in hiding among the Partisans.

In the beginning of **January 1945**, the leader of the Styrian Heimatbund, Franz **Steindl**, wanted to establish **contact with Melaher**. After putting it off for a long time, Melaher finally agreed under the condition that this be considered a parley between hostiles with exactly defined purposes.²⁵ They reached an agreement that the **Germans would recognize Melaher’s**

²⁴ Jože Melaher, *Četniki na Štajerskem [The Chetniks in Styria]*, ZSS 1965, 245-260. Melaher was an SLS member and later in emigration a member of the NO. In his writings about his activities, he maintained that the people in Styria did not differentiate between the OF and its rival forces all the way until the autumn of 1943 or even as far as the summer of 1944. As far as the people were concerned, the fight against the Germans was all that mattered.

²⁵ First they agreed to a 24-hour truce. The meeting was on January 12, 1945 at Castle Vurberg near Ptuj. Accompanied by a deserter-soldier who understood German well, Melaher arrived dressed in a full Yugoslav Army uniform with a ranking-officer’s cap, armed with a submachine gun and a pistol. Melaher enumerated the German war crimes to Steindl (forced re-settlements, shooting of hostages, forced Germanization, etc.). Steindl stated an interesting reproach about the SD: if the Russians were to arrive, the SD would fight like lions [alongside the Germans against the Russians]; but if the North Americans were to come, they would fight alongside the Allies against the Germans.

Chetniks as their belligerents, and that the Germans would remove their soldiers and German gendarmes from the land north of Maribor down to Ptuj and Ljutomer, and from the land above Ptuj north of the Drava River. Melaher demanded that Slovenian gendarmes remain in service, because he did not want to have to deal with robberies and homicides.

Melaher's **main base** was at **Sv. Peter near Maribor**. His partial autonomy lasted barely two months, because the Eastern Front was coming closer and closer. Melaher's unit disarmed the Germans who were beginning to retreat *en masse*. In the beginning of April, as the Russian and Bulgarian troops approached, the Chetniks together with their families moved across Celje and Trojane to Domžale. At that time Melaher received an order from his superior, Gen. Prezelj, that in anticipation of the arrival of the Western Allies, he was to protect the railroad junction at Zidani Most. The Chetnik unit remained deployed in the perimeter Sevnica-Zidani Most-Laško until May 8th.

On May 7, Melaher drove to Ljubljana to get orders, but by then he already could not locate anybody because the NO and the Homeguards had already withdrawn to Kranj. There he met Colonel Bitenc, who ordered him to go to Carinthia with Marn's departing group. Melaher refused and returned to his own unit, which on May 8 set out towards Carinthia. **By then, the Soviets were already at the gates of Maribor.**²⁶

On May 12, Melaher reported to the British at Landsdorf near Št. Vid na Glini; the British divided his unit into two parts and drove them to Italy: the first, which included Melaher, arrived at Udine on May 14; the second was driven through Villach and Udine to Forlì, where around 15,000 Chetniks were assembled. However, the Štajerska Chetniks were immediately incorporated into the newly-composed Slovenian Army under the command of Gen. Andrej.

The fragment of the Chetniks that had withdrawn jointly with a small group of Homeguards **remained behind** in Carinthia. Gen. Krenner wanted to distribute them among the Homeguard troops, but the Chetniks refused, so food was withheld from them. When the Chetniks wanted to make contact with the British Command, Krenner prevented a translator from helping them. And so it came to pass that around 155 Chetniks, together with some men from Marn's unit, were included in the first transport of the Homeguards that was handed over to Tito's army.

The Gorenjska Chetnik Detachment withdrew to Carinthia at the end of the war and together with the Homeguards was handed over to the Partisans. The Notranjska and Soča Chetnik Detachments, together with a smaller group of Serbian Chetniks and some Croatian Homeguards, reached safety in Italy by crossing the Soča River.²⁷

The Germans in 1944 Foil a Plan to Attach the Slovenian Homeguards to the JVVd

Since the summer of 1944, **General Prezelj** agreed with the concept of **secretly incorporating the units of the Slovenian Homeguards (SD) into the JVVd**, because he and his

²⁶ The Serbs have written much about the Soviet violence perpetrated in Beograd. Has anything been written about the violence by the "liberating" Red Army in Prekmurje and Štajerska? **The bottom line is that the OF never "liberated" Prekmurje or the major part of Slovenian Štajerska!**

²⁷ For the entire subsection see Kos I, 203-207 and II, 129-139; Griesser-Pečar, 247-252; about the civil war in Ljubljana Province before Italy's surrender, see also Mlakar, 21-35; Mikuž I, 338-340 speaks briefly about the Mihailović phenomenon in Slovenia, whereas NOV (321-327) writes about the appearance of the Chetnik armed units on the scene in conjunction with the "White Guard" troops, which does not dovetail with historical truth.

staff were convinced that **99% of the Homeguard officers and men were anti-Germany**, notwithstanding that they were for a federalist constitutional Yugoslavia. The JVvD leaders did not trust Krenner, so they turned to the Chief of Staff Lt. Col. Ernest Peterlin and to Lt. Col. Milko Vizjak.

Peterlin formulated a **plan to attack the Germans** and created a **network of radio-telegraph stations in the underground**. But the Germans sniffed out this network and arrested quite a few of its members. The JVvD Command divided all of Slovenia into 8 military zones (Maribor, Celje, Kranj, Ljubljana, Novo Mesto, Kočevje, Trieste, and Gorica) to be commanded by **Andrej Glušič**. In **June 1944 the Germans arrested Glušič**, so **Milko Bitenc** was named to replace him. In July 1944 the Slovenian Command gave Bitenc an assignment to **format the ranks of all three Legions in Ljubljana into special battalions** that would be subordinated to Lt. Col. Vizjak. Bitenc formulated a **plan for 7 battalions**, each with two or three companies. Officers from the Slovenian Legion would command four of these battalions, and officers from the Sokol Legion would command the other three. The **plan fell apart**, because in **October and December the Germans arrested very many members of both legions**.

At the **end of 1944** the Germans also seized Lt. Col. Peterlin, Captain Ilovar, Major Križ and some Chetniks, plus many members of the Legions, who were working for the Western Allies, and drove them to Dachau.²⁸

The **greatest beneficiary** of the Germans foiling the joint JVvD-SD military venture was the **KPS** along with the OF, because now **their takeover of power was extremely facilitated**. And it also caused **irreparable damage to the anti-communist camp in its relationships towards the Western Allies**.

3. The Beginnings of the Liberation Front (the OF / the Partisans)

The OF was founded several weeks after Germany's attack against the USSR

[Tr. In other words, not when Germany invaded Yugoslavia, months earlier].

The postwar Communist Regime for half a century celebrated **April 27** as Liberation Front (OF) Day, as the purported day of its founding. In the post-Regime era, the independent Republic of Slovenia for reasons unknown decided that this day should be celebrated as **Uprising Day**. However, on April 27, 1941, neither the OF was founded nor was there any hint anywhere of any sort of uprising.²⁹

Had the OF really been founded on April 27, then the *Slovenski poročevalec* (SP) [*the Slovenian Reporter, the OF's official newsletter*] would certainly have written about it in its first issue in May.³⁰ But there is also no mention about any OF either in the 2nd number of the SP (June 8, 1941) or in the 3rd (June 15), which incidentally already begins to attack and vilify the native Slovenian "capitalistic upper class that scurried for refuge under British wings", the class that "promises to preserve capitalism..."

²⁸ Kos II, 137-139; Griesser-Pečar, 310-313

²⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 121, cites J. Galičič, *Politična laž ali zgodovinska resnica* [*Political Lie or Historical Truth*] (Zaliv, Trieste, Dec. 1975, 180), who opines that this [date] probably was simply a coincidence, but afterwards they ascribed way too much importance to the date. **We could, on the other hand, link this holiday to the creation of the Slovenian Legion, which really did occur on that date, according to the testimony of its chief, Rudolf Smersu.**

³⁰ The publishing of the *Slovenski poročevalec* began already before the war, but only for two issues. After the war it became a daily newspaper.

It was only **after Germany's attack on the USSR** that the **Central Committee of the KPS (CK-KPS)** called a meeting and via scattered leaflets **called upon all Slovenians to join a united bloc of all oppressed nations** under the leadership of the USSR and the Worker-Farmer Red Army. **"The Grand Struggle, which is being fought by all the Soviet peoples under the fatherly leadership of their and our great Stalin, is also a holy nationalist war of the Slovenian people."**³¹ The leaflet continues, and eventually does mention the words "liberation front", although here it was not yet speaking about any formal organization as such: "Slovenians! The Communist Party of Slovenia calls upon you so we can close our ranks into a unified liberation front against the imperialist occupiers..."

To nobody's surprise, there was no mention of an OF even in the June 22 issue of the *Slovenski poročevalec*, namely the same day as Germany's attack on the USSR. The paper did call upon all Slovenians "to thwart every effort of the imperialist occupiers to exploit our lands", by leaning, of course, towards the Soviet Union. The OF was mentioned for the first time in the June 28th issue of the *Slovenski poročevalec*³², however it was not until the September 30th issue that this paper carried the subtitle "Informational Herald of the Liberation Front".

The Creation of the Anti-Imperialist Front (PIF)

The **claim by the Regime's historian, Mikuž, that the name PIF was changed to OF on June 22**, is a **pure fantasy**: "The Second World War, an imperialistic war till now, received a new character, the character of a patriotic war."³³

The *Slovenski poročevalec* in the issue dated June 22 did list a "more detailed program", but there was still no mention of a Liberation Front. However, in this "more detailed program", it is **for the first time stated clearly that the national-liberation war will be at the same time also a people's revolution**³⁴. The author Bučar therefore holds that with the publicizing of this program, **"the Party in essence declared a civil war"**.³⁵

In its June 22 issue the *Slov. poročevalec* for the first time mentioned the **Anti-Imperialist Front (PIF)**, which allegedly was created "by order of the KPS" on the 27th (or 26th) of April 1941 at Josip Vidmar's villa in Ljubljana. Present at the founding meeting were allegedly a handful of more important individuals, and above all small dissident groups such as the Christian Socialists and the leftist Sokols.³⁶ According to Kardelj's own admission, those in attendance could not agree on any of the key issues. Kidrič therefore proposed that the KPS announce the creation of a new Slovenian political organization.³⁷

³¹ Kos I, 126-127

³² According to Griesser-Pečar, 133; Kos I, 125, writes that this did not occur until July 11. - It is possible to print something and then "pre-date" it at will or as necessary.

³³ Mikuž I, 154

³⁴ Mikuž, *ibid.*

³⁵ Bučar, 51

³⁶ Mikuž I, 150-153 lists 10 groups by name, small in numbers and importance, but states that the most important were the two above-mentioned groups, whereas Griesser-Pečar, 134, speaks of "at least fifteen groups" and lists them.

³⁷ Martinc (Dr. Tine Debeljak) maintains in his article *Zgodovinska osnova narodne osvobodilne fronte v Sloveniji* [The Historical Bases of the National Liberation Front in Slovenia] (ZSS 1951, 95-126) that the members of the PIF upon the initiative of CK-KPS organized a "coalition" whose purpose would be to compose an Executive Committee of the OF. According to Martinc, the meeting for this purpose was held on August 1, 1941 at the base of Rožnik Hill in the villa of the former royalist deputy, Ivan Hribar (122). - Martinc's article, according to a closing comment, was supposed to be a synthesized overview of the first chapters of a book *"Komunistična revolucija v Sloveniji"* [The Communist Revolution in Slovenia].

One extremely important undeniable fact is that the **PIF was oriented against “the imperialists”, which for the KPS meant England, France, and the USA. In other words, the PIF was not even against Nazi Germany, because the USSR was still Germany’s ally at this time and was supplying it with equipment, fuel, and food.**

The PIF was founded to be against the Western Allies, in no way against the occupier. Some statements about the PIF by Regime historians strain credulity and logic. For example, a Regime historian, F. Škerl, stated that since the PIF and the later OF had the same structure and ideological orientation, the founding date of the OF could therefore be back-dated to April 26 or 27, the date the PIF was founded.³⁸

E. Kardelj himself stated at the Party school at Rog in the beginning of 1944: **“The war between England and Germany from 1939 to 1941 was an imperialist war, therefore unjust. With Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union and the alliance between England and the Soviet Union, the character of the war changed. The war between England and Germany became just...”**³⁹ After the attack on the USSR, Germany of course became imperialistic in communist eyes. Kardelj went so far as to **claim that Great Britain and the USA are fighting justly only insofar as they are fighting alongside forces that are oriented towards the USSR!**⁴⁰

The **OF** was therefore not created until several weeks after Germany’s attack on the USSR. In contrast, various **resistance movements in the democratic, patriotic ranks** had been created **two months, or at least one month, earlier**, [in other words, as soon as the occupation started].⁴¹

As circumstances changed, so did the KP’s rallying cry: **anti-imperialism changed to anti-fascism**. But in Kardelj’s eyes, fascism was merely a form of imperialism, which in his philosophy was the main enemy of the people.⁴²

The PIF cannot provide any evidence that it ever did anything publicly, not even the distribution of any sort of leaflets. All distributions of leaflets up to June 29 were done directly by the KPS; even the content of these leaflets, mostly just generalities, was dictated by the Comintern.⁴³

Preparations by the Communist Party for an Armed Fight

When Germany attacked Yugoslavia, a tiny segment of the KPS leadership circle advocated taking a nationalistic hostile stance against Germany. “But many lock-step communists, especially their sympathizers ... welcomed Hitler as some sort of social liberator and a Soviet ally.”⁴⁴ Many communist eyes were not opened until Hitler attacked the USSR. Up till then,

³⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 133, quoting Škerl, *Politični tokovi* [Political Currents], 33

³⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 126, quoting Deželak-Barič, *Osvobodilni boj* [The Liberation Fight], 146; text highlighted for emphasis

⁴⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 125-127; highlighting by JR for emphasis

⁴¹ See Chapter 4 “Pan-Slovenian Resistance against the Occupier”. Concerning the initial date of the creation of the OF, see: Kos I, 122-126; Bučar, 49-52; Griesser-Pečar 133ff. – Concerning the creation and its reasons: Jelenc, *Kako je nastala OF* [How the OF Came to Be], ZSS 1971/2, 129; Martinc (Debeljak), *Zgodovinska osnova narodne osvobodilne borbe v Sloveniji* [The Historical Bases of the National Liberation Front in Slovenia], ZSS 1951, 95-126; Martinc, *Pot v komunistično revolucijo spomladi 1942* [The Path to the Communist Revolution in the Spring of 1942], ZSS 1953, 237.

⁴² Griesser-Pečar, 126

⁴³ Griesser-Pečar, 128

⁴⁴ Ude, 45 and 46

their stance was that the war between Germany vs. France, England, and Yugoslavia too, was an imperialistic war, which did not concern them. But they would indeed enter the war, if at all, only when they decided it would be to their own benefit. "So, in light of this, the communists have absolutely no basis whatsoever to castigate the clericalists, liberals, and socialists."⁴⁵

The KP found itself in a huge predicament after the occupation. On May 4-5, 1941, the top leaders of the KPJ met in Zagreb, where the Party's strategic plan was unveiled. The "General Secretary" of the KPJ, Josip Broz Tito, presented an analysis the war and already here unfolded his plans to take over the government. Milovan Djilas, then still a member of the Central Committee, revealed this in his critical biography of Tito.⁴⁶ **Tito at that time set up a new thesis, which was contrary to the stance then held by the Party: it is not necessary that the revolution must pass through two phases, a middle class-democratic revolution and a proletarian revolution; what is necessary is the direct communist takeover of power.** These words by one of Tito's closest associates already "mirrored the entire tragedy of Slovenia's situation during the years of the occupation".⁴⁷

To the KPS, it was clear even before it decided to begin any armed uprisings that taking over the government took precedence over any sort of fight against the occupier. For this reason, their intention already from the very outset was to destroy every group that was making preparations to resist the occupier.

This resolution by the KPJ was at the time not in line Moscow's immediate plans.⁴⁸ Therefore Moscow's reply to their report was negative. The Chief Secretary of the ComIntern, Dimitrov, stressed that they were only at the national-liberation war stage in Yugoslavia and not at the proletarian revolution stage. To all outward appearances Tito relented, however only as far as his public statements were concerned. Nonetheless, the terminology about national liberation instead of proletarian revolution, as directed by the Comintern guidebook, proved to be quite beneficial for the OF, since with such words they could lure more supporters.

As the Regime historians tell it, the **KPS** convened a **conference in June 1941. Here Kardelj mentioned the probability that the Fascists (Nazis) would march into the USSR.**⁴⁹ Therefore they defined clear concrete tasks: gather weapons, organize war committees, expand bases in the field, and strengthen them, etc. The KPS adopted these resolutions, with no thought of even consulting the PIF about this. This snub in itself was already proof that the so-called "allies" – the non-communist groups – within the PIF had no importance, much less any right to make joint decisions.

The Party had never accepted the notion of any sort of "spontaneous" uprising or revolution, "since this would mean chaos and anarchy, but only a well organized revolution,

⁴⁵ Ude, *ibid*

⁴⁶ "Tito, *Eine kritische Biographie*", Vienna-Munich-Zurich, 163-165; quoted by Griesser-Pečar, 128

⁴⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 129

⁴⁸ Already on the very day of Germany's attack, an instruction came from Moscow that the priority was liberation [over revolution] (F. Škerl, 38). However A. Bajt ("*Od kod protiimperializem in osvobodilnost OF*", *Delo*, 5/13/1998) later proved how Moscow clearly considered the liberation fight to be only a means towards the revolution (cited by Griesser-Pečar, 131-132)

⁴⁹ If the accounts by the Regime historians are to be believed, then taking into account Tito's analysis of the war and Kardelj's statement about the probability of a German attack on the USSR, one might logically assume that both the KPJ and the KPS knew about such an attack. How then could the USSR not know about it? The entire world was obviously surprised by Germany's attack against the USSR.

with clear goals and a resolute leadership.”⁵⁰ Tito’s closest associate, **Moše Pijade**, emphasized in his speeches that the **creation of national committees was just as non-spontaneous as the creation of the people’s rule**. Even **Milovan Djilas** in his articles in 1947 confirmed that the **KPS was behind the creation of national-liberation committees as agencies of the people’s government**. Tito himself in 1947 in the newspaper *Komunist* stated that **in 1941 the communists were calling upon the people to rise up against the occupier, and that at this time they had already cast aside the old framework of the government**.⁵¹

Goals of the Anti-Imperialist Front (PIF)

Kidrič announced the main objectives of the PIF in the first issue of the *Slovenski poročevalec*: 1. The right of the Slovenian nation to self-determination, including the right to secede and unite with other nations; 2. The liberation and unification of the dismembered Slovenian nation, including the Slovenians of Carinthia and of Primorska; 3. Concord and harmony among the captive nations of Yugoslavia and of the entire Balkans in their fight for liberation; 4. The Soviet Union is the leading force and main support of the liberation front of the Slovenian nation and all oppressed nations; 5. The liberation of the Slovenian nation is possible only with the collapse of imperialism; 6. An oppressed nation can be liberated only by a fight against the traitorous capitalist upper class; 7. Brotherhood and peace among nations.⁵²

It is safe to say that the intent here was simply to **present goals for the sake of presenting goals: temporary, intermediate, and just plain ostentatious**.

The **main, ultimate goal** was something different, that was somewhat concealed within the publicized goals. Mikuž himself briefly summarizes where the emphasis lay: “... **for the first time it is clearly stated, that the national-liberation war will be simultaneously also a people’s revolution...**”⁵³

In the beginning, this prime purpose was intentionally concealed. Years later, after the **reins of power were completely in their hands alone**, they finally admitted it publicly and plainly. **In a letter dated December 14, 1942, sent to Josip Broz-Tito, Edvard Kardelj wrote**: “With regards to this: in our fight, or better yet, our ‘war aims’, we publicly adopted the demand to incorporate all of Primorska, including Trieste as an autonomous city, and Carinthia, including Celovec. **Had we not done so, it is already now completely clear that we would have placed weapons into the hands of the Mihailović crowd... As far as socialism is concerned, this issue of course is not even important, and we would not even have brought it up ourselves**. However we are on the steps of a national-liberation war, and for this reason we must pose this question in the manner that all questions must be posed - within the framework of capitalism.”⁵⁴

A search for any word about the occupier in these goals would be fruitless. A first glance makes it obvious that this proclamation was quite insincere, just a piece of naked propaganda. Otherwise, why else did Slovenia so soon after 1945 lose all the rights that the OF had been touting in its wartime heyday (its own national army, constitutional right to secede, etc.), or more precisely, why else did the KPS take this away from them? Furthermore, there are

⁵⁰ Šnuderl, 109

⁵¹ Concerning this paragraph, see Griesser-Pečar, 142-143 – Of course Tito does not mention that this call to arms in 1941 was made after Germany’s attack on the USSR, that is, after June 22, 1941

⁵² Mikuž I, 154

⁵³ Mikuž I, 155; text highlighted by JR for emphasis

⁵⁴ Jesen 1942, 559; text highlighted by JR for emphasis

enough other objections to the list of goals: With what other nations would they [*Slovenians*] unite: once again with the Austrians or perhaps with the Italians? And to speak about Slovenia as being a part of the Balkans is completely erroneous!⁵⁵ Likewise blind and fraudulent was telling Slovenia to place its trust in the USSR, which had consistently oppressed the peoples within its borders, until Stalin in 1941 fashioned the slogan “Fight for the Homeland”; and to imagine that this “internationalist” USSR was going to give a hand in the nationalist liberation of Slovenians and other peoples!⁵⁶

Mikuž writes that the OF, though wanting to give the impression that it was a coalition, **was actually not some sort of coalition of political parties, for it was composed of only small dissident factions from various parties.** Rather, “the OF was all about a sort of formal, but beneficial continuation of Slovenian political life, in which the KPS, the founder of the OF, remained the uncontested leader.”⁵⁷ It is rather interesting that in the same issue of *Slovenski poročevalec* that carried the above-mentioned goals, there was also an announcement that the KPS was an integral part of the KPJ and that the KPJ was a part of the Comintern; that the KPS was closely tied with all the illegal communist organizations in all Slovenian lands and elsewhere; but there was no mention that other groups were also working together within the PIF (and therefore within the OF either!).⁵⁸

The difference between the KPJ-KPS and the other European KPs in occupied countries

After Germany attacked the USSR, **Stalin ordered the Parties in the countries occupied by the Nazis to begin an armed uprising against the occupier, for in this way they would be helping the USSR.** So that there would be no doubts that the primary issue was to relieve the pressure on the Red Army, Stalin ordered **that the communists must in this fight cooperate with the democrats and must not begin any attempts at a revolution.** This means that he expressly postponed the goal of a world revolution to a time after the war!

In those parts of occupied Europe which were not ordained to fall under the Soviet sphere of influence, it was obvious among all the leaders of the communist parties that it was necessary first and foremost to save the USSR. For this reason they responded accordingly. In Italy and France, countries where the communists had the most strength, **the communists did organize their own resistance groups; however, they still followed Stalin’s instructions.** At least just until the moment of liberation, they were careful to not come to odds with the democrats, who

⁵⁵ The Balkans is one of Europe’s southern peninsulas: bounded on the north by the Balkan Mountains; on the east by the Black, Marmara and Aegean Seas; on the south by the Ionian Sea; on the west by the Ionian and Adriatic Seas. The Balkan countries are: Romania, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, the European part of Turkey and the southeastern part of the former Yugoslavia. Regrettably even the new government of the RS has accepted this label since 2004, as if Slovenia were a part of some new “Western Balkans”.

⁵⁶ In these goals we already notice the switching of the connotation of the word “nation” [*narod*], which in Serbo-Croatian actually denotes “a people”, to mean “a People-Nation”, which the Serbs and above all the Slovenian communists equate with “nation” or “national”. Since the goals – and all the succeeding calls, decrees, orders, etc. – spoke about national liberation, wouldn’t the reasonable expectation be that it was in reality all about an autonomous Slovenian state, even if perhaps of its own will (temporarily?) it were joined to a Yugoslav Confederation.

⁵⁷ Mikuž I, 97-98

⁵⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 125

had their own resistance groups. Greece was perhaps the only serious exception to this. But Stalin's instructions were followed throughout all of Western Europe.⁵⁹

Lojze Ude in his reports concurred with the OF leadership that the Slovenian nationalist revolution must necessarily be a social revolution too. But he insisted that foreign templates must not be used, whether for goals or methods or tactics.⁶⁰ He stated that **the OF/KPS were oriented towards Moscow in their basic ideas about the sovietization of Slovenia and its incorporation into the USSR**, something that would be more dangerous for Slovenia than its incorporation into Yugoslavia or to the Balkans. To Ude, this exhibited some sort of "Anglo-American phobia", which seemed groundless, but it was a dangerous game, since Nazi propaganda was focusing on the exact same fear.⁶¹

Armed Resistance and Walkouts by Adherents of the OF

After Germany attacked the USSR, the former "imperialistic war" suddenly became "our war" for the KPS. The anti-imperialist slogans simply disappeared quietly everywhere. The PIF therefore melted inconspicuously into the Anti-Fascist Front (AF). The KPS still was very careful that the news about the Western Allies not be too friendly. Thus, for example, Kardelj corrected Kidrič for having spoken too highly of the British in some proclamation and insisted that such mistakes never be repeated. This elucidates why the Central Committee of the KPJ (CK-KPJ) wrote the following in a letter dated January 1, 1942 to the CK-KPS: **"It is impossible that our Party would renounce the fact that it advocates reliance on the Soviet Union. On the contrary, it must be clearly emphasized – as we have always been doing all along – (and which is also stressed in Issue No. 1 of *Osvobodilna fronta*), that the Soviet Union is the sole savior of the Slovenian nation."**⁶²

The CK-KPS most probably quickly adopted the resolution by the political bureau of the CK-KPJ dated **July 4, 1941**, that preparations for an armed uprising should begin throughout all of Yugoslavia. Following the guidelines set by the KPS, the main command of the Slovenian Partisan troops held a meeting on July 14-16 and decided that these armed actions should begin everywhere on July 20. Due to difficulties in relaying information, these actions did not begin until July 22, or even later in many places.⁶³

However, **not everybody was in favor of unbridled armed resistance**. One example is the Christian Socialist **Lojze Ude**, who often expressed his opinion in reports to like-minded people or to the leadership of the OF. He was of course in favor of armed resistance, but he pointed out **there was a dilemma as to the form of such resistance**.⁶⁴ In Ude's opinion, resistance should involve fighting, **"however a fight using common sense"**.

He maintained that **"a longer period of wartime and occupation still lies before us"**, and he argued this point with the OF, which was convinced that the war would be over already in 1942.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Kremžar, *Med smrtjo in življenjem* [Between Life and Death], Družina, Ljubljana 2000, 13

⁶⁰ Ude, 39

⁶¹ Ude, 42

⁶² Mikuž I, 343; text highlighted by JR for emphasis

⁶³ NOV, 99

⁶⁴ B. Mlakar in "Lojze Ude kot kritični spremljevalec Osvobodilne fronte" [Lojze Ude as a Critical Companion of the Liberation Front], Ude, 158; text highlighted for emphasis

⁶⁵ Kocbek's impression upon reading Ude's report dated January 8, 1942 still struck a chord after the war: "All this reading gives me shivers", of course at that time it was already too late (Dnevnik 1946, II, 185; Ude, 7 op. 3); text highlighted by JR for emphasis

Ude based his views also on the purposes of armed resistance. In his report 1/8/1942 he stressed that **armed action would be convincing only for a liberation of Slovenian territory, not for a revolution.**⁶⁶ Therefore the reason for fighting must not be made dependent the German-Soviet war or the situation in Serbia or orders from Serbia, but they should keep before their eyes the remembrance of the German forced-deportation of Slovenians; on this account it is certain that under the Italian occupation they are not yet directly threatened.⁶⁷ He also harshly criticized the fact that the KPS was only “using the front” and that the KPS within the OF was guilty of non-forthright behavior towards its partner groups within the OF.⁶⁸

Ude stated that with its activism, the OF was showing what the Slovenian people were capable of accomplishing. However “activism was consuming all the energies of the OF”, as a result a foreign intelligence service was being neglected as well as technical preparations for the moment of unveiling a new government upon the defeat of the Axis, and most of all, the OF was growing engrossed only in Ljubljana territory and was forgetting about the rest of Slovenia.⁶⁹

The First Acts of Militant Resistance

The postwar Communist Regime in Slovenia celebrated **July 22** as the **Day of Uprising against the Occupier**. On that day in 1941, three “national-liberation fighters”, hidden in the woods along the road from Tacen to Šmartno below Šmarna gora above Ljubljana, fired shots at a Slovenian gendarme, Francé Žnidaršič, who was only wounded. But **even earlier than this, two Germans were killed in brief skirmishes** (one on July 16 in Besnica pri Zalogu, the other on July 19 near there). This shows that the KPS regarded the earlier incident as meaningless, since the KPS’s fight was directed not against the occupier but against fellow Slovenians, above all against those who could hamper or even prevent them from taking over the government.⁷⁰

In Gorenjska⁷¹

The ruthless German oppression in Gorenjska did not dissuade some activists from every political party or conviction to **meet together** already in the very beginning of **June 1941 at Št. Jošt above Kranj**; even the communists were invited. The Christian Socialists had the main say. They resolved that it was necessary to organize a united stand against the Germans; even the communists in attendance agreed to this, despite the fact that at this time the Party already had other plans.

These members of the underground made their first appearance in Gorenjska. These were persons who were hiding from the Germans, and the people called them the “bushmen” or “woodsmen” [hostarji/gošarji]. Communist Party members apparently started arriving some time after July 17, after a joint meeting of the Kranj and Jesenice regional committees of the KPS which sent 3 Party members, experienced organizers, to the “men in the woods”. The communists quickly seized control over leadership and began to eliminate from the ranks any non-communists who were better qualified or independent-minded, either by “liquidating” them

⁶⁶ Ude, 10-11; text highlighted by JR for emphasis

⁶⁷ Ude, 158 and 15

⁶⁸ Ude, 38

⁶⁹ Ude, 34 and 35. Upon reading Ude’s opinions, a person wonders and asks how was it that the KPS/OF did not get rid of Ude, for they had killed others for much smaller reasons.

⁷⁰ Kos I, 142

⁷¹ Mikuž I, 171-87; Kos I, 140-147

or by sending them into the front lines of battles.⁷² For this reason, democratic and patriotic resistance fighters soon distanced themselves from such groups of woodsmen and became professed anticommunists – and some of these also became the first communist victims.

The initial militant actions against the occupier were small-scale acts of sabotage, such as knocking down some telephone or electrical pole. Immediately after the first such incident, committed during the night of July 26-27 according to the Germans (one week later than the date claimed by the Partisans), the Germans ordered a curfew on July 28. After this date, the Germans also stopped deporting Slovenians to Serbia and began sending them to Silesia and to inner Germany instead.

The Partisans destroyed some small, unimportant bridges.⁷³ They also attacked some German policemen or police stations. By such actions they were following the instructions of A. Bebler published in the Partisan paper *Delo [Work]*. In the same issue of *Delo*, Kardelj decreed something that had frightful consequences for Slovenia: **“All of Slovenian land must become but one sole battleground, where the war is fought from village to village, from house to house.”**⁷⁴ Kardelj’s call notwithstanding, the Germans soon completely destroyed the so-called “Kranj Battalion”, and the Gorenjska Battalion dispersed. The Germans destroyed all the Partisan units in the Kamnik area and below Šmarna gora, and likewise the Storžič Battalion.⁷⁵ Despite this, the Partisan attempts of sabotage continued. For example, they succeeded in setting ablaze the Remec factory for curved woodwork in Duplica. The purpose of the arson was primarily to lure people into the Partisan workshops, since the fire rendered them jobless; the reason given for the arson, namely that the factory was manufacturing skis and rifle stocks for the German Army, was a lie.

The re-established Kamnik Battalion was preparing to ambush a German column and policemen in the vicinity of **Rašica**, east of Šmarna gora. On September 16 the Partisans killed 3 members of the Gestapo who had come to Rašica to investigate. A few days later, the Germans surrounded the village, crushed the Partisan troop, burned down the village, deported the villagers, and shot the wounded Partisans.⁷⁶

The activism by the Partisans at first gained them much sympathy in Gorenjska. Yet all these actions in Gorenjska and the rest of Slovenia were still not enough in the eyes of the CK-KPJ, which on September 26, 1941 at its conference in Stolice near Krupanj (Serbia) issued a reprimand to the Slovenian Partisans.⁷⁷

⁷² The entire city of Kranj quickly learned about the “liquidation” of naval lieutenant Marko Česen, the son of Kranj’s mayor. A one-time resident of Kranj, Dr. Ljubo Sirc, writes about this killing in the magazine *South Slav Journal*, London 1981, 1/31, which is also mentioned by Kos I, 142.

⁷³ The KPJ took the name “Partisan” from the French “le Partisan” (a member of some political party) or perhaps the Italian “il partigiano”; in Spanish it is translated as “el Partisano”. Their assignment of names such as “battalion”, “brigade”, etc. was ridiculously inflated, because ordinarily these groups numbered only a few persons. For example, Peter Štante-Skala himself admits, that 3 Companies (Celje, Savinja, and Pohorje) contained all together 12 persons (see J. Martinc, *Prvo leto komunistične revolucije v Sloveniji [The First Year of the Communist Revolution in Slovenia]*, ZSS 1952, 204-214, 205).

⁷⁴ *Delo*, No. 2, August 1941; cited in NOV 127-128 as a newspaper article, but Kos I, 143 attributes the quote to Kardelj.

⁷⁵ For the entire topic, see NOV, 107-111. According to Regime sources (NOV 110), there were 22 illegals [those in hiding] in Gorenjska before June 22, 1941, 138 new fighters joined between June 22 and 26, and 199 new fighters joined between June 26 and August 5. Of the 356 illegals and fighters, there were 135 members of the KPS, 9 candidates for the KPS, 36 members of SKOJ, 20 Sokols, 7 Christian Socialists, 10 Socialists, 1 member of the JRZ, and 2 adherents of the JNS (NOV, 111)

⁷⁶ NOV, 133-136; Griesser-Pečar, 351-352

⁷⁷ A later [rotational] president of the government of the LRS, Miha Marinko, in the book *Moji spomini [My Memories]* (Ljubljana 1971, 257) admitted that the rebuke was justified (Kos I, 145). Such an opinion by the KPS stemmed of course from a gross error, the assumption that the conditions in Slovenia and in Serbia were the same.

This spurred the so called Main Command in Ljubljana to devise a large-scale plan for the next round of fighting. They tried to foment a mass uprising at many a location. For example, on December 5, 1941, they decided that a mass uprising must occur in Gorenjska. They selected the Jesenice and Bohinj corridors and the Poljane and Selška Valleys. They mobilized by force more than 350 men and boys, but there were not enough weapons for all of these. The Regime historians spoke about the “December Uprising in Gorenjska”⁷⁸. Mikuž admits that **its first major action was “the numerous liquidations of national traitors on December 1, 1941”**. The Regime historians laud the initial victories, but also acknowledge that this general uprising was quickly snuffed completely and that the Germans afterwards destroyed the Partisan secret organizations in Tržič, Kranj, and Škofja Loka and seized over 150 activists.

Kardelj’s manner of describing these events in a report to Tito is both interesting and at the same time instructional: **“Our people in actuality raised into battle all of Gorenjska south of the Sava River... Well, due to the lack of ingenuity of the Party leadership and the Gorenjska officers staff, the farmers in revolt were included in the ranks and not armed in time, so the Germans hunted down and shot these unarmed men and sent the remainder into Germany for forced labor.”**⁷⁹ Marinko wrote years later in his memoirs the fault for the suppression of the rebellion was due to **“the opportunism and inexperience of some Partisan commanders, which engendered defeatism, despair, and fed the theory that Partisanism needs to wait until the war is over.”**⁸⁰

Still, the Partisan recklessness had no limits. The best proof of this is the **tragic fate of the village Dražgoše**, at the southern ridge of Jelovica, at the end of Selška valley. After the Cankar Battalion fought off a small-scale attack by a German patrol, they proclaimed “the Republic of Dražgoše” and held victory celebrations over several days. They knew of course that the Germans were preparing an offensive against them, but they resolved to fight it out. But how? They deployed the non-communist Partisans at the most exposed locations. According to Partisan accounts, the German storm arrived on January 9, 1942, 2500 men against 200, a figure that seems exaggerated. During the fighting, the communist leaders withdrew to Jelovica, where a handful of survivors also appeared after two days of fighting, and the villagers were left to face the mercy and displeasure of the Germans. The Germans burned the village to the ground, even the church, and shot 40 villagers.⁸¹

The public grew dispirited due to the large numbers of victims. Likewise, the numerous killings of “traitors” began to turn people away from these types of “liberators”, because the KPS (VOS) without any trials was sentencing prominent respectable persons as traitors. Additional factors were the public hanging of Partisans and the shooting of hostages, which was the German standard response to the killing of each German. At first the ratio was 10 Slovenians for one German, and later even higher. Even elementary school children were forced to be present at some hangings! For all these reasons, the armed uprising in Gorenjska in 1942 almost totally ceased.⁸²

⁷⁸ Mikuž I, 255-270

⁷⁹ Mikuž I, 263

⁸⁰ Mikuž, ib. With this he unwillingly admitted that the viewpoint of the non-communist resistance movements (passive resistance first) was not limited to themselves, but that at that time there were many like-minded people within the Partisan ranks too.

⁸¹ Mikuž I, 260-267; NOV, 201-214; Griesser-Pečar, 353-355

⁸² Martinc, op. cit. 212 op. 45, lists the number of hostages for various actions: for blasting the bridge in Radovljica, 4 hostages; for robbing the food warehouse in Radovljica, 10 hostages; for the attack on the electricity plant Vintgar, 6 hostages; for undisclosed sabotage on August 7, 10 hostages; on August 19, 10 hostages at Begunje; on August 22, 10 hostages; for 1 shoemaker, 5 other shoemakers [*killed*]; in Domžale on September 1st, 10 hostages; on October 4th, 5 hostages at Lesce and 5 at Jesenice.

In Štajerska⁸³

Despite the harsh German oppression, a Partisan fold emerged, albeit small in numbers. Their actions were limited to sabotage on the railroad line Zidani most-Celje-Maribor and inside the subterranean mines, or in attacks on police stations. Their tactic was to withdraw immediately, before it came to any fighting.⁸⁴

In October of 1941, the OF combined 4 smaller units to create the 1st Štajerska Battalion which numbered 56 fighters. On October 8 this battalion broke into Šoštanj and “liberated” it. “After an occupation lasting two hours, the Štajerska Battalion lined up, and, singing Partisan songs, marched off in formation through the settlement towards Bela voda...”⁸⁵ The Germans of course exacted their reprisals against the Šoštanj villagers by shooting 10 hostages.⁸⁶ The Styrians understandably did not care for such “liberations” and their consequences, since it meant only innocent victims and misfortune. Within a week already, the Germans attacked the battalion on Čreta, forcing it to withdraw far off towards Brežice.

In the previous month, on September 19, the Gestapo crushed the KPS organization in the Maribor region and captured various important functionaries, including the Secretary of the KPS. In the larger cities (Maribor, Celje, etc.) and in the mining regions they imprisoned over 150 members of the KPS and the OF. This left the Štajerska Battalion without a hinterland. Probably in order to raise spirits, the so-called Revirska troop on December 26 attacked the mining operations at Hrastnik. However, the Germans exacted heavy reprisals for this attack.

In 1941 there were at most a little more than 260 Partisans in Štajerska. By the end of the year, only 58 remained, and even many of these left in the spring of 1942.

The Slovenian Styrians cared only that a person was fighting against the Germans. The OF side, of course, was the one that was crowing the loudest on this point.⁸⁷

In Carinthia⁸⁸

There was no resistance movement here in 1942. Only towards the end of 1942 did some activity begin in the Meža tract, an area that had been added to Yugoslavia after World War I.

⁸³ Mikuž I, 187-194; NOV, 138-142; Kos I, 147-149

⁸⁴ To counter the Partisans, the Germans established a militia, the Wehrmannschaft, or the “vermani” [wehrmans] as the Slovenians called them. This para-military organization operated within the structure of the Germanic Styrian Homeland Alliance. **In the beginning, 95% of the old-age Styrians, the majority probably by force, enlisted in the “vermans” - and yet we never heard of the KPS-OF daring to besmirch all Styrians as traitors!** The Germans also created a special battalion, which unfolded into 12 companies; their purpose was to guard the southern border jointly with the German police. Later they organized also a Territorial Defense (Landwacht) and the so-called “Gegenbanden” (anti-Partisan units), who were passing themselves off as Partisans.

⁸⁵ NOV, 141; the writers speak about “occupation”; was this then an occupation or a liberation?

⁸⁶ Mikuž I, 193. In his account of the skirmish on Čreta, Mikuž stated that the Germans had almost completely encircled the Štajerska Battalion, save for a small “opening” in the ring, where an ambush was set up, to prevent any escape. This became a standard German tactic, so that the Partisans eventually advanced only towards the sounds of gunfire, lest they fall into the German trap positioned at the sector from where no shooting was heard. According to Mikuž, in this instance, the Štajerska Battalion broke its way through the section where the ambush was located (I, 194).

⁸⁷ See Melaher, op. cit., who on page 251 presents exact figures about the crimes by the German police: 3,600 shot; 217 hanged; 103 stabbed; 358 killed from torture; 1,156 died in camps; 1,157 permanently disabled; 10,575 imprisoned; 7,971 interned in concentration camps; 21,579 taken away into forced labor; 67,885 deported.

⁸⁸ Kos I, 150

In Primorska⁸⁹

The Slovenian minority inhabiting the Slovenian Primorska that was adjudicated to Italy in 1920 suffered oppression at the hands of its Italian masters in the period between the World Wars. When the Province of Ljubljana was created, the Slovenians of Primorska for a while hoped that Italy would give them some similar autonomy too. However, all they received was permission to once again use the Slovenian language in the churches, and to start publishing some Slovenian books and newspapers.

The majority of the Slovenian men and boys in Primorska, being *de jure* Italian citizens, were drafted into the Italian army. Organizations of the Italian KP (PCI) sprung up in Trieste and its surroundings. The Slovenian communists also joined into them. However, the PCI's view on the Slovenian [boundary] question was utterly chauvinistic; any statements to the contrary made by the PCI remained just pure talk; the PCI stood firm by the Rapallo Agreement, and with a few exceptions towards the end of the war, regarded Primorska, Istria, and Trieste as being an integral part of the Italian empire.⁹⁰

The City of Ljubljana and the rest of Ljubljana Province⁹¹

On account of its autonomy, Ljubljana Province was given more opportunities for cultural and political activities, and perforce resistance too. This last opportunity was fully exploited by the KPS, which had been preparing for their fight already since 1940, following the directives from the CK-KPJ.⁹²

In Ljubljana, the OF limited itself to propaganda in the beginning. It went so far in this that **via leaflets it tried to get the people to celebrate the Slovenian National Holiday of October 29th**, and to a lesser extent the so-called Unification Day, December 1st. **Of course it quickly forgot about these holidays later** since what was important to the Slovenian people was not December 1st, but October 29th.

By its numerous, albeit minimally significant militant actions, **the Partisans succeeded in the city of Ljubljana at portraying the OF as a widespread organization. It did not get the same response in the outlying areas, mostly due to the Partisan violence** and the killing of leading Slovenian men connected to the democratic parties, above all the Catholic SLS, and the killing of decent citizens who had influence on their fellow villagers.

The Partisans began of course to form their own troops and battalions throughout the forests in Ljubljana territory too, especially in the area around the mountains of Krim and Mokrec, around Novo Mesto, and in Bela Krajina. They carried out some minor acts of sabotage on telephone and electric lines. The **Stiška Troop** in the middle of September even attacked an Italian scouting patrol at Radohova vas in Dolenjska, which again resulted in harsh Italian reprisals. On October 19 the Partisans attacked the **Italian garrison in Lož and on Bizelj**, but the Italians totally destroyed the first group of attackers, and dispersed the second. During the night of December 5-6 they attacked the **Italian guardpost at the railroad bridge across the Ljubljanica River at Preserje** and did sufficient damage to the bridge to stop traffic there for 15 hours. Of course the Italians meted strong reprisals for this action too. As a matter of fact,

⁸⁹ Mikuž I, 291-297; Kos I, 151-156

⁹⁰ Mikuž I, 292-293

⁹¹ Mikuž I, 194-255; NOV, 119-123, 142-150

⁹² Mikuž I, 157

this was the only resistance action that meant a more serious recovery effort for the occupier, because it severed the railroad link between Ljubljana and Italy.⁹³

The Status of the OF at the end of 1941

What was the **Partisan situation in Slovenia at the beginning of the early winter of 1941**, Mikuž asks rhetorically and then responds:⁹⁴ “There is no doubt that the **military situation was very difficult. The Slovenian Partisan army experienced heavy blows**. Both the Germans and the Italians demonstrated the most determined willpower to crush each Partisan concentration, no matter how small, and to foil every Partisan action...” He judges that all this did diminish the national-liberation war in Slovenia. He states that at this very time, new battalions were starting to arise (in Gorenjska the Cankar Battalion, in Notranjska the Koželj Battalion, in Dolenjska the 2nd Štajerska Battalion). He maintains that the **OF, “the backbone of the fight”, remained untouched**, and that in its revolutionist evolution it had already reached the stage where it was beginning to receive the **first elements of “the people’s” power**.

⁹³ Mikuž I, 157

⁹⁴ See *Zaveza*, No. 51



Partisan Army wearing three-cornered caps with the red star
Podobe MNZS, 139



Partisan Army wearing the red-star caps
Podobe MNZS, 141



Creation of the 14th Brigade of the NOV and the POS Fratelli Fontanot, on Suhor above Metlika, Dec. 7. 1944

Podobe MNZS, 150.



Dead fighters from the Brežica Company (The slogan from the Spanish Civil War "No pasaran" is inscribed on the rifle stock)

Podobe MNZS, 155

6. The KPS/OF Proclaim a Monopoly on the Fight for Liberation

Social Revolution, the Priority for the KPS

The CK-KPJ at its meeting in Zagreb wanted to skip the “bourgeois” stage on the path to revolution. But the KPS took a different route. The **KPS instead followed the model of Lenin**, who himself admitted that **the Party had exploited small landowners and small farmers in the fight of the proletariat against the large landowners, and afterwards mercilessly attacked all of its former partners as well.**

Kardelj put it this way: “The **strategic plan** has a bourgeois-democratic revolution in the first stage, which in an unstoppable development passes into the second stage, a proletarian revolution... We must ascertain that **the role of the Party in the national-liberation fight and in the new perspectives that are opening up with this fight represents only a part of the universal fight, a part of the universal plan...** The main enemy faced by the proletariat in the struggle for national liberation was **pan-Serbian reactionism, coupled with the reactionism of the remaining nationalities of Yugoslavia...** The immediate goal of the Party’s strategic plan was to crush the dictatorship of these elements. The main forces in the fight were: the working class, the farmers, the middle class, and the national liberation movement. Neither the main enemy nor the main forces have changed. The only thing that has changed was the degree and the extent of the struggle.”¹

From this, two things are patently clear: 1. The **priority** was **social revolution**, and not a fight against the occupier; 2. It was necessary to **exploit the small dissident factions** within the various political parties, and afterwards cast them aside.

An Invitation to “everybody”, but not really everybody

The Slovenian OF was therefore created in the spirit of Lenin, because it had to rely on partners for support as long as the KPS itself remained too weak, numbering at that time less than one thousand members. The OF’s appearance of including all political parties in the beginning made a good impression on the Slovenian public, which was almost unanimously opposed to the occupier. This was the reason that when the “Supreme Plenum” of the PIF met for the first time (allegedly on June 15, 1941), they decided that the KPS, the Christian Socialists, the Sokols, and the cultural activists should introduce themselves as the key founders of the PIF. The OF did have an open invitation for anybody to join it, however this meant only the “positive” forces of society, in other words, the “socially progressive” forces. **Thus, anybody who was opposed to the communist concept of social change was excluded *a priori*.** The KPS lumped into this category first and foremost any politically active non-communists within the established political parties, which were called “bourgeois” by the communists; this in effect meant the Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS) and the liberals (JNS), even though the strongest party, the SLS, was comprised mostly of farmers and workers, the supposed backbone of the com-

¹ Griesser-Pečar, 135-136, who cites Deželak-Borič, *Osvobodilni boj, Strateški načrt naše partije* [*The Liberation Fight, the Strategic Plan of Our Party*], 146; highlighting by JR for emphasis

munists. All this done of course under the pretense that the majority stratum of the Slovenian nation, in other words, the working class, had been kept out of leadership positions in public life throughout past political history.

The “Partners” Given a Back Seat

It became obvious rather quickly to some of the “partners” within the OF that the KPS intended to keep all decision-making power in its own hands. For example, Josip Rus wrote that whenever he went to visit some subgroup within the OF, some Party member always accompanied him. It became obvious to Rus that this was just part of a “*modus operandi*, whose goal was usurp all the contacts that we had with people in our groups”.² Some Party members noticed this and later wrote about it at great length, for example Albert Svetina, the former aide to the head of OZNA (Ivan Maček – Matija).³

The disregard, or rather, indifference shown by the KPS to its “partners” within the OF was most evident whenever the KPS would make a decision; the rejoinder was: such and such was **the business of the CK-KPS, not the OF!** This happened with resolution to change the name of the PIF to the Anti-Fascist Front (AF) and later to the OF; or with the resolution concerning armed resistance, with the creation of the Main Command of the Partisan detachments in Slovenia; and so on.

The KPS, the culprit for starting the Civil War

There are many proofs for this claim:

1. The **Plenum of the PIF** at its **2nd Session on June 28, 1941** (the first was allegedly already on June 15, 1941) resolved to create definitive **standards for the punishment of (alleged) traitors**, initiate a national tax, and assess (forced) loans on people.⁴

The Regime historians claim that the CK-KPS convened after Germany’s attack on the USSR and already then and there created a Partisan army. However, for a fact it was much later that the OF via leaflets called on the Slovenian people to close ranks in the fight against the occupier. The summarization on the leaflet clears up the issue: “Our resistance to date (sic!) must now unfold into an all-peoples holy national war against the imperialistic occupiers.”⁵

2. In August the **KPS created the Security Intelligence Service (VOS), without caring to get any approval from the OF Plenum to do this.** The VOS was a completely secret organization, culled exclusively from KP members and its youth organization SKOJ (from its Serbo-Croatian initials: *Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*; in Slovenian: *Zveza komunistične mladine Jugoslavije* [the Union of Communist Youth

² Griesser-Pečar, 138, who quotes from “Zapiskov iz življenja Jospia Rusa” [Notes from the Life of Josip Rus], Ljubljana 1992, 148

³ Svetina, 55-57, 58-60, 64-66, 67 (!), 69-70, 80-83, 87-88, and elsewhere

⁴ Martinc, 1952; Griesser-Pečar, 137, who cites *Dokumenti ljudske revolucije I* [Documents of the Peoples Revolution] (Dokumenti), 64 footnote 1

⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 139, who cites *Dokumenti I*, 44. It is fitting to underscore the expression “national war”, whereby it somehow signifies that it is all about something more than just a people’s (SerboCroatian: *narodno*) revolution, here one of the rare instances of such terminology. The communists of course always equate the term “people’s” with “proletariat”, and never with the term “nation” in the Slovenian meaning (a state-worthy people, nationality).

of Yugoslavia]). The VOS was the special assignments arm of the Party; its primary task was to do “liquidations”, in other words, murder Slovenians that displeased the Party.

3. The **Supreme Plenum of the OF**, which met in some private residence in Ljubljana, **resolved on September 16, 1941**, “to form a **Slovenian national-liberation committee**”. The decision included the following Articles:

Article 1. The Supreme Plenum of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation constitutes itself into the Slovenian National Liberation Committee;

Article 2. The Slovenian National Liberation Committee, during the period of the national liberation war, **exclusively represents, sponsors, organizes, and leads the Slovenian nation in all its lands.**

Any organizational work outside the framework of the Liberation Front during the time of the foreign occupation is a detriment to the fight for national liberation;

Article 3. To achieve concord and unanimity among the peoples of Yugoslavia, the Slovenian National Liberation Committee is stepping into constant contact with its corresponding counterparts that represent the other nations of Yugoslavia.”⁶

In Griesser-Pečar’s opinion, this resolution “signifies the start of the **civil war and the decades of cover-ups of the culpability of the communists.**”⁷

Neither the PIF nor its subsequent OF – whether *per se* or the individuals in the Plenum – either by natural law (which the KPS does not recognize) or by positive law, possessed any authority to grant itself supreme power. It did have the right to create its own resistance organization. But it had no right to usurp the same right from others, who already months earlier had created their own resistance movements and moreover did so with links to the Royal government in exile and with the Western Allies.

The claim that this was to be the first step towards Slovenian sovereignty is utterly ludicrous.⁸ Even the Regime lawyer Šnuderl defended this claim, although he did admit that it was all about creating a **revolutionary body**, therefore not something legitimized by public and free elections. “This is not a regulation by some megalomaniacal or fancied office, like what was doled at that time by the political groups in Ljubljana, but rather the ascertainment of something that the OF actually held in its hands, and what it would be able to accomplish: the representation of the nation, its organization and leadership by the KP... the efficacious means for the further channeling of the process for a people’s revolution. These brief sentences contain the entire political program for a state... This is a typical revolutionary body...”⁹

Bojan Godeša reached the conclusion that the leadership of the KPS and the KPJ were responsible for the radicalization that occurred in 1941/42 in the politics concerning the resistance; after the quarrel between Tito and Mihailović, they adamantly opposed any form of anti-occupation resistance outside the Partisan movement.¹⁰

⁶ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 3, 21

⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 142

⁸ Kidrič “V osvobodilno fronto”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, No. 18, September 20, 1941

⁹ Šnuderl, 134

¹⁰ *Ustanovitev slovenskega narodnoosvobodilnega odbora in pomen njegovih odlokov za nadaljni razvoj v Sloveniji [The establishment of the National Liberation Committee and the meaning of its decrees for the subsequent development in Slovenia]*, Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije, 29-34

The Illegality and the Illegitimacy of the Revolution

To the question, **whether the revolution was legal** or not (having a legal foundation, permitted by law), only one answer is possible: **absolutely not!**

The second question is **whether the revolution was legitimate** (in other words, justified by any laws – natural, moral, perhaps even enacted). This would require some higher-level rationale that transcends legitimate law (or responds to some landmark legal precedent). Griesser-Pečar lists various cases, such as the liberation of some nation from slavery or a caste-system or foreign rule (thus, occupation), and explains more precisely: “In the judgment on the necessity and the moral right for a revolution, what is important are the conditions that gave rise to the revolution, at which human victims mostly pay the price, and by what means (in accord with or contrary to human rights) was it carried out. The question is also, does the revolution take into consideration human rights, namely that with regard to victims and human suffering it does only what is utterly necessary to attain its goal and it acts as humanely and tolerantly as possible, or does it upon the solidification of power by designated individuals, organizations or political parties, overstep like a torrent the bounds of restrained terrorism and (or) in the end, set up on its own a system inimical to human rights.”¹¹

More than 50 years passed before it became clear to the majority of the Slovenian nation that the revolution was not justified. This realization began to sink in especially after the liberation of Slovenia from beneath the heel of the dictatorship of the Party. Kos wrote: “Without a doubt the NOB would have been one of the greatest epochs in Slovenian history had its goal truly been the liberation of the people, and not the substitution of one dictatorship with another, and had it at least employed humane methods.”¹² He rightfully adds: “But then in this case it would no longer have been a Stalinist revolution!”¹³ Kos should have emphasized that even this sort of armed resistance in the first year of the occupation would have been utter foolishness, or more accurately, a crime, which would have brought the nation to an unwanted suicide.

In revolutionist morality, the end justifies the means – in other words, anything is permitted as long as it leads to the attainment of the goal. Kos lists **several of the main immoral methods that the KPS used during the revolution**: unscrupulousness, deception in its monopolization over armed resistance, disregard of the democratic principles of the majority, lies, slander, intimidation, torture, liquidations as the cruelest tools of the revolution, secret contacts with the occupier.¹⁴ To this list we must add also the mid-war and post-war mass murders, long years of terror, suspicious vehicle accidents, thought control, half a century of falsifying history, and more.

¹¹ Griesser-Pečar, 141-142

¹² Kos I, 134

¹³ The author (JR), questions Kos’s choice of title: the revolution in Slovenia was not Stalinist, but rather communist. The distinction between Stalinism and communism is of course important, but not in the case of Slovenia, where Leninism was always dominant, as Pučnik stressed in his own writings. Of course, making a distinction between Stalinism and communism does in no way exonerate communism and its crimes.

¹⁴ Kos I, 134-137

Whoever is not with us, is against us¹⁵

Among the various decrees adopted by SNOO at the conference on September 16, 1941, there was **“The Decree by the Slovenian National Liberation Committee (SNOO) concerning the Protection of the Slovenian Nation and its Movement for Liberation and Unification.”**¹⁶

Already at the absolute start (“A. Protection of the Nation”), Article I stipulates that traitors are to be punished by death. And a traitor is anyone of the following: 1. Whoever denounces someone; 2) Whoever steps into direct or indirect contact with the occupation authorities or with other enemies to the freedom of the Slovenian nation or with their agents, for the purpose of destroying or continually obstructing political freedom and independence; 3. Whoever, for his personal benefit or for the benefit of selfish groups, amasses or diverts national forces to fight against the liberation of the Slovenian nation or offers aid in any way whatsoever in this fight.

Article II (under the letter “B. Protection of the National Liberation Movement”) declares who must be punished by death: 1. Whoever directly or indirectly betrays to the authorities, or intends to betray, reveals or spreads the secrets of the organization of the National Liberation movement; 2. Whoever betrays or denounces to the occupation authorities the individuals who lead, abet and support the National Liberation movement; 3. Whoever betrays, discloses, or delivers to the occupation authorities resources used by the National-Liberation fight; 4. Whoever acquires resources on behalf of the occupation authorities or other enemies that can be used to fight against the National Liberation; 5. Whoever quits or deserts the National Liberation movement and commits any of the activities in Articles I to IV.

Article III orders the death penalty also for any denouncer whose false testimony led to a death sentence being carried out in the above situations. Article IV punishes anyone who quits the National Liberation fight with the intention of foiling or substantially damaging the work of this movement with national boycotts, in more serious cases even with punishment by death. Article V stipulates punishment by death for anyone who associates or collaborates with the occupiers in a manner that offers the occupier the chance to appeal to the goodwill and devotion of the Slovenian nation. Article VI stipulates that a punishment cannot be waived under any circumstances, even if the deed was done from ignorance or was forced by the occupiers or by other enemies of the Slovenian nation.¹⁷

Article VII (under the letter C, which deals with trials) stipulates that special courts will pass judgment on the actions mentioned in Articles I to IV. **The proceedings are to be speedy, oral, and secret. It is not necessary to interrogate a culprit personally**, but this may be done as long as there is no chance of this bringing harm to the National Liberation movement. **There are no appeals against the decision of the court. The punishment is to be meted immediately**, the manner and executioners to be determined by the court. Anyone who escapes a sentence during the Liberation War will be tracked down after the liberation.

Article VIII declares that these regulations are suspended during a state of emergency.

This decree remained in effect until August 30, 1944, when the decrees formulated by the Supreme Command of the NOV and POJ on May 24, 1944 were put into force.¹⁸

¹⁵ Such is the title of a book by Bojan Godeša (Sources)

¹⁶ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 5, 22-23

¹⁷ Punishment of a person who had been forced to do something is unheard of in civilized law!

¹⁸ Šnuderl, 142-143. (NOV is the abbreviation for *Narodnoosvobodilna vojska [National-Liberation Army]*, POJ the abbreviation for *Partizanski odredi Jugoslavije [Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia]*.)

Frightful consequences of the decree for those wrongfully accused and for the Slovenian nation in general

For the OF it was perfectly clear that this decree conferred authority upon the OF and its Partisan army to kill Slovenians who would not follow the commands and orders of the OF. Invoking this decree, the Partisans were labeling a good number of patriotic Slovenians as traitors, without regard to the question whether these people, accused as such, actually collaborated with the occupiers or not. **“For the writers of this decree, any activity, even fighting against the occupier, was in one way or another egotistical and oriented against the National Liberation, unless it was performed within the framework of the communist-led OF and the Partisan army.”**¹⁹

The Regime lawyer Šnuderl quietly **admitted** that this decree contained many a serious error, yet he condoned it anyway of course. He wrote, for example: “The decree has the typical character of a conspiratorial court. It makes no distinction between *dolus* and *culpa*. Even an act committed under force is punishable, because in the fight for the existence of a people it is everyone’s responsibility to make sacrifices.”²⁰

The decree mentions courts, but does not say who would compose them or even how they should operate. The *Slovenski poročevalec* published some of these sentences, the public learned about others from leaflets. **Of the sentences that were reported publicly, there was never any mention of who issued the sentence, or when, where, and why; in the absence of such data, the very pronouncement of such a judgment is “ipso facto” a criminal deed.** Absolutely nothing is known about the majority of the cases; there is no paper trail for the several thousand death sentences.

From the Decree it is clear that **the communists were not concerned about proof**, or about interrogating the accused, who was **not even granted the right to a defense**. The situation changed only partially, when according to a decision by the IOOF, accepted on July 31, 1942, a special court commission was established for the so-called “liberated territories”. As of the end of 1943, the punitive phase of the Protection Decree was relegated in part to the military courts.

The debate on the validity of these decrees by the SNOO

It is fitting at this point to mention the work by Dr. Tamara Griesser-Pečar in conjunction with the petition (as a court expert) to re-open the case against the Bishop of Ljubljana, Dr. Gregorij Rožman. Bishop Rožman was sentenced after the war as a war criminal, but he died in exile in the USA in 1959.²¹

When Dr. Griesser-Pečar presented her work, she was castigated for “serious incorrectness”. The Regime historians had never questioned the legitimacy of the decrees, accepted on September 16, 1941. It must be taken into consideration that these decrees, innately revolutionist and legally invalid, **were given a formally-legal validity by the “Law for historical certification of historically significant decrees”, which the Slovenian Parliament accepted on February 23, 1948.**

A Regime historian, Janko Pleterski, called upon lawyers to evaluate these decrees from a legal standpoint. Dr. Lovro Šturm, who until the end of October 1998 was the president of

¹⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 146

²⁰ Šnuderl, 142: *dolus* means intention, premeditation, and *culpa* means culpability.

²¹ See Kolarič and Griesser-Pečar-Dolinar (Sources)

the Constitutional Court of the RS, came to the conclusion: **“This is a typical example of the misuse of jurisprudence. Both acts (author’s note: the Decree by the NOOS and the Law for Protection) were not intended to guarantee freedom and establish a democratic society, but were employed as a means to terrorize the people and to carry out a communist revolution and establish a totalitarian social system under the monopolistic rule of the Communist Party.”**²²

Griesser-Pečar concludes that it is impossible to call the government takeover by the KPS in 1945 a liberation. “A nation or society can feel it was liberated from a foreign or domestic yoke only if this is not succeeded by a new lack of freedom.”²³

Liquidations in Ljubljana and in the countryside in 1941-1942²⁴

According to reliable sources, by the end of 1941 the VOS “liquidated” in Ljubljana province no less than 100 Slovenians, and **around 1,000 by the middle of 1942, and all this was done long before there was any armed resistance against the OF.**²⁵ The Regime historian Mikuž writes that prior to the “liquidation” of the former governor Dr. Natlačen on October 13, 1942, there were 49 “liquidations” in Ljubljana.²⁶ Data from **Gorenjska and Štajerska** is only in the last few years slowly coming to light.

By comparison, the VOS in Slovenia was far more violent and bloodthirsty than the Basque ETA in Spain: the **VOS in only 1.5 years killed more than 1,000** in a country of 1.5 million inhabitants, while the **ETA in 38 years (1968-2006) killed less than 900** in a country of 39 million inhabitants.

Not a single prominent individual from the occupation side was ever assassinated by the VOS. On the other hand, the Italians never thwarted a single assassination of a Slovenian nor ever found a VOS perpetrator, even though the assassins were killing in broad daylight. Until the end of December 1941, Slovenian newspapers were not even permitted to write any more than a few lines about such incidents. All this becomes somewhat understandable in light of admissions revealed in Regime publications after the war: “The web of the intelligence ser-

²² Griesser-Pečar, 147, quotes from Lovro Šturm, *Pogledi na vsebinsko pravno pravilnost dveh aktov SNOO z dne 16. septembra 1941*. Pravnikov odnos do (pol)pretekle zgodovine, *Podjetje in delo* 6-7/198/XXIV, 1094-1095. Šturm calls attention to the fact that the KPS was subordinate to the KPJ, and the latter in turn to the Comintern. He quotes the historian Godeša, who repeats that in the beginning both sides – the OF and the later anti-revolutionists – were oriented against the occupier, and that they were divided only on the question of how to act against the occupier. In his contribution in *Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije* [Anthology on the victims of the war and the revolution], 110-111, Dr. Šturm again emphasized that the decrees by the SNOO and AVNOJ, which prohibited any resistance outside the OF, were from a legal standpoint more than controversial and in actuality swept away the legal precepts that are binding during the period of an occupation. Underlying everything was the “usurpation” of power. When lawyers will finally evaluate this action as illegal and ethically illegitimate, then everything else that followed this action will be judged as being illegal.

²³ Griesser-Pečar, 148

²⁴ Kos I, 174-179

²⁵ *Črne bukve*, 136-162, writes that by the middle of July 1942 there were 1,023 persons killed, of whom approximately 10% were killed in battles. However *Črne bukve* does not contain a complete list, therefore Griesser-Pečar, 253, judges that the correct figure is likely 1,000, the figure always cited by émigrés. *Črne bukve* relates (71) according to a statement by the former Partisan commander Janez Marn-Črtomir, that according to the statistics by the NOV Command, 3,000 persons were liquidated in the spring and summer of 1942! Nonetheless, the opponents of the OF never gave serious credence to this figure. - See also Kos I, 185.

vice of this organization (the VOS, author's note) spread thousands of its strands across all of Ljubljana, and literally caught not only the entire life of each and every resident of Ljubljana, but moreover reached even inside the very headquarters of the Italian 11th Corps itself".²⁷

Neither the intelligence service nor the spies can be condemned *a priori* for this. However, the fact that the VOS (read: KPS) already in those early days of the "liberation fight" knew about "the entire life of each and every resident of Ljubljana", this coming from the lips of the Regime historian himself, is proof enough as to what the Party was, where it was leading, and into what reign of terror it brought the Slovenian race in the end. The first president of the Socialist People's Republic of Slovenia, Boris Kidrič, himself wrote about this already that same year: "**The moral political pressure exerted by the struggle for liberation of all nations also includes the national-liberation violence perpetrated by the Security Intelligence Service...**"²⁸ Only Marxist-Leninist doubletalk and cynicism can conceive the juxtaposition of two mutually exclusive concepts: liberation and terrorism. This makes it more understandable that the liberation of 1945 was nothing more than a "state terror" or reign of terror, and not freedom, democracy, pluralism, a legitimate nation, personal freedoms, and so on.

In this light, how utterly important were **Lojze Ude's warnings** about the hostage situation, and opinions about who exactly was a traitor, and that the true traitors should not be judged until the war was over, etc.²⁹ He even warned about the **possibility** that the shooting of hostages, caused by attacks against the occupier, would lead **Slovenians to begin to seek refuge under the protection of the occupation authorities**.³⁰

Therefore he wrote: "Given the situation we Slovenians are in, it is necessary to **limit armed actions to acts of self-defense**. All preparations for fighting and propaganda must be temporarily subordinated to the goal of preventing or postponing forced resettlements and mitigating their consequences. In parallel with this it is necessary to organize a Slov. liberating army in its widest sense, i.e. the sort of army that should protect our borders".³¹ The KPS of course paid no attention to his reports: Ude was merely one voice from among the Christian Socialists that were duped and exploited by the OF, though later they did give him a higher position, but with little responsibility. Many Christian Socialists never realized they had been duped, or realized it too late; a good number of them had joined the KPS beforehand already.

Resistance against the Party's exclusive control over the OF and the Partisan movement

"The Stalinist-style mass liquidations and torturing of Slovenian opponents throughout 'liberated territory' (in the first half of 1942) was immediately met with opposition by the non-Party partisans. Their dissatisfaction was also growing on account of the Party's sectarianism and war-leadership. The sectarianism was demonstrated especially by their impatience towards non-Party Partisans, and the war-leadership by the wanton sadistic behavior of individual Party

²⁶ Mikuž I, 206-207. Mikuž writes (*loc. cit.*) unbelievably cynically that "revolutionist law demanded" these murders (utter legal subversion!) and that it is "difficult to find in the history of revolutions examples of taking revenge against counter-revolutionaries so rigorously and scrupulously" as did the VOS!

²⁷ Mikuž I, 205-206

²⁸ Cited in Kos I, 178, according to *Ljubljana v ilegali II*, Ljubljana 1959, 21.

²⁹ Ude, 47-56

³⁰ Ude, 17

³¹ Ude, 19

commanders towards some Partisans and the civilian inhabitants, especially by the shooting of ideological opponents.”³²

The worst period of liquidations was in mid-July 1942. Any Partisan who was not trusted by the Party was liquidated for any trivial reason, whether it related to discipline (if a person had not turned in all his money; if he fell asleep on guard duty, complained about the leaders, wavered about going on patrol, lost his weapon during flight, etc.) or related to political ideas (if he spoke about the Yugoslav king, Mihailović, or the British, spoke against communism, or did not want to sing the Internationale, etc.). Quite a few lower-ranking officers who were not Party members were also shot. Trials and executions were performed in front of the assembled troop. **According to the statistic in *Črne bukve*, at least 1,500 Partisans were killed in such cleansings.**³³

Some intellectuals from the ranks of the Christian Socialists exhibited considerable **opposition** to the Party dictatorship. In the beginning of 1942 they even went so far as to submit their own 8-Point **Program** in which they stated that “the Christian group must remain autonomous in every respect and an equal-rights partner in the OF along with the remaining founding groups...”³⁴

Dr. Aleš Stanovnik had to pay the price for taking such a stance; he had wanted to create special Christian-Socialist Partisan detachments within the framework of the OF – which all in all was a right for all the other western-European anti-occupation armed forces! On May 22, 1942 the Italians arrested Stanovnik, and a few weeks later, after the assassination of Dr. Ehrlich, shot him as a hostage. His relatives were convinced that the communists had betrayed him, because on the day before his arrest, Dr. Stanovnik was already trying to find refuge somewhere because he was convinced that the communists were going to betray him since he had voiced his opposition to the massive extent of the liquidations.³⁵

The Dolomites Declaration: The KPS removes and crushes its own ‘partners’ too

The Dolomites Declaration most clearly showed and proved the ever-increasing supremacy of the Party and its leadership. This “agreement” was reached on **February 28, 1943** in a

³² Kos I, 220, also the source of all the details in this section. The Slovenian words for “sectarianism” [*sektarštvo*] and “war-leadership” [*vojvodstvo*] are only two of many “gains” by the Party for Slovenian vocabulary that introduced the new and radical concepts of the Party’s philosophy into Slovenian dictionaries and minds.

³³ *Črne bukve*, 73-74. The number seems too high if the data applies only to the period of some 10-12 months, for this would mean three partisans were killed per day, and especially when the number of such victims is compared to the total number of Partisans in this period. On the other hand, according to the latest data published in “*Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije*”, the number should be even greater.

³⁴ Mikuž II, 232-3, who adds (II, 234) that the Christian-Socialists completely missed the mark with their notion that “We will destroy the White Guard also in this manner, that we will organize the OF on the basis of its founding triad (the KP, the Christian Socialists, and the Sokols), and not on the basis of the KP”. And he asserts: “The OF did not expand and grow on account of the ‘founding triad’, but rather from the fact that the KPS – the founder of the OF – was ever more convincingly proving to the Slovenian nation, that the path of armed resistance is the only exit from the people’s direst straits.” - The NOV also writes about this affair (p. 443), where it reproaches some Christian Socialists for wanting to have their own representation at whatever the cost, for working to benefit their own group instead of working for the whole, for even wanting to gain the sympathy of the farming community, implying that the Party did not know how to direct politics on behalf of the farmers, and so on.

³⁵ Kos I, 222-223; Godeša, 123; Griesser-Pečar, 153; Vode, 95-96

meeting with the Christian Socialists and the Sokols. The declaration formally eliminated any influences, by now already weak in one way or another, that were still held by the non-communists groups within the OF.³⁶

Kocbek, in a conversation with Boris Pahor made public in 1989, declared that he had been the one most vociferously opposed to signing, and that after much vacillation he finally **signed** the declaration so that he could **prevent hostility among the groups** and discord within his own group, and last but not least, so that he could prevent the **threatened danger of spiritual and physical harm against the Christian Socialists themselves**.³⁷

This Dolomites Declaration, upon which the OF/KPS built its “democratic” ruling power, was in essence dictatorial-totalitarian.

Janko Prunk points out that all the various groups that had joined up with the OF during the war were striving for social change, but each was interpreting revolution in its own way. But the Dolomites Declaration finally raised Bolshevism to the top, and embossed a **Bolshevist stamp on the revolution within the War for National Liberation [NOB]**.³⁸

Unsuccessful Talks between the SLS and the OF

Despite such an exclusionary act as the Dolomites Declaration, Lojze Ude continued to **urge for the establishment of peace between the communists and the anti-revolutionists**.

The **Slovenian Alliance [SZ]** also received a hint to hold talks; the SZ had in fact already beforehand reserved a place for the OF within its organization. A question came from London: **Was it possible for the SZ through the mediation of Vidmar, Nagode, and Kocbek, to come to an agreement and work together with the OF?** The SZ replied that it would of course be **possible, as long as the OF were to stop its denunciations and murders**. Talks along these lines were still going on in **June of 1943**, but ultimately had no success.³⁹

However in the **summer of 1944** talks were held between Dr. Ude and the spokesman for the SLS, Dr. Šmajd. The radio broadcasts from London by Dr. Alojzij Kuhar most probably had a huge influence on the SLS's readiness. Dr. Šmajd and Dr. Ude forged personal contacts. It was in fact probably the **last ditch attempt to find a unified program**. The discussions were completely confidential, so much so that in the SLS only 4 individuals knew about it. Ude even imagined some sort of joint leadership, in which the SLS and OF would be represented in a ratio of 3:1.

³⁶ Mikuž II, 228-252, who relates very interesting details and tacit admissions for many a thing; NOV, 442-445; Kos I, 263-267; Griesser-Pečar, 151

³⁷ Edvard Kocbek, Pogovor z Borisom Pahorjem [A Conversation with Boris Pahor], *Svoboda in Misel*, Celje 1989, 299-300; quoted by Griesser-Pečar, 151 – Jože Javoršek, *Spomini na Slovence III [Memories about Slovenians III]*, Ljubljana 1990, 212-215, describes the meeting in Bušinja vas. “The atmosphere was serious and tense, if anybody tried to make a joke, his joke fell flat. Jože Brilej-Bolko read aloud the declaration... When he finished reading, there was dead silence. A hot debate finally ensued. Almost all of us rejected the declaration. Politcommissar Ivan Novak (Očka [Daddy]) grew tired of their talking and said, ‘If you want, accept the declaration just as it is, and if you don’t... then we also have some other arguments’ and brandished a large pistol. With this, the meeting came to an end.”

³⁸ Janko Prunk, *Pojmovanje revolucije v različnih segmentih OF in NOB [Interpretations of the Revolution by various segments of the OF and the NOB]*, Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije, 124-133, particularly 133; highlighting was added by JR for emphasis

³⁹ Ude, 29. - Concerning the Ude-Šmajd talks, see Boris Mlakar, “Lojze Ude, kot kritični spremljevalec Osvobodilne fronte” [Lojze Ude as a critical companion of the Liberation Front], Ude, 160-163

Dr. Šmajd on behalf of the SLS and spokesmen (?) for the OF met several times until August 20, 1944. **The KPS and the OF resolutely rejected the idea of agreements or cooperation of any sort.**⁴⁰ Still, Ude erroneously placed the blame on the members of the London government by claiming that their talks “did not permit the possibility of thinking anything other than that the Slovenians must travel a non-revolutionary path.”⁴¹

Ude **immediately afterwards did spread and apportion the blame on several factors:** from the old Slovenian political parties and the dispute between Mihailović and the Partisans, to the consequences caused by the ideological tenets of the Party and its muddled behavior towards the non-Party groups within the OF. On account of all this, [Ude claimed] that “**the OF transformed itself from an initial liberation movement that excluded no groups on principle, into a political organization with its own concept of a Slovenian national and social revolution.** Today the OF is on the path of choking off any possibility of accepting new organized groups... **The OF under its current leadership is moving from problematic expanses into even more problematic straits.**”⁴²

Jerca Vodusek Starič demonstrated that the efforts at coming closer together remained unsuccessful because the communists, “who started the civil war in Slovenia”, wanted no agreements whatsoever.⁴³

⁴⁰ See, for example, Dr. Šmajd’s letter of April 21, 1944, which Mlakar quotes in Ude, 160-161

⁴¹ Ude, 29, where footnote 29 has a postscript by B. Mlakar. The latter rightfully claims that Dr. Alojzij Kuhar in his radio address on 3/23/1942 ascertained that the Slovenian race had received an internal enemy, that is, the OF; and that later Dr. Kuhar and Dr. Miha Krek emphasized this even more, called upon all movements to subordinate themselves to Draža Mihailović, spoke only about the efforts of the Western Allies, and characterized Partisan-ism as a movement that was concerned solely with the question of who will be the first to take over the government after the defeat of the enemy and who will get to direct Slovenia. But Mlakar forgets the time difference between 1942 and 1944. - A rhetorical question: Were perhaps Dr. Kuhar and Dr. Krek mistaken? Or is Dr. Mlakar obligated to point to some different, more fitting, and more accurate opinion about the OF? - The author [JR] states that the illogical Slovenian quoted phrase “*iti nerevolucionarno pot*” [*travel a non-revolutionist path*] was amended to “*iti po revolucionarni poti*” [*go down a revolutionary path*].

⁴² Ude, 31 – The author JR ventures to make a comment that Ude’s style is difficult and does not dovetail with the Slovenian way of thinking. JR believes that the a reader should think of “people’s revolution” when Ude speaks of “national revolution”.

⁴³ Dr. Jerca Vodusek Starič, *Vrtinec političnega spora* [*A whirlpool of political quarrels*], Zbornik žrtev in revolucije, 35-46

7. The Village Guards (VS)

Self Defense Against the Murders, Robberies and Arsons

1. The Beginning and Growth of the Village Guards

In a Crossfire

In 1942 the Partisans in Ljubljana Province continued to use the **tactic** of provoking and slightly pestering the Italians with attacks and acts of sabotage, yet immediately withdrawing at the first sign of danger. Their actions were **forcing the Italians to exact revenge**, which could be perpetrated only against innocent Slovenians.

Thus the **rural Slovenians** were the first and foremost to find themselves **caught in a crossfire**. On the one side were the Partisans, who were coming in and confiscating their food supplies and livestock. At the same time they were also unleashing their fury against individuals or against entire families that had been tagged as being opposed or non-cooperative to the OF, or inactive against the occupation authorities. They customarily **branded them with the Soviet-style name “White Guard”, even though there was not yet any armed movement anywhere against the OF**. Under this pretense the Partisans were slaying in sadistic fashion not only charismatic individuals, but also their families, and often burned down their entire property. This was happening **“before even a single shot had been fired against the communist Partisans from the side of national anticommunist units: more than 1,000 slain.”**¹ For many of these victims it was not even known, where they were – euphemistically said – “buried”.²

On the other side were the **Italian (or German) occupiers, who were wreaking their own violence against the same villages and the same families**, on the pretense that the villagers

¹ The book *V znamenju OF [The Mark of the OF]* lists first of all the murders of more prominent individuals (F. Emmer, A. Praprotnik, Jaroslav Kikelj, Franc Župec, Dr. Lambert Ehrlich, Ivo Peršuh, Fortunat Majdič, Kazimir Kukovič, Dr. Marko Natlačen); next it lists the names of the murdered by parishes (Ajdovec 11, Bloke 6, Brusnice 7, Borovnica 15, Dobrepolje 13, Dobrnič 9, Dravljce 13, Velike Lašče 13, Begunje pri Cerknici 19, Št. Jernej 28, Št. Vid pri Stični 15, Mirna peč 6, Preserje 8, Rovte 12, Rudnik 9, Horjul 17, Stopiče 20, Sv. Križ pri Litiji 8, Sv. Trije Kralji, 5, Šmarje pri Ljubljani 8, Šmihel pri Novem mestu 15, Toplice 9, Žužemberk 23, Brezovica pri Ljubljani 13, Zaplana 5, Dragatuš 3, Stična 17, Št. Jošt nad Vrhniko 20); next it shows the destruction of schools (18) and cultural buildings, the destruction of property and historical monuments (castles), the killing of rural leaders, farmers with large holdings, priests, members of Catholic Action, and above all the frightfully sadistic killings of families, including small children (3 from the Kolenc family, 2 from the Zavodnik, 7 from the Jakopin, 4 from the Lončar, 4 from the Dolinar, 4 from the Fatur, 5 from the Gruden, 4 from the Kozina, 7 from the Mavsar, 4 from the Mravlje); everybody knew about the killing of the pregnant Ivanka Novak. - See also *Bela Knjiga [The White Book]* which lists the Roster of the Dead by year, ex. for 1941-1942, 19

² For the numbers and names of the victims, see: *Črne bukve* (1,023 slain, 44 castle-manors demolished, and so on; some, Žajdela for example, are currently citing that almost 100 castle-manors were destroyed); *Vir*, II; Kos I, 175-178 and 185-195 (including the Comments); M. Šorn-T. Tominšek Rihtar, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne in zaradi nje (april 1941-januar 1946)” [Victims either of or on account of World War II (April 1941 – January 1946)], *Zbornik žrtv vojne in revolucije*, 13-21

were supporting the Partisans or else had not reported them. So they would burn down entire villages, drive away numerous individuals into camps, or kill them on the spot.³

This wave of murdering first and foremost, and partly also the robbing and burning, are what caused an armed reaction.

Principle held by the Supreme Command of the POS: “*Talis, qualis*”

The Supreme Command of the Slovenian Partisans issued a statement on May 7, 1942:

- “1. **For each Slovenian hostage killed, the Partisan authorities will shoot the same number of people** on whom the Italian occupation authorities rely (armed forces, gendarmes, bureaucratic personnel, native traitors).
2. If the Italian occupation forces will persecute or even shoot as hostages the wives and family members of Slovenian liberation fighters, **the Partisan rule will exact the same measures against the wives and family members of occupation persecutors.** We declare that we will find them, even if we have to go into Italy itself.
3. All headquarters under our command have received instructions to arrest and keep alive the members of the occupation authorities as hostages, who **will be shot according to the maxim ‘an eye for an eye’** if the occupiers shoot Slovenian hostages.
4. The Partisan rule will act in the same fashion in the Slovenian territory held by the German fascist bands...”⁴

On July 26, 1942, the IOOF warned that any attempt to recruit into the White Guard army will be punished by death. The death penalty will also be applied to anyone who gives information about the OF to the VS, conceals weapons, or spreads “White Guard” literature.⁵ On August 27, 1942, the Supreme Command of the Partisan units issued an order that all armed members of the White Guard are placed outside the protection of law, and thus any member of the National Protection or any Partisan is permitted to shoot on the spot any White Guard found to be carrying a weapon.⁶

The Lie about “Liberated Territory”

For various reasons **the Italians were steadily abandoning the more remote and strategically less important areas** where they had established their strongholds at the start of the occupation. For example, the Italians had 86 outposts as of March 1, 1942, but by April they had withdrawn from 46 of them. **Wherever they moved out, the Partisans immediately moved in.** The Partisans were calling such spheres “**liberated territories**”. In these places they were even setting up some form of Soviet republics.

Mlakar had established that the KPS began liquidating its opponents as early as the autumn of 1941, and more so, that the communist terror in the spring and summer of 1942 in

³ Numerous villages and personal names are known by now, but the investigation is not yet complete. On the other hand, the Regime historians never had any serious intention of uncovering or writing about these incidents, which still holds true somewhat to this day. Griesser-Pečar, 254, reproaches these historians for ignoring emigrant literature; as of today, they have yet to change.

⁴ The statement contained 2 additional points: that the Partisan ruler would also employ these same measures against fifth columnists; that the statement must be made known to all headquarters of Slovenian Partisan troops with instructions that they begin immediately to implement its contents; see *Dokumenti Šnuderl* No. 28, 42; Mikuž I, 348-349

⁵ *Dokumenti Šnuderl* No. 51, 58-89

⁶ *Dokumenti Šnuderl* No. 52, 59-60

the so called liberated territory in Dolenjska and Notranjska signified a **fateful break** and the start of an uninterrupted Slovenian feud.⁷

Spontaneous self-defense

On account of all this, the people had to find a way to protect themselves against the attacks on their houses and farms, against robberies, arsons, and above all against all the unjustifiable and senseless murders. Thus **self defense against the violence** spawned spontaneously. With their backs to the wall, in the end the people even had to obtain weapons from the Italian occupier too, but solely to defend themselves against the Partisan violence.

The nagging question of course remains: **to what extent did the KPS/OF intentionally create this situation and thereby oblige some sort of “collaboration” or “cooperation” with the occupier?** Historians are coming to an ever greater consensus that **perhaps the greatest coup of the KPS/OF** was in that it pushed the opponents of the Revolution into some sort of collaboration with the occupation forces. **The communists, through innuendo, popularized in Slovenia the notion that collaboration in any form was taboo.**⁸

Miloš Stare wrote to Dr. Krek on September 10, 1965⁹: “As for the issue of the Village Guards, it’s just that nobody was able to prevent it. You actually did send such instructions (that groups should have no ties to the occupier, author’s comment). However the communists at the outset created such a situation that it was impossible to do anything otherwise than take the path of self-defense. I remember well, when the mayor of Velike Lašče, Mr. Paternost, was with me and told me that they were going to create a village guard, I made it clear to him that under no circumstances could they take weapons from the Italians. I was presenting him arguments, on how your own position in the foreign diplomatic field will be hampered, etc. But he said to me: ‘Sir, you don’t understand this. If you lived in the countryside, you would see that there is nothing else we can do, otherwise they will kill us all.’ I remember well, that he went away with tears in his eyes, ‘because I did not understand him’. And it was the same wherever the village guards were cropping up. They had to defend themselves, if they wanted to stay alive.”¹⁰ Bishop Rožman also remained opposed for a long time to armed conflict. Even after May of 1942 he was maintaining that our weapon is the Rosary.¹¹

The Occupier was obstructing the work of the VS

According to Partisan claims, the OF controlled two-thirds of Ljubljana Province in the summer of 1942.¹² The situation began to change after the so-called Eight-Phase Italian Offensive between July and November of 1942.¹³ But there is absolutely **no truth** to the claim by Regime historians **that the VS came into being as a consequence of these Italian offensives.**

⁷ *Krogi nasilja med Slovenci v vojnih letih 1941-1945 [Spheres of violence among the Slovenians during the war years 1941-1945]*, Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije, 22-28, particularly 24

⁸ P. Urbanc, *Primerjalno-pravna razčlemba temeljnih pojmov revolucije, antirevolucije, upora in kolaboracije [A comparative legal analysis of the basic concepts of revolution, anti-revolution, resistance, and collaboration]*, Na Poti, 95-106

⁹ Stare was a member of the SLS leadership; in the postwar era, after the death of Dr. Krek and until his own death, he was the president of the SLS and the president of the NO.

¹⁰ Kolarič III, 282

¹¹ Kolarič III, 287

¹² NOV, 296-297

¹³ NOV, 304-321

According to the NOV, there were only 2,058 Partisans at the end of 1941.¹⁴ In 1942 the NOV probably somewhat correctly enumerated a long list of detachments, units, battalions, and even brigades, which is understandable in light of their forced conscriptions in the “liberated” regions. With these conscriptions, the number of Partisans grew quite high, but fell again after the Italian offensives. In fact, some of the **remaining Partisans later had to flee all the way into Croatia, which provided them with support in 1943 in their fight against the VS!**¹⁵

The communist detachments were “in the autumn of 1942 so weak and so despised by the people, that even a modest and poorly armed force, such as the Village Guards, could have beaten it.”¹⁶ The Regime historians write that **the Italian occupier “allowed the White Guard units only enough slack and organizational structure and enough equipment so that they could not threaten their own interests in any way.”**¹⁷

The Regime historians themselves admit the fact that **the Italians did not trust the Village Guards**, that the latter were loyal to the Royalist government and on the side of the Western Allies. The Italians attached **their own liaison officers** to the garrisons, purportedly to provide for food, clothing, weapons, and ammunition. However their task was first and foremost **to oversee the activity of the VS**. According to some testimonies, many of these liaison officers had ties with the Partisans too, gave them information about the VS, and at each garrison even infiltrated at least one person who was known in the local area to be a communist informant.¹⁸ The Italians, for example, **refused to permit the VS to operate outside the local boundaries of their garrisons, to take any joint actions with adjacent units**, or to merge Village Guard units into larger formations. The Italians **also forbade a single overall command**.

The **members of the VS** did not obey all these prohibitions, but **tried to circumvent them in various ways**. For example, in the summer of 1943, the SL leaders wanted to form the VS into an underground and active “Mountain Chetnik Detachment” (named “the White Chetniks”). But before this plan could be carried out, Italy surrendered.¹⁹

The Village Guard at Št. Jošt nad Vrhniko²⁰

According to Kos, the first instance of a spontaneous armed resistance happened in Loški Potok on May 15-17, 1942, but it was unsuccessful.²¹ A resistance inevitably had to be organized

¹⁴ NOV, 225

¹⁵ NOV, 334-336

¹⁶ ČB, 212

¹⁷ NOV, 330

¹⁸ ČB, 213-214, which lists many examples

¹⁹ Kos I, 215-216

²⁰ Kos I, 211-218; NOV, 327-330; Griesser-Pečar, 253-278. NOV, 328 claims that the first VS was established in Begunje pri Cerknici in Notravska, and the same claim is made by Lojze Debevec, who together with Dr. Zdešar escaped from Teharje and now lives in Argentina. But the **first garrison in Notranjska** did not spring up in Begunje pri Cerknici until **July 31, 1942**. Anton Drobnič, “*Rdeči udar na Notranjskem*” [*The Red Strike into Notranjska*], *Zaveza*, No. 60, XVI, 1, 14-20, reports that in April 1942 at Št. Vid the Partisans murdered the pastor Rev. Tekavec and the township secretary, Sterle. Some men and boys fled. Some others of their own accord asked the Italians to take them away temporarily to Italy. And some barricaded themselves armed with old Yugoslav weapons inside the Makovec house on Rudolfovo. These defenders were attacked here by the Partisans on May 27th and June 1st, both times without success, however they still had to go into hiding into the woods on account of the Italians. When the latter had moved out of Loški potok, 13 young men on May 15th occupied Tabor on Hrib, yet already two days later the Partisans attacked them and forced them to surrender. It is a fact that in some villages some sort of nighttime sentries were posted in secret on account of the numerous murders perpetrated by the Partisans.

²¹ Kos I, 207

in the village of Št. Jošt nad Vrhniko. This hillside village was strategically important to the Partisans as a site for safe nighttime crossings through the corridor between the nearby German-Italian border and the high-traffic Ljubljana-Logatec road, which was in Italian hands.

The pro-OF activism in this area garnered absolutely no positive response; the OF was not even able to establish a National Protection group here. On the other hand, during the springtime months of 1942, the Slovenian Legion was very active in creating cells and organizing networks. At St. Jošt, more than 50 boys and men joined up. They began to collect weapons and were preparing themselves to make a stand, be it against the occupier or against the communist violence. When the Italian troops withdrew from here to Horjul, the Partisans occupied Št. Jošt on April 19th. Late at night they woke up all the villagers and herded them into the village tavern, where they staged a “trial” against the parish priest, Rev. Jože Cvelbar. They reproached him for preaching against communism and for warning the people about the hidden agenda of the OF. They threatened him and some villagers with death if they continued these things. Then they sacked the rectory and the storerooms of the village’s purchasing cooperative.

After this incident many persons no longer dared to sleep at home, but went instead to other houses or into the woods. In May and June of 1942 the situation in the vicinity of Št. Jošt became unbearable. In Horjul, the Partisans murdered the mayor Bastič along with his wife, and the storeowner Erbežnik. Because the villagers in **Ligonija nad Vrhniko** did not want to join their forces, the Partisans took their revenge by firing a few shots in the direction of some Italians passing through the village. Although nobody was killed, the Italian revenge was immediate: they burned down the village, shot some hostages, and sent the rest to internment camps.

In June of 1942, the Ljubljana OF directed to Drenov grič a boxcar loaded with various clothing material for the Partisans of the Notranjska detachment. Here the Partisans transferred it to waiting wagons, killed the stationmaster, and calmly drove the wagons through Horjul, even though an Italian garrison was stationed there.

The Št. Jošt villagers turned to the SL leaders, who reported back to them that the Italians had permitted the establishment of Village Guards (MVAC). Gen. Roatta (from his base at Sušak) had given his permission to create such guards already 4 months earlier, however Gen. Robotti in Ljubljana Province did not trust the Slovenians and therefore withheld his approval for a long time.

The Village Guard (VS) pitched its camp **at Št. Jošt on July 17, 1942**. The Slovenian Legion sent them 40 old rifles and 3000 rounds of ammunition, insufficient by any standard. The VS fortified the rectory, the school, and nearby houses, and dug entrenchments. Already on July 24 at 11 o’clock at night the Partisans attacked the garrison. Various sources disagree on the numbers, ranging from 200 to 500 attackers and from 35 to 70 VS defenders. Because the Guards had learned about the impending attack a good hour in advance, they were ready and waiting. They still had to use their meager ammunition sparingly, and were firing only when utterly necessary. Ultimately they had to withdraw into the rectory, from where they were able to make a more rigorous defense with machinegun fire. The Partisans set fire to the school, the church caretaker’s house, and the majority of the other houses, emptied the cooperative and then set it aflame too. The attack lasted till 4 a.m., but the Partisans were unable to overrun the rectory because each charge was beaten back again and again. The Partisans finally withdrew and carried away their wounded; they probably had some dead too. The VS suffered no casualties. Several days passed before a platoon of Italian soldiers from Horjul drove up with some more ammunition.²²

²² Kos I, 210; Kos writes makes a reference to NOV 315 that cast the blame for their defeat on the aid of “Black Shirts”, who were to have quickly supplied the VS with ammunition; however NOV 315 contains no mention of this.

For this defeat at Št. Jošt, the Partisans exacted a terrible revenge. Between July 24 and August 3rd, they killed 23 persons in the area and burned down 70 more buildings.

Other Village Guards

Despite the extent of the material losses suffered by the village, **the St. Jošt Village Guard immediately became the self-defense model for other areas.** A Regime historian quotes the words of the leader of the SL, Rudolf Smersu, who wrote about this significant phenomenon in the beginning of July 1942: **“When other areas learned about this, the reaction was like an avalanche.** Mayors and other officials were arriving and begging for this to be established in their areas too. The **military command of Slovenia** (Novak’s HQ staff, author’s comment) approved and supported the creation of Village Guards. **It issued a statement that all members of the Village Guards were Chetniks, that is, members of the Yugoslav Army.** The Slovenian Legion was the first to enroll into these newly created units and became the backbone of the Village Guards. It comprised the majority in these units...”²³ It must be mentioned that Novak’s HQ Staff merely approved of the creation of the Village Guards, but did not support them with weaponry because they were not subordinated to Novak.

Soon other Village Guards were established: in the Polhograd Dolomites, along the Ljubljana-Rakek road, in Notranjska, in the outer Ljubljana circle from Mlačevo and Boštanj, along the Grosuplje-Kočevje railroad line, in Dobropolje valley, in Suha Krajina and Miren valley.²⁴ Many members of the VS were men and lads who did their farm work in the fields during the daytime and at night guarded their settlement from the inevitable Partisan attacks.

A Regime historian proffers the following items as “facts” about the VS: 1. Its establishment in Slovenia had been Gen. Mihailović’s wish; 2. The Slovenian Alliance (SZ) in September 1942 gave approval to the creations; 3. All VS commanders “secretly swore a loyalty oath to King Peter II, to Yugoslavia, and to the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav Army”.²⁵ **Naturally, as far as the Regime historians were concerned, even this self-defense action had be branded as “imperialistic” or “fascist”, thereby “collaborationist” and “traitorous”.**

In its first year already, 1942, almost 50 garrisons were established in other areas, and in 1943 at least 60 more. In the year 1942, these **garrisons had 2,823 members** (2,219 armed) at the end of September, 3,499 members (3,174 armed) at the end of October, 4,471 members (4,085 armed) at the end of November, and **4,544 members (4,009 armed) in December.**²⁶ At the end of 1942, there were on the average 50 men per garrison, who despite their small size successfully enough fought off the attacks of the so-called Partisan brigades. In **1943** the number of VS members grew to **more than 6,000.**

It is impossible to deny the fact that the VS sprung up spontaneously, as a defense against Partisan terrorism. All approvals or recognitions by various underground organizations and military commands occurred afterwards.

The Alarm of the KPS on account of the VS

Kardelj, as the theoretician of the revolution, had been expecting a reaction to occur all along, but not in such a form and not to such an extent. **With the manifestation of the VS,**

²³ Kos I, 210, quotes from *Ljubljana v ilegali II* [*Ljubljana in the Underground II*], Ljubljana 1961, 299 (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis)

²⁴ NOV, 327-355

²⁵ Saje, 496

²⁶ Mikuž II, 157; Kos I, 214-215; Griesser-Pečar, 257-258

he admitted that it was the Partisan terrorism that had brought it to life. Already 9 days after the start of the Italian Offensive, he wrote: "Our ranks, especially the commanders and the political-commissars... went too far with their killings of the White Guard, at which time and again it included people who probably should never even have been placed into this category of enemies; there are even individual cases of abominable tortures of some people, news of which spread among the inhabitants and threw a very poor light on the figure of the Partisan fighter; there are instances of robberies etc."²⁷

Kardelj wrote on October 1st to Maček, that **"the roles and successes of the White Guard must never be underestimated"**.²⁸ Therefore he ordered that they must mercilessly destroy the White Guard: **"Shoot those who rebelliously fight... Shoot every single priest in their troops. Likewise, the officers, intellectuals, etc. and especially the kulaks and the sons of kulaks."**²⁹ He continues straightway: **"Our situation here is untenable. If we cannot succeed in improving the situation, we will have to withdraw.** Where? Start thinking and doing something, otherwise **it just may happen that we will be blasted into smithereens."** Kardelj added that they must therefore send brigades as quickly as possible into the vicinity of Ljubljana, "so they can clean out the White Guard there. Here it will be the most difficult, because our nerve center is here." (*ibid.*)

Edvard Kardelj, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the KPS, in another lengthier report on November 27, 1942 to France Leskošek, **warned Kidrič and Maček (Angela) "especially on this point, to deal in the most resolute manner with the various dirty messes that are occurring in the field** (liquidations), because it matters not only who is picked for the job but also how the liquidations are done... Strongly demand that only the military courts are allowed to order liquidations! Issue a strictly confidential directive, that the justifications must be carried out only by shooting..."³⁰

According to Kocbek, the worst kind of war started, namely, a civil war; according to his rationalizations, the Party had to reach for its unfortunate classic template, which is what it was most afraid of having to do, that with it would have to renew its revolution in Central Europe. Nobody could any longer stop such a civil war; on the Partisan side, nobody was permitted to even mention this word. Tito confirmed this, when he made a statement in the Zagreb *Vjestnik* (May 24, 1972), that there was a civil war in Slovenia too: *"No o tome nismo htjeli govoriti u toku rata, jer nam to ne bi koristilo."*³¹ (Translation: "Well, we did not want to mention this during the war, because it would not have been to our benefit.") **So, the welfare of the Party and the revolution rank before national liberation!**

The Ljubljana Security Guard

After the establishment of the VS, talks began at the Italian Command in Ljubljana for the establishment of a Slovenian police force, which would have two branches: intelligence

²⁷ Kos I, 216 quotes from *Dokumenti II*, 369 (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis); we must not think that Kardelj was any more of a humane person on the basis of such writing, but rather that he was counting on the publicity-political effects of such "exaggerating".

²⁸ Mikuž II, 147 (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis)

²⁹ Mikuž II, 148 (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis)

³⁰ Jesen 1942, 462 (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis)

³¹ Quoted in Kos I, pp. 217-218 from Boris Pahor-Alojz Rebula, *"Edvard Kocbek, pričevalec našega časa"* [Edvard Kocbek, A Witness for Our Time], Trieste 1975, 146

[undercover] and active.³² The force would be composed exclusively of Slovenian policemen under the direction of Slovenian senior officers from the ranks of former gendarmes.

In the autumn of 1942, the SLS reported to London that the Italians were unable to provide protection for people even in the city of Ljubljana itself, and for this reason some scheming was underfoot to establish a VS in Ljubljana too. Its purpose would be to acquire weapons, stop the murders, and find the terrorists. Nobody was giving any information about the terrorists to the Italians; and whenever the Italians did nab anyone, they didn't do anything to the person, because the Slovenian communists had connections with the Italian communists. Besides this, there was in actuality a trifold rulership in Ljubljana: Gen. Robotti states that the army is supreme and that the civil authorities have no business about anything; Grazioli, as the representative of the civil authority, maintains just the opposite; and the Fascist Police has an exclusive position, because the commandant of the city is a Fascist general.³³

Probably due to the stir caused by the VOS's assassination of Dr. Natlačen, the Italians at the end of October 1942 relented to the creation of the **Ljubljana Security Guard** (*La guardia di Sicurezza di Lubiana*), whose name was changed later to the Volunteer AntiCommunist Militia Formation of Ljubljana (*Formazione MVAC di Lubiana*). Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest Peterlin of the former General Staff HQ, who was released by the Italians from an internment camp, assumed command of this force. At its creation the police numbered 150 men, the majority being members of the Slovenian Legion and the Sokol Legion. Its base was located in the Belgian Armory. The Italians gave them some places here to use as lockup cells, since the police were permitted to do searches through Ljubljana and detain people.

When Gen. Gambaro assumed command of the Italian troops on December 16, 1942, he took away the lockup cells from the Slovenian police, and in mid-January he disbanded the force and redistributed the majority of its manpower among the VS garrisons. Several signs indicate that the KPS, through its ties with the Italians, had a hand in this dissolution, as is deduced from statements made by Zdenka Kidrič.³⁴

In a mere 4 months, the new Security Guard uncovered several Partisan printing shops, bunkers, reports, secret supply caches, etc. It jailed several active OF collaborators and supporters: three members of the Supreme Plenum of the OF (Prof. Kidrič and the Kozak brothers, Juš and Ferdo), Stane and Ciril Vidmar, Dr. Lavrič, Prežihov Voranc, and others. During the interrogations, some detainees began to reveal the organizational network of the OF in Ljubljana. This enabled the captures of a few hundred OF followers, but in no way the 1,500 figure claimed by the Regime historian Mikuž.³⁵ Not a single detainee was sentenced to death. Some were sent into confinement (not internment camps!) in Italy, while others were handed over to the military court, which postponed pronouncing any sentences.

The Ljubljana Security Guard struck a heavy blow against the organization of the KPS and the OF in Ljubljana. **Kardelj** himself wrote about this to Leskošek: **"It's a true hell here by us** [Tr. lit. By us we now have 'a devil and a half']. A true old-style shake-up has begun. A certain girl technician, who was responsible for the cyclostyles, began to betray one person after another. They say that in two days there fell (into the hands of the Ljubljana Security Guard – comment by Kos) 100 persons: typists, contacts, residences, etc., even **3 or 4 bunkers are also in danger, besides these another one is also very uncertain – our own. Everything is**

³² Kos I, 218-220

³³ A letter by Miloš Stare-Prikazen to Dr. M. Krek, November 12, 1942; mentioned by Saje, 485

³⁴ Jesen 1942, 304

³⁵ Mikuž II, 168, who cites *Zbornik*; Mikuž dares to claim that the residents of Ljubljana openly laughed in the faces of the members of the Security Guard. Given that this force had locked up 1,500 individuals, it is difficult to believe that the people would have been so foolish and invite arrest.

so uprooted that it's funny. Even the link we had with you (up till now) has fallen along this vein..."³⁶

The Justification for the Village Guards

On the issue of the legality of the VS, many have referred to the **Hague Convention**, which in **Articles 42 to 56** deals with military occupations. "Concerning the conditions in Slovenia, in view of the establishment of the Village Guards (MVAC) and the Home Guards, the most important is Article 43 which states: 'The authority of legitimate power having in fact passed into the hands of the occupier, the latter shall take all the measures in his power to restore and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting the laws in force in the country.' According to the explanation given in *Modern Law for World Wars* by the world famous expert, Morris Greenspan, this means in practice: **'Given that the native administration remains in force, being capable of assuming the responsibility for civil administration, it will customarily assume this task after the initial military phase of the occupation. In its obligation to provide for public order and peace, the occupier will organize a qualified police unit to be in charge of prisoners. If necessary, it can use native inhabitants for this role.'**"³⁷

Urbanc adds that **international praxis in Occupied Europe 1941-1945 attests to this legitimate collaboration**, which in all instances included armed police equipped with German weapons, militias, and even army detachments that had to take an oath, as in Greece and Czechoslovakia. The **Hague Convention explicitly permits an oath of loyalty**, of course with neutrality towards the occupier. According to Urbanc, we encounter a **double standard** in judgments about collaboration: **in Slovenia it was a crime, while everywhere else it was accepted as legitimately normal and even worthy of honor**; England conferred aristocratic titles on all the high officials who collaborated with the Germans during the occupation of the islands in the English Channel, but in Slovenia the same type of "collaborators" were awarded with bullets by the VOS terrorists or with slaughters at Teharje or Rog.

Aside from the legal aspect, **the majority within the VS had weighed their decision simply from a moral standpoint, in other words, according to their conscience**. This is clearly evident from a statement by Joško Tominc from Šentjošt: "What bothered us the most was that we would have to shoot at fellow Slovenians. But we did not start it; we are only defending ourselves."³⁸

On behalf of the SZ, Miloš Stare on November 22, 1942 sent to London a report in which he described the conditions and circumstances that led to the establishment of the Village Guards.³⁹ Among other things he wrote: "The people in their despair grasped at this and then after word arrived of Draža M.'s instructions that the people should get weapons from any source whatever, the establishing of the Village Guards proceeded and today in the province there are c. 3,500 armed men and lads." He then continues: **"The occupier is utterly afraid of any mutual links being formed among these Guards or of the Guards having any contact with Slovenian political people**. In such an event, he would of course demand disarmament, the people would

³⁶ Jesen 1942, 348-349; Kos I, 219 claims that this girl was Lilija Neuman-Ljerka; (highlighting was added here for emphasis)

³⁷ P. Urbanc, op. cit., 107; the author JR admits that the text in Slovenian language was somewhat changed for a better understanding.

³⁸ *Mi med seboj [We among ourselves]*, Informational supplement to *Zaveza*, No. 61

³⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 256-257 carries part of the text; (highlighting was added here for emphasis)

not return their weapons, and we would fall into a new catastrophe. **Nobody can make an accusation that there is in this Guard any sort of collaboration with the occupiers.** Anybody who has yet to experience 'Partisan freedom' cannot imagine the sort of suffering that has befallen the rural population, when entire families and villages for entire weeks and months had to flee through the forests and hide from the Partisan murderers."

The Slovenian Legion (SL) was heavily represented in the VS. In other words, many members of the VS were at the same time members of the SL. "Being members of the Village Guards, they were legals in the eyes of the Italian occupiers, but in reality many among them were working for the underground. Thus the **Village Guards** by their activities often were **not only protecting the neighborhoods, but also collecting information, which later reached the Allies via underground routes**, through Switzerland or the Vatican or by radio transmissions. **The VS gave support to the underground organizations and units**, for example by providing food and even protection itself."⁴⁰

2. OF Activities at the end of 1942 and in the Spring/Summer of 1943

The Partisan "Winter Offensive" of 1942/1943

This is the name given by Regime historians to the revolutionist exploits in this period.⁴¹

In **Ljubljana Province**, the "Ivan Cankar" Combat Brigade at the end of November 1942, joined by the Croatian "Rado Končar" Proletarian Brigade, attacked the VS garrison at **Suhor**, which was hampering their passage between Bela Krajina, the Gorjanci Mountains, and Žužemberk. On December 11, 1942 several Partisan brigades attacked the garrison at **Ajdovec**, established in October 1942, which was near an important intersection point for Partisan units. After lengthy fighting they succeeded in capturing these two garrisons. However, they were unable to capture the garrison in **Žužemberk**, allegedly because they lacked the appropriate weapons. They attacked some other garrisons too, destroying some of them. For the Partisans, these initial skirmishes were beneficial as training, on how to attack, destroy, and capture the garrisons of the Village Guards.

After these partial successes, the **Partisan units were reorganized**, which allowed them to make the (disastrous) so-called March of the Brigades towards Ljubljana and the return of brigades from Croatia to Slovenia. One of the consequences of this return was the attack on the garrison in the Carthusian Monastery at **Pleterje**. **During the fighting, they set fire to the monastery, including its church, and caused severe damage. Then they invaded Suha Krajina again.**

A battle very noteworthy for the Partisans was the **battle at Jelenov žleb** [*mountain pass*], on the western side of Ribnica's Velika gora, where on March 26 1943 the Cankar and the Gubec brigades under the leadership of a Montenegrin Jovanović exploited their excellent strategic position and in a brief battle destroyed an Italian battalion from the Macerata Division; 106 Italian soldiers were killed in action, and 102 were wounded.⁴²

⁴⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 261; (highlighting was added here for emphasis)

⁴¹ NOV, 388-437; For the entire section see Mlakar, 11-20; **Three significant events** occurred between Spring and Autumn of 1943: 1. Starting with May of 1943, the British began supporting the Partisans; 2. On May 15, 1943, the Comintern was formally dissolved; 3. On June 10, 1943 the Western Allied forces invaded Sicily.

⁴² NOV, 409-412; Mikuž II, 170-194

In **Primorska**, the Partisans carried out mass mobilizations in the first months of 1943. Nevertheless, their so-called Soča Battalion had no noteworthy successes.

In **Gorenjska** in the meantime, the Germans were requiring Slovenian young men to be conscripted into the German Army or military construction units. This conscription did much to increase the Partisan numbers. They tried occasional attacks against the occupier, but suffered huge losses in their military and political ranks.

Composed of shattered units, the **Koroška Troop** came into being in the winter of 1942/43 near Železna Kapla and by March of 1943 became quite organized; but it numbered only 37 fighters, male and female.⁴³

On January 8, 1943, the Germans succeeded in destroying the Pohorje Battalion in **Lower Styria** (69 killed). The Partisans afterwards still created the Kamnik-Zasavje Detachment. It operated in the territory between the Kamnik mountain pastures to the north and the Sava River at the south, and in the corner between Kamniška Bistrica and the line Menina-Trojane-Zagorje.

The Reorganization of Partisan Units

After the Italian Offensive in the summer and autumn of 1942, **only the Village Guards remained on this terrain, and were left to fend for themselves**. As expected, in Dolenjska, the **Partisan units already in November of 1942 were trying to return** to almost all the territory where they had been before the Italian Offensive.

Meanwhile, the **OF also received a boost from Tito's HQ Staff** in the form of **11 NOV and POJ officers** in order to bring into Slovenia their expertise from their Partisan fighting in Montenegro, Bosnia, and Croatia. These newly-arrived officers were immediately appointed as deputies for the brigade and battalion commanders.

Kardelj, after the unsuccessful attack against the VS garrison at Devica Marija v Polju, wrote that "the Tone Tomšič Combat Brigade with its failure around Ljubljana damn uplifted the spirits of the White Guard riflemen."⁴⁴ The Regime historian writes: "**All four Slovenian National Liberation Brigades were unable from the second half of September to the middle of November 1942 to capture any White Guard garrisons that they went against**", and then tries to rationalize the defeats with various excuses.⁴⁵

As a result of these attacks, the anti-revolutionists withdrew from some smaller outposts in Notranjska and in Suha Krajina, and joined up with larger garrisons.

The Partisan Supreme HQ **resolved to destroy more than 30 "White Guard" garrisons** that were the greatest hindrances to their mobility. However, after numerous unsuccessful attacks, the Partisan leadership had to admit: "**that our troops are not capturing the fortified White Guard garrisons** and that they are not destroying the White Guard active forces, moreover they are attacking not even half-heartedly. Instead of yelling during a charge to overrun White Guard positions, they **often enough in the face of White Guard gunfire retreat at the middle of their attack**. If we do not immediately get rid of such weakness, our entire movement will remain unsuccessful to the core."⁴⁶

⁴³ For this entire section see Mikuž II, 159-252; NOV, 412-413; Kos I, 249-260 and 267-290

⁴⁴ Quoted in Mikuž II, 154

⁴⁵ NOV, 350

⁴⁶ Jesen 1942, 184-185

German Retaliations in Gorenjska

In Gorenjska, the OF continued to liquidate influential Slovenians.⁴⁷ But even worse were the Nazi “punishments” (retaliations) against the innocent Slovenian populace. A few examples: for the assassination of the mayor of Jesenice, Luckmann (April 17, 1942), the Germans selected 50 hostages, drove them to Mauthausen and shot them there, and also deported 50 families; for the partial shooting up of the steel bridge across the chasm at Moste near Žirovnica, they shot 29 hostages at that very site; at Mengeš on January 8, 1944, the Germans shot 30 hostages simply to instill order and to demonstrate that they still held the power in their hands.

At the end of June in 1943, Himmler issued the **Guidelines for Actions against the Partisans and Other Bandits**, which ordered the destruction of Partisan units and the punishment of everyone who was supporting them: if punishment was warranted, then they were to kill all the men, drive off their wives to concentration camps, place their children in designated areas in Germany, and confiscate their property. Given these draconian measures, the Gorenjska Detachment in the middle of 1943 understandably numbered only 230 fighters (and only 140 had weapons). Mikuž does mention also a Jesenice and a Kranj troop, the coming into being of the Koroška and the Loka troops, and three sapper/demolitions squads, but all total, these did not have many fighters.⁴⁸

The more important battles in Ljubljana Province in the first half of 1943

With the arrival of springtime, the Italians were increasing their belligerence against the Partisans, while the latter were reducing theirs.⁴⁹ One reason for this was the appointment of Gen. Gambaro, who had fought in the Italian Expeditionary Force in Spain. He ordered that all captured Partisans be shot, but on the other hand he ordered an end to the burning down of villages and the shooting of hostages in Ljubljana.

This was one of the reasons that made it possible to **reestablish some VS garrisons** (Temenice, Škocjan pri Novem mestu, and elsewhere). **This forced the Slovenian Partisans to become even more reliant on cooperation from the Croatian Partisans.** A battle erupted with the Italians in mid-April near Čatež, after which the Partisans were forced to withdraw. The Partisan brigades then attacked German garrisons along the German-Italian border, but were again turned back. The attempts by the Partisan units to cross into Štajerska were unsuccessful. Their attacks were unsuccessful against the Village Guard garrisons at Castle Rakovnik, Šent Rupert, and Mokronog, although they did damage the railroad tracks at several locations. They skirmished with the Italians along the road Pijava gorica-Velike Lašče, and with the Village Guards at Šmarje, Veliki Ločnik, and Vodice near Velike Lašče.

The Italians and the Village Guards **launched three fierce drives towards Rog Mountain.** This forced two Partisan brigades to depart towards the Gorjanci Mountains, and two brigades into Bela Krajina. The brigades in the Gorjanci Mountains skirmished with the VS at Kostanjevica and Šent Jernej.

Parleys between the Italians and the Partisans

The first talks were supposedly held already on **December 17, 1942 in Kartelevo near Novo Mesto.**⁵⁰ According to Kos, the subsequent events around Novo Mesto proved that the gist of

⁴⁷ Kos I, 270-272 lists the names of many victims of these slaughters.

⁴⁸ Mikuž II, 318; Kos I, 272-273

⁴⁹ Kos I, 291-294

⁵⁰ The communists did not see (and do not see) anything morally wrong with these talks, this being in conformity with their revolutionist morality (anything that helps the revolution is morally permissible: the end justifies the means). However, according to the rules set by the OF itself, didn't this action make them traitors and collaborators?

these talks was to make mutually-beneficial agreements: the Partisans would receive food and clothing; the Italians and the Partisans would not attack each other; the Italians would obstruct the activities of the Village Guards.

In **spring of 1943**, at the initiative of **Gen. Cerutti** (the commander of the Italian Isonzo Division in Novo Mesto), his representatives and Partisan commanders held several talks: **below Hmeljnik (May 9), at Dolenji Kamen (May 30), and in Straža by Novo Mesto (June 13)**. After the talks at Straža, the Italians completely vacated this area and stopped all traffic between Novo Mesto and Toplice so that a solitary train could drive up 3 boxcars of weapons, ammunition, and Italian uniforms for the Partisans. Specially mobilized teamsters drove all this materiel away to Partisan hideouts.⁵¹

On the day that the Allies landed in Sicily, Gambara himself proposed talks with any available OF representative. He repeated this desire many a time after the fall of Mussolini (July 25, 1943). The Partisans held talks at **Srebrnič (August 12)**. They negotiated about the Partisan wounded, but much more important was the agreement that in the event of a German attack against the Italians, the latter would immediately join up with the Partisans.⁵²

According to Mikuž there were several more meetings, **the final one held even after Italy's surrender**. The substance of the first session was Kardelj's dispatch, sent in Tito's name to the Supreme headquarters on August 14, 1943 with his proposals for a cease-fire in Slovenia. **The dispatch ordered the Supreme HQ of Slovenia to inform Major Jones (British liaison officer) about these demands in an official fashion, "but unofficially it should emphasize that it considers all units of the White and Blue Guards (MVAC) to be an integral part of the occupier's army."**⁵³ Major Jones by his own desire was present at one parley at least.⁵⁴

Finally on August 29 there were even talks between Gambara and Krivic, the Secretary of the Commissariat CK-KPS – therefore, not with any representative of the OF, which was *de facto* subordinated to the Party! Gambara proposed "mutual collaboration", "to which he received an affirmative reply", all for "the strengthening of our [Partisan – author's note] positions in the city."⁵⁵

The Consequences of the Italian-Partisan Agreements for the VS

These **agreements** in effect sealed the fate of many democratic-minded Slovenians on lands occupied until now by the Italians, with the exception of Ljubljana. After the collapse of Fascist Italy, a considerable number of well-armed Italians fought side by side with the Partisans against the Village Guards and helped bring about the near-total annihilation of the VS.

At the demand of the Western Allies, the **new Italian government of Marshal Badoglio issued a directive** to all Italian Army Divisions on Yugoslav territory **to surrender to Tito's Partisans and hand over all their weapons and ammunition, whereupon the Partisans would permit the Italians unimpeded passage to Italy**, unless the latter wanted to join the Partisan army. It is impossible to explain such Italian collaboration by simply claiming that

⁵¹ ČB, 208 - Dr. P. Urbanc wrote about this in *Svobodna Slovenija* dated 11/9/2006, where he provides the statement by the XI Italian Army Corps dated 9/13/1942, that admits the collusion of railroad employees at delivering boxcars of weapons, food, medicine, and other things for "the rebels", and demands an urgent agreement on how to expedite this possibility.

⁵² Mentioned by Kocbek in *Listina*, 211-212; see also Kos I, 302

⁵³ Mikuž III, 6-7, quoting from *Arhiv CKZKS XI/1943*

⁵⁴ Mikuž, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ljubljana v ilegali IV*, 98-100; see Kos I, 302

Badoglio's Italy had now suddenly become an Allied co-combatant. This is but another proof that the KPS/OF's main purpose was not to liberate the Slovenian nation but to have a nationality-less communist revolution.

Measures taken by the Revolutionist Leaders before Italy's Surrender

The **Partisan Supreme headquarters** in Slovenia **called upon the Italian armed forces to receive without hostility** the Partisans who were coming to take over their weapons and ammunition. It also invited them to **fight jointly against the Germans**. Immediately after the fall of Mussolini, the IOOF handed this directive to IOOF's Board for Ljubljana, in which it asserted that "it is exceedingly important to intermingle intensively with the Italian soldiers and draw them into the anti-imperialistic struggle..."⁵⁶

However not a single Italian unit in Slovenia joined the Partisans. A few individuals and some smaller groups with heavy weaponry did cross over to the Partisans. The Partisans transported the uniforms and ammunition seized from the Italians to Kočevski Rog and to Vipavska dolina. They **permitted the Italians unobstructed passage** across Notranjska towards Trieste.

The situation was different in Ljubljana. The Germans occupied the city on September 9, 1943, although some of their units had been sent into Ljubljana Province already in the previous month of August. On the day of the German occupation, a column of Italian prisoners several kilometers long was standing in the streets of Ljubljana; the POWs were then sent to German prison camps.⁵⁷

The **IOOF** once again showed its true face when it gave the **order** to its activists in Ljubljana: **"Start again the liquidation of national traitors... Begin preparations immediately for the capture Ljubljana. Renew the National Protection in a suitable fashion and link it tightly to the Informant Committees of the Liberation Front.** If the Germans move in, it will be necessary to hold Ljubljana for at least some time, and then carry out an evacuation of every person fit to fight."⁵⁸ The Supreme Headquarters will of course organize an armed revolt, "so that the Germans will have as many losses as possible, however, the Slovenian units will not confront any direct attacks".⁵⁹ Of course it meant nothing to them if this action meant harsh consequences for the inhabitants left behind, their personal property, and national-cultural public property.

3. The Fate of the Village Guards

Shortcomings within the Anticommunist Leaderships

"From the reports sent by two SLS senior men on January 22, 1945 to Minister Krek in London, it is evident that it had become clear to the SLS leaders that when Italy surrendered it must **order the Village Guards to go into the underground** (into the forests), mobilize manpower, and above all disarm the Italians. It figured on a German occupation, **'but we forgot that out in the field, our first and quintessential enemy to our nationality, state, society,**

⁵⁶ *Ljubljana v ilegali IV*, 69-70

⁵⁷ Vauhnik, 347-348; Kos I, 311-312 describes this according to Ferenc, 1967, 133

⁵⁸ *Ljubljana v ilegali IV*, 70; (highlighting was added here for emphasis)

⁵⁹ Mikuž III, 8

and religion was the Partisan army'. Two Italian divisions handed over their weapons to the Partisans, and the latter showed that 'they have Slovenianism only on their lips and that for them the first and exclusive priority is a social revolution and a Soviet victory on Slovenian land'."⁶⁰

There is no doubt that the **British Supreme Command** was seriously **considering the notion of landing Western-Allied troops on the Dalmatian coast or even in Istria**.⁶¹ **All in all, the Slovenian anti-revolutionist leaders were putting too much stock on this possibility; as a result they somehow staked everything on this and were also developing their own strategic plan based on this assumption.** The revolutionist leaders were likewise making preparations for this possibility; they pulled all their armed forces into the southwestern part of Dolenjska, which lies closest to the sea.⁶²

In the end, there was no landing on the Dalmatian coast or in Istria, even though the British were continuously bringing this up all the way to the end of the war. Roosevelt strenuously opposed this plan of Churchill.⁶³ "Sinister forces", as Vauhnik calls them, were working with unbelievable energy at this opposition; he adds: **"An Allied attack in the Balkans was sacrificed as one of the greatest concessions to Stalin and his Third International. This not only sealed the fate of the Balkans, but more so the fate of all of Europe, and yes, the entire world, to be placed into the hands of communism. Instead of there being a balance of powers, which a Balkan invasion by the Western Allies would probably have achieved, communist ideology gained the upper hand."**⁶⁴

In the summer of 1943 the leadership of the Slovenian Legion created a **War Council of the Slovenian Alliance** and placed Colonel Peterlin in command of all the Village Guards. Peterlin divided all the existing 107 garrisons of Village Guards, numbering 6,134 fighters, into 19 battalions, but this reorganization never occurred because Fascist Italy capitulated beforehand.⁶⁵ Peterlin and his HQ staff also made a plan to combine all the Village Guards into mobile underground units; for this purpose he divided Ljubljana Province (except Bela Krajina) into 5 military sectors.⁶⁶ He divided the entire lot of approximately 9,000 men (Legionnaires, Village Guards, and members of the Slovenian Legion) – regrettably only on paper – into 9 units of approximately 1,000 men each; for their commanders he appointed former active army officers, who at the appropriate moment would have proclaimed these units to be the Yugoslav Army and disarm the Italians.⁶⁷

Kos presents sound arguments that these "calculations" were quite unrealistic. **The anti-communist leadership did not understand well enough that the Village Guards were only volunteers.**⁶⁸ There were other reasons too, but the most significant was the **lack of unanimity among the leaders of the anticommunist units.**⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Mikuž III, 24-25 (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis)

⁶¹ Kos I, 313, who quotes Ralph Ingersoll *Strogo zaupno [Top Secret]*, Ljubljana 1947, 77 and 362

⁶² Mikuž III, 7-9

⁶³ Mikuž, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Vauhnik, 341-342; (highlighting was added here by author JR for emphasis)

⁶⁵ For both, NOV, 520

⁶⁶ Kos I, 314, which contains a typographical error: 1942 instead of 1943.

⁶⁷ According to Kos I, 314, whereas NOV (p. 520) speaks only of 6,134 "White Guards"

⁶⁸ Kos I, 314, op. 45

⁶⁹ Saje, 519, probably correctly characterizes all anticommunist armed units as "an army of various masters".

After Italy capitulated, the leadership of the Slovenian Alliance **renamed all the anti-revolutionary armed units as the Royal Yugoslav Army**. Peterlin issued the following orders: **the younger Village Guards with weapons should head into the woods and create detachments of Slovenian “Forest Fighters” [guerrillas] , who would later be organized into battalions of the Slovenian National Army as an constituent part of the Yugoslav Army in the homeland**; the older-age Guards should return to their homes and present themselves to the Germans as volunteer constables;⁷⁰ the “Slovenian Forest Fighters” should cooperate with the Chetniks and **not attack the Partisans**, however in the event of being attacked by the latter, they should resolutely defend themselves;⁷¹ they should get as much weaponry as possible from the Italian units to be used for the fight against the Germans. However, **the majority of the commanders of the Village Guards never received Peterlin’s instructions and so they did not know what to do** [when Italy surrendered]. Thus the fate of individual Village Guard units depended simply on the decisions made by their commanders.

On the morning of September 9, 1943, **the leaders of the SLS, the leaders of the SL, and higher-ranking military officers** assembled at the Trades Hall in Ljubljana for a **consultation**. The first topic of discussion was the Village Guards. Kos writes that Col. Vauhnik allegedly stated that the Western Allies were going to land at Rijeka and in Trieste, and that they would reach Ljubljana before the Germans; but if the Germans arrived first, the Village Guards should head to meet the British.⁷² Everybody was expecting an Allied landing, but it did not happen. Therefore at least at the work sessions by the leaders of the SLS and of the Slovenian Legion, the growing **opinion** was **that there was a need to parley with the Germans**, who in the meantime had already occupied Ljubljana and the railroad corridors from Trieste to Rijeka.

A Brief Description of the Destruction of the VS

Lt. Col. Peterlin had ordered immediately after Italy’s capitulation that the Village Guard be dissolved, but this order could not be carried out. The manner of the VS demise is briefly summarized by location:⁷³

a) Notranjska

When Italy capitulated, this region had 36 garrisons with around 2,000 men. After the capitulation, some of them assembled at Vrhnika, Borovnica, and Logatec. Some garrisons moved into the woods and waited to see what the Germans would do, and others disbanded. The only garrison to remain at its post was the strong garrison at **Rovte**, which confiscated 2 artillery pieces from the Italians. However, Partisan agents sent word to the Germans at Logatec that there were Partisans at Rovte. On this misinformation the Germans attacked the garrison, killed 4 Guards, set fire to the building, disarmed all the survivors, and drove them away to Logatec.

⁷⁰ NOV, 521, which quotes Ferenc 1967, 178-187

⁷¹ According to Kos I, 314-315; however NOV, 521, writes according to Ferenc: “In principle they should not attack the Partisans, and they should carefully shy away from all skirmishes...”

⁷² Kos I, 315, without citing any sources, writes that Col. Peterlin stated this in 1945 before the court in Ljubljana to where he had been transported by force from Dachau; NOV 521 repeats the same thing, but it says that this was an order by the reactionary leadership, in other words, the antirevolutionist command, on September 8, 1943.

⁷³ Saje, 566-567 and 584-610; Mikuž III, 5-29; NOV, 520-526; *Vestnik* 1963, 186-189 and 256; Grum-Pleško, the entire book; Kos I, 316-349, and others. Probably the best description to date is *Dies Irae* by Ferenc.

After the pastor from Rovte was able to convince the Germans that these captives were really anticommunists, the Germans returned their weapons and drove them back to Rovte.⁷⁴

The garrison at **Šent Jošt** remained quite active, where 25 men and lads maneuvered night and day around the neighboring hills until the Slovenian Homeguard was established.

More than three hundred men had gone for refuge to the garrison at **Bloke**, which the Partisans, with the help of Italian artillery gunners, destroyed after a one-day battle. All the officers and distinguished Village Guards were tied up and driven off to Kočevje, where after frightful tortures they were killed in Jelendol and Mačkovec. As for the remaining men, some were mobilized into the Partisan ranks, and the others were permitted to go home.

At **Pudob**, the Partisan Šercer Brigade destroyed the manpower of three VS garrisons from Loški potok and the garrison from Grahovo. Seventy VS surrendered, and 55 of them fought their way to Rakek to reach the Germans.⁷⁵

The garrisons from **Begunje** and **Bezuljak** took the weapons from the Italians at Cerknica, but they had to return to **Bezuljak**. After two days of fighting, the Guards surrendered after the Partisans promised them amnesty. But the Partisans tied up and drove away about 40-50 of them to Jelendol and Kočevje where they shot them. Any remaining VS who had gone into hiding were later hunted down and also killed.

The Partisans immediately conscripted almost 3,000 men in the Cerknica area. The Germans attacked them from Rakek and shattered these raw Partisan units, who lost over 100 men killed in battle, which included many former Village Guards who had gone back home.⁷⁶

b) The Mirna River Valley

The VS units from **Rakovnik** and **Št. Rupert** rescued the garrison in **Mokronog**; all of them then departed towards Sv. Križ to Krško, where they teamed up with Captain Vuk Rupnik's group.

One part of the garrison at **Trebnje** broke its way to Turjak. The larger part, with its commander, were led to Trebnje by Partisans who falsely claimed that they were going off to fight the Germans; here the Partisans disarmed them, immediately shot the more prominent individuals, and shoved the rest into their own ranks.

The Italians first of all disarmed the strong garrison in **Stična**, but afterwards the Guards with 6 submachine guns disarmed all 300 Italians. They were joined by the garrison from Temenica. They wanted to set out towards Dobropolje, but the active army officer Zupanc betrayed them to the Partisans. The Partisans had come from Trebnje aboard an Italian armored train and surrounded the Guards at the Stična RR station. They conscripted the majority of the Guards into the Partisans, released a few, and imprisoned the rest.

c) Bela Krajina

A part of the garrison from Metlika and the garrison from Dragatuš went to Črnomelj, where the members of the garrison that was formerly there joined up with them. They reached an agreement with the Italian officers to depart jointly towards Trieste. At Kočevska Reka the Partisans recognized the VS, disarmed them, shot the more prominent ones, and placed the majority into the front lines of their own brigade. Only 16 men from Bela Krajina succeeded

⁷⁴ Kos I, 316

⁷⁵ See Franc Hrbljan-Tine Velikonja, "Grigorij z Velikih Blok" [Gregory from Velike Bloke], *Zaveza*, No. 60, March 2006, XVI, 1, 30-39

⁷⁶ Kos I, 317, citing Ferenc 1967, 264

in reaching Trieste, where the Germans disarmed them and sent them to labor in Germany. The other part of the Metlika garrison wanted to travel together with the Italian group by train to Novo Mesto, but the Partisans stopped them at Gradac; because the Partisans promised amnesty, they started negotiations, but in the end the Partisans disarmed them all.

d) Grčarice

After Major Novak divorced himself from the SL, he received no further aid from it. He tried to get help from the Chetniks in Gorski kotar (the Lika Detachment), which promised him 200 to 300 men. Major Novak remained in Ljubljana, but deployed **the Osredok Detachment (also known as the Dolenjska Detachment)** to Grčarice. This site was hardly suitable from a military standpoint, but they were probably just waiting there for the Allied landing. The landing was the same reason that the Partisans as well had amassed all their brigades in a line between Krim and Kočevski rog. Neither Major Novak nor the SL (or rather, the SZ) realized the reason for this Partisan concentration, so the SL also oriented all the Village Guards towards Turjak.

Two hundred Chetniks from the Dolenjska (also known as the Osredok) Chetnik Detachment had assembled at Grčarice. They were heavily armed and supplied with enough food for a good month. The Partisans attacked them on Wednesday, September 8th. Quite a few officers suggested a sortie, but the commander kept to his standing orders. With the help of Italians at the antitank artillery, the Partisans began to shell the garrison. After two days of fighting the Chetniks raised a white flag. Some officers still wanted to make a break for it, but they were held back by Novak's promise of help from Lika and also from Ljubljana, from where 20 men actually did come. Some officers began negotiations with the Partisans: the latter promised free passage to Dalmatia, from where the Chetniks would go to the British in Egypt, and the wounded would be accepted into Partisan hospitals. The wounded men and commander Koprivica rejected both offers.

The battalion commander, **Captain Milan Kranjc-Kajtimir, was shouting to the Partisans that they must realize that they were attacking the regular Yugoslav Army.** He urged them to kill their commissars and join the Chetniks. **But the Partisan commanders were calling upon the Chetniks to surrender**, and set the deadline for midnight.

The attack began after midnight and continued through the night. The fighting lasted two days, during which commander Kranjc died. He was replaced by an active though indecisive officer, Lieutenant Strniša-Pribina. Some officers went to a parley and brought back the news that they were being promised amnesty. Two Chetnik battalions hung out a white flag, whereupon all the rest surrendered too: 171 Chetniks. Eleven had been killed in battle, 18 were wounded, and one fled, while the Partisans had 11 dead and 18 wounded, of whom 2 died later (Ferenc).⁷⁷

After the surrender, the Chetnik officer who had been negotiating with the Partisans asked for a written guarantee. They shoved a submachine gun muzzle to his chest and said: "This is our guarantee!"⁷⁸ They shot some of the Chetniks immediately. They tied up the captive Chetniks, hands wired together behind their backs, and under continuous jeering led them away to Dolenja vas; Chaplain Šinkar walked at the head of the Chetnik column of prisoners.⁷⁹ Then amid constant taunting and beating, they led them away towards Kočevje. They intended at first

⁷⁷ NOV, 519, states that the Chetniks had 17 wounded, not 11; Kos states the Partisans had 28, not 18, wounded.

⁷⁸ Grum-Pleško, 73

⁷⁹ Report by Janko Mačkovšek (*inž.*) on December 4, 1943 to the London government; quoted by Griesser-Pečar, 237-238.

to shoot them all, but then interrogated some of them. In the end, they sentenced 17 to death at the infamous Kočevje Trials. As for the rest, the majority was slaughtered without trial, some in Mozelj, and the others in Grčarice.

When 1943 drew to a close, barely 60 men of the JVvD remained.⁸⁰

e) Turjak

According to the plan by Colonel Ernest Peterlin, in the event of the Italian capitulation, the Village Guards were to disarm the Italian soldiers and assemble around Turjak.⁸¹ Some already then and there argued against his plan to concentrate around Turjak, and the debate continued, even into the emigration era. Nevertheless Kos (Jeločnik) together with the Regime historians hold the opinion that the plan did have “some tactical merit, for it enabled venues towards Ribnica, Grosuplje and Dobropolje, and a retreat to Ljubljana...”⁸² After the collapse of Fascist Italy, Peterlin sent couriers with instructions that the VS should set out towards Turjak. Individual VS in the vicinity of Ljubljana did indeed head there, but the couriers probably never reached the vast majority of the garrisons.

Much has been written about Turjak, much of it very polemical by both sides [the two leaderships, political and military].⁸³ Franc Grum writes correctly that there was no mutual trust between the two leaderships and thus no collaboration either. Mikuž also delves into quite some detail on this point.⁸⁴ It is true “that the fall of Grčarice and Turjak were but the logical consequence of what had been going on in the anticommunist camp”.⁸⁵ Grum acknowledges that it is pure conjecture whether the course of events would have been different had there been a resolute anticommunist manifestation under a unified leadership since world public opinion was already on the side of the communists. But he disagrees with anyone who maintains that the reason for the communist victory was primarily or solely because the anticommunist leadership had no links with the outside world, with the allegation that only the communists had contacts with “the Allies”.⁸⁶

Kos presents a day by day account of the events at Turjak, from Thursday September 9 to Sunday September 19, when at 13:20 the VS fighters, who stayed there to fight, hung a white flag from the ruins of the castle, not because they believed they could be defeated, but only because the Partisans had been yelling for them to surrender with the words: “Our Command

⁸⁰ Kos I, 318-322; Part of this is also in the chapter on armed resistance.

⁸¹ The purpose of this concentration was to reorganize the Village Guards and rename it to the Slovenian National Army as a part of the JVvD. In this manner the VS would be accepted as Allies, when the latter had landed on the northern Adriatic.

⁸² NOV, 521

⁸³ I list only a few works. Regime writers: Saje, 598-607; Ferenc 1967, 187-196; NOV, 523-527; Mikuž III, 28-32. Anticommunist: Grum-Pleško, 77-127; Janez Grum, *Ob 20-letnici Turjaka [On the 20th Anniversary of Turjak]*, ZSS 1964, 310-320; Franc Grum, *Misli ob septembarskih dogodkih leta 1943 [Thoughts on the events of September 1943]*, Vestnik 1963, 8-9, 171-175; Stane Bitenc, *Ugotovitve ob Turjaku [The Findings about Turjak]*, Vestnik 1960, 3-4, 54-55; Janez Grum, *Za zgodovino Turjaka [For the History of Turjak]*, ZSS 1965, 260-272.

⁸⁴ See the writings of Mikuž and F. Grum on this topic in the preceding footnote.

⁸⁵ This fact radically refutes the Partisan defamation about the servile character of the anticommunist fighters, whose behavior was the exact opposite of the true submissive slavery, blind obedience, and groveling of the Partisans before the handful of criminals that were seated in the CK-KPJ and the KPS.

⁸⁶ F. Grum, *Vestnik* 1963, 8-9, 175

offers amnesty to everybody including the commanders.” Kos also reports what happened after the surrender, from Sunday the 19th till Tuesday the 21st of September.⁸⁷ Kos, with Grum-Pleško as the source, writes that 34 wounded were seized; the Partisans tied up the remaining prisoners in pairs, 300 pairs in all. The NOV account gives a specific figure: “695 captured White Guards and Chetniks, among them, if you can believe it, there were 26 priests and seminarians”⁸⁸

The Partisans immediately shot most of the severely wounded right in front of Turjak Castle, where the local inhabitants afterwards buried 26 bodies. All the others were herded on foot to Velike Lašče. The column of prisoners was led by a tank, sporting a Slovenian flag defiled by a Soviet star, and a troop of Partisans with accordion music for accompaniment.

On Monday morning they divided the prisoners into four groups: commanders and organizers, priests and seminarians, volunteers, and conscripts. They segregated the first two groups from the rest and tied their hands. First of all they drove away 12 officers (3 escaped), and shot the rest without any trial. They led the second group to the Kočevje Castle and locked them up together with the prisoners from Grčarice. On the following day they selected 60 new victims and again without trial shot them in front of the Velike Lašče train station.

All who remained were tied in groups of 40 to a rope, crammed into livestock boxcars and driven away to Kočevje. They packed around 350 of them into the Student Dormitory, where they lay on the floor without food and water for three days. During this time, the Partisans continuously interrogated them, and called individuals outside, who were fed the lie that they were being sent home, but in fact every last one of these was slaughtered.⁸⁹ As for those who had distinguished themselves in battles, the communists transferred these to the Kočevje Castle and shot many of them in secret. The rest were packed into small cells, approximately 35 to a cell, so crammed together that they could only stand. Once per day they were given some sort of “dingy soup”. They were plagued by diarrhea but were not permitted to go to the toilets. They were afflicted by skin rashes; everybody had sores and scabs.⁹⁰

Some reasons for the defeat of Turjak:⁹¹

1. Lt. Col. Peterlin was absent. He was probably the only person whom all the commanders would have obeyed, even those from Dobropolje, most of whom were members of Straža.
2. The commanders at Turjak were unrealistically focused on holding back the Partisan advance towards Ljubljana and that with this they would show the Slovenians something grand. That is why three times they rejected Cerkvenik’s order for a breakout. According to Kos, even the Regime historian maintains that a sortie was still possible even to the very end; some fighters of course would be killed, but the majority would have been able to save themselves.⁹²
3. Given so many anti-revolutionist units, there was at that time not even a single combat battalion. The Village Guards from their very inception were a defensive and not an

⁸⁷ Kos I, 324-343 and 344-347; similar descriptions are found in Grum-Pleško, loc. cit, but with fewer details in NOV, loc. cit., and other regime writers.

⁸⁸ NOV, 326

⁸⁹ Grum-Pleško, 129

⁹⁰ Grum-Pleško, 123

⁹¹ Kos I, 344

⁹² Kos cites “Mikuž, III, 24”, which has no word here about this: Mikuž III, 31 is where it is treated directly

attacking force. At the same time, the majority of them believed that the Partisans were the stronger force, which was not true – not even with the help of some Italians and the weapons that they had confiscated from them, or rather, that the Italians freely handed over to them.

According to Ferenc, Who is at fault?

Ferenc rightfully poses this question.⁹³ His list of developmental problems can be summarized as follows:

1. There was too little concern about discipline among the VS men, despite the fact the Italians were most to blame for this;
2. There was no true order and discipline at the leaderships in Ljubljana.
3. The unforgivable mistake of the main leadership was that nothing was done about an intelligence service, from the Supreme Command down to the commanders in the field.
4. Nothing was being done about plans of operations and about an eventual withdrawal.

According to Major Novak, Who is at fault?

At the plenary session of the Slovenian Alliance on the day after the fall of Turjak, the commander of the Chetniks, Major Novak, tendered his letter of resignation. In the letter he wanted to show the **reasons for the tragedy**: he cast blame on the military politics of the SZ and its consultants (Vauhnik, Peterlin), on the unfriendly attitude of the VS towards the Chetniks, and above all on the fact that only the Gorenjska Chetnik Detachment was fighting against the Germans, while the VS and the Chetniks had shoved themselves into a civil war with the Partisans, even though it is necessary for all time “to stigmatize the Partisan leadership for having no shame about using a part of the Italian army to fight against fellow Slovenians”. He lists the following as **ill-fated moments** in military politics:

1. The failure to carry out the resolution that was made in the early springtime of 1942, when the communist menace first loomed, to arm small units in the threatened areas; the consequence of this failure was an unimpeded Partisan growth and the slaughtering of inhabitants, who then were compelled to begin a justifiable fight with weapons donated by the foreign occupiers;
2. After the defeat of the Partisans in 1942, there came the golden opportunity to form independent detachments, as ordered by the Minister of War, Mihailović;
3. The creation of a war council, that in effect wrecked the prestige of this commander;
4. The failure to carry out the renewed resolution, that after the Fascist collapse at least 25% of the VS would transfer to the Chetniks; the consequence of this was that when Italy did capitulate, 3000 people were missing from the field; this number would have given the democrats, not the communists, the upper hand.

The Village Guards, Legionnaires, and Chetniks in Novo Mesto Save Themselves

Because there were no instructions coming from Ljubljana, the SL leaders and the SZ deputies in Novo Mesto made a decision to take over the administration of the city and demand that the Italians recognize the native rule. It appointed **Captain Vuk Rupnik** as the commander of the city and the combined anticommunist military units (the Legion of Death and the VS).

⁹³ Ferenc 1992, 392-402; see also Mikuž III, 32-33

The communist-dominated IOOF issued a decree as well to its own 15th Division to disarm the Italians and take control of the government in Novo Mesto. Kidrič, Avšič, and Major Jones came to Novo Mesto to negotiate with the Italian General Cerutti. They did not reach an agreement about the handover of weapons.

When Rupnik came to the Italian HQ on the morning of September 10th with the intention of clarifying the relations between the Italians and his own soldiers, he learned that Gen. Cerutti was at Straža holding negotiations with Party representatives. With Italian assistance, an armored train full of Partisans drove from Straža into the city, and simultaneously a convoy of army trucks packed with Italians and Partisans arrived in the city.

By 16:00 hours that day, 1,600 anticommunist fighters had already congregated in Novo Mesto, and Rupnik deployed them around the city. The Legionnaires moved from the northern part of the city to the southern part. The Italians were trying to convince them to move into the camp of the Italian infantry regiment at Rogov log. That same evening Rupnik recommended to the VS commanders to make a sortie and assemble at Mrtvi Slatnik, but the commanders rejected this, because their men were hungry and tired.

Gen. Cerutti invited Captain Rupnik to his base headquarters. He informed Rupnik that he had negotiated with the Partisans for the unhindered departure of all the Italian divisions, and invited Rupnik to join their withdrawal. But then Rupnik encountered Kidrič and Avšič at the headquarters. In Cerutti's presence, Kidrič invited Rupnik with his units to join into the NOV, "after a preliminary sifting and removal of those who have blood on their hands", an offer that Rupnik declined.

When Rupnik returned to the camp, he gave everyone a choice, either to march out with the Italians towards the Allies or to head for the Slovenian mountains and wait for the Allies there. The vast majority favored the joint march with the Italians, yet during the night around 200 Legionnaires and civilians slipped from the camp. On the morning of September 10th, the Partisans occupied Novo Mesto as soon as the Italian army and the Legionnaires departed.

At the village of Potok, the commander of the Italian Combat Battalion, Captain Di Pompa, told Rupnik that the **Partisans were demanding that the Italians hand over all their weapons and also hand over the Slovenian Legionnaires as the precondition for allowing the Italian Army a continued unimpeded passage.** The Slovenian anticommunists therefore **resolved** at Jurna vas **to separate themselves from the Italians.** The Slovenians departed towards the Gorjanci hills. They rested atop Zajčji vrh; here, during the night, around 200 young men left to return to their homes. **The remaining 1200 arrived on September 11th in Maršeča vas which was situated at the then German-Italian border.** The Partisan Šlander Brigade sent then an ultimatum to surrender. A short while ago this brigade had attacked Kostanjevica, to where the Village Guards from Šentrupert, Mokronog, and Rakovnik had retreated, but German soldiers with the help of Village Guards had repulsed the attack.

On the morning of the following day, the **Partisan attack began at Zameško naselje**, on the left bank of the Krka River, some 4km from Šentjernej. The fighting lasted till 5:30 in the afternoon, when the **Legionnaires put the Partisans to flight**, seized their weapons, wagons, and an Italian tank.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Report by Vuk Rupnik in *Tabor* 1978, 214-299; citing it is Kos I, 347-349

4. Mass Murders in 1943

The Kočevje Trials

On October 2, 1943 there **“came to an end the investigations preliminary to the first communist political trials, which should be used as a model for similar trials after the war.”**⁹⁵ “In these preliminary investigations the new ‘People’s Power’ was trying to eliminate all political, intellectual, and religious opposition.”⁹⁶

The proceedings began against 21 handpicked prisoners on October 9th at 21:30 hours in the Sokol Hall, and ended already on October 11th at 6 o’clock in the morning. They sentenced 16 prisoners to death, and 4 to forced labor; the case against one of the accused was dropped. They liquidated all of the sentenced persons in Mozelj near Kočevje on October 19th during the night.

The trial was **“a theatrical exhibition, to show to their own inhabitants and to the foreign world how orderly the ‘Peoples Rule’ was operating and how justly it was treating its enemies.”**⁹⁷ In other words: a pure farce.

However this show trial also had an additional purpose: **to deflect attention from the secret executions of hundreds of other prisoners!** First they killed the Chetniks captured in Grčarice, 171 in number,⁹⁸ and next they probably killed the remaining 14 wounded too, as can be inferred from a letter by the physician Dr. Obračunč to Dr. Cedrik, the health expert at the Supreme Headquarters.⁹⁹

At the OF plenary session on September 21, 1943, Boris Kidrič reported that their investigative lockup pens contained 1,200 “White Guards” (VS and Legionnaires) and “Blue Guards” (Chetniks), that these included both higher and lower criminals and also those who were suckered in. He proposed that a public trial be held for the high criminals, and that the remainder be sentenced to forced labor. The Supreme Plenum ratified his proposal: this meant that this executive body determined sentences! Countermanding the OF Plenum, the CK-KPS ordered that those who were sentenced to forced labor must be “liquidated” too; the majority of the prisoners belonged to this group.

The “public prosecutor”, Dr. Vito Kraigher, gathered most of the data against those sentenced at Kočevje, but the investigation in Ribnica and Kočevje was entrusted to a specially selected commission. In accordance with a publicly known common communist practice, they demanded that some prisoners sign an affidavit which admitted their guilt, as for example, the **Affidavit by the White Guard Priests and Seminarians**, 26 in number.¹⁰⁰ The latter also had to write a letter to Bishop Rožman to urge him to take an interest in reconciliation among the Slovenian people. Because the original copy of the letter was discovered among the documents from the Kočevje Trials, it is not known if this letter was ever actually sent.¹⁰¹

“If the special military court gave the semblance of judicial proceedings, the ‘regular’ military court operated without mercy. The regular court was comprised of only two members, an

⁹⁵ Kos I, 350-356; Griesser-Pečar, 434-446; Ferenc 2002, 403-669

⁹⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 434

⁹⁷ *ibid*, 435

⁹⁸ Grum-Pleško, 74

⁹⁹ Borštnik, 55-56

¹⁰⁰ Janez Grum, *Ob petintrideseti obletnici kočevske izjave duhovnikov in bogoslovcev [On the 35th anniversary of the Kočevje Statement by Priests and Seminarians]*, Meddobje, Bs.As., 1979, 76-80; Kos I, 350

¹⁰¹ Griesser-Pečar, 438

unknown political-commissar and the infamous Brigade Commander Pirkovič from Št. Jernej, known by the nickname 'Čort' (the Devil)."¹⁰² The liquidators had barely returned when these two "judges" summoned a new group of prisoners out of the cells into the corridor. However this was not for the purpose of any hearings. As their hands were being tied behind their backs, Pirkovič would read the sentence: "You are traitors and deserve death!" They drove them away aboard a truck to Mozelj and shot them there. This happened in the darkness of nighttime from the twelfth to the thirteenth of October, and resumed the following day, from eight o'clock in the evening until three o'clock in the morning. In this manner they drove off 114 victims.¹⁰³ The larger group of prisoners (335), not earmarked for public trials, were on October 2nd put into "labor brigades" and taken away from Kočevje to Ribnica. The majority went all the way to Stična, but towards the middle of October, before the Germans occupied this area, this group was "cleansed", in other words, put to death.

The "Trials" in Ribnica

In **Ribnica** there were 396 individuals in military detention, or 440 if including suspects. What is interesting is that local delegations and OF agents came to intercede on behalf of many of these detainees, but were unsuccessful, according to the written records of the court. The "court" actually had no idea of what were the charges against the majority of the detainees, so they released a few, but this engendered strenuous objections by the VOS, who had brought in all these suspects. The judiciary mentor himself, Kocijančič, was complaining how difficult it was to convince his Comrades about what was meant by proof, what constituted guilt, and what can be considered as a legal proof, because many of them were accepting the VOS report itself as the sole proof of guilt.

On October 15th, the "Court Commission", comprised of Commissar Pirkovič-Čort along with two Partisans (Mršek and Marko Vrhunc) arrived in Ribnica. They did not interrogate the prisoners. Pirkovič summoned individuals according to a pre-fabricated list. Vrhunc shoved them into an adjoining room, from where they were packed aboard trucks and driven away to the execution sites. At Jelendol, they were shooting them at the rim of three limestone caves so that the bodies would drop headlong into the abyss. The exhumation of the bodies in 1944 proved that just from the Ribnica jails alone, the Partisans had slaughtered 329 Slovenians without a trial and without a determination of any guilt. The list of all the slaughtered has been preserved.¹⁰⁴ The bodies of those exhumed in 1944 still bore visible signs of torture before execution.¹⁰⁵

On October 21, the last 18 prisoners **from the Kočevje Castle** were tied up with wire and driven to Grčarice, where they were locked up together with those who had been brought from Ribnica. Two days later they selected 21 victims, lined them up on the road along a wall, tied their hands together with wire and then to a rope, and led them away into a small valley near Grčarice where they were shot. The last 54 prisoners from Grčarice were taken into the woods on Medvedjek where they were transferred into a labor battalion; a good number of these died from starvation, a handful even escaped, but the majority was "liquidated" by Party members.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² ČB, 115-116

¹⁰³ Op. loc., 116

¹⁰⁴ Pastor Turk wrote down the list of the executed in his breviary. – One of those shot, Slavko Zupančič, saved himself; his testimony is in *Taboriščni arhiv priča*, 2. Bs.As., 1970, 253-278

¹⁰⁵ Grum-Pleško, 136

¹⁰⁶ Kos I, 355

The Regime historians write that the VOS and the OF field agents were the one who determined the fate of the prisoners.¹⁰⁷

In Novo Mesto as well, the Partisans locked up a whole line of anticommunists, 85 already by the end of September. They locked them in the cellar of the burned down Brajtenau Manor near Prečna. They did not permit any visitors, and did not even give them the food that these visitors had brought. About a week later, they took them away to Birčna vas, where they shot 18 of them.¹⁰⁸ When the Germans were approaching Novo Mesto, the Partisans released 70 prisoners, but killed 25 of them in the woods near Padež, among them the catechist Kek, even though Mikuž had earlier promised amnesty to this cathedral canon and priest from Novo mesto.¹⁰⁹

If any charges were even actually presented, they were not authenticated, either at the trials in Ribnica or at Kočevje. They also paid no heed to the testimonies of the accused, who claimed counter to the public indictments that they had never even been in the places where the accused deeds were alleged to have occurred. **In other words, there was no realistic, legally valid defense.** Griesser-Pečar writes that she herself has authenticated how the statements that were given in the remand prisons were used as the indictments.¹¹⁰ And **Kraigher** could still make the statement that the Kočevje Trials were extraordinarily significant in the development of a judicature in the burgeoning new state. The president of the special court, Anton **Kržišnik**, claimed that even greater was the political and moral meaning of the Kočevje Trials, which they later hailed as the first trials against war criminals in Europe. Kržišnik also wrote: "The legal basis for the trials was revolutionist punitive law, which was created by the needs to safeguard the fundamental nationalist achievements and to win the national liberation fight against the fascist occupiers and their accomplices from the ranks of native traitors..."¹¹¹

Or stated in another way: law fabricated by the whim of the victor.

¹⁰⁷ NOV, 526

¹⁰⁸ Ivan Dolenc, *Moja rast [How I Grew Up]*, Buenos Aires 1973, 111

¹⁰⁹ ČB, 129-135; Dolenc, *ibid.*; Kos I, 356

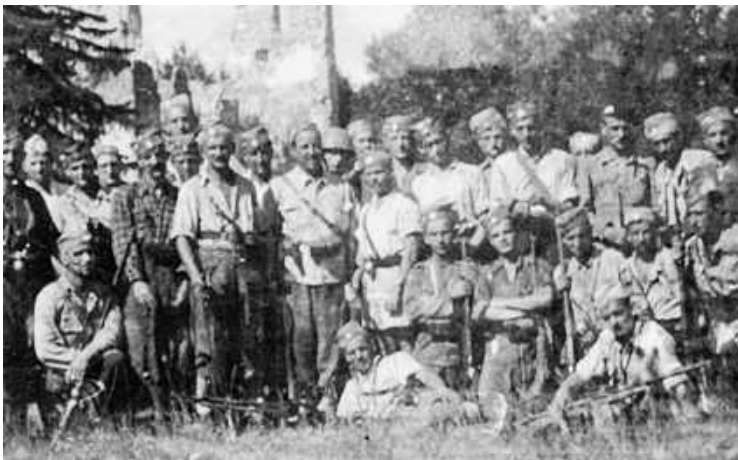
¹¹⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 442

¹¹¹ Anton Kržišnik, *Kočevski proces, Spomini na partizanska leta [The Kocevje Trials, Remembering the Partisan Years]*, Ljubljana 1963, 69; quoted by Griesser-Pečar, 443.



The first VS group
created, in Št. Jošt

Maček, 53



Group of Chetnik
soldiers

Podobe MNZS, 98



VS in Videm near Muljava

Podobe MNZS, 93



VS garrison from Dobrova on patrol

Podobe MNZS, 97



Murdered
members of
the Mavsar
family

Zajdela



Assassination of Dr. Erlich

Zaveza, 5, 29



Kočevje after days of battle with the Partisans

Zaveza, 26, 80



VS in Grčarice

Zaveza, 38, 20



VS captives at Turjak,
tied, must walk to
Kočevje

*Podobe
MNZS, 99*



Turjak Castle before
its destruction

Zaveza, 10, 25



Solemn burial of the
victims from Jelendol

Ferenc, 35

8. The Slovenian Homeguard (SD)

1. The Creation

The Germans Establish the Adriatic Coast Operational Zone

When the Partisan Tomšič Brigade attacked the German transport train between Preserje and Borovnica on August 23rd 1943, the German 71st Infantry Division under the command of Gen. W. Raapke crossed the border checkpoints at Ljubljana, Podbrdo, and Trbiž [Tarvisio]; two regiments took control of the southern railroad tracks as far as Opčine nad Trstom [above Trieste], and the third regiment guarded the trains.

After Mussolini's fall (July 25, 1943), Marshal Badoglio took over the Italian government. The Germans realized that the new government of Marshal Badoglio would offer surrender to the Allied forces. Therefore they made plans to disarm the Italian army and occupy northern Italy, and more especially because they anticipated an Allied landing either in southern Italy, along the Adriatic Coast, or in Greece. Italy signed its surrender on September 3rd, but the Allied Command did not make it public till September 8th. Immediately after this, Field Marshal Rommel, the commander of German forces in northern and central Italy, received orders to disarm the Italian Army and fortify the battle line in southern Italy.

In Slovenian lands, the Germans disarmed the Italians only in the city of Ljubljana, and in the areas along the southern railroad tracks up to Trieste and along the Podbrdo-Gorica RR line. Due to a lack of troops, they were unable to go into the interior of the country. As a result, **a large part of Ljubljana Province was abandoned to the Partisans, who unleashed their rage against their ideological opponents; the same was happening in Istria, Gorica, Trieste, and Furlania** [Friuli-Venezia Giulia].

Rumors were spreading through Ljubljana that the Partisans were intending to break into the city, pillage it, and slaughter around 20,000 inhabitants.¹ Any such attempt along these ideas was **prevented by the City Guard of Ljubljana, which was conceived by the mayor at the time, Gen. Rupnik**; he entrusted his son-in-law, Captain Suvajdžić, to organize this group. At its inception it was comprised of a few hundred men, former Village Guards, Chetniks and some civilians, but after September 15th it increased to around 1,000 men. The commander of the German garrison in Ljubljana immediately gave it recognition as an anticommunist military detachment.²

The Germans formally marched into Ljubljana during the night leading to September 9 and disarmed the Italian division together with the entire HQ Staff of the XI Army Group. **Gen. Raapke addressed a proclamation to the Slovenians in Slovenian and in German**, that af-

¹ Kos II, 9, quoting Tone Ferenc, "*Nemski okupator v Ljubljani*" [*The German Occupier in Ljubljana*], *Ljubljana v ilegali* IV, Ljubljana 1970, 70.

² There are already many works about the SD. Probably the most significant is the book *Slovensko Domobranstvo* by B. Mlakar. Other sources: Kos II, 7-29, 56-76, 90-116, 117-145, 160-173, 179-182, 201-217; Griesser-Pečar, 288-319; Kolarič III, 289-309; on the Revolutionist side: NOV, 573-578 and elsewhere; Mikuž IV, 237-321, 527-550, and elsewhere.

ter Italy's surrender, Germany was taking the homeland of the Slovenians under its protection, that work should calmly go on as before, and that Slovenian security forces were responsible for maintaining order. **"With this proclamation the Germans for the first time since 1941 addressed their call to Slovenians. The proclamation aroused hope in the people that Germany would tone down its behavior to date against Slovenians."**³

According to Hitler's decree, on September 10th Ljubljana Province was added to the newly-created **Adriatic Coastal Zone of Operations**, which also included Istria, Trieste, Gorica, Rijeka, the Kvarner Bay area, and Furlania [Friuli-Venezia Giulia]. The zone was placed under the jurisdiction of the Gauleiter of Carinthia, Dr. Friedrich Rainer, who was later given the title of High Commissioner. Italian Prefects were appointed as administrators of the individual regions; only the head of the Ljubljana Provincial Administration was given the title "president". The Germans of course assigned "advisors" to all these administrators. To head the police department in Ljubljana Province, Himmler appointed the senior director of the SS and Police of the XVIII Military District in Salzburg, Lt. General **Erwin Rösener**, who moved from Bled to Ljubljana. Lt. General **Otto Globotschnigg**, who resided in Trieste, was appointed to be the superior director of the SS and Police for the remaining five regions.

Rainer offered the post of Head of the Provincial Administration to Gen. Rupnik, who asked for a few days to consider the offer. During these days he supposedly was visited by Bishop Rožman who conveyed a plea from the Slovenian political leaders to accept the post.⁴

The extraordinariness of the case of Slovenia

"The problem of the Slovenian Homeguard during the Second World War is one of the most complicated and tragic chapters in Slovenian history, which the communist propaganda cannot justly portray with its simple black-or-white characterizations."⁵

The tragedy of this period during the German Occupation is that **the Slovenian anticommunists had only two choices: either to join the communists**, whereby they would be casting aside their ideals and also putting their own lives at risk, **or to rely to some degree on the occupier in the fight against communism**, whereby they would be putting themselves in the constant danger of crossing the line into the taboo realm of collaboration with the rulers of an enemy occupation. **The middle ground, if it could be imagined, would be to keep the reliance on the occupier as minimal as possible.**⁶

The creation of the SD undoubtedly served the German war plans, but even more so the extraordinary dire straits of the anticommunists. Even before Germany occupied Italy, Gauleiter **Rainer had intended to establish native units under the directorship of the German police**. However the Slovenians rejected this arrangement. **They wanted to have their own security unit, as the eventual SD motto stated, "For God, the nation, and the homeland"**.

³ Kos II, 9; highlighting was added here for emphasis

⁴ Kos II, 11 writes what were to have been Rožman's actual words: "What mattered at that time was that in the governmental palace there would sit not a German, but a Slovenian, of whatever political conviction, as long as he was a resolute anticommunist"; he cites his source as being Kolarič III, 296, but this text is not found there.

⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 288

⁶ Griesser-Pečar, *ibid.*

The only point in common with the Germans was therefore the fight against Bolshevism and against a sovietization of Slovenia. Viewed in this light, the SD was but a continuation of the VS, even though over time it became more organized, less defensive and more on the offensive. The leadership of the anti-revolutionists regarded the SD to be a part of the Slovenian National Army.⁷

The historian Mlakar makes an important point: the Germans in Slovenia could never do any better than place ever tightening restrictions on the Homeguards: **“Thus the Slovenians remained one of the rare European nations that did not have ‘their own’ SS units – as a part of the joint European army against Bolshevism.”**⁸

The quandary of the VS survivors: hide out or turn themselves in?

The Partisans pressed thousands of new fighters into service and seized from the surrendered Italian Army vast quantities of weapons and ammunition, enough to last them nearly to the end of 1944. After Italy surrendered, the VS units, who possessed only outdated light weaponry, despite their numeric superiority, for the most part disbanded, while some of them were killed in action in brief skirmishes with the Partisans or else were murdered, pressed into service, or sent into labor detachments; in the end, barely a third of the VS remained intact.

A group of around 400 fighters, who saved their lives by making a sortie out of Turjak Castle, was moving towards Ljubljana when it was stopped and disarmed by the German Army. This group of Village Guards asked the Germans for protection, just as was done by the Novo Mesto group under the command of Vuk Rupnik. Other nearby garrisons followed suit.

The request for German protection was not to the liking of either the leaders of the Slovenian Alliance or of the Slovenian Legion, or of the SLS within the homeland and in exile. Yet for the majority of the VS members, they could see no other way out at the time to save themselves from certain death.

The Political Leaders Decide on a Middle Course

The anticommunist leadership (the political leaders of the SLS, the SZ, and the JVvD) had quite a few meetings in those days. When **they finally saw that there was not going to be any Allied invasion in Istria or in Trieste**, they realized that their plans had fizzled. **Only three choices remained:** 1. Go into the forests and give themselves up to the Partisans; 2. Though insufficiently equipped, fight against the Germans; 3. With German aid, organize a self defense against the Revolution.

It was clear to everyone that **in the first option, the Partisans would put the majority to death.** “By principle, the OF had no room for anyone who wanted to be in the OF purely to fight for national liberation but was against the leadership role of the Party.”⁹ **In the second option**, the Germans in retaliation would be sending the younger males to their own battlefronts and the older ones to forced labor inside Germany, and deporting their families. Therefore **the only salvation that remained was self-defense, which was not possible without German approbation and German weapons.**

⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 289-290

⁸ Mlakar, 353; highlighting was added here for emphasis

⁹ Sp. Hribar, 111

¹⁰ Bučar, 116; highlighting was added here for emphasis; some dispute this opinion by claiming that the SD was only about self-defense

“Only once the Homeguard was created, did the Slovenian anticommunist leaders clearly perceive the fundamental fact, to which no thought had been given until just before Italy’s surrender, that the Partisan army would have to be defeated militarily, if they wanted to wrest from the hands of the Communist Party the basic tool that was paving the way to their monopolization of ruling power.”¹⁰

The Creation of the Homeguard¹¹

General Rösener sent an invitation for a parley to Dr. M. Stare and Dr. A. Šmajd, who did not reply because they believed that this would be improper for them to do. They convened a meeting of the SLS, at which they unanimously renounced and forbade any collaboration whatsoever with the occupier. At this time they were probably unaware of what was happening out in the field.¹²

Before this, Andrej Križman, a priest who was in the VS leadership circle, had responded to an invitation by General Rösener to come for a talk. At this visit on **September 16, 1943**, the priest was joined by a companion travelling incognito, Dr. Albin Šmajd, member of the SLS and one of the leaders of the SL, who introduced himself to the general **under a fake name**. According to Dr. Šmajd’s notes, the conversation dealt **exclusively with the organizing militarily of Slovenian security units**. Rösener suggested the name of either “White Guard”, which Šmajd adamantly rejected as offensive, or “Territorial Security”. Šmajd suggested “Provincial Police” (Landesgendarmarie). Šmajd also mentioned the possibility of mandatory conscription, because many would not dare to enroll voluntarily from their fear of communist retaliation. The Slovenians of course wanted to resolve as many uncertainties as possible.¹³ **Rösener did approve some of the conditions:** the force would have Slovenian leaders accepting and dismissing the men, it would have freedom of operation against the Partisans, it would have its own uniforms, sporting neither a Slovenian nor a German coat of arms, but rather the Coat of Arms of the Duchy of Carniola [Kranjska], and some other points. The most important point was Rösener’s unequivocal consent that **the official language within these units would be Slovenian**. He also promised that **the Slovenian men would serve only in Ljubljana Province**.¹⁴ Rösener wanted two German officers or junior officers to be assigned to each Homeguard troop, to which Šmajd objected; as it turned out: until February of 1945 there were no Germans in the Homeguard troops except at battalion-level command, but after February 15th of 1945, the Germans, in their distrust of the SD, mixed their own German troops into the Homeguard battalions, except for Vuk Rupnik’s battalion, which remained 100% Slovenian.¹⁵ Rösener did not send an invitation to Gen. Rupnik until September 17, 1943, the day after his meeting with Dr. Šmajd.¹⁶

¹¹ Mlakar, 83-145

¹² Griesser-Pečar, 290 footnote 251

¹³ Miloš Stare, *Leto 1945 – usoden mejnik* [*The Year 1945 – a Fateful Milestone*], ZSS 1965, 215-218, especially 216-217; Kos II, 14, who cites Ivan Križnar, *Slovensko domobranstvo*, Ljubljana v ilegali IV, 240

¹⁴ Janez Grum, *Spomini na dr. Šmajda* [*Remembering Dr. Šmajd*], *Vestnik* 1986, 4, 283; Kos II, 14, who mentions that he is taking details from the book by Božo Repe, “*Mimo odprtih vrat*”, Ljubljana 1988, which prints a facsimile of Šmajd’s report on the negotiations with Gen. Rösener; Griesser-Pečar, 291

¹⁵ Janez Grum, *loc. cit.* in the preceding footnote; Griesser-Pečar, 291, also contains a letter received from Janez Grum dated 2/20/2002

¹⁶ At his trial, Rupnik testified that Gauleiter Rainer had posed the suggestion to establish a homeguard, that he [*Rupnik*] proposed the name “Homeguards”, and that he and Rainer reached an agreement concerning certain conditions. However, Rösener had already acceded to this – and even more! – at the meeting with Dr. Šmajd.

The SZ assigned to Col. Anton Kokalj the task to begin setting up this military organization and for this to step into contact with German officers. The organizing of the SD thus centered on two individuals: Col. Kokalj, who had the support of the democratic political parties, and Gen. Rupnik, who had the favor of the military detachments.¹⁷

On September 21st Rainer authorized Rupnik to write a proclamation about the creation of the SD. Rupnik did indeed compose a draft about the SD, “which was written in a nationalistic spirit, but he also reflected some views from the National-Socialist repertoire”.¹⁸ The Germans composed a different text, which Rupnik did not sign because it was “written too much in the German spirit”, as Rupnik supposedly stated at his trial.¹⁹

Kos was able to write already in 1991 that the younger generation of Slovenian intellectuals was coming to recognize that the anti-revolutionists were faced with a dilemma: either go with the communists or else together with the occupier go against the communists. Spomenka Hribar concurs: **“Expressed in the simplest terms, the dilemma went like this: EITHER go against the occupier and bring about a Sovietization, OR go against Sovietization along with the occupier. There was no middle!”**²⁰

After holding a discussion with Krenner, Peterlin, and Vizjak, Rupnik released all three from any responsibilities entailed with the organizing of the SD. Despite this, Krenner was still called later to a parley at Rösener’s headquarters.²¹

Many members of the former Village Guards responded to the call by the Slovenian Legion and in large numbers enrolled into the SD. On September 22, at the suggestion of the SLS, the **Anticommunist Committee**, under the directorship of Jože Sodja (*inž.*), was created in Ljubljana. This committee organized an **Intelligence Service** and **reorganized the Village Guards**. At first, **three battalions** were created: The **First (1.) Battalion** was constituted from the Ljubljana City Guards, also from Village Guards, Legionnaires, and Chetniks who were billeted in the Homeguard barracks, and from Village Guards from the eastern and northwest vicinities of Ljubljana. The **Second (2.) Battalion** was comprised from the smaller Village Guard units west of the southern railway line. The **Third (3.) Battalion**, placed under the command of Vuk Rupnik, was comprised of Village Guards units and Legionnaires from Novo Mesto and its vicinity.

It must be emphasized that **all the Slovenian representatives were sympathetic to the cause of the Western Allies, and that they were negotiating with the Germans only because they considered the latter to be the lesser evil than the Revolution.**²²

¹⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 291; Kos II, 15 states that Lt. Col. Krenner, Lt. Col. Prezelj, and Naval Captain Kregar were also involved in the talks.

¹⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 292

¹⁹ Griesser-Pečar states this according to Željeznov, but does not mention the page.

²⁰ Kos II, 15 footnote 16, quoting from *Delo*, December 27, 1984; highlighting was added here for emphasis

²¹ Kolarič III, 764-766, *Izjava Franca Krennerja* [Statement by France Krenner], 4/15/1972, in which he states that the Germans promised to him that the Homeguards would have Slovenian officers, orders issued in Slovenian, a Slovenian flag, their own regulations, and their own uniforms (a Slovenian patch with the Carniola Coat of Arms worn on the left sleeve and their own epaulettes on their uniforms the same color as the German police).

²² Today it is clear to anyone who is seriously and objectively familiar with history that Fascism and Nazism were lesser evils than Communism. The first pair of -isms had sprouted from and were focused on only a single nationality, limited to Europe, and had carried out their own reign of terror for a relatively short period of time. But also, communism in various forms for half a century had even more brutally lorded over a large part of Europe, over almost all of Asia, Africa, and a large part of Oceania, and even at present enslaves one third of mankind. In addition, communism caused the deaths of more than 100 million victims!

Friction with the Germans

On **September 23**, while Rösener was away, Rupnik, convinced that he had Rainer's authorization, **appointed** his colleague, a former Yugoslav General, as the **commander of the Slovenian Homeguards**. Kokalj became Inspector General, Krenner became Kokalj's deputy, and Peterlin became the Chief of Staff. Rösener was enraged at such a presumptuous display of personal initiative. When he returned, he dismissed Rupnik from all posts and in writing on November 4th forbade him from any activity whatsoever related to the Homeguards. A year later, in **September of 1944**, **Rupnik was named Inspector General** of the Homeguards, but there was no jurisdiction attached to the title.

In Mlakar's opinion, the **end of October 1943 marked a demarcation of sorts**.²³ The birth phase of the Homeguards was ended. A sort of equilibrium had developed between the German overlords and the Slovenian activists. Via a formal decision by the High Commissioner, **Rösener was appointed the Commander of the Homeguards**, effective on October 1, 1943.²⁴

Thus, friction between the SD and the Germans began immediately, and it never ceased but only increased over time.²⁵

Rösener on the objectives of the Homeguard

Rösener's personal description and definition of the SD is all in all quite significant: "**The Slovenian Homeguard is a territorial self-defense unit, which now numbers some 8,000 men and helps to maintain public order and safety.**"²⁶

Equally significant was Rösener's response at his 1946 trial in Ljubljana, when he was asked by the president of the military court, **against whom would the Homeguards be used: "Against the Partisans."**²⁷

The Homeguard in Primorska, and its work to restore Slovenian public life

Establishing a Homeguard was more difficult in Primorska than in Ljubljana Province. The main reason was that the people believed the lies of the OF, which was strumming the most sensitive chords about nationalist ills and was concealing its own true face about its planned takeover of power.²⁸ **Two decrees** by the High Commissioner Rainer **helped** in the establishment of the Homeguard. The first decree (11/29/1943) ordered mandatory military conscription for all males living in the entire Adriatic Coastal Zone of Operations, and the second (12/6/1943) established volunteer Homeguard units. The task of organizing these units was assigned to the Director-in-chief of the SS and police, Lt. General **Globotschnigg** (Globočnik), whose operational headquarters for the fight against the Partisans was in Trieste. He created a **Directive HQ for Native Detachments** for these volunteer self-defense units.

²³ Mlakar, 281-288

²⁴ It seems fitting to emphasize the following: the **majority of the Homeguards did not know that Rösener was commander of the Homeguards!**

²⁵ Mlakar's "*Slovensko domobranstvo*" gives sufficient examples of this over many pages.

²⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 295, shows Rösener's letter dated 3/8/1945, preserved in the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS 7 /122; highlighting was added here for emphasis

²⁷ Kos II, 17, quotes from the book *Proces proti vojnim zločincem in izdajalcem Rupniku, Rösenerju, Rožmanu, Kreku, Vizjaku in Hacinu* [The trial against the war criminals and traitors Rupnik, Rösener, Rožman, Krek, Vizjak, and Hacin], Ljubljana 1946, 115; highlighting was added here for emphasis

The VOS killed quite a few of its ideological opponents in Primorska too, starting in the spring of 1943; the IOOF on May 19, 1944 “sanctioned” this with a special bulletin.²⁹ Thus opposition against the OF developed, although slowly, in Primorska too. Only after numerous intercessions by the Slovenian leadership in Ljubljana and by Gen. Rupnik, the **Slovenian National Security Committee** (SNVZ) was established on November 12, 1943. Its Inspector General was Kokalj, who up till then had been the Inspector General of the SD. The executive committee of the SLS promised Kokalj every form of aid. In fact, on the day of the establishment of the SNVZ, 8 former active Yugoslav Army officers already came to Kokalj to help. The initial manpower also came from Ljubljana: 20 Homeguards in November and a public relations company of 70 men in February.

The discords among the various ideological groups that arrived from Ljubljana dealt a severe blow against the effectiveness of the SNVZ. Adherents of the SLS (SL) and those who were pro-Glavač took to Trieste and the Straža crowd took to Gorica. Then Major Novak arrived too and began establishing Mihailović’s underground army among the Homeguards. And throughout, the SL was working in secret among the men.³⁰

Despite the mound of difficulties, Kokalj by the springtime of 1944 was able to found the first regional HQ staffs and the first units of men. NOV writers admit that by the end of July of 1944, Kokalj had amassed “barely” 1,815 senior officers, junior officers and soldiers, and that by the autumn of 1944 the Primorska Homeguard had 15 Companies and 1 Reserve Company.³¹ Tratnik reports that there were around 2,000 Homeguards at that time.³² They were divided into 4 groups: the Gorica [group] with 5 companies, the Idrija with four, the Postojna with three, and the Ilirska Bistrica with two. Orders to the men were issued in Slovenian. There was also a Slovenian Police in Trieste, which had 90 men, with stations in Trieste, Postojna, and Gorica.

There was also **a Senior Officers and Junior Officers School at Devinski grad, and the main Homeguard Garrison and a School for Recruits at Sv. Ivan in Trieste – both areas now belong to Italy.**

The Primorska Homeguards **launched several anti-communist actions.** The Partisans, after destroying the railroad tracks in several spots between Košana and Rakek, attacked the garrison in Postojna, but were repulsed, suffering heavy losses. Patrols from Tolmin on April 23, 1944 attacked VOS units on *Šentviska gora* Mountain. On the following day a part of the company from Šempeter skirmished with the Partisans in Parje. A few days later the Homeguards attacked the Partisans in Podmelec in the Baška grapa gorge. Then on May 1st the Partisans attacked the new garrison in Viharše, but were driven off; three days later the Partisans tried again with the entire Vojkova Brigade, but failed again. The members of the Viharše garrison attacked the Partisan HQ in Sežana. On June 5th the Razdrto Garrison was attacked by 3 Partisan divisions (of which the **Gregorčič** division alone numbered 1000 men) plus **two battalions, one Slovenian and one Italian!** (How is this reconciled with the illusory claim by the OF that it was all about a fight for national-liberation?) The Homeguards had 20 men killed in battle, the Partisans had some, but the garrison was destroyed and so the Homeguards withdrew towards Sežana.

The interest taken by the Primorska Homeguard in Slovenian institutions had an extraordinary impact that extended even to the postwar preservation of Slovenianism in Primorska and in Trieste itself. A few examples:

²⁸ Matija Tratnik, *Temna zarja na Primorskem*, ZSS 1951, 142-151; Kos II, 17; NOV, 576-578

²⁹ See Kos II, 81-84; he lists many names of the victims.

³⁰ According to Kos II, 18

³¹ NOV, 577

³² Tratnik, 149; Kos II, 85, who cites also Mlakar, *Domobranstvo*, 159.

1. The Germans appointed Italians, among them some die-hard Fascists, to the administrative posts in both Primorska provinces. They ordered that in the larger settlements the locals appoint their own mayors. The Party leaders fired a sharp attack against this with threats, so that some mayors resigned. Nonetheless Vipava, Postojna, Kobarid, Idrija, and Ajdovščina had **Slovenian mayors**.
2. A **Slovenian judiciary** was something new in the Slovenian administration. District courts were situated in Gorica, Ajdovščina, and Tolmin. Quite a few judges from Ljubljana came to staff these courts. A peaceful co-existence with the Italians developed in Gorica, but in Trieste, the prefect tried to obtain from Berlin a prohibition against having a Homeguard in Primorska.
3. On **April 19, 1944**, the Inspector of the Primorska Homeguard, Col. Kokalj, **submitted to the Trieste prefect himself the minimal program for the Slovenians in Primorska**. In it he demanded Slovenian schools, Slovenian mayors and township committees in Slovenian areas, Slovenian language in the courts, Slovenian staff at the Trieste Administration, restitution for the destroyed or confiscated Slovenian printing houses, schools, libraries, cultural homes, and for the burned down National Home in Trieste, and finally the creation of an Italian-Slovenian committee to resolve disputes.
4. **The Homeguards began to establish Slovenian schools in Gorica and Trieste**, even though they had not received permission from the Trieste Administration. But they did not succeed in establishing a Slovenian middle school and a district council in Trieste. It was even difficult to get Slovenian teachers, because the Partisans were always threatening them. It was easier in Gorica, which had more Slovenian intellectuals and also a stronger Catholic tradition. The Slovenians had an ombudsman for their affairs at the Gorica Administration. They established a cultural advisory board, a public university and a liberal arts secondary school [*gimnazija*], a teachers school in Tolmin and Idria, and quite a few Slovenian schools throughout the country sides.
5. The Organizational HQ in June of 1944 decided that the Homeguards should begin **cultural work among the people** in order to **invigorate nationalist consciousness**. They also prepared anticommunist mass assemblies in various areas. This nationalist resurgence was aided considerably by **Slovenian publishing**, which in the beginning was coming from Ljubljana. On May 6, 1944 the Germans finally relented and permitted the printing of the twice-a-week *Goriški list* [*Gorica News*] (editor Dr. Milan Komar), which became the official newspaper of the SNVZ. It was distributed also throughout Trieste and reached a shipment of 12,000 copies. Smaller newspapers also developed in Idria and Tolmin.
6. The **renewal of the Gorica Mohorjeva družba** publishing house was very significant; it remains active to this day.
7. **Slovenian broadcasts** began on **Trieste radio**.³³

The Homeguard in Gorenjska and demands on behalf of Slovenianism

In **Gorenjska**, people never joined the OF in large numbers because the majority was cautiously awaiting the end of the war. The Partisans' most favorable following was in the area

³³ For activities in Primorska see Kos II, 80-89 and the already mentioned article by M. Tratnik; likewise Marijan Schiffrer, *Odlomki iz dnevnika 1943-1945 [Excerpts from my diary 1943-1945]*, *Meddobje XXXIX-2005*, 1-2, 77-104

around Škofja Loka, followed by Kamnik, Kranj, and Jesenice. After their experiences in 1941, the Partisans did not dare to do much in areas where the German police or gendarmes were stationed. Therefore the Partisans were more active in the valleys of Poljane and Selška, where they actually even established a republic in Žiri. The most significant unit was the Gorenjska Detachment, which numbered only around 200 armed Partisans. They were trying to conscript as many people as possible, but the people were evading this as much as possible. The OF succeeded in conscripting several thousand persons; they sent 900 to Primorska, but did not know what to do with the rest since, for example, the Styria Brigade declined to accept 300 conscripts, which deeply disappointed these “volunteers”.³⁴

The Partisans would carry out minor acts of sabotage, and then immediately slip away. The innocent civilian population had to pay a high price for this Partisan tactic, because the Germans followed up by shooting numerous hostages. The **Party Terrorism** increased in range and severity **in the autumn of 1943**, when the killings (“justifications”) increased considerably. The impetus for this upsurge was due to the Partisans being better armed now with Italian weapons. Kos lists the numerous victims of the VOS.³⁵ The Regime historian lists a few liquidations, but then congratulates that “they were doing a nice job of eradicating the native enemy” and adds that there were “around 200” killings.³⁶ But hitherto unknown executions are being uncovered even to this very day.³⁷ The people of Gorenjska began to resign themselves to the OF from their fear of the growing terrorism by the OF, the increasing of Partisan propaganda, and the dwindling hope in the arrival of the British.

The Gorenjska Homeguard came into being as a backlash to the communist terrorism, and also to the forced Partisan conscriptions, which frequently changed into liquidations if there was any suspicion about the “loyalty” of the conscripts.³⁸

The Germans at first did not want to permit a Homeguard, but then simply on account of the Partisan terrorism, they later permitted smaller units under Slovenian commanders.

The first garrisons came into being in the winter of 1943-1944 in Poljane Valley and in the northern part of the Polhograd Dolomites, in February 1944 in Lučine and on Črni vrh, and in the springtime in Škofja Loka, Kranj, and the surrounding villages. However, the Germans did not permit the garrisons to be inter-connected, although in actuality they were. Credit for this linkage is due much to the individuals that the SL leadership had sent from Ljubljana.

³⁴ Mikuž III, 347

³⁵ Kos II, 110-112, taking data from *Taboriščni arhiv priča I*, Buenos Aires, 1974; the list was drawn up by Albin Gaser and Valentin Markež; see also Škerbec 1952, 52 and Škerbec 1954, Part 1 *passim*

³⁶ Mikuž III, 193-197, where he euphemistically congratulates the successes in Gorenjska, and 344-358

³⁷ For example, *Skrivnost revolucije pod Storžičem [The Secrecy of the Revolution in the shadow of Mt. Storžič]*, *Gorenjski glas*, 11/3/2004

³⁸ Upon numerous pleas by the people, the Germans on January 9, 1944 formed a Gorenjska Homeguard troop, which they at first gave the name Auxiliary Police (Hilfspolizei). Some of the initial members included Milan Amon, Franc Erpič, Anton Žakelj, Jože Dobnikar-Klobovs, and others. A garrison in Kranj was established on April 12, 1944 and was billeted first of all in the barracks at Zlato polje, and then in the Cultural Home in Stražišče. In the winter of 1944 the Gorenjska Homeguard Center was established in Kranj; it was headed by Slavko Krek, who as Rupnik's secretary was sent from Ljubljana. When the VOS on March 15, 1944 killed many persons who were in hiding in Škofja Loka and its vicinity, the ones who survived went to the teacher Rudolf Humer for refuge. Upon his intercession, 7 men and youth set up camp in the Cultural Home in Škofja Loka. In a few months the garrison increased to around 100 men, the majority being people who had been in hiding and partisan deserters (I. Jan, o.c. I, 71) - An illustrated magazine *Kozorog* was published between December 1944 to April 1945, and *Gorenjski domobranec* from January 1945; *Gorenjc* began to be published again, Jan o.c., 195

Officially named the **Gorenjska Guards (Oberkrainer Selbstschutz)**, its growth was in the beginning rather slow due to fear of the Partisans. But when the Homeguards proved themselves in battle to be brave and able soldiers, the numbers increased. The Regime historians acknowledge that in the autumn of 1944 there were 15 garrisons, and by the end of the year there were 20 with approximately 1,000 men.³⁹ They of course add various rationalizations for this growth in size: because the leadership had sent from Ljubljana people who had originally lived in Gorenjska in 1941; because the Germans ceased their conscriptions; because some deserters from the German Army had joined the Homeguards; and other reasons. In the beginning of 1945 the number of Homeguards increased to almost 2,000 with 17 garrisons and 2 combat troops. At the end of the war there were 47 garrisons with more than 2,500 men.

The deployment of the garrisons **signified a big change** for Gorenjska, since living conditions were becoming more tolerable for its inhabitants; as one example, the Germans were no longer conscripting Slovenian young men into their own army. In Šenčur, the Homeguards replaced the German police. Elsewhere, as in Cerklje, they were protecting the harvesting and helping with the labor in the fields. As a result, pillaging by the Partisans ceased in many areas.

In mid-September of 1944, 150 Homeguards marched through Kranj, singing Slovenian songs. A Party historian wrote that this “parade through the Partisan city of Kranj made a most favorable impression on the city’s residents.”⁴⁰

Through the mediation of the Bishop of Celovec, Bishop Rožman was able to send **eight chaplains** to the Gorenjska Homeguard. The Bishop of Celovec had stipulated that the chaplains were to perform their ministry in Slovenian only among the Homeguards and in the German language for anybody else, a restriction that could not be heeded.

In October 1944, two **combat companies** of 100 men each were created; one made its base in Kranj, the other in Škofja Loka. Both fought intense battles with the Partisans. The fight on Velika planina is very well known, where the Homeguards put to flight an entire Partisan battalion.

All this probably emboldened the Homeguard **in November 1944 to place a whole list of demands before the Germans**: military commands to be issued in Slovenian; all Gorenjska Slovenians to be released from the German Army; the Homeguards to fight only on native soil; the introduction of the Slovenian language as an instructional course in schools; exiled priests to be returned; the cessation of the shooting of hostages and of Partisans captured in battle; the release from concentration camps of all those prisoners who would be prepared to enlist in the Homeguard; the cessation of the German practice of burning down buildings where Partisans had been hiding against an owner’s will; the right of the Homeguards to be the first to interrogate Partisan prisoners; and others.⁴¹ **The Germans acceded to almost everything, except the release of Slovenians from the German Army and the teaching of Slovenian in schools.** They of course continued to forbid a single overall leadership, and as commander appointed Dichtl, an SS junior officer who was the Chief of Police in Kranj. Dichtl was somewhat inclined to the Homeguards, however he lied when he stated that the Homeguards themselves were the ones who asked to be directed by the Security Police (Gestapo), and that this is the reason the Homeguards were subordinated to the Security Police.

³⁹ NOV, 697

⁴⁰ Mikuž IV, 542 (quoting from the RSNZ archives); see also I. Jan, o.c. I, 98

⁴¹ Mikuž IV, 543-544

The Homeguards soon realized that the Gestapo were disinclined towards them and that the Gestapo had ties with the Partisans. This was the reason that many Homeguard military operations, which were always accompanied by two Gestapo, met with misfortune. But what was felt the worst was the lack of a unified command, because often each German police chief simply acted on his own discretion. The Homeguards did create some sort of **Center in Kranj, which was establishing new garrisons and had a non-com officer's school at Castle Brdo.** However this Center **had to cease in February of 1945** because some of those in charge (Slavko Krek) were meddling too much into politics; the Gestapo imprisoned some of its leaders. This Center worked to acquire new weaponry, because the Germans did not want to give automatics to the Homeguards. It organized his own intelligence service, increased propaganda, and maintained contacts with the Chetnik Detachment of Milko Pirih. The tension between the Homeguard leadership and the Gestapo grew so severe that the Gestapo eliminated a part of the leadership.⁴²

The Homeguards continuously presented more demands to the Germans. Shortly before the end of the war, they demanded that Gorenjska to be joined to Ljubljana, and that the Gorenjska Homeguard be a completely independent organization with no German supervision. The Germans refused this, but they did accept the demand that all internal security must be in the Homeguard hands, and that all administrations be Slovenian.⁴³

2. The Growth of the Homeguard and Major Battles

The Growth of the Homeguard and Major Battles

The Ljubljana Homeguards received **uniforms** in the beginning of **December 1943**.⁴⁴ They were armed with rifles, light machine guns, and mortars. The **first reorganization** of the Homeguard units by the organizational HQ took place.⁴⁵ Battalions were renamed as combat groups, which were comprised of companies of 161 men each.

Combat Group I, with its leadership base in the Middle Technical School in Ljubljana, was comprised of 10 Companies, which were protecting the ring around Ljubljana.

Combat Group II in the vicinity of Škofljica, was comprised of 9 Companies and had outposts in 5 areas. It also had the task of protecting the railroad line and the road between Ljubljana and Kočevje.

Combat Group III was in Novo Mesto. Until February 1944 it had 10 Companies, then it received 7 more. It had garrisons in several areas. Its task was to protect Novo Mesto and maintain the link between Kostanjevica and Krško ob Savi.

⁴² The commander of the Loka garrison, Rudolf Humer, shot himself by accident with his submachinegun as he was getting out of his automobile in Kranj; however, the rumor spread among the Homeguards and the civilians that he was shot in the back by the Chief of the Gestapo for Škofja Loka.

⁴³ For the entire section, see *Vestnik* 1983, 3; *Tabor* 1977, 6 and 1987, 7/8; Kos II, 124-129; Mikuž IV, 539-549; NOV, 696-699

⁴⁴ About the organization and military structure of the SD, see Mlakar, 147-280; Griesser-Pečar, 280-333 presents a different viewpoint and a more abridged account.

⁴⁵ Kos II, 59-60; about the organization of the SD and various specialized units, see Mlakar, 147-163; at the outset the leading officers were Lt. Col. Franc Krenner, Lt. Col. Milko Vizjak, Lt. Col. Ernest Peterlin, and Captain Ladislav Lah. Peterlin was imprisoned by the Gestapo "on account of activities to benefit the underground and the British Intelligence Service" (Mlakar, 154); he was succeeded by Captain Ivan Drčar.

Combat Group IV had 5 Companies, its command was at Vrhnika, but it had garrisons in several areas; in addition, it protected the railroad between Vrhnika and Rakek.

Combat Group V, headquartered at Borovnica, had to protect the railroad between Ljubljana and Planina, for which it had the use of an armored train.

Combat Group VI was stationed in Kočevje. It had 2 Training Companies and 1 Pioneer Company; it maintained the traffic with Ljubljana and protected the reconstruction of the railroad towards Ribnica.

The Organizational HQ staff wanted to form regiments. The Germans refused this on the grounds that the Homeguards were not yet fit for heavy weaponry. From confiscated Italian cannons the Homeguards formed **three artillery batteries**. Over time they also received **5 armored trains to protect the tracks**; these trains were under the command of Slovenian officers. Later they also established a **Homeguard Railroad Police** stationed in Ljubljana and Postojna; its task was to track down OF couriers and agents aboard the trains.

In the beginning 1944, the Homeguard was again reorganized.⁴⁶ The Homeguard Combat Groups II, III, and IV wanted to push the Partisans as far as possible from Ljubljana and set up an open corridor between Grosuplje and Kočevje, and one between Novo Mesto and Sevnica. Despite persistent and heavy fighting, they were unable to accomplish this. Therefore the organizational HQ staff disbanded all the combat groups, which at this time already numbered 7, and re-formed them into **4 stronger units**, known as the **Trainee Group, the Group for Protecting Railroad Lines, the Operations Group, and the Group for the Protection of the Novo Mesto Area**. The **Operations Group**, formed from the former Combat Groups II, IV, and VII, **was not permitted to have a joint command**; its task was to drive ever deeper into Partisan territory and establish new garrisons. The group soon experienced heavy attacks in Ribnica, Velike Lašče and Grosuplje, but it repulsed all of them.

Because it was becoming ever more difficult to keep open the link between Grosuplje and Novo Mesto, the organizational HQ staff on **March 25, 1944 created a Combat/Strike Battalion**. At first, it was based in Ljubljana, from where it launched actions towards Višnja gora.

The Novo Mesto Group maintained control over a tight ring around the city. It fortified itself in Tržišče and Šentjernej, and fought off many Partisan attacks. It reestablished outposts even deep in Partisan territory, in Mirna peč, Dobrnič, Žužemberk and Trebnje. However these outposts, together with Dobrava, switched hands from one side to another. Already in May of 1944, the Homeguards in the face of Partisan superiority had to withdraw from these outposts and leave Tržišče as well to the Partisans.

For greater operational activity, the Homeguard HQ Staff in **May 1944 established 4 Strike Battalions**.⁴⁷ Each battalion had 4 Companies and a so-called heavy squad (mortars). The **1st Strike Battalion**, under the command of **Major Ladislav Križ**, was garrisoned in Stična; the **2nd Strike Battalion** was based on Rakek, from the middle of June 1944 it was commanded by Captain Vuk **Rupnik**; the **3rd Strike Battalion**, under the command of Captain Miroslav **Stamenković**, had its base in Višnja gora; the **4th Strike Battalion** under the command of Dušan Meničanin was based in **Šentvid pri Stični**. The **2nd Battalion** was commanded at first by Major Lehman; later the Germans inserted their own Captain Schumacher as an "advisor". In September of 1944 a **5th Battalion** was created, using men from the garrisons from Velike Lašče, Ribnica, and Kočevje.

⁴⁶ Kos II, 99-100

⁴⁷ Kos II, 143-144

The Strike Battalions achieved **huge successes**. There were many reasons for this: their continuous operational presence in Partisan territory; their tactics, whereby they advanced into enemy territory in multiple columns: the middle in the open, and the flanks in secret, which attacked the Partisans on their flanks.⁴⁸

The Homeguard reached its apex in the summer of 1944. At this time it numbered more than 12,000 men in 63 Companies and 4 Batteries (3 artillery and one on armored trains). The occupier still did not permit larger-sized combat units, such as regiments and brigades, “because it was aware of the plans of the Slovenian politicians, who wanted to draw all the Homeguards into the Chetniks upon the arrival of the Allies.”⁴⁹

Battles against the Partisans

The purpose of this book is not to describe all the battles between the democratic-side fighting units and the Partisans. Only a few of the most significant ones are mentioned.

a) **In the late autumn and winter of 1943** the Partisans began to attack the garrisons around Ljubljana, and later each newly-established garrison (Orle, Lavrica, Škofljica on the 22nd and 23rd of October).⁵⁰ The Partisans repeatedly skirmished with the fighters stationed **at Sv. Urh**. In the middle of November the Partisans attacked **Novo Mesto**, but the Homeguards repulsed them, on the last day with the help of German armor.

During the night of November 23-24, the Partisan Tomšič Brigade under the leadership of Stane Semič-Daki with 300 men surrounded the garrison at **Grahovo**, 5km southeast of Cerknica. The garrison had 70 fighters under the leadership of Francé Kremžar. According to orders from Logatec, it should have withdrawn to Cerknica already at dusk, before the attack, but it decided to wait until dawn to launch the sortie. The Partisans first of all used **artillery to destroy the house** where the garrison was lodged, then **towards noon they set it ablaze**. Some Homeguards tried to escape from the burning house, but the Partisan caught the majority and threw them alive into the flames; only 7 from the unit survived. The **poet Francé Balantič also perished in the flames**.

A Homeguard garrison was established in **Velike Lašče** in November of 1943. During the nighttime of December 2-3, the Partisan Šercer Brigade attacked the Homeguard garrison, which numbered 170 poorly trained fighters and a few German non-com officers. Because the commander Danilo Capuder was killed in action almost immediately, the Homeguards decided to sortie and 80 of them did make it as far as Ljubljana. The Partisans immediately shot the captured wounded and the Germans, along with numerous civilians who had sought refuge inside the garrison.⁵¹

The 3rd and 7th Companies of the Novo Mesto Battalion with 254 men and around 60 German gendarmes were in **Kočevje** by the second half of November. On December 9, they were attacked by the 14th Partisan Division with around 1,000 men, which included many Italians. A messenger brought an order to the commander, Lt. Šabič, to withdraw to Novo Mesto. In the meantime, the latter had already learned that the city was completely surrounded. The Homeguards quickly manned their fortified positions, 200m apart. The Partisans attacked repeat-

⁴⁸ Kos II, 56-61 and 143-147

⁴⁹ Kos II, 144

⁵⁰ Kos II, 61-64

⁵¹ Most probably they also shot a North American parachutist, who had intended to go to the Partisans, but had sought refuge with the Homeguards in order to get away from the Germans (Škerbec 1954 III 48-49)

edly, but suffered huge losses. The Homeguards withdrew into the castle, which the Partisans stormed during the night. They began to fire anti-tank artillery rounds at the castle doors, and then during the night of December 12th they charged the castle, but the Homeguards repelled them. The Partisan commander Bračič was killed in action already while the crossing of the Rinža River. Because the Partisans had so many casualties, they tried to hasten the fall of the castle by setting fire to it with Molotov fire bombs. This failed, so they offered a cease-fire and negotiations, which the Homeguards declined, because they expected that help would arrive in time. The German captain wanted to surrender, but Lieutenant Jakoš, brandishing a revolver, forced him to refuse the offer. The Partisans resumed shooting up the castle, which began to burn on three corners. The Homeguards were already making preparations to sortie, when Homeguards together with the Germans came to their aid. The Partisans directed the bulk of their forces to face the relief column, while those who had been attacking the castle began to leave in disorder. Quite a few of them drowned in the Rinža River, and many were captured by the Homeguards. The battle ended at noon on December 12. The Homeguards had 34 dead and 29 wounded, and the Partisans more than 500 dead.⁵²

b) Larger Engagements in the beginning of 1944⁵³

After the abortive attack on Kočevje, **the Partisans started attacking in three areas:** around Novo Mesto, on the Ljubljana-Kočevje RR link, and at Grosuplje. In the battles around **Grosuplje**, according to Partisan reports from that phase, the Homeguards were to have had 400 dead, 600 wounded and tremendous losses (3 tanks, 3 trucks, 4 mortars, 12 machineguns, 300 rifles, etc.), and the Partisans only 21 dead and 70 wounded; however, the Regime historians admit that these figures are exaggerated.⁵⁴ Regime writers report (ibid.) that on March 10-12, the Partisan 4th Brigade and the Dolenjska Detachment engaged in fierce fighting against 4 garrisons (Trška gora, Lešnica, Rakovec, Bršljin), and the battles yielded heavy Partisan casualties.

The Partisans experienced an even greater defeat on March 6, 1944 at **Javorica** in the Gorjanci Mountains, when the Homeguards attacked the 4th Battalion of the Cankar Brigade and totally destroyed it almost without a fight; only 8 wounded Partisans and the deputy commandant were able to save themselves by fleeing, and 130 were killed in battle.⁵⁵ The Partisans attacked three times unsuccessfully against the garrison in Ribnica, established in March 1944, whose task was to protect the Ljubljana-Kočevje railroad line.⁵⁶

There were also **many smaller engagements in the Dolomites**. The Partisans ceased attacking the Homeguard garrisons, particularly after the Homeguards began to establish garrisons on the other side of the former country border. The Partisans nonetheless succeeded in destroying the water pumping station in the Idria silver mine, the electric power plant in Lower Idria, and power lines.

The Regime historians rationalize that the Partisan failures were due to the dwindling of weapons and ammunition, claiming that the Allies were not sending enough from their bases in

⁵² Kos II, 64 cites *Vestnik* 1959, 2, 25

⁵³ Kos II, 97-98

⁵⁴ NOV, 701

⁵⁵ NOV, 701. A participant in the battle on Javornica, France Erjavec, born 9/17/1917, on 5/23/2006 told the former editor of *Vestnik*, Bine Magister, that 19 partisans, who were fleeing from the cemetery fortifications, were killed in the first charge; later they counted 92 more bodies, thus a total of 111 and not 130. About this, see *Zaveza* No. 9 and 61

⁵⁶ NOV, 702

southern Italy.⁵⁷ It does show that the Allied Command in Cairo and Bari had differing opinions about sending weapons to the Partisans. The Regime historians cast the blame for this on the Yugoslav Royalist circles.⁵⁸ But they are forgetting that Tito's Supreme Headquarters wanted to have control over aid sent to Slovenia.⁵⁹

c) Major battles up to the autumn of 1944

In Dolenjska the Homeguards launched a **spring offensive into Partisan territory in the direction Sevnica-Mokronog-Trebnje**.⁶⁰ The Homeguards occupied Trebnje, Mirna, and Dobrnič, and began to fortify Žužemberk. With these strong garrisons they wanted to block the Partisans from any influence along the Ljubljana-Novo Mesto line. The Regime writers maintain that this area had around 5,000 Homeguards and Germans with several tanks.⁶¹

The Partisans wanted to destroy the fortified line, which led to **heavy battles on the Trebnje-Žužemberk line**. They occupied Dobrava and Dobrnič. The Homeguards at Žužemberk, after undergoing a third attack with artillery support, began to withdraw towards Novo Mesto; they were saved from encirclement by Homeguards who together with the Germans attacked from Trebnje across Dobrnič. Regime historians write that the Homeguards and Germans had 87 dead and 110 wounded, while the Partisans 23 dead and 51 wounded.⁶²

In mid-May the Homeguards **attacked the Partisans south of Mirna** and pushed them towards the south. The **Partisans** with artillery support **attacked Trebnje**, protected by the Homeguard 33rd Company, which after a one-day defense of the garrison had to withdraw towards Novo Mesto. Towards the end of May the **Partisans attacked the garrison in Mirna peč** and here again the **Homeguards had to withdraw**. The garrisons in Grosuplje, Velike Lašče, Ribnica and Kočevje held fast.

After the reorganization of Homeguard battalions in **June of 1944, the Homeguards controlled all the territory from Ljubljana to Stična, along the southern railway lines to Postojna, all the Polhograd Dolomites, Novo mesto, and the corridor between Kostanjevica and Brežice**. The Germans, in their distrust of the Homeguards, deployed some of their own men at almost all the Homeguard garrisons.

On June 22 the **Partisans again attacked the Štampe Bridge by Verd**, where they destroyed 2 RR branch lines with explosives and thereby stopped all traffic for 22 days. In the same time period the Partisans attacked **in the areas around Grosuplje, Stična, Šentvid and Novo mesto, while the Homeguards from Rakek, Velike Lašče, Ribnica, and Kočevje attacked the Partisans**.

The **Homeguard offensive into Bela Krajina** began in mid-July. According to some sources, the Germans together with the Cossacks and the Circassians advanced as far as Metlika, which they found devoid of Partisans, and then they again withdrew from Bela krajina; according to others, Božo Stariha with the Homeguards marched into Metlika. At the end of July at Lepi

⁵⁷ NOV, 709

⁵⁸ NOV, 933

⁵⁹ Kos II, 98, who cites Dušan Biber, *Tito-Churchill – strogo tajno [Tito-Churchill – Top Secret]*, Ljubljana 1981, XXV

⁶⁰ Kos II, 164-170

⁶¹ NOV, 704. The fate of the garrison from Ig deserves mention. The majority of the Homeguards went to Ljubljana for the oath, and in the meantime, the Partisans during the night hid in the neighboring houses. When the Homeguards returned, the Partisans attacked them and savagely killed 14 captured Homeguards, among them the senior corporal Franc Kukovica. Help from Ljubljana arrived too late.

⁶² NOV, 705; Kos II, 165 postulates that the figures are "most probably" reversed, but offers no proof.

vrh, Rupnik's Combat Battalion put the Partisan HQ to flight and confiscated their flag. In the meantime, the Višnje gora Battalion was fighting around Veliki Gaber. The Homeguard Strike Battalions began to employ a Partisan tactic in their attacks: they would surprise some Partisan unit in its camp, and then moved back to the safety of the garrisons.

The Partisans wanted to destroy the **tunnel at Šmarje**. During this mission, on August 14 they stumbled onto Homeguards and German troops. After extended fighting the Partisans lost almost one third of their men (43 killed in battle, 145 missing, many wounded).⁶³

The Partisan attack in Višnja gora and Stična in mid-August did not succeed; 35 Partisans were killed in battle. In those days the Homeguards also skirmished with the Partisans in Čatež, Tebnje and Novo mesto. They confiscated 15 freight loads of leather in a Partisan tannery factory.

The Partisans held a meeting of OF activists on September 2nd at Črnomelj. The main purpose was to make preparations for decisive battles that would enable their takeover of power. Kidrič was forced to admit that the OF was falling behind in some places, for "they had not yet even passed from the point of an undercover-spy system to a system of local informant committees."⁶⁴

In **Primorska** the Partisans, after an unsuccessful attack on Godovič and Hotedrščica, on April 2nd attacked Lower Idria, but it was a fiasco. The Regime historian claims that the blame for this lay on unqualified commanders, untrained fighters, unskilled artillery, insufficient Allied shipments, and so forth. According to German reports, these battles left 373 Partisans killed, 33 supposedly captured, and 3 surrendered.⁶⁵

In the beginning of April the Partisans set off a bomb in the packed cinema theater in Opčine that killed 2 and wounded 57 German soldiers. In retaliation the Germans shot 71 hostages, and hanged 51 hostages in Trieste and 11 at Prosek.⁶⁶ During the night of April 23rd the Partisan sapper-sabotage group from the 16th Brigade of the 31st Division set ablaze 12 wagons of petrol inside the Postojna Caverns, and on the following day a time-bomb exploded in the military hall in Trieste, which according to Partisan sources killed 150 and wounded 200 German officers and soldiers.⁶⁷

A garrison was established at Črni vrh on August 3, 1944 and manned by the 15th Company of the Homeguards. Because this garrison was obstructing their passage into Notranjska, on September 1st the Partisans with 2 battalions attacked the garrison with artillery fire. The garrison's commander, Lt. Jože Jakoš, was killed in the morning during a sortie attempt. The Homeguards from Veharše and Logatec together with the Germans wanted to come to their aid, but there were too many Partisan ambushes. The Homeguard artillery from Rovte fired at the area around Črni vrh. The combat battalion from Rakek wanted to come to their aid in the afternoon, but the Germans forbade them from marching across the former Yugoslav-Italian border at Kalce. This

⁶³ Kos II, 166, writes that he is citing Mikuž IV, 734; the correct reference is NOV 734. I caution that some of Kos' references to Regime authors are incorrect. Even more important is the suspicion that Kos perhaps places too much trust in the Regime authors. Perhaps it is thus pertinent to ask just how much participation by the Germans in joint actions was there actually. The Regime authors wanted to create the impression of massive German participation, which does not dovetail with historical truth, because the same historians themselves report that frequently there were only a few German officers or non-coms as liaisons (Javorica, for example) and as overseers in smaller units, such as patrols.

⁶⁴ Mikuž IV, 161

⁶⁵ NOV, 709-710; Kos II, 167

⁶⁶ NOV, 710-711

⁶⁷ NOV, 711

German prohibition was an effect of their agreement reached one month earlier with the Partisans in order to guarantee a mutual cease-fire in the Trieste area. Because no aid was forthcoming and the garrison and the surrounding buildings were destroyed, the Homeguards surrendered. Around 100 Homeguards were killed during the battle; the Partisans captured more than 30 and killed them. When the Homeguard relief column was getting near, the Partisans withdrew. Since then, Črni vrh was called the “Primorska Turjak”. After the destruction of Črni vrh, the Germans relented and permitted the Homeguards to cross the former border.⁶⁸

On August 20th the Primorska Homeguards closed a ring around the Gregorčič Brigade, which had 21 dead and 23 missing, while the Homeguards had 7 dead and 8 wounded.⁶⁹ The Partisan attacks against Koren nad Horjul and against the Chetnik headquarters in Žiberše were failures, as well as their attempt to break into the Polhograd Dolomites.⁷⁰

In **Gorenjska**, the Partisan attack against Nomenj and Bohinj failed. Similar failures met the Partisan attacks against Kavtarski vrh, against the garrisons in Veharše and in Baška grapa, against Suhi dol and Horjul (Sep. 17, 1944) and their attempt to disable the Gorenjska railroads.⁷¹

In **Štajerska**, the numbers of Partisans grew slowly, but not their being well-armed. At the end of May 1944 the region supposedly had 2,683 male and 51 female Partisans. The Lacko Battalion with its 71 men was constantly on the move in western Pohorje and Haloze, Slovenske gorice and on Kozjak, but it had no particular successes. There was greater activity around Kamnik, Gornji grad and Moravče, but the Partisan actions were unsuccessful. The judgment written by the Regime historian was harsh: that in the Kamnik area there were “75 dead and 28 captured... The headquarters of the detachment acted like they belonged to an upper class and for this reason separated from the unit, which was destroyed...” and therefore concludes: “It is impossible to speak of any spontaneous movement of the OF in Štajerska. A huge fear still reigns everywhere. The sympathy for the OF is truly immense, but with this organization we still have not made inroads among the masses.”⁷²

The Partisan technique of forced conscriptions was unsuccessful, for even their own sympathizers were reluctant to become outlaws from their fear of what would happen to their own families. But when the Allies air-dropped for the partisans some crates on Moravče and Pohorje, the conditions began to change. Nonetheless the Partisan attacks around Slovenj Gradec were unsuccessful; the Germans inflicted huge losses on two battalions.⁷³ Their attack on Kozje likewise met with failure. But they did succeed with their attack on Gornji grad, where the German garrison (156 men) surrendered. The strengthened 14th Division (982 Partisans) attacked the southern railway.⁷⁴

The *Vzhodnokoroški* [*Eastern Koroška*] Detachment operated in **Koroška**; it had 140 Partisans in February of 1944, 170 in March, and almost 300 in June, but they lacked weapons. In May they even established an OF for Villach and Zilja. They avoided encounters with the German police. They were hiding in Obirsko, and the political leadership was encamped

⁶⁸ Kos II, 14-147

⁶⁹ Kos II, 168 (erroneously refers to NOV, 744)

⁷⁰ Kos II, 168

⁷¹ Kos II, 168

⁷² Mikuž IV, 585

⁷³ NOV, 720

⁷⁴ Kos II, 168-169

in tents near Železna kapla. In September they established the Koroška Partisan Detachment, which numbered around 400 members.⁷⁵

After agreements between the Allies and the Supreme Command of the NOV and the POJ, the Partisans began to receive ever greater aid in weapons, ammunition, equipment and medicine, first via air drops, but then as of August 1944 via airplane landings on the makeshift airstrip at the village of Otok, south of Metlika in Bela Krajina.⁷⁶ The Supreme HQ of the NOV and POS, on the basis of agreements between Tito and the Allies (August 6-14, 1944 in Italy), **“were demanding that Allied aircraft pound certain objectives in Slovenia.** Thus on August 26, 27, and 29, airplanes bombed and strafed the viaduct at Borovnica and the repaired Štampe Bridge by Verd. But the air strikes had **no serious effect, because the airplanes were unable to hit small targets.”**(author JR: *sic!*)⁷⁷

According to Partisan sources, at the end of 1944 there were 29,462 Partisans on all of Slovenian lands, and a total of 33,000 to 35,000 by adding other collaborators (couriers, protectors, members of OZNA, etc.). There were around 15,000 Homeguards in all, including those in Gorenjska and in Primorska.

d) Homeguard Strike Battalions⁷⁸

As of autumn of 1944, these battalions were becoming ever more significant, even though their operations were greatly hampered by German “advisors”, like Schumacher for example. The Homeguard Strike Battalions were trying to **keep control of the link between Grosuplje and Novo mesto, and advanced along the valley of the River Krka into Suha Krajina, and from Cerknica into the Loška valley and to Bloke.** Several battalions skirmished with the Partisans at Sv. Vid, NW of Cerknica. The Šentvid Battalion captured 27 Partisans. The Stična Battalion struck against the HQ itself of the Gubec Brigade; it captured 22 and killed 155 Partisans in battle. Meanwhile, the Šentvid Battalion attacked the brigade and killed 115 Partisans, while it itself had only 2 wounded. When the Partisans tried to break out towards Stari Trg, Rupnik’s Battalion struck and scattered them. The latter battalion then smashed the HQ of the 7th Corps at Gorenje Otave, where 1 Partisan major and 2 lower officers died in battle and 12 Partisans were captured.

In the **beginning of October** all three of the above-mentioned battalions advanced all the way to Žužemberk, but they were unable to remain on this terrain. In the middle of October, 4 Homeguard battalions advanced into Suha Krajina and on Čatež, and again dealt the Partisans heavy losses.

In the **second half of October**, Partisan brigades assembled around Trebnje and Žužemberk. The Homeguards wanted to push them out of the Krka valley and thus take control over this approach into Novo mesto. At the end of October the Partisans attacked Šentvid by Stična, but the Stična and Višnjagora Battalions drove them off.

In **November** the Višnjagora Battalion together with the Stična Battalion struck the Partisan hospital in Hinje. In the middle of November the Homeguards wanted to take control of Bela Krajina: 1,200 men from Novo Mesto and 1,400 from Kočevje advanced simultaneously towards Črnomelj. Due to a dense fog, these groups battled against each other for about an hour (Rupnik’s battalion on the one side, and the Stična and Šentvid battalions on the other), leaving 5 dead

⁷⁵ Kos II, 169-170

⁷⁶ NOV, 733

⁷⁷ NOV, 735

⁷⁸ For actions by the Homeguard Strike Battalions, see Mikuž IV, 291-322

and 6 wounded. Nonetheless, the Homeguards were able to break into Črnomelj and destroy the Partisan stockpiles; but the operation was not fully plotted out, so they had to withdraw. At the **end of November**, the Šentvid Battalion skirmished with the Partisans at Občine; and in December it set out towards Občine with the intention of protecting the garrison. The battalion commander Meničanin was killed during the fighting. On November 24th the **first automobile convoy drove from Ljubljana to Stična**. From that time on, the Homeguards fortified the corridor with strong outposts along the road and held this link open until the end of the war.⁷⁹

e) The final larger battles

The final larger battles occurred in almost every section of Slovenian lands. In **Gorenjska**, December of 1944, the Partisan attack in Poljanska dolina failed. In February 1945 the Homeguards together with the Germans occupied Železniki and fortified themselves at Sv. Križ and at Kališe.

In **Primorska** the Partisan attack failed against the garrison at Skopa and Kreplje, between Trieste and Štanjel. In the beginning of 1945 the Primorska Homeguards established new garrisons in Trnovo pri Gorici, Gargarje, on Črni vrh nad Idrijo, and on Col. A force of 3,500 men participated in the winter offensive in the Trnovo forests, where the Trieste Garibaldi Brigade was partially destroyed. In the beginning of March, the Homeguards, together with the Germans and Vlasovites, drove the Partisans out of the Trnovo forests; from the 30th Partisan Division there remained only 451 Partisans, and from the Kosovel Division there remained 180, many of whom left to return to their homes.

In **Dolenjska** in December of 1944 the Homeguards fortified **new outposts along the Grosuplje-Novo mesto road**. On New Year's Day 1945 the Partisans attacked the garrison at Občine, which numbered around 600 Homeguards. Even though they had artillery support, they were unable to capture the garrison. Already the next day, the Homeguards broke through the Partisan encirclement. Three days later, 6 Homeguard columns attacked the Partisans in the rear and forced them to withdraw. On the Partisan side, 40 were killed in action, 137 were wounded, and 93 were missing.⁸⁰

In the second half of January an intense **battle began for Suha Krajina**. Five Homeguard battalions and two German Police battalions participated in this operation. They planned to push the majority of the Partisans into the Krka River valley and destroy it southwest of Žužemberk. However, the Partisans attacked the Šentvid Battalion at Velike Lipje. The Homeguards had 65 killed in action and 70 wounded. The Homeguards retook Lipje, but because the Homeguards had several wounded and two dead, they decided to withdraw. The commander of the Stična Battalion, Captain Cof, was among the wounded, and the German Captain Schumacher was killed.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Kos II, 177-179

⁸⁰ NOV, 891-892; according to this source, the garrison at Občine was to have contained 2 Companies from the 3rd Battalion and 2 Companies and a part of the Heavy Company from the 4th Homeguard Battalion, "and also some commanding German police officers" – as if the Homeguards did not know how to fight by themselves with their own commanders.

⁸¹ There were rumors that the Homeguards themselves shot Schumacher, even though the official report stated that he was shot in the head as he was coming to the aid of the wounded Major Cof. Kos II, 180 footnote 43 states that Schumacher had a sexual relationship with the opera singer Manja Mlejn, a VOS spy, to whom he was revealing the plans of upcoming Homeguard expeditions. – See also Mikuž V, 45

The Novo mesto Homeguards, with the help of the Homeguards from Velike Lašče and Kočevje, struck at **Dolenjske Toplice**. The garrison at Žužemberk was guarded first by the Šentvid Strike Battalion, and later by the Stična Battalion. After that point, the Homeguards established **several new garrisons** in the vicinity. In February 1945, Partisan and Allied airplanes unsuccessfully bombed these garrisons.

In these battles the **Partisans retained Bela Krajina and Kočevski Rog, but they had to leave Suha Krajina**. In this area the Homeguards dealt heavy losses to the Partisan spy network, causing the cells to shrink to a nucleus of a handful of trusted agents.

The Savinska valley was the scene of fierce fighting in December of 1944, when the Germans with the help of the Gorenjska Homeguards broke into Mozirje and Nazarje, captured Luče, Gornji grad and Ljubno. The Partisans had to retreat to the region of Moravče, and the Homeguards established **8 new garrisons**. By the beginning of January, 212 Partisans were captured, and 134 OF members turned themselves in; 27 Partisans were killed in action, 17 were wounded, and 361 were missing.⁸²

In **Koroška**, the Partisans would attack the German police here and there, but then immediately withdraw to Gorenjska.⁸³

When Mihailović's Chetniks and Ljotić's Volunteers withdrew to the Slovenian coastline in the late **autumn of 1944**, followed by the Chetnik Dinar Division in the beginning of 1945, the **Partisans began to plan a withdrawal towards the Partisan 4th Army, which was driving westward along the coast. But Tito ordered the Slovenian Partisans to remain in Slovenia**.⁸⁴

On March 19, 1945, a force of around 15,000 men began **one of the last larger German offensives against the Partisans** across the Banjška plain and along the edge of Trnovski gozd; the objective was to destroy the Partisan 31st and 32nd Divisions.⁸⁵ **Rupnik's Battalion participated** in this operation. The anti-Partisan units first broke into Jelovica and encircled around 3,000 Partisans. The latter tried to break out in two columns; one was destroyed below Blegoš Mountain. The other, which wanted to retreat towards Bohinj, was captured by the Germans along the Italian fortifications from the 1st World War. Killed in the fighting were 32 Partisans. At villages around Cerklje, the Germans shot 145 captured Partisans, and drove 38 of them into jails in Gorica, including Dr. Vito Kraigher, notorious for being the public prosecutor at the Kočevje Trials.⁸⁶

In the second part of the offensive, the Chetnik's Dinar Division along with the 1st Strike Battalion of the Primorska Homeguards occupied the line Vipava Valley-Col-Idrija. The fighting shifted from Sinji vrh to the Trnovski gozd area. The Partisan column with their HQ staff of the 9th Corps fell into the anti-Partisan ambush at Vojsko. When the Partisans tried to break out, several dozens of them were killed.

This offensive reduced the Partisan 9th Corps to 3,039 fighters, having lost around 2,000 men. Many were wounded and tried to break out to Notranjska. However the offensive continued. The Germans were advancing along Kras, the Chetniks and Nedić's men on Brkini, the Cossacks on Goriška Brda and parts of Venetian Slovenia. **The Partisan units were fleeing from all these advances**.⁸⁷

⁸² Kos II, 181, which quotes Regime historians.

⁸³ Kos II, 181

⁸⁴ Kos II, 190

⁸⁵ Kos II, 190

⁸⁶ NOV, 912-921

⁸⁷ NOV, 919; Kos II, 191, who quotes from Regime historians in his footnotes

Throughout the entire month of March, fighting continued around Kočevski Rog, where the Homeguards were pushing the Partisans ever deeper into the Rog wilderness. In mid-March the Homeguard established a garrison in Ambrus.

In the beginning of April, Rupnik's Battalion and the 4th Homeguard Battalion encountered heavy fighting around Stara gora near Žužemberk. In two weeks the Partisans had 72 dead and 239 wounded. The chief Partisan commander Kveder reported to the Supreme HQ that the 7th Partisan Corps had to withdraw from Suha Krajina to the north of Rog. From then on the Homeguard units ran over Partisan positions, one after another, and pushed the Partisans into Stari log.⁸⁸

The Homeguards also captured Sv. Peter (8 km from Žužemberk) and the Gornjo Toplo ridge, and pushed the Partisans to Podturn (12 km from Novo Mesto). However, due to the growing Partisan pressure from every direction at that time, they received orders to retreat to Ljubljana.⁸⁹

3. Other Anticommunist Organizations and Activities

a) Slovenian Police

The German occupier permitted the renewal of a **Slovenian Police Force**. To the position of Chief of the **State Security Service**, Gen. **Rupnik** appointed **Dr. Lovro Hacin**, who had already been the Director of the Ljubljana Police in pre-war Yugoslavia. The police department had 150 members. The uniformed members were joined to the SD. A special section called the **Political Police** was led by **Dr. Maks Loh**; working with him were for the most part the university students from the ranks of Straža, even though the SLS also sent some of its own people. The pre-war gendarmes were merged into the **Regular Police** section. The Regular Police (the Guards), the Political Police, and the Specialized Squad (formed in mid-November 1944) were under the command of 2nd Lieutenant **Jože Hlebec**.⁹⁰ Dr. Duscha, an official from the Criminal Bureau in Berlin, had supervisory control over the Political Police.

The communists let around 200 of their own members infiltrate the Ljubljana Police. The Police Attorney for the Political Police, Dr. Vladimir Kante, was a VOS agent; he was unmasked in the beginning of 1945 and sentenced to death on the gallows.⁹¹

b) Intelligence Services

The democratic camp had several such groups. When the VS was established, the War Committee used the existing SL network to form a stronger intelligence service, which was assisted also by some persons from Glavač's group and by the intelligence office of the Straža group. This organization was named **U-7** and had a place at 7 Miklošičeva Street. An unexpected Italian betrayal dealt a hard blow, but did not destroy this network that extended across all of Slovenia.

⁸⁸ Mikuž V, 29-37

⁸⁹ Kos II, 190-191

⁹⁰ The police regarded Hlebec and Marn as the "Black Hand". Hlebec above all is accused of the murders of more than a twenty individuals detained by the Political Police, including Dr. Vito Kraigher, who was executed at Turjak in the last days before the collapse.

⁹¹ For the entire matter, see Kos II, 65-66

During the period of the German occupation, the main intelligence centers moved above ground. The **SD Organizational HQ staff** immediately established **its own intelligence service**, which was directed by Captain Ilovár until he was taken away to Dachau in November of 1944; Lieutenant Kovač replaced him.

Among his first steps towards organizing Ljubljana Province, Gen. Rupnik established an **official information service**. To serve as a highly trusted tool for the president of the province, naval captain Kregar established the **PRIP** (Presidential Information Office), which had connections with U-7. Gen. Rupnik soon renamed PRIP to the Information Bureau of the Provincial Administration and appointed Captain Finc as its chief. It was officially known as **DOS** (State Intelligence Service), and in order to conceal its true identity from the Germans, also simply as OS or TOS. **It had links to the more important Homeguard garrisons, the Intelligence Section of the SD, and the Political Police. Yet there was continuous friction internally among its members. Ultimately two factions developed: the “true Homeguard” and the “underground”.** The former faction wanted to be exclusively Slovenian, unconnected to any political party whatsoever, and loyal to the German Army while rejecting subservience to the occupier. Siding with the latter faction were almost all the pre-war political machines; it was growing increasingly attached to Mihailović’s underground and wanted to prepare the SD for the moment when as a Slovenian National Army it would join up with the Allies.

There were similar intelligence services in Gorenjska, Primorska, and Štajerska, where it was the least developed.⁹²

c) AntiCommunist Propaganda

Regime historians write that **anticommunist propaganda was a “widespread and solidly entrenched... activity, which was without peer in the other parts of occupied Yugoslavia”.**⁹³ Such propaganda was not permitted under the Italian occupation, and the Italians persecuted such activity. Not until May 1943 did the Italians reluctantly permit the publishing of the documentary book, **“V znamenju Osvobodilne fronte”** [*The Mark Left by the Liberation Front*], written by Rev. Francé **Glavač**. Simultaneously, the morning newspapers (*Slovenec*, *Jutro*) and weekly newspapers (*Slovenski dom*, *Domoljub*, *Slovenski narod*) began to write about this topic. Three months before Italy’s surrender, public assemblies started to be held in the countryside, especially in the more populous areas. The assemblies were held after the main Sunday Masses in front of the parish churches. The initiative for them came from the student organization at Ljubljana University, and afterwards the organizational work was taken over by the Committee of the Village Guards and the SL. Ordinarily, a single university student was the speaker. Because the speeches were unwritten, they could not be censored by the occupier.

In November 1943, Gen. Rupnik separated the **Propaganda Section** from the Information Bureau; Dr. **Ludvik Puš**, a leading member of the SL, became the Section’s chief. Officially, the Section was subordinated to the German section “Kultur, Presse und Propaganda”, which was represented in the Provincial Administration by “Volksdeutscher” **Gladnigg**.⁹⁴ There was never any mutual contact between these two offices.

⁹² On the entire topic, Kos II, 66-76

⁹³ Čepč Mitja, *Domobranske propagandne akcije [Homeguard Propaganda Activity]*, Ljubljani v ilegali IV, 393; cited by Kos II, 69

⁹⁴ The majority of the Volksdeutsche was from the German minority in Slovenia; before the war they had lobbied publicly for the Reich, and afterwards collaborated with the Germans.

In mid-spring 1944, a **Propaganda Section** also was developed at the SD Organizational Staff HQ. Officially on paper, it was **subordinated to Gen. Rösener, however it was directed by Dr. Stanko Kociper**. The SD chaplains assisted with its activities.

The Germans permitted the SD to have only **6 chaplains**, whereas the VS had 12; the head chaplain was **Dr. Ignacij Lenček**. The Chaplain Section published the paper *Naprej* [*Onward*], which was soon changed to *Za blagor očetnjave* [*For the good of the fatherland*]; Dr. Franc **Blatnik** was the editor. In the spring of 1944 *Slovensko Domobranstvo* began to be published; the editor for the first issue was Stanko **Kociper**, who was succeeded by Slavko **Skoberne**.⁹⁵ The head chaplain was printing brochures as inserts, intended for the ethical edification of the Homeguards.

The members of the propaganda departments would present theatrical plays and establish singing groups at the garrisons, and a Homeguard Band was established in Ljubljana. Then there were also the public pro-Homeguard demonstrations in Ljubljana.⁹⁶

d) Provincial Administration

Its work was diverse. One of Gen. **Rupnik's** first acts was to **remove all Italian signs throughout the city**, and despite German protests, he remained firm on this. **He renamed the Academy of Arts and Sciences to the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences** – and the name has remained to this day.

New departments came into being, such as: **the Information Department, the Department for Aid to Former Yugoslav Junior and Senior Officers, the Youth Office, the Farm Board, the Department for the Reconstruction of Destroyed Entities, the Department for the Confiscation of the Assets of Rebels, Social Aid, and Winter Aid**.⁹⁷

4. The Homeguard Oath Incident

Diverse Opinions on its Correctness

For a long time even some legal experts persistently defended either the oath *per se* or its wording.⁹⁸ Many dwelled on the factor that the oath had been forced and on the moral pressure about the consequences had they had refused to take the oath. But nobody has ever argued that the oath was the right thing to do. In fact, in an article published already in 1961 in *Vestnik*, EC from Italy wrote that words can be made to mean anything, that there is no crime that cannot be defended from the viewpoint of Sacred Scripture, and that there is no claim that cannot be supported by logic and syllogisms. “The Homeguard Oath was by wording, concept, understanding, and intent, either a truthful obligation to fight against one criminal with the help of another, or else a hypocritical utterance, a lying statement, and an affirmation of partnership that was uttered with the understanding that nobody was going to honor this partnership. All efforts (...) to demonstrate the morality, ethics, legality and other characteristics of this, what is the most unfortunate if not already the most shameful, deed of the Slovenian Homeguards,

⁹⁵ Kos (Jeločnik) mentions that in May of 1945 the final issue had already been printed, welcoming the arrival of the Allies, but it remained in the storeroom.

⁹⁶ For the entire topic, Kos II, 69-74

⁹⁷ For the entire topic, Kos II, 69-76

⁹⁸ Kos II, 117-124; Mlakar, 291-328; Griesser-Pečar 301-309

are truly a waste of time (...) Many a thing can be defended on the grounds that one had been forced to do it, but to claim that it was rightful makes my blood boil, for I would be ashamed if anyone counted me among such apologists. And you do know that I was in the thick of the fight against the communists from the very start!”⁹⁹

Dr. Miha Krek’s statement now becomes all the more understandable: “With the oath, all our legs were cut down from under us politically and diplomatically, even though we knew very well that the lads and men had been forced to take the oath. The Allies refused to hear anything more about it from us.”¹⁰⁰ An especially bad impact on the Allies was the appended phrase inserted by the Germans, that the Homeguards “in the joint fight together with the German armed force, that stands under the command of the leaders of Greater Germany” would fight against the communists “as well as their allies.” The sentence is ambiguous, but not to Rösener. Mlakar accepts the fact that an oath is something common in military units; but he doubts that the idea for an oath was Rupnik’s alone, with which Dr. Stanko Kociper concurs. According to Mlakar, the idea was Rösener’s, and Rupnik, being a true soldier, unswervingly supported and executed it.¹⁰¹

The Gist of the Oath – Preliminary Discussions and a German Dictate

It is thus understandable why Griesser-Pečar entitles her chapter on this affair “**The Oath: The Tragedy of the Homeguard**”.¹⁰² The author presents the text of the oath, and then compares it to similar oaths by other foreign volunteers in auxiliary units. The text follows:

“I swear before Almighty God, that I will be faithful, courageous, and obedient to my superiors, that I will, in the joint fight together with the German armed force, that stands under the command of the leaders of Greater Germany, the SS troops and police, against the bandits and communism as well as their allies, fulfill my duty for the Slovenian homeland as a part of Free Europe. I am prepared to sacrifice my life in this fight. So help me God.”¹⁰³

Griesser-Pečar ascertains that “one can hardly find a direct oath to Hitler in the text”. Two notable historians arrived at this same conclusion in their historical dissertations, Peršič already in 1973 and Mlakar in 1994. Peršič also ascertains that **the written form which is obligatory for military superiors has no signature from a single officer on the organizational HQ staff!** The text of the oath does mention German leadership, but it is totally clear that **this did not mean unconditional cooperation nor independent activity, but rather that it happened due to circumstantial conditions of being in a tight spot.** It is therefore clear that the Homeguards were not swearing an oath to Hitler, but to the Slovenian homeland. There are numerous proofs that the officers finally agreed to a generic vow only after they received an approbation from Gen. Mihailović – although in actuality it did not come from Mihailović himself, but from Glušić and Domazetović.

The Homeguard organizational HQ staff refused to accept the first draft, which was composed by Rösener. So on April 12, 1944, Lt. Col. Krenner submitted a new text, and attached

⁹⁹ Vestnik 1961, 4, 80-81.

¹⁰⁰ Pavle Rant, *Iz razgovora starešinstva DSPB s predsednikom NO, Vestnik [From a conversation between the DSPB old-timers and the president of the NO]*, 1961, 10, 257-261; the quotation on 258

¹⁰¹ According to Krenner, the first time Rupnik wanted an oath was already in September 1943! See Griesser-Pečar, 304; Mlakar, 295-297 and 299-300; Stanko Kociper, *To sem živel [What I Underwent]*, Ljubljana 1996, 189-193

¹⁰² Griesser-Pečar, 301-310

¹⁰³ Griesser-Pečar, 301

a letter to substantiate his wording.¹⁰⁴ The Germans of course refused to accept this wording, because Rösener wanted a Homeguard to be tightly bound to the Germans and threatened to disband the units unless they took the oath. He was well aware of the underground activity of many of the Slovenian officers and politicians. The former commander of the city of Ljubljana, Milko Vizjak, supposedly stated at his trial in Ljubljana in 1946: “The oath meant that we Homeguards on Slovenian land were totally in Rösener’s hands”;¹⁰⁵ however, everybody knows about how little freedom has an accused person standing before a “revolutionary” or “peoples” communist court.

The oath was administered two times, on April 20, 1944 and January 30, 1945. At the first, Bishop Rožman said Mass and then left immediately, before the oath was administered; not a single German soldier was present during the Mass. The bishop did not even attend the second oath, on the grounds he had a sore throat, but afterwards he did appear as the Homeguards were marching past the front of the Ursuline Church.

The oath as viewed by the SD and by politicians inside and outside the country

Vizjak later stated that they did consult with the chief chaplain, Dr. I. Lenček, who then went to ask the bishop; and that the latter told him that in the final analysis, the issue was not the oath but more importantly, their former vow, because the officers were still bound by their oath to King Peter. Nonetheless, the bishop reviewed the wording of the oath and convinced himself that it was not about an oath to Hitler, otherwise he would not have come to say Mass. And he also expressed in writing that he was not officially sanctioning the wording of the oath.¹⁰⁶

According to Mlakar, a brochure written by Dr. A. Odar, “**Be a Christian during War Too! Some Moral Principles for Our Times**”, published in the beginning of April 1944, undeniably had an impact on many persons. Concerning an oath, Odar stated that for a volunteer in an anticommunist army of a foreign country, it is not problematical if the foreign country demands he take an oath and if the oath is not contrary to a previous oath. But if a volunteer was forced to take an oath, then the oath was not valid.¹⁰⁷

The democratic-side politicians inside and outside the country had differing views about the oath. Those in exile felt more keenly the adverse reaction of the Western forces and were therefore warning their countrymen back home. But those back home did not want to listen to these warnings and had a blind faith in the salvation that would be brought by the Western Allies liberating the Slovenian land.

Mlakar relates the description **by a daily newspaper of the day about the overt festive atmosphere and the enthusiastic mood of the citizens of Ljubljana.** But probably based on other sources, he adds that some observers **left with the impression of orchestration and artificial enthusiasm**, and that according to the **statements of “eye witnesses”, only children were shouting cheers.** The Partisan intelligence service reported that **the citizens were disillusioned, because the marching parade gave the impression that the Germans were herding the Homeguards through the city, because they [the Germans] supposedly were even laughing cynically, whereas the Homeguards appeared dejected, since they were being**

¹⁰⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 304-305

¹⁰⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 305, who cites B. Mlakar, *Domobranska prisega [The Homeguard Oath]*, *Zbornik slovenskih zgodovinarjev*, 116

¹⁰⁶ Dr. Jože Jagodic, *Proces proti škofu dr. Gregoriju Rožmanu [The trial against Bishop Dr. Gregorij Rožman]*, ZSS 1965, 57-72, especially 69

¹⁰⁷ Mlakar, 301-302

tailed by a tank and a heavily armed German unit was marching behind them. In Mlakar's opinion, this appearance of dejection seems to be partially true, because rumors were spreading among the Homeguards that after this oath, the Germans would be able to send them elsewhere and that they could be punished according to German regulations. This led to open rebellion in Ljubljana and at some garrisons, especially among the officers. All in all, this demonstrates that neither the officers nor the soldiers easily accepted the oath, even though after lengthy negotiations at the Organizational HQ the understanding was reached that **it was merely a promise**, not an oath.¹⁰⁸

Mlakar's **evaluation of the oath comes not only from an external, objective view, but also from a subjective evaluation of the text of the oath.** Mlakar is convinced that already before the oath there was an overpowering fear that they would be swearing to Hitler; this would explain why some officers and Homeguards had fled already before the oath, even though they did return later, once they saw it was not about swearing fealty to Hitler.

The predominant opinion among the leftist **liberals** was that at least the Home Guard officers in refusal should have headed into the field, and in conjunction with this Mlakar relates the harsh words of Črtomir Nagode (*inž.*). Even **the leading SLS politician inside the country, Miloš Stare**, judged that **the oath was a shameful blow and a humiliation for Slovenians.** The leader of Straža, Dr. Ciril **Žebot**, considered the wording of the oath to be **legally improper, morally repulsive, and politically damaging.** The editor-in-chief of *Slovenski dom*, Mirko Javornik, sensed the negative repercussions that the Homeguard oath would engender, and for this reason limited the reporting of it to only the most necessary photographs and speeches.¹⁰⁹

The central non-military event to affect the SD

Mlakar maintains that this was a **legal oath** with all the required elements, **even though he admits that some of the phrases of the oath were ambiguous.** He also dissects the wording of the oath to great extent.¹¹⁰ He **concludes** that the **Homeguard oath was something unique**, because it does not mention Hitler by name (the only other instance being the Danish volunteers). From the very oath itself it is obvious that it is **all about a native police force, which sprung up from native Slovenian stirrings.** The oath was therefore only about unity in an armed fight against the Communist Revolution.

Even though those in the Homeguard organizational HQ succeeded in emphasizing this anti-revolutionist orientation of the oath, it did contain **some pro-Nazi elements just the same.** This was the reason that the Homeguards and their commanders were objecting so strongly to it, trying to lessen its objective meaning, pointing out its compulsion, and finally even disavowing the nature of the oath. They were doing so from an internal need for justification, and also from political needs and a self-defense against propaganda, because over time the oath became one of the main arguments in the Partisan attack against the SD. **The oath became the central non-military event in the brief history of the SD.** For the Germans, the oath was undoubtedly some additional legal basis to enable taking measures against the Homeguards who might desert it or be working against German interests, which is clearly seen from Rösener's speech at the

¹⁰⁸ Mlakar, 308

¹⁰⁹ Mlakar, 317, who cites the article *Nezanesljiva zgodovina [Untrustworthy history]*, *Sij slovenske svobode*, No. 7, 7/15/1978

¹¹⁰ Mlakar, 322-329

administration of the oath on January 30, 1945. **Because the Germans considered the oath to invalidate the former oath to King Peter, the NOS already then had the members of the Slovenian National Army take a new oath to the King and to the Slovenian homeland.**

All in all, it would be foolish to imagine that a Homeguard could have saved his life if he had not taken the oath, or if he deemed the oath invalid since it was given under duress, or if he afterwards renewed his oath of faithfulness to the king. The Primorska Homeguards and the Gorenjska Homeguards did not take the oath – yet the Partisans killed them afterwards just the same. Oath or no oath, the British Army, to whom the Homeguards had surrendered in Austria, would have handed them back to Tito just the same. And not on the grounds that this was required by the agreements made at Yalta and at Teheran!¹¹¹ Insofar as it is known, none of the repatriated Homeguards who escaped the postwar slaughters ever claimed in their writings that the Partisans had at any time questioned them if they had taken the oath. Given this fact, it would be interesting to determine exactly when and how did the Partisans come to write so much about the Homeguard oath and ascribe so much importance to it.

¹¹¹ Mlakar, 328-329



Group of Homeguards in
Yugoslav army caps

Podobe MNZS, 103



Homeguards from Dravlje
(commander Milko Pirih
front row, center)

Zaveza, 23, 24



Homeguard Battalion

Zaveza, 46, 9 (F. Horvat)



In battle

Zaveza, 25, 24



Balantič

Zaveza, 23, 63



Homeguard Legal Unit

Zaveza, 56, 85



Anticommunist rally
in Ljubljana

*Podobe
MNZS, 110*



Homeguard mar-
ching through Kranj

*Podobe
GMK, 136*



Homeguard on parade in Ljubljana
Podobe MNZS, 108



Group from the Gorenjska Homeguard
Podobe MNZS, 137



Capt. Berlot reports to Gen. Rupnik at an anticommunist rally in Vrhnika, Summer of 1944 (Lt. Col. Peterlin in the middle)
Tabor, 1987 7/8



Orlov Vrh (Eagle's Peak) at Ljubljana Castle.
Ferenc, 33



Homeguard Military funeral at Orlov Vrh

Zaveza, 13, 60

9. The Slovenian Church's Position on the Occupier and Communism

Testimony in Blood

The KPS/OF already during the wartime ordered the death sentence for dozens of Slovenian priests. After the Second World War the communist rulers brought charges against the more prominent representatives of the Catholic Church for allegedly collaborating with the occupiers during the years 1941-1945. Dr. Dolinar writes that Revolutionist side in the years 1941-1947 was responsible for the deaths of 79 diocesan priests and 9 priests from religious orders, 52 of these were killed during the war; the occupier killed 34 priests. In addition, 16 seminarians were killed during the war and 54 after the war. As for religious orders, 7 brothers lost their lives during the war, and 27 brothers and 3 religious nuns after the war. At the end of the war, there were fewer than 1,000 priests in Slovenia, and 429 of these were actually put on trial.¹ Mlakar concurs with Dr. Tamara Griesser-Pečar's statement that the true intention of the Revolutionist regime was not so much to punish those priests who allegedly compromised themselves during the Second World War, but rather to bring the Catholic Church in Slovenia to its knees.²

The key trial against the Church was the Trial against the Bishop of Ljubljana, Dr. Gregorij Rožman, whom they accused of treason against the nation and collaboration with the occupation authorities. However, objective historical articles, based on sound investigations and appearing ever more frequently, are slowly beginning to dispel the fog that shrouds this affair. For this reason it is necessary that the following question is posed and answered clearly: for the communist rulers, **was this trial truly about legitimate punishment for alleged collaboration, or was it above all about putting the Church in a poor light**, given that the Church posed a danger to their ideology?³

1. Attitude towards the Occupiers

Bishop Rožman's attitude towards the Italian Occupier

Rožman's uncompromising stance against the atrocities perpetrated by the occupation forces proves that **the bishop was never a friend of the occupiers**, which was one of the charges trumped up later by the communist rulers. As a matter of fact, the claim that the Bishop Rožman was pro-occupation would be considered downright comical had it not simultaneously led to such tragic consequences: for Dr. Rožman himself in 1920, after the unfortunate plebiscite, had to forsake his native Carinthia, the land of his birth, and take refuge in Ljubljana!

¹ Dr. Francé Martin Dolinar, *Cerkev v primežu revolucije* [The Church in the Revolution's Vise], *Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije* [Anthology of the Victims of the War and the Revolution], 61-69, particularly 65

² Mlakar, o.c., 68 and Griesser-Pečar 2002

³ Griesser-Pečar, 174

After the occupation started, Bishop Rožman did not visit the Italian High Commissioner **Grazioli** until April 20, only after his inner circle called his attention to the necessity of such protocol. The **Italians** demanded a **declaration of loyalty** be submitted by the bishop and the Slovenian politicians, who composed their own text. However, the **Italians completely changed** the wording that was submitted.

The Italians rejected the initial statement written by the bishop; the text that they actually published was never shown to the bishop beforehand; thus the bishop learned only from the newspapers what he purportedly was to have signed.⁴ Shortly after the publication of the fabricated statement (May 6, 1941), Bishop Rožman handed his original document to his secretary Lenič and ordered him to store it in the archives for history. Thus, **the texts of both statements were stored in the diocesan archives under No. 45/1941**. After the war, on August 23, 1946, the Vicar General Anton Vovk sent a letter to the military court of the 4th Army, in which he stated that the indictment against Bishop Rožman with regard to the loyalty statement was erroneous. The court refused to accept delivery and ignored the letter completely.⁵ Griesser-Pečar presents both texts, and a comparison shows the vast and essential differences between the two.⁶

Bishop Rožman wanted to condemn from the pulpit the actions of the Italian occupier, as the later Auxiliary Bishop Lenič testifies in his memoirs, but he refrained upon consideration of the probable harsh consequences – not to himself, but to the Slovenian people.

In his role as the spiritual shepherd of the Ljubljana Diocese, he did go to have a talk with Grazioli on September 26, 1942 and lodged a protest about the “difficult conditions under which Slovenians are living in the Ljubljana province”. Lenič’s later writings reveal how difficult it was for the bishop to decide on this course of action: “Perhaps it really would be best if I severed all contact with the Italians. I often think about this, that I would make a public appearance in the cathedral and condemn all their crimes. But then I again think about the streams of tears shed by mothers and wives as they beg me to intervene, and so I cannot. If I sever the ties, then each intervention afterwards will be in vain.”⁷

The bishop used the opportunity of the visit to assure the High Commissioner that the Slovenians were a race that bears its nation’s fate with self-restraint, that is peaceful and loyal to their rulers, that is accustomed to giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s. “As a reaction to the doings of the Liberation Front, draconian measures have ensued, meting heavy blows on the Slovenian population. **The introduction of the concept of collective responsibility by the Slovenian people for the actions of individuals**, which has reached expression in the form of hostages, torchings, firing squads, arrests, and imprisonments, **has dealt a hard blow against the highly developed Slovenian sense of justice** that has its roots in the traditions of Roman Law. **This had to create in the people the feeling of possessing no rights, and led even decent folk to flee into the forests and thereby right into communism’s embrace**. There is no doubt that **the one who is benefitting the most from collective responsibility is communism**, which is turning it to its own advantage by increasing the number of incidents, knowing full well that the fear of reprisals will bring itself success in achieving dominion ...”⁸

⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 179

⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 181; she quotes from Griesser-Pečar 1997, 75, and *Arhiv Slovenije* (AS III, Rožman, 3118)

⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 180

⁷ Griesser-Dolinar, 57

⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 181-182; highlighting was added here for emphasis

Rožman begged the High Commissioner to review the extraordinary decrees that the military and civilian authorities issued on September 1, 1941, and then annul or mitigate many of them. On behalf of the Slovenian people, he listed 20 points, ex. that the Italians keep the laws that were in force already before April 6, 1941. Even though he acknowledged that Italy with the statute of May 3, 1941 on its own initiative recognized the national name of "Slovenian", and guaranteed the Slovenian language, national individuality, and an autonomous character, due to circumstances, the promises in the statute for the Province of Ljubljana had not yielded the desired results. The advisory council (*konzulta*) was unable to accomplish its tasks because no regard was being paid to their well-founded "suggestions". The introduction of the political organizations of the Fascist Party (which had an Italian soul and an Italian nationalistic character), which had not been mentioned in the statute, was antagonizing the sensitive disposition of an oppressed nation. **"Its personal pride severely wounded, the nation had to see in this the beginning of a genocide."**⁹ Rožman himself reported how Grazioli became enraged after he heard the bishop's reproofs. Grazioli told the bishop that if any politician had dared to come in with such reproofs against the fascist authorities, he would have thrown him in jail.¹⁰

All this makes it clear that **the Bishop and the Church leadership endeavored to help the population, so that it would survive the occupation without any major damage.** "Rožman was convinced that an armed rebellion by a nation as small as the Slovenians was senseless and hopeless. The tremendous number of victims would have been for naught and by any comparison completely disproportionate to any conceivable partial success here or there."¹¹

Because the Italian occupier was more lenient at the start, the bishop's interventions with the authorities on behalf of individual cases were quite successful. But after the Italian occupier changed direction and was perpetrating numerous crimes (shooting hostages, burning down villages, etc.), Bishop Rožman wanted to publicly condemn these crimes, but in a discussion with Pope Pius XII, he was dissuaded from this course of action. As a result, Rožman tried to contact Mussolini directly, but did not succeed.

Griesser-Pečar was able to find **only one single document among the files that were confiscated during one of the many house searches at the chancery on August 23, 1948!** All the other proofs, which the Church had stored for the bishop's defense, had vanished!¹²

Bishop Rožman's attitude towards the German Occupier

When Germany annexed Austria, Bishop Rožman convinced the Bishop of Maribor Dr. Tomažič to issue a joint letter to the faithful to pray for the homeland – but the Yugoslav Minister of the Interior at the time, Dr. Anton Korošec, forbade them, most probably to prevent any increased complications with Germany.¹³

When the Germans in their occupied section of the Ljubljana Diocese began to imprison priests – around 350! – Bishop Rožman begged the Holy See to take up this matter with the Italian government, and the Vatican Secretary of State actually did so. But on October 20, 1941, Italy's ambassador to the Vatican reported that his intercession was unsuccessful.

⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 182; highlighting was added here for emphasis

¹⁰ Griesser-Dolinar, 70

¹¹ Griesser-Pečar, 182, who quotes from Griesser-Pečar, "*Stanislav Lenič. Življenjepis iz zapora*", Klagenfurt-Ljubljana-Vienna 1997, 84; highlighting was added here for emphasis

¹² Griesser-Pečar, 178-179

¹³ Kolarič III, 14

The shrinkage of the Ljubljana Diocese, **caused by the German occupation of Gorenjska in 1941**, spurred Bishop Rožman to write **a pastoral letter to the priests and the Faithful on October 24, 1941**. In this letter he explicitly condemned the German violence against the Slovenian people. He wrote: **"In the course of 14 centuries our nation has not suffered anything worse on this land."**¹⁴ These words reminded him that the German occupation in 1941 had swallowed up 142 parishes, from which 193 priests were deported, leaving 200,000 believers without spiritual shepherds; that the brothers and nuns from religious orders were also deported; that the buildings of the Bishop's Academy [*Škofove zavode*] were commandeered by the occupier, and that all Church property in Gorenjska was confiscated.

In **May 1941**, the Bishop of Maribor, Tomažič, sent to Ljubljana a report about the German tyranny in his own diocese and begged Bishop Rožman to forward the report to Rome.

After all that has been said, it is obvious that Bishop Rožman did not go over to kowtow before the German Gen. Raapke when he occupied Ljubljana after Italy's surrender. **The bishop accepted Dr. Rainer's invitation for a conference** in the former palace of the governor, but Rainer himself never stepped foot in the diocesan chancery. Gen. Rösener supposedly made only one visit there. In their rare other encounters, the bishop would not even greet Rösener, or with minimal formality if at all. Yet the Partisan historians wrote volumes on how the bishop shook hands with Rösener, as if this were something other than customary etiquette at an encounter.¹⁵

On **October 29, 1944**, Bishop Rožman, under the pseudonym Andrejc, was the first signee of the Declaration of the National Committee for Slovenia, which mentioned that the democracy of Slovenia was awaiting the defeat of Germany and the arrival of the Western Allies in Slovenia. Despite being invited, the bishop did not attend the celebration of Hitler's birthday on April 20, 1944, nor did he attend the commemoration of Hitler's death in the beginning of May, 1945.

The Head Chaplain of the SD, Dr. Ignacij Lenček, had stated: "The difference between Stalin and Hitler in and of itself was really not great. But our situation was different. Nazism and Fascism were already ruling over us, but communism not yet by a long shot. The resistance against communism was something possible and reasonable; it was fundamentally necessary to think about the possibility of success; a revolt against Nazism and Fascism would have had for us harsh, disproportionately too harsh consequences."¹⁶

2. Attitude towards Communism

Bishop Rožman renounced communism on religious grounds

In the first months after the establishment of the OF, the Bishop issued no statements. **But when the overt terrorism erupted and many patriotic Slovenians were dying, often killed on the allegation of being traitors, the Bishop publicly condemned these actions.** The more murders the VOS perpetrated, the more frequently and more clearly the Bishop spoke

¹⁴ Kolarič III, 107

¹⁵ Kos II, 78 footnote 36, presents only a few examples: before the war, Churchill shook hands with Mussolini, Stalin with von Ribbentrop; during the war (before the attack on each other of course), Molotov with Hitler; after the war, Gen. McArthur with the Japanese emperor; and so on. – For these two sections, see also Kolarič III, the 2nd chapter *V viharju vojne in revolucije* [*In the storm of the war and a revolution*], 67-244, and the 3rd chapter *Umažite škofa* [*Smear the bishop*], 245-298

¹⁶ Kolarič, III, 256

out against it. **It was becoming ever clearer to him that the communists were directing the OF.** He therefore **warned against atheistic communism**, just as he had been doing before the war on the basis of the famous encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*. **The VOS's liquidations were completely unacceptable from a Catholic moral standpoint.** For this reason Bishop Rožman **consistently took a resolute stance against communism.** Even none other than France Bučar himself, the first president of the parliament of independent Slovenia, conceded that **Bishop Rožman was directly obligated to take a stand against such activity.**¹⁷

For example, the bishop preached from the pulpit on November 30, 1943: "Today I hear otherwise sensible people say that assassination is no longer a crime, but a patriotic act... God alone is the master over human life..."¹⁸

Bishop Rožman **rebuffed communism not on political grounds, but on religious grounds.** For this reason he taught in his **pastoral letter of November 30, 1943: "Nobody can be simultaneously a Catholic and a communist...** Whoever willingly supports communism and thereby helps it attain its atheistic goals, this person is supporting militant godlessness and therefore commits a mortal sin."¹⁹ A few sentences earlier he had written: "...godless communism... has led astray many among us with its nationalistic slogans, and under the mask of the Liberation Front and a national liberation army, is trying to take over the government... **This is the main culprit for all the evil that it has either directly perpetrated or indirectly instigated.**"²⁰

This then raises the question: **"Are these words anything other than basic Catholic teaching?** The defense that Bishop Rožman wrote against his own indictment of September 30, 1946 is well known: "The alleged cooperation (collaboration) consisted of the overt ideological opposition of a priest against godless communism. Given the resolute antipathy of atheistic communism against Christianity, which springs from the very essence of communism, no Catholic priest can hold any other position. **And in this one can find no political or any other kind of collaboration with the occupier.**"²¹

In his sermon on St. Nicholas Sunday 1943, Bishop Rožman said that the Faithful themselves were urging him to respond for once to the slanders against him. However he also confessed: "With Divine help I want to – and have to – remain at the post where God has placed me, and to the very end I will teach and admonish the same as I have always done... **to the very end I will maintain and teach, that godless communism is the greatest evil and the worst misfortune for the Slovenian race.**"²²

Later on, Bishop Rožman stated **why he repudiated communism more** [than Fascism/Nazism]. There was no danger that the Slovenian people would have adopted Nazism or Fascism, which they regarded as a short-lived phenomenon. **But as far as he was concerned, the greatest danger of Partisan-ism was that through it the people would have adopted communism.**²³ Undoubtedly today it would have been easier for him to assert this and even some worse things: that the greatest danger of Partisan-ism was that it was the means whereby

¹⁷ Bučar, 64

¹⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 184, cites *Jutro* 12/21/1943 (there is a typographic mistake in the reference: 1941)

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 239

²⁰ *ibid.*, 237, highlighting was added here for emphasis

²¹ Dr. Joze Jagodic, *Proces proti škofu dr. Gregoriju Rožmanu* [The trial against Bishop Dr. Gregorij Rožman], ZSS 1965, 57-72; this quote is on page 71; (Griesser-Pečar incorrectly cites ZSS 1956); highlighting was added here for emphasis.

²² *Ibid.*, 242; highlighting was added here for emphasis

²³ Quoted in Kos II, 80, from *Ameriška Domovina*, Cleveland, 7/21/1948

the Communist Party took over the government and for 45 years suffocated the nation with its dictatorship and poisoned the people with its teachings.

The Differences between the Two Slovenian Bishops of that Era

Griesser-Pečar points out some differences between the only two Slovenian bishops of that time. Both bishops, Rožman and Tomažič, **strongly propounded the position that no collaboration with communism was possible**, and perforce with the OF, because the KP was its driving force. However **Tomažič repudiated both the OF as well as the Homeguard**.²⁴

Bishop Tomažič already in **December 1941**, and again in January 1945, sent a **Pastoral Letter admonishing all the priests** “that they should **abstain from “every activity that is illegal or directed against the current order”**, and above all, activity that is linked to the ideologies or systems mentioned by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*.²⁵

In the spirit of this loyalty, Tomažič already on **April 16, 1941**, in the name of the priests and Catholics of the Lavantian (Maribor) Diocese, addressed to “**the Führer**” of the German “Reich” a **declaration of loyalty in the hope that “the legitimate wishes of the Catholic population of both nationalities” would be heeded**. Tomažič also paid a visit to the German Occupation authorities, notably already on April 19, 1941.

And yet the Partisans neither chastised nor did anything at all to Bishop Tomažič!

The Partisans Try to Win Over Bishop Rožman

His opposition to communism notwithstanding, Bishop Rožman still helped the religious advisor at the NOB, Metod Mikuž, when the latter petitioned to obtain liturgical vessels. Dr. Rožman's opinion was that the Partisans needed priests too.

The strategy of the OF was not merely to fight against Bishop Rožman. **They wanted to win him over to their side**. Therefore **the IOOF turned directly to the bishop on at least four occasions**.

The **first** time was on **November 30, 1941**, when the IO expressed a desire for personal contacts and explained the work of the OF in a lengthy memorandum to him. Rožman declined every contact.

The **second** was in 1942 when, in response to the bishop's repudiation of communism in his “Easter Pastoral Letter to the Catholics in the OF”, the *Slovenski Poročevalec* printed “several unpleasant questions” to the bishop about his contacts with the occupier and about his public silence on the politics of the deportations in Štajerska and Gorenjska; they demanded that the Church at least remain neutral “if it cannot take a step on the side of the people”.

The **third** time was on June 9, 1942 when a group of “Catholics in the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation” begged the bishop to change his behavior “out of love towards the Church and the Slovenian people”. In this letter they “bungled” a bit when they admitted that, from a subjective viewpoint, some of the people who had been sentenced [to death] “before the regular OF court” had been innocent. In the letter they emphasized that his personal mediations

²⁴ The author questions the wording by Griesser-Pečar, who on page 185 writes that Tomažič even more strongly than Rožman propounded the position that all rule comes from God (in the sense of Rom 13, 1-2). Then she continues: “For Tomažič, the fight even against the godless communists cannot justify unlawful violent acts”, as if Bishop Rožman would have approved such deeds!

²⁵ See the extended text in Griesser-Pečar, 185; the **encyclical** *Divini Redemptoris* condemned **Communism**, just as Pope Pius XI condemned **Fascism** in *Non abbiamo bisogno*, and **Nazism** in *Mit brennender Sorge*.

with the Italian authorities on behalf of Slovenians were not enough, so they were demanding that the bishop make a public stand against the injustices by the occupation rulers.

The **fourth** attempt was the letter that the bishop received in October 1942. Some persons in the OF were of the opinion that the bishop was still wavering, but because it was right after the assassination of the former governor Natlačen, some Christian Socialists felt that this was not the fitting time to be attempting to make contacts. But Kardelj deemed that this was indeed the most opportune moment, so the Communists themselves made contact with the bishop, primarily so that they could deflect some of the rumors that they were planning to murder him. The bishop had received a death threat in a letter, but the communists countered that this letter was probably a "dirty trick" made by the White Guard.²⁶

Rožman did in fact receive a threatening letter dated September 20, 1942 from "the political executives" of the OF which was supposed to be his final warning. Note the incongruity in Kardelj's statement: in the autumn of 1942 Kardelj claimed that the bishop was still wavering as usual, yet on the other hand, communist propaganda had already in 1941 stigmatized the bishop as a Quisling and friend of the occupation rulers.

Reproaches for meetings with politicians

After the former governor Natlačen was assassinated, **there was no strong individual in the Catholic political party (SLS) capable of uniting it**. So the SLS **sought counsel from the bishop**. Not only the SLS, but **the liberals as well** were going to him for advice. The communists subsequently chastized the bishop for this, claiming that he was directing politics, that he was a co-founder of the "White Guard", and so on. But his critics seem to forget that at that time the bishop's palace offered the safest hiding place from the occupiers.²⁷

In **August 1942, Gen. Roatta from the Supreme HQ and Gen. Robotti**, commander of the 11th Army Corps, **visited the bishop**. Roatta stated that they had come by order of Mussolini. He announced that they were not going to tolerate any rebellious movement and that every such movement would be cut down to the roots; it will be up to the Slovenians to find a solution; if they themselves cannot find a way to make the Partisan attacks cease, then the Italian Army will take care of it. He also threatened to deport entire districts.

Bishop **Rožman** was very worried **about this**, so **on September 12, 1942 he summoned the representatives of the pre-war political parties**. Of the 22 persons that were invited, 12 came. According to the accounts of those present, the bishop was a non-participant, he simply provided a place for them to meet; in the beginning he did inform them about the visit of the Italian generals, however he himself refrained from making political statements. Dr. Pirkmajer substantiated the opinion that from a legal standpoint the Italian demands cannot be fulfilled: according to the Hague Convention, an occupier had the right to demand their loyalty, but not to demand that they must take action against Slovenian guerrilla fighters. Dr. Natlačen was opposed to the term "guerrillas", but he did emphasize that the Italians themselves were to blame if it had come to this state of affairs, because they had taken the administration and the police

²⁶ Kardelj wrote on October 13, 1942 (Jesen, 125-126): "In actuality (now) all the strings of the b.g. /White Guard/ are converging in the bishop's hands, quite against his will. We know that he is still ever hesitating, whether he should assume this task or not."

²⁷ Griesser-Pečar – Dolinar, 292-317. The authors speak about the attitude of the OF and the KPS leaders towards Rožman, about the letters from Mikuž, Kocbek and Cankar, and about Rožman's reply to Kidrič. They also describe the conditions between priests and the OF.

out of the hands of the Slovenians. **In the end, only 5 representatives of the SLS and 1 of the JNS were in favor of fighting against the Partisans, so the meeting ended without an agreement.**

A reply had to be given to the Italians at any rate, because their past behavior had demonstrated what they were capable of doing, for they had already incarcerated several thousand Slovenians, burned down many houses, and so on. The identity of the person who wrote the reply remains unknown, because all that remains is a very poor German translation of it. Although the memorandum uses the word “we” throughout, the indictment at the trial against the bishop persisted in claiming that the bishop himself had composed it and read it at the start of the meeting, insinuating that from the preface one can discern that the bishop and his deputy were the ones who set up the agenda of the program. Given the following excerpt, “Speaking on behalf of the side of a sound segment of the Slovenian population, who have declared themselves in favor of serious cooperation with the Italian official bodies for the sake of establishing order and exterminating subversive elements and ringleaders, we propose the following to the military authorities...”²⁸, Griesser-Pečar asks rhetorically, did such words then cross the boundary between loyalty and collaboration? The question is, were the Slovenian politicians proposing that the police forces should respond only against actual acts of terrorism, or that these police forces should on their own initiative take active steps against the armed resistance groups. In any event, the Slovenian politicians were clearly under immense pressure: either forced deportations or personal cooperation in maintaining order.²⁹

They also inserted into the statement the idea about international [Hague] permission for a [native] police force. They spoke about “forming security units under Slovenian command.” To achieve this, they proposed the urgent need to covertly release from imprisonment some young, trustworthy former Yugoslav officers, whose names would be proposed by the undersigned. But there is no document that would support the accusation that Bishop Rožman was organizing troops or even giving orders.

Another reproach leveled against the bishop was **that he was present at the oath of the Homeguards**. But the bishop had only said a Low Mass and then departed immediately, before the first oath was administered. After the second oath was given, he merely made an appearance in front of the Ursuline Church as the Homeguards marched past. According to Griesser-Pečar, his making an appearance may have been imprudent, however it was definitely not a legally punishable offense.³⁰

The Moral Dilemma of the Church³¹

The Slovenian Church hierarchy, together with the diocesan and religious-order priests, religious-order nuns, and conscientious Catholic laity, found themselves facing an exceptional moral dilemma already in the first year of the occupation. More than half a century later, the Slovenian bishops in their **Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the End of the War** asserted:

²⁸ Griesser-Dolinar, 67

²⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 190

³⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 192

³¹ The expression “moral dilemma of the Church” is found in Griesser-Pečar, however it was first used by Auxiliary Bishop Lenič (Griesser-Pečar, 301 and 309); it appears that this expression correctly evaluates the spiritual-pastoral dilemmas of that time, especially for Bishop Rožman. – For the entire topic, see Griesser-Pečar 174–199, Griesser-Pečar-Dolinar, and Kolarič. The book *Rožmanov proces [The Rožman Trial]* is worthwhile almost in its entirety, and the book *Skof Rožman* particularly part III, 2nd chapter *ad finem*, and chapter 3

“that during the period of the Second World War and simultaneously while a fight against the occupier was going on, a communist revolution was happening in Slovenia, whose unconditional goal was to establish a totalitarian communist rule. The postwar government's official explanation never denied this, but actually even boasted about it. Therefore it is impossible, that in a search for the utmost proper evaluation of the wartime events, we should just simply ‘let it be’.”³²

However, **“This latter fight eclipsed the first.”**³³ In this manner the Church found itself facing a dilemma: “On the one side there was the despicable occupation rule, with its violation of human rights, oppressive measures, and simply brutal dictatorship, and on the other side were Marxism and Bolshevism, incompatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church.”³⁴ Besides this, the Church could not condone the terrorist acts committed either by the occupation forces or the by communists, deeds that the Party was carrying out not only defensively, but offensively, such as its use of assassinations on its road to power. The communist judges in the postwar trials naturally did not take this into consideration, not even as a mitigating circumstance.

A handful of writers (Franc Špelič, Rev. Cerar, and others) claim that the Partisans were not anti-religion; however, it would be **difficult to reconcile such claims in light of the Partisan symbols, songs, marching songs, and so on.** How could they explain the fact that the Partisans already during the wartime destroyed so many churches, chapels and shrines, roadside and field shrines, Eucharistic crosses and other religious objects? How can they explain the **Partisan songs**, only two of which are presented as an example:

*“At the call of the Comintern, form yourselves into ranks –
To fight for freedom, to fight for the Soviets.
We are the fighters for the Red Front...
For our slogan is: a Soviet World!”*³⁵

How should a person evaluate these verses of poetry by Matej Bor:

*“Spread gallows across the whole world!
Your god is: robbery, arson, death!
Go wild! Cry out for blood!
Rebellion has raised its head for us!
Hurrah! ‘Red’ pioneers!
Under the foundations, arches –
Place bombs and dynamite!

Tomorrow – ‘Red’ engineers,
Under the victory arch [you’ll march], to build a new world.

Partisan,
Destroy! Demolish! Hurrah!”*³⁶

³² Dolinar, 36

³³ Griesser-Pečar, 174

³⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 175

³⁵ Quoted in *V znamenju OF*, 7, from *Slovenske partizanske pesmi*, published by the Supreme HQ of the Partisan Troops, June 1942.

³⁶ Quoted in *V znamenju OF*, 40, from Matej Bor, *Previharimo viharje*, published by the Main HQ of the Slovenian Partisan Troops, 1942.

The Trial against Bishop Rožman

On August 30, 1945, the Military Tribunal of the Yugoslav 4th Army sentenced Rožman to 18 years of imprisonment with forced labor, to the loss of political and citizenship rights for a period of 10 years after the completion of his prison term, and to confiscation of all his property. The Supreme Court in Beograd ratified the sentence in its entirety.³⁷

“The trial against Rožman was of course not the only trial against the representatives of the Catholic Church after World War II. From the Ljubljana Diocese alone, up to the year 1959, 272 priests were actually imprisoned. But his was the key trial against the Church in Slovenia.”³⁸

The Interior Ministry wrote a report in November 1945 that explicitly warned about the danger posed by the Slovenian Catholic priesthood, claiming that during the time of the Liberation (read: during the Revolution) the official Church had been the backbone of the entire reaction – and that it remains so even to this day.

In response to the accusations against him, **Bishop Rožman wrote a reply** which is now in the Archbishop's Archives in Ljubljana. The former secretary to the bishop, Dr. Jože Jagodic, wrote an article “The Trial against Bishop Dr. Gregorij Rožman”³⁹. The article contains the accusation, an excerpt from the speech by the military prosecutor, and the sentence; he also adds the defense argument presented by the Bishop's public defender. Just these few sentences alone reveal the strange approach taken by his court-appointed defense:⁴⁰

“In determining the degree of the punishable responsibility of the accused Rožman, it is necessary to take into consideration that Rožman deemed that he was tied to the directives which he received from his superior Pope, who condemned communism in his encyclical ‘*Divini Redemptoris*’. Thus Rožman faced a personal dilemma: to follow the people or to listen to the pope! Rožman took the wrong path. He subjected himself to the discipline of the Church, and the reactionaries already had him in their midst...”⁴¹

Pope John Paul II in *Centessimus annus*

Pope John Paul II wrote that Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism wants to destroy the Church primarily because the Church defends the three-fold separation of governmental powers and insists on an objective criterion of good and evil, the criterion that is used to judge Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism and its crimes.

“In modern times, this concept (from *Rerum novarum*, that there are three powers – legislative, executive and judicial – a part of Catholic Church doctrine) has been opposed by totalitarianism, which, in its Marxist-Leninist form, maintains that some people are exempt from error and can therefore arrogate to themselves the exercise of absolute power.” (44)

“The culture and praxis of totalitarianism involve a rejection of the Church. The State or the party which claims to be able to lead history towards perfect goodness, and which sets itself above all values, cannot tolerate the affirmation of an objective criterion of good and evil beyond the will of those in power, since such a criterion, in given circumstances, could be used to judge their actions. This explains why totalitarianism attempts to destroy the Church, or at least to reduce her to submission, making her an instrument of its own ideological apparatus.” (45)

³⁷ See Griesser-Pečar – Dolinar; the authors hold that the entire trial demonstrates the invalidity of both the “procedures” and the judgment.

³⁸ Griesser-Pečar – Dolinar, 13; highlighting was added here for emphasis.

³⁹ ZSS 1965, 57-72

⁴⁰ ZSS 1965, 57-72; also Kolarič, III. Part IV, 477-479

⁴¹ The rebuttal by Bishop Rožman is in the article by Msgr. Jagodic, ZSS 1965, 57-72 — For the entire chapter, see also Bizilj and Griesser-Pečar 2005

10. The OF/KPS Prepare to Take Over the Government

Vodušek Starič distinguishes the two connotations of the phrase “take over the government”.¹ The first meaning is “establish or assume the reins of an administrative-state apparatus, institutions, and organizations”, which was the case of “the organizational-technical process” that had been applied according to pre-ordained plans already in the “liberated territory” in Bela krajina. The other and primary meaning of the phrase has a broader scope, hence “we think about the series of political moves, that the KPJ began preparing in the autumn of 1944, through which, looking at the whole picture, it was guaranteeing for itself dominion over the entire country in actuality and with a tight grip, and that were the products of deliberate tactics.” Added to both types of takeover must be the planned secret activities for a government takeover that the KPS had begun already before the war, or at least as of June 22, 1941.

1. The Main Instruments of the Revolution

1. The Partisan Army²

a) Creation and Purposes

Regime historians maintain, without offering any proof, that already on the very same day as Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union (June 22, 1941) the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party (CK-KPS) held a meeting in order to establish a **High Command** (later: Supreme Command, or rather, Supreme HQ) **for Slovenian Partisan Troops** (modeled on the Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia – POJ – they later were named **the Partisan Detachments of Slovenia, POS**). They made the following appointments: the commander was Franc Leskošek – Luka, the political commissar was Boris Kidrič (later Miha Marinko), and the deputy commander was Dr. Aleš Bebler. Again without proof, they maintain that the Executive Committee of the OF (IOOF) on June 29th ratified, or rather “legitimized” this creation; a rather surprising claim, since the OF actually did not even exist yet at this time. The Command of the Partisan troops was announced publicly for the first time in the newsletter *Slovenski poročevalec* dated August 16, 1941.

The Central Committee (CK) of the KPJ on June 27, 1941 established the Supreme HQ staff for the **National Liberation Army (NOV)** and the **Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia (POJ)**, and **placed all Partisan activities** [in Yugoslavia] **under a single, in other words communist, leadership**.³

¹ Vodušek-Starič, 209

² Griesser-Pečar, 344-397; *Ključne značilnosti [Key characteristics]*, 47-51. – All in all, it would be fitting if it were ever learned how the fighters in the so-called “national-liberation war” came to be named “Partisans”; the word, of course, conveys neither denotation nor connotation of its true political affiliation or bias – the Communist Party.

³ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 5, 22

In the first half of **July**, a laws-and-bylaws document, named **The Partisan Regulations**, was formulated in Slovenia to cover the organization, work, and tasks of the Partisan units. Only **here, for the first and probably the last time, the Partisan forces were called the “National Liberation Army of the Slovenian Nation”**, with “national” in this phrase denoting “people” not “state”. **The Slovenian Partisans were incorporated into the Yugoslav Army on September 16, 1941.**⁴

October 1941 marked the start of the dissemination of the newspaper *Partisan*, containing **Tito’s directives about the tasks of the National Liberation Partisan Detachments, along with an oath, symbols, and the organizational structure.**

b) The Oath

Upon joining, each person had to recite the following oath:

“I, a Partisan of the Liberation Army of the People’s Armada of the Slovenian Nation, which side by side with the glorious Worker-Farmer Red Army of the SOVIET UNION and all other nations fighting for freedom, will fight for the freedom and the unification of the Slovenian race, for brotherhood and peace among nations and among peoples, for a better future for the working class, do hereby swear before my nation and my fellow fighters, that I will give all my energies and all my capabilities to the liberation issues of the Slovenian race, the working people and all progressive and freedom-loving humanity in the holy war against the fascist oppressors and barbarians, that I will not desert the Partisan ranks, to which I am joining freely and consciously, and I will not lay down my weapons until the total victory over the fascist occupiers, until the complete realization of the grand liberation goal of the Slovenian nation. I swear that in the battle for these grand liberation goals I will defend with my own blood the honor and untouchability of our Partisan flag and that I will, if necessary, sacrifice even my own life. Onward to battle, for freedom!”⁵

c) Symbols and Structure

The Partisan Regulations mentions **two flags**, the Red and the Slovenian, which sported the unit’s identification and the slogan “For Freedom”. In the beginning, this slogan was the expected reply to the standard greeting, “To battle!” The slogan “Death to Fascism – Freedom for the Nation!” came later. Long after the war, this slogan was still printed on almost all official documents.

The Partisan Regulations stipulated the standard **division into squads, companies, battalions, and brigades, which were headed by commanders and political-commissars. Po-**

⁴ *Odlok SNOO o vključenju slovenskih partizanskih čet v narodnoosvobodilne oddelke Jugoslavije*, [The Resolution by the SNOO to incorporate the Slovenian Partisan troops into the National Liberation Detachments of Yugoslavia], September 16 1941; cited in Griesser-Pečar, 339, *per Dokumenti I*, No. 40, 118

⁵ The text is found in Griesser-Pečar, 336. **A comparison with the Homeguard oath is *a propos* here:** For example, the soldiers of both armies swore that they will be fighting in collaboration with a foreign army; both armies were collaborating with a totalitarian regime, but in contrast the Homeguards did not serve it! (ibid. 337). The Partisan oath is replete with well-known propagandistic “clichés”. The oath was hypocritical because the majority did not join the Partisans voluntarily, but were forcibly mobilized. – Also, for communists, the term “fascist” included all non-communists.

litical-commissars were in principle co-equal to the commanders, but in actuality they carried more weight.⁶

In mid-October 1941, the NOV and POJ **changed the flag and emblems**: The *Slovenski poročevalec* printed on October 17, 1941 that the flag of the Slovenian Partisans is white-blue-red with the Soviet star across all three fields, and the caps of Slovenian Partisans would sport a 2x2cm field with the tricolors and a Soviet star. The salute was raising the fist of the right hand alongside the edge of the cap.⁷

d) A Regular Army or Irregulars (subversives/guerrillas)?

An important question is **whether the Partisans were truly a military unit according to internationally-accepted norms**. The Regime lawyer and historian, Maks Šnuderl, is convinced that they were true military units and therefore distinguishes between guerrillas and the Partisan units. He claims that the Partisan units satisfied the regulations of international law, but guerrillas did not.⁸

If the Hague Agreements for Wars on Land from 1899/1907 applied to the Partisans, then the Partisans would have had to abide by the Fourth Agreement from 1907, which lists actions that are forbidden to recognized military units. **Without question the Partisans violated the following Articles**: 23. (prohibition against malicious killings; or damaging, destroying and taking the property of the helpless), 28. (prohibition against robbing), 30. (punishment only on the basis of a trial), 46. (protection of the individual and his personal property), 50. (punishment of transgressions by individuals).⁹

e) The Number of Partisans

In 1941 in Slovenia, 1,924 individuals filled the Partisan ranks (1,100 in Gorenjska, 558 in Ljubljana Province, and 266 in Štajerska). **Adding the 134 Slovenians outside the country**, gives a **total of 2,058 persons**. However, **of these, 630 returned to their homes, 287 were captured, 126 were killed in action, 223 moved to other regions, and 31 were unaccounted**. **After 1941, only 639 individuals remained with the Partisans**.¹⁰

According to the estimates by groups of historians, the **highest number of Partisans in Slovenia occurred in the autumn of 1943 (40,000)**.¹¹ Some say that there were **at the end of the war some 30,000 Partisans, of whom only 17,000 were operationally active**, while 8,000

⁶ **Leon Trotsky** introduced political-commissars into the Red Army, and Stalin transformed them into a true tool of the Party. The Yugoslav Supreme HQ prescribed that political-commissars must sport the emblem of the hammer-and-sickle, which led to sharp quarrels in 1942 between the Communists and the Christian Socialists. In reaction, Kardelj in a letter dated July 14, 1942 recommended to Ivo-Lola-Ribar, a member of the CK-KPJ, to acknowledge at least some limited latitude on this, otherwise the others could “one day slide to the White Guard position...” Griesser-Pečar, 338, quotes from “*Zbornik dokumentov in podatkov o narodnoosvobodilni vojni jugoslovanskih narodov*”, VI/3, t 58, 137 (the future *Zbornik NOB*)

⁷ This gesture alone should have convinced many a person what was really lurking behind the OF. But “Whomever the gods strike blind...”

⁸ Šnuderl, 130 footnote 70a

⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 341

¹⁰ NOV, 225-226, also contains a statistical summary and percentages of survivors at the end of the war. In 1941, altogether 0.13% (!) of the Slovenians would have been in the Partisans, and at the end of 1941 only 0.042%

¹¹ *Ključne značilnosti*, 48

were in reserve, and the rest belonged to the National Protection and to the National Defense of Yugoslavia Corps.¹²

f) Operational Zones and Army Units

In **December 1942, 4 Operational Zones** covered in **Slovenia**: **1) Dolensjska** (disbanded on July 13, 1943), **2) Notranjska** (disbanded on July 21, 1943), **3) Gorenjska-Primorska** (the Primorska disbanded on February 21, 1943, and the Gorenjska on June 24, 1943), and **4) Štajerska** (5 battalions, which remained until the end of the war; but when the 14th Division was deployed to Štajerska, these battalions were incorporated into the 7th and 9th Corps).

NOV Corps sprung up at the end of 1942 (by a decree of the Supreme Command of the NOV and POJ, November 1942). The Corps **remained until January 1945**, when **Army Groups were established**. In Slovenia there were the **7th Corps** (created October 3, 1943), which had between 10,000 and 13,000 men (the Detachments of Bela krajina, Noranjska, Dolenjska, and tank), and the **9th Corps** (created December 13, 1943) with between 7,000 and 12,000 men (Jesenice-Bohinj and Škofja Loka Detachments and two naval), and the **4th Operational Zone** (Kamnik-Zasavje, Kokrški, Lackov and Koroška detachments).¹³ Corps were not reorganized if they were engaged in battles. Because this was the situation in Slovenia, the 7th and the 9th Corps remained until April or May of 1945, when they were replaced by the **National Defense of Yugoslavia Corps (KNOJ)**.

There were two divisions in Slovenia, the 14th and the 15th; after Italy's surrender, the 18th, the 30th and the 31st divisions also sprung up. In the final operations in 1945, especially in May, other Yugoslav divisions entered Slovenia.¹⁴

In the final phase of the war, **the POJ** was reorganized into **4 Army Groups**: Army Group 1 (66,000 men) was moving along the left bank of the Sava River; Army Group 2 (110,000 men) south of the Sava River; Army Group 3 (110,000 men) south of the Drava and the Mura rivers; Army Group 4 (110,000 men) on the Adriatic coast. **At the end of the war, both Slovenian Corps were attached to the HQ of Army Group 4.**

g) National Protection

National Protection (NZ) was a military organization whose objective was to protect the inhabitants. It evolved afterwards into the [postwar] Police to replace the former Police. The NZ was created in **September 1941**. Membership in the NZ was not limited to communists. The NZ spread quickly in Ljubljana; it is claimed that it had 1,500 members there in 1942. The NZ performed several acts of sabotage in and around Ljubljana. It worked directly with the VOS. In the countryside it had more of a defensive character.

¹² Veljko Namorš, *O številu Slovencev v prekomorskih enotah in o celotnem številu Slovencev v NOV [Concerning the number of Slovenians in foreign units and concerning about the total number of Slovenians in the NOV]*, Borec No. 542-543, Ljubljana 1995; cited in Griesser-Pečar, 347. Given 1.5 million Slovenians at this time, 40,000 represented 2.6%, 30,000 represented 2%, and 17,000 a little more than 1.1% of the Slovenians!

¹³ *Enciklopedija Slovenije*, Vol 8, 144 under the title "Operativne cone med NOB" [Operational zones in the NOB] (Zdravko Klanjšček); op. cit., Vol 8, 144, "Partizanski odredi" [Partisan formations] (ibid); op. cit., "Korpusi NOVJ" [Corps in the NOVJ], Vol 5, 306, (ibid); op. cit., Vol 2, 269-270, "Divizije NOJ in POJ" [Division of the NOJ and the POJ] (ibid)

¹⁴ These army group formations came as a boon to the murderers involved the postwar genocide, who after Slovenia's self-liberation cast the blame for the mass murders on the Yugoslav Army.

The NZ had a **two-fold task**: to mobilize manpower and to be an intermediate station before departure into the Partisans. After Italy's surrender, the Supreme HQ staff of the NOV of Slovenia on September 13, 1943 issued a directive for the establishment of an occupation (sic!) military government, in which the NZ acted as some sort of military Police in the "liberated" territories.

After the SNOS had its assembly in Črnomelj on February 19-20, 1944, the VOS was abolished.¹⁵ It created various administrative units, including a **Department of Internal Affairs**, into which the NZ was incorporated.¹⁶ The **Decree on the Creation and Organizations for National Protection** was publicized on March 1, 1944.¹⁷

2. The Security-Intelligence Service (VOS)¹⁸

The VOS can be said to have come into being on August 15, 1941, the date that Kardelj entrusted an intelligence service to Zdenka Kidrič, and the organization of security units to a Party functionary, France Ravbar-Vitez. In top-secret instructions, Kardelj clearly stipulated the primacy of the Party.¹⁹ The written correspondence between Kardelj and Zdenka Kidrič clearly indicates how little trust the communists had in their own "partners".

The work of the VOS covered **three areas: general intelligence, special intelligence, and security**. The task of the first area was to observe the occupier and the anticommunist camp. The special service, which had several sections, was to tail individuals, weaken the situation of the enemies, infiltrate them, and try to wreck them. The third service, the execution body of the VOS, had the task of "liquidations" and acts of sabotage, but it also performed house searches, carried off documents and archives, destroyed printeries, and confiscated weapons, equipment, and money.

The VOS had primarily two goals: first, to support the Partisan Army and the political fight against the occupier and his White Guard-Mihailović helpers; secondly, to become a strong and effective weapon, so it could nip in the bud any and all ventures by the enemies of the Slovenian nation.²⁰

According to *Slovenski poročevalec*, by the end of the year, 40 people were shot for being suspected – not proven! – informants and traitors. By the end of 1941, the VOS had liquidated around 100 Slovenians in the Ljubljana area alone.²¹ One fact is indisputable: the **VOS was killing only Slovenians!**

¹⁵ Decree dated February 19, 1944; see *Dokumenti Šnuderl*, No. 114, 143: Article 2 acknowledged the VOS for its three-year fight against the fifth column and national treason.

¹⁶ *Dokumenti Šnuderl*, No. 126, 154

¹⁷ *Dokumenti Šnuderl*, No. 127, 154-155

¹⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 367-393

¹⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 368, posts (according to AS I, VOS II-1, 346) a section of *Navodila Centralnega komiteja za izgradnjo Varnostne in obveščevalne službe na terenu in v vojski* [the Directive of the Central Committee for the development of a Security and Intelligence Service in the field and in the army]

²⁰ For a verbatim quotation, see Griesser-Pečar, 372

²¹ Kos I, 176-178. Kos evoked special attention and expressed surprise at how the anticommunist side likewise accepted into parlance the euphemism "liquidation", which removes all moral depravity from the expression "killing" and thus transforms a criminal deed into some sort of mechanical gesture.

They always tried to justify the murders, most often with the derogatory term “White Guard”, a slur that the *Slovenski poročevalec* first used on December 9, 1941 in conjunction with the assassination of Emmer.²²

OZNA (The Department of National Security)²³

a) Establishment

The 1st Session of SNOS in Črnomelj established the **Department for Internal Affairs** with three domains: the fight against the Fifth Column, national security, and internal affairs. The most important sphere was the first, called the **Department of National Security – Intelligence Services**. In **April** this department **changed its name to Intelligence Service, and in May to OZNA** (in parlance, it was simply called “Ozna”, the phonetic pronunciation of the mnemonic). The military had its own unit, the **Army National Security (VDV)**. Its first director was Vito **Kraigher**; after he was captured, the directorship was given to Ivan **Maček** – Matija, who later became director of OZNA for Slovenia.

After AVNOJ-II and after the signing of the Tito-Šubašić Agreement, **increasingly greater efforts were being made to combine the various organizations. The Department of National Security (OZNA) was established on May 13, 1944** by a decree of Tito, the commander-in-chief of the NOV and the POJ. Upon the recommendation of the Soviet Commission stationed at the Yugoslav Supreme Headquarters, all intelligence services were merged under a common leadership.²⁴ OZNA was structured militarily according to the pattern of the Soviet NKVD. Its first director was the Commissioner for People’s Defense, A. **Ranković**.

OZNA is not mentioned in Slovenian documents until October 1944, when several headquarters received Soviet advisors. The **troops of the VDV on August 15, 1944 became a component of the Corps for the National Defense of Yugoslavia (KNOJ)**; in other words, all the Slovenians in the VDV were in KNOJ, and thereby also the criminals of the postwar massacres. The SNOS was left with only the National Protection (later National Police).

b) Responsibilities

The work of OZNA covered **three areas**: foreign countries and the occupied regions within the country, “liberated” territories, and the army. OZNA was divided into 4 sections according to tasks: intelligence, counter-espionage, prevention of spying in the army, and a statistics-technical department. Maček sent a memorandum to his associates in which he clearly stated that the OZNA – in contrast to other departments – must be a highly centralized organization.²⁵

²² Some people are to this day still using this expression, which was borrowed from the Russian Revolution, and they take it to mean all native groups or organizations that did not suit the OF and were therefore unilaterally labeled as enemies of the people and collaborators. The Regime historian Saje admits that the concept “White Guard” in Slovenia was not identical to the Soviet Union one, because in Slovenia (at the time) there was still no civil war, but a liberation struggle, which according to him evolved into a people’s revolution. Griesser-Pečar correctly maintains that the existence of a White Guard according to Lenin’s logic implies the existence of a Red Guard, which necessarily means a civil war.

²³ Griesser-Pečar, 394-405

²⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 395, on the basis of the memoirs of Ivan Maček, *Erinnerungen eines jugoslawischen Freiheitskämpfers*, Köln 1985, 320-326, and Dušan Biber, *Zavezniške in sovjetske misije ter obveščevalne službe v NOB [Allied and Soviet missions and the intelligence services in the NOB]*, Borec, XLIII, 1-3, 132

²⁵ Griesser-Pečar quotes according to Ljubo Dvornik-Šubelj, *Ustanovitev oddelka za zaščito naroda [Creation of National Security Detachments]*, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, Ljubljana, 1995, 1-2, 106

c) Tasks

The **task** of OZNA was to **safeguard the achievements of the Revolution**. According to the Directive of June 10, 1944, OZNA drew up a list of enemy elements for each region.

On July 19, 1944, **the SNOS issued a decree** concerning special measures to be taken “against the occupation helpers, Homeguards, and traitors”; this decree **granted OZNA very broad powers**. This power was so extensive, that the memorandum stated explicitly: “... nobody from any of the administrative parts of our governance... has the right to obstruct OZNA departments in their carrying out this decree... All the components within our governance... are required to give OZNA all necessary information.”²⁶

OZNA was also instructed to **establish its own centers in the occupied territories and along the borders with other nations**. Its main task was to **collect information on three groups**: enemy intelligence services, institutions within the state apparatus, and quislings in various military units. It must tap into all the archives at the main enemy intelligence centers, capture their leaders and top agents. It must also tail the agents of Allied countries.²⁷

The work of the intelligence section was quite successful, as attested by the reports of October 31, 1944 and November 28, 1944.²⁸ Yet more important was the 2nd Section, whose task was to remove any possibility of there being any illegal group or activity “after the victory”. Of course, the Party itself was exempt from any checks, because it was “so clean and so powerful”.²⁹

The 2nd Section had its full-time helpers (informants and agents) as well as secret policemen, who were used as needed. At the end of 1944 there were 216 people working for it plus several hundred agents and infiltrators within various military units. OZNA also performed purges within its own ranks. A unit of the 2nd Section contained **courts**, but these had limited powers. They were permitted to expel people, but they did not have the right to decide on the life or death of the detainees.

d) A State within a State

The communists thus wanted to establish a network as extensive as possible already before the war ended, so it could then be expanded even further after the war. It became clear already during the war that **OZNA was a state within a state, accountable to no one for its actions**: this fact was openly affirmed by Jože Brilej at the conference on December 12, 1944³⁰ to discuss the prosecution and treatment of war criminals and enemies of the people; Regime historians affirmed the same, and offer the “sentences” meted in Ribnica in 1943 as an example.³¹

E. Kardelj nonetheless expressed his dissatisfaction with Maček in a letter to CK-KPS dated 10/3/1944: “Matija will have to change many a thing and become less conspiratorial”³² But there

²⁶ Vodušek – Starič, 30; Griesser-Pečar, 399

²⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 398, quotes from *Iz arhivov slovenske politične policije [From the Archives of the Slovenian Political Police]*, Ljubljana 1996, 48

²⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 399

²⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 400

³⁰ Vodušek – Starič, 33; Griesser-Pečar, 403

³¹ Mikuž IV, 226-227

³² Griesser-Pečar, 403, quoting from AS I ZKSS, fasc. 391, *Pismo 3.10.1944*

is no indication that anything changed after this letter.³³ This was hardly a surprise, since Maček was a member of the CK-KPS Politbureau and was probably in daily contact with Kidrič.³⁴

When the deadline for “amnesty” passed, OZNA acerbated its measures. Maček wrote that as of that moment they brought to trials even all those who had voluntarily turned themselves in, and that they treated mercilessly the families that still continued to support the White Guard.³⁵

e) Weapons for the Government Takeover

As of March of 1945, OZNA devoted itself exclusively to preparations for the takeover of the government. They assigned exact locations where anybody should be when the Yugoslav Army, or (in actuality also) the Red Army, marched in. The larger part of OZNA was assigned to Ljubljana. The VOS index-card files, which were continuously growing, were housed in the city; at the start of 1945 they held data on 17,000 persons.

After the war, OZNA's most important tasks were to liquidate occupation units, Slovenian Homeguards and other groups, to ensure the sentencing of certain political parties and to persecute their members. They became fanatical against the **Catholic Church** on account of its influence on the population and its anticommunist stance.

After the new federal constitution, January 31, 1946, OZNA was reorganized and placed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

3. Revolutionary Justice³⁶

a) Punitive Courts against the enemies of the people

At the Congress of Lawyers on “Liberated Territory” (October 10 and 11, 1943 in Suhor), Dr. Darko Černež rejected the principle of continuity, that was being proposed by the government-in-exile in London, which he argued was no different than the long-dead type of state rule of Louis XIV (*L'Etat c'est moi* – I am the State). In his line of reasoning, the old government had come to an end on account of the occupation, not on account of the liberation fight; since the liberation movement is the one that will drive out the occupier, it must be the one, in order to maintain continuity, to organize a legal system for whoever remains in the field and for the liberated people in the liberated territories.³⁷

The Congress of Slovenian Lawyers articulated its position that **no continuity exists in the legal system between the old and the new state.** To sidestep some legal questions that cropped up, they justified their statement by appealing to “**generally accepted norms**”. On this issue, they of course did not ask themselves wherein lies the continuity for a state since it is not recognizing any previous reign; nor did they identify what these “generally held norms” might be.

Their position was based on a doctrine that the KPS had espoused from the very start of its own liberation movement. Delo on June 3, 1942 wrote that the KPS “has always been and

³³ Vodušek – Starič, 31-32; Griesser-Pečar, 404

³⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 404, quotes Jera Vodušek-Starič, *Odgovor na vprašanje Preiskovalne komisije Državega zbora Slovenije o raziskovanju poveljnih množičnih pobojev etc., ki so prispela do 2.2.1994*

³⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 404, where she quotes from the already-cited memoirs of Maček in German, 343

³⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 407-434, who distinguishes: punitive courts against the enemies of the people, regular (non-military) courts, and military courts.

³⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 409, who cites according to D. Černež, *Državnopravni značaj našega osvobodilnega gibanja*, Spomenica o prvem zboru slovenskih pravnikov na osvobojenem ozemlju, 46

will always be in favor of eventually establishing a people's democracy". The newspaper also claimed that **the KPS was among the first ones to give the initiative for the establishment of a Political Rule by the People within a framework of National-Liberation committees that are truly freely elected.** This Power of the People extends not only to political-administrative and economic spheres, but must also extend into the court system for the sake of law and order, so that it can preserve and strengthen the Power of the People and protect itself against the enemies of the nation.³⁸ It names **two types of enemies:** the White Guard, and those people who from selfish motives damage the people's community.

The basis for such an interpretation of justice was the **principle that justice must be subordinated to the achievements of the national-liberation fight. This unwritten law is still to this day in effect in the independent, yet legally imperfect, Republic of Slovenia!**³⁹ Numerous statements by communist big-wigs and their collaborators confirm this position.⁴⁰ Lojze Ude, a member of the Commission for the Ascertainment of Crimes by the Occupier and His Helpers, created in 1944, wrote: "Our fight is righteous in the moral sense of the word. This is sufficient. This is the right to life, this is **the right of the progressive forces in the world** and in the Slovenian nation. This right is more primal and more supreme than the rights ascribed by positive law. For there are two worlds: the world of legality in the sense of positive law, and our world." Therefore he states that it is impossible to be a good Slovenian if one is opposed to the OF, and for anyone to be opposed, a wretched case already *per se*, it is inexcusable.⁴¹

b) "Regular" Courts

These did not appear until **after the establishment of the Department of the Judiciary at the SNOS, August 19, 1944, and after the resolution by the Presidium of the SNOS on September 3, 1944.** Before then, some legal proceedings, that are by custom relegated to courts, were performed by the national-liberation committees, or rather, the OF committees.

At the suggestion of the KPS, the IOOF already on May 17, 1942, issued a **decree on the establishment of a People's Rule on liberated Slovenian lands.**⁴² The decree stipulated that the OF assumes reign over liberated lands and that it temporarily grants the roles of civilian affairs to the secret-agent committees of the OF.⁴³

Thus empowered, **they began to confiscate the real estate of German citizens and of those Slovenians who had supported them.** This decree articulated the "socialist element of

³⁸ Verbatim text quoted by Griesser-Pečar, 407 – The constant prattle about "people" and about the rights of the "progressives" raises the question, what remains for those excluded from the "people" and what sort of rights do the "non-progressives" have, if any.

³⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 409, substantiates this with the fact that the request to revise the trial against Bishop Rožman has been rejected already three times since 1991.

⁴⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 409-412

⁴¹ Griesser-Pečar, 411-412, quotes from L. Ude, *Aktualna vprašanja iz mednarodnega prava*, Spomenica o prvem zboru slovenskih pravnikov, osvobojeno ozemlje 1944, 26. Here, Ude has forgotten what he had thought in 1941 and 1942 in conjunction with the liquidations; highlighting was added here for emphasis

⁴² Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 30, 43-44; see the text of the decree also in Griesser-Pečar, 412-413

⁴³ Even before this decree, in some areas the so-called Liberation Committees were proclaiming that they were taking over the government, and were also establishing the death penalty, ex. for stealing and robbery, basing their actions on the Resolution for the Protection of the Slovenian Nation (9/16/1941).

the Revolution”, according to attorney Šnuderl.⁴⁴ They also issued a **Decree on the Confiscation of the Property of Gottscheer Germans** on liberated land (6/14/1942).⁴⁵ The National-Liberation Committees and the Partisans were **permitted to search houses. According to the IOOF Resolution dated August 10, 1942, all public and personal liquid assets** (money, precious metals, food provisions, etc.) throughout the liberated lands **were eligible to be taken by any apparatus of the People’s Government**.⁴⁶

c) Judiciary Committee

On July 31, 1942, the IOOF appointed a **Judiciary Commission**.⁴⁷ Due to the Italian Offensive, the revolutionary trials had ceased, even before the civilian commission began to operate. At a meeting on July 13, 1942, the IOOF argued that military courts should be established in the Partisan units. On September 14, 1944 by decree they finally rejected any need for a non-military court, because Zoran Polič, a member of the IOOF at the Slovenian Supreme HQ, stated that a distinction between regular and military justice was unnecessary.⁴⁸

d) Abuses

The 1942 resolutions for liberated lands opened wide the doors to various abuses. Even members of the NOV became victims of these abuses. Kardelj himself for reasons unknown (foreign or domestic/political?) was forced to criticize (for the benefit of the public) such unjustifiable and baseless behavior: It was true the instructions demanded that all traitors must be confined, interrogated, and “justified” [liquidated] so that WhiteGuard-ism can be nipped in the bud. But they must first of all **make the nation become convinced that the White Guard was the main culprit for all woes** (because then the KPS/OF could have a free hand for any sort of crime whatsoever); All White Guard terrorists and torturers will receive their deserved punishment, **because now even the USSR has agreed to the resolution by England and the USA that all Fascists and Hitler’s criminals and White Guard traitors be punished by death immediately after the liberation**.⁴⁹

e) The end of operation by the “Regular” Courts

After Italy’s surrender, the work of regular courts on liberated land came to an end with the Decree of October 18, 1943.⁵⁰ The task of judicial prosecution of all punishable activities, not relegated to the military courts after September 15, 1943, were relegated to the Local Agent Committees, who were allowed to resolve disagreements in personal disputes. Real es-

⁴⁴ Šnuderl, 191

⁴⁵ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 40, 51-52

⁴⁶ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 44, 54-55, and No. 45, 55-56

⁴⁷ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 50, 58

⁴⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 417, quotes Zoran Polič, *Začetki organiziranega sodstva v NOV in PO Slovenije*, *Pravnik*, Ljubljana 1964, 312

⁴⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 419, quotes from *Dokumenti* 4, 149, 151-152. Kardelj’s claim that England and the USA demanded death for all those named in the letter is a pure fabrication! If there actually were such a resolution by England and the USA, where is it “registered”? If the Regime historians know about such a resolution, why have they never published it? And if the resolution doesn’t exist, why haven’t they “demythologized” Kardelj? – The parenthetical comment within Kardelj’s statements is by the author, JR.

⁵⁰ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 95, 115-116 - The author JR places the terms “regular” and “people’s” within quotation marks because each has its own meaning in communist jargon.

tate ledgers and illegal judgments continued to remain with the military courts. In the opinion of Dr. T. Tominšek, the judge at the Kočevje Trials, this finally did away with the pre-April Yugoslav Judiciary.⁵¹

The “approaching” end of the war forced the communists **in the middle of 1944 to begin reinstating the regular courts**. A decree by the SNOS Presidium on **March 12, 1944 named a general public prosecutor**, who according to the USSR model now had more jurisdiction than in the former Yugoslavia.⁵² Vito Kraigher was appointed the first general public prosecutor.⁵³ Kraigher recommended that the law on the judiciary structure in the USSR be used as the model for the structuring of the new Yugoslav judiciary.⁵⁴

The Presidium of the SNOS on August 20, 1944 accepted the **Decree on Special Measures against Helpers of the Occupier, Black Marketers, and other Traitors**.⁵⁵ This was followed on August 23, 1944 with the **Decree on the Determination of the Value of the Necessities of Life and the Punishment of Criminals**.

f) “People’s” Courts

The **Decree on the Temporary Establishment of National Courts and National Judges**, meaning People’s Courts and People’s Judges, was issued on September 3, 1944.⁵⁶ People’s Courts were to be established on a regional and local basis, and there should also be a higher people’s court and a supreme people’s court. The decree stipulated that the regional, or rather the local, committees should elect the judges, and an assembly of regional committees within a designated area should elect the higher judges. The courts had a multi-member (collegiate) structure, with the decisions determined by the majority. Until judges were assigned, the national-liberation committees assumed all their functions. According to Tominšek, this assignation enabled “the principles of the people’s democracy and a progressive judiciary to be expressed”, which is a true statement only because the judges in the regional districts were almost to a man legally incompetent.

After the “Liberation” in 1945, a temporary **People’s Panel** created a **law on the organization of people’s courts** in order to give a **legal foundation** to the establishment of the judgeships. The delegates in this board eventually reached the opinion that each person on the basis of his understanding must be capable of judging impartially, and that a person’s moral suitability was a much more important qualification than one’s profession; “moral suitability” was of course equated with “political suitability”. This was supposed to be a proof of the principle that all power comes from the people, who should judge according to their feelings, a notion that gained ascendancy in the USSR after the October Revolution. (On the one hand, this in

⁵¹ Griesser-Pečar, 419-420. This holds a new contradiction, given the earlier claims by other attorneys and the opinion of the IOOF that continuity applies only to a country, and not to laws.

⁵² Šnuderl, 350-351

⁵³ By law he should have been appointed by the SNOS and been answerable only to the SNOS, but in actuality Kraigher was a member of the KPS and reported regularly to the Polit-bureau. Proof that the USSR was really the model for the new jurisprudence was the fact that Kraigher sent to each prosecutor a translation of the Soviet Criminal Lawbook, basing his decision on the grounds that this lawbook contained a list of the most modern principles concerning criminal-law.

⁵⁴ Vodusek-Starič, 17-18

⁵⁵ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 151, 203-204

⁵⁶ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 149, 200-201, and No. 152, 204-211

effect denies a separation of powers and leads to non-independent courts, and on the other hand it denies that professional lawyers are necessary!)⁵⁷

g) Court for National Honor

The **Court for National Honor**, a special entity in itself, was created on June 9, 1945 by a decree of the SNOS Presidium to satisfy a resolution by the CK-KPS. It operated throughout all of Slovenia in several assemblies until August 25, 1945. **The “Achievements of the National Liberation Fight” served as the basis for determining guilt.** This achievement did not come into being until June 9, 1945, however it was **applied retroactively**: it was being utilized to punish “crimes and offenses against the national honor of Slovenia, committed during the period of the occupation, or rather, in conjunction with it”. This “retroactiveness” is totally contrary to the concept of law in Western civilization.

4. Military Courts

a) Beginnings in 1941

In the beginning, **sentences were meted** within the Partisan units **simply by the commanders themselves, ordinarily at whatever their whim.** In the opinion of Zoran Polič, these would have been “the first public courts”.⁵⁸

Military courts **appeared shortly before Italy’s surrender.** The Partisan Yugoslav Supreme Command issued an order for the establishment of military tribunals already on December 29, 1942; this was not carried out in Slovenia because due to its poor networks nobody even knew about it.

In Slovenia, the first provisions for military tribunals were based on two directives, issued June 30 and August 8 of 1942, but their texts have not been preserved. Their gist was approximately as follows: the battalion commander has the task of leading the investigative procedure; the HQ Staff of the relevant detachment (a military unit, almost the same as a regiment) had the task of overseeing the proceedings and issuing death sentences.

The Supreme HQ for the Slovenian Partisan Army followed this with an order dated August 27, 1942 that placed armed members of the “White Guard” outside the law. **“All Partisan troops, the National Protection, and all individual Partisans and protectors are authorized to shoot on the spot every White Guard found in possession of any type of weapon whatsoever.”**⁵⁹ The term “armed White Guard” applied also to anyone who was caught helping the White Guard either by deed or propaganda, or was doing organizational work against the People.

b) Expansion in 1943

The military tribunals appeared on the scene at the same time as the first brigades were created. The tribunals at brigade and detachment levels were **comprised of three members** and their deputies, **plus a prosecutor** and his deputy. **Because there were not enough**

⁵⁷ Ferenc 2002, 520-540 writes about the “*Zaslišanja in sodbe v Ribnici*” [*The Hearings and Trials in Ribnica*] of September 1943. The chief prosecutor was Franc Gorjanc-Bobek, barely 20 years old! At his insistence, 124 persons were sentenced to death and killed!

⁵⁸ Quoted by Griesser-Pečar, 423. – Civilized circles would find it impossible to speak about law or rights, if they had to operate according to the “revolutionary”, “regular”, “people’s” legal procedures as described for “Partisan” jurisprudence, which in reality was a factional-Party-prejudiced judiciary.

⁵⁹ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 52, 59-60

lawyers, people untrained in law performed this judicial work. This created a backlog, because these judges had to be trained first on how to judge. According to Polič, the trial roles were preferentially assigned to commandants, political-commissars, and veteran Partisans in order to ensure that decisions would be rendered by people who were rooted in the national-liberation fight.⁶⁰

The Supreme HQ on August 30, 1943 issued a **manual** for these tribunals.⁶¹ **Brigade and Detachment tribunals were special courts**, so the local-agent committees should not be allowed to burden these tribunals with insignificant issues. The state prosecutor should interrogate the accused and the witnesses. All this should be written in a report, which should also include a confession signed by the accused. These preliminary procedures were followed by the trial, at which the charges were read to the accused. Unless it was utterly necessary, witnesses need not testify in person, since their statements are read aloud.

After Italy's surrender, **the Slovenian Supreme HQ on September 15, 1943 issued a decree on the establishment of permanent military tribunals at the Commands of the six zones that covered the territory of the OF at the time.**⁶² On the following day they issued a **Directive concerning the Jurisdiction** of the various tribunals. By a special decree **on September 15, 1943, they also established a Superior Military Tribunal**, which had to approve all the sentences by the brigade, detachment, or lower-level tribunals, except of course for exceptions that were deemed necessary.⁶³

c) The Manual

A **more extensive manual** was issued on October 16, 1943.⁶⁴ It stipulated that the brigade and detachment tribunals had jurisdiction over all violations against the IOOF Decree on the Protection of the Slovenian Nation, against the Decree of the Executive Committee on a Sole Slovenian Army, for offenses against the nation or against military order. The sentence should be pronounced after secret deliberations. **An admission of guilt by the accused was all that was needed for sentencing. The tribunal did not need to justify anything, and it also chose the punishment.** The **pronouncement of a death penalty had to be unanimous.** A death penalty could not be pronounced unless the accused was present. **All decisions were pronounced in the name of "the Slovenian People's Government", and had to be forwarded to the Superior Military Tribunal.** If the latter approved the sentence, the lower jurisdictional court must be notified immediately, and the **sentence carried out within 24 hours.**

These guidelines of course **partially decreased the instances of a person acting on his own; however, the VOS continued to act on its own as always.**⁶⁵ The VOS also did not pay that much attention to the rule that the Superior Military Court must approve death sentences; two directives by the court at the Supreme Headquarters ordered just the opposite.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 425

⁶¹ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 64, 76-77

⁶² Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 71, 82-83

⁶³ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 70, 81-82; Again, the mention of "exceptions", in other words, the arbitrariness of the lower courts.

⁶⁴ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 91, 109-113

⁶⁵ See examples in Griesser-Pečar, 428

⁶⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 428-429

There were **no provisions stipulated at this time for either mercy or appeals**, which some people (Polič for example) deem totally understandable, given the military circumstances at the time.

Directive No. 4 by the Supreme HQ (January 7, 1944) revealed how untrained the members of the tribunals were, because it gave instructions about the difference between forced requisitions and forced confiscations, etc.⁶⁷ **It soon became obvious that it was not possible to hold trials without lawyers. For this reason the Supreme HQ on January 19, 1944 revised the Manual** on the structure and operation of district tribunals: **at least one judge and his deputy must be lawyers**, selected by the Supreme HQ of the NOV and the POS. This **applied also to the state prosecutor and his deputy, who should have some knowledge of law and come from the ranks of the political-commissars**.⁶⁸

d) Punishment by Imprisonment and Forced Labor

The Partisan leaders also meted **prison sentences**. They stipulated that suspects should be interrogated as quickly as possible and set before the courts. **Public proceedings** were envisaged, however these could be waived for due reason. Every sentence had to be submitted to the Supreme Military Tribunal for approval.

Directive No. 5 dated February 17, 1944 (l. c.) covered **forced labor**. The decree emphasized that pre-war sentences were based on the concept of revenge, whereas that Partisan sentences were based on the concept of rehabilitation, to transform the accused into a valuable member of society. (For this reason, the majority were never even dragged in front of a court; for they were being “transformed” by death!)

The Supreme Military Tribunal operated from September 12, 1943 until May 15, 1944. In this period it processed 1,769 persons, among them 711 Partisans and 966 civilians. The vast majority (1,273 persons) were tried for their membership in the Homeguards or the White Guard. There were 733 cases of persons in hiding, and 487 were for unauthorized absence from their troops or desertion. In 751 cases they confiscated the property of the person who was sentenced. They issued 22 death sentences.⁶⁹ They ratified 1248 sentences, and changed 307.

On April 20, 1944 the Supreme HQ of the NOV and the POS issued the “**Directive on Military Penal Justice**”, which was the manual with only a few modifications.⁷⁰ The directive did **contain some additions**: it provided for loss of citizenship; it ordered the death penalty to be carried out by shooting; it enabled appeals and pleas for mercy. But the decision of the Supreme Tribunal was still final. No appeal was possible for sentences made by special tribunals for high-profile political or military cases. But it was possible to submit a petition for clemency to the Presidium of the SNOS for a decision by the Supreme Tribunal.

⁶⁷ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 96, 117-119

⁶⁸ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 101, 123-125

⁶⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 430-431. These figures do not include all the death sentences, particularly those that were pronounced after the quick judicial proceeding in October 1943 in Kočevje and Ribnica. On October 19, the Supreme HQ issued a directive that, for the future, sentences made in hasty proceedings should not be forwarded to the Supreme Tribunal but simply recorded; their reasoning was that the Supreme Tribunal would be unable to reverse a sentence since they would have to sacrifice various formalities in the interests of speed.

⁷⁰ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 139, 177-184

e) The Standardization of the Judiciary for all of Yugoslavia

The “**Directive on Military Penal Justice**” was in force for only a few days, because on May 24, 1944 it was already replaced by the “**Directive on Military Tribunals**” issued by the Supreme HQ of the NOV and the POJ, which made the same provisions apply to all of Yugoslavian land. This directive was a new harsh blow to the dream for Slovenian independence, that the OF had continuously emphasized and trumpeted as being what it was fighting for.

In Slovenia, the Superior Military Tribunal of the NOV and the POJ sat in judgment on the more senior officers and alleged war criminals. Harsh punishments were prescribed for war criminals. A **war criminal** was any native person or foreigner who had committed a crime during the war against the People. **According to the Partisan explanation**, this category encompassed **all those who in any manner whatsoever supported the occupier and weakened the power of the national-liberation fight. Of course, this fight meant only the fight by the Partisans.** “This provided a legal sieve for straining all those who needed to be removed from the society of the new Yugoslavia... In brief: with the help of this construct ‘national enemy’, who commits ‘national treason’, they could pack into prisons and lead to execution sites even plain ordinary anticommunists.”⁷¹ This was supremely obvious from Articles 13 and 14 of this directive, which defined who is a war criminal and stipulated in detail who falls into this category.

The decree dated May 24, 1944 concerning the military tribunals that was issued by the Supreme HQ and the law dated August 1945 concerning punishable acts against the people and the state, were used as the legal basis to intentionally eliminate all opposition in the postwar era. In actuality in numerous instances these decisions were not legally just, because they were applied to a period before their promulgation, in others words, retroactively, which from a legal standpoint is absurd. Only since the last decade, some newer, internationally accepted, laws recognize retroactivity, and only in cases of violations of civil rights, which have no statute of limitations on punishment.⁷²

2. Political and Military Actions by the OF in 1944 and 1945

The First Attempt at a Slovenian Partisan Government

On June 27, 1942, the IOOF on liberated land composed a **Slovenian National-Liberation Committee (SNOO)**, which had 8 commissioners.⁷³ The IO-SNOO [*Executive Committee of the SNOO*] resolved to **call for an election of delegates for an assembly**.⁷⁴ They held elections in Kočevje area, but on account of the Italian Offensive, the assembly did not convene until October 1943 in Kočevje.

⁷¹ Griesser-Pečar, 432-433

⁷² After all that has been said, a question arises: is it even possible to give the name “courts” to all these bodies? All in all, this is a new example of the overturning of ideas and meanings that is so customary of communism. Another question is: how many of these decrees were inserted into communist-written history only after the “Liberation”, that is, they were pre-dated and the texts altered.

⁷³ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 37, 49-50; the names of the commissioners, *ibid.*, No. 38, 50

⁷⁴ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 43, 54; in the beginning, it was actually called a “committee”.

Kardelj regarded this government “of their own” (the National-Liberation Committee) to be “absolute nonsense and a small comic operetta”, having the characteristic Slovenian mentality that likes to see that everything is somehow legal. Kardelj stated that he had no misgivings about the role of the Party in the future, however, **the masses should be preparing for the new era with the greatest of patience**. For Kardelj, the time to set such a body [SNOO] on its feet would have been only after the Dolomites Declaration – to give the appearance that this declaration had been an expression of the will of the People! So the **Slovenian National-Liberation Committee (SNOO)** right then did **change its name to the Slovenian National-Liberation Council (SNOS)**.⁷⁵ Kardelj also pointed out two most dangerous tendencies: bureaucracy, which had taken over the communists, and sectarianism.⁷⁶

The Kočevje Assembly of 1943

Italy's surrender in September 1943 left vacant a wide area, which the OF proclaimed to be “liberated” territory.⁷⁷ At this moment in time, their “liberated territory” reached its greatest extent, because it covered almost all of Ljubljana Province excluding the city of Ljubljana, the Polhograd Dolomites, the belt along the Ljubljana-Postojna railway line and Kostanjevica by the Krka River.⁷⁸

On September 12, the Secretary of the IOOF, Boris Kidrič, proclaimed that **the OF and the NOV of Slovenia have assumed full reign over this territory**. Later, in the *Slovenski Poročevalec* he described the tasks for those days: general mobilization; adding new, People's ruling bodies and departments to the organization; vigilance against the Fifth Column.⁷⁹ On September 13th the IOOF established an administrative commission for the liberated territory, on the grounds that it itself was preoccupied with the fight for liberation. In the various “regions”, sectors, and other areas, the authorities would perform the tasks for the people “until District National-Liberation Committees can be elected”. However, by autumn of 1943 the OF still did not dare to hold these elections in all these areas that had been formerly under Italian rule, on the grounds that “the inhabitants **were still blinded as always by White Guard propaganda**”.⁸⁰

Nine districts, which for the most part lay within the Province of Ljubljana and had 195,000 Slovenian inhabitants before the war, were under the administration of 6 regional and 79 sectional and a few hundred local OF committees. However they did not include Primorska, even though they had officially annexed it to Slovenia,⁸¹ but they did create a **National-Liberation Council for Primorska Slovenia**, so “that they could also emphasize the internationalist character of the People's uprising as being a fighting plebiscite by the inhabitants to be joined to the new

⁷⁵ The renaming of various establishments - often deceptive and with always more and always new abbreviations - is a mark of Party bureaucracy, necessitated by the autocratic dictates emanating from some CK [Central Committee of the Party].

⁷⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 417, cites *Zbornik dokumentov*, VI/3, 142; Kardelj was of course first and foremost an internationalist, a fanatic for Sovietization, and a pro-Yugoslavian, and only then finally a Slovenian

⁷⁷ For the entire background, see *Kočevski zbor*

⁷⁸ NOV, 537. – Of course, this “liberated territory” soon shrunk when the Germans moved in, and also when the Slovenian Homeguard deployed its garrisons and later its strike forces.

⁷⁹ NOV, 538; Ferenc 1967, 202-207

⁸⁰ NOV, 540 (highlighting was added here for emphasis).

⁸¹ Dokumenti Šnuderl, No. 73, 83

Jugoslavia, and simultaneously ensure a basis with which to safeguard the gains achieved by the national-liberation fight in case there would be a quick collapse of the German occupier in Italy, in other words, an Allied invasion in Istria...?”⁸²

Following the example of AVNOJ (*Antifašistično veće narodnog oslobodjenja Jugoslavije* [*Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia*]), the OF leadership in Slovenia began in the summer of 1943 to make preparations to create a broader assembly of representatives of the Slovenian people. At first they did not exactly know what they actually wanted, as evidenced by the various names proposed for the assembly: the Assembly of Representatives of the Slovenian People, the Freedom Assembly, the Slovenian Anti-Fascist Council, Parliament, and so on.

After Italy's surrender, **the IOOF called for elections for an assembly of representatives of the Slovenian people**. The assembly would convene only one time, its purpose would have more of a declarative nature. The assembly would elect a body, which would later comprise the First Parliament of the Slovenian People.⁸³ The IOOF decided that the voting districts must remain within the bounds of the OF local committees, enterprises, establishments, and of the NOV battalions. **There should be one representative elected per 500 inhabitants, and two representatives per battalion** – falsely implying that each of their battalions numbered 1,000 fighters! The elections should be held during September 20-25, 1943.

On September 12, 1943, the IOOF notified its own organizations what sort of people should be elected as delegates: **persons who could be trusted and were ready to fight, who lived within the bounds of a local OF committee**. The elections of course evolved into an important political manifesto: “In the vast majority, the elections were general, immediate, and public”.⁸⁴ There were 668 delegates elected immediately and 78 indirectly. Although it was impossible to hold elections in the city of Ljubljana and in Gorenjska and Štajerska, Regime history rationalizes that somehow **“the entire Slovenian nation was truly represented”** in the assembly because the OF members coming from Dolensjka and Notranjska included some persons who originally came from those other regions [Gorenjska and Štajerska]! Meanwhile, disproportionately, **Bela Kranjina would eventually send one delegate per 157 inhabitants!**⁸⁵

The assembly of delegates **convened from October 1-3, 1943 during the nighttime** on account of German bombardments. The invited guests included: the president of AVNOJ (Dr. Ivan Ribar), two representatives from the Supreme HQ of the NOV and the POJ, the president of the KPJ Central Committee, the head of the British military mission for Slovenia (Major William Jones), and several others.

The IOOF president, Josip Vidmar, opened the convention. The first session was spent on the base formalities. The second session listened to the mentors Kidrič and Kardelj and discussed their presentations. **Kidrič spoke on the reasons for the collapse of the old Yugoslavia**; and among other points, he stated that the Yugoslav Army collapsed in April 1941, and added: **now we have an army, we have the power, we have our own national and people's army, and we have our own national and people's rule**. **Kardelj defined the essence of the liberation**

⁸² NOV, 541

⁸³ NOV, 557. The emphasis is not so much on “first”, but on the “first people's” parliament. This intentional obfuscation of terms and connotations became ensconced in the rewriting of history, thereby also intentionally misleading the new generations.

⁸⁴ NOV, 557; the very term “public” leads us to the unspoken conclusion that the elections were not free.

⁸⁵ NOV, 558

fight, and then listed its **characteristics**: the readiness of the Slovenian people to fight; the survival of the activist top-level, in other words the KPS and Slovenian patriots; and proper basic principles. At the 3rd session they accepted a resolution on general mobilization; this was followed with speeches by IOOF members Zoran **Polič** (on constructing a rule by the people) and Dr. Marijan **Brecelj** (on economics, finances, and support).⁸⁶

Kidrič proposed the **creation of a smaller body** (120 members), to be named the **Slovenian National-Liberation Committee (SNOO)**. He read aloud the names of the members for this committee and the delegates ratified this with their applause.⁸⁷ They also ratified the IOOF, which simultaneously became the Presidium of the SNOO. Then in a similar fashion they also “elected” **42 persons as Slovenian delegates at AVNOJ**. Finally, they **proclaimed that they were the first freely-elected delegates and that by this event the Slovenian nation has definitively stepped into the circle of sovereign nations**.⁸⁸

Kidrič later wrote that the assembly had **unanimously** (“with one voice”) – but with no discussion whatsoever – **resolved to fight against the occupier, without regard to the cost in victims**. To a question posed by Vidmar, whether **the assembly should approve the propriety of the IOOF’s actions to date**, he claims that he had replied: **Of course, without reservation; even more than that, the IOOF committee had determined that, had there not been a world war, there would have been even more victims**.⁸⁹

“Liberated Territory” in Bela Krajina⁹⁰

By the expression “liberated territory”, the Partisans were speaking primarily about Dolenjska and Notranjska. This territory in June of 1942 for a brief time encompassed two thirds of Ljubljana Province, but did not include the city itself, major towns, and transportation cross-roads.

After the offensive in **Dolenjska** (9/5 to 11/11, 1943) the Germans occupied the more important areas and valleys of this territory. In November of 1943, the Germans invaded the Kobarid Republic in **Primorska** and established their garrisons in the larger valley settlements. In **Gorenjska** in the autumn of 1943, a “liberated” territory existed for a while in the Poljane Valley and in the Selska Valley, until mid-March 1944 in the Moravče Valley, and in the beginning of August for a brief time in Tuhinj Valley. There was a “liberated” territory in **Štajerska** from June to September of 1944 in the upper Savinjska valley, in Zadrečka valley, in the Kozjansko area and in the region of Pohorje, but the Germans re-established their control over these areas towards the end of 1944.

In the beginning of November 1943, the Germans withdrew from Bela Krajina, which remained a “liberated territory” until the end of the war.

In 1944, a large portion of this “liberated territory” was retaken from the Partisans, due in part from the German offensives and in part from Homeguard attacks. However the sections under control were limited to the areas along railroad tracks and the major roads.

⁸⁶ NOV, 559-561

⁸⁷ NOV, 561

⁸⁸ Kočevski zbor, *Proglas Zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda [Proclamation by the representatives of the Slovenian nation]*, 161-164; it made little difference to the KPS/OF that the text of this proclamation did not dovetail with historical truth

⁸⁹ *Slovenski poročevalec* No. 24, October 17, 1943; quotes *Kočevski zbor*, 5-6; highlighted and underlining added here for emphasis by the author JR, who asks: what sort of proofs did the “assembly” have for such a baseless, absurd statement?

⁹⁰ NOV, 537-561; Kos II, 90

After the Great Offensive in late autumn 1943, Bela Krajina became a true revolutionist “oasis”. Even though the Homeguards broke into it twice, both times they withdrew. This **enabled the Partisans to operate almost completely undisturbed in Bela Krajina and around the Rog wilderness**. The **base of the main revolutionary camp was in Rog**. In Bela Krajina they began to install **institutions**, such as Partisan schools, theaters, cultural activities, etc., which the KPS regarded as a **lower priority** than politics and fighting. The Supreme Partisan HQ settled down at the edge of Bela Krajina. All their larger demonstrations and mass meetings were held in Črnomelj.

In time they even constructed a temporary airstrip for Allied planes near the village of Otok. These planes flew in from the Allied bases at Bari or Foggia in southern Italy. The airplanes delivered ammunition and equipment, and removed the wounded.

Propaganda for the Resolutions by AVNOJ ⁹¹

When almost the entire Slovenian delegation returned from AVNOJ II at Jajce, the IOOF on December 1, 1943 issued a bulletin that listed all the resolutions, and also printed them in a special edition of the *Slovenski poročevalec*. Then they immediately started their propaganda for familiarization and acceptance of the AVNOJ resolutions. The Partisans considered this propaganda activity to be especially important for at least two reasons: 1. The Allies had not recognized either AVNOJ or any sort of temporary government it had set up, specifically its **National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ)**; 2. The Slovenian delegation that had been appointed in Kočevje by the so-called Assembly of Delegates of the Slovenian People was not a legitimate representation of the Slovenian people.⁹²

The high watermark of the propaganda touting the resolutions by AVNOJ-II was the **People’s Rally in Črnomelj on January 30, 1944**, where speeches were delivered by the president of AVNOJ (Ribar), plus Kardelj and Kocbek.⁹³

The Activism of the KPS and the IOOF

The Supreme Plenum of the OF emphasized at a meeting at Kočevski Rog, December 24, 1943, that **political activism must be increased in Gorenjska, Štajerska, and Primorska**.⁹⁴ Kardelj instructed the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party (CK-KPS) to work on getting international recognition for the NKOJ. He judged (incorrectly, as he had done on each prior year) that the war would be over in the spring, and that they should be completely prepared, both politically and militarily, down to the last detail when the end arrived. **The Revolutionist inner circle should especially take care that it not be forced to leave Slovenia**.⁹⁵

⁹¹ AVNOJ is the mnemonic of the Serbian name “Antifašistični svet narodnega osvobođenja Jugoslavije” [Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia]. The Slovenian translation should properly read “Protifašistični svet ljudske osvoboditve Jugoslavije” [Anti-fascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia].

⁹² Kos II, 91, citing Dr. Francé Bučar, “Pravna ureditev položaja Slovencev kot naroda”, *Nova revija*, Ljubljana 1987, 57, 150ff, where Bučar writes **about the illegitimacy of AVNOJ and its resolutions**

⁹³ Kos II, 95

⁹⁴ Kos II, 93

⁹⁵ Mikuž III, 206-208 - It is interesting that historians do not ask the question, exactly who had given Kardelj the authority to issue this and similar orders?

On January 12, 1944, the IOOF issued a decree to establish a Slovenian National Theater (SNG), at a suggestion by the “cultural group” in Bela Krajina.

Tito and the Supreme Partisan HQ in December 1943 and in January 1944 urged the Home-guards “for the final time” to come over to the Partisans, however these calls were repeated one after another until the beginning of 1945.

A Regime historian printed the contents of a letter which Kidrič sent to Kardelj in January 1944.⁹⁶ Kidrič wrote: the **VOS has liquidated several mayors in Primorska**, causing many other mayors to resign. **In Ljubljana Province it was not possible to mobilize anyone other than those who were in hiding, who then desert at the first opportunity.** They really do have control over all of **the Bela Krajina region, the former Kočevje region (except the city of Kočevje), Suha Krajina, Rog, the area of Novo Mesto on the right bank of the Krka River, Notranjska, and all the land from the left bank of the Krka River to the demarcation line** (between Germany and Italy). However *Radio-Free Jugoslavia* (from the USSR) was broadcasting news about the Partisans in Slovenia, that **large German convoys were moving unhindered along the roads and railways in “liberated territory”**. Somewhat as a **rationalization**, he added: **“Well, our army is small.”** Because they could conceivably be able to mobilize 20,000 people in Štajerska, they sent an entire division there so they could eventually create a third Slovenian Partisan Corps. In Gorenjska, the masses of people were involved in the OF, however they did uncover “a White Guard and Blue Guard nest” within the OF, which they cleaned up, even though the danger was that they would have to liquidate everyone across the board.

Kos reports about the purges by the Partisans in Gorenjska, where they uncovered a Rupnik conspiracy within the OF.⁹⁷ He states that they had to liquidate 5 ringleaders, whom he names and says that the majority were from the Kamnik area. Before this, the OF had regarded Šenčur and Cerklje as the center of the White Guard, which was not surprising, “since clericalism was deeply ingrained here already long ago”.

The SNOS Session in Črnomelj

The purpose of SNOS session (Slovenian National-Liberation Council) held in Črnomelj, February 19 and 20, 1944, was: **“in the spirit of the AVNOJ resolutions, to begin to construct also a Slovenian state within the framework of a Federalist Democratic Jugosavlja”**.⁹⁸ They talked about the establishment of a Slovenian government, the responsibilities and rights of the Slovenian people, and a call for elections to the National-Liberation Boards (NOO). Guests from southern Yugoslavia, and the British and the North American liaison officers attached to the Supreme Partisan HQ attended too.

The Slovenian National-Liberation Council (SNOS) was supposed to meet twice a year. Because the SNOS had handed its executive power to the government, that is, to the National Committee for the Liberation of Slovenia (NKOS), and a government had not yet been named, the Presidium of the SNOS, temporarily assumed the functions of the government.

They increased the number of members in the SNOS from 120 to 180. Their objective was to convert the SNOS into the first Slovenian parliament.

⁹⁶ Mikuž III, 208-212

⁹⁷ Kos II, 94, cites Tone Fajfar, *Odločitev*, Ljubljana 1966, 442

⁹⁸ Mikuž III, 213-215

The most important resolutions from this session were the following:

1. Ratification of the actions by the Slovenian delegation at the assembly of AVNOJ-II, at which the Slovenian people were joining other nationalities into a federalist Yugoslavia; and this was being done “freely, by its own will, on the basis of every nation’s right of self-determination, including its right to secede as well as to unite with other nations.”⁹⁹
2. A statement on the fundamental rights and responsibilities of the Slovenian nation.
3. A decree to create a law-giving committee in the SNOS.
4. A resolution to call for elections to the National-Liberation Boards (NOO), initiating a system of voting for delegates.
5. A resolution to create a commission for the Presidium of the SNOS to determine the crimes by the occupier and his helpers.
6. A resolution to set up a religious commission with the SNOS. Upon the intercession of this commission, Bishop Rožman appointed the pastor from Podzemlje, Deacon Ilc, as the Vicar General for Bela Krajina.¹⁰⁰

Many other resolutions were issued, including a resolution to end the VOS.¹⁰¹ The NOOS for Primorje was dissolved, its functions passed over to the IOOF. They resolved that special payment vouchers could be printed, whose value would depend on the subsequent dollar loans by the Western Allies. They also introduced a national tax.

They sent a fawning (rather: groveling?) greeting to Tito, in which the SNOS expressed its hope that the new Yugoslavia would “**make the Slovenian people’s thousand-year-old dreams about freedom and independence come true**”.¹⁰²

Later the Regime historians changed this session into some sort of constitutional assembly, which supposedly provided the foundation for Slovenian statehood. However the declaration from the session spoke only about the rights of each nation to **self-determination** and about the Slovenian people’s thousand-year-old dreams for independence. This session had never been justified by any norms (laws, decrees, etc.) which are required for its relevant actions to be **legally valid and legally binding**.

Neither the assembly at Kočevje nor the session in Črnomelj ever had any legitimacy to undertake such legally-aspired actions. **The foundations of Slovenian statehood would therefore be quite specious and tenuous, if they were to have these sessions as their basis!**¹⁰³

⁹⁹ NOV, 680. - Of course nobody asked just who gave them the right to speak and decide in the name of the entire race. All this shows that at the time neither politicians nor lawyers nor historians had any comments or questionings.

¹⁰⁰ Concerning the 1st Črnomelj Session, see Mikuž III, 215-219; his outline and manner of writing in 1973 clearly reveal that the Črnomelj Assembly at the time of his writing did not yet have the degree of significance that the Regimist history was trying to attribute to it in later years in its desire to impress this event on the entire nation.

¹⁰¹ In actuality this did not occur. According to Regime historians, the VOS remained in Ljubljana almost till the end of the war, while in the countryside, OZNA assumed the tasks of the VOS; NOV, 830; Kos II, 96, who references also Ivo Svetina, “*Varnostna obveščevalna služba v Ljubljani*” [*The Intelligence Security Service in Ljubljana*], *Ljubljana v ilegali* IV, 363

¹⁰² NOV, 681-682

¹⁰³ Kos II, 95-96

Partisan Failures in Slovenia

The OF leaders ordered elections be held for all the OF entities, from local committees to regional plenums. A change came in the leadership itself: in October 1944, Tito appointed Boris Kidrič as the political-commissar of the Supreme HQ, but Kidrič would still retain the post of Political Secretary of the IOOF. Boris Kraigher became the Organizational Secretary of the KPS.

OZNA reported on September 24, 1944 that on the basis of the decree by the Presidium of the SNOS, 178 families and 4 individuals were banished from Partisan territory in Dolenjska, but **it made no mention that by doing this it was imitating the behavior of the occupiers.** In the period from September 12, 1943 to May 15, 1944, the military tribunals in this sector passed 1,679 sentences, on 713 NOV members and 966 civilians. **They passed 222 death sentences.**¹⁰⁴

In autumn of 1944 the Partisans partially destroyed the railroad tracks of the southern tier. They attacked without success the Homeguard garrisons at Višnja gora, Stična, Velike Lašče and Kočevje; they rationalized all these defeats on a lack of ammunition, a surprising claim in light of all the materiel they were receiving from the Allies. Their attack against Šentvid by Stična was unsuccessful, as were their attacks against Litija, Pogonik, and Šmartno ny Litija. They launched a larger attack against Kočevje on November 18, 1944. This site contained two companies of Homeguards and a German Police unit, altogether around 1,200 men. The attack lasted three days, supported by Partisan artillery and by Allied bombers, who dropped 20 bombs. The Homeguards drove away the artillery with a counterattack, and when a Combat battalion from Velike Lašče and a motorized troop from Ribnica came to their aid, the **Partisan brigades fled into Bela krajina and Suha krajina.**¹⁰⁵

In **Primorska**, Partisan battling was hampered by the Serb Volunteer Corps (4000 men, who had moved out of besieged Belgrade and from all of Serbia). The Partisans withdrew to Notranjska and even into the Gorski kotar area of Croatia. In **Gorenjska** there were larger battles in Poljanska dolina, where the Partisans drove out the Germans from their garrisons in Poljane and in Gaberk, and the Homeguards out of Železniki. They partially destroyed the Homeguard garrison in Zgornje Strane by Kamnik, but they still had to withdraw after their attack on Blagovica and Krašnje. In **Štajerska** the Partisans in October unsuccessfully attacked Dovže, Turiška vas, Slovenj Gradec, Zgornja Polskava, and Šmartno in the Tuhinj valley. The Germans drove out the Partisans from Pohorje. The Partisans first withdrew to Graška gora, and then despite aid from Dolenjska they had to leave Zgornja Savinjska dolina and Kozjansko. A part of the Lackov battalion fell into a German ambush, which resulted in 35 killed in battle, 133 captured, and 20 missing.¹⁰⁶

In the middle of 1944 there was a **continuously growing expectation** among the Homeguards that the **Allies would be landing in Istria and Trieste.** The Homeguard officers were therefore convinced that the Organizational HQ should be turning all its attention on sending battalions towards Primorska, thus preventing the Partisans from linking with the Allies. Even

¹⁰⁴ Mikuž IV, 170-171; the given reasons were 487 for desertion; 159 for theft; 1,273 for denunciations, collaborating with the occupier, or being a Homeguard; 733 for hiding; 201 for careless performance of duties; 142 for violation of the prohibition of movement by the population; 87 for violations of discipline; 55 for improper use of weapons; 10 for murder.

¹⁰⁵ NOV, 782

¹⁰⁶ Kos II, 177, who cites Klanjšček, "Pregled narodnoosvobodilne borbe na Slovenskem" [Overview of the National Liberation War in Slovenia], 282

Dr. Krek reported from London to Ljubljana that “the Anglo-Americans would almost certainly be occupying as far inland as Rakek”.¹⁰⁷

But the **Partisans were also seriously figuring on this possibility of a landing**, as their own historical writers confirm: “The British circles were the biggest proponents of an Allied invasion of Istria, because this would have assured the influence of the Western forces in Austria and the western part of Yugoslavia, in the event that the Soviet influence was spreading too far to the west. Such expectations were fanning the hopes of the Slovenian anti-revolutionist forces about coming to power at the end of the war, while simultaneously stopping the process of decay within the Slovenian Homeguard and other quisling formations.”¹⁰⁸

The **Germans, also** considering the possibility of an invasion by the Western Allies through Postojna and the Ljubljana Gap, **ordered the construction of defensive lines**. The Provincial Administration in Ljubljana created work brigades of National Pioneers, who were digging trenches and preparing fortifications.¹⁰⁹

German-Partisan Negotiations

There are **many documented sources** about these negotiations.¹¹⁰

1) In Yugoslavia

Griesser-Pečar writes about the first negotiation.¹¹¹ Initiated by the Germans, it resulted in an **exchange of prisoners on September 5, 1942**.

The **second exchange** took place **on November 17, 1942 in Livno** [Bosnia] where the Partisans were already demanding to be recognized as a regular army.

When the German **Major Stecker** fell into Partisan hands, Tito's Supreme HQ presented a clear offer to him. In the offer, the **Partisan officers gave their assurance that they were unwilling to fight against the Germans; they cited the secret collaborations between the Italians, the British, and the Chetniks. They suggested Stecker to write about this to the German Command, which he did on March 5, 1943.**¹¹² The letter was received by the German

¹⁰⁷ Kolarič III, 783

¹⁰⁸ Kos II, 177, who cites Klanjšček, p. 273

¹⁰⁹ Kos II, 175-177 – In the opinion of the author JR, the Provincial Administration made a mistake when it created the “Labor Brigades of National Pioneers” – if this even really were their officially-given name. First of all, it was using Nazi and Partisan expressions and entities; secondly, this activity could be labeled as anti-Allied.

¹¹⁰ Pavel Fajdiga, *KPJ in Yugoslavia [The KPJ and Yugoslavia]*, ZSS 1973-1975, 178-195, especially 183-186, which contains photocopies of German original documents concerning these negotiations stored in the USA National Archives in Washington under No. NOKW 1085; Milovan Djilas' *Une guerre dans la guerre*, Paris 1979 (published in English as *Wartime*, London 1977); Kos I, 136 op. 58, cites the book by Vladimir Dedijer *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita [New Additions to the biography of Josip Broz Tito]*, Part 1, Rijeka, 1981; and others.

¹¹¹ Griesser-Pečar, 359; she substantiates it with various Partisan and German sources (l.c., op. 427)

¹¹² Fajdiga, o.c., writes that in the recorded minutes for the Partisan proposals, dated March 11, 1943, which were submitted to the German delegation (Point 3), the Command of the Yugoslav NOV opines: “a) **That given the current situation, there is no reason for the German Army to lead military operations against the NOV of Yugoslavia**, especially even when taking into consideration the situation, the enemies, and the interests of both sides – therefore it would be to our mutual interest to cease hostilities...” At the same time, the police in Pecs, Hungary, captured a Soviet courier en route to Tito with Stalin's order that Tito and his Partisans must fight jointly the German forces against British detachments if the latter were to land on the Yugoslav Adriatic shores.

Military Commissioner for Croatia, **General Edmund Glaise von Horstenau**. The Supreme Commander of the Southeast Theater – **Colonel General Alexander von Löhner**, and he agreed **that the Partisans must no longer be treated as bandits**. The two of them immediately received a reply, that **Tito on March 11, 1943 sent three of his closest associates (Djilas, Popović, Velebit) for talks in Gornji Vakuf**. Djilas and Velebit went to **Zagreb** on March 26, 1943 to continue the talks. Velebit at this time submitted **Tito's proposal: Germany should cease attacks in western Bosnia, and the Partisans will cease sabotage in Slavonia; Velebit also stated that the Partisans were prepared to attack the Anglo-Americans if they landed in Dalmatia**.¹¹³ Moscow opposed these agreements, as testified by Stalin's radio broadcast to the Partisan Centrale, to which Tito did not pay much heed.¹¹⁴ However, these negotiations broke off, because Ribbentrop stopped them on Hitler's orders. **Tito actually did stop the Partisan actions against the Germans** with his order dated March 20, 1943, in which he also asserted: **"Our most important role now is to destroy the Chetniks of Draža Mihailović and break apart his apparatus, which represents a great danger to the subsequent course of the national-liberation fight"**.¹¹⁵

2. In Slovenia

a) Pero Popivoda was **negotiating already with the Italians in Straža** by Novo Mesto. He was accompanied by **a group of Serb Partisan officers and Arsa Jovanović**, the head of the Supreme HQ of the NOV and the POJ, who had come into Slovenia in order **to do away with the independence of the Slovenian Partisan army**.

Later, **Popivoda was negotiating with the Gestapo at Bled**. Shortly before this, in his role as commander of the Gorenjska Operational Zone, he was negotiating with the Germans at Farji potok in Selška dolina. However in this case, it was a trap set by the Germans; the outcome was the defeat of the Partisans at Žirovski vrh on August 1, 1943.

b) **In Ljubljana Province**, the first German attempt at negotiation occurred on **December 19, 1943**. In **Mokronog**, university professor Stanko Lapajne delivered word of the **German desire for a truce between the OF and the German Army for the duration of the war**. The **German** offer proposed that the Partisans withdraw to the right bank of the Krka River, and the Germans would provide the Partisans with food; the Germans would send the Homeguards to the Russian Front, and change the politics in Ljubljana. The Partisan Supreme HQ immediately reported the news of this offer to Tito's Supreme HQ along with the comment that the truce should remain until the end of the war. They of course informed British Major Jones about the negotiations, but it is not known just how much they actually told him. Jones reported the news about the German offer to Cairo, the seat of the Allied Supreme Command for the Near East; if a reply were received, it probably would have been negative.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Griesser-Pečar, 36, who cites the book by P. Broucek, *"Ein General im Zwielicht"*, Vienna-Cologne-Graz 1988, 220; Djilas also reports this in his book *"Der Krieg der Partisanen"*, Jugoslawien 1941-1945, Vienna-München-Zürich-Innsbruck 1978, 326

¹¹⁴ Griesser-Pečar, 361 cites as supporting evidence the book by Miša Lesković, *"Martovski pogovori 1943"*, Beograd 1983

¹¹⁵ Cited by Griesser-Pečar according to C. G. Ströhm, *"Als Tito auf die Wehrmacht setzte"*, Die Welt, 2/11/1986

¹¹⁶ Mikuž III, 227-228; Griesser-Pečar, 363, who cites Delo 7/3/1980 (Ivo Pirkovč according to the reports by Jurančič, *Pozabljena diplomacija v gozdu*) and has a somewhat different list; of course, it does mention the offer about the Homeguards.

Other sources report that negotiations were actually held.¹¹⁷ The initiative for negotiations came from the Gestapo in Sevnica. The Supreme HQ of the NOV gave its approval for the talks. Kidrič prepared the instructions. The delegations met **in Mokronog on December 18, 1943**: Representing the Partisan side were Pero Popivoda and Jože Jurančič, and for the Germans an Army major and a Gestapo officer. The Germans proposed a truce and massive supplying of the Partisans, and demanded in return unobstructed movement along the traffic route Ljubljana-NovoMesto-Karlovac. The Partisans rejected the German proposal and the Germans likewise the Partisan demand to be recognized as a regular army. But they did **agree on the exchange of prisoners**. They had a **joint dinner** and **were even photographed**, which was printed in *Graz's Tagespost*.¹¹⁸

c) There are also **many proofs of talks in Primorska**. In Primorska the Germans held talks with the Partisans for the first time already on September 19, 1943. The Germans promised to remove the Italians from Primorska, to provide the civilian population with food, and to recognize the Partisans as a regular army. They agreed on the exchange of prisoners.¹¹⁹

L.V. provided first-hand testimony about **the agreement reached at the courthouse in Bovec**.¹²⁰ He states that an agreement was reached whereby the Germans relinquished all Primorska land to the Partisans and retained for themselves the Trbiž-Videm (Tarvisio-Udine) road, whose protection was guaranteed by the Partisans.

In 2005, Franc Zorec, who was an eyewitness, wrote an account about the negotiations between the Partisans and the Germans at Hotel Soča in Idria in the first days of April of 1944, and how the agreement was then actually carried out.¹²¹

In the beginning of **June 1944**, the Partisans and the Germans reached an agreement wherein the Partisans promised to **not obstruct the railroad link Gorica-Podbrdo**. Such German-Partisan negotiating enkindled much displeasure among the Slovenian anticommunists in Ljubljana and in Primorska.¹²²

A **new meeting** between the Germans and the Partisans occurred on **June 15, 1944** with the Prefect [mayor] of Gorizia, Mr. Pace, who was proposing "some sort of co-existence". A good week later the Prefect of Gorizia and the Partisan delegation met again. The Prefect submitted the demands on behalf of the Germans: a determination of neutral zones, and unobstructed traffic along the following railroad links: Gorizia-Pontebba, Udine-Gorizia-Podbrdo, Trieste-Postojna, Trieste-Rijeka, Trieste-Pula, Šempeter-Pula. In exchange, the Germans would provide food for the civilian population and would exchange prisoners.¹²³

Another meeting was held upon the request of the Partisans in the villa Volat in Bilje by Gorica, where the Germans offered a cease-fire in exchange for unhindered railroad traffic

¹¹⁷ Zdenko Zavadlav, *Pregled pogajanj med NOV in okupatorjem* [A review of the negotiations between the NOV and the Occupier], *Vestnik*, 1990-1991, 20-21

¹¹⁸ Mikuž III, 227 reports that on December 19, 1943 the German occupier made an offer to the Partisan HQ for talks "on agreeing to a truce with the German Army for the duration of the war"

¹¹⁹ Kos II, 148, who cites Tone Ferenc, "Ljudska oblast" II, 257

¹²⁰ Kos II, 147, a deposition by L.V. dated January 20, 1976

¹²¹ Nine installments under the title "*Moji spomini*" [My memories] in the Buenos Aires weekly *Svobodna Slovenija*, 2005 No. 32 (8/18/2005) to No. 40 (10/13/2005); the main summary is in Numbers 32 and 33; Zorec had written about this years earlier in *Vestnik*

¹²² Mikuž IV, 327

¹²³ Mikuž IV, 329

along the Gorica-Podbrdo route.¹²⁴ The Partisan delegation included Zdenko Zavadvlav, who later reported about this.¹²⁵

A new meeting was held on **July 3, 1944 in Renče**, where supposedly on July 5 the Partisan delegate consented to a cease-fire in the area of Udine-Trieste-Rijeka.¹²⁶ The German commander in Gorizia issued a bulletin to all Italian units, that on July 5th they should cease hostilities and that the Partisans units would be released. A few days earlier the Germans had surrounded around 4,500 Partisans in Baška dolina. When they received the announcement about the cessation of hostilities, they stopped their attacks against the Partisans.¹²⁷

When this news reached Ljubljana, it caused quite a stir. The *Slovenec* on July 7, 1944 reported that rumors were spreading in Primorska about agreements between the Germans and the Partisans; it also emphasized that the fighting to date against communism would continue. However, the knowledge about these agreements did cause some discouragement, leading 63 soldiers to desert from the 8th Company in Primorska.¹²⁸

Stane Semič-Daki writes that in September 1944 he received orders to stop all fighting against the Germans within Ljubljana Province and that the Partisans should take a rest, because they must be prepared for the possibility of an Anglo-American invasion along the Adriatic Coast.¹²⁹ Djilas reported that Tito first met with Stalin in September of 1944. Hearing Molotov's comment that British units had landed at the Adriatic, Tito said that the Partisans would throw them back into the sea.¹³⁰ But Djilas wrote: "Without thinking, we insisted that we would attack the British if they landed by us."¹³¹

The negotiating between the Partisans and the Germans is proof that their topmost objective was survival, and especially proof that as far as the Partisans were concerned, their main enemies were the JVvD (the Chetniks and other armed forces) and the AngloAmericans.¹³²

The German Attack on Tito's Main HQ

After AVNOJ-II, Tito and his staff moved into southwestern Bosnia. He moved into some houses and in a limestone cave on the slopes of Unca. The Germans succeeded in intercepting

¹²⁴ Mikuž IV, 531

¹²⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 364 op. 447

¹²⁶ Kos II, 149 op. 58, cautions against Mikuž's claim (Mikuž IV, 330), that the text concerning these negotiations was fabricated. However, Mikuž does not deny the negotiations, on the contrary, he reports that there were several talks and who attended them, for example, Dr. Vilfan for the Partisans, and he reports on the details of the agreement, which was to begin to be in force on July 6, however they never received approval from the top brass. See also Griesser-Pečar, 364

¹²⁷ Matija Tratnik, *Temna zarja [Ominous dawn]*, ZSS 1951, 147-148

¹²⁸ Mikuž IV, 531-532; Griesser-Pečar, 367

¹²⁹ Kos II, 150, who cites Stane Semič Daki, "Spomini" [Memories] III, 812

¹³⁰ Kos II, 150, cites Dedijer, "Novi prilozi" II, 812

¹³¹ Kos II, 150, cites Djilas, "Une guerre", 255. – Concerning this entire section, see Kos II, 147-150

¹³² Griesser-Pečar, 359-367. – When writing about the Avignon Period of the Papacy, the French speak about the residing of the Popes, the Germans about the exile of, and the Italians about the bondage of. Which of these expressions portrays this phase of Church history as it actually happened? Similarly, the Regime historians **never speak of holding negotiations with the Fascists and the Nazis, but rather talks with the Italians and the Germans**. This is a surreptitious **alteration of history**, because they in all other contexts were always calling them the Fascists and the Nazis; in contrast, they denounced every contact with the occupier by the counter-revolutionists as being treason and collaboration with the Fascists and Nazis.

the Partisan radio broadcasts. So they planned an attack from the air and on land, whereby they would capture Tito together with his associates and destroy the main part of the Partisan army. On May 25, 1944, after a preliminary bombardment, they air-dropped on Drvar 750 parachutists, who cut the telephone cables. Due to the fierce resistance, they dropped another 180 parachutists. Both sides suffered heavy losses.

Tito and his staff left their underground shelter. They roped themselves across a dry waterfall and broke their way to the railroad station, where they spent 4 days under German fire. Then over three days they moved across the Šator mountain plains to Kupreškega polje in the direction of Sarajevo, where there was a Partisan-Allied airstrip. Here, the British airlifted Tito to Bari, and then to the island of Vis, where the British had 5000 soldiers and some airplanes, and the Partisans around 7500 men.¹³³

The Meetings of Tito with Churchill and with Šubašić

Churchill and Tito met for the first time on August 12, 1944 in Naples. When **Churchill asked if the Partisans would work together with the Allies in the event of a landing in Istria**, Tito replied that he did not oppose this plan and that he could send Partisan units from Slovenia and Croatia to help.

On the following day **Tito met with Šubašić** in Caserta. Tito **consented to receive military aid** from the Allies, but when the Allied commanders stated that they themselves would be assuming the administration of occupied territories, Tito objected and persisted in having the Partisans assume control.

On the same day **Tito** again met with **Churchill**. Tito consented to have his Committee issue a special statement in which he promised that **he would not to introduce communism into Yugoslavia**.¹³⁴

On **August 14 Tito and Šubašić** met together on the island of **Vis**. The document known as the **Public Statement of the Partisans**, drafted by Edvard Kardelj and Moša Pijade, was written here. In the statement, they reiterated that **the goal of the Partisan movement was to create a truly democratic and federalist Yugoslavia, and not to establish communism**.¹³⁵ On **August 29, 1944** King Peter II dismissed Gen. Mihailović from his position as Supreme Commander of the Army in the Homeland and **set Tito as the commander-in-chief**. Because the Red Army was invading, Mihailović withdrew into Bosnia during September and October of 1944.

The **Slovenian public in general did not know about the Tito-Šubašić agreement**, except for those very few who were able to listen to Radio London. **Even the Partisan press remained silent about this agreement!** The Slovenian democratic leadership, as everything seems to indicate, from this time forward no longer had any official contacts with the Allies or with Minister Krek in Rome. Despite all this, all the anticommunists, both leaders and the rank-and-file alike, were strongly expecting an Allied landing in Istria or at Trieste. But in actuality, the situation was hopeless. There were no Allied assurances on either a landing or aid to the anticommunist camp: **“After the talks between Šubašić and Tito, the fate of the democratic Slovenians was sealed; however, hardly any one of them realized this.”**¹³⁶

¹³³ Kos II, 150-151

¹³⁴ Tito had always claimed that he was introducing socialism, but he did not state that it would be the communist form; at this time, Tito and his cronies still kept quiet about this!

¹³⁵ Kos II, 155-156

¹³⁶ Kos II, 159

When the Serb Volunteers and Nedić's National Guards began arriving in Slovenia, many democratic Slovenians took this as a sign that Serbia was lost and that the same could happen in Slovenia too. Understandably, **on November 20th Bishop Rožman sent to Minister Krek in Rome a letter addressed Pope Pius XII with a plea to intercede to get the Allies to intervene militarily in Slovenia.**¹³⁷

The Soviets Take Beograd

The Red Army, in accordance with the Šubašić-Tito Agreement, advanced into Yugoslavia in October 1944. It captured Nagotin, forced a crossing across the Morava River, captured Nis and turned towards Beograd. Bulgarian Army units collaborated for the first time at the occupation of Nis.

On October 14 they attacked Beograd, defended by 20,000 Germans with 40 tanks, 170 cannon, and mortars. The city fell on October 20. The first Partisans entered Beograd, but only behind the Red Army, with the Soviets paying no attention to the Partisans. The Soviet soldiers acted like barbarians against the inhabitants of Beograd, especially against girls and wives. There were so many rapes that Djilas in Tito's name protested to the Soviet commanders, in vain of course.

Before the Soviets occupied Beograd, many anti-revolutionist military units began to move out of the city and its surroundings: the Serb Volunteer Corps (Ljotić), the Serb National Guard (Nedić) and the Chetniks. The Serb government in Belgrade fled into Austria.

The majority of the retreating Serb military units came into Ljubljana, and the Germans directed them to head towards Primorska. They set up their headquarters in Ilirska Bistrica. They were joined by a part of the Russian Liberation Army and the Cossack Mounted Corps. **The entire lot planned to stop the Partisans, who were moving from Split towards Rijeka. The Slovenian and Serb politicians invited Gen. Mihailović to come to Primorska and assume command over all these units.**¹³⁸

The Serbian Blow against the Slovenian Partisans

On **March 1, 1945** Tito issued an order that **the NOV and the POJ** be henceforth called the **Jugoslav Army (JA)**. The Supreme HQ of the NOV and POJ now became the General HQ of the JA, and the **Slovenian Supreme HQ of the NOV and POS** became the **Supreme HQ for Slovenia**.

The centralization of all Partisans was an especially heavy blow for the Slovenian Partisans, who all along had been emphasizing the Slovenian character of their native units.

The President of the IOOF at the time, Josip Vidmar, searched out Kidrič, showed him a telegram by the Supreme HQ about the name-change of the Partisan army "and began to sob as if all his insides were convulsing – This is a Slovenian army and now, without being given any recognition, in a trice it is rubbed out and crossed out."¹³⁹

The IOOF and the SNOS by right should have had to give their assent for this subordination of the army, even though such a matter needed to be requested or proposed to Tito beforehand. However the fact of the matter was, as Vidmar also had chided Kidrič, that the Slovenian Par-

¹³⁷ Kos II, 156-157

¹³⁸ Kos II, 184-185

¹³⁹ Kos (II, 182) cites Veljko Namroš, "Tradicija NOB in enakopravnost jezikov JLA", Nova revija, 1987, 57,111.

tisan leadership had already months ago consented to be subordinated, having requested already on September 16, 1941 to be joined to the POJ.¹⁴⁰

The KPJ starts to emphasize “Jugoslavism”, that is, Serbian hegemony¹⁴¹

Kardelj already on April 18, 1944 wrote these criticisms against the Slovenian Partisans: he has their Slovenian printed material in front of him – but finds nothing in it about the survival of Yugoslavia. Their Slovenian press has so “locked itself up within Slovenian problems, that it is **acquiring a character of nationalist exclusiveness**. Don’t let this happen again... Send your Party reports to the CK-KP of Yugoslavia. I think that Slovenia is the only one that does not send such reports.”¹⁴²

Kardelj also attacked [*Tr. note: for being too Slovenian and not enough Yugoslavian*] the behavior of Slovenian youth at the Yugoslav Congress and demanded that they immediately remove “Jernej” from the SKOJ and send him to the so-called “Central Agitprop” [*Central Propaganda*]. In addition, Kidrič at that time was in some serious trouble for having tried to obtain loans for Slovenia (100 million *lira*) from the Allies through their own Supreme HQ.¹⁴³ The correspondence that ensued concerning this enterprise show that the CK-KPJ regarded the loan request as an attempt to forge special links with the outside world, which at that time to the KPJ meant intelligence links as well as an attempt at greater Slovenian independence.

The Partisans Occupy Trieste and Gorizia

Some Partisan units were rushing along the Yugoslav coast and others towards Gorski Kotar. They reached the Kolpa River at Osilnica and wanted to go from there across Ilirska Bistrica and Št. Peter na Krasu. The main body of Primorska Homeguards had retreated through Vipava valley towards the Soča River, crossed it, broke their way to Furlanija, and at Udine surrendered to the Allies.¹⁴⁴ In Trieste, the Partisans wanted to occupy the port and the railroad station, but the Germans and the Croats fought them off. Only after these defenders withdrew, were the Partisans able to enter the port. The greater part of Trieste was in Partisan hands on May 1st. On that same day the Partisans occupied Gorica [*Gorizia*], Tržič (Monfalcone), Postojna, and Čedad.

¹⁴⁰ Kos II, 181-182. The question by Kos, on whether Kidrič and anybody else along with him were double-crossed, seems somewhat naïve. Concerning Kidrič’s difficulties, see footnote 139

¹⁴¹ It is important to distinguish between Yugoslavianism and Yugoslavism [*jugoslovanstvo* and *jugoslovenstvo* respectively in Slovenian]. Yugoslavianism means espousing a confederate country of Yugoslavia, whereas Yugoslavism connotes Serb centralism (hegemony) and Serb domination.

¹⁴² Vodušek Starič, 80, quotes from *Dokumentih centralnih organa KPJ 1941-1945* (highlighting was added here for emphasis)

¹⁴³ They sought Tito’s intervention for the loan. In May of 1944 the CK-KPJ (or rather, Kardelj) sent them a reply, that such a request had no purpose, and that Tito had regarded their request as an insinuation that he was not concerned about such aid. Despite this, the Slovenian leadership resolved to accept the loan; the initial offer was made by an Allied liaison officer and a member of TIGR, Captain Zdravko Lenščak, and then it was arranged by the chief of the Allied Military Mission to the Main HQ of the NOV and POS, James Goodwin. Ivan Maček was the only person at that time who objected to the loan. In the beginning of June, Leskošek reported that they had suspended Kidrič. (It is not known if Vidmar too). Kidrič had to write to Kardelj a ‘self-criticism’ letter, in which he emphasized that the entire CK-KPS had been in favor of the loan, not only he himself, while at the same time he gave assurances of his own ‘devotion to the Party to the last drop of blood’. Afterwards, when Leskošek wrote two letters in support of Kidrič, in which he described the whole thing as being a misunderstanding, the Supreme HQ lifted the suspension. However, already on June 23rd Kidrič printed an article in *Slovenski poročevalec* entitled *Več jugoslovenstva [More Yugoslavism]*. (Thus, not even Yugoslavianism! - author’s comment). For the whole matter, Vodušek Starič, 80-81

¹⁴⁴ Kos II, 216-217

In Trieste, 200 Homeguards, who were unable to retreat, remained at the barracks of Sv. Ivan. The Partisans broke into the barracks and shot most of them. The officers and a part of the HQ staff of the Primorska Homeguards broke their way into the port of Trieste, drove off on motorboats to the mouth of the Tilmenta, where they surrendered to the British. The advance force of the British 8th Army arrived in Trieste. The Germans wanted to surrender to the British; they lay down their weapons to them on May 7 – all together around 16,000 men. The British convinced the Germans to surrender to the Partisans.¹⁴⁵ In the end, the Partisans forced the Germans to surrender to themselves; they killed 7,000 of them, and threw the bodies into nearby caves.¹⁴⁶

The Partisan occupation of Trieste was violent, linked to excessive force, looting, and murdering of their ideological opponents. In the first days they imprisoned a thousand Trieste residents. All this was not limited to Trieste, but extended to neighboring areas, especially in the settlements towards Gorizia. The Partisans brought a reign of terror to Gorizia too until the Western Allies expelled them from the city.

The threat of a violent confrontation between the Partisans and the Allies was very real because the Partisan march into Trieste was not in accord with the matters agreed by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. The British claimed that Trieste and its surroundings and roads leading to Austria belonged to them, but the Partisans were claiming that that Trieste was a part of Yugoslavia. Incidents between the two sides were steadily increasing. In addition, OZNA was operating at full steam, kidnapping Trieste inhabitants and Slovenians nearby.

Field Marshal Alexander rejected Tito's proposal to allow a Yugoslav Military Command, but he did permit a Yugoslav Civilian Administration to exist under the Allied Military Administration. Tito reported to Alexander his plan to liberate Istria, Trieste, Monfalcone up to the Soča River, and a break-through to the Austrian border, and Alexander was prepared to permit use of the harbor in Trieste and Pula. Alexander of course protested that Tito was not abiding by the agreement wherein the Allies would occupy the entire area and have complete supervision over the harbor and all railroad and traffic links from Trieste across Gorizia up to Tarvisio and into Austria. Field Marshal Alexander therefore ordered all his units remain at their positions.

Alexander also forwarded to Tito the message in which the American and the British governments had assigned him [Alexander] to have the British occupy Styria and Carinthia and assume its administration. Having been informed that Tito was also demanding a zone of occupation in Austria, he ordered Tito to withdraw his troops until the matter was resolved; he also ordered Tito to recall his troops from the area west of the Soča River, where near Udine they had been pillaging the belongings of the local people.

On orders from Stalin, Tito finally on June 6th notified the commander of the Partisan 4th Army that the Partisans must withdraw from Trieste back to the line designated in the Allied agreement. Stalin stated that he was not prepared to start World War III on account of the Trieste question. Thus the famous Zones A and B came into existence; the Allies assumed the administration of the first, and Yugoslavia the second zone.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ This event is not yet the instance to equate the British with the Partisans. As subsequent events proved, the English did have huge difficulties with providing food. By obligating thousands of Germans to surrender to the Partisans, they washed their hands of the matter like Pilate and saved themselves from the problem of food for prisoners. It is possible that they did not know or believe that by this act they had sent the majority to death.

¹⁴⁶ In the beginning of 2005 a film about the murders in the caves aroused much anger among the Italians. To this day, the RS has not been able to find a suitable reply, not only for Italy but also for Slovenia and the entire EU.

¹⁴⁷ Kos II, 214-216

The First Slovenian Revolutionary Government

On April 23 Kardelj notified the CK-KPS that it would be fitting to form a Slovenian government as soon as possible. Kidrič wanted to do this on April 27th, to coincide with the fabricated “Anniversary of the Establishment of the OF”, but Kardelj advised that this should be postponed for one week, because military successes must be attained first.

When the Partisans occupied Trieste on May 1st, **Kardelj ordered the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia** (all this was in fact just a Party matter!) to prepare the SNOS to name a government. The SNOS then assembled on **May 5, 1945 in Ajdovščina** by Vipava and **named the First Partisan Government of Slovenia**. The president was Dr. Boris Kidrič, and the ministers were Dr. Marjan Breclj, Zoran Polič, Dr. Jože Pokoren, Dr. Ferdo Kozak, Dr. Aleš Bebler, Franc Leskošek, Dr. Lado Vavpetič, Janez Hribar, Tone Fajfar, Vida Tomšič, Dr. Marjan Ahčin, Dr. Miha Kambič and Franc Snoj. This government **introduced itself on May 10th from the University balcony in Ljubljana**.

The Partisans marched into Ljubljana during the nighttime leading into May 9, and did a victory parade on May 9th around 10 o'clock in the morning. OZNA, of course, immediately started arresting thousands of ideological opponents, and this day marked the start of killings that increased into the thousands.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Kos II, 217



11-year-old courier with submachine gun

Podobe MNZS, 143



VOS, 1st Battalion

Podobe MNZS, 146



At Base 20: Francé Svetek, Makso Šnuderl, Josip Jeras, Dušan Serneck, Tatjana Jakac, Major Jones (Brit), Božidar Jakac

Podobe MNZS, 226

11. The Anti-Revolutionists Before the End of the War

1. Naive Trust in the Allies

Contacts with the Royalist Government

The anti-revolutionist leadership in Ljubljana and in Primorska already in 1941 regarded the Slovenian politicians who were members of the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile to be the legitimate leaders of the Slovenian nation and the representatives of Slovenian interests before the world and the Allies.¹ Dr. Miha Krek, Minister and Vice-President of the Royalist Government until August 1943, was acknowledged as being the main leader. Both he in exile and the leaders remaining behind within the country were in frequent contact with each via written correspondence and by radio, so both sides were in almost complete unanimity on the key issues regarding resistance tactics and strategies, in their evaluation of the developments engendered by their behavior towards the occupiers, and concerning resistance against the Partisan activities.

Almost until Italy's surrender, Dr. Krek had succeeded in convincing the British observers that the anticommunist side in Ljubljana Province was taking the right course of action. With the appearance of the Homeguard, however, difficulties increased because it was difficult to explain any form of collaboration whatsoever with the German occupier, and above all, what type of collaboration could actually even be discussed with the Allies? When Krek learned in the autumn of 1943 about Rupnik and the Homeguard, it pained and worried him. He later confessed that the Homeguard oath had "**chopped off the hands and feet of our foreign delegation**".²

However the **connections** between Dr. Krek and the homeland were becoming **less and less straightforward**. Even though Krek received regular reports from Ljubljana, he did not know if his opinions were really reaching the designated addressees or not. **It is possible that the leadership in the homeland did not want or dare to report to everybody some of his opinions or suggestions.**³ All in all this did cause some émigré groups after the war to reproach Dr. Krek for not understanding the anticommunist camp. **Dr. Krek** had indeed expressed grave doubts about some individuals who wanted to speak on behalf of all the Homeguards. It is also true that Krek himself stated that the situation in the homeland was not clear to him, still, he defended to the end everybody that he knew in the VS and the SD, and affirmed "**that they were patriotic Slovenians to the core... that otherwise they would not be able to act as they did!**"

¹ See Mlakar, 427-454

² *Kuharjevi govori iz Londona [Kuhar's Speeches from London]*, Vestnik 1960, 102-114, especially 104; mentioned also by Mlakar, 319

³ Eiletz, 135-136

The Allies Begin to Support Tito

How did it reach the point that the Western Allies ceased supporting Gen. Mihailović and began furnishing the NOB with weapons, clothing, and food?

The British government sent their first mission to the Partisans in May of 1943. Its commander, Capt. Stewart, was soon killed during an aerial attack. He was succeeded by an Oxford professor, William Deakin, who began to send very favorable reports about the Partisans and their fights, and also parroted the Partisan calumny about the Chetniks collaborating with the occupiers.

These reports moved Churchill to send in September of 1943 a new mission led by British commander Fitzroy MacLean and North American Major Lynn M. Farish. This pair sent back enthusiastic reports about the National Liberation movement and recommended that Tito be sent weapons and equipment, so Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin resolved at the Teheran Conference, November of 1943, to give more support to Tito's Partisans. Churchill was very much influenced by MacLean's opinion, expressed to him at a meeting in Cairo, that the Partisans would be the most powerful political force in Yugoslavia after the war; and Churchill also heard from MacLean's report that the NOB leaders were communists and that after the war they would probably operate according to the Soviet pattern.

It is impossible to "guess" what ultimately convinced Churchill to wager on Tito. Apparently Churchill gave precedence to the fight against Germany, and on account of the prevailing biased reports, he came to believe in the superiority of Tito's Partisans over the remaining groups. And probably he did not want any disputes yet at that time with the Soviets. **However it is must be reiterated that not one of the Allied officers attached to the various missions at Mihailović ever recommended that the Allies should stop supporting Mihailović's Chetniks, because all these liaison officers were convinced that these Chetniks were not collaborators but fighters against the occupier.**

That the English would support the Partisans is quite understandable from various other angles. The British spy service (SOE, Special Operation Executive) was in the hands of English leftists. The head of the Yugoslav section, Davidson, was by his own admission a communist, as was Major Klugman. When the first British mission arrived in Yugoslavia, the Partisans already had the famous battle at Neretva in Herzegovina under their belt, and they really did tie down a large number of German divisions that would have been otherwise sent to Africa or to the Eastern front. Therefore it is understandable that the reports were favorable to the Partisans. Major William Jones was sent as liaison to the Slovenian Partisans; he arrived at **Base 20** in Kočevski Rog on July 17, 1943. "He benefited the Partisans above all by his propaganda: he called upon the 'White Guard' to lay down their weapons and join the Partisans".⁴

The Coerced Tito-Šubašić Agreement

Although the agreement was signed on June 16, Tito did not promulgate it until August 8, and Šubašić on August 17, 1944. The key points of the agreement between the **National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ) and the President of the Yugoslav government-in-exile** were the following:

- The Royal Yugoslav Army must be comprised of people who did not compromise themselves in the fight against the National-Liberation movement.

⁴ Kos I, 299, who cites *Vesti*, Ljubljana, Aug. 23, 1943

- The main responsibility of the government is to help the NOV and all those who in the future will be fighting against the occupier, so that "all forces merge together into one national front".
- The NKOJ and the Royalist Government will determine entities that will coordinate collaboration in the fighting and facilitate the creation as early as possible of a uniform representation of the country.
- The NKOJ deems that now is not a fitting time to deal with the question of the king and the monarchy; both parties agree that the people will decide on this issue after the liberation.
- The Šubašić government will: a) issue a statement that will acknowledge the nationalist and democratic achievements attained by the peoples of Yugoslav in their three years of fighting, achievements that enabled the establishment of the foundations for a democratic federalist constitution and at the same time the creation of a temporary civil administration with the help of AVNOJ and the NKOJ; b) give complete recognition to the fighting might of the NOB under Tito's command and pass sentence on all the traitors of the nation who publicly or secretly collaborated with the enemies; c) will address to the entire nation (sic! instead of the plural nations, meaning the various independence-aspiring nationalities - JR) that all fighting forces should join the NOV.
- Tito, as President of the NKOJ, will be the one to release the statement about the collaboration with the Šubašić government and will emphasize that the NKOJ during the course of the war will not broach the question about the final format of the country.

In actuality, Tito dictated the agreement, and Šubašić was given the right to make only petty editorial corrections.

Under British pressure, **King Peter dismissed Gen. D. Mihailović as Minister of War in May 1944, and then on August 29 also as the Supreme Commander of the Yugoslav Army in the Homeland.**⁵

The Supplementary Agreement

The Allies were officially still recognizing the King and the government-in-exile, so **an additional agreement had to be signed on November 1, 1944, in order to eliminate the duality in Yugoslavia**, meaning, between Tito and his side and the King and his side.

This agreement begins with the following words, which clearly assign whatever constitution-making right to AVNOJ: "Representing the principle of the continuity of the state of Yugoslavia from an international standpoint and the clearly expressed will of all the nations of Yugoslavia in their four-years of fighting for a new, based on democratic principles, independent, and federalist 'union'... Whereas Yugoslavia is recognized by the society of nations in its own old form and still functions as such, for the future we will be the ones to represent this country before the outside world in all foreign policy issues, until our federalist Yugoslavia receives its own finalized form of government based on the free determination of its nationalities."

Next, it declared that this agreement was enacted at this time because King Peter II will not be returning to the homeland, and a regency will operate during the period of his absence.

⁵ Gen. Mihailović stated at the time that he will remain faithful to the King, irrespective of what the government will do; he also stated that the agreement, signed between the Foreign Minister Dr. Šubašić and "Marshal" Tito, was "typical of British politics".

This royal regency will be set up by an act of the King, pending approvals by the President of the NKOJ, Josip Broz Tito, and the President of the Royalist Government, Dr. Ivan Šubašić. A new government will be formed, upon full agreement between the NKOJ and the President of the Royalist government plus settlements with AVNOJ; the new government will rule until a determination is made on the final constitutional setup of the country.

This **perfidious statement promises** that it will issue a “proclamation” which will list the fundamental principles of democratic rights and the guarantees for their implementation. **“Personal freedom, freedom from fear, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of speech, press, meeting and assembly will be explicitly iterated and guaranteed, as well as the right to private property and personal incentive.”** It also reiterates that the sovereignty of the individuality of nationalities will be respected with total equality of rights, as had been passed in resolution at the second session of AVNOJ.

The Agreement Policy – Constitutionality Issues

Two supplements were signed on December 7: one on a national plebiscite, and the other about the royal property in the homeland and on the relationships between the king and the regency council.

It is necessary to emphasize that **King Peter did not want to accept the second agreement.** He regarded the concept of **regency** as being **unconstitutional**, but above all he realized that **with his acceptance, he would be confirming AVNOJ as the Yugoslav legislative body.** A signature would be lunacy, plus contrary to the historic resolution in 1941 when the regency was dismissed and he as a minor was named king, and now he was being told to accept regency, which was being forced on him by his own mortal enemy! **But the British pressure was strong!** And so **on January 29, 1945, the King relented, though he did not actually sign the resolution about the regency until March 2, 1945.**

After this point, the Regency Council was comprised of politicians named by Tito. The council did included 5 representatives from the king’s circle, but they had no influence.

It cannot be denied that the Tito-Šubašić Agreement was a constitutional act. Yet not for the reason maintained by Dr. Šnuderl, that the agreement was “a constitutional act, which the NKOJ, in its role as being the legitimate rule in Yugoslavia, forged with the illegitimate émigré government excluding only the foreign policy interests of Yugoslavia *vis-a-vis* Allied countries.”⁶ Experts in international law assert that **by the very making of this agreement, the NKOJ was in effect recognizing the Royalist government, from whom on the other hand the NKOJ had earlier received internal and international recognition!**⁷

The Yalta Conference and its effects on Slovenia

At Yalta (Feb. 4-11, 1945), Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin signed many agreements.⁸ Some were significant for Yugoslavia:

1. The Statement about Free Europe: the victors mutually pledge to help the liberated European countries resolve their political and economic difficulties and to hold democratic

⁶ Šnuderl, 304

⁷ On this, see Zalar, 110, which states that the USA government did not want to influence the King, and it declared that since the text of the agreement coincides with its own principles, the true test of the good will of the new government will be demonstrated by its carrying out the agreement.

⁸ Concerning the agreements at Yalta, see Miha Krek, *Konferenca v Jalti [The Yalta Conference]*, 1945, ZSS 1956, 20-42

elections. However, every state should determine its own constitutional structure and the new governments must hold elections as soon as possible.

2. A demand that Tito and Šubašić immediately fulfill their resolved agreement, and that the new government must be formed on this basis, and also that AVNOJ must be expanded to include representatives from the pre-war national parliament, who did not collaborate with the enemies. AVNOJ of course never did this.⁹

The communists quickly forgot about all these promises, which they never made in good faith anyway, on par with their revolutionist ethics. On the anniversary of the Second Session of AVNOJ, November 29, 1945 – the day that the communists hailed as the day of the establishment of the new government – the newly-elected **constitutional assembly dismissed the monarchy, took away all rights from King Peter and the Karadjordjević dynasty, and proclaimed a federalist People's Republic of Yugoslavia as a country of nationalities with equal rights.**

Statements like the following demonstrate quite well what the sole goal of the KPS/OF was: “The concept of people's rule and people's sovereignty is incompatible with any other parallel form of governance. **The entire national-liberationist effort was done in the spirit of people's sovereignty and in revolt against the traitorous politik of the Royalist camp and its rule.**”¹⁰ Those who are familiar with communist practice know what happened next: they soon dismissed the vice president of the government, Dr. Milan Grol, one of the representatives in the Royalist government, and in October they ejected Foreign Minister Šubašić and Minister without Portfolio Šutej. Thus the communists seized complete power and Tito received full rein.

The Status of the King and the Status of those in the Homeland loyal to him

The issue of the status of the King is **extremely crucial to properly understand the status of the people who had – in secret, of course – sworn fealty to the king, who were steadfastly pro-Western Allies, but who for reasons of self-defense were forced to take up weapons to fight against the communist revolution.**

Until the King placed his signature on the agreement, their anti-Revolution revolt was legal in the eyes of the King and in the eyes of the Allies, but afterwards, they were just purely and simply labeled as traitors and collaborators! But to themselves, the sole issue was – stated quite simply – only to defend their own lives and their families, because the KPS/OF was continuing at every given opportunity to carry out its program of “liquidating” all steadfast opponents of communist ideology. Thus, they could expect for themselves nothing other than what occurred in 1943 at Turjak, in Kočevje, Ribnica, and so many other execution sites.

⁹ The challenger to AVNOJ was the first Slovenian Parliament, which convened underground already before the end of the war, on May 3, 1945; it was comprised only of legitimate national representatives, and excluded naturally was any delegate who had been appointed by *fiat* of the KPS.

¹⁰ Šnuderl 381; highlighting was added here by the author for emphasis. – The Slovenian text by Dr. Šnuderl contains a vocabulary error: he should have written that the concept of people's rule was *not compatible* [*nezdružljiva*]; instead, he wrote that it *is inseparable* [*je nerazdružljiva*] with this concept, which implies that both governments would be necessary.

Entreaties and Warnings from London

a) Activities by Dr. Izidor Cankar

In 1943, opinions began to diverge discernibly within the Yugoslav foreign delegation in exile. Dr. Izidor Cankar and Franc Snoj, already while living in the USA in 1943 expressed numerous reservations about whether the events in their homeland will have a happy ending for all the people, and above all expressed their doubts about the survival of the Slovenian People's Party (SLS).

After the Tito-Šubašić Agreement in June of 1944, statements and entreaties grew more vocal for the fighting against the Partisans to stop and for the anti-revolutionists to distance themselves from the Germans. **To many people, some of the resolutions at the Teheran Conference meant that the Homeguards would be treated as collaborators.** The politicians-in-exile sensed much more keenly the change in British policy towards Gen. Mihailović, or rather to the Partisans, simply from the new directions taken in the BBC broadcasts. For example, Kuhar and Krek were no longer allowed to speak on this broadcasting station (the former as of March, the latter as of September 1943).

The statements by the new president of the government, Dr. Šubašić, became very significant harbingers of the change in policy, and above all King Peter II's proclamation on June 1, 1944 and his official letter of September 12, 1944. The trend was followed by some speeches on the Homeguard problem delivered by Prof. Janko Lavrin and Slavko Klemenčič. **The final break among the Slovenians in exile occurred at the end of July 1944 with the arrival in London of Dr. Izidor Cankar,** the former Royal ambassador to Argentina and afterwards to Canada. While in London, he convinced Kuhar and Snoj that it was necessary to take a resolute stand against the situation in the homeland, because the SLS leaders were so nearsighted that they were binding the Homeguards to the Germans in the fight against the Partisans. **According to Cankar there were only two possibilities: either a union of the anti-Partisan forces and a fight [against the Partisans], or a transfer to the Partisans.** However, the first choice was a hopeless one for them, because it meant fighting the "Allies"; and the other choice was for Slovenian Catholics just plain difficult and uncertain, and in actuality unacceptable. **The third possibility was to just wait passively for whatever was going to happen** – which, unfortunately, is what actually did happen.

Based on this, Cankar, with concurrence by the British and by Tito's delegate Velebit, intended to send a telegram to Krek in Rome wherein **he proposed a "putsch" within the SLS, or rather, within the Homeguards.** He did not send it, because he accompanied Dr. Šubašić to Caserta near Naples for a meeting with Churchill. **While in Rome, Cankar spoke with the representatives of the SLS and the JNS. The outcome of the discussions was that the majority of the representatives persisted that the fight against the Partisans must continue, at least within Slovenia.** To Cankar, this signified the end of the SLS.¹¹

After a discussion with Tito on the island of Vis, Cankar **called upon all Homeguards** to step into the Partisan ranks. He **wrote a letter to Bishop Dr. Rožman** in which he begged him to do everything possible to stop the Homeguard fight against the Partisans. The letter demonstrated his frightfully naive mentality, for he assured the bishop that a fear of the Partisans was unjustified and that it would never come to a communist revolution; this shows that Cankar was blind to the fact that a Revolution had been rampaging for three years already. **The Bishop did**

¹¹ Cankar foresaw the end of the SLS, however he should have also foreseen the end of all the other political parties – except the KPS!

respond to the letter: he stated that the Homeguard oath was not an oath to Hitler, and that Cankar was naive about the communists and their promises.

b) Dr. Franc Snoj goes off to Slovenia

When Cankar returned to London, he convinced Snoj to return to the homeland so that in person he could urge the Homeguards to cross over into the NOV. Kuhar would be directing a similar call to the Homeguards via Radio BBC. **Snoj did actually go to Slovenia, where he was detained at the Slovenian Partisan HQ in Kočevski Rog and prevented from making personal contact with the SLS leadership inside the country;** he was not even able to see his own son, who was a Homeguard. The Partisan leadership's sole concern was that Snoj issue a statement urging the "ordinary" Homeguards to desert, since its only interest in the Homeguard leaders was to "sentence" them. Snoj later prepared even more entreaties, in which he stressed that the Partisans were an Allied army, that the Allies had recognized the Partisan rule, and that the Allies were not going to "occupy" Yugoslavia.

c) Kuhar's Radio Broadcasts

The **broadcasts of Dr. Alojzij Kuhar on the BBC** aroused even greater attention. The British "democratically" of course determined the content of his talks; only long afterwards was Dr. Kuhar able to write about their censorship and tight control.

In the **first speech**, September 8, 1944, he **deplored the civil war in the homeland, the writings in the collaborationist newspapers, the Homeguard oath, and the resolution issued by the priests, because all of this was supporting the occupier while the rest of the world was united against Nazism.** He stated that those in London had made up their minds that this was the final attempt to save whatever could still be saved. He added that this was why Dr. Snoj had gone back into the homeland, and the people should listen to him.

In the **second talk**, September 10, Kuhar **called attention to the resolutions that the SLS leaders had made in the springtime of 1941, namely, that there must be no collaboration with the enemy. The SLS leaders back home must acknowledge whatever culpability they have for the current situation, and then revert to position the SLS had taken when Germany and Italy invaded the country.** He stated that Snoj's task was to get likeminded people to break from the enemy and return to the Allies, so that in this way they can erase the stigma of national treason. **He also threatened that the Allies will not be giving aid to a nationality that is killing its own kind.**

In the **third talk**, September 11, he **tried to rebut the objections that the Homeguards were fighting for their Faith and against communism:** those who want to fight for the freedom of their homeland should join the OF; and those, who think that they cannot do this, should throw down their weapons and distance themselves from the enemy.

The speeches by Dr. Kuhar and the entreaties by Dr. Snoj aroused much attention and even increased bad blood. Dr. Krek was opposed to the Snoj's trip to Slovenia and to Kuhar's speeches. Later as postwar émigrés, Krek questioned Dr. Kuhar about this affair, but his only reply was that he had wanted to save the Homeguards. At any rate, it is **today clear that the statements made by Kuhar and Snoj about communism having some democratic nature and plans were emanating solely from their jobs, and not from their actual personal convictions.**¹²

¹² See Debeljak, *Zapiski*, ZSS 1967, 100, which has a statement from Kuhar's alleged autobiography: "The speeches were broadcast. They were interpreted that I myself had now joined the Tito side too. The Homeguards did not follow the advice because they did not understand it, because I was not permitted to tell them the whole truth..."

The response to these entreaties of Snoj and Kuhar was completely nil, at least with regard to the Homeguards rushing over to join the Partisans. The memory of the 1943 massacres was still too fresh for the Homeguards, and in fact was even augmented by the new shedding of blood and somewhat by the strong propaganda from the pro-Ljotić crowd in Rupnik's headquarters staff; the continued killings showed that the Homeguard could really not seriously expect that the communists, if they won, would treat them any differently than they did with the prisoners and wounded in 1943. Andrej Križman's opinion was that Kuhar was breeding confusion, and the fact remained that **someone from outside the country was not in a position to give them orders on how to act.** Rudolf Smersu deemed the speeches were **probably just tactics.** The Commander of the Organizational HQ Staff of the SD, Krenner, regarded Kuhar's speech as **a piece of brutal propaganda that aimed to disintegrate the Homeguard at any cost.**

Of course, now the anticommunist camp could no longer deny the fact that the Partisans were in contact with the English. But it retained till the very end the naive but steadfast hope that the British-Partisan collaboration would cease after the war.

The Partisans publicly acknowledged the gist of Snoj's entreaties and Kuhar's speeches, however exactly between the first and the second of Kuhar's speeches, the so-called **Commission for the Determination of Crimes by the Occupiers and their Helpers** wrote a **denunciatory report against Kuhar and Snoj and accused the two of anti-proletarian politics, supporting the government in exile and Mihailović, and obstructing the resistance against the occupier.** The Partisan propaganda of course still continued to issue invitations to the Homeguards, but these calls were becoming ever more threatening and were imputing an *a priori* guilt: almost each Homeguard would have to lose his head, and he wouldn't be able to evade the death penalty even if he were to kneel contritely before a people's court.

Among the Slovenians, the sole true allies of the Western Powers

The main purpose of the KPS/OF was a communist revolution under the guise of a liberation war. The KPS/OF was employing the most extreme terrorism in its objective to have everybody subordinate themselves to their exclusive power. Anyone who did not submit was sentenced to death. The KPS/OF thus had no reservations about instigating a civil war, because part of its plan was to **force** the democratic camp into **armed conflict against its monopolization.** This armed self-defense of life and liberty by the anti-revolutionists, who had to obtain weapons for this fight from the occupier in accordance with the articles of the Hague Convention, was twisted by the KPS/OF into being termed collaboration and treason.

The **most important reason for the ascendancy of the communists and the victory of the KPS/OF** was undoubtedly the **wheeling-and-dealing among the Four Great Powers.** Instead of being liberated from the occupier, Slovenia thus fell from one occupation into another, from one enslavement into another, from one tyranny into another.¹³ Besides, Churchill and Stalin cynically, nearly secretly, and almost flippantly decided that Yugoslavia would fall 50% under the English sphere and 50% under the Soviet sphere. But in point of fact, Tito's Yugoslavia from its inception was 100% under the tyranny of the Yugoslav Communist Party. This meant that there was no legal government in Yugoslavia and perforce in Slovenia from 1945 to 1990, because there was no separation of the three powers of government, personal freedoms were not guaranteed, and so on.

¹³ Prof. Lojze Peterle, representative to the EU and the president of the first democratic government after the fall of the communist regime, expressed this in a similar manner, *Delo*, 5/6/2005

The **democratic-minded Slovenians** always regarded themselves as allies of the Western Powers, even though they were making a fighting stand against the terrorism and the government takeover by the Communist Party, which was receiving the backing and massive shipments of weaponry from the Allies. The **Slovenian democrats believed in an Allied victory, were preparing themselves for it, and were aiding it according to their own means** – but in such a way as not to bring the nation to destruction. At the end of the war, despite everything, they continued to believe and trust that the Western Allies would help them. This trust was by all means utterly naive and contrary to the circumstances of the times. Today **we know that they were not completely mistaken in this faith**: the Western Allies and the Soviet Union came very close to war already in May of 1945.¹⁴

In contrast to the democratic-minded Slovenian camp, the KPS/OF had always maintained that it would fight against the Western Allies if they were to land on the Adriatic coast. This was admitted in statements by high-ranking persons in the KPJ and the KPS, particularly during their negotiations with the Germans.

Nonetheless, **at that time the majority of the Western political leaders took seriously their alliance with the USSR and its satellites**, as for example, Tito's Yugoslavia. **There were many politicians, especially in Western Europe, who were blindly infatuated with a Soviet paradise. Many of the Western military commanders were focused solely on a joint victory over Nazism**, which many at the time – and some even to this day! – considered to be the greatest enemy of the human race in the 20th century. Various people throughout almost all the postwar years spoke only about the horrors of Nazism and Fascism. Meanwhile, for a long string of decades, they bragged about the real or alleged victories and achievements of the Soviets, even though the indisputable fact was that the number of deaths attributable to the Soviet Union ran into the millions.

Various Attitudes by the Allies towards the Homeguards

After all that has been said, the attitude of the Allies towards the Slovenian Homeguards should be quite obvious. After the Tito-Šubašić Agreement, **the Allies regarded** the Slovenian anti-communists as **collaborators**. The military priorities of the war were at the forefront, and these left no room for any consideration of justifiable reasons for fighting against communism. The reports filed since 1943 by the British observers, or rather, advisors to the Partisans, showed they were completely under the influence of the Partisans; the reports were even replete with all the Partisan jargon: they always referred to the Homeguard as the "White Guard".

A noteworthy fact is that Allied diplomats and intelligence services continued to maintain contact with Dr. Krek and his people. Dr. Krek was at that time the only one in exile who was still trying to save the anti-Partisan movement in Slovenia. **Even the American mission (Lt. Col. Robert McDowell) at the HQ of Gen. Mihailović showed it understood this when it recommended that they weave ties "with the Slovenian nationalists"**. The British acted exactly the opposite; their sole contacts with the Homeguard were threatening leaflets.¹⁵

¹⁴ The publication of British documents from 1945 has proved that Churchill had already on May 12, 1945 ordered the Supreme Command to draw a plan of attack against the USSR, but he was dissuaded within a few days. Nonetheless, Churchill ordered the highest state of preparedness for defense. When the Labor Party won at the polls, Churchill was no longer the Prime Minister, and with this, the British politics towards the USSR did (or, if you will, did not) change.

¹⁵ Dr. Miha Krek, *Črni spomini [Dark Memories]*, ZSS 1951, 47-79 writes that the Allies were correctly informed about the true nature of the Homeguards.

2. Political and Military Actions

Conscious of the Need for Unity

The traditional Slovenian politicians realized more and more that they needed a unified national force, which together with the Western Allies would defend Slovenia from communism. For this reason they wanted to revive something similar to the defunct Slovenian Alliance. After various attempts, the National Committee was ultimately established.

The Christmas Memorandum of 1943¹⁶

On December 23, 1943, a delegation of representatives from the civilian sector solemnly handed Gen. Rupnik a memorandum, addressed to the Slovenian nation. The memorandum stated the following points: **The Slovenian nation is becoming a victim of communism, which is pushing the nation to extinction; to date, 15,000 people have been killed**, including 29 priests; **nearly 10,000 Slovenian families have been resettled**; under the pretense of a fight for liberation, the **Party wants to illegitimately take over the government and establish its own dictatorship**; therefore, the fight against communism is a fundamental personal and ethnic obligation; nobody can demand that the Slovenian nation must allow itself to be slaughtered. Therefore it is forced to resort to self-defense.

The memorandum was signed by 141 of the more renowned spokesmen for the public and cultural sectors in the city of Ljubljana, and signed across the country by 1,300 representatives of townships, economic and cultural organizations, above all among the farming class. Kos questions the authenticity (apparently, of the majority) of these signers, although he cannot substantiate his reservations. According to the Regime historian, Bishop Rožman allegedly stated at the Anti-communist Conference of Slovenian Priests in Ljubljana (June 12-16, 1944) that 70% of Ljubljana was pro-OF and that everybody was awaiting Tito.¹⁷

The Slovenian People's Bloc¹⁸

In the Catholic camp, June 21, 1944 saw the establishment of the **Slovenian People's Bloc (SLB)**, a joint forum of the SLS, the Catholic middle (Gosar's group), Straža, and the KA. It proved fatal that the SLB likewise **emanated the presumption that the English or the Americans were going to smother the communist revolution**.

The first attempt to unite the various Catholic organizations was the **Slovenian Declaration of 1943**. It was composed by Mirko Javornik, Ruda Jurčec, and Franček Žebot. The declaration set its **political goal as the Slovenian people having their own country encompassing land that belongs to the Slovenians ethnically, economically, and strategically**. The declaration was signed by approximately 200 intellectuals and public servants. **The Slovenian People's Bloc (SLB) adopted this declaration in essence**.

The Bloc was created by a written agreement among the spokesmen for the SLS, Gosar's group, the members of Straža, and Catholic Action (KA). The bloc was to serve as a supreme forum to keep all Catholic-leaning political groups united. The agreement resolved that: 1. Until the arrival of normal conditions, each group in the bloc would refrain from independent political activity and deals with other groups outside the bloc; 2. Mutual attacks among the groups should cease; 3. The Catholic Press should also abide by this agreement; 4. Each group bears

¹⁶ Kos II, 76

¹⁷ Mikuž IV, 259; *Slovenec*, June 17, 1944, reported about the conference

¹⁸ Kos II, 160-162

responsibility for what it has been doing to date; 5. The agreement is in force until the start of normal conditions after the end of the war.¹⁹

The purpose of this agreement was to tie together the entire Catholic camp, above all the **SLS** and **Straža**, where the divergence was the greatest. The strongest group was the **SLS**, even though the majority of its leadership was outside the country. Inside the country, national government [*elected*] **Representatives Rudolf Smersu and Prof. Mirko Bitenc were working underground**. They authorized Gosar to invite the liberals into the bloc too. They reported to Dr. Krek in Rome that henceforth only resolutions made by the bloc were valid for the political émigrés.

The bloc, **headed by a three-member executive committee** (Kos speaks of “executives”, although he does not mention names) set as its first task to formulate a plan for the postwar organization of Slovenia. A wider committee was composed of the three-member executive committees established for each region. These executives committees existed also at the town-ship level.

In September of 1944 they began to prepare a national declaration for a unified political program by the anti-communist camp. **The plan included the establishment of the National Committee**, which in underground mode would assume governance of the nation until the opportune time it could operate above-ground in public. One part of this leadership group would be make preparations for whatever needed to be done at the end of the war, and the other part would go over to the Western Allies.

Just at this very time, the Gestapo penetrated the anticommunist underground and imprisoned over 100 influential Slovenians. This in effect rendered impossible this unified plan of action by the democratic forces. Gosar was among those captured and sent to Dachau.

Thanks to Dr. Gosar himself, the bloc fell into a new crisis in November of 1944. Dr. Šmajd had uncovered the existence of some sort of National Committee with Gosar at the head, and it was being supported by the Chetnik Command and the National Legion (Gosar- Šolar). The committee was created at Mihailović's HQ in January 1944. When Gosar signed the agreement with the other Catholic groups in July of 1944, he had been president of the Mihailović's National Committee for three months already.

The uncovering of this special committee meant to Bitenc that the bloc was shattered as of November 15th. Smersu sided with Bitenc, who was authorized to be Krek's deputy inside Slovenia. However, when the bloc met, all the members except Smersu opposed Bitenc's action against Gosar.

Šmajd was also to have uncovered that the **members of Straža were trying to take over the political leadership in the Catholic camp. So he began to make preparations for the creation of a National Committee**. He was assisted by other SLS members, who had belonged to the bloc but resigned; with this, the bloc in effect disintegrated.²⁰

The National Declaration, October 29, 1944

The Declaration was not accepted until December 4, when the SLS and the JNS reached an accord. The Socialist Party had participated in the discussions, but at this time it had not

¹⁹ Janez Grum, *Slovenski ljudski blok in Narodni odbor [The Slovenian People's Bloc and the National Committee]*, *Vestnik* 1986, 3, 170

²⁰ This book cannot go into detail about all the **activities of the SLS during 1941-1945**. This topic is covered in the notable book by Dr. Janez A. Arnež (see Sources). Equally notable is his book *Gabrovškov dnevnik [Gaberšek's Diary]*. Due consideration must also be given to the “biography” of Dr. Kuhar, which is mentioned by Dr. Debeljak, *ZSS* 1957, 96-121. Dr. Miha Krek wrote a brief report about its 1944-45 work in Rome in *Aprila in maja 1945 v Rimu*, *ZSS* 1951, 49, and *Črni spomini [Dark Memories]*, *ZSS* 1951, 47-49); see also Rant P. 1990

yet signed the declaration. The spokesmen for the participating political parties were secretly gathering signatures for the declaration, though under fake names and pseudonyms.

The first declaration was simple and covered **4 points**:

1. A demand for a **constitutional unification of the entire Slovenian nation into a Unified Slovenia**, which would be an entity in a geographic, economic, and strategic sense where the ethnic and economic existence and development of the nation will be protected;
2. A demand for a **Kingdom of Yugoslavia that is based on federalism, democratic principles, and social justice**;
3. A demand that in such a federalist country, the **centralized government will hold only those tasks and special prerogatives which the constitution will delegate to it**;
4. A demand for **fundamental economic and social reforms, which would destroy the lordship of capital over labor, recognize the social function of all working classes, families and individuals, and finally, guarantee them a life of human dignity**.

Yet this declaration **did not receive a great response** among the Slovenian people, because the majority was uninformed about it. But it was a **strong rebuttal of the Party's slander**, that had begun already in 1941 and gradually grew until the end of the war and even afterwards, **that the anti-revolutionist camp wanted to retain the pre-war political and social status quo in Slovenia**.²¹

The Creation of the National Committee for Slovenia (NOS)

At the founding of the National Committee, Dr. Šmajd relied heavily on the majority SLS, although the NOS was supposed to unite all 3 pre-war democratic political parties: the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, pre-war JNS) and the right wing of the Slovenian Socialist Party (SSS).²²

Even though the parties were unanimous about the need for the NO, **difficulties surfaced during the composing of the National Declaration**. Specifically, the liberals at this time still did not accept a federalist constitutional Yugoslavia, nor an ethnic country of Slovenia as one of its composite parts. In the end it reached the form mentioned earlier.

The NOS was comprised of the following members - **from the SLS**: president Dr. Jože Basaj and members Principal Bogumil Remec, Dr. Albin Šmajd, Dr. Franc Bajlec (Representative for Prekmurje), Dr. Marko Kranjc; **from the SDS**: Dr. M. Zajec, J. Bevc (*inž.*), Dr. Pavel Pestotnik (absent), Rudolf Žitnik; **from the socialists**: Dr. Celestin Jelenc; the representative for Koroška, Dr. Kolterer, and the representative for Primorska, Dr. Kacin, were absent. The two secretaries were Šmajd and Zajc.²³

Tasks and Activities of the National Committee for Slovenia

In order to achieve these national demands, the newly-established National Committee for Slovenia, in its role as the supreme national government, **temporarily assumed for itself the rights of sovereignty and supreme constitutional powers**.²⁴

The NOS had **precursors in the National Declaration of October 29, 1944, which came from the wishes of representatives, duly-elected at the last regular elections held in the prewar country of Yugoslavia**. These representatives signed the declaration together with vari-

²¹ Concerning this, see the oft-cited correspondence of Dr. Debeljak "Zapiski...", 106-111

²² Griesser-Pečar, 101-118; Kos II, 173-175

²³ Everything indicates that even the Regime historian acknowledged this legitimacy; see Mikuž V, 47

²⁴ For the actual text, see Griesser-Pečar, 106-107

ous spokesmen from cultural, economic, religious, and political life. The National Committee still fell back on these signatures on March 15, 1945.

The NOS clearly emphasized that with regard to the questions concerning the nature of the Slovenian nation, it was not going to make any *a priori* decisions. These should be debated after the war, and the nation should decide.

During the duration of the war, therefore, the NOS would and did *de jure* execute the powers of a Presidency, of the government, and of the ethnic national organizations.²⁵ The NOS was comprised of a Supreme Committee (KOS calls it the Plenum), a Select Committee, and a Presidency. The **Supreme Committee** contained 7 representatives for the SLS, 5 for the JNS and 1 socialist. The **Select Committee** contained 4 representatives for the SLS and 3 for the other parties. The **Presidency** had 4 members: a president from the ranks of the SLS, a vice-president from the JNS and other parties; two secretaries, one each from the SLS and the JNS. Later they added a spokesman for the JSS (SSS) and one more vice-president from the SLS.

The NO adopted some significant **resolutions**, for example:

1. A resolution on exercising the government on Slovenian territory;
2. A resolution to create a Slovenian National Army;
3. A resolution to create a temporary representative body of the people, to serve as the framework for a national government, which came into being on May 4, 1945.

Divisiveness within the anticommunist camp at the end of 1944

The British envoy to Belgrade wrote a particularly interesting report in March of 1945, in which he maintained that the might of the Homeguard in Slovenia was growing and that the popularity of the Partisans was falling.²⁶

Yet the anticommunist camp **towards the end of 1944 was truly divided**. One side supported the **military** above all else; it was convinced of a victory over the Partisans, basing its optimism on its own military experiences within the Slovenian borders. The other, the **political side**, was looking also beyond the borders and, given the international picture, was extremely pessimistic. According to Dr. Debeljak, **the first side revolved around Gen. Rupnik**.²⁷

²⁵ The term “de jure” is used because its members were elected by delegates, who were elected in the last free elections, thereby lawful (legal and legitimate). “De facto”, the KPS/OF and its own bodies had more power due to its use of force, however except for the final months before the end of the war [Tito-Šubašić Agreements], it is impossible to state that they were legal; the other question is, exactly when did they become legitimate?

²⁶ Mlakar, 482

²⁷ Dr. Tine Debeljak, op. cit. His journals are important for giving a description of the situation at the threshold of the fateful year 1945; additional valuable information comes from Dr. Kuhar’s own statements about his speeches in his “autobiography”. Dr. Debeljak asks himself, was the NOS really something nonsensical? His chapter, “*Vse novo ali nadaljevanje starega?*” [*Everything new or a continuation of the old?*], is quite interesting: He points out two contradictory statements made by the same group: Dr. Ehrlich in 1941 (*Jugoslavije kot oblastne stvarnosti ni več* [*Jugoslavia as a ruling governing entity no longer exists*]) and their official statement in *Slovenska pot* X, 1-2, 6 (*Naša vlada je v inozemstvu* [*Our government is in exile*])). He attacks the anti-Churchill talk and speaks about wasted time. He stands firm on the significance of the government of the NO. He sharply refutes the view of those who wanted to turn the then Slovenia into “an anticommunist fortress of world significance”. He emphasizes again that the NOS was not to be blamed for Vetrinj, but that Vetrinj was the victim of international Anglo-American ‘mistakes’. - In the opinion of this author, there can no longer be any doubts about the real reasons for the Vetrinj tragedy, given the public apology made by the President of the USA, G. W. Bush in May of 2005 for those Anglo-American ‘mistakes’.

The views of Gen. Rupnik or Dr. Kociper cannot be equated with those of the majority of the Homeguard officers and soldiers, who also were convinced of the possibility of a victory over their fellow-Slovenian communist military units, however unlike the first two, they did not believe in a final German victory; they had sworn fealty to the King and also confidently anticipated an Allied victory.

The best proof of the Homeguard's pro-Allied bent was the **German arrests of groups of Homeguard officers at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945**, even including Lt. Col. Ernest Peterlin from the HG Supreme Command.²⁸

The **Slovenian politicians had a different outlook of the development of the war in the homeland**. In their view, Gen. Rupnik had gone too far in collaboration with the occupier. They likewise knew that the outcome of the war would be different from what Rupnik's circle might have wished, especially because the Allies were unable to comprehend the difficult situation in Slovenia. They knew that the situation had changed completely with the Tito-Šubašić Agreement (June 16, 1944). With this agreement the Allies had cast aside Mihailović and his Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD) – including the Slovenian Homeguard – and recognized Tito's Partisans as the legitimate army. However the truth of the matter is that none of the Homeguards wanted to listen to the warnings coming from the outside (ex. the speeches of Dr. Kuhar, the telegram of Dr. Krek), to the politicians in the underground (Miloš Stare), and to the intelligence agents (Vauhnik), or else they simply did not believe that all these were telling the truth.²⁹

Rupnik's Evacuation Plan

Gen. Rupnik had his own plan for the final days of the war: because the Partisan army will logically strive to achieve its own goal, the **Homeguard must "by fighting create in the homeland the possibility of negotiation for the most favorable surrender terms possible"**.³⁰ The Homeguard would offer protection to anyone who wants to evacuate.

As the best sector for a long lasting fight **he chose the northwestern corner of Slovenia (Pokljuka, Vintgar, Stol), where 15,000 persons could defend against the north, west and south**. The forests would be able to conceal a maximum of 30,000 refugees, because the populated centers (Javornik, Jesenice, Dovje, Mojstrana, Kranjska gora, Rateče) were out of consideration due to the possibility of bombardment. Of course, this plan **needed many conditions to be implemented**, from incorporating the Gorenjska Homeguard into the SD and the stockpiling food and weapons, to obtaining assent from the German commander Rösener.

Rupnik at his trial **maintained that he had succeeded in accomplishing much of this between the 15th and 25th of April**. He had received approval in principle from the Germans for this evacuation. He likewise received the assent for the subordination of the Gorenjska

²⁸ Peterlin was sent to Dachau, and after the war he was nabbed there by the so-called Yugoslav National Committee and returned to Yugoslavia, where at the "Christmas Trials" he was accused of being one of the main organizers of the Homeguard, by their definition a national traitor, and was sentenced to death.

²⁹ For the entire topic, see Debeljak ZSS 1967; it was already mentioned how the anticommunist Slovenians urged the Allies to launch an invasion in the Balkans; ex. Dr. Miha Krek in November 1944 in Rome handed over to the Anglo-American command a memorandum on the conditions in Slovenia; Bishop Dr. Rožman on December 1944 sent a letter to Pope Pius XII; and so on.

³⁰ Surrender to whom? The author JR doubts that Rupnik intended to surrender to the Partisans. And if he was thinking of surrendering to the Allies, he would himself be admitting that he had fought on the side of the Germans.

Homeguard, and the promise that the Germans would recommend to Rainer that Gorenjska be joined to Ljubljana Province.³¹

The NOS Decisions about an Eventual Withdrawal

On April 2, 1945 the NOS decided that the Slovenian troops must move away if the Soviet troops were to approach Slovenia. If only Tito's Partisans or even if only the Slovenian Partisan troops were to approach, then they must prepare to resist.

If a temporary vacuum occurred between the withdrawal of the Germans and the arrival of the Americans, all Slovenian soldiers should remain at their posts, however, it would be necessary to secure the south, west and north borders.

The **National Committee** should do whatever is necessary to facilitate the entrance of the Americans and the landing of paratroopers. All this makes it evident that the NOS was figuring that the Western Allies would be extending their lines into Slovenia.

A few days later (April 17) they adopted several more **decisions**: Slovenian as the official language, the appointment of commissioners in the territories of the national state of Slovenia, etc.

Because Tito's troops were approaching, they made the following resolutions:

- 1 The armed Slovenian units are prohibited from fighting together with the Germans against the anti-German troops;**
- 2. The armed Slovenians and the civilians must not withdraw into German territory together with the Germans;**
- 3. It was necessary to fight against propaganda, whose purpose is to create unrest and confusion.**³²

Because it was necessary to do whatever was necessary for the withdrawal of the armed units, the civilian population, and some especially high-profile individuals, they created the **Committee for the Safety of the Population**. The plan for the withdrawal should take no consideration of wartime speculators or of individuals who had worked politically with the Germans. At the 10th session of the Presidency they even specifically determined how the evacuation of the inhabitants should be carried out.

The Urgency to Do Something "Revolutionary"

The **military leadership of the NOS** in the SD formulated a **detailed plan for a withdrawal to Italy**. However it was not until its 6th meeting in mid-April 1945 that the NOS resolved that there was a need for a full consultation with the forces of Damjanović and the remaining Serbs

³¹ See the earlier footnote about the summary of Dr. Debeljak's article, which repudiates such a plan. The consulted military experts have stated that from a stark military viewpoint this plan was exceptionally naive. For any possibility of success, they would have had to start implementing it at least one year earlier, with a complete occupation of the territory and with the elimination of the slightest chance of any sort of sabotage activity by the NOB. In addition, the issue was not only a clash with the Slovenian NOB, but with the Red Army, which was already breaking through Prekmurje and Štajerska and leaving behind horrible trail, and also with Tito's forces which had been completely furnished by the Allies with new equipment. However, the entire Rupnik trial (Željeznov) shows that the general had forgotten about many a thing, either because he was concealing his opinions to those around him or because they had morally crushed him; See, for example, 62-64, 70-72, 80-83, 84-88, 92-103, 219-223, 231-233, 273-276, 284-288, above all, the final "defense" 316-317.

³² See Griesser-Pečar, 111

about their own plan to create a Yugoslav government on Slovenian land, also with regard to the recent conclusion of the "United Nations" Conference in San Francisco, USA. With this purpose in mind, **Zajc and Šmajd went to Primorska**. After discussions in Ilirska Bistrica, Gorica, and Ajdovščina, the two **returned in a few days to Ljubljana with very poor news**. The two of them said that the idea about a Yugoslav government had been forgotten. There was a very alarming possibility that Tito's forces could break through the front right at Primorska, occupy Trieste, and cut off Slovenia from the Allies. **With this, the situation of the Homeguard and the leadership in Ljubljana was "downright catastrophic"**.

In Šmajd's opinion, the threatening **danger was that the Homeguards would have to fight jointly with the Germans to the very end and withdraw north towards the Karavanke Mountains, which would be the worst scenario**. A withdrawal towards Furlanija would be difficult due to the concentration of various Italian units there. Upon his return to Ljubljana, Šmajd also went to inform Bishop Rožman about this and promised him to do everything necessary to save Slovenian lives, civilian as well as Homeguard.³³ **Tito's 4th Army, armed by the Western Allies with modern weaponry**, occupied Trieste on May 1st; this closed the door on any possible **retreat into Italy through Primorska**.

Thus the **main problem** that now remained was **the ties of the Homeguard with the Germans**. Therefore the **NOS members** working together with the military committee **resolved** that they must **not permit the Homeguards and civilians to withdraw towards Carinthia together with the Germans**. At this, however, **the overriding principle must be to save as many lives as possible**.

The question did arise, just **who should evacuate**: everybody or only the high-profile cases; the entire army, or should some soldiers head into the forests as guerrillas (the Green Cadre); etc. They instructed the Committee for the Safety of the Population to devise a **detailed plan for the evacuation of the civilian population, with guidelines on who should go and what they should bring**.

Because the hope in the arrival of the Allies was still ever present, the **NOS decided to do something "revolutionary"**, with the intention of attracting the attention of the Allies. The most effective act would be of course to **revolt against the Germans**, something they had thought about since the autumn of 1943, **but there was no explicit development along this line**.³⁴ Towards the end of the war, the **NOS was still, as always, considering what would be the actual possibility of the Homeguards revolting against the Germans**. The director of the military committee, **Bitenc, was in favor of a revolt**, but this was not his decision to make. But Major **Krenner** said clearly that **they were not powerful enough** to do this, and Gen. Rupnik stated: "Memento Varšava!" [**Remember Warsaw!**"]

The **NOS finally had to become reconciled with the unfeasibility of an armed revolt**. It likewise had to accept the difficult fact that a revolt by the Homeguard commanders against Rupnik was not possible.³⁵ Therefore the **decision prevailed**, that in light of the Partisan advances in Primorska, it was necessary to hurry and wrest official governmental power from the

³³ Mlakar, 469

³⁴ Mlakar, 469-470

³⁵ All in all, this demonstrates the superior power of at least some of the decision-making military commanders over the political leaders, which was probably the main reason for so many failures and even defeats, both after the fall of Italy as well as after the war. But it is really not necessary to consult Machiavelli for instructions on this, that political power must be seized and maintained.

Germans by **convincing the Germans that it was to their benefit if they would cede power without a revolt.**³⁶

The First Slovenian Democratic Underground Parliament

At the suggestion of the National Committee, on **May 3, 1945, the first Slovenian Parliament** convened in secret (underground) in the gymnastic organization building, called Sokol Hall, at Tabor [Ljubljana]. At the suggestion of Major Bitenc, Franc Kremžar was elected president, Rudolf Žitnik vice-president, and Pavle Masič and Ivan Tonja the secretaries. The Parliament **proclaimed “the sovereign state of the Slovenian nation”** as a constituent part of a democratic federalist Yugoslavia. It appointed a three-member board (President Bogumil Remec, SLS; Dr. Pavel Pestotnik, JNS; and Dr. Celestin Jelenc, JSS) to perform all the rights of a state ruler until the King returns. It also composed a government, sworn in on May 4th. In actuality, the NOS had to work hard until the end of its residency in Slovenia to obtain power.³⁷

Difficulties between the NOS and Gen. Rupnik³⁸

Meanwhile, the NOS was preparing the most urgent decisions and the incorporation of the SD and the police into the SNV. However it encountered great difficulties with Rösener, which they expected, and also with Rupnik, which they did not expect, so much so that they even had to beg Bishop Rožman to mediate. This mediation became a decisive factor in Rožman's postwar sentencing, despite the fact that he did nothing more than place the bishop's residence at their disposal, and during the debate make an effort to keep them from straying off onto tangents.³⁹

Similarly, difficulties arose at the meeting between the NOS spokesmen with Rösener, at which Rupnik was also present, with Bishop Rožman as the mediator. They posed many demands to Rösener, some even in writing.⁴⁰ According to the president of the NO, Dr. Basaj, **Rösener** was wild with rage, particularly at their ultimatum, which he considered to be offensive to the German army. When **Rupnik** spoke up, he said that **these present [the NOS delegation] were those gentlemen who had never cooperated with the occupation forces and had worked for the underground.** He claimed that **these men were in no way representatives of the Slovenian people, whereas he himself has the young and the intelligent people, the real new Slovenian generation, who are the true representatives of all Slovenians;** he and they have everything already worked out, and **with these he will set up a real national committee, and even inform the Germans about it.**⁴¹

³⁶ Mlakar, 470-473

³⁷ For the significant resolutions of this group, see Dr. T. Debeljak, *Prvi slovenski parlament v Ljubljani 3. maja 1945 [The first Slovenian Parliament in Ljubljana on May 3, 1945]*, ZSS 1965, 280-286

³⁸ A more detailed account on the final months, Mlakar, 466-481

³⁹ See Griesser-Pečar, 113-116

⁴⁰ Griesser-Pečar, 116 - The text is extremely important, because among other things it says: “We Slovenians are democracy-oriented; hence totalitarian ideas of any type are alien to us. Despite this, we have tried everything to keep the relations between our nation and the occupation rulers in the spirit of the international convention concerning permissible behaviors. Even in this fight against Bolshevism by Slovenian units, we always argued the position that this fight must not overstep the bounds of the international convention. Our fight against Bolshevism was first and foremost oriented towards maintaining order and peace in Slovenia; at this we represented the stance that the Slovenian formations must under no circumstances be allowed to be used to fight against the Allies.”

⁴¹ Griesser-Pečar, 116-117, according to Bajlec, 61

“The Hour of the National Committee for Slovenia”

The Slovenian spokesmen (the NO members, Bishop Rožman, Gen. Rupnik, Police Chief Hacin) were back at Rösener’s on May 5th around 11 o’clock. Rösener informed them that **by orders from Rainer, he will hand over the administration** to them. He also informed them that **Rupnik had resigned**, as they had demanded, notwithstanding that the Germans had earlier handed over the administration of Gorenjska to him. Rainer did not agree to the handover of weaponry or supplies. In the meantime, most of the German occupiers had already departed. “This was the NOS’ hour.”⁴²

Although the NO had earlier decreed that the SNV should make a stand against the Partisans, the politicians’ evaluation was now influenced by **Krenner’s** judgment that **the SNV would not be able to hold the city of Ljubljana** against the Partisans. Discouragement also prevailed when they finally realized that the **Western Allies were going to abandon Slovenia to its fate** and yield it to Tito’s communists. So the **NO politicians resolved to withdraw and resume the government in Carinthia**.

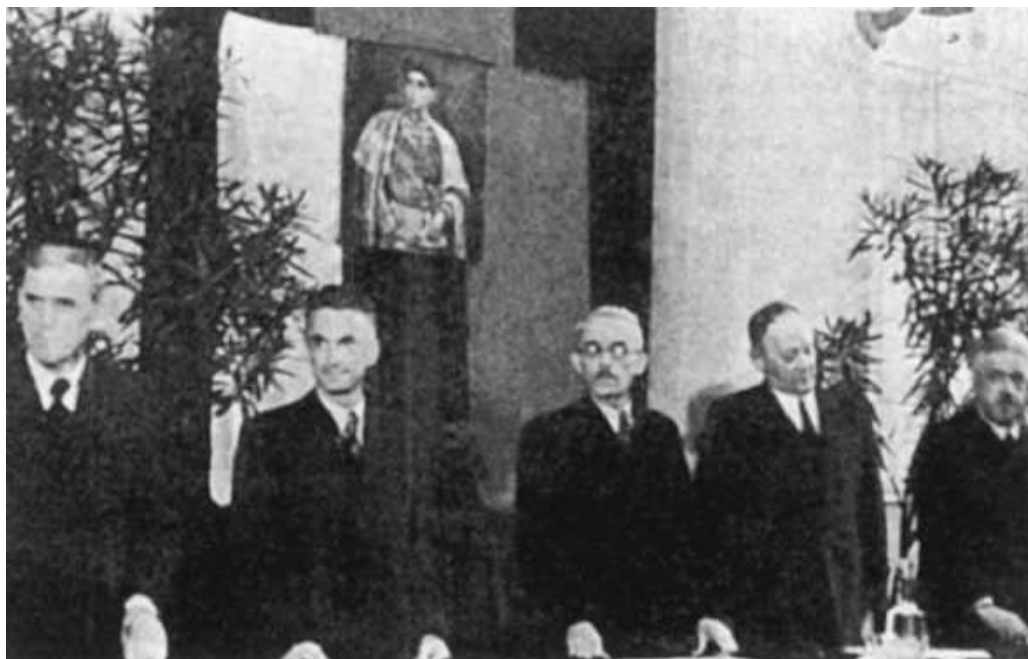
Despite this, the president of the NOS, Dr. Joze Basaj, and NOS member Marko Kranjc one more time drove to the governmental palace to meet Gen. Rupnik so that the pair could formally assume the reins of power. Counselor Doujak told the two of them that he had nothing to hand over, but Rupnik listed at length all the departments of his administration.

In reality, at that time, whatever sort of non-communist rule there had been, was already finished.

Slovenia in 1945 fell into the hands of the Partisans without any resistance worth mentioning.⁴³

⁴² Griesser-Pečar, 118

⁴³ In emigration, there was quite a lot of bickering about whether or not the NOS had taken the scepter from Rösener. Rupnik in reality had not taken over the rule in Gorenjska, which the Germans had handed over to him; but he had wanted to keep the territory of the former Province of Ljubljana in his own hands, even though Rösener stated that, per Rainer’s orders, he will hand over the rule over this territory to the NOS.



Slovenian Parliament at Tabor, May 3, 1945: president Jože Basaj, secretary Ivan Tonja, Franc Kremžar, vice-president Rudolf Žitnik, secretary Pavle Masič *ZSS, 1965, 284*



Bishop Dr. Gregorj Rožman
author's personal collection



Dr. Miha Krek *Podobe Ssi, 210*



Dr. Alojz Kuhar *Podobe Ssi, 211*

12. The Withdrawal Across Ljubelj Pass and the Vetrinj Tragedy

1. The Withdrawal Across the Ljubelj Pass

The order to the Homeguards to withdraw

There is still speculation as to who gave the order for the withdrawal. It is most probable that Lt. Col. Drčar gave the final order and the plan for withdrawal on the afternoon of May 8.¹ Gen. Krenner, as **commander of the Ljubljana Division of the SNV**, had already earlier sent out a directive to prepare for a withdrawal, initially planned for May 7th. Krenner then went to the Polhograd hills to convince Lt. Col. Tatalović to hold out at the defensive line for a little while longer. Then he went towards Škofja Loka, presumably to check one last time on the possibility of withdrawing to northern Primorska. From there he returned to Ljubljana. On May 8th he left to attend a meeting with the NO members in Gorenjska. Because he had not returned by evening, Col. Vizjak issued an order for the Organizational HQ staff to leave Ljubljana at 8 o'clock in the evening. Krenner waited in Kranj for his staff. The order to withdraw was given to the **Mountain Division**, as the Gorenjska Homeguard was now called, by its commander, Major Bitenc.²

For Two Weeks...

Today it is not easy to fathom how otherwise reasonable and sensible people were able to speak in the beginning about a withdrawal for fourteen days, but all in all they had enough good reasons. These fourteen days then lengthened into several weeks, to several months, to several years. After their resettlement to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the majority ceased to affix to the withdrawal an end-year or a period of years, or as it turned out, a number of decades.

Perhaps one of the reasons for such thinking was subconscious: some sort of need whereby in this way they could more easily withstand the weight of their persecution and thus be able to survive all the disappointments, all the hidden personal or communal pains, and homesickness.

Various Accounts

There are quite a few accounts about the withdrawal across Ljubelj. In actuality, almost every person who went on this personal Way of the Cross in May 1945 has preserved personal memories of this. Some have been published, others not yet and probably never will be.³

¹ Maks Loh, *Bajeslovje v zgodovini [Mythology within history]*, *Vestnik* 1966, 10-12, 245; Mikuž V, 66; Kos II, 213 (who gives the date as May 7); *Vetrinjska tragedija [The Vetrinj Tragedy]*, 16; Mlakar, 484

² The NO created these two divisions and 4 brigades, and appointed the following 4 as their commanders (at this, all were promoted Lt. Colonels): Emil Cof, Anton Mehle, Vuk Rupnik, and Miroljub Stamenković (Kos II, 213)

³ Eiletz, 146-157, writes about the final days of the Homeguard and about the route across Gorenjska to Carinthia into Vetrinj; a book by P. Rant, 19-20 and 21 contains a brief excerpt from an autobiography and a journal about the withdrawal to Vetrinj. From the author's memories of those days: "It was shortly before nightfall when we stopped again, a little before the entrance to the tunnel. I gazed back, towards our beautiful Gorenjska. I don't know why, but I was sure that I was saying good-bye for a long time,

At any rate, there were also quite a few people who were unable to leave in time, or could not find the means to do so. Most of these were killed. As an example, I mention only the tragic fate of the writer Narte Velikonja; his son, Prof. Dr. Jože Velikonja, with complete justification lodged a formal protest against his death.⁴

An unsigned article in ZSS 1949⁵ presents a brief, somewhat generalized description of the withdrawal, and is reprinted here:

“Saturday, May 5, 1945. We are standing, just past the Črnuče Bridge. It is dark. Yet we recognize each other. Only acquaintances. All of us are silent. Plain sorrow enshrouds us. Threatening flashes like lightening light up the clear sky there on the other side of Ljubljana in the direction towards Vrhnika and Krim. In the distance, artillery thunders. Each flash sends shivers up our spines; each thundering arouses terror. It is coming ever closer. All of us want to get away from here as soon as possible.

It is 11 o'clock. Pitch darkness. The column moves slowly. First a long line of wagons from Polje, behind them march people from Polje. Next a column of Ljubljana wagons, behind them march people from Ljubljana. Then queued up are: people from Ig, Šmarje, Stična, Dolenjska...

Slowly, with a steady pace, the long procession moves from the Črnuče Bridge towards Trzin, Cerklje, Tržič, Ljubelj... Just as if we were following a hearse. And yet in all this vast procession there is no corpse. The dark cortege is steeped in deep sorrow and prayer. Even the draft animals are struck dumb. Before us, behind us, flashes of light. The thunder of cannon grows ever more distant and less loud. Ljubljana, cloaked in pitch darkness, becomes distant behind us.

Cerklje. A most beautiful day for a Sunday. The bells are pealing solemnly. The entire village is awash in flags. The sounds of happy music. A free and united Slovenia is waking up. People with cheerful faces hurry to High Mass.

A long, endless procession of people, exhausted and sorrowful unto death, arrives in the village. It interrupted the festive mood. The music grew silent. The people were struck dumb. The people stand in front of the church as if their feet were planted there. What must all this mean?

The procession stops. The church is filling up with locals and refugees. People sob during the Mass. After the Mass, the locals host the refugees. One word leads to another. Soon they understand each other. After lunch the mighty procession rises up, heads towards Tržič. It has grown awfully larger and longer.

if not forever. Just then my Dad drew near to me and said almost in a whisper: ‘Take a good and long look while you still can, because afterwards we perhaps will never see this again!’ Then he turned away, perhaps so that I would not see his tear-filled eyes.”

⁴ Velikonja was the director of Winter Aid. He was not a member of any political party. Even before the war, he began to speak and write against communism, at a time when others were still silent. After an entire day of waiting at the edge of the road, the cripple Velikonja had to return to his home. Then he heroically accepted a martyr's death. (From the archives of Pavle Rant, *Dopisovanje z dr. Jožetom Velikonjem [Correspondence with Dr. Jože Velikonja]*, for example, August 10, 1983). – About the person of Narte Velikonja, note two quotations from his articles; the first begins with the question: “Who appointed them as judge?”, and the other states: “The national traitor is the one who wants our nation to be a nation of murderers and robbers; the traitor is the one who cripples the nation.” (ZSS, 1960, 114). – In “*Ob petletnici smrti Narteja Velikonje*” [“Upon the 5th anniversary of the death of Narte Velikonja”], ZSS printed some of Velikonja's testimony, above all before the “court”. The article states that he was killed on June 25, 1945 either in the courtyard of the courthouse or at Castle Turjak; his grave has yet to be discovered (ZSS 1950, 103).

Strange news is spreading like lightening across all of Gorenjska: the nation is fleeing! The Slovenian Catholic nation is fleeing from the liberators coming out of the forests! It is fleeing from Red freedom! From every direction, new bands of refugees are arriving. They are pouring onto the Kranj and Tržič road.

The roads are packed with soldiers and with refugees. Automobiles, tanks, tractors, wagons. Din and noise as if it were Judgment Day. The German armada is disintegrating. Their retreat is organized. Even though they are defeated, the German soldiers are still as ever domineering, mean, imperial, reckless, selfish, greedy. They beat the refugees with sticks. They shove them off the roads, steal their bicycles, luggage, horses.

Hour after hour we wait on the road. Slowly we begin to inch forward on the steep Ljubelj road. Frightening gunshots to the left and the right. The army is throwing away and destroying weapons and ammunition. The road and its ditches are littered with entire cases of useable weapons, ammunition, full cases of grenades, burning automobiles, dying draft animals; here and there lies a dead soldier. Intermingled is a cacophony of the sounds of shouting, swearing, confusion, beatings, weeping and blood. Even though the first days of May have just arrived, the sun is burning hot. This journey is full of horrors!

Late afternoon we reach Ljubelj. SS guards stand with submachine guns in front of the Ljubelj tunnel and do not allow the refugees through. The road leading over the pass is under guard and closed. We cannot go forward. We wait for nightfall. Perhaps during the night the pressing throng will stop.

We wait in vain. All night long and all day long new columns of soldiers and refugees are arriving. The crush is awful. Like a lightning bolt hitting our midst, news comes that the Partisans are already in Tržič behind us and at the bridge in Borovlje ahead of us. New bands of refugees are arriving. These come without wagons, without luggage. They are barefoot and have only what they are wearing. In Tržič local agents are shooting from windows at the refugees. Partisans are dropping mortars on the main road. We are trapped. We can't go forward or back. Death presses on us from all sides. Dreadful moments! People are weeping, wailing, some are raving like lunatics.

Twilight develops. The barracks of yesterday's concentration camp are aflame. The flames lick their objects in a ghostly manner and the image of a bloody dawn illuminates the entire valley. Ammunition explodes frightfully. Livestock bleats in terror. People fall on their knees and in concert despair aloud and pray the act of contrition. Death has its scythe poised over us! We wait for its sweep at us!

Noon. The situation grows critical. The Germans are robbing, beating, frightful. Half-dead, we endured the third day already at Ljubelj. The sun burns mercilessly. Our spirits are frayed. But each one bears his personal pain heroically. Neither swearing nor complaining is heard. We are resigned to God's will. And we wait for it to be fulfilled on us.

It grows dark. The guards in front of the tunnel have rotated. They are trying to act mean. The eyes of our people flash menacingly. A column is queuing up. It is ready to depart. The SS still persist at blocking the entrance. A Serb officer grabs his revolver, yells, and throws himself at the guard. The bolts on the guards' rifles rattle shut. The guards are surrounded by our boys and men with stakes and poles. In the next moment, the German officer gives the order to let the refugees go on the road over the mountain.

An endless column of refugees winds along the serpentines leading up to Ljubelj Pass. Horses wheeze. Wagons creak under the extreme weight. The animal cannot handle the burden. Men brace their shoulders to the wagons and we push. The valley below is ghastly illuminated from the complete conflagration of the Ljubelj concentration camp.

Around midnight, we reach the top of the mountain pass. The road drops steeply on the Carinthian side. A child surrenders to Sleep. Given the extremely steep slopes, we dare not place the children aboard the wagons. We carry them in our arms, even though we ourselves are dead tired. We pray aloud the Sorrowful Decades of the Rosary.”

The Homeguard Wounded

At wartime, in movements and retreats, the wounded and sick are the first concern; the SNV did likewise.⁶ At the end of the war, the wounded were kept mainly in the military hospital in Ljubljana, or in the one at Novo Mesto. Until recently, most writers spoke only of two hospital evacuation trains. The published research work entitled *Brez milosti [Without Mercy]* has shown that 4 trains with wounded left Ljubljana.⁷

The **first train** departed from Ljubljana on the afternoon of May 5, 1945. Mostly wounded German soldiers were aboard, but also a **smaller number of Slovenian military patients**.

On the **second train**, which departed from the main RR station in Ljubljana on May 7th in the afternoon, there were at least **200 Slovenian military patients** and an undetermined number of German, the Slovenian attending medical personnel, and many civilians. This train arrived in Kranj on the morning of May 8; here, a portion of the civilians disembarked and went on foot through Tržič, across Ljubelj and through Borovlje to Vetrinj. In Kranj, some wagons were uncoupled. On the morning of May 9th the train continued the journey as far as Podnart, where the first hospital train was already standing in wait. The two trains were combined into one, which numbered 60 wagons, which was the reason it moved very slowly. By evening this train reached as far as Lesce. That same evening the Partisans occupied Radovljica and the next morning they engaged with the Vlasovites in a battle that lasted all morning. When the Partisans were nearing Lesce, the train drove away towards Jesenice. Aboard this train were Dr. Valentin Meršol, Dr. Stane Grapar, and Dr. Janez Janež. Dr. Grapar learned from the German physician that the Germans and the Partisans had negotiated an agreement whereby all the Slovenian wounded would be taken prisoner at Žirovnica and the Germans would be then permitted to continue the trip, so Dr. Meršol ordered the Slovenian engineer to pull the train back into Lesce. Here, almost all the civilians and any patients who could walk got off the train. This group was led by several individuals, among them a young lieutenant, Ivan Korošec. At least 56 badly wounded remained on the train. Dr. Lovše (the source of this report) was himself wounded but at least still ambulatory, but not so his badly wounded son.

Details vary on the number of wounded who remained on the train: Dr. Meršol 80, Nurse Mrak 120-130, orderly Alojz Zrimšek 150-160; Ižanec writes that 82 Homeguards succeeded in escaping, and 150 men and 10 women were captured, though he himself admits that his figures could be wrong.⁸ Those who disembarked joined up eventually with the multitudes that were moving towards Austria. The wounded who remained on the train were captured by the Partisans and killed, probably in the limestone cavern *Brezarjevo brezno*, in Iški Vintgar and

⁵ *Čez Ljubelj v Vetrinj [Across Ljubelj to Vetrinj]*, ZSS 1949, 80-83, which includes also subsections about the fields of Vetrinj and about the Vetrinj tragedy

⁶ Mlakar, 485

⁷ See Šturm, *passim*

⁸ *Vetrinjska tragedija*, 122-130; Ižanec I, V; Meršol, *Domobranski sanitetni vlak v Lescah maja 1945 [The Homeguard Hospital Train in Lesce, May 1945]*, *Tabor* 1969, 10, 260-266; Šturm, 22-45; Korošec 1994, 46, 114-116; Griesser-Pečar, 462-463, who lists additional sources.

⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 463, quotes the report by Kristina Krek née Mrak.

perhaps elsewhere too. Seminarian Feliks Zajec survived; he was imprisoned at Šentvid, and released in August. Attendant hospital nurses Kristina and Jelka Mrak were sentenced initially to 6 years in prison, and then to 12 years after they appealed, but were released in 1950.⁹

Aboard **the third train** were mostly Serb patients and a **smaller section of Slovenian** patients. The train left on May 6 in the afternoon from the military hospital at Moste and drove directly to Kranj. On May 7th it drove away from Kranj, and then stood on the tracks for two to three days for inexplicable breakdowns. On May 11th, Yugoslav soldiers from Herzegovina captured it in front of the tunnel by Radovljica. The majority of the patients did not survive.¹⁰

The **fourth train** departed from Ljubljana on May 8. Aboard it was an **undetermined number of German soldiers, Homeguards, and wounded**. It had to stop at Otoče because the bridge across the Sava River was damaged. The Homeguards and the German soldiers disembarked, and the wounded remained aboard the train. Nothing is known about their fate, but one can infer that they shared the fate of the majority of the wounded who were captured.¹¹

In Šturm's estimation, **a minimum of 120 Slovenian sick patients, wounded and invalids disappeared**, which he lists by name in the book *Brez milosti [Without Mercy]*. But Šturm himself believes that the number was much higher. Only 19 attendants survived.¹²

The wounded from Novo Mesto were transported by trucks on May 6th as far as Krško and then to Celje. Here they were loaded onto the German hospital train, which continued the journey as far as Maribor and Dravograd. The Partisans took control of the train already at Pragersko. Thanks to the ingenuity of nurse Ivanka (Irena) Primožič, the **Homeguard wounded pretended they were Germans and were thus allowed to remain on the train**. In the end, they manually pushed the train across the Austrian border.¹³

The "Last" battle of World War 2

Dr. Bajlec, a member of the NO, arrived in Celovec before the Partisans occupied the bridge at Borovlje. At the English Command HQ he begged for help for the civilian refugees. At the same time he tried to explain to the English who the Slovenian Homeguards were, who were moving into Carinthia. The English replied that they would **accept the Homeguards under their protection once they laid down their weapons, but the Homeguards would have to accomplish the crossing the bridge over the Drava River on their own**.¹⁴

The Partisans had occupied Borovlje and the tract below the road down to the Drava River. They were permitting only individual German soldiers to cross the bridge, as long as they first laid down their weapons. On May 10th the Partisans at the bridge below Borovlje **captured around 600 Slovenian refugees, both men and women. They killed 60 of them, and herded the remainder to Kranj and Ljubljana. Many of these were locked up in the Bishop's Institute in Šentvid. The execution sites for the ones that were killed are not yet known**.¹⁵

¹⁰ Šturm, 37-41; Griesser-Pečar, 463, lists additional sources.

¹¹ Šturm, 40-41

¹² Šturm, 40-41

¹³ *Taboriščni arhiv priča* 2, 30-32; Srečko Šivic, *Zadnji vlak [The Last Train]*, Tabor 1985, 11-12, 210; Mlakar, 485; Janez Grum, *Le samoobramba nam je ostala, Mi med seboj* 1998, 30, 8; Janko Maček, *Križev pot od ljubljanske bolnišnice do Brezarjevega brezna [The Way of the Cross from the Ljubljana Hospital to Brezarjevo Brezna Cave]*, Zaveza 1998, 312, 48-53

¹⁴ Such promises given in wartime – whether from the British or anyone else – should not have been taken as truth; they of course did not imply any final obligation whatsoever.

¹⁵ See *Tabor* 1978, 9, 134-135

In Podgora at 13:30 on May 10th, Krenner ordered the battalions of Rupnik and of Kunstelj, under Rupnik's command, to make their way as soon as possible to the Drava River, drive the Partisans away from there, and make contact with the English. In actuality, the operation involved two bridges across the Drava River, the road traffic bridge at Borovlje and the railroad bridge below Castle Humperk.

The British had accepted the unconditional surrender of the Germans already at one o'clock in the morning of May 9th. The Homeguards were not bound by this, and even much less, since the issue was to save numerous lives. But the Regimist history is completely unjust and erroneous to claim that Krenner and Rösener had made an agreement for a joint attack.¹⁶ It is true that despite the surrender, German officers were discussing how to force their way across. They invited Rupnik to this discussion, but not Krenner, who was at that time still on the Ljubelj road. The Germans offered to Rupnik the services of their own anti-aircraft batteries and armor.

Rupnik deployed the Homeguard units. According to Homeguard sources, the Homeguard battle was joined by the Russian Colonel Rogožin with one regiment and two battalions, and the German officer Dahm with his artillery unit, all together around 1,500 men. The Partisan side had the 13th Bračić Brigade, and the passage across the Drava River was defended by the Koroška Detachment and a company from the Austrian Partisan Battalion, all together around 1,000 men.

The attack began at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The Partisan losses were exceptionally high; their own historians mention 180 dead.¹⁷ Rupnik claimed that on his side nobody was killed in battle, but others speak of a few dozen Homeguard dead. Around 21:00 hours, the armored unit from the motorized detachment of the [Partisan] 4th Army, which had come to Carinthia from Trieste, drove up from Sv. Jakob. The Homeguards destroyed 4 tanks in front of the vehicle-traffic bridge, and supposedly 15 Partisans were killed in battle.¹⁸ Rupnik states in his report that there was one more skirmish on the following day.¹⁹

Some call this engagement **"the last battle of the Second World War"**. If so, **they are forgetting** the terrible fact **that, according to the Partisan sources, the war did not end in Slovenia until June** – after, under the guise of needing to cleanse their land, they had killed their ideological opponents, whether those captured in Slovenia or those delivered by the English.²⁰

The deployment of various groups in Carinthia²¹

Civilian refugee columns were arriving in Carinthia from the 7th to the 13th of May. The first groups settled down in Celovec. **The English already on May 12, 1945 drove approxi-**

¹⁶ Kos II, 222 quotes Križnar, "Slovensko domobranstvo" [*The Slovenian Homeguard*], Ljubljana v ilegali IV, 292

¹⁷ Kos II, 222 quotes Franci Strle, "Veliki finale na Koroškem" [*The Grand Finale in Carinthia*], Ljubljana 1977, 209

¹⁸ Griesser-Pečar, 465, who cites AS III, ZA-503-7 (*Poročili Basaj/Bajlec*)

¹⁹ *Razgovor z Vuletom* [*A Conversation with Vulé*], Tabor 1978, 1-2, 13-15; Mlakar, 487, who quotes Vincenc Udovč, written testimony 1993

²⁰ Kos II, 221-222

²¹ Čez Ljubelj v Vetrinj [*Across Ljubelj to Vetrinj*], ZSS, 1949, 82

mately 500 of them by automobile into Italy.²² Some had come through Jesenice to Beljak. **The English immediately drove these as well to Italy.**

A smaller number reached **Lienz and Anras in the Eastern Tyrol**. The Bishop of Ljubljana, Dr. Gregorij **Rožman**, was among them. Because the railroad bridge just a little past **Spittal** was destroyed, some of them **remained in the vicinity of this city**. After lengthy discussions, the British drove only some Serb Chetniks into Italy, but not one Slovenian. **The newly-ordained priests from the Ljubljana diocese** found haven in **Krka** by St. Hema. The English directed the main body of the refugees to the **open fields around Vetrinj**, where they split them into two parts, a military camp and a civilian camp, separated only by a road.

Talks with the English

After the battle for access across the Borovlje Bridge, three small English armored cars drove up from the northern bank of the Drava River. Two remained on the bridge, and one drove as far as Podgora, where the Homeguard HQ was. Spokesmen for the NO and for the SNV tried to make the English officer understand who the SNV was and who the civilians were. The English officer advised that the (2) representatives of the NOS and the SNV should go to the English Command HQ in Celovec.

The priest Rev. Kranjc, a member of the NOS, and Gen. Krenner did in fact go there, where they were joined by Dr. Bajlec. They conversed in German with an English officer, and asked him for refuge.²³ Kos claims, without providing any sources, that Krenner described the Homeguards as being a part of the German police troops, who were protecting Slovenian villages from communist attacks. After the officer spoke with the English Command HQ in Caserta, he replied that they would take under their protection any soldiers and civilians who crossed the Drava River. The condition was that they themselves must provide for their own food for two weeks. Upon return to Podgora, Krenner stated within a narrower circle that the Germans had completely “discredited” the Homeguards in front of the English.²⁴ However Kos presents no proof for this.

“Between May 11 and 13, the Homeguard leaders were seriously wondering whether or not it would best if they returned to Slovenia and began a guerrilla war. However they decided to not take this step.”²⁵

Immediately after Kranjc and Krenner returned, Dr. Basaj, Msgr. Škerbec, Dr. Eiletz, and with Dr. Meršol as a translator, drove to the English Command in Celovec. Their aim was to speak with Fieldmarshal Alexander, however at that time he was not yet in Carinthia. The

²² Marjana Batagelj gives an account about one of these groups, *Odhod [The Departure]*, ZSS 1966, 127-138. The article is interesting, because she talks also about the various opinions and “gossip” during those days, and then describes the first days in the camp at Servigliano.

²³ Most probably this was not ideal, because the Slovenians surrendering to the Western Allies should have had a large number of English translators. However, it is true that the English occupation forces came into Austria with translators of German, and that quite a few British officers did understand at least some German.

²⁴ Kos II, 223 maintains that after some further thought the Slovenian spokesmen then should have portrayed the Homeguards as a Yugoslav Army under the leadership of Mihailović. By the same token, their own uniforms were fatal for the Homeguards, even though they wore Slovenian emblems on their caps and the Kranj Coat of Arms patch on their shoulders (*Tabor* 1964, 12, 262). Another opinion (*Tabor* 1983/84, 6, 80) also lays the entire blame exclusively on the Homeguard uniforms.

²⁵ Kos II, 223

delegation was sent to the department for displaced persons, but Major Johnson told them that it was already late and that they should come the next day.²⁶

On May 12, Major Johnson received them cordially at 10 o'clock. To the plea for protection, he replied that he could make no promises for the soldiers because he was not responsible for them, but as for the civilians, he instructed that they should gather together on the Vetrinj fields next to the military camp.

On the same morning a delegation went to the Brigade HQ too, where Capt. Hornby received them. He told them that the Homeguards should just come, because the army command would accept them.

On that same day, the English posted their own sentries at the Borovlje Bridge, only one soldier at each end. Then these started to cross the bridge: German prisoners of war, the Serb Volunteers, the Chetniks, the Vlasovites, the Russian Corps, a part of the Ukranian Division and mostly Slovenian civilian refugees, who numbered around 6 to 7 thousand. In the meantime, almost all the Homeguard units were waiting at Podgora and Borovlje for the arrival of the Homeguard rear guard, which was led by Boh, Cof, and Jeruc under Lehman's command. Some Homeguards were unable to go through the tunnel or over the Ljubelj pass; some were stranded in Tržič, already imperiled by the Partisans. Terrified of being captured by the Partisans and blaming himself for being unable to protect the refugees from the Partisan attacks, Lehman shot himself in Tržič.²⁷

The Camp on the Vetrinj Plain²⁸

The refugees immediately began to set up emergency shelter from branches with leaves and with pieces of bark, and farm wagons. The camp was quite disorganized. Everything was intermixed: people and livestock; disorder, filth, and stench. Potable water was growing scarce; whatever wells there were, were besieged. Many wells were already dry, and some were intentionally sabotaged by the locals.

Life was very similar to that of gypsies. Hundreds of campfires burned throughout the camp. The refugees were cooking for themselves in small army kettles or in metal containers, picked up during the journey. They ate from tin cans. Spoons were a scarcity, so they were passed on from hand to hand.

The first official visit by the English to the camp was on May 14, 1945. The military government appointed Major Barre as the commander of the civilian camp. The first job for Maj. Barre was to set up a camp committee and put the camp in order.²⁹ The camp committee

²⁶ Kos and all the reports from this time write the name 'Johnson'. Kos, II, 224 op. 7, cites from a Serb historian Staniša Vlahović, that Major Johnson was in actuality the Canadian officer Maj. Jones, who was in 1943 and 1944 the military attaché for the English Mediterranean Command, first with the Croatian Partisans, and later with the Slovenian Partisans. He was openly pro-Tito (South Slav Journal 1980, III/2, 55). Because there is insufficient proof that this is the same person, this author maintains the distinction between William Jones and William Johnson, as do Mlakar and Griesser-Pečar. - Major Villiers was also stationed at the British Command in Celovec; he had worked for several months in Jugoslavia and became Tito's friend.

²⁷ Mlakar, 486

²⁸ *Čez Ljubelj v Vetrinj*, ZSS 1949, 82

²⁹ Major Paul Herbert Barre died on February 2, 2005 in Montreal (Canada), just shy of his 99th birthday (February 22, 2005). The Buenos Aires weekly *Svobodna Slovenija* printed his obituary on February 17, 2005 (4,3.), based on an article written by Jerry Zupan (New York). For all his military service, Major Barre received only one military decoration. But it was not awarded for his most significant

(its first president was Jože Jonke, succeeded by Marko Kranjc) had a meeting each day at 9 o'clock, at which Major Barre attended. The translator was Dr. Valentin Meršol, who was described in the above-mentioned article: "He won the respect of all the campers with his calm and friendly demeanor and with his understanding character. Even the commander regards him as his translator and advisor."

Soon several English persons gathered around Major Barre: as of May 17th Miss Jane Balding (British Red Cross), as of May 18th Mr. John Corsellis (Friends Ambulance Unit), as of May 25th Miss Florence Phillips (British Red Cross).³⁰

As of May 20, 1945, the civilian camp contained 3,514 persons, among them 1,546 women and 868 children (190 below the age of three). The majority were from Gorenjska (1,044).

The Homeguards surrender their weapons to the English

On the morning of May 13, the Homeguard rear guard joined the main body of the Homeguards, and then this force, together with some civilians, crossed the bridge in the afternoon. On the left bank of the river, the English demanded that the Homeguards toss down their weapons: later British documents mention this act as the surrender.

According to some accounts, the **Homeguards did not settle down in the military camp on the Vetrinj plain until May 17 and 18, 1945**. The military command of the NOS organized them into battalions, regiments, and divisions and issued a special legal statute for the SNV.³¹ The military camp contained more than 12,000 men of the Slovenian National Army. As of May 16th, Lt. Ames was the British commander in charge of this holding camp.

As of May 19, the English started giving some food to the civilian refugees.

The NOS asks the English to take the civilians and the soldiers under their protection

Basaj, Bajlec, and Meršol went again to **Maj. Johnson**. He again promised them aid for the civilian refugees. Then the delegation went to the military command to inform them about the Homeguards. Over the days, the NOS and the Homeguard Command submitted several memoranda about the Homeguards along with a request to be taken under British protection, but never received any reply from the military authorities.³²

NOS members went on **May 14th to thank Maj. Johnson** for accepting the SNV under their protection, and at the same time submitted some requests concerning the camp. **On May 15th, the NOS submitted to the English command a written petition that they separate the members of the SNV from the Germans.**

achievement! His managerial skills did help the Slovenians in Vetrinj to organize their camp, but then he pawned his military rank and career advancement by lodging a formal protest against the British Army's plan to hand over the Slovenian civilian refugees to Tito's people. His obituary thus correctly claims that "his life and death would have passed unnoticed, had not 3 fateful weeks in May of 1945 transformed him from a modest Canadian Army officer into an honored hero with a permanent place in the annals of Slovenian history". Proof of his modesty is that when he wrote his brief autobiographic summary, he appended almost as an afterthought the following sentence: "During the time while I was at Vetrinj, I somehow helped the Slovenians so that they were not returned against their will."

³⁰ Dr. Valentin Meršol, *Dogodki v Vetrinju pred petimi leti [Events in Vetrinj 5 Years Ago]*, ZSS 1951, 50-51

³¹ Griesser-Pečar, 467 footnote 39 reports that some (ex. Chaplain Tone Poldaj) later harshly criticized this decision on the grounds that this was not the time to be doing such things.

³² Meršol, op. cit.

On May 16th Col. Bitenc accompanied by Dr. Meršol went to the English Divisional HQ in Celovec. The pair was received by Capt. Hornby, but not by the brigade commander Gen. Murray, on the claim that he was not in Celovec at this time. The pair again attested verbally and in writing to Capt. Hornby that the Homeguards had never fought against the Allies, moreover they were only providing for security within Slovenia, where the communists were killing innocent people and burning down villages. Such self-defense was permissible under international law. Therefore they again asked for protection for the Homeguards, but did not receive any clear reply. They also visited Maj. Johnson who again guaranteed care for the civilian refugees and **repeated that he did not have jurisdiction for the soldiers.**

In the following days Lt. General Richard McCreery, the commander of the 8th Army at the time, visited the camp but spoke only with Maj. Barre.³³

On May 19th, NOS members submitted at the English Brigade HQ in Celovec a document requesting that the English accept all the refugees, provide food for them, and under no condition hand them over to Tito.³⁴ Once again they asked the British Command to separate the SNV from the Germany Army. Nicolson received a similar request already on May 14. In a special memorandum they described the evolution of the SNV, from the Village Guards through the Homeguards to the SNV. They also requested to be transferred to a suitable area as soon as possible.³⁵

Nicolson writes that he developed a very friendly relationship with the Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs. The British crudely called the anticommunist Yugoslavs, whom they trusted, the “Jugs”, and their opponents as the “Tits”.³⁶

The Slovenian soldiers nonetheless repeatedly discussed whether or not the British in the end would hand them over to Tito. The NO members in response constantly assured them that there was no danger of this, because the British Army Command has more than once guaranteed protection for the refugees and the SNV.³⁷

On the issue of the Homeguards, the English stated that according to international law they were prisoners of those military forces on whose territory they were at the time of the German surrender. Because the Homeguards were at that time in Partisan territory, they belonged to them. However there are several inaccuracies in this: 1. This came not from international law, but from the agreement among the “Big 4” at Yalta; 2. At the time when Germany surrendered, the Homeguards were not on Partisan territory, unless the English commanders there mistakenly (intentionally?) regarded the right bank of the Drava River [Austria] to be Partisan territory.

At English HQ Gen. Krenner was told that those Homeguards, who will remain in uniform, will be considered as prisoners of war, while all those who change into civilian clothes will be regarded as refugees.³⁸

³³ [Tr. note: Footnote 33 in the Slovenian book discusses a grammatical issue about the proper ending to attach to the English name ‘Barre’ in Slovenian declensions. This has no bearing on the English translation of the book, but this footnote number is retained in order to keep the footnote numbers in sync with the Slovenian book.]

³⁴ Kos II, 226

³⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 467, quotes the reports by Basaj and Bajlec, and the British brigade report (by Nicolson).

³⁶ Griesser-Pečar, ib., according to Nicolson, Long Life, New York 1998, 115

³⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 467, who quotes Bajlec’s report

³⁸ This warning *per se* should have been sufficient for the leaders to ask themselves what was the rationale for giving such advice. This raises the question, why didn’t the SNV Command at the time, which ultimately was the NOS, order everybody to change into civilian clothes simply from the standpoint of safety and caution?

On May 23, the NOS sent to the military government administration a written thank-you for the aid and support given to date and asked for continued help and support.

The arrival of the surviving Novo Mesto Homeguards

The Homeguards from Novo Mesto finally arrived at the camp on May 24th. In Novo Mesto there had been 10 Homeguard Companies with approximately 1,600 soldiers. Because they had not received from Ljubljana a notification about withdrawal, they organized it themselves. They set out on May 6 in nine companies. Some smaller groups departed in the direction towards Litija, but nothing is known about their fate. The Partisans smashed the Homeguard main body in the Krka valley. They captured the majority, all together 1,800 men and 20 women, of whom 1,547 were then murdered around the Gorjanci mountains, at Ljubno, and in Kočevski Rog.³⁹

At Krško, Maj. Stamenković let his men choose whether to move to Carinthia or remain home. The majority decided to remain. They scattered back to their homes or departed into the hills, where they remained hiding as the "Green Cadre". Later on, they turned themselves in to the Partisans, who killed almost all of them. Marn's Chetnik detachment decided to travel with Stamenković's remnant, which numbered around 150 Homeguards. This combined group broke its way into Carinthia by going past Celje across the Kamnik Alps [Kamniške planine] and the Savinjske Alps.⁴⁰

2. The British Hand the Slovenian National Army (SNV) over to Tito

Rumors and Truth

After May 15th, rumors began to spread through the camp that the English were going to transport the Slovenian and the Serb military units to Italy.⁴¹ Some of the English confirmed this news or at least did not deny it; but not a single person dropped even the slightest hint that the Homeguards were going to be returned to Yugoslavia. This confounding was increased by the fact that in the first few days the English had indeed driven some of the refugees to Italy.

In point of fact, the refugees were prisoners. Not only because they were not permitted to go anywhere outside the camp, but also because there was the ever-present danger that the Partisans would kidnap and take away some person. This happened already on May 13th, when they grabbed Dr. Stane

³⁹ Seznam, *Tabor* 1978, 9, 134-135; Kos II, 227

⁴⁰ Dr. Valentin Meršol, o.c.; Kos II, 225-227; Mlakar, 485, has two other inaccuracies about Stamenković: according to the first, that he learned about the withdrawal on May 5th, but he procrastinated until May 8th when he departed with 1,500 men in the direction towards Radeče, where units of the Yugoslav 2nd Army smashed them on May 10th; according to the second, that Stamenković had disbanded the units on his own, and 150 men remained with him along with Marn's detachment.

⁴¹ For this entire section, see *Vetrinjska tragedija*; Kos II, 227-235; Mlakar, 489ff (*Vrnitev domobrancev v Jugoslavijo in njihova usoda/The returning of the Homeguards to Yugoslavia and their fate*); Griesser-Pečar, 456ff (*Britanci izročijo slovenske domobrance: drama v Vetrinju/The British hand over the Slovenian Homeguards: Drama in Vetrinj*); concerning the rumors about returning, see Meršol, o.c. 52

Grapar, the head of the medical department at the Homeguard HQ.⁴² Even Dr. Meršol had narrowly escaped the same fate.⁴³ Some Homeguards were kidnapped right out of the camp itself.⁴⁴

On May 17th Tito's office asked the director of the British Military Delegation to inform British Fieldmarshal Alexander that it had received his telegram dated May 16th, in which Alexander had notified it about the handover of 200,000 Yugoslavs from Austria.⁴⁵

Events from May 24 to 30⁴⁶

The British began to return the Croats already on May 18th. The Slovenians were unaware of this because the British had relocated the Croats to Kriva Vrba. They were returning the Croats from May 18 to May 23.

1. On Thursday, May 24, the first transport departed **from Vetrinj**. They drove away the soldiers from the Serb Volunteer Corps on trucks. They were escorted by English tanks and several trucks with English soldiers in full battle gear. Before departure, Lt. Col. Tatalović, Chief of Staff of the Serb Volunteer Corps, asked the highest-ranking senior officer present there, who probably was Major William Johnson, where they were headed. The latter gave him his word

⁴² There are apparently differing accounts about this – if indeed the incident is about the same person. Griesser-Pečar (482) claims on the basis of Dr. Meršol's statement, that the head of the medical department, Dr. Stane Grapar, was seized in Vetrinj, however, in the monthly periodical *Ave Maria* (Lemont, Illinois, USA), February (38-40) and March 2005 (63-64), cardiologist Dr. Teodor Vovk Maurin, who practices in Cumaná, Venezuela, claims that Dr. Grabnar (*sic!*) had remained in Ljubljana because he had been "working for the communists at his position", and that he was replaced by Dr. Iglič. He also claims that a main culprit and traitor was the very commander of the 1st Division of the Slovenian National Army (SNV), Gen. Krenner himself! JR, the author of this book, does not consider Dr. Vovk's story trustworthy for several reasons: Vovk himself admits that he stole a typewriter from Krenner's office in Celovec and sold it; he himself admits that he smuggled and dabbled in the black market, etc. He states that first of all he had been placed under arrest by Krenner in Vetrinj because he had criticized Krenner, and that later, 4 months after his flight from Vetrinj, Krenner had lambasted him when they encountered each other in Udine. - In the May issue of *Ave Maria* (2005, 111-112) Francé Krištof, who lives in Cleveland, responded to the article by Dr. Vovk. He responds that perhaps then, he himself was also a traitor, because he was Krenner's interpreter. He asserts that he was following the orders of the NO, although Krenner was not to his liking; but that Krenner at the time was meddling too much in the internal affairs of the SNV about the reorganization of the formations, transfers, and promotions, etc. However Krištof affirms that Krenner despite all this "was poking in every manner possible to find out from the English where the relocation was destined". Krištof also writes about the disappearance of Dr. Grapar, but that he was replaced by a woman doctor. According to Krištof, Krenner placed much weight on the concept of "an officer's honor", and this was the reason he believed the English officers, who were actually lying to his face. However, on May 30, when 2nd Lt. Šprah, who escaped from the train, returned from Področca, and reported to Krenner about the repatriation, Krenner immediately went with Krištof and Šprah to the British officer Lt. Hames. When Šprah reported that the Partisans were robbing the Homeguards, Hames let slip: "Well, all troops loot, even the British". When Krištof translated this to Krenner, the two exchanged a knowing look: "Well, his quip means: they are handing over the Homeguards to the Partisans." Krenner that very same day changed into civilian clothes and disappeared. Three hours later Dr. Janež appeared, and then also Captain Tomic. "The matter became totally clear." (See also Griesser-Pečar, 479)

⁴³ Griesser-Pečar, 481, who quotes from Dr. Meršol's deposition (AS III, ZA-503-7).

⁴⁴ Griesser-Pečar, *ibid.* footnote 84, who cites the expertise of Dr. Mlakar for the Pučnik Commission

⁴⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 470, who quotes from The Cowgill Inquiry, Documentary Evidence, 157, KP 159

⁴⁶ For the entire subsection: *Vetrinjska tragedija*; Meršol, o.c.; Kos II; Griesser-Pečar; Mlakar

of honor that it was to Italy.⁴⁷ In Podgorje (Maria Elend), the railroad station before Podrožca, the British herded them into boxcars. Then the Yugoslav communists took over control, and the English returned. On **that day**, they also returned the **Homeguard Supply Convoy consisting of around 40 men and 20 horse-drawn wagons**. Aboard the wagons were the **archives of the individual battalions, or rather regiments, with exact rosters of the men**. These lists had been formulated in Vetrinj, packed in special crates and sealed.⁴⁸

When the agreements with the Yugoslav Army concerning the repatriation were fulfilled, the brigadier for the British 5th Corps on **June 30th** signed a **document**, which relates that they had handed over 12196 Croats, 5480 Serbs, **8263 Slovenians**, and 400 Montenegrins, who had fought against Tito's troops.⁴⁹

2. On Friday, May 25, two transports of Serb Volunteers departed, however no longer through Celovec but instead directly to Podrožca. According to the testimony of Albin Gospodarič, an ordnance non-com at the Homeguard Command, on this day a certain local resident stopped by and informed Gen. Krenner that on the previous day at Podrožca they had transferred soldiers from trucks onto a train, which drove through the tunnel into Yugoslavia. Gospodarič's co-worker Marn told him that Krenner ordered the local person to be placed in lock-up where he remained until the next day.⁵⁰

Lt. Col. Bitenc, who was the aide to the Commander of the SNV, Gen. Prezelj, summoned all officers, non-coms, and soldiers, including those from the Primorska Homeguard, to report themselves to the adjutant of the 1st Regiment by the evening of the following day. Also on this day, Marko Kranjc, who was a member of the NOS, resigned as director of the civilian camp, and Major Barre named Dr. Valentin Meršol as the replacement.

3. On Saturday, May 26, before the first transport of Homeguards departed, a Serb **Chetnik Lieutenant Vujičić** returned to Vetrinj and went to Gen. Krenner with the information that the English were extraditing the Serb and other soldiers to Jugosalvia, but Krenner did not believe him.⁵¹

That afternoon, the **English Command in Celovec** ordered that **all Slovenian Homeguards must be transported to the designated location by May 31st**. Therefore Krenner went that same day to the Command to get information on where the transports were headed. When he returned to the camp, he ordered that the following units would depart the next day: Lt. Col. Šturm with the reserve battalion, the Military Police Battalion, Major Škof with the Engineers Company, and a part of the HQ staff together with Gen. Krenner, Krenner's adjutant Lt. Col. Miroslav Meršol, and Lieut. Kovač.⁵²

Lt. Col. Bitenc in the name of the NO ordered the mobilization of all civilian men between the ages of 16 to 40 into the SNV. By his authority as commander of the Slovenian Legion, he also summoned all SL members to formally join the SNV.⁵³

⁴⁷ *Vetrinjska tragedija*, 25, which quotes from Boris M. Karapandžić: *Kočevje, Tito's Bloodiest Crime*, Cleveland 1959.

⁴⁸ *Vetrinjska tragedija*, 26

⁴⁹ Griesser-Pečar, 470, quotes from dop.zv. Documentary Evidence 299, KP 309

⁵⁰ Kos II, 228

⁵¹ Meršol, o.c., 52; *Vetrinjska tragedija*, 29

⁵² Kos II, 229

⁵³ It is doubtful that this was necessary or appropriate at the time; see *Vetrinjska tragedija*, 29-32; Kos II, 229-230

During the night, a Serb soldier Vlada Ljotić, son of Minister Ljotić, returned to the camp and said that the transport with Tatalović's soldiers was sent through the tunnel to Jesenice, and that he had escaped before the tunnel. When they wanted him to repeat this in front of the English, he refused, so they did not believe him; his story became entangled in discrepancies too.⁵⁴ There was also some suspicion at the time that the Serbs wanted to break apart the Homeguards probably so that afterwards they could bring them under their own command. In addition, other news was claiming that the transports were going through Beljak, and not towards the tunnel to Jesenice.⁵⁵

4. On Sunday, May 27, early in the morning, **Vuk Rupnik** wanted to speak with Gen. Krenner. He first **informed Krenner** about what **Ljotić's son** had told him, and then informed **Drčar, Bitenc, and Basaj** too. Krenner, Bajlec, Bitenc and Veble believed that this was simply **an attempt by the Serbs to make the Homeguards disband** and then **join up with the Chetniks**. In Drčar's opinion, the Homeguards should try to **find out on their own** whether the news was true or not, but the others **rebuffed** him, saying, **why, of course the English are driving the Homeguards into Italy**. The camp police locked up Ljotić's son. The NO members nonetheless resolved that Basaj, Krenner, and Bitenc would go to the English divisional commander for information.

After the conversation with Rupnik, Krenner decided that the following units would depart on that day: the technical battalion, the police, and perhaps the Slovenian legionnaires. So, as ordained, the **first larger transport of Slovenian Homeguards** drove off, together with **around 600 civilians** who decided to go along.

Drčar sent Janko Marinšek to tail the transport. A railroad worker at Podrožca told him that a permanent Partisan garrison was there and that the English were handing over the Homeguards to the Partisans. Marinšek reported this to the HQ staff, but they did not believe him.

That night, Franc Veber came to Maj. Mehle with the same news. Around midnight Mehle and Capt. Grum reported this to Vizjak. When Krenner was informed of this, he said that the afternoon's reconnoiters had ascertained nothing, plus he did not believe Veber.⁵⁶

5. During the nighttime leading to Monday, May 28, three Serb officers, who escaped from their transport, arrived at Vetrinj. When Krenner demanded that they repeat all this in front of the English, they recanted their statements. Still, on account of this news, Krenner ordered that all transports stop, until it was determined where they were going.

6. On Monday, May 28, Basaj, Krenner, and Bitenc went with interpreter Podhorsky to the English command. They were received not by Major General Sir Murray, but by his adjutant who had the rank of captain. They explained who the Homeguards were and begged to be told exactly where they were driving them. The major ordered them to wait.

Meanwhile, at 9:00 hours, the commander in charge of the transport, an English captain, demanded that Col. Vizjak and Maj. Mehle make the Homeguards, who were assigned for that day's transport, to board the trucks immediately. Mehle replied that the transports were stopped only until the Homeguard commanders would get a reply at the English Command. However the captain was insistent. After being threatened with the use of force, **the Homeguards, accompanied by some relatives, climbed aboard the trucks**.

⁵⁴ Meršol, o.c., 52; Kos II, 230

⁵⁵ *Vetrinjska tragedija*, 31-32; Kos II, 229-230; Griesser-Pečar, 476

⁵⁶ Kos II, 230

At the English Command, the Slovenian delegation was forced to wait until noon, when the “first officer” brought a sheet of paper which contained the following communiqué written in German by Maj. General Murray to Gen. Krenner:

- 1.) The order which was given to me stipulates that we must drive your group by train to assigned places at assigned times.
- 2.) I was not informed about the destination of the trains and I myself do not know anything about this. Besides this, it is also of no concern to me.
- 3.) The further orders that I received, stipulate this transporting, if at all possible, must be accomplished without the use of force. I aim to carry out these orders and I would much regret it if I had to use force.
- 4.) As a soldier, I am fulfilling this order that I received from my superiors. You yourself, as a soldier, must help me with this.⁵⁷

All this points to the fact that the Command of the British 5th Corps was following a policy of “blind obedience”, and undoubtedly this particular Maj. General Murray too. Such an interpretation of obedience was not recognized by the Allied postwar trials against Nazi war criminals, nor is it today by the Western World for the most part.⁵⁸

If Gen. Murray knew that they were not sending the SNV to Italy, but instead into Jugoslavia and thus to certain death, he was not supposed to carry out these orders! However, Gen. Murray even dared to write in the army diary of the 5th Armored Division that “later General Krenner came to our HQ and demanded an assurance that we will not send the Slovenians to Jugoslavia. But we did not give him this assurance!”⁵⁹

Despite this, the Slovenian spokesmen satisfied themselves that the English were not returning the Homeguards to Jugoslavia. Krenner became quite enraged, because in the meantime 3,000 Homeguards had been driven away, despite his orders that they must wait until he returned from Celovec. Nonetheless, he again went to the mentioned captain and asked him, where were they taking the Homeguards. When he replied, that it was to Italy, to Palmano, Krenner believed him!⁶⁰

On this day, Lt. Col. Drčar himself rode by bicycle towards Podrožca. He learned from local folk and a certain railroad worker that they were handing over the Homeguards to the Partisans at the RR station in Podgorje.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 478, footnote 73, has the original text; the translation is quite different than the one by Kos.

⁵⁸ In Argentina in 2005, two laws from the term of President Alfonsín (1983-1989) were declared to be unconstitutional: the law exempting from prosecution superior officers for any crimes committed by those under their charge, and the law on “placing the period at the end of the sentence”, that means, exempting from prosecution any soldier who was “just following orders”.

⁵⁹ Kos II, 231, who cites Bajlec, Gradivo 12, 318, and *Ukaz gen. Murraya gen. Krennerju o odvozu domobrancev* [The Order by Gen. Murray to Gen. Krenner concerning the driving away of the Homeguards], Tabor 1981/5, 105. – Griesser-Pečar, 458-9, footnote 16 adds the names of the top commanders: the commander of the 8th Corps was Major General Charles Keightley; the 8th Army, Gen. Richard McCreery; the 6th Armored Division, Gen. Major Horatius Murray, to which belonged also the 1st Guards Brigade under Brigadier Gerald Verney

⁶⁰ Kos II, 232

⁶¹ Janez Grum, “Neresnični podatki iz Drčarjevega ‘Dnevnika’ v knjigi Vetrinjska tragedija” [Untrue details from Drčar’s ‘Diary’ in the book Vetrinjska Tragedija], *Vestnik* 1993, 26-32; Prof. Janez Grum denies that this account was completely true, because Drčar would not have been able in those days to cross bridges completely guarded by the British.

In the evening Gen. Krenner was summoned to the English Divisional HQ to explain his order from that morning; a stenographer took notes of his statements.

That night, Vuk Rupnik was visited by **two Serb Chetnik officers**, his colleagues from the former Yugoslav Army. They told him that they had been **returned to Jesenice** and escaped. **Rupnik immediately summoned the higher-ranking officers of the 2nd Regiment, told them the truth and ordered them to organize a move of their men into the civilian refugee camp or a flight from the camp.**⁶² However they did not do this!

7. On Tuesday, May 29, the transports departed again, because the reconnaissance patrols did not find anything suspicious. **Maj. Kunstelj with the Homeguard 3rd Regiment and Maj. Hočevár with the artillery detachment** were driven away to Pliberk. Dr. Janež Janež joined the transport that carried Kunstelj's regiment. When he saw that Partisans were surrounding the trucks, he escaped into a nearby field of rye. At nightfall, he made his way towards the Drava River and stayed with some acquaintances for the night, and on the next morning by rowboat he crossed the Drava River and fled into Celovec.

In the meantime, **rumors were spreading rampant through the Vetrinjski camps that the British were carting away the Homeguards to Yugoslavia.** Major Barre's response to these openly expressed doubts was that they should interrogate the people who were spreading these news. Even Principal Marko Bajuk asked Maj. Barre, was it possible that the English were repatriating the Homeguards to the Partisans. Major Barre, offended by such a question, replied: "Do you really think that the English are capable of doing something like this?"⁶³

Lt. Col. Drčar rode his bicycle through Št. Jakob into Celovec. He encountered Maj. Cof, Maj. Rupnik with his wife, and Maj. Tomic. He told them that the trains were not driving towards Tarvisio. Their counter-response was that without fail the English were driving the Homeguards to Italy.⁶⁴ Drčar repeated this news at the Homeguard HQ. Krenner, Vizjak, Bitenc and Veble rationalized that the British were driving the Homeguards to Italy through Jesenice and Bohinj, or across Št. Vid ob Glini and Feldkirchen to Villach, and from there into Italy.⁶⁵

A certain **railroad worker from Podrožca** came to Kovač, a relative of his, with the same news, that they were driving the Homeguards to Yugoslavia. A **Homeguard lieutenant, Šprah**, together with a certain Serb woman, had also escaped and returned. Krenner reported this at a NO meeting, but they decided that Šprah was not a reliable witness. Nonetheless, according to Franc Krištof's report, Krenner and Šprah together with a certain English captain went on May 30th at 10 o'clock to the deputy camp commander, Lieutenant William Harris, the liaison officer between the camp and the Command HQ.⁶⁶ When Šprah told him that the English were repatriating the Homeguards to Yugoslavia, this seemed to be a matter of fact to him. **Krenner would therefore have known with certainty already on May 30th that they were returning the Homeguards.**⁶⁷

⁶² Kos II, 232

⁶³ Kos II, 232-233

⁶⁴ Kos II, 233

⁶⁵ How could Krenner attest to this, if he himself had found out a few days earlier and told the British that the bridges were destroyed and for this reason trains could not be driving to Tarvisio?

⁶⁶ The author JR adds that he assumes it was his aide, because it appears inconceivable that the commander would have received them.

⁶⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 479

8. On Wednesday, May 30, Lt. Col. Drčar with Maj. Tomic again went to Podrožca.⁶⁸ A Partisan confirmed that they were sending the Homeguards to Yugoslavia. Still, on that day **a new transport departed, carrying Maj. Rupnik and the Homeguard 2nd Regiment. The English drove 1,400 men to Podrožca, and the other 1,400 with 20 civilians to Pliberk.**⁶⁹ The convoy was escorted by English soldiers on motorcycles. Rupnik was riding with his wife in his own automobile at the rear of the convoy. At Pliberk, Rupnik stopped and asked at some house what was happening. They told him that an empty train with boxcars arrives from the Yugoslav side; they pack the soldiers into them and drive them to Yugoslavia.

Several officers had gathered around Rupnik. He instructed them to tell the Homeguards where the transport was headed, and that they should flee. However the officers were of the opinion that something like what had happened at Kočevje in 1943 could never happen again, because the war was over; that the Partisans have to act according to international laws; that the Partisans were people too; and that they could more easily escape at home, if it became necessary. Except for a very few exceptions, nobody was thinking to flee or resist.

As the Homeguards were jumping off the trucks, the English soldiers began slowly to surround them. Rupnik told the English Major Witt, who was responsible for the transport, that these soldiers were Homeguards; that they had been told that they were going to Italy; that they do not want to go to Yugoslavia. Witt replied that he had to finish the transport, that he didn't care about the destination of the Homeguards, and that the civilians could leave; he said that Tito was a good man and so the Homeguards need not fear anything. Rupnik mentioned he had a letter in which his father attested that Major General Arbuthnott had guaranteed to him that they would not hand over the Homeguards to the Partisans. Major Winn was unmoved. After they had already sent to the Homeguards to the RR station to board them on the train, he demanded that Rupnik hand over this letter to him, and then he decided to detain Rupnik with his wife for 24 hours.

Krenner had sent his chauffeur Šega to Pliberk. He was driving a small truck right behind the convoy with the Homeguards. He returned to Vetrinj and reported to Krenner and the NO members.

Towards the evening of May 30, Dr. **Janež** returned from Pliberk, to where he had been transported on Tuesday, and **went with Bitenc to the NOS. Assembled were Basaj, Bajlec, Jelenc, Kranjc and Veble, and afterwards Zajec and officers Drčar and Tomic came too. The NO members finally believed the tragic news.**⁷⁰ They decided: **inform the soldiers and the civilians; advise the Homeguards to change into civilian clothes or to flee.** Basaj informed Krenner about this in person.⁷¹

Of the higher-ranking officers, **only Krenner's adjutant, Vizjak, still remained in the camp.** In the evening, **Major Cof**, commander of the Homeguard 1st Regiment, summoned

⁶⁸ Concerning this day, see Kos II, 233-235

⁶⁹ There appears a contradiction: during the nighttime leading to Tuesday, May 29, Vuk Rupnik supposedly believed the report by two Chetnik officers that they were returning the Homeguards to Yugoslavia; on Tuesday during the day he supposedly encountered Lt. Col. Drčar and assured him that they were not returning the Homeguards; and on Wednesday, May 30th, he departed with the new convoy.

⁷⁰ Meršol, o.c., 52

⁷¹ If Basaj had personally informed Krenner about this after the NOS meeting, which happened "towards evening" on May 30, then Krenner could not have disappeared already that morning, as is claimed by a different source.

together some officers, told them the truth about the transports, released them from their oath, and told them that each should go his own way; they should announce the same to the soldiers. The company commanders relayed this, but still around 500 Homeguards on the following day resolved to go on the transport with the words: "Wherever the others went, so will we."⁷² Partially to blame for this were undoubtedly Vizjak and Boh, who decided to go with the Homeguards, but at the last moment changed their minds and fled.⁷³

8. On Thursday, May 31, the Brits returned a remnant of the 1st Regiment, around 500 men without officers.

The End of the Repatriations

On May 31, the President of the NOS, Basaj, via Dr. Jože Prešeren sent a report to Krek in Rome. He wrote about how everybody thought that once they reached Celovec they were now saved; how they forged contacts with the authorities; how they organized the camp and reorganized the army; how they had written military memorandums, so the English would understand about the Homeguards, and political memorandums, so that they would understand their political activities and their suffering under the occupation. They could not believe that the English were capable of doing such a thing. They hope that they will not also hand over the civilians to Tito.⁷⁴

On Saturday, **June 2**, Maj. Witt, who was responsible for the transport of the Homeguards to Pliberk on May 30th, informed Vuk Rupnik that the forced repatriations to Yugoslavia were stopped.

The Slovenian Leadership found wanting

Griesser-Pecar, and many others, postulate: "**All in all, we can claim that the civilian and the military leadership of the Slovenians in Carinthia in this instance failed completely**".⁷⁵ This of course does not diminish the responsibility of the British and Yugoslavs for the slaughters that followed.

The civilian and military leadership should have taken more seriously the testimony of those who had escaped, and above all should have better evaluated the attitude of the English authorities towards them, which evidenced belittlement and disdain. They should have taken the British statements more seriously, such as, that they will consider uniformed personnel as prisoners of war, and persons in civilian attire as refugees. However Griesser-Pecar rightfully questions whether civilian attire would have saved anybody in Carinthia, since the Brit 5th Corps on May 31st still issued the order that all the civilian refugees were to be returned.⁷⁶

⁷² Kos II, 235

⁷³ Griesser-Pečar, 480. Vizjak lived under an assumed name in the DP camps at St. Veit a.d. Glan and Kellerberg, until the English, to accommodate a Yugoslav demand, seized him on January 14, 1946 and on February 12 in Podrožca handed him over to the Yugoslavs; he was sentenced to 20 years of forced labor. – For further significant reading, see Janez Grum, "*Resnica o domobranskih častnikih v Vetrinju*" [*The truth about the Homeguard Officers in Vetrinju*], *Zaveza*, No. 32, 94-96

⁷⁴ Kos II, 235

⁷⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 480

⁷⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 481-482

The Reasons for the Repatriation of the Homeguards

Meršol gives the following reasons for the returning of the Homeguards:

1. The prior agreement (already in 1944) among the Allies, that after the war all native opponents of individual regimes must be returned to their respective nations for investigation, trial, and eventual punishment or amnesty according to democratic principles.
2. That the British 8th Army was pro-Tito, because during its operations in Italy, it both lived and worked side by side with the communists.
3. The Allied rulers and Commands did not believe the numerous and exhaustive information about the true nature of the Homeguard, who never fought against the Allies but were their friends and helped them wherever possible. In Celovec, until the arrival of Fieldmarshal Alexander, the Homeguards were unsuccessful in reaching the higher-ranking, decision-making commanders, and the lower-ranks were neither permitted nor able to make independent decisions.
4. Judging by what happened afterwards, the English never expected that the Yugoslav communists would be so bloodthirsty that they would kill the vast majority of the Homeguards. This action disconcerted them at first, and later helped bring about the decision that no Yugoslav be forcibly returned to Yugoslavia.⁷⁷

The Main Culprits

It is becoming ever clearer who the **main culprits** were. Dr. Marko Kremžar published in *Svobodna Slovenija* (Buenos Aires) in 2006 the serial “*Ozadje vetrinjske tragedije*” [*The background of the Vetrinj Tragedy*].⁷⁸ The following points summarize Kremžar’s article:

1. **Both the North American Command (Eisenhower) as well as the British Command (Alexander) had originally ordered that all the refugees be transported to Italy, whether soldiers or civilians.**
2. The commander of the 5th Corps, **Gen. Keightley, sabotaged Alexander’s instructions.**
3. The **main culprit** for handing over the SNV to Tito was the **Chief of Staff of the 5th Corps, Toby Low**, the later Lord Aldington, who in his lifetime was able to obtain a court decision against the historian Tolstoy, who was unable to provide enough proofs for the claims in his book.⁷⁹ After Low’s death, Mitchell was able to discover additional documents that provided more credence to the historical account.
4. According to an order by the British 8th Army that the 5th Corps received on May 17, **they were forbidden to make any agreements with the Yugoslav commanders** (concerning a withdrawal from Carinthia).
5. **Low met with Tito’s representative, Col. Hočevar, already on May 15th.**
6. **Despite his army’s prohibition, Low met on May 19th with Colonel Ivanović**, who had replaced Hočevar. At the meeting they reached an agreement that the Partisans

⁷⁷ Meršol, o.c., 54

⁷⁸ Marko Kremžar, “*Ozadje vetrinjske tragedije*” [*The background of the Vetrinj Tragedy*], *Svobodna Slovenija* 2006, Nos. 22-26; the details in his book come from Ian Mitchell, “The Cost of a Reputation”, Glasgow 1997, which is also mentioned by Griesser-Pečar

⁷⁹ Nicolai Tolstoy, “The Minister and The Massacres”; Low’s title of nobility [Lord Aldington] appears in various spellings in writings: some write Addlington; Griesser.-Pečar, 457, uses Aldington, but Adlington in the list of *dramatis personae*, Griesser.-Pečar, 551

would withdraw from Carinthia, and most probably negotiated the handing over of all the Yugoslavs (around 25,000).

7. **Keightley and Low hosted a dinner for Ivanović in Celovec; Keightley reported to Gen. McCreery about the dinner, but not about the content of the discussions.**
8. The **Partisans withdrew** from Carinthia on **May 21**. On **May 22**, **Low left his position** and then entered politics with the Labor Party led by Eden. On **May 23**, **the British began handing over the Croats**, followed by the Serbs and the Slovenians.⁸⁰
9. Low probably loathed the assistance by the North Americans [*Tr. who in Italy were willing to accept all these refugees*], and as a future politician he probably wanted to demonstrate his political prowess by preventing a planned ousting of the Partisans from Carinthia by force.

According to their own statements, the British also did not want to use force unless it proved utterly necessary. In a pharisaical manner they left this savage and bloody “work” to the Yugoslav communists.

For the record, Dr. Miha Krek had sent a letter of protest already on (not until?) June 7, 1945.⁸¹ But he did not receive a reply until July 31, 1945 from the Chief of Staff, Gen. William Morgan, who maintained that the repatriated Yugoslavs had fought on the side of the Germans and for this reason were treated as enemy personnel; as such, by orders from the Main Command, they were handed over to the Yugoslav military forces.⁸² According to this, at least **partial blame must be attributed to the General Staff** and probably even to Field Marshal Alexander!

Also on record, the **North Americans opposed the British intentions from the start**. The USA State Department already on August 8, 1945 lodged a formal protest with the Commander of Allied Forces in the Mediterranean, Field Marshal Alexander. In this protest, the State Department asserts that it renounces the British deeds on the grounds that they were contrary to Allied politics.⁸³

The Number of Returned and Killed

The **British tallied** the Homeguards at the transfers, but these lists disappeared for a while, or rather, they could not be found.⁸⁴ Dr. Kremžar writes that **11,850 Slovenians were returned** from May 27 to May 31, 1945, according to the official **diary of the British 5th Corps**.⁸⁵

The **Homeguard leadership, while in Vetrinjška**, also composed a roster of the Homeguards, **but this list does not represent everyone who was returned**.⁸⁶ Various figures are given for the number of persons returned: the report of Dr. **Basaj**, June 1, 1945, mentions **11,000** handed over; the book *Vetrinjska tragedija* says **9,740**, which agrees with the article by Dr. Godnič

⁸⁰ This is another example of discrepancy on dates: according to other, the more common, sources, the British began handing over the Croats already on May 18

⁸¹ Griesser-Pečar, 484, who cites the Cowgill Inquiry, Documentary Evidence, 282-285

⁸² Griesser-Pečar, ib., who cites the Cowgill Inquiry, Documentary Evidence, 303

⁸³ Griesser-Pečar, ib., who cites the Cowgill Inquiry, The Repatriations, 149 ff

⁸⁴ Kos II, 238-239

⁸⁵ o.c., footnote 78 of this chapter

⁸⁶ According to an account by a former editor of *Vestnik*, B.M. to this author, a certain A.O. gave *Vestnik* the original lists of Homeguards, who were at Vetrinjška, and *Vestnik* gave them to *Tabor* for the “Bela Knjiga” [The White Book]; the lists were photocopied before they were handed over, and it would be important to learn who holds these lists now.

⁸⁷ Ižanec I, 114-119

after the investigation of events in Spittal, January 11, 1947, and with the statement by Lt. Col. Drčar; **Ižanec** gave a complete review of the killings and execution sites known as of the publication of his book: over **13,981** Slovenian Homeguards in the months of Maj, June, and July 1945 and an undetermined number of persons held in Ljubljana jails that were killed.⁸⁷

According to the figures given by Kos, **11,751** of the Homeguards and civilian refugees who were returned **from Vetrinj** were killed; this figure **does not include** the undetermined number of the Homeguard **wounded that were murdered, plus the approximately 1,000 civilian refugees who did not reach Carinthia, and the 1,820 Homeguards and civilians from the Novo Mesto group.**⁸⁸

The First Foreign Witnesses

Already in **August 1945, a high official in the British Foreign Office**, upon confronting the documents that were coming into his hands, **wrote** that the **handing over of the Slovenians** and others to Tito's forces was a "ghastly mistake". "It was rectified as soon as it was reported to headquarters. But for about a week at the end of May these unfortunate men were passed across the frontier to be butchered by Tito's Army."⁸⁹

John Corsellis prints the testimonies of some English officers, who were present or were even intimately involved in the handing over the SNV.⁹⁰ Nicolson writes:

"These were three weeks which must remain shameful. It was about one of the most shameful vile acts which had ever been ordered to British soldiers... (Military historians) should be ashamed. For they claim that it was about political decisions, not an issue of jurisdiction. But the politicians insist that this was mostly a military concern.... But both bear responsibility. This savage deed was committed with knowledge about its probable consequences. They bypassed any type of mercy. In exchange for temporary benefits (JR: whose?) and with the purpose of satisfying Stalin and Tito, it committed with premeditation the greatest betrayal. The fact is that almost half a century has passed, cannot absolve us from our duty to find out those responsible for this (betrayal) and the reasons."⁹¹

⁸⁸ Kos II, 239

⁸⁹ Mlakar, 515, cites the note of J.M. Addis, 8/30/1945, according to the archive PRO, FO 371/489 20; see also Tolstoy, 176-207 and 361-399

⁹⁰ Corsellis 1996. In a 1996 article he provided not only the personal testimony of some Slovenian refugees, but also gave a brief and clear picture of the war and the occupation of Slovenia, the civil war between the Communists and the Catholics in Slovenia (though the anti-revolutionists included others besides Catholics), and also the refugee camps in Austria and the English treachery in Vetrinj, to which he himself was an eye-witness. But quite different is his book, "Slovenia 1941-1945, Memories of Death and Survival" (see Sources), co-authored with Ferrar, where he attempts to give an accurate portrayal of the repatriation and the life and work in the refugee camps, but he loses objectivity and impartiality particularly in the final chapters, where he buys into Kučan's fallacy about the existence of multiple truths, and thus describes the wartime situation and the Revolution according to the communist viewpoint about the Catholic – and not only Catholics! – anti-revolutionists-collaborators. Kučan's viewpoint might be tenable if he were discussing multiple explanations for historical actions, thus about truthfulness, and not about the truth.

⁹¹ Corsellis 1996, 50-59, prints the article by Nigel Nicolson 1989; Nicolson was not just some ordinary socialite gentleman-intellectual. As an officer in the intelligence service and captain in the famous Grenadier Guards he was intimately involved in these events. – The dates for all these statements arouse attention: all the dates – except for the Croats – still precede the start of the forced repatriations; perhaps the reason is an unintentional mistake or the writing later from memory.

Nicolson was sharply scolded by his superior officer for writing in the **official Sitrep** [Situation Report] for **May 18 1945: "The whole business is most unsavoury, and British tps [troops] have the utmost distaste in carrying out their orders. At the moment it is not known what higher policy lies behind the decision."**⁹²

Nicolson was not the only one who condemned such repatriations. Captain Anthony **Crosland** (Royal Welsh Fusiliers), future Foreign Secretary and a leading thinker of the Labour Party, wrote in **his journal for May 18 1945**: "The problem of the anti-Tito Croats and Slovenes is almost causing a civil war within the British Army. We have on our hands at the moment some 50,000 of them. When we accepted their surrender, they certainly assumed that they would not be returned by us to Yugoslavia. It was then decided as a matter of higher policy that they were to be handed back to Tito... The unarmed lot were shepherded into trains and told they were going to Italy; they crowded on in the best of spirits, and were driven off under a British guard to the entrance of a tunnel at the frontier; there the guard left them and the train drove off into the tunnel. Among the officers here, there is a great revolt and resentment against the deception and dishonesty involved."⁹³

In a letter to a colleague, a university student at Oxford, Crosland described this deed as **the most nauseating and cold-blooded act of war that he had ever taken part in**.⁹⁴

According to Nicolson, **the British had no other choice but to lie to the people in the camps**, so they spoke about resettlement to Italy. Nicolson also states that the British were not authorized to use force, but most probably they would have used heavy force if they encountered resistance. Why then did nobody resist?

Nicolson describes what happened when the Homeguards became aware of the treachery of the British, whom they had trusted so deeply. They were overcome by futile rage. They began hammering and pounding on the inside of the boxcar walls, shouting curses against the British. For Nicolson, this was the most horrible experience of his life.⁹⁵

And yet on the day after they set up the refugee camp in Vetrinjs, Nicolson had written in his Sitrep report: "None of them can be repatriated except to almost certain death at the hands of Tito".⁹⁶ Nicolson also analyzed the ethnic and military groups in the camp and ascertained that there were huge differences among them, as for example: "But the great majority [of the Slovenian soldiers] never accepted German leadership, and **if sometimes compelled by the civil war to fight on the same side against Tito, they had been at most their co-belligerents, never their allies. They hoped for an Anglo-American victory in this war**."⁹⁷

⁹² Corsellis 1996, who quotes Nicolson verbatim; *Zaveza* No. 32, 79-93 reprints Chapter 5 "The Witness" from Nicolson's book "Long Life". *Zaveza* misspells his name as Nicholson.

⁹³ Corsellis 1996, 54-55, who quotes Crosland verbatim; however, is that date May 18 correct?; highlighting by the author JR for emphasis

⁹⁴ Corsellis 1996, *ibid*.

⁹⁵ Griesser-Pečar, 473, who quotes Nicolson, *Long Life*, New York 1998, 117

⁹⁶ Griesser-Pečar, 468, quotes Nicolson, p. 115. MacMillan, the political advisor at Alexander's HQ, made similar statements in front of the assembled generals of the 5th Corps concerning the returned Cossacks and White Russians: Cowgill Inquiry, 19. – See also "*Konec druge vojne, Dr. Robert Knight, Harold Macmillan in kozaki*" [*The End of World War II, Dr. Robert Knight, Harold Macmillan and the Cossacks*], *Borec* 1986/12, 771; War Diaries WO 170/4337 - The complete report: Anthony Cowgill - Thomas Brimelow - Christopher Booker, *The Repatriation from Austria in 1945. The Report of an Inquiry*, London 1990; and the supplement, Cowgill Inquiry: The Documentary Evidence Reproduced in Full from British, German and Yugoslav sources, London 1990 (Griesser-Pečar 468 footnote 45)

⁹⁷ Griesser-Pečar, 468-9; highlighting added by the author JR for emphasis

3. The Civilian Refugees Are Saved

The Visit of Dr. Meršol with Maj. Barre to Maj. Johnson

Dr. Meršol reports that on May 31st around 5 o'clock, Franc Krištof, the translator for Lt. Ames, was waiting for him and told him to go as soon as possible to the commander of the military camp, **"because it concerns the returning the civilian Slovenian refugees to Jugoslavia."**⁹⁸ This was the first time Dr. Meršol learned about their intention to return the civilian refugees too. When he heard this, he immediately reproached Maj. Barre: so, first they send the soldiers to torture and death, and now it's the turn of the civilian refugees. "Until this moment we did not believe that the English were capable of lies and deceit, but the facts confirm these dishonorable actions." Major Barre turned pale at these words and ordered Dr. Meršol to accompany him to the commander of the military camp. Due to the secrecy of the matter, Lt. Ames wanted to speak alone with Maj. Barre, however Major Barre reminded him that Dr. Meršol was the camp director and as such had the right to learn everything that would affect the refugees.

Lt. Ames took a sheet of paper in his hand, and said: **"I have an order that tomorrow, June 1st, 2,700 Slovenian civilian refugees must depart from the camp, namely 1,500 to the RR station at Pliberk, and 1,200 to the RR station at Maria Elend. They must be ready to depart already at 5 o'clock in the morning. They will be transported by trucks from the camp to the designated stations where a train will be waiting."**

When Dr. Meršol heard this, he interrupted the conversation and spoke loud and clear: so then, the English are sending Slovenian refugees to Yugoslavia into the hands of the communists, who according to reports just received, are killing them. He stated that he could not and cannot believe that the English were capable of sending to death their friends, who were innocent and to whom they had promised protection and aid; the very English whom the Slovenians held in such esteem and yearned to come under their protection, whose airmen they were rescuing during the 2nd World War, and whom he himself in the 1st World War had rescued and helped.

Lt. Ames became irked at this outburst. He said that this concerned an order from the divisional commander, and that Meršol was not allowed to meddle in this matter. From the conversation that followed between Ames and Barre, the doctor understood that after the first transport, the other refugees would follow. Ames demanded that Barre carry out the order, but Barre asked him to wait until he first went with Meršol to the army headquarters in Celovec.

Meršol had the impression that until now, even Barre himself had believed that they were really sending the Homeguards to Italy, and that not until today was he able to clearly conclude that this was untrue. During the drive to Celovec, **Meršol reproached Maj. Barre, that the English had broken all their promises and international obligations.** He implored the major to take all steps in front of the army command so that the remaining Slovenian soldiers and civilians would not be returned to the communists in Yugoslavia. Major Barre was pale and extremely upset.

In **Celovec** they first went to the Department for Displaced Persons, where **Maj. Johnson** was already waiting for them, because he had been notified by telephone why they were coming.

⁹⁸ Meršol, o.c., 52-53 [Tr. note: The author JR provided no explanation for referring to Ames as a colonel in the Slovenian edition of this book; therefore, the English translation reverts the rank to lieutenant, in conformity with all the referenced sources to date. Also, in some émigré literature the person is named Hames, not Ames.]

Meršol again implored him to help save the Slovenian refugees, on the grounds that this was the duty of the English. Meršol remained in the waiting room, while in the adjacent room Maj. Barre first of all gave Maj. Johnson all the details, and then they made several telephone calls. After about half an hour, Barre called Meršol into the office. Johnson offered him a chair, and then said: **“We decided that the civilians will not be sent to Yugoslavia against their will. Only those who wish to return may go.”**

Meršol was overjoyed to hear this statement, which came so unbelievably quickly. While he was stammering all the reasons for his gratitude, Maj. Johnson interrupted him, and said that the doctor need not inform him about the conditions in Yugoslavia, for he knew all about them quite well, and that this was the reason that they decided as they did.⁹⁹

About 200 Slovenian refugees originally decided to return voluntarily, but on June 3rd only 100 of these departed because the others had changed their minds. On that same day, a Montenegrin Chetnik arrived, who had escaped at Radovljica, where the communists shot around 600 Serbs and Montenegrins who had departed on the first transport. This was the first deposition they created, and submitted it, written in English, to the English authorities. “In the following days there were many more such escapees and depositions.”¹⁰⁰

The Visit by Field Marshal Alexander

On June 4th at 11 o'clock in the morning, Maj. Barre informed Dr. Meršol that Field Marshal Alexander was coming to the camp around noon. There was no time to write a memorandum, so **Meršol** formulated in his mind **what he was going to say**.

The Field Marshal stepped from his automobile and listened first to a report by Maj. Barre. For the next 20 minutes Alexander had a frank and friendly conversation with Meršol. Everything seemed to indicate that Alexander had already been instructed beforehand about the plight of the Slovenian refugees. Meršol received the impression that the Field Marshal had wanted to hear personally from the doctor himself about what was burdening the Slovenian refugees and what they desired. The ZSS published the doctor's written recollections of his conversation with the Field Marshal.¹⁰¹

As stated in these recollections, the doctor explained who he was. As spokesman for the Slovenian refugees, he was repeating his plea for their protection and aid, because they knew that the returned Homeguards had been tortured and killed without trials.¹⁰² These Homeguards had never fought against the Allies, but only against the Communists, who were behaving in Slovenia like robbers and murderers. Then the Field Marshal asked, **how did he know that the soldiers were killed? Meršol replied to him that they had been informed by persons who had escaped, returned across the mountains, and gave detailed testimony.**¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Meršol, o.c., 53-54

¹⁰⁰ Meršol, o.c., 55

¹⁰¹ Meršol, o.c., ib.

¹⁰² Dr. Meršol was speaking on behalf of all the Slovenians, because as the camp director, he was more noteworthy to the British than anyone else. Yet we must ask what happened in the meantime with the political and the military leaders. The majority of the NOS members and the leading politicians remained in Vetrinjski, just as before; some of them also lost their own sons in the repatriations (NO President Dr. Basaj, President of the Parliament Kremžar, and others.)

¹⁰³ Meršol, o.c., 55-56, highlighting added by the author JR for emphasis

After a brief conversation, in which Alexander asked what the majority of the refugees did for a living, Meršol again thanked him for his past help, and repeated his plea for asylum, protection, and aid for the future, and begged that they not be sent back to Yugoslavia because for many this would mean torture and death. The Field Marshal replied: "As far as I am concerned, you can all remain here in Vetrinj. Rest assured that we will help you and your people."¹⁰⁴

On the evening of that same day, the commander of the army camp, **Lt. Ames, received urgent orders that no Yugoslavs will be returned to Yugoslavia or handed over to Yugoslav troops against their will; Yugoslavs, who bore arms against Tito will be treated as surrendered personnel and sent to the Vetrinj camp** for disposal, pending further instructions; **all these persons will be regarded as Displaced Persons (DP's)**, and will be ultimately routed to Italy; **no evacuation of the Vetrinj camp**.¹⁰⁵

This order confirmed the decision that Maj. Jones announced on May 31st, that the civilians will not be returned to Yugoslavia against their will. This spelled salvation (at least partially) also for all Yugoslavs who had fought against Tito.

Meršol correctly judges that the final point, about no evacuation of the Vetrinj camp, was definitely the result of his intercession, because he had begged for this point explicitly.

The Refugees Become "Displaced Persons" on June 4, 1945

After the change in the English "Army Policy", the refugees became "DP's" (Displaced Persons). An anonymous person wrote somewhat begrudgingly: **"We became numbers with no rights, the leftover coins from various purchases by political speculators and brokers, a valuable work force, blood donors for various peoples marked for extinction."**¹⁰⁶ He adds that they had to refrain from political activity, and that they cannot make any demands, for they have no rights. But, as he points out, they are allowed to beg, and their motto is: help yourself and God will help you.

Next he asserts: **"The people must not be left to fend for themselves. Leadership is utterly necessary. Despair must be dispelled from the people. Their confused souls must be vigorously supported. We must maintain our high cultural level. We must prepare the people for new tasks while now as refugees and for later in some homeland. It is imperative to keep all the old and the young occupied spiritually and physically."**

So on June 5th they created the **Social Committee for Slovenian Refugees in Austria**; its first president was **Msgr. Matija Škerbec**. The committee assumed leadership of the refugees and care for their subsequent fate. Their first concern was the youth, and they found an utmost dedicated educator in the person of **Principal Marko Bajuk**. For the planning session, **the committee on June 7, 1945 convened a consulting group. It resolved to create a choir for church and secular singing, organize public lectures, print camp publications, organize gymnastics and sports, organize technical skills courses, and teach foreign languages.** Youth activities were relegated to the Salesians.

An **elementary (public) school** began with instruction already on **May 20, 1945**. Because there were no suitable locations, class instruction was held in the hallways of the large Vetrinj

¹⁰⁴ Meršol, o.c., 56

¹⁰⁵ Meršol, o.c., *ibid*; The title itself of these orders is revealing: **New Army Policy**; highlighting added by the author for emphasis

¹⁰⁶ *Slovenski begunci v Avstriji [The Slovenian refugees in Austria]*, ZSS 1949, 109-120; highlighting added by the author for emphasis

monastery. A **kindergarten** operated right in the monastery courtyard. A **Slovenian Refugee Secondary School** (*gimnazija*) was **established already on May 16, 1945**, and regular instruction began on June 11, 1945. The beginning of the high school was modest: three classrooms were set up in the empty Knesebeck house in Thal at the edge of the Vetrinj plain; the fourth classroom was in the covered enclosure for animal-bedding adjacent to the barn, and the kitchen became the assembly hall and the office. There were no books, no instructional tools, no paper and no pencils, and yet the instruction proceeded orderly and successfully.

A Memorandum to the British about the Repatriated

The fate of the returned Homeguards was the highest concern of the people at the time, especially for relatives. They were filled with a dark foreboding about their tragic end. Now and then young men, who had escaped from the places of suffering and death, appeared secretly in the camp. **Through Major Barre, the Camp Committee on June 16 submitted to the British authorities a memorandum with a plea that the British take an interest in discovering the fate of their sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers of many of the refugees.** The memorandum stated explicitly: **“More than 10,000 Slovenian men, who were handed over to Tito, can fall victim to the savage revenge that is the driving principle for Tito, just as it was for Hitler and Mussolini”**. These soldiers had a basis for their defense in the international conventions concerning the legal status of inhabitants in occupied territories; conventions that were accepted by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Great Britain, and the USA, but not the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷

On June 18th, **Major Barre was suddenly transferred**. The refugee choir's first performance was for his farewell.

Many high-profile visitors were coming to the camp. All were promising re-settlement to better conditions. This is what eventually happened in June 25-29.

Whence the moral strength to overcome a double trauma?

Corsellis describes the traumas of the Slovenian refugees.¹⁰⁸ The **first trauma** was that they lost their homeland, their personal identity, and every hope in a safe future. The **second trauma** was the loss of faith and trust in mankind, because their kin had been handed over to their mortal enemies by the British knowingly, unsympathetically, cold-heartedly, and cynically, by the very British that they had so revered and esteemed. Then **the question arises, how was it that they did not remain paralyzed in their bitterness, ill will, and hatred against the British, who had betrayed them so reprehensibly**.

According to Corsellis, the **first reason** was **the intensity of their Faith**. The **second reason** was the **deep Slovenian ethnic consciousness**, their passionate esteem for their country and their language, which only strengthened their continuous resistance against the invasive Germanization or Italianization. The **third reason** was the presence of **widespread leaders**, who possessed dignity, moderation, and spiritual depth; these qualities helped them to confront

¹⁰⁷ Comment by author JR: In the Slovenian translation of the memorandum in the above quote, the word “*sme*” (translated as “can”) was a poor choice, because it implies something permissible. But we cannot claim that the genocide in Slovenia was permissible under any viewpoint. But to replace the word “can” [*sme*], for example, with “might become” [*lahko postane*] would give the impression that the statement is only about the possibility, or rather, the probability. Perhaps the best term would have been “must” [*moré*].

¹⁰⁸ Corsellis 1996, 55-56; highlighting added by the author for emphasis

their own personal suffering and fanned their determination to serve their own communities wholeheartedly and honorably, and thereby they were giving good example to their fellow countrymen. The **fourth reason** was the **large numbers of children** who needed care. These children came to Vetrinj with their parents on May 12th; a mere 4 days later (as is written in the annual report 1944/1945 and in 1945/1946) the national committee already organized the legal paperwork for a new high school and already that same week instructed the headmaster Marko Bajuk to organize a kindergarten, an elementary school, a high school, and a trade school.

“Thus with unbelievable courage and stoicism, the Slovenians helped themselves... and continued their own life’s task; those four reasons even later on gave them the strength to withstand starvation and to not yield to despair, which would have brought them to utter human defeat, but patiently waited for the moment when the doors would be opened for them to the free world (in emigration).”

Re-settlement to other camps

Major Barre, a man of merit for Slovenians, was replaced by Maj. Bell, who remained with the Slovenian refugees until June 29, 1945. On that day the British resettled them to refugee camps at Peggetz-Lienz, Spital, St. Vid ob Glini [St. Veit an der Glan], and Judenburg.

Many refugees fled during this resettlement because they no longer trusted the English. Dr. Meršol wrote in conclusion that everyone was watching vigilantly, how and where we were riding, lest they be driven “by accident” somewhere else. Yet they arrived at the proper places; soon, those who had fled came there too.



Towards Ljubelj Pass

Zaveza, 13,33

Aboard one wagon...

Zaveza, 9, 49

Homeguards in Vetrinj

Zaveza, 13, 41



Vetrinj
Zaveza, 59, 105

Repatriated Slovenian
National Army in Kranj
Ferenc, 15



Secondary School/
gimnazija in Peggetz,
Personal from the USA



Choir in Vetrinj,
Personal from the USA

13. Postwar Murders

Torturing and Killing the Homeguards¹

The Homeguards who were handed over at Podgorje and Podrožca were packed into camps in Kranj, Škofja Loka, and Šentvid by Ljubljana. The Homeguards who were sent back through Pliberk, were driven by train through Slovenj Gradec as far as Mislinje, where they had to walk to Velenje, and then by another train to Celje, and from there to Teharje, or through Maribor to Celje and from there to Teharje. According to currently known data, more Homeguards were brought to the camp at Teharje than to the camp at Šentvid.²

The Homeguards were subjected to all sorts of humiliations and horrors already during the drives. At intermediate train depots, officers were dragged off the train and killed immediately. They were also searching for officers in the holding centers. Some officers were able to rip off their rank patches and thus escaped detection. OZNA agents and other Partisans searched through the camps to find known individuals. When they spotted someone they knew, they immediately beat that person to unconsciousness. The majority of these persons then disappeared without a trace.

The Homeguards were subject to **vicious humiliations** as they trudged to a holding camp. For example, as they were being herded like cattle through the streets of Celje, they were forced to shout: “We are traitors! We are bandits! We are the White Guard...” The mobs alongside the street would meanwhile jeer at them, beat them, and spit on them. Even though it was near the end of May, the weather was already hot, the roads were dusty, yet they were given neither food nor water. To amuse themselves, the Partisans forced them, time and again, to dive into the dirt. The trip to Teharje, normally an hour and a half on foot, took them a full 7 hours.

The Homeguards were **robbed of all items of value and clothing** – even what they were wearing. Sustenance was limited to only what was minimally necessary, **two meager fistfuls of food per day**.

They separated the repatriated Homeguards into **three groups**: those who were underage were in group A, those who were mobilized in 1945 were in group B, and everybody else was in group C. Approximately 400 minor-age juveniles were eventually released from Teharje, but many never reached home because they were killed *en route*. The same happened to 30-40 Gorenjska Homeguards: they were first given pardons and released from Št. Vid, but then they were killed on their way home in the small wooded area not far from Spodnji Brnik.

¹ [Author’s comment] Dr. Tine Hribar believes that the word “murder” [*poboji*] in the heading is wrong and should be replaced by the word “killing” [*pomori*]. However the SSJ provides no clear differentiation between the two words. Killing denotes only a death, with insufficient connotation on the type of killing: every murder is a killing, but not every killing is a murder. (See footnote 12)

² Griesser-Pečar, 485-494, who presents the testimonies by Ivan Korošec, France Dejak, Zdenko Zavadlav, Albert Svetina, and France Miklavčič before the investigative commission DZ, and Mlakar’s expertise for the Pučnik commission; Zdešar 2005; Korošec 1994; BK 1970 and BK 1975; the testimonies of Lojze Debevec and others.

Some Homeguards Escape from Teharje

At least 11 Homeguards made an escape from Teharje on June 21st. One, who was wounded, was captured, but the other 10 succeeded. Four of the escapees were still alive as of October, 2005.³

Some Homeguards survive from the mass graves

Despite numerous obstacles and difficulties, some of those shot at the rim of the pits fell in still alive. The majority did not survive their wounds, or after several days and nights lost the strength to climb to the top of the cave. Some others did try to crawl out, but the criminals shot them.

A few miraculously succeeded in getting out of the cave. After trudging a long time, sometimes weeks, they were able to reach the safety of their kin or trustworthy people. Some of these later escaped across the border. For many decades they remained living witnesses to the frightful postwar genocide. The testimony of some of these survivors has been published.⁴

Murders of other persons

The **Homeguards were not the only victims** of the postwar killing spree. The so-called 3rd Brigade (VDV) was entrusted with the special security tasks, which in the period immediately after the takeover of the government meant: “**Cleanse the land of enemy elements**”. The Pohor Battalion (1st Battalion) had to cleanse the Pohorje area, the Kozjan Battalion (2nd Battalion) the Kozjan area, the Savinje Battalion (3rd Battalion) the Savinska dolina, and the 4th battalion the areas of the Mežiska dolina and the southern part of Carinthia. All these battalions carried out mass murders, even on Austrian land. From Austrian territory, 200 people were taken away and placed into prisons in Slovenia; of this group, only 66 came out.

The **OZNA** was drawing up its **lists of enemies** already **during the war**. After the takeover, these lists became the basis for mass arrests of non-conformist thinkers and also for their deaths. The **KNOJ helped OZNA** accomplish these tasks.

To date, **official documents concerning the killings of civilians have not yet been found**. However, an **OZNA document from the county of Celje**, dated May 29 1945, has been found. According to this document, within a few days after the government takeover, they arrested 1,004 persons in 12 districts. Of this group, 272 were brought to Celje, 271 to concentration camps, 47 were released, and 70 were liquidated; as for in the city of Celje itself, they murdered an additional 75 persons and sent 20 to the concentration camp in Ljubljana.⁵

Revenge Expeditions

Actual revenge expeditions occurred in the first days after the war. It was generally about **local vindictiveness** with “traitors” or from politics, and sometimes for no other reason than a particular communist disliked somebody. Very often they killed without having been given any orders, or without giving any trial whatsoever, and not because the killed person’s name had been on some list.

³ See, for example, Zdešar 2005 (Sources)

⁴ For example: France Dejak, Milan Zajec, Franc Kozina; see Zajec (Sources); for example, Lojze Opeka, dec. 2006 in Buenos Aires, saved himself at the mine shafts in Hrastrnik.

⁵ Griesser-Pečar, who cites “*Slovenija. Zamolčani grobovi*” [*Slovenia, Covert Graves*], eds. Franc Perne and Anton Žitnik, Ljubljana-Grosuplje 1998

The Process

The deputy at the time of Section 1 of OZNA, the department for Štajerska and Koroška, Zdenko **Zavadlav** (who later resigned from OZNA, was sentenced to death, but pardoned), **stated** that the following were **responsible for composing the lists** of people to be killed without trial: a member of OZNA, who led the investigation; the legal service; the leaders from the regional OZNA and the OZNA Central in Ljubljana.

Zavadlav himself **participated** at one such liquidation on Pohorje and **described the standard operating procedure**. From the lists of names, the **OZNA director ordered who was to be liquidated**. The designated OZNA officers conferred with their KNOJ counterparts and chose volunteers for the killing. The KNOJ soldiers secured the killing sites and dug the mass graves. The designated OZNA officer drove to the various camps or to prisons and dragged off the victims. The drive to the killing sites was organized with precision. **All the planning was in the hands of OZNA, the KNOJ units were simply the executing bodies. This means that Slovenians were the ones who ordered the killings of the SNV, and probably members of other nationalities carried it out.**

The methodology of the slaughters

They tied the victim's hands behind his back, and then tied the victims together in pairs. They tossed them onto trucks. They beat and kicked them during the drive. Sometimes they were stacked aboard like cordwood, one atop another, or sometimes they had to kneel, packed tightly together. They often packed 50 individuals or more on a single truck.

At the mass executions during the month of May 1945, the victims were mowed down by machine guns, but then in June, following the customary method of the NKVD, most were put to death with a bullet fired into the back of the skull. Also at the executions in May, the victims were still clothed, but then the procedure changed: the victims had to strip naked at the execution site. Their clothing was brought to the Ljubljana marketplace or stored in warehouses. Then they shoved the naked victims forward some 100 to 200m to the rim of the opening that dropped into a cave. They beat the victims continuously during this time. In most cases the victim (oftentimes still tied to a partner) had to step to the edge of the pit. The muzzle of the weapon was pressed against the head or the base of the skull and a shot exploded. From time to time entire groups of victims were cut down with sub-machinegun bursts. Not everyone died instantly, so from time to time the killers tossed hand grenades at the survivors in the pit below. They detonated explosives afterwards at some gravesites, for example Kočevski Rog, to obliterate the site. Some wounded were sometimes buried alive when the place was backfilled with soil.

In Slovenska Bistrica they shoved 431 local inhabitants into an underground shelter excavated horizontally into a hill; then fired their weapons continuously into the shelter.

Who ordered the killing

Without a doubt, **the Party and the government leaders** were the ones who determined the fate of the captive soldiers.

When Tito gave his speech in Ljubljana, May 26, 1945, among other things he stated that **"only the smaller part of the traitors" had succeeded in escaping** and that this minority **will never gain gaze upon "our beautiful mountainsides, our blossoming fields. But if this ever does happen, it will not last very long for them."**⁶

⁶ *Slovenski poročevalec*, No. 31, 5/27/1945, which various authors mention, for example, *Zbornik ZS*, 422, Mlakar, 524, *et. al.* The entire speech is printed in Tito's book *"Graditev nove Jugoslavije"* [*Building a new Yugoslavia*], I, 27

According to Albert Svetina, they adopted **the resolution concerning the “liquidations” of enemies** (political opponents) **after Maček’s visit to Tito in Drvar in May, 1944**. When Maček returned in June of 1944, he announced that the end of the war was drawing near, and that therefore it would be best to **liquidate a large number of their enemies and bring as few of them as possible before a court**. But the **implementation of this decree was left to the central bureaus of the Party, thus in Slovenia’s case, to the Slovenian Politbureau, the Slovenian OZNA, and the units of the 2nd Division of the KNOJ**. Maček insisted that they hold to the Tito’s explicit instructions, which included the prohibition of punishing anyone younger than 17 years of age, no matter how evil a traitor he might have been.⁷

Maček had the main word concerning the slaughters in Slovenia, but others also knew about the slaughters. As early as 1950, Lado Kozak handed Kocbek a statement indicating that Boris Kidrič was the one who gave the order for the slaughter of 12,000 young White guards.⁸ Stane Kavčič testified that at the time they by voice vote had to approve the “liquidation” of the Homeguards.⁹

Ecological Consequences of the Mass Slaughters

These killings brought other consequences too. Already in the summer of 1945, the decaying corpses inside the pit Brezinarjev brezen near Podutik **contaminated the source of the spring water at Drgomaš**. The contamination seeped into the stream Glinščica; livestock refused to drink this water or became sick, as did also quite a few people from the vicinity. German prisoners-of-war were then forced to drag the corpses out of the cavern and re-bury them not too far away; after the job was completed, all these POWs disappeared without a trace too. They had to throw soil and lime over the decayed bodies in Strnišče (re-named Kidričevo in its time), and likewise at Tezno by Maribor and in Slovenska Bistrica. In Rog, with the help of German prisoners-of-war, they filled in the mass graves with gravel and covered it with stone. They were forced to re-camouflage the cave Pod Krenom several times.

The Total Number Slain

The exact number of Homeguards slain is still unknown. The Yugoslav-side lists, which according to eye-witnesses still existed to the middle of the 1980s, have disappeared. However, already in 1964 the **émigrés in Buenos Aires** composed a roster that listed a total of **11,750 names**. As Mlakar later pointed out, this roster did **not include those who had remained at home and were imprisoned afterwards**. The roster was published in 1970 as “*Bela knjiga slovenskega protikomunističnega upora 1941-1945*”, and republished in 1975 with addenda. The second publication, prepared in the USA, also took into consideration the list that the Slovenian and the Gorenjska Homeguard composed. This report listed the names of **9,047 Homeguards** returned to Yugoslavia by the British and the names of 1,072 who were killed in action, and the names of **3,103 civilians** who were murdered.

⁷ Mlakar, 524, who cites the newspaper article “80-letnica Ivana Mačka-Matije. Revolucijo ustvarjamo še danes” [Ivan Maček’s- Matija 80th Birthday. We are still building the Revolution today], *Delo*, 5/25/1988; of course the veracity of Maček’s claim is rightfully debatable.

⁸ Mlakar, *ibid*, who cites Edvard Kocbek, *Dnevnik* 1950, Ljubljana 2000, 209 and 292

⁹ Mlakar, *ibid*, who cites Adolf Logar, “Pričevanje Staneta Kavčiča” [The Testimony of Stane Kavčič], *Slovenec*, 11/2/1995; why would they have to vote? what would be the purpose of a forced vote like this?

Everything indicates that the majority of the Homeguards was not slain in Kočevski Rog. Rog was the final destination of the ones penned at Št. Vid above Ljubljana (today: Šentvid), and those from Novo Mesto who were captured while still within Slovenia. Most probably the majority of the Homeguards passed through Teharje; many of these were slain in the abandoned mine shafts near Hrastnik.

The society *Nova slovenska zaveza* [*The New Slovenian Covenant*] is **collecting the names** of the victims. To date they have certified the names of **8,250 Homeguards and 291 civilians, all of these killed after May 9, 1945**. However, newer discoveries are constantly increasing these figures. For example, historian **Dežman** has discovered the names of 300 persons for Gorenjska. During construction for a road, they unearthed **1,179** victims of postwar massacres in just a 100-yard long section of a former anti-tank ditch in the forest **Tezenski gozd**,

The **Institute for Modern History** in Ljubljana, **as of the end of year 2005, has identified almost 13,000 Slovenians who were killed in Slovenia after the war**.

The president of the commission, the State Committee for the Investigation of Postwar Massacres, Jože **Pučnik**, estimates that **from 14 to 18 thousand Slovenians** were killed in Slovenia after May 9, 1945 – to this figure must be added the even larger numbers of Croat, Serb, Bosnian, Albanian, Italian, and German prisoners of war, and civilians. **All of these are lying in various types of execution sites: limestones caves** (ex. Kočevski rog), **abandoned mine shafts** (above all in the area around Laško, Hrastnik, and Trbovelj), **anti-tank ditches** (between Brežice and Dobrovo by Teharje, in Bistrica pri Sotli, in Trezno by Maribor), and **holes dug in forest clearings or in fields at the edge of forests** (throughout all of Slovenia).¹⁰ Only exhumations and investigations of the remains can provide the most accurate details. But to date, the ruling powers in Slovenia are not giving any serious consideration to such work.¹¹

According to “*Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije*” [*Journal of the victims of the war and the revolution*], **13,898 murdered victims** of the postwar reign of terror have been identified as of the middle of the year 2005. This figure represents at least 15% of all the wartime and postwar victims combined.¹²

More than 400 Concealed Burial Sites

The **Museum of Modern History** in Celje on May 31, 2005 opened an exhibit, prepared by Dr. Mitja Ferenc and his assistants, advertised as “**Concealed and Hidden from Sight – The Concealed Burial Sites 60 years after the end of the 2nd World War**”.¹³ The exhibition was then re-displayed at Cekinov grad in Ljubljana.

The exhibit contained a document of exceptional significance because it confirmed that the government at the time knew about all these killings done outside the justice system. It is a **telegram** sent on **June 25, 1945** by the then vice-president of the Yugoslav government, **Edvard Kardelj**, to the president of the Slovenian government, Boris Kidrič. Kardelj states in the telegram that there is **no longer any excuse for the slow speed of the “cleansing”**.

¹⁰ See Tolstoy, various publications by the SPE, and the accounts by participants (accomplices?), such as Zavadlav and Svetina

¹¹ Griesser-Pečar, 494

¹² Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar - Mojca Šorn, *Žrtve druge svetovne vojne in zaradi nje, Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije*, 13-21, particularly 19 and 20

¹³ See Sources

To date, more than 400 of these burial sites have been identified. The investigations have not stopped, because this slice represents only a narrow portion of the reign of terror. It is unfortunate that there were almost no disinterments earlier, because now it is difficult to determine whether these were soldiers or civilians. According to the research to date, 134 of the concealed burial sites were for soldiers, 79 for civilians, 72 for mixed, and there is no data yet for 109 of these sites. But it is known that members of other nationalities were also killed without trials in Slovenia: the members of the armed forces of the former Independent State of Croatia, the Serb Volunteer Corps, Montenegrin and other Chetniks, and the civilians who were withdrawing with these units. **Of the identified burial sites, 108 were filled with Slovenian victims,** 84 with Croat, and 51 with German; 59 of the burial sites contain victims of various nationalities, and for 62 sites, the nationalities have yet to be determined.¹⁴

The worst thing is that all these persons were killed without any trials whatsoever.

Why only in Slovenia such a bloody retribution against opponents?

Nowhere else, not even in the Soviet Union, was there afterwards such a bloody retribution against native opponents.¹⁵ This was possible only in an atmosphere of class and ideological hatred, in the circumstances of a “true” revolution, after the end of a civil war. Nobody today any longer denies that a civil war was raging in Slovenia, even though at the time nobody used that expression. But the question remains, how to explain this sort of civil war, which was happening during the occupation by a foreign power and during a world war. Civil, class, and revolutionary wars always end in bloodshed.

What were the essential reasons that the events developed as they did? **“At the revenge with the returned Homeguards and at all the remaining ‘accompanying’ revenges, the is-**

¹⁴ The author of the exhibition, historian Mitja Ferenc, is the son of a famous historian, for a long time on the Regime side, Tone Ferenc (see *Delo*, 5/30/2005 “*Več kot 400 prikritih grobišč*” [More than 400 Concealed Gravesites] and “*Dokaz, da je oblast vedela za poboje?*” [Proof that the government knew about the killings?]). With the exhibit, the author wanted to arouse national awareness about the right of those secretly killed to have a marked grave and to bring a successful resolution to this question. According to him, the 60th anniversary of the end of the war was “a meaningful milestone, at which we owe it to remember also this extension of the war on our land, which in many an aspect is something is unique and special, and with which other nations have no comparison with regards to its extent or form”.

It is interesting, that *Delo* in the same issue carried an article by Matej Babič “*Poskus, že vnaprej obsojen na neuspeh*” [An Effort doomed to failure already in advance]. **The official reports by Pavel Jamnik show that from the start of the *Sprava* investigations that the postwar killings were considered to be crimes. However the investigators were not permitted to reveal or publicly mention the names of these perpetrators!** (highlighting added by the author JR for emphasis) [Tr. note: Jamnik was commissioned to head a special police unit, called *Sprava/Reconciliation*, to investigate postwar murders, but its efforts were severely hamstrung by the courts who endeavored to keep the scales of justice tilted in favor of the criminals.]

See also the author’s review of the exhibit and commentary in *Meddobje*, XXXIX/2005, 3-4, 313-317. Of the critical comments, the following seem most important: 1. “The postwar killings are not the effects of World War II on our ground, but the purposeful achievements of a Bolshevik revolution...”; 2. According to Ferenc, “cleansing” was characteristic of the victors in other countries too, but he offers no proof for this; **revenge by an individual or groups cannot be equated with slaughters that were planned and executed by a government!**

¹⁵ Mlakar, 524-526, also the source of the subsequent direct quotations.

sue was about the elimination of actual and potential opponents, it was all about a simple final solution that did not provide nor demand, or in a very tiny measure if at all, for any determination of a person's guilt, or for any judicial proceedings, but it did pour fear into the bones of everyone else who survived and with this it enabled the solidification of an absolute police-state and Party-rule."

The claim that the issue was about **retaliation** is erroneous because it implies that the anti-revolutionists committed deeds that demanded such a frightful retaliation. It would be even less accurate to speak about **acts of revenge**, because in this instance one could rightfully ask: revenge for what, to repay what evil? The only possible conclusion is: **this was an act of utter hatred and a criminal solidification of power!**

The plan was "Do it in secret", but sooner or later everything becomes known

All this criminal activity was being done **in secret**, because neither the international nor the domestic public would have condoned such radical "retribution".

Of course, some of it soon became known, despite the fact that the Slovenian newspapers wrote almost nothing about this. But some editorials did fan the atmosphere of revenge.¹⁶

The Regime historian **Mikuž** mentioned that during the trial against Bishop Rožman, various people were asking about the whereabouts of their kin who were in the Homeguard, and that he told them that they should be asking the bishop and the priests, for they were the ones who had sent them into these "criminal military units". Despite this, the circle of people that learned about the massacres was quite wide. Escaped prisoners testified about it; notes scribbled on pieces of paper were thrown from the transporting trains during the trip towards Kočevje; SKOJ personnel were bringing home Homeguard clothing and equipment and distributing it among their acquaintances, and sometimes they also confided to someone about the sort of work they were engaged in. Many of those in hiding, who had managed to escape with their lives from the execution sites, were speaking about it.

One such account reached the ears of a government Minister, Franc **Snoj**, who mentioned this in September 1945 to **Kocbek** and **Kardelj**. This news unnerved Kocbek, but he grew satisfied with Kardelj's assurance, that OZNA was indeed responsible for a few hundred victims, and with the reply by the CK-KPS that the Homeguards were in re-education centers.

The members of the returned SNV were not the only ones who lost their lives after the end of the war. There were in Slovenia also hundreds and probably thousands of others, who died on account of ideological, political, or social class reasons. Even **the Pastoral Letter by the Yugoslav Bishops on September 20, 1945 brought attention to this point, when it stated that "thousands of your sons and your brothers were sentenced to death, without being given a chance to provide a personal defense, as is allowed by every civilized country."**

The memory of all this was preserved and widely published by the Slovenian political émigré communities.¹⁷

¹⁶ For example, Tone Seliškar, "Maščevanje je strašna beseda!" [*Revenge is a frightening word!*], *Slovenski poročevalec*, 5/28/1945; cited by Mlakar, 525

¹⁷ *Zbornik ZS*, especially "Spominski dnevi" [*Days of Remembrance*], 365-456, and also the entire Part I "Zgodovina in zgodbe" [*History and Tales*], which summarized the meetings of the society *Zedinjena Slovenija* and its general sessions, at which there was always renewed talk about the commemoration of these events. Žigon brings attention to this in his book "Iz spomina v prihodnost – Slovenska politična emigracija v Argentini" [*From Memories Into the Future*], above all B. IV "Energija političnih mitov, rituala, simbolov" [*The energy of political myths, rituals, symbols*], 136-148 (see Sources); see also Mlakar, 524-526, et. al.

“The Crime With No Criminals”

Tine Hribar, writing a piece under the above title, points out that **a crime cannot be identified unless its criminals are identified**.¹⁸ He writes: “If we have victims of the Revolution, then there must be criminals of the Revolution too”.¹⁹ This of course cannot be dismissed by rationalizing that the Communist Revolution itself (as perhaps being necessary and good) must be kept distinct from the criminal perpetrators within the Revolution!

Hribar writes: “On the basis of the data collected to date, we receive the following picture of the entire event: The basic decision to kill the returned - or more accurately, handed over - prisoners was adopted by the most inner sanctum of the Yugoslav Party (in 1945, one and the same as the military and political top level), which unquestionably were Josip Broz-Tito, Edvard Kardelj, and Aleksander Ranković... All three of them came to Slovenia at the end of May of 1945 and convinced the Slovenian ruling Party-OZNA top-level, which in addition to the liaison Kardelj were unquestionably Boris Kidrič, Ivan Maček, and Franc Leskošek, about the necessity of liquidations... The decision-making operational director of the liquidations in Slovenia was sooner than later Maček, for the Yugoslav units were only assisting his forces... which means of course that the thesis propounded by the current Slovenian leadership of the ZZB (*Zveza združenih borcev*, *author’s note*) is invalid, which claims that these roles were reversed, that the ‘Slovenian political leadership’ were merely the agents, while the persons who ordered it were standing behind them and were so to speak supervising the deed... But just as Zoran Polič himself in the end signed his own document about camouflaging the gravesites, so too in the end the Slovenian Party-political top-level itself also made the final decision to kill the returned prisoners. By this act they not only became guilty for the crime, but also numbered themselves among the criminals.”²⁰

“If we have victims of the Revolution, then there must be criminals of the Revolution too. This is today obvious.”²¹ Stated in legal terms: for Hribar, **“There remains a reasonable doubt about the known names of the leading Slovenian Communist revolutionists, who by their ordering the Crime became criminals themselves.”**²²

Some of Hribar’s claims are disputable. For example, her comment that the Slovenian Communist revolutionists became criminals, “regardless whether they were – rightfully or wrongly – proclaimed to be national heroes”.²³ Or the following claim: “The tragedy for at least some of them was that they became evildoers, even though (perhaps) they personally were not evil people”. Hribar does note that while historical circumstances can be mitigating, consideration of them cannot be taken so far that it removes the weight of criminality and fault from the criminals.²⁴

Genocide of Slovenians

The following proffered assumption is absurd: that all those killed were without exception national traitors, who faithfully collaborated with the occupier to attain his goals. Even

¹⁸ *Zbornik žrtev vojne in revolucije*, 148-170; Žigon (Sources)

¹⁹ o.c., 164

²⁰ o.c., 167

²¹ o.c., 167-168

²² o.c., 168

²³ o.c., ib.

²⁴ o.c., ib.

if this were assumed to be true, they should have been **guaranteed all basic human rights**, for example, the right to a fair trial! It absolutely cannot be claimed that the mass murders in Slovenia were but the expressions of personal revenge, the excesses of Partisans inebriated with victory, or the like.

The deed was simply the **premeditated destruction and effective extermination of all opponents, so that not the slightest trace remains**. Or to put it differently: the **postwar killings in Slovenia** were nothing else but **a genocide that was planned and executed down to the tiniest detail**. This applies to every single person that was killed, and in particular to those who were murdered because they had fought against communism and its Revolution.

What happened in Slovenia after the war, unfortunately, completely fits the definition of “genocide” in dictionaries: **“The systematic and premeditated extermination of racial, religious, or political groups”**.

217 persons acknowledged as Martyrs for the Faith

Noticeable even today, the Slovenian public media takes a differing position towards the dead depending on whose side they belonged. Of course, the public media does not always reflect public opinion!

This double standard by the public media does not preclude that the victims of the communist revolution and of the postwar government reign of terror should be honored by setting memorial plaques by parishes, or by gradually erect memorials at the most well-known execution sites. There should be no objection to this proposal, since each year since 1990, thousands of sad/happy pilgrims visit the most notorious mass gravesites, such as Teharje and Kočevski Rog.

The communal veneration customarily occur in July. At the 11th Anniversary Mass held in the year 2000, 217 of this multitude of martyrs were acknowledged as Slovenian witnesses to the Faith. This means that it is now possible to initiate steps for their beatification and subsequent Sainthood (see www.rks.si/Rog). The list of these 217 Slovenian martyrs of the 20th century contains the following names: “Ernest Anžel, Vinko Avsec, Janez Bastič, Marijana Bastič, Pavel Bastič, Vladimir Berčič, Alojzij Bernot, Jože Bitenc, Jože Bobnar, Jožefa Bojanc, Jože Breclj, Marija Breclj, Martin Breclj, Angela Breclj, Jožef Bregar, Alojzij Breznik, Ivan Bric, Jožef Burgar, Milko Cankar, Franc Cerkovnik, Franc Cvar, Darinka Čebulj, Janez Černoga, Vencel Zdešar, Anica Drobnič, Alojzij Duhovnik, Anton Duhovnik, Lambert Ehrlich, Mihael Erklavec, Jožefa Feguš, Alojzij Finžgar, Gabrijel Gaberc, Franc Gabrenja, Jože Geoheli, Franc Glavan, Franc Gomilšek, Henrik Goričan, Alojzij Grebenc, Mihael Grešar, Franc Grobler, Lojze Grozde, Janez Gustin, Danijel Halas, Anton Hočevvar (Ambrus), Anton Hočevvar (Grosuplje), Janez Hočevvar, Franc Hočevvar, Janez Homan, Lojze Hostnik, Anton Hren, Ivan Hrovat, Franc Hrustelj, Srečko Huth, Alojzij Jakoš, Franc Jakoš, France Jakoš, Franc Jakoš, Alfonz Jarc, Janez Jenko, Anton Jenko, Rok Jereb, Jakob Jerman, Ludvik Jerman, Franc Kač, Franc Kanduč, Anton Kastelic, Jože Kastelic, Vinko Kastelic, Anton Kastelic, Franc Kek, Boris Kerč, Franc Kern, Emil Kete, Jaroslav Kikelj, Janez Klopčič, Janez Kodrič, Jožef Kofalt, Janko Komljanec, Avguštin Kostelec, Marko Kostelec, Jože Kotlušček, Anton Kovač, Stanislav Kovačič, Bratomil Kozamernik, France Kozina, Frančiška Kozina, Ivan Kozina, Janez Kozina, Janez Krajnik, Frančišek Krašna, Marijan Kremžar, Alojz Kristan, Peter Križaj, Matevž Krmelj, Matej Krof, Ivan Krušič, Štefan Kuhar, France Kunstelj, Albin Lavrenčič, Anton Lavrih, Vlado Leban, Dušan Leskovic, Veronika Lestan, Melhior Lilija, Franc Lindi, Jože Logar, Štefan Lopert, Janez Lotrič, Alfonz Malavašič, France Malovrh, Ciril Mavsar, Darko Mavsar, Dolfi Mavsar, Jožef Mavsar, Mici Mavsar, Pavel Mavsar, Peter Mavsar, Stanko Mavsar, Terezija Mavsar, Vilko Mavsar, Jože Mehle, Franc Miklič, Franc Mlakar, Anton Mravlje, Anton (sin) Mravlje, France Mravlje, Vinko Mravlje, Veronika Mrgan, Ignac Nadrah, Franc Nahtigal, Marica Nartnik, Ive Novak,

Ivanka Novak, Ludvik Novak, Henrik Novak, Alojz Obit, Valentin Oblak, Jakob Omahna, Rafel Oražem, Franc Orešnik, Franc Oven, Janez Pašič, Janez Pavčič, Marijan Pavlovčič, Frančišek Pen, Viktor Perkan, Franc Pezdir, Ladislav Piščanc, Cvetko Podlogar, Peter Pogačar, Jožef Pokorn, Anzelm Polak, Anton Polda, Janez Polše, Leopold Potočnik, Ferdinand Potočnik, Jože Pravhar, Antonija Premrov, Alojzij Prešeren, Stanislav Pungeršek, Amalija Purgar, Stanislav Rabuda, Alojzij Rakar, Janko Ramovš, Janez Rančigaj, Janez Raztresen, Franc Rihtar, Matija Rom, Janez Rus, Franc Rus, Anton Salmič, Viljem Savelli, Janez Seljak, Jakob Sem, Jože Sivec, Ludvik Sluga, Janez Sotošek, Franc Stopar, Anton Šatej, Anton Šegula, Jožef Šerjak, Franc Škufca, Anton Šmalc, Leopold Šmid, Jožef Šolar, Franček Štabuc, Vladimir Štefančič, Vinko Štirn, Bernard Štuhec, Filip Terčelj, Domink Tiselj, Ernest Tomec, Mirko Tratnik, Stanko Tratnik, Miha Turk, Viktor Turk, Matej Tušek, Mihael Umek, Franc Veber, Lenart Velikonja, Anton Vovk, Aloj Vrhnjak, Jože Zajec, Izidor Zavadlav, Izidor Završnik, Viktor Zorman, Anton Zupančič, Frančišek Župec, Karel Žužek, - From foreign areas: a) the Diocese of Trieste: Mirko Vekjet, Placid Sancin, Jakob Ukmar; b) the Archdiocese of Gorica: Lojze Bratuž;, c) the Diocese of Celovec: Janez Hornböck, Anton Kutej, Vinko Poljanec, Jožef Pollak, Otto Schuster, Štefan Singer, Jožefa Sumper; d) "and other wives, husbands, girls and boys, who confirmed their witness to the Faith with their blood, in places known and unknown, and with their state till the end known only to God."

Štev. 96./ 48.

Od Predsedništva Centralne vlade.

25.VI.1945. prejeto ob 11 uri.

K i d r i č u - osebno.

Najkasneje v teku treh tednev bude raspuščena
sodišča nacionalne časti, vojna sodišča a bude sedila
samo vojnim osebam, vse druge bude prevzela redna sodišča.
Proglašena bo nova amnestija. Nimate torej nobenega razloga
biti take počasni v čiščenju kot doslej. ~~xxxxxxxx~~

K A R D E L J.

Kardelj's order to Kidrič to accelerate the "cleansing"

Ferenc, 18

Memorial plaque of victims at the Žalé cemetery

Zaveza, 27, 75



Rog 2004

Zaveza, 54, 75

Kočevski Rog

Zaveza, 20,66

Teharje

Ferenc, 78Teharje after landfill over
the massacre sites*Ferenc, 78*



Krimska jama
Cave, fenced
Ferenc, 77



Dedication of
memorial chapel
pod Krenom,
June 6, 2004
Ferenc, 82



Memorial at
entrance of Rov A
in Zgornja Bistrica
Ferenc, 92

14. In Refugee Camps

Total number

According to the Social Committee in Rome on July 15, 1948, Italy had **3,899** refugees who were either born in Slovenia or were living on Slovenian land as of April 6, 1941; plus **3,790** refugees born in the territories that belonged to Yugoslavia after September of 1947; a total of **7,689** Slovenian refugees.¹

There were approximately 10,000 Slovenian refugees in Austria and Germany.

This yields a combined total of approximately 17,700 refugees. By adding the number of those returned by force (approximately 10,000), then **in 1945 approximately 27,700 persons left Slovenia to flee from the Communist terror, or 1.8% of the inhabitants in Slovenia at the time!** The undetermined total number of those who were unable to leave their homeland or were captured during the withdrawal should be added to this figure.

1. DP Camps in Austria

Various areas²

1. Peggetz near Lienz in Western Tyrol

Peggetz, located in the western Tyrol region, housed **2,600 Slovenian refugees from June 29, 1945 to November 13, 1946**, making it the **largest Slovenian camp in Austria**.³ The camp was located 2km from the city of Lienz and had 34 well-constructed barracks. An infirmary had two treatment rooms and several sick rooms for patients. The camp also had a theater hall and a pool. A chapel was built later.

2. Spittal ob Dravi

The camp was located 5km from the city of Spittal. It contained 104 barracks. This camp also had a nice infirmary and a large theater hall. The camp originally received 1,600 Slovenians from Vetrinjš. After UNRRA on **November 18, 1946** transferred those from the Lienz camp to here, the **Spittal** camp housed **4,500** Slovenian refugees.⁴

¹ Rant P. 2003, 267, *Poročilo o statističnem stanju beguncev v Italiji p. Prešernu*; refugees from the Italian part of Primorska, who had already returned home, were excluded from this report.

² Comparatively much has been written about life in the camps. Perhaps in its lifespan *Koledar-Zbornik Svobodna Slovenija* was the most extensive. Various articles from this anthology are the main sources for this chapter. – A significant future reference will undoubtedly be the as yet unpublished doctoral dissertation of Rozina Švent entitled “*Življenje Slovencev v begunskih taboriščih na avstrijskem Koroškem po drugi svetovni vojni 1945-1950*” [*The Life of Slovenians in Refugee camps in Austrian Carinthia after World War II 1945-1950*], 425 pages with photographs and documents

³ At one time long ago, Western Tyrol was a land where the Slovenian language was spoken, as its geographical names still testify.

⁴ UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association). A UN organization for aid and reconstruction.

3. Šentvid ob Glini

This is an old ducal town at the edge of the fields of Maria Saal [*Saalfeld/Gospodsvetsko polje*]. Part of the refugees settled into the half-destroyed buildings of a former pyrotechnic factory, and the rest of them into army tents. Šentvid contained **600** Slovenian refugees. These DPs were soon transferred to Kellerberg, and from there to Spittal. Thus, almost all the Slovenian refugees in Austria were funneled to the DP Camp at Spittal.

4. Judenburg-Lichtenstein

This was an ancient city in Styria. This quaint, well designed, but small camp lay 1km from the city of Judenburg. The barracks were well constructed. The **500** Slovenian refugees comprised the majority of the camp residents. In spring of 1948 they were resettled to Trofaiach near Leoben.⁵

5. Bistrica na Dravi (Kellerberg),

6. Sv. Jedert nad Velikovcem,

7. Puch pri Salzburgu.

8. Asten pri Linzu⁶

Daily Distress and Suffering

In the first year there were several months when the camp inmates were often very hungry, not surprising because, for example, in the summer of 1946 they were receiving barely 400 calories per day, while the lowest daily number of calories in other camps was around 800.⁷ Beets and cabbage was the standard menu during wintertime. In the morning they were given unsweetened coffee (from roasted peas) with 100g of bread to last the entire day, at noon some “soup” (boiled water containing some “filaments” of meat from a can, plus one or two small pieces of macaroni and perhaps a green leaf), and in the evening only the same sort of coffee, nothing else. Many months later, at noon they occasionally received some watery corn meal *polenta*. However, this was not the worst. Worse than starvation were the fear and uncertainty that in the end they would be returned to Yugoslavia.

UNRRA constantly tried to talk the refugees into “repatriation”, claiming that the refugees had been “pardoned”. It started as mere propaganda, but later changed to pressuring and subtle threats. UNRRA increased the pressure with greater starvation. Then it stopped all camp publishing. In November 1946, when the temperature was -16C, they transferred all the refugees from the beautiful Peggetz camp to the Spittal camp, where they were crammed into poorer barracks. There was no firewood, so everyone suffered from the bitter cold. This persecution simply stiffed their resolve. So UNRRA tried a different tack: it offered food packets and promised 6-week’s worth of food to anyone who would return home. Only a handful took the bait, and they never did receive the promised food.

⁵ *Slovenski begunci v Avstriji [Slovenian Refugees in Austria]*, ZSS 1949, 110; *Naše šolstvo po taboriščih v Avstriji [Our School Systems in Camps in Austria]*, ZZS 1952, 171-172

⁶ For this, see the article concerning education in footnote 5, 1, 179-180.

⁷ Corsellis-Ferrar, 120, comment that the average German diet during wartime (until the winter of 1944-45) was never less than 1,800 calories per day.

The **Steele-Tito Agreement of September 8, 1947** engendered even worse suffering.⁸ A few days after the agreement, Austrian newspapers forecast a forced repatriation of 7,000 Slovenian refugees from Carinthia. A **wild hunt for certain Slovenian refugees** began throughout the camps. The Yugoslav Radio renewed its diatribes against the refugees and called them traitors and war criminals. The Yugoslav Repatriation Commission was growing mean and aggressive. Panic gripped the people, as it had earlier in Vetrinj. The men folk no longer dared to spend the night inside the camps. Some slept in nearby barns, others simply under the open sky. Frequent raids also started: the British completely surrounded the camp and searched through each barrack for “war criminals, collaborators, and traitors”.

During the search from the raid during the nighttime of November 9-10, they seized 12 men and drove them away to **Wolfsberg**. On November 12th already, the camp commander, Major Maydon, announced over the camp loudspeakers the names of persons that would be driven to the camp **St. Martin pri Beljaku**; the reason was supposedly that the Yugoslav Commission suspected all these persons of anti-Yugoslav propaganda. (What about free thought and free speech, values that the Western Allies had fought for? According to the practice of all victors, unfortunately, “rights” applied only to their own “allies” – even though they later crossed into a cold war against these same “allies”. Equal rights did not apply to those whom they were unjustly accusing.) In this manner, they **evicted from the camp 30 families and several single persons** who did not want to go to St. Martin because they did not believe the British assurances. The Yugoslav Repatriation Commission was convinced that this agreement would now give it a free hand and get all 7,000 refugees to return home. It invited the refugees to meetings. At the first session, the head of the mission, Trobec, and his entire staff waited in vain: only 12 Yugoslav secret agents came to the meeting. At the following meeting, only a single refugee appeared. Trobec made a threat that whatever the refugees had undergone till now was nothing compared to what they would undergo in the next 14 days. However, on November 12th 1947, the pressures for repatriation stopped completely.

Between May 1945 and the end of 1947, opting for repatriation were 729 persons from Spittal, 61 from Trofaiach, and 56 who were living outside the camps, thus altogether **846 people**. However all these returned home for personal reasons or at the urging of their kin, and not on account of the commission.

Even though the **Jugoslav government renounced the Bled Agreement on December 10, 1947**, the British again locked down the camp on January 3, 1948 and took away 4 men. Of all those persons that the so-called McLean Commission snared, **only 3 persons were handed over by force to Jugoslavia** (Anton Košir, Alojzij Kovačič, Fric Natlačen).⁹

⁸ The Slovenian translation (signed by M.K.) is printed in ZSS 1958, 107-110; appended is an Epilog by P.R. (Pavle Rant) that reported what the Slovenian Social Committee in Rome had done in conjunction with this agreement, and also the shameful lying reply by the British legation at the Holy See, 12/31/1947, in which among other things it maintains that the agreement did not change the British policy on the handing over of war criminals and quislings from Austria, and **that it was completely untrue that the British authorities had returned 11,000 Slovenians by force to Jugoslavia**. As proof that the British government was dealing with the question of the Yugoslav refugees in the spirit of its own concept about justice and not in the Yugoslav spirit, the legation's reply pointed to the fact that the Yugoslav government had just renounced the agreement a short while ago. The original of this reply is now housed in the archives of *Studia Slovenica* (donated by Pavle Rant).

⁹ ZSS 1949, 118-120

Life and various activities¹⁰

“The camps are a world unto themselves. Wooden cities with their own administrations. A state within a state. Entrance forbidden to anyone who is not a citizen of the camp. Slovenian refugees live and die inside them. Happy and sad hours are tallied inside these wooden barracks. Days of grand and happy events pass over the camp, and also days of desperate straits.”¹¹

The first year passed, marked by bare internal activity. The greatest amount of cultural work and activity unfolded in the Peggetz camp. The vast majority of Slovenian refugees and Slovenian refugee intellectuals were amassed at Peggetz. Thus the Peggetz camp became the cultural and organizational center for Slovenian refugees in Austria. The Social Committee had its base here. As the English authorities avowed, this camp was the most beautiful and best organized in Austria. Later this glory was passed on to Spittal.

1. Education¹²

- a) Each Slovenian camp had its own **primary or elementary** school. The DP camps contained 330 Slovenian children of elementary school age. Of course they had to struggle in the face of huge difficulties: there were no suitable locations, benches, teaching supplies, books, pencils, paper, or chalk. After painstaking efforts they received an entire barrack to use for a school. Thanks to the British directors becoming ever more sympathetic, the education process became normalized, especially in the year 1946 under the commander Ryder Young and with the support of Pavla Mayk and John Corsellis, “and we actually forgot that we were in a camp”. The education system was modeled on the one from the homeland. To help the teachers, the **Slomšek Society** was established, which was publishing the newspaper *Šola in Dom* [School and Home].
- b) In the Peggetz and Spittal camps, they established the **Agricultural Continuing Education School**, mandatory for all young men up to the age of 21 upon completion of public school, unless they were occupied elsewhere. These young men met together in their own club “*Lepa bodočnost*” [Beautiful Future] and were printing a monthly newsletter under the same name.
- c) Girls had their own **School for Continuing Education in Homemaking** in Peggetz. At the time of registration (August 10, 1945), this school in its first year had 165 girls. The classes covered religion, Slovenian, bookkeeping (accounting), mathematics, principles of physics and chemistry, homemaking and milking, and the practical section was held in the camp sewing room.
- d) The **Continuing Education School for Trades** began in Peggetz on January 15, 1946. Registered were 38 apprentices, both boys and girls. Classes were held on Tuesdays and Fridays, and the other days were spent in the shops. The same type of school was opened in Spittal.

¹⁰ The best account written to date by a foreigner about the Austrian DP camps was by John Corsellis, “O Slovencih v begunskih taboriščih” [About the Slovenians in the Refugee Camps], ZSS 1973/1975, 61-105. The text is accompanied by photographs that were loaned to the editors by Lenčka Zupan Malovrh, Franc Pernišek, Dr. Marko Kremžar, and Marijan Kocmur. Soon a more significant work on this subject will be published, the doctoral dissertation of Rozina Švent.

¹¹ ZSS 1949, 111

¹² For a more detailed account of their schooling in Austria, M.B. (Marko Bajuk), “Naše šolstvo po taboriščih v Avstriji” [Our School Systems in Camps in Austria], ZSS 1952, 160-180

e) The **Slovenian Refugee High School**- Faculty

Headmaster Bajuk assembled **85 high schoolers** in **Vetrinj** already. He also composed the following staff of professors: Prof. Božidar Bajuk (classical languages and ancient history), Marko Bajuk [*inž.*] (classical languages, German, Slovenian, and chorus), Dr. Franc Blatnik, SDB (classical languages), Jože Brodnik [*inž.*] (physics), Dr. Kajetan Gantar (Slovenian and Italian), [*substitute prof.*] Janez Grum (classical languages and ancient history), Dr. Janez Janež (health), Dr. Franc Jaklič (religion and philosophy), Prof. Milko Jeglič (math and philosophy), Dr. Franc Kozin (chemistry), Dr. Rajko Ložar (art), [*substitute prof.*] Alojzij Luskar, SDB (religion), Dr. Franc Mihelčič, SDB (singing and natural sciences), [*music academy graduate*] Silvester Milhelič (singing), [*graduate/phil.*] Franc Novak (geography), [*Ph.D. candidate*] Roman Pavlovčič (classical languages, ancient and national history), Prof. Janez Sever (Slovenian), [*graduate/phil.*] Maks Šah (geography and history).

Over time there were **changes in the staff**: [*substitute prof.*] Grum took a new position. The staff was re-joined by Jože Majcen, Dr. Drago Zudenigo (took leave on 9/15/1946), [*Ph.D. candidate*] Vinko Logar, and Dr. Ludvik Žagar. On 3/1/1946 the staff was joined by Principal Jože Ovsenek (classical languages), and Dr. Oton Knežević (geography, history) who soon left to Italy; on 5/22/1946 Peter Pajković (geography, history); on 9/15/1945 Pavel Kveder (gymnastics).

- Number of students and success rates

In **Peggetz**, the instruction was continued at the **Refugee High School**, “Opening Day” July 9, 1945. There were **122 high school students** in the Peggetz camp.¹³ The **number** of students was **growing**. In the 1946/47 school year, 184 received grades, and in the 1947/48 school year, there were 178. For the 1949/50 school year, the high school had only the 3rd and 4th years, directed by Dr. Rajko Ložar. As for classrooms, it started just like the elementary school: roofs with holes, windows without panes, doors without handles, tables and benches worn down on all sides. All in all, the **success rates** were excellent (passed, no re-takes necessary): 84% for the 1944/45 school year, 75% for 1945/46, 81% for 1946/47, and 87% for 1947/48. The initial graduation examinations at the high school began on August 30, 1945. **Completing the graduation proficiency tests were 21 students in 1945, 21 in 1946, and 10 in 1947, and 38 in 1948** because a special class was held in that year due to the emigrations.

- Textbooks and other teaching material

Textbooks and teaching supplies were smuggled in knapsacks from Trieste across the 2000m high Alpine mountains. There was also the case of a **student, France Jerman, who actually sneaked back into Slovenia to get books**, a visit that cost his sister long years of imprisonment [*tr. for not reporting him to the authorities*].¹⁴ The

¹³ The proper spelling is “Peggetz”, but the majority of refugees wrote simply “Peggez”, probably since this conformed more closely to their Slovenian pronunciation of the name.

¹⁴ Corsellis-Ferrar, 106 – Jerman settled in Bariloce (Argentina), where for many years he was a national ski champion.

publication of *Zgodovinski atlas [Historical Atlas]* composed by Roman Pavlovčič was an invaluable text.

- Hardships after the resettlement to Spittal

A veritable Way of the Cross began with the resettlement to Spittal in November of 1946 because the English administration was little inclined towards educating the youth. The commander told Principal Bajuk that the high school classes were taking too long; that the youth must be taught to read and write, and then sent off to work. There was first of all a struggle to obtain space, notably because the high school had brought along a rich inventory: a public library of more than 1300 books, a school library with 1200 books, the school archives, and furniture for assemblies and for the office.

- “Technical School” instead of a High School

Principal Bajuk did his utmost to preserve the continuation of the schooling, until the shocking news on **December 9, 1946, when the camp commander summoned him and showed him a letter from Vienna, that the high school must be closed, that the students must in the quickest manner possible be trained in marketable skills, etc. The commander demanded that by the next day the school administration must submit a new educational plan for a middle technical school.** He did acquiesce to the principal's plea to extend the deadline to two days.

Principal Bajuk quickly summoned a meeting of the professors, who formulated an organizational structure for the new type of school. The plan kept all the high school basic courses, but for the higher grades added descriptive geometry and practical training in the workshops. In effect, this modification enabled them to **dupe the camp leadership**. The commander's aide rated this plan as “excellent”, thus as of December 16th the teaching was able to continue “according to the old tier” in the Youth Home. During the Christmas vacation, the high school was in working session in the 4 classroom barracks. After January 7, 1947, the classes were broken off, because the construction of the new barrack for a school was behind schedule. On January 29, the “new technical school” was solemnly opened. Marko Bajuk (*inž.*) taught descriptive geometry. A bitter cold wave arrived on February 23; since the school had no heating, the classes were shortened from one hour to 15 minutes, and absolutely no classes were held from the 1st to the 10th of March.

- Demands by the Yugoslav Liaison Commission and their effects

The worst blow was yet to come. The **Jugoslav Liaison Commission in the spring of 1947 wanted to destroy the Slovenian High School in any way possible**. Two emissaries from Tito (Prof. Kunc and Major Počkaj) came in March to inspect the high school. As a consequence of this visit, the **new commander of the camp on April 8 ordered Principal Bajuk and several professors to leave the high school** (Božidar Bajuk, Marko Bajuk (*inž.*), Dr. Franc Blatnik, Dr. Rev. Mihelčič, Prof. Janez Sever, Dr. Ljudevit Žagar, and Pavel Kveder). This eliminated almost 100 hours of classroom instruction. Despite this setback, the **high school remained in existence and operated effectively**. The role of principal should have fallen to Vice Principal Milko Jeglič, but because he was on sick leave, **Prof. Jože Majcen** assumed the post. The year was coming to a close and it would be necessary to attend to the student evaluations.

- A High School again

On **June 10, 1947** came the news that everybody was waiting for: the **commander** of the camp **again permitted a high school**. The new commander, **Maydon**, heeded the petitions by the high school and **granted permission for Principal Marko Bajuk, Prof. Božidar Bajuk, Prof. Sever and Dr. Žagar to be authorized to give the oral final exams to the students**, which were accomplished before September 20.

- Mandated Changes to the Professorial Staff

But the Slovenian communists persisted and were able to effect the following change: **Principal Bajuk on November 19, 1947 had to hand over his responsibilities to Prof. Majcen; on December 10, Jože Ovsenik became the new principal. Prof. Milko Jeglič substituted** as needed for Ovsenik, who had to drive three times a week from Camp Treffling. When Principal Ovsenik moved to Italy, **Prof. Jeglič became the principal**.¹⁵

The classes formerly taught by Principal Ovsenik were taught by Substitute Professor Petančič as of December 15, 1946. Gymnastics instructor Ivo Kermavner was replaced by Pavel Kveder, who in turn was replaced in Nov. 1947 by Alojzij Zupan. As of January 8, 1948, Dr. Žagar was succeeded by Maks Ocirk (*inž.*). Unfortunately there was no replacement instructor for natural history, which the students had to learn on their own. The Greek language course was dropped completely.

- Disposition of school's material assets

When the high school was dissolved at the end of the 1949/50 school year, the school's assets were given to the Salesians at Kamen near Tinje. The Society of Slovenians in Buenos Aires received the public library. Principal M. Jeglič handed over the school records to Rev. Ciril Petelin; this priest and later the Society of Slovenians were able to provide proof of schooling needed by any former students now in Argentina.

- English acknowledgment of the instructional standards

Principal Bajuk explicitly requested that the entire instructional program be inspected and accredited by the representative of the English Educational Supervisory Commission, C. W. Baty, a former high school principal. Baty wrote in his report that the Slovenian High School holds "a vital significance for us" and "**in some subjects even exceeds the standards of similar institutions in England.**" In the **General Conclusion** he wrote: "**The school is maintaining, under very great difficulties, the best traditions of European education and culture. Given the circumstances, the venture can fairly be called heroic, and deserves all possible recognition and support.**"¹⁶

¹⁵ See Božidar Bajuk, "*Moj in naš beg*" [*My flight and Our Flight*], *Duhovno življenje* 2002 Feb/March 54-56, April 88-89, May 120-122, June 152-154, a serial describing how the professors had to go into hiding as if they were criminals, and how they afterwards departed in secret to the North American zone of occupation.

¹⁶ Corsellis-Ferrar, 104-106

2. Singing and Music¹⁷

In all the camps, music and singing were fostered with utmost zeal. At Peggetz, a **School of Music**, which had 32 students, was incorporated into the structure of the high school. The camps at Spittal and at Judenburg each had their own **orchestra**, which from meager beginnings rose to wonderful heights. Singing proved a strong weapon during the entire refugee period. The singing of Slovenian songs soothed the refugee hearts and conquered many a difficulty.

The **Vetrinj Choir** broke up when the camp was disbanded. The new **Peggetz Choir** numbered 70 permanent singers, male and female. At first, its rehearsals were held right out in the open. There were virtually no songsheets and music scores, but the idealism of the singers and their **choir director Silvin Mihelič** overcame all obstacles. The choir fostered church, folk, and popular music. It had a whole line of repertoires. Its first performance was in Tristach on July 27, 1945. At the church concert on August 3, 1945 in the parish church in Lienz, the choir numbered already more than 100 singers.

The **Spittal Choir** rivaled the Peggetz Choir. At first it also had 70 singers. After the merge with the Peggetz Choir, the number increased to around 140.

3. Theater

Theater groups were quickly created in all the camps. At first they struggled due to the lack of the most basic necessities: no suitable playbooks, no stages, no scenery, no costumes. However, ingenuity and effort overcame all difficulties. **Numerous works** (more than 20) **were performed** on Austrian stages. These groups also provided the annual St. Nicholas pageants and other seasonal performances.

4. Adult Continuing Education

The school system covered the youth until age 21. General and special lectures were also being prepared throughout the camps. The general lectures were open to the public and covered mostly social issues. Special lectures were organized according to social status or profession: religious, social, political, general-cultural and educational.

5. Reading Evenings

A specialty of the Peggetz Camp was the Reading Evening. Its purpose was to teach reading and acquaint people the more important sections of Slovenian literature. The Reading Evenings were led by Prof. Božo Bajuk. They read the likes of *Martin Krpan*, *Ovčar Marko*, *Trop brez zvoncev*, *Beli menihi* and *Visoška kronika*. Reading Evenings followed by discussions were held each week, and attracted as many as 150 attendees.

6. Language courses

Because the paths to foreign lands were beginning to open, the watchword became: learn foreign languages! Courses were organized for German, English (upper and lower), Italian, French, and Spanish. Because there were no text books, the instructors themselves had to prepare the material.

¹⁷ For more details, Franc Pernišek, *Prosvetno delo v taboriščih v Avstriji [Cultural activity in the camps in Austria]*, ZSS 1953, 110-124

7. Gymnastics and Sports

Sports and gymnastics were fostered in all the camps. The spirits behind this activity were **world famous gymnasts**: Janez Kermanver, Janez Varšek, Janez Boh. Like all the other groups, they had to start from nothing too, yet were able to create a gym and gymnastic equipment.

Soccer tournaments followed one after another, where athletes from various camps competed against each other. The sports festivals were a special attraction, where their top gymnasts performed. Many devoted themselves to table tennis, mountain climbing, skiing, or chess. There was an entire series of chess tournaments.

At Peggetz, **scouting** attracted many teenagers; in Spittal, cub scouts were added to the scouting program. The director of the 1st Slav Council of Scouting was Prof. Alojzij Zupan, and the troop leader was Franc Humar. The scouts went often on campouts. They prepared many interesting programs for the refugees in the camp and the English administration. A huge supporter of the scouts was the camp commander, Capt. Ryder Young, who was involved in a fatal accident during a visit to the scouts; Dr. Valentin Meršol, who was accompanying him, was in the same accident.

The outstanding physical health of the Slovenian refugee youth can be attributed in large measure to the regular training in sports and gymnastics.

8. Publishing

Slovenian publishing was exceedingly important for the refugees. People needed to be informed about daily events, life in the homeland and in the camps. It was also critically necessary to nip in the bud all the communist propaganda that tried to trickle into the camps.

The newsletter *Domovina v taborišču* [*Homeland in the camp*] had its publishing debut already in Vetrinje around the 15th of May, and *Demokratična Slovenija* [*Democratic Slovenia*] had an even earlier start, already on May 11, 1945, in Lienz, courtesy of the National Committee.

At the Peggetz camp, the single-sheet newspaper *Novice* [*News*] was distributed each morning. An afternoon publication, *Domači glasovi* [*Voices from Home*] brought news from the homeland. For the youth, the illustrated *Begunska mladina* [*Refugee youth*] was published every 2 weeks. The farmers had their own paper called *Za lepšo bodočnost* [*For a Better Future*], the teachers had *Šola in dom* [*School and Home*], the students were publishing *Cvetje v tujini* [*Blossoms in Foreign Land*], and every family received each week the *Cerkvena oznanila* [*Church Bulletin*] and each month *Bogoljub* [*Lover of God*]. The camp had loudspeakers, over which the camp radio station broadcast native music and news.

The Spittal camp did not have its own newspaper until the refugees from Šentvid arrived. The Šentvid refugees brought along their *Taboriščnik* [*The Camper*], which was published daily, while *Begunček* [*Little Refugee*] was published for the youth.

In Judenburg, their daily newspaper was *Dom ob Muri* [*Home alongside the Mura River*].

The printing business extended to other areas. A cultural magazine entitled *Slovenska beseda* [*Slovenian Word*] was published from time to time. The girls had their own magazine, *Slovensko dekle* [*Slovenian Girl*]. The Catholic Action published an entire line of brochures. The camps were printing their own school textbooks, plays, and the works of Slovenian refugee poets and writers.¹⁸

¹⁸ René Podhorsky in "Slovenska begunska bibliografija" has collected, organized, and published all this print material from the first years.

9. Spiritual Life

A total of 83 priests ministered among the Slovenian refugees. This enabled liturgical services in all the camps, and more often than not, several Masses a day. The primary concern was to preserve the religious practices, customs, and devotions, particularly First Fridays and First Saturdays. The chapels were beautifully decorated. All the furniture was constructed by refugees. The picture of Our Lady of Brezje (Mary, Help of Christians) was set prominently on each altar.

Various religious organizations worked diligently, such as Catholic Action, the Marian Sodality for Girls, the Congregation of Mary for students, the Missionary Circle, the League of Young Catholic Workers, and others. Important work was done by *Mladinski dom* [*The Youth Home*], under the directorship of Salesian Janko Mernik with assistants the likes of Lojze Ambrožič and Rudi Knez.

The refugees even refused to allow the practice of pilgrimages to lapse. Bishop Rožman led the first pilgrimage to the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine located in Thurn near Lienz. There he solemnly read aloud the vow: if they safely returned home, they will build in Ljubljana (in Zgornja Šiška) a shrine, which would become the center of national devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. From July 21 to 29, 1945, the camps prayed the 9-day novena in honor of Our Lady of Fatima, which inaugurated a new prayer, composed by Bishop Rožman, to be recited each day of their lives as refugees.

On July 14, 1945 there was a penitential pilgrimage to Ulrichsbüchel near Tristach. That afternoon, the FSS appeared at the camp and wanted to know if there really had been any pro-Mihailović demonstrations held that morning. Group pilgrimages were made a few times to the grave of St. Hema and to Gospa sveta [Maria Saal].

10. Labor

- Peggetz-Lienz

Economic life was **crippled in the first year in Lienz**. Various epidemics had broken out. The English administration could not individually examine the hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war, displaced persons, refugees, and also all sorts of vagabonds. Extreme restrictions were therefore placed on movement, and this greatly hampered any opportunity for gainful employment. Often for days at a time the refugees were not permitted to leave the camps, and whenever they were allowed, they were required to stay within a 5km limit. The Social Committee therefore began to consider the possibility of the camp refugees having their own workshops. In reality this plan quickly become realized.

On **August 8, 1945** there was an assembly of all those who had already on their own begun to produce products according to their trade skills. Msgr. Škerbec encouraged them to create their own workshops. By Sunday **August 10, 1945, there was already an exhibition of camp-made products in the hall of the Handicraft Home in Lienz**. Visitors were amazed at the ingenuity, taste, and skill of the Slovenian people.

Because the authorities had cleared out the camps of all persons who were not DP's, more room was becoming ever more available, but each camp faced its own large set of challenges. All these newly-available places had to be renovated: any furnishings destroyed by the war had to be replaced; beds, a great shortage, had to be fixed or constructed; the most necessary furniture had to be constructed; destroyed water pipes and electric wiring had to be reconnected. For these tasks, the camp administration quickly provided work to the craftsmen and skilled laborers. A major difficulty was the shortage of tools, which were simply not available on the open market; but Slovenians are ingenious: they rooted out and fixed anything that others had discarded as rubbish; in one way or another, they found a use for everything!

Workshop after workshop sprang up: carpenter/cabinetry, blacksmith, plumber-electrician, tailor, shoe maker. Each camp exhibited the skillfulness of its people. In Lienz they were able to expand the workshops. When UNRRA came and brought a **large amount of new clothing and cloth material**, all of it had to be **re-worked**, enabling the tailors and seamstresses to demonstrate their skill and creativity. Piles of rags were found in the former German Army warehouses; immediately a slipper factory sprung up, which made **thousands of pairs of slippers**. Pine trees, hazelnut trees, and willows were plentiful in the vicinity. The local Austrians had run out of wooden bowls, so the refugee **pots-and-pan makers and basket-weavers** immediately set to work. The wicker workshop and the tub workshop flourished; their best customers were the local residents around the camp.

The areas around the camps were littered with wagon and automobile wreckage, petrol drums, metal concrete-reinforcement bars. The locals paid absolutely no regard to this, but the Slovenian blacksmiths and tinsmiths pounced on this rubbish. From discarded automobile parts they fashioned the **finest quality chisels and wedges for wood planers**.

From the recycled automobile sheet metal there developed a true **industry of small but quite attractive wood-burning kitchen stoves**. The former army warehouse also contained piles of kerchiefs, ribbons, strips, military sleeve stripes, and the like. The Slovenian girls found this mound of colorful military paraphernalia to be a treasure trove of raw material and source of income. This led to the **manufacturing of puppets and all sort of toys**: rabbits, teddy bears, etc. Rosettes/appiqués were unthreaded to provide sewing thread and colorful embroidery thread. The girls and wives from Žiri and Škofja loka began to make **bobbins-lace**; other girls were **binding albums, keepsake boxes, tablecloths**. The locals and the English women's world marveled at this resurrected craft industry.

In Lienz, a real factory sprung up in the camp. The refugees earned good money. They voluntarily donated a small share of this income to the community at large. This amounted to 2,000 shillings per month.

Apprentice training was introduced from the very start, while former apprentices were fulfilling their certificate requirements under the tutelage of excellent masters. **A special trade-technical course for apprentices was created in March of 1946, and in September the apprentices already received their certification diplomas**, issued by the UNRRA. In three years, a good number of young men and girls, and invalids too, completed their training in gainful trades.

- Spittal

The **Spittal camp** lagged behind no one when it came to work. But it displayed its individuality. Many rooms in Spittal doubled as **workshops for dry goods**. Each week they were driving away truckloads of sieves, strainers, pails, tubs, and whole piles of wooden utensils. The Spittal camp supplied almost all of Austria with these wares. For this reason the people also earned good money.

A former aircraft factory was near the camp. All that was left of it were heaps of aluminum scrap. The locals did not know what to do with it. But the Slovenian refugees were carting it back to the camp on hand-pulled wagons. In the metal-works barrack they built a simple furnace, and hung the sign "**Foundry**" on the barrack. From the scrap aluminum they cast **pots, crosses, and various figures**.

Starting in the autumn of 1947, there were many technical courses in the Spittal camp. The courses enabled the youth to learn the trades of tailor, carpentry, shoemaking, mechanics, and masonry. Female students were sacrificing their vacation time and going to work in the sewing rooms.

- Judenburg

Near **Judenburg** there was a large airport and also an aircraft “graveyard”. With permission from the English authorities, the Slovenian refugees dismantled these junked airplanes and took away the aluminum sections. A true **industry for aluminum ware sprung up in DP Camp Lichtenstein: cups, pots, frying pans, bowls, tubs, wash basins**. All the Slovenian camps eventually obtained this metal ware, which replaced their “substitute” objects; the local folk were also purchasing them.

The Slovenian refugee camps had no lazy folk, for up to 95% of the able-bodied were engaged in work. The occupation authorities put weight on the concept that the DPs must support themselves – no matter how difficult the work. Over time the Spittal camp became the largest Slovenian refugee camp in Austria. **Each month the Slovenian refugees had to pay around 120,000 shillings for food and board in the camp!**

Emigration

There was virtually no emigration to trans-oceanic countries until the spring of 1948. Then **60 Slovenian refugees immigrated to Venezuela**. The first **permissions to immigrate to Argentina** arrived at **Easter of 1948**. Although **Canada** restricted its selection to **unmarried girls and men up to the age of 40**, **624 Slovenian refugees** had already emigrated there by the end of October.

The year 1948 saw the departure of 96 persons to **England**, 13 to **France**, 27 via **Italy** onward into the world, 2 to **Germany**, 3 to **Spain**, 1 to **Sweden**, 3 to **Africa**, 232 to **Argentina**, 85 to **Brazil**, 20 to **Chile**, 8 to **Ecuador**, 3 to the **USA**, and 4 received citizenship in **Austria**. Including those who went to Canada, a grand total of 1,122 refugees had departed from the DP camps by the end of October 1948.

The **emigration flow continued**. The **door into the USA opened** up for many, and the **majority of the remaining** – especially families with small children, the elderly or the invalids – departed to **Argentina**.

The Camp in Graz

As of 1945 already, there were around **120 Slovenian refugee students** attending the University in Graz. Later they forged ties with their counterparts in Italy.

During this period many of them received their diplomas or continued working towards a doctorate. Afterwards, some of them emigrated to Argentina or Canada. Many of them were able to transfer to continue studies in Spain, where some of them remained to work in their professions, some with much acclaim.

2. DP Camps in Italy

Four camps contained the majority of the Slovenian refugees in Italy: **Monigo, Forlì, Servigliano and Senigallia**.¹⁹ More camps were actually involved, due to the frequent resettlements.

¹⁹ *Slovenski begunci v Italiji, DP Camp Nr. 9 [Slovenian refugees in Italy, DP Camp No. 9]*, ZSS 1949, 125-138

1. Monigo

A contingent of the refugees departed from Austria immediately after they arrived in Carinthia; the English drove the majority on trucks to Italy. Here they were placed in the central collection camp at **Monigo** near Tarvisio. The Slovenian spirit of industriousness and enterprise came to the fore and during the summer the camp was tidied up as well as could be. Already in the first days of their residence, they were visited by the Bishop of Tarvisio, Antonio Mantieri. The refugees set up for themselves a beautiful chapel in the camp. For the feast of Corpus Christi, the chapel hosted the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and various other nationalities joined the procession. Just as this was going on, the Slovenian refugees were stunned by the news from Carinthia about the repatriation of the Homeguards.

Quite a few **Slovenian seminarians** left their homeland in May of 1945. The final-year seminarians were ordained to the priesthood on June 17, 1945 in Zermano. They had their First Masses in the DP camp chapel in Monigo.

Provisions for cultural life were made in Monigo too. There were **many cultural lectures and presentations**. They created a choir which later became the very famous **Émigré Singing Group (EPZ)**, which held its first performance there a few days before its departure from Monigo. They also created a kindergarten, an elementary school, and a high school.

The **resettlement** of the strongest Slovenian community in Italy **from Moniga to Forli** began on **August 26th** with the departure of the first group. The second group followed on the **27th**, and the third on the **29th of August, 1945**.

2. Forli

In Forli, the majority of the refugees were housed in the large building of the army academy, and the remainder into the old army barracks in another part of the city. The Slovenian refugee community remained in Forli **only until September 5th**. On this day the majority departed by special train further southward to Porto San Giorgio, and from there the group was taken by army trucks to **Servigliano**. Some of the Slovenian refugees remained in Forli, and others were sent to the camp in **Fermo**, from where some were later sent to Servigliano and some to **Modena** and **Riccione**.

3. Servigliano

Initial Events

The Slovenian refugees upon arrival found the camp in **considerable disarray**. Under the leadership of a new committee, it was once again necessary to do as much as possible to create living conditions that were as bearable as possible. This industriousness caused the signs of discouragement visible on some faces to quickly disappear.

On the second day of their new residency at Servigliano, the camp was unexpectedly visited by Minister Dr. Miha Krek, who thus came in contact again with Slovenian people for the first time in many years.

Capt. Oakes held the command for the Allied side. He became liked because he was a simple and unpretentious man who understood their situation. He relegated the management of the camp in all matters to the Slovenian committee. Capt. Oakes departed for a new position at the end of September, and on October 10th, **Capt. Flood** assumed command of the camp.

Slovenian liturgies were held in the Servigliano parish church for the first four weeks while their own **camp chapel** was being constructed, which was **officially consecrated on October 6, 1945**. On the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, October 7, the refugees at Servigliano also made the vow to construct a church in Zgornja Šiška. Many death-memorial services were held in this chapel.

On September 24, the Allied authorities sent quite a few families to Senigallia to be resettled in a camp dedicated exclusively for families. Both camps maintained constant contact with each other.

The Creation of Slovenian Schools²⁰

The greatest obstacle for the operation of schools was the lack of space. When Capt. Flood arrived, he decided that the Slovenian elementary school and high school should hold classes in the Italian elementary school in the city itself. But because a floor needed be constructed first and there was a shortage of lumber, Capt. Flood decided that space should be prepared in the camp itself. When the families were resettled to Senigallia, the question also arose whether only one high school or two should remain; the prevailing opinion was to keep two. Principal **Ivan Prijatelj** directed the high school at Servigliano the entire time.

In the camp they also set up a boarding school for students, and while under the command of Capt. Lancaster, one for the co-eds too. Classes at the Slovenian school began on October 5, 1945. The educational achievements were acceptable at the end of the year and satisfied the success levels at Slovenian high schools. There were **88 students in the first year**. They had their own **Slovenian Student Union (SDZ) and Marian Congregation**.

Cultural Activity²¹

Slovenian refugee culturists wanted to offer as much education, recreation, and entertainment as possible. With their performances, the Servigliano refugees quickly proved to every audience how talented their nationality was.

Slovenian Emigrant Theater (SEO)

The SEO was created on October 29, 1945 and became highly active. Although in the beginning it had no stage or other essentials, with the support of the camp command it succeeded in achieving all its goals: a suitable theater hall, a spacious stage with whatever was necessary for lighting and scenery, and costumes provided by the camp seamstresses.

The first event was the St. Martin Festival [*martinovanje*] on November 12, 1945. This was followed by [poet] **Balantič Night**, then the **St. Nicholas program** on December 6. The first play was Vombergar's *Voda* [Water], presented on January 1, 1946. Then they performed Jalen's *Dom* [Home] on February 19, 1946, *Revizor* on February 17, *Srenja* [The Community] on February 24, and *Miklova Zala* in the beginning of April. The premier of *Hamlet*, which Dr. Krek also attended, was on July 11.

Sports

Interest in sports was displayed already in their first months in Monigo. There were quite a few athletes in the camp, who organized a track and field meet while still in Monigo. After the resettlement, the interest in sports even increased. On November 26, 1945, the sports club **ESK Slovenia** was created, whose membership soon numbered 100 men and around 20 women. It had 7 sections: **soccer, volleyball, ping-pong, track and field, rings, swimming, and gymnastics**.

The club was its liveliest on the outdoor playing field, where it carried off quite a few victories. The soccer players competed with the Poles, Croats, Serbs, and Italians. The volleyball

²⁰ For more detail, M.M. (Marjan Marolt) *Naše šolstvo v Italiji v dobi begunstva* [Our Schools in Italy during the Refugee Period], ZSS 1952, 181-182, with data about Riccione, Eboli, Trani, and the university students.

²¹ More information in Marjan Marolt, *Kulturno delo v italjanskih taboriščih* [Cultural Activity in the Italian Camps], ZSS 1953, 125-138, where he includes Praglia-Brixen

players also competed against other nationalities, and in the long run achieved more victories than the soccer team. The track and field events aroused great interest. The apex of sports activity was the **Sport Days**, which the club prepared for November 17-18, 1946, attended by athletes from Bologna. The members of the sports club also performed in various disciplines in other camps: Riccione, Fermo, Bologna, Senigallia, Jesa.

The Émigré Choir “Slovenija”

In order to make the chorus’ work as disciplined as possible and to preserve the direction upon which the choir was founded in Monigo, they chose the name EPZ Slovenija. The success of the preparatory phase reached its first expression on **August 25, 1945 with a concert of Slovenian songs** in the automobile garage in Monigo. A second concert soon followed at the same location. After the resettlement to Servigliano, the chorus achieved even greater heights in every aspect. It participated in numerous camp performances and celebrations. It also performed its own concerts in its home camp and elsewhere. With the program that it first performed at home and then in the municipal theater in Riccione, it went on tour on March 19, 1942 to Rome, where it gave a series of performances through March 25th. It also sang during a special audience with the Holy Father, and made an audio tape which was broadcast by Radio Vatican and other stations. This tour marked the highest success of the EPZ and also proved that it was conscious of its mission. The choir was directed by Rev. Dr. Pogačar, who later immigrated to Chile.

Slovenian Publishing

The daily newspaper *Zedinjena Slovenia* [Unified Slovenia] set its mission to keep refugees in touch with daily news, political and otherwise. The first issue was released in Servigliano on September 6, 1945. The newspaper was printed daily, until the community became dispersed throughout the world. As of November 1, 1945, the daily newspaper included a monthly literary magazine as supplement, *Svet in Dom* [The World and Home] which also featured drawings by the best refugee artists.

Every Saturday, *Zedinjena Slovenija* included a religious supplement, *Sejalec* [The Sower], which later became an independent publication. In November of 1946, the students initiated their own paper *Orač* [The Ploughman], and as of December, 1946, the youngsters had *Begunčkovu luč* [The Little Refugee’s Light]. For the priests, there was the monthly magazine *Besede življenja* [The Words of Life]. The *Zedinjena Slovenija* Publishing House printed all these publications. The printing house also printed a Spanish primer and numerous sheets and printed material needed by the camp. *Slovenski rodoljub* [The Slovenian Patriot], later renamed *Slovenski begunec* [The Slovenian Refugee] was also published on occasion.

Businesses

In the Servigliano camp, the strongest Slovenian refugee community in Italy experienced the most beautiful days of its refugee life. Much credit for this goes to the good will of the Allied commanders of the camp. In addition to the establishment of outstanding cultural activities, the groundwork was laid for numerous craft and trade workshops at the behest of the camp committee.

The Servigliano camp became **a veritable city in itself**. The camp was continuously inspected by the most diverse array of Allied visitors, who always were amazed at the order and cleanliness of the camp. **Various workshops** accommodated the specialized trades: **woodworking, shoemaking, wood planing, metal working, and tailoring**. There was even a **photography studio** and a **hair salon for ladies and gentlemen**. The restroom was equipped with showers, which cooled the camp residents during the hot months. The camp kitchen was quite

well stocked. Two canteens were able to provide a swallow of good wine and a snack, and the camp store provided for other needs. A **swimming pool** was constructed by the Tenna River. The camp infirmary was well equipped and supplied with medicines.

Various Other Activities

The long winter nights in the barracks were shortened by interesting lectures, and a series of lectures on continuing **adult education** were given in the camp assembly hall. Many language courses were held in the camp.

Because the camp was situated in a nice valley, with beautiful natural surroundings, the area offered the Slovenian refugees countless opportunities for hikes along meadow paths, through cool glades, past wheat fields or rich vineyards.

Tribulations

This pleasant atmosphere was frequently spoiled by events that upset the people, as for example, when the president of the camp board, Dr. Žitko, was forced to leave the camp. At the new elections, Avgust Vivod (*inž.*) was elected to be the Slovenian spokesman.

The UNRRA Investigative Commission

Upon its arrival on **March 30, 1946**, this commission triggered an entire line of interrogations and unpleasanties that the Slovenian refugees were forced to weather. The **members sitting on these commissions exhibited neither the spirit nor principles nor behavioral attitudes of democracy, the very reason why the Allies went to war**. Sitting already on the very first commission were people who were under the communist influence, and who looked upon the refugees as war criminals, fascists, and traitors. In **April of 1946, repatriation officers came a few times** into the camps; they were trying, in vain of course, to talk the people into returning home.

“Go home, go home!”

Even while the camp was still under the command of **Capt. Lancaster**, on May 23, 1946 there began a **period of shortages, pressuring, and unabashed propaganda for returning to Titoland**. This was a period of attempts to disintegrate the refugee community and to obstruct the workings of the Camp Committee for the emigration of Slovenian refugees.

On May 31, 1946 **Major Burnell** assumed command of the camp. With full military ruthlessness he carried out the directives of the Allied rulers, as did the UNRRA leadership for a while in the same manner. Their mentality was: the refugees were supposed to return home; if they had not yet done so, it was the fault of the intellectuals, the lay people as guilty as the priests; therefore, it was necessary to suffocate the rich cultural life in the camp – and that is exactly what happened.

Major Burnell immediately upon his arrival informed the refugees that UNRRA did not accept them and that the English military government would take care of them. As soon as the Slovenian children returned from a three week seaside vacation in Riccione, where the camp leadership had sent them, there came the **directive for the resettlement of the camp to Senigallia**.

4. Senigallia

In Senigallia the Slovenian refugees quickly set up residence, whether in constructed houses or the sheet-metal barracks. They refurbished places for a **chapel, school, choir rooms, kitchen, infirmary, printery, and also an athletic field and swimming area at the river bank**. The

communal dining area was a novelty. The **workshops** for shoemaking, carpentry, metalworking, and other trades moved into new places.

Investigative Commission

The pleasant new life soon ceased. Already on **August 9th** a **new investigative commission** came to the camp and remained two weeks. In numerous instances the commission demanded that the campers reply in a certain way or extorted from the campers such statements so that they could be placed in the “blemished” [suspect] group. There were plenty of threats that they would be returned, or that 300 refugees would be removed from the camp. Dr. Krek put a stop to this in time.

Expulsion of the Slovenian priests

Just as if they were using the Nazis as their model, the Allied rulers devised a plan to expel the majority of the priests. On **September 10, 1946, 29 Slovenian priests received an order that they had to leave the camp in two hours and go to Riccione, where there was a collection camp for all who were returning to Yugoslavia.** The people spontaneously amassed in front of the command post of the camp and demanded protection for the refugee spiritual leaders. The command threatened to call the Italian *carabinieri* and then actually did, but all this did no good. **Finally** the Allied officers announced that **the priests were going to other camps, and that nobody would be repatriated by force.**

The dismissal of the elected board – expulsions to Reggio Emilia, and Bagnoli

The next blow was the dismissal of the elected camp board. Major Burnell then set up a new board with France Maršič at the head. The previous president, Vivod (*inž.*), had to leave the camp.

No room in the camp even for a chapel

With no forewarning, the camp residents had to **dismantle their chapel** on May 1, 1947. The excuse given by the camp leadership was that there was a shortage of space. Without permission, the camp residents temporarily set up the chapel out **in the open.**

Then on April 30, the command ordered the **resettlement of the girls and women from their current accommodations into worse lodgings** – not that there was any reason for this.

In like manner they wanted to suffocate the daily newspaper *Zedinjena Slovenija*.

Brighter Moments

These brighter moments were **above all the cultural performances:** the re-presentation of Hamlet out in the open; the Christmas display of 1946 and the one for Easter in 1947. The theatrical community SKEO presented *The Miser* on stage on February 9 and *Veriga* on April 10. The Society of Slovenian Students (SKAD) *Slovenija* set up Lecture Days from February 10 to 15, 1947. On September 8, 1946 the sports club *ESK Slovenija* began to operate. Even the chess players formed their own club and held tournaments and instructional classes.

The prevailing Allied policy towards the refugees changed with the arrival of **Major Ebsworth.** The **propaganda for returning home stopped.** The **chapel was restored to its former location.** But on **August 20, 1947** a **new investigative commission** arrived, but this time already from the **IRO** (International Refugee Organization).

Spiritual Life

Some members of the investigative commissions already did not like the very fact that Slovenians were religious. This enkindled hostility towards the refugee, and made emigration more difficult for many a person. But this very prejudice made refugees hold their heads high and stiffened their resolve!

As always, the focal point was the Eucharist. Preparations were made with utmost splendor for the major feasts: Easter, Christmas and the like. The Slovenian processions on Holy Saturday and for the Feast of Corpus Christi were considered most important. The need for religious education was met by regular religious lectures and for a long time also by monthly spiritual renewals. The religious organizations and Catholic cultural organizations did a lot of work, especially with the youth. The leader for the spiritual ministry at the beginning for 3 weeks in Monigo was Msgr. Rev. Alojzij **Košmerlj**, followed by Rev. Anton **Orechar** until he was resettled, and by Diocesan Counselor [*svetnik*] Karel **Škulj** for the final month.

More cultural shows, but the final ones

Registrations for emigration began, mostly to Argentina; registration was being handled by the Slovenian Social Board in Rome.²² During this period the ESK Slovenija held Sporting Event Days, May 24-26, 1947. The camp choir performed again, even though its numbers were substantially smaller. The SKEO put on stage Cervantes' *Čuječega stražarja* [*La Guardia Cuadrosa/The Vigilant Sentinel*], Chekhov's *Prisiljenega obupanca* [*The Tragedian in Spite of Himself*], and Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*. The other theater group performed *Mesec je zašel*. For the end of the school year the students staged *Luč z gora*. They also prepared a Marian Dedication and a Baraga Commemoration. The university club SKAD in November 1947 presented a Social Issues Discussion Week open to everyone, and then a philosophy week just for its members.

A Visit by Frank Mervar

On October 4, 1947 a famous North American philanthropist Frank Mervar came from Rome for a visit. In fact, he was the first "Old American" who saw with his own eyes how the refugees were living. The very next day was also the final time that Tito's Commission visited the camp, which of course had absolutely no success.

Departure

The first 30 DP campers departed for Argentina on August 22, 1947. After January 1948, the majority of the Slovenian refugees were transferred to the collection camp Bagnoli near Naples, where they waited for ships to take them to Argentina, either embarking at Naples or Genoa, or sometimes also after crossing Germany. *Zedinjena Slovenija* ceased publication on February 1, 1948. The remaining DP campers again voted for their final spokesmen, with Peter Horn at the head. By now the Senigallia camp lost its Slovenian character. **Only a handful of Slovenian refugees now remained in Italy. A part of those refugees that were tagged as "blemished" by the IRO's investigative commission were assigned to depart via Germany.**

While in Italy, 8 countrymen died, 98 young couples were married, and 64 babies were born.

5. Albergo Bagni²³

Shortly after their arrival in Servigliano, the **families with the younger children** were transferred **already on September 21, 1945** to the **partially destroyed asylum Bagni** within

²² Concerning the work of the SO, see D.R.F., *Slovenski Odbor je utrl pot naši emigraciji* [*The Slovenian Board Facilitated the Path for our Emigration*], ZSS, 1949, 162-165

²³ Marjan Marolt wrote an article with this title in ZSS 1949, 139-144

the city of Senigallia. (The camp was normally called No. 7, while the camp at Senigallia was called No. 9). **Two kerosene lanterns provided the sole source of lighting. On the second floor, not a single room had a ceiling. There was only a single water tap. There was not even any straw for sleeping mats.** However the commander was quite different than the other Englishmen: he was only waiting for his demobilization so he could return to his store; he was kindhearted.

With the **young men** who came from Forlì, they quickly **formed a committee** with Alfred Volčan (Rudolf Smersu) at the head. They quickly overcame the initial difficulties and thus the camp developed nicely: it had **a kindergarten, an elementary school and a full high school, an infirmary, trade workshops, its own police, boy scouts, etc.** A **choir** was started, **cultural evenings** were prepared, **cooperatives** cropped up and also small **pubs**.

Slovenian students at the high school had to repeat all the exams and thus were able to obtain Italian report cards.

The first commander was after a brief time replaced by a New Zealander from UNRRA, followed almost immediately by an Englishman, who was a serious and hard-working person, and in contrast to the others took quite an interest in the reasons for their becoming refugees. **Food became sufficient and good-tasting.** Because the building was right next to the sea, life in Senigallia became rather tolerable.

In July 1946, all the remaining people from Servigliano were resettled near this camp. However, at first they were not permitted even to go from one camp to the other, until **Major Burnell** assumed command over both camps. Maintaining that the English were not in Italy to educate Slovenians, he **began to threaten to close the schools, increased the propaganda for returning home, abolished the infirmary, ignored the camp committee, and wanted to transfer some persons elsewhere. Then Tito's commission came into the camp** to urge them to return home. The food became demonstrably worse.

On **Tuesday, November 11, 1946** Mr. **Košiček** came to the front of the camp – he was not permitted inside – **with the first factual details about emigration to Argentina.** That very same day **Dr. Bajlec and Mr. Demšar** arrived from Trani and handed Burnell **an order that the two of them must collect a prescribed number of people from the Senigallia camp for the new camp in Barletta.** Burnell wanted above all to get rid of the families because there was a labor shortage. At the time, this “Camp No. 7” held 87 families representing 331 members, and 135 single persons. The **Tiene** Factory immediately offered them a wage increase, but everyone wanted to leave. The transfers began on the following Sunday already, two wagons per day. Altogether, **81 families, representing 316 members, and 59 single persons went to Barletta. Only 6 Slovenian families and a few single persons remained in Senigallia.**

6. Barletta

In Barletta the Slovenian refugees met more than a **hundred young men from Štajerska and Gorenjska** who had come there from Anversa and Lanicampo. They had been drafted into the German Army and then fled to the Allies, who at first wanted to return them home. After some transferring, in the end there were **340 Slovenians in Barletta.** The camp was situated outside the city. A shortcut path led to the city; because there were a few huts with goats along the way, the Slovenians nicknamed it “the goat path”.

The camp was in a **large double garrison in pavilion form.** They packed the former Senigallia residents into one pavilion. They selected the able-bodied to work inside the camp and to begin construction of a hospital in the neighboring Trani and immediately promised them wages; as for the rest, nobody paid any attention to them. Rumor had it the commander Owen and his aide Beech did not have time for them because they were busy writing the protocols.

From the Poles the Slovenians inherited a **small chapel**, which underwent even more decorating; an artist, Milan Volovšek, painted Our Lady of Brezje for the altar, and then even a banner. In this chapel, Deacon Milavec and afterwards Dr. Gnidovec married 14 Slovenian couples and baptized 18 refugee babies, 12 children received 1st Holy Communion, and 20 of them received Confirmation.

After one and a half months, the Slovenians were given one and a half **blocks for new residences**. Of course they had to prepare everything by themselves. The two commanders hardly ever made an appearance, therefore they appointed deputy managers; **soon almost all the deputies were Slovenians**. The board was able to obtain permission to create **all school levels, just like the ones in Senigallia**, and the command admitted the need for a special kitchen for the children, because the food was just too meager.

The conditions changed when **Miss Buttler** appeared in the camp. The schools and the kitchen underwent immediate repair. Out of the blue, clothing was also found for the refugees. **A clothes-washing room and a sewing room** were also set up. Unfortunately this young lady remained barely a full month. She was replaced by **Miss Tydeman**, whom the refugees knew from Senigallia.

Then more and more people of various nationalities began arriving at the camp. The Slovenian community numbered considerably **more than 500 persons**. **Although they were resettling other groups, the Slovenians remained there** on the grounds that they were utterly needed and the only ones capable of keeping the camp in order for so many people. The new commander, **Major Ormesher**, as well as **Capt. Beech**, had even beseeched the **IRO in Rome to leave the Slovenians where they were**.

In Barletta, **almost all those fit for work had jobs**. The **cultural work**, begun in Senigallia, continued here. The youth here also successfully completed the examinations at the Italian high school. The students were working in the Congregations, Catholic Action, and the Scouts (Marjan Trtnik). The choir won laurels from the Italians too. On stage, Linhart's play *Matiček se ženi* delighted 700 Slovenians in Barletta and Trani. They also held many Spanish classes.

The community slowly dispersed, mostly with the emigrations to Argentina, the final one somewhere around the middle of 1948. The only ones to remain behind were the 4 children who had died and were buried in the cemetery.

7. Modena²⁴

Around **100 persons**, mostly men, were the remnant of the group that had waited for three weeks in the half-destroyed building of the Airplane Academy in Forlì before they were directed to go to **Treviso**. Yet **remaining behind** in Forlì were still **more than 300 Slovenians**, mostly families, **some of whom after a full month of waiting were brought to Senigallia, and the remainder on November 2, 1945 into the Military Academy building in Modena**, which at the time was already an international refugee camp with at least 40 nationalities.

In Modena as well, the Slovenians quickly won recognition, so that in two and a half months, 98% of them had employment. This was probably the reason that they **resettled the university students to Bologna** so they could attend the university.

They were **culturally quite active** in Modena. They offered suggestions for various shows, but also prepared some themselves, serious as well as entertaining. They held language classes, and elementary and middle schools for other nationalities. They also performed concerts of Slovenian songs.

²⁴ *Slovenski begunci v Modeni [Slovenian refugees in Modena]*, ZSS 1949, 144-145

In Modena, the English rulers did not treat the Slovenians with disdain. The camp storeroom was under the direction of a magnanimous Englishwoman, **Lady Charlotte Rous**, who always kept its doors open wide.

After several months, some DPs transferred out so they could be with their relatives and acquaintances in Servigliano. The final 60 did not join the core in Servigliano until May of 1946.

8. Reggio Emilia²⁵

To the superstitious, the number of the camp – 13 – would have aroused fear. They packed **2,500 refugees of 23 nationalities** into this camp, a former Italian garrison. When the first Slovenians were sent here, they arrived already pre-judged as being the worst, allegedly because “they destroy obedience and submission to the camp rulers at other camps”.

The **first 9 Slovenians therefore felt like they were in hell**. Many others joined them later. Accustomed to cleanliness and order, they felt that they had entered a barn. The food was insufficient and poorly prepared; the commander’s behavior was inhumane (jail, forced labor, grounded for 3 days, etc.). In addition, among the other nationalities there was drunkenness, fighting among themselves, and nightly carousing. Despite this, the **Slovenians withstood everything till the end, when they were able to emigrate**.

9. Trani²⁶

The quaint small town of Trani lies a few kilometers north of Bari. The first years of refugee life were spent in the DP camp next to this town by some Slovenian **young men from Gorenjaska and Štajerska, who had been mandatory draftees into the German Army but did not want to return home after the war**.²⁷ Many of them after lengthy interrogations obtained jobs with the RAF (English Royal Air Force) as security guards at warehouses, etc.²⁸ When the Allied Forces were withdrawing from Italy at the end of 1946 and in the beginning of 1947, **these young men were discharged and sent to refugee camps**. Later the Allies brought more Slovenian families from other camps to Trani.

The camp at Trani was conspicuously international. The Slovenians quickly distinguished themselves from the rest. They set up their own chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Brezje.

The young people had their own **elementary school and high school**, and the children a **kindergarten**. The focal point was the **Slovenian Cultural Society** with numerous sections and subsections. The most active were the groups for singing, instrumental music, drama, sports, gymnastics, and the library, which had more than 70 Slovenian books. They had their own magazine, *Novi upi* [*New Hopes*].

The **driving spirit** behind all the work was due to **Rev. Stanko Skvarča** and **Edi Gobec**, at the time a student at the Italian university; the **spokesman for the community** was **Dr. Fanc Bajlec**.

The **majority departed to Argentina**, and the rest to various other countries.

²⁵ *Reggio Emilia – Begunsko Taborišče št. 13* [*Reggio Emilia – Refugee Camp No. 13*], ZSS 1949, 145

²⁶ *Begunsko taborišče v Trani* [*The Refugee Camp at Trani*], ZSS 1949, 150-152

²⁷ Albert Svetina (158-160) maintains that they had made the right choice; he claims that the OZNA imprisoned, interrogated, and ultimately “liquidated” all the Primorska parachutists. (It is not known if Svetina was exaggerating when he claims that all of them were killed; author’s note)

²⁸ A brief account can be found in “*Slovenski rojaki v RAF*” [*Slovenians in the RAF*], P.T., ZSS 1949, 149-150

10. Eboli²⁹

The camp was about 10 minutes away from Salerno. Most of the camp was situated on a plain, but the Slovenians preferred to dwell on the small hill. There were **around 700** Slovenians. For residences, they lived in tents under olive trees, crisscrossed by nice paths. There were also a few barracks made of sheet metal: the first was for the canteen, the second for a chapel, the third for the headquarters, and the fourth for assemblies and shows. The Slovenians from Štajerska were encamped opposite the barracks, the Homeguards on top of the hill, and the Chetniks of Duke Djurišić on its slopes.

The **lifestyle** was **quite active**. The **choir** was **directed by Emil Savelli**. The drama section provided entertainment from time to time, performing many plays (*Trije vaški svetniki*, *Mrtvaški ples*, *Postržek*, and others). There were **many classes on various topics** (farming, radio-telegraphy, etc.).

The **propaganda section** published *Jugoslovanski vestnik* [*Jugoslav Gazette*]. Zvone Žitnik, Hotimir Gorazd, and Ludvik Debeljak collaborated to produce the humoristic broadside *Rafal* [*The Blast*]. The poets published the magazine *Mi in svet* [*We and the World*], a collaborative effort by Zvone Žitnik, Pavle Borštnik, Dimitrij Jeruc, Perlec, and Bergant. Some collections of poetry were also published.

The Slovenian **students** lived in the **student boarding hall**. The high school was attended by **350 students, 36 of these were Slovenians**. The high school professors also held language classes for English and French. The athletes spent their time mostly on soccer and on track and field disciplines.

11. Riccione³⁰

In **June of 1945**, the **first Slovenian refugees, mostly from Primorska**, were moved into the former Mussolini villa in Riccione, on the coast between Rimini and Cattolica. The first commander was an Englishman, **Lambert**, and the Slovenian spokesman was **Polde Kemperle**. A **group of professors from the Gorica high school** started **classes** immediately. When the majority of the Primorska Slovenians went back to Gorica and Trieste, **some members of the NO** moved into Riccione, and **Ladislav Bevc** (*inž.*) became the spokesman. The subsequent English commanders were **Chase** and **Caringher**. The latter commander particularly made a very poor showing of himself in all aspects; for example, he treated the Slovenians like serfs. The Englishmen were succeeded by two North Americans, **Brown** and **Sampson**; both of these were true “gentlemen” and solicitous for the Slovenians.

The camp had an **elementary school** and a **technical** school. The camp also presented **language classes** and numerous **presentations**. They published **their own newspaper** for a while, but it soon stopped. The activists in this camp were Marjan Marolt, Prof. Alojzij Geržinič, Nikolaj Jeločnik, and Marjan Willempart.

The Riccione camp was undoubtedly one of the nicest of the DP camps, for the people roomed in hotels along the coastline, like some vacation resort. It was **disbanded on August 22, 1947**, when its DP refugees were dispersed **among the DP camps in Bologna, Reggio Emilia, and Senigallia**.

²⁹ *Slovenski begunci v Eboli* [*Slovenian refugees in Eboli*], ZSS 1949, 154

³⁰ *Taborišče v Riccione* [*The Camp at Riccione*], ZSS 1949, 154-155

Refugees outside the camps³¹

The larger communities were in **Bologna, Padua, Milan, and in various areas of South Tyrol.**

Many Slovenian refugees were also in **Trieste**, where they had to push for their rights and aspirations. Dr. Srečko Baraga was one of the main activists. One fruit of his efforts was the rapid rise of a **Slovenian High School**, and education was developing in all the sectors of Allied-occupied Trieste. Unfortunately, many Slovenians lived in **constant danger, because Tito's agents were kidnapping** them, taking them away to prisons in Slovenia or putting them to death.

Quite a few culturists helped with the publishing of *Zavezniški glas* [*The Allied Voice*], managed by Dr. **Brdnik**. The Slovenian refugees provided the foundations for Slovenian radio broadcasts in Trieste. They published **textbooks**, which were also used by the Slovenian schools in Austria.³²

Publishing began for *Mlada setev* [*Young Seedlings*]. They released Novačan's *Peti evangelij* [*The Fifth Gospel*] and *Atlas Slovenije* [*Atlas of Slovenia*], prepared by Jože Velikonja.

In **Rome**, the group of Slovenians who had various jobs there congregated at the **home offices of the Slovenian Social Committee**, situated on Via dei Colli 8 and 10. Larger groups of Slovenians were at Marija Snežna on **Olmatic** and in **Cinecittá**. There was **much Slovenian refugee cultural activity** in Rome, **internally or by hosting performing visitors**. The students organized *Tomaževe dneve* [*Thomas Days*] and published their own newsletter *Nova doba* [*The New Era*]. The League of United Workers organized many lectures and published the magazine *Družabna pravda* [*Social Rights*]. Bara Remec and Mihelič had an art exhibition for their work. Many performances were held in the hall of the Argentine church; at one of these was the first time for the reading of Jeremija Kalina's (*Dr. Tine Debeljak*) *Velika črna maša za pobite Slovence* [*A Funeral High Mass for the Slain Slovenians*].

Slovenian university students

Bologna

The first Slovenian refugee university students received permission to reside in a transient camp in **Bologna**. Starting in January of 1946, they were able to continue their studies here. For the 1946/47 school year, 90 Slovenian university students were registered at Bologna University; they completed 400 exams, and 6 received their diplomas.

They had their own **Slovenian university chorale** under the direction of Anton Štukelj. They participated in other areas too: a **photography club**, which organized an exhibition; a **soccer and volleyball club**. In June of 1948, the volleyball club won first place at Bologna University. They had their own little chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Brezje.

Some of these university students left in 1948 to continue their studies in Spain or Belgium, and others went to the USA or Canada.

Padua

There were some Slovenians studying in **Padua** already during the wartime who did not return home after the war. In the summer months of 1945 their numbers increased with the addition of the refugee students.

³¹ *Slovenski begunci izven taborišč* [*Slovenian refugees outside the camps*], ZSS 1949, 157-158

³² ZSS 1957, 209-212 contains a complete list of their books

In the winter of 1945/46 they **created the Club of Foreign Slovenian University Students**, which forged links with similar groups in Rome, Bologna, and Graz.

The Slovenian university students in Padua had **many difficulties, especially financial**. But they always found good people who would give them a helping hand. They also received aid from the Catholic LIGA in the USA and the Social Committee in Rome. **Between the autumn of 1945 and the autumn of 1948, 14 Slovenian refugee university students received their diplomas at Padua**. Some afterwards **emigrated to Argentina or Canada**.

Refugee Slovenian Seminarians³³

The **majority** of seminarians in Ljubljana **moved to Carinthia in May of 1945; 38 of them were returned to Yugoslavia by the British**. The fate of the majority of those returned is not known, but it is safe to surmise that they were killed.

Of the remaining seminarians, **6 were ordained to the priesthood that same year at Krka ob Glini, and 8 somewhat later in Tarvisio, Italy**, to where the Allies had driven a part of the Slovenian refugees from Carinthia.

The **idea to create a temporary Slovenian seminary in exile** surfaced at camp **Praglia**, especially since the refugees included many professors from the theological faculty. This idea could not have been realized without the help of the **Salesians from Montortone near Padua**, who upon the intercession of Dr. Štefan Farkaš made available the use of the sparsely **furnished rooms in the old Benedictine Abbey Praglia, some 10km from Padua**. The Salesians had likewise sought refuge here for their own seminary during the war, after their own site in Montortone had been seized by the Germans.

The **establishment of the Slovenian Theological Seminary began already in June of 1945 under the directorship of Msgr. Dr. Alojzij Odar**, who was able to get the **Papal Congregation on Seminaries to recognize the seminary in Praglia as a part of the Ljubljana Theological Faculty**. The General Assistant of the Jesuits in Rome, **Rev. Anton Prešeren**, was highly instrumental for this. Pope Pius XII immediately ordered emergency aid for the seminary.

Slovenian seminarians from various Austrian and Italian camps congregated in Praglia. Summer classes began in June of 1945 and in October the regular curriculum. Per appointment by the Congregation for Seminaries, Dr. Odar assumed the position of Rector of the seminary, and Dr. Karel Truhlar as the Spiritual Director, the post he already held in Ljubljana.

The **professorial staff** was comprised of Dr. Alojzij Odar, Dr. Matija Slavič, Dr. Ignacij Lenček, Dr. Ivan Ahčin, Dr. Janez Krajlič, and Dr. Janez Vodopivec. There were **25 seminarians** in Praglia. Four were ordained in the summer of 1946, three of whom departed to Primorska.

There were many initial difficulties. The rooms were unsuitable and lacked furnishings. There was a shortage of teaching materials, as well as food, clothing, shoes, and underwear. Over time the conditions stabilized enough that they were able to complete the entire academic year. They received aid from the neighboring farmers in the form of food, and were supported especially by their North American countrymen, who were deftly rallied in Italy by a U.S. Army chaplain for the North American troops, Rev. Louis Baznik, and within the USA above all by Msgr. Francis Gabrovšek and later by the Slovenian Franciscans stationed there.

Because the Salesians needed the furniture they had loaned, the **Rector happily accepted an invitation by the bishop from Brixen** to relocate the Ljubljana Refugee Seminary to his own seminary building. So in **mid-June 1946, the Slovenian seminary moved to the ancient**

³³ An article under the same title, ZSS 1949, 146-148

South Tyrolean town of Brixen (Bressanone), which lies between high mountains at the confluence of the rivers Eisack and Rienz. Until the seminary was repaired, the theology students lived at the diocesan boy's academy Vinzentinum, and in September they already moved into the seminary, where they occupied the entire second floor, while the native seminarians had the third floor.

In Brixen the seminarians had the **use of a beautiful chapel and a seminary library, and each seminarian had his own room. Suitable food, cleanliness throughout the building, and clothes washed and ironed**, were all taken care of by the nuns: everything delivered the feeling of their former well-ordered life in the homeland. In addition, the **healthy climate and the beautiful countryside** strongly reminded them of Slovenia.

The **number of seminarians** increased to **32**, and Dr. Ludvik Čepon joined the teaching staff. The friendly neighboring inhabitants provided the seminarians with gifts and invited them into their homes during the school vacation periods.

However, news from Rome made it clear that next year they would no longer be able to support the seminary. Many recommended that the seminarians disperse among the various Italian seminaries. The Italian authorities did not like to see Slovenian institutions along their borders. Plus the Allies were preparing to leave Italy and wanted to resolve the entire refugee question beforehand.

The **leaders wanted to preserve the seminary**, so they searched for possibilities in America. The **most favorable offer came from Argentina**, where the **Bishop in San Luis, Msgr. Dr. Emilio Di Pasquo**, upon the intercession of the Slovenian émigré priest Janez Hladnik, expressed his readiness to receive the seminary in its entirety in his diocese. The Papal Congregation on Seminaries and Bishop Dr. Rožman concurred with this solution.



Snow-covered DP Camp at Spittal,
personal from the USA



Bishop Gregorj Rožman visits the DP
Camp Peggetz *Tabor, 1970 12*



Officers from the Social
and the Education
Committees,
personal from the USA



Altar in the DP Camp
Chapel,
pesonal from the USA



Secondary School Barrack,
personal from the USA



Graduating Class 1948,
personal from the USA



Secondary School,
Headmaster Marko
Bajuk absent,
*personal
from the USA*



Graduation
Procession 1949,
*personal
from the USA*



A line of Boy Scouts,
personal from the USA



Cub Scouts, *personal from the USA*



Boy Scout
exhibition,
*personal
from the USA*



Front row,
seated, l-r:
Tomaž Sfiligoj,
Tone Natlačen,
Jožko Meršol,
Jože Rant.
Back row, stand-
ing, l-r: Prof.
Zupan, Stané
Jerebič, Lozje
Ambrožič,
Lt. Col.
George Beaton,
Srečko Gaser,
Janez Jeglič,
Scoutmaster
Humar,
*personal
from the USA*



Slovenian Social
Committee at Spittal
ZSS, 1975, 65



Carpentry workshop
ZSS, 1975, 72



Shoemaking workshop
ZSS, 1975, 72



Homemaker skills
workshop
ZSS, 1975, 72



Teaching staff for
the elementary
school

ZSS, 1975, 82



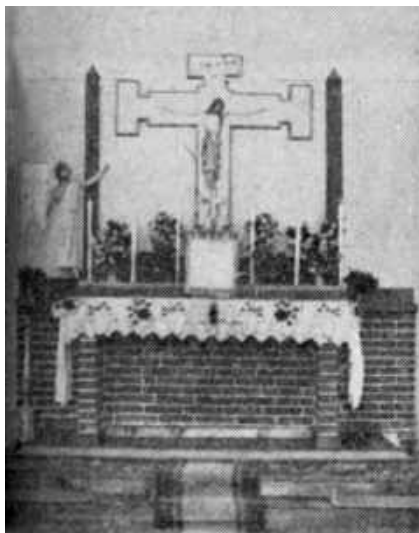
Infirmary Staff

ZSS, 1975, 72

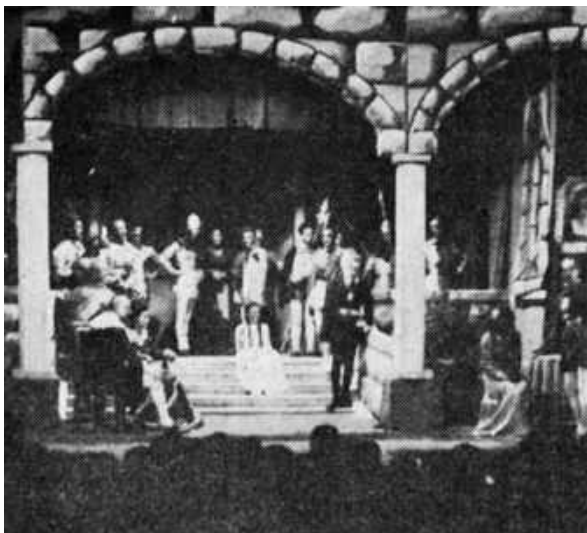


Waiting in line for
food at Spittal DP
Camp

Zaveza, 41, 37



The first refugee altar in Italy
ZSS, 1949, 125



Hamlet
ZSS, 1949, 129



Servigliano
ZSS, 1949, 126

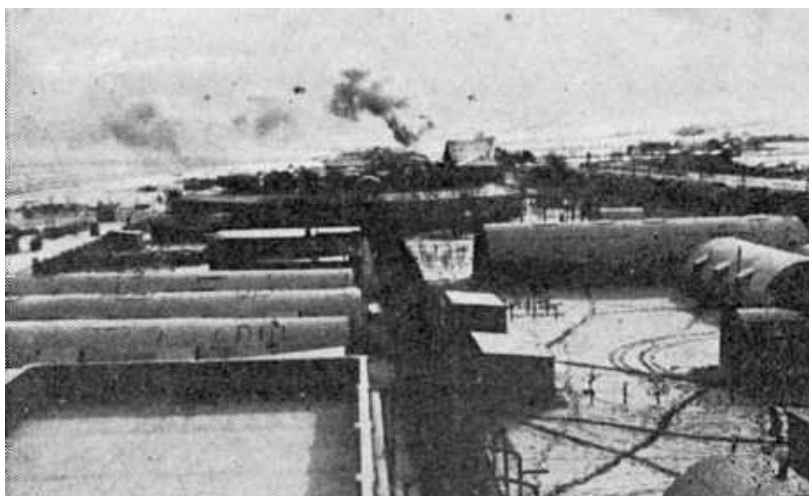


Choir in front of the
Basilica of Sts. Peter
and Paul, Rome
ZSS, 1949, 130



The 1st senior
graduating class,
DP secondary
school

ZSS, 1949, 133



Aerial view of
Senigallia

ZSS, 1949, 134



Slovenian com-
munity in the
DP Camp at
Trani

ZSS, 1949, 151

15. In the Free World

Where did the Slovenian refugees of 1945 go?¹

By July 15, 1948, a total of **3,126 persons left Italy**; most of these went **to England and to Argentina**. Afterwards a few of the “gray ones” and some smaller groups and individuals went to **various countries around the world**. The majority of those who remained **in Italy** stayed in **Trieste**, as long as jobs were available there.

The emigration of the Slovenian refugees **from Austria** started to **Venezuela**, and later to **Canada, Argentina**, and the **USA**. Some of these refugees moved to **Switzerland**. As for the rest, some remained in Austria, or moved to **France, Belgium**, and the **Netherlands**, and a somewhat larger percentage, especially the “grays”, to **Germany**.

A few hundred, mostly Slovenians from Primorska and Istria, were in **Belgium**. Some university students studied in Louvain. Some university students, the majority coming from Rome, went to study in universities in **Spain**. A few Slovenians moved to **Portugal**.

The immigrants to **Ecuador** were mostly priests; the majority of them moved to **Chile** within a year.

Exact data was not yet available for 1949. It was known that some Slovenians remained in North Africa (French **Tunisia**), others went to **South Africa**, and some reached **Australia** and **New Zealand**. As for Asia, a few dozen Slovenian missionaries labored in **China** until the invasion by Mao Ze-dong. Dr. Janez Janež went to China from Argentina; when he was expelled by the communists, he practiced in Taiwan; the process for his beatification has been initiated.

1. Europe

1. ENGLAND

Quite a few Slovenians went to **England** as part of the “Westward Ho” movement; the majority came from the Italian camps, particularly Eboli, and the remainder from Austria. According to calculations, there were **around 600** of them: 50% employed in coal mines, 20% in agriculture, 20% in factories, and 10% in other professions. The majority lived in private houses, and the rest in hostels set up for this purpose. They felt discriminated, because their wages were lower but their taxes were identical compared to the English citizens, so some of them wanted to move elsewhere.

Beginnings

Ignacij Kunstelj wrote in ZSS 1950 the first report about his visit to the Slovenians in England.² He described his visit with a mineworker Peter and with the brick makers and the workers at a blast furnace. He mentions they were asking about the whereabouts of any Slovenian

¹ *Slovenci v svetu [Slovenians in the world]*, ZSS 1949, 173-178; *Slovenci se razhajajo v svet [Slovenians are dispersing throughout the world]*, ZSS 1950, 128

² *Slovenci na Angleškem [Slovenians in England]*, ZSS 1950, 222-227

girls, because they would like to get married. On Christmas Eve they went midnight Mass in Yorkshire and sang Slovenian Christmas carols right in front of the church.

Then he writes about the blessing of "Our Lady of England" in the church of St. James in London, February 27, 1949. This Mary then travelled from place to place, from church to church, wherever Slovenians had settled. He told of a priest in northern Scotland, who though not Slovenian himself, could single out the Slovenians in his meager little church because they were singing almost nothing but Marian hymns.

A group of around 125 Slovenian young men and girls went on a pilgrimage to the famous Tyburn Abbey and then went sightseeing through London July 30 - August 1. Slovenian church songs echoed far and wide through Hyde Park. The founding general committee for *Slovensko društvo* [*The Slovenian Society*] approved the bylaws and elected the first committee. A short while later, the 35 Slovenian university students in England created a group for themselves, *Društvo slovenskih akademikov* [*The Society of Slovenian University Students*].

The Slovenian Society and a Slovenian parish

Some of the initial refugees from 1947-1948 later emigrated to the USA or to Canada, so that **in 1954 there were only around 500 Slovenian postwar refugees in England**. Because they were so scattered, cultural activity was quite a problem. The London community was the most active; with the cooperation of the Slovenian parish, it had monthly meetings, entertaining as well as cultural-instructional. The largest assembly occurred at the Easter meeting in 1953.

The young men in the vicinity of Wales had two annual meetings and those in Mansfield had one. The drama circle in London performed two less pretentious performances, joined by young girls from Venetian Slovenia most of whom were employed as house maids. In 1953, singing was fostered only by the young men in Wales, who had their own octet; to date it had performed already three times in various places. The singing group in Rochdale died out after their director left.

In addition to the Slovenian Society there was also a cultural-political society of a liberal strain, *Slovenska pravda* [Slovenian Rights]. The Slovenian Society at its general assembly in 1953 resolved to purchase a house of its own to serve as gathering spot for all Slovenians in England. The most read papers were *Pismo* [Letter], mailed each month by the Slovenian pastor, and *Luč* [Light] from Celovec. *Stara pravda* was also circulating a mimeographed paper *Klic Triglava* [Call of Mt. Triglav].³

In his 1955 report, L.M. quoted the words of the London spokesman for the High Commissioner for Refugees: **"If the refugees forget their nationality's values, from which Fate has severed them, they will pick up the worst that can be found in foreign lands."**⁴

The Slovenian "parish" did the most to preserve Slovenian values; the parish was not small, for it covered all of England, Wales, and Scotland for the sake of the several hundred Slovenian settlers scattered throughout. In London, the Slovenian parishioners assembled each Sunday for Vespers, after which the monthly meetings were held. The pastor tried to visit often the countrymen in the other areas. The tie that bound everybody together was the *Pismo* [Bulletin], which ceased being published in 1954. It was replaced by *Naša Luč* [Our Light] from Celovec. In 1954 the parish obtained its very own room, where the pastor placed a painting

³ L.M., *Velika Britanija* [Great Britain], ZSS 1954, 272-273

⁴ L.M., *Slovenci v Veliki Britaniji* [Slovenians in Great Britain], ZSS 1955, 254-255

of Mary, Help of Christians. Of course this meager little room could not serve all their needs. They began to think about purchasing their own house, to contain a chapel, social rooms, and eventually residences. A collection for this goal was already in progress in 1954.

Slovensko društvo [The Slovenian Society] was an important institution, but unfortunately its activity was limited to London. The Society prepared 12 monthly meetings, with the theatre community performing at some of these. The Society also tried to ease the hardships of ailing countrymen.

Slovenska pravda was also still publishing its paper *Klic Triglava*.

Unfortunately it was sad to see the immense lack of interest in the Slovenian refugee books published during the refugee period. The Society was partially successful in getting some to subscribe to the books published by the *Mohorjeva družba* [St. Hermagoras] publishing company.

A few Slovenian university students were able to complete their studies, however in general they continued to be employed as manual laborers, mostly in textile factories, in coal mines, or as agricultural field laborers. Wages were good in general; as a result many a person was already able to purchase a house.

Only unmarried persons came to England in 1947-48. Later on, some families were created and others had immigrated. Therefore it was utterly necessary to think about having a summer Slovenian school, but this would happen only if they would have their own home.

ZSS 1956 reported on the economic situation of Slovenians in England.⁵

Ten Years Later

There is a brief "Letter from England" in ZSS 1957.⁶ The writer stated that after ten years, the Slovenians here feel "at home". Some of them did go to the USA, Canada, or Australia. For those who remained, their dispersal throughout all of Great Britain unraveled their mutual contacts, but despite this, the **tight mutual bonds forged in the DP camps had left its seal**. The strongest tie was as always the unofficial Slovenian parish. Luckily Rev. Kunstelj was released from his obligation as chaplain at a hospital, which enabled him to move into the Slovenian House in London where his ministry could then be completely devoted to the Slovenian Catholics.

The **Slovenian Society** in Great Britain no longer operated as effectively as at its inception. In London it was still somewhat active, but elsewhere its work just fell asleep. A singing group was formed in Rochdale and performed 4 concerts in the last year. In London, social interaction was dependent on the monthly meetings in the rented places of St. Edward Parish on Golders Green. **In 1956 it moved into the Slovenian house**. In 1955 it had already created a theatrical community, which gave 3 performances, but its activity ceased in 1956. *Slovenska pravda* was still operating, limited to its specific circle. *Klic Triglav* was passed to the management of *Slovenska Pravda*.

The official spiritual shepherd and the Slovenian chapel

Franjo Sekolec sent to Argentina in 1961 a "Letter from England" with interesting details to bring everybody up-to-date. The future Slovenian parish numbered 543 Slovenians already in 1957. There were 332 married couples, however only in 122 cases were both spouses Slovenian,

⁵ ZSS 1956, 225-226

⁶ ZSS 1957, 164-165

thus 210 of the couples were of mixed nationalities. In 1960 there were in Great Britain around 120 children from pure Slovenian marriages, and over 300 from the rest. **Rev. Kunstelj** cared for their spiritual life; in **July of 1958** he was appointed the official spiritual shepherd of the Slovenian immigrants. A significant event was the consecration of the Slovenian chapel in the Slovenian House in London on March 1, 1959. He shared in the apostolate of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. Some individuals received *Naša Luč*; the *Mohorjeva družba* [*St. Hermagoras Publishing*] had 70 subscribers. *Klic Triglava* was still being published. As of 1958, *Pismo* was also being published again. Both papers were politically informative. Two organizations plied political work in England: the Great Britain Section of the SLS and *Stara Pravda*.⁷

The Slovenian Catholic Mission in England had its own house with a chapel at 62 Offley Road in London. After Msgr. Kunstelj left, France Bergant from Argentina was the next pastor for several years, followed by Rev. Stanislav Cikanek, the current active pastor.

A Booklet on Slovenians in England

In "Greetings from England" in 1963, L.M. related that the Part II of *A Booklet on Slovenians in England* was published.⁸ The first part was published in 1957. It was issued by the Slovenian parish and gave a complete picture of the countrymen in England. He reported that the Slovenian parish in England was the only entity that was able to gather the necessary details on its parishioners. This compendium was possible because there were almost no Slovenians in England before the war and all the Slovenians after the war came there under the government's control; in addition, the spiritual shepherd from the very beginning had been able to maintain written and personal contacts with his countrymen. There were some changes over the past four years. At the end of 1961 there were 576 Slovenians over age 15 registered at the Slovenian parish, however the roster was incomplete. There were probably still more Slovenians throughout England that the Slovenian pastor had not located yet, or who have distanced themselves intentionally. In Great Britain at the end of 1961 there were 84 Slovenian families (108 children) where both parents were Slovenians. There were also 224 mixed marriages [one Slovenian spouse], 15 widowers and widows, and 19 separated spouses.

As for employment, 219 countrymen worked in factories for the most diverse types of business: textile, automobile, iron and steel, glass and brick. The number of miners decreased to 98 and almost no one was employed in agricultural work. Hospital workers numbered 17, office workers 11, and the number of self-employed had grown. There were presently 10 new trades and retail businesses. In 1957, 150 owned their own houses, and in 1961 already 200. The health picture was not as bright. At first there was almost no illness or death because only young people had been permitted to immigrate; the average age in 1941 had been 40 years. But now to have 10 patients, who perhaps will never again leave psychiatric hospitals, is just too many.

The differences were evident from the performances. In the first years there were almost only adults, and in the last years there were ever more children. Wherever there were more children, in Bedford for example, there were Slovenian school classes. It has already often happened that the students selected the Slovenian language as one of the subjects for the middle school (proficiency) examinations; the language is recognized as a supplementary qualification in an application for acceptance at a university.

⁷ ZSS 1961, 181-184

⁸ ZSS 1963, 237-238

2. BELGIUM

Quite a few Slovenians had settled already in the years 1928-1933 in Belgium, as well as in the Netherlands, France, and Germany (Westfal) due to the harsh economic conditions in the homeland. The majority had to take jobs in mines.

After the war, some refugees came from camps in Germany and Italy. Although there were now around 1000 Slovenians, **only around 100 were refugees**. Wages were good, but the work was demanding, thus many had to go into early retirement.

The older settlers already had their own nice houses in factory settlements, mostly in Esden. The majority of the newcomers had to sign labor contracts for two-year mandatory work in the mines. After the agreement expired, it was difficult to find work, because Belgium had high unemployment in 1950.⁹

The spiritual ministry to the countrymen was provided by Msgr. Vinko Žakelj and Dr. Ilc.

3. FRANCE

France was another of those European countries where many Slovenians went before the war to search for jobs. These Slovenians had their own Slovenian schools, singing groups, and various organizations; quite a few Slovenian immigrant priests ministered among them. After the war, the new Yugoslav government, concerned only for its own political interests, summoned back the teachers, whereas the Catholic priests worked unselfishly for the immigrants.¹⁰

The choice to settle permanently in France was taken only by those refugees of 1945 who did not want to travel to transoceanic countries and wanted to remain as close as possible to the homeland. There were not many.

In France it was **impossible to distinguish between the pre-war and the post-war immigrants**, especially since the pre-war Slovenians in general also took a negative view of the communist regime in Slovenia. For this same reason, many of the "old settlers" from the very start attended the programs which the "new ones" were preparing.

In 1953 Cardinal Piazza visited France in order to learn the situation and the needs of the Catholic immigrants in France. The Slovenians joined the other 17 nationalities at the solemn church ceremony at Montmart, where a speech was delivered by a Slovenian priest, Rev. Dr. **Ignacij (Nace) Čretnik**, who later became the director of all the Slovenian ministries in France and the main driving force for the Slovenian Home in Chatillion, a suburb of Paris. The Slovenians delivered several other performances that day too. Msgr. Čretnik was aided by a group of priests, some of whom were in France already before the war (Msgr. V. Župančič, Msgr. Stanko Grims, Msgr. Jože Kerec) and some others who came to France after the war (Stanko Kavalar, Tone Dejak, Ciril Lavrič, Jože Flis, and others).

The postwar anticommunist refugees were able to see that they had good friends among the French, especially among those with whom they were close in political and world views.

Later on, many of the so-called economic emigrants received haven and employment in France. It is significant that many of them liked to attend the presentations by the former refugees. France soon stopped accepting those countrymen who spent a year or two in DP camps in Italy or Austria, and permitted entry only to those who were coming directly from the homeland, even though the majority of these runaways then departed to other countries.

⁹ *Slovenci v Belgiji [Slovenians in Belgium]*, ZSS 1950, 244-245

¹⁰ *Slovenski naseljenci v Franciji [Slovenian Immigrants in France]*, ZSS 1961, 195-197

Yet all these people passed through the Slovenian Bureau in Paris that had been first headed by the prelate Dr. Ignacij Čretnik!

Various groups in various areas fostered **cultural activity**. Idealistic people passionate about performing culture on stage could be found everywhere. Slovenians did not have their own newspaper in France. *Naša Luč* did arrive in their midst, and there were some subscriptions for the democratic newspapers from Carinthia and Primorska, or from abroad, such as Argentina or the USA. Many of the Slovenians also ordered the books published by *Mohorjeva družba* in Celovec or Gorica. Several places had Slovenian schools. Of significant importance for the Slovenian community in France were the memorials held in 1960 in various cities to honor the late Bishop Rožman, particularly the one prepared by the Society of Friends of Yugoslavia [*Društvo prijateljev Jugoslavije*].

The Letter from France in 1963 was very brief; it reported primarily about the **acquisition of new office space in Paris for the Slovenian Catholic Mission**. With the Croats they also jointly purchased their own place in Nice. In Paris they staged three plays and provided many cultural presentations.

Dr. Žajdela, an expert on cancer illnesses, received critical acclaim by his peers.¹¹

ZSS 1965 reported about a Slovenian religious-ethnic showing at Lourdes.¹²

4. NORWAY

ZSS contains only one report about the new Slovenians in Norway. Refugees with lung sickness were predominantly the ones who went to this country. The sick people were arriving from Italy, Austria, and Germany. In 1954 they numbered around 30 to 40. At first they were housed in sanatoriums, and upon regaining health they obtained work in positions that suited their capabilities. The Slovenians adjusted well. The climate seemed good for them, even though the winters were long and quite cold.

Regrettably the conditions to foster social activity were unfavorable. Still, many of them maintained contact with Slovenian communities elsewhere; for example, quite a few of them regularly received *Svobodna Slovenija*.¹³

5. SPAIN

The report in 1950 about Slovenian university students in Spain was very brief.¹⁴ They presented an ideological-study class in Madrid. They were passing their examinations.

The next report did not appear in ZSS until 1958 with an article by A.P.M. about "Slovenian University Students in Spain".¹⁵ The majority of Slovenian university students had transferred from Rome to Madrid, where they were among the first residents at St. Jakob College. A few of them were able to reside in Barcelona, and a few coeds in Zaragoza. At the end of the 1947-48 school year, there were 29 Slovenian students of higher education in Madrid, 9 in Barcelona, and 6 in Zaragoza.

¹¹ M.Z., *Pismo iz Francije [Letter from France]*, ZSS 1963, 236

¹² J.K., ZSS 1965, 339-341

¹³ *Slovenci na Norveškem [Slovenians in Norway]*, ZSS 1955, 262

¹⁴ ZSS 1950, 239

¹⁵ ZSS 1958, 221-226

Slovenian coeds came to Zaragoza upon the intercession of the Spanish Girls' KA [Catholic Action]. They lived in convents that had residences for students. All these Slovenian coeds eventually completed their studies, some only after their emigration to the USA or Brazil; two of them went to London to become nuns.

Nine Slovenian university students, 2 female and 7 male, came to Barcelona. They lived in residences in monasteries. At first they had no projected financial support, but they received aid from OCARA (*Obra Católica de Asistencia a los Refugiados Extranjeros*), a Catholic organization to support foreign refugees, and then they received government stipends or stipends from the College of Free Europe at Strassburg. The first 5 registered for medicine; 4 of these have already completed and are now practicing medicine in Barcelona. One lawyer immigrated to Canada. One coed, who quit chemistry, went to Canada. Four quit their studies: two emigrated, one became ill, and the fourth, a girl, dropped her studies in the USA.

College provided a life amid much diversity. They grew acquainted with various other nationalities. They regaled monthly visitors with presentations.

University students came from the ranks of KA and *Straža*. This status continued in Spain too. The Madrid chapter of *Straža* held weekly meetings. Already on November 10, 1946 in Rome, the members of the KA formed a founding general committee to create the League of Slovenian Catholic Higher-Ed Students [*ZSKV - Zveza slovenskih katoliških visokošolcev*]; joining it were the club *Slovenija* from Moniga or rather Servigliano, *Branik* from Bologna, the Roman university residents club and the coed sorority *Čebelica* [*the Honey Bee*]. Upon their arrival in Spain, the students in Barcelona created their club named *Plamen* [*The Flame*]. In May 1948, the League was joined by the *Cirilsko društvo*, the St. Cyril Society of Slovenian seminarians in Argentina, and later by student resident groups from Belgium, Canada, and Argentina.

From 1946 to the autumn of 1951, ZSKV printed via a duplicating machine the magazine *Nova doba* [*New Era*]. After that, it continued to be published for two more years thanks to a syndicate, but it was limited to social issues. Starting in 1951, the ZSKV published a newsletter *Stanovec* [*University Resident*], which since 1952 contained an insert on Medicine.

The most visible activities of the ZSKV in Spain were the one-week seminars in Madrid. The first one, in 1948, had 30 attendees. The fifth and final seminar was in July of 1953.

The Slovenian higher-ed students also went on pilgrimages: to Zaragoza [*Virgen del Pilar*] and to Rome. They had several group vacations: in 1948 to Salamanca, and then the next two years to *Sigüenza*, and then for five years to the Catalanian Island. They also attended courses at some International Summer universities. Sometimes they went on field trips and took summer courses at the Catholic Institute in Paris or the College of Free Europe in Strasbourg.

In 1957 the situation changed considerably. Of those who remained in Spain, a few married Slovenian girls, and the rest married persons of other nationalities. Quite a few immigrated to the USA, Canada, Brazil, and France.

2. North America

1. CANADA

Canada was the first country to open its doors to the Slovenian refugees. They came to Canada after having undergone a selection process in the DP camps. Each person had to sign a 10-month job contract, after which the person was free to choose another job. The first group of young men arrived in October of 1947. Their jobs were mostly to fell trees. In January of 1948, a second group of young men and a group of young women arrived; the girls were employed as house maids and hospital aides. In March came the first group of families, seamstresses and

tailors, and in April there arrived 82 young men to work on the railroads, then farm workers, for sugar beets, etc. The largest group of young women came in September of 1948.

The First Postwar Immigrants

As they were leaving from Austria and Germany, the first and foremost thought on the minds of the future Canadians was to leave Europe behind as quickly as possible. They were somewhat intimidated by the almost one-year-long labor contract, but they nonetheless submitted themselves to the unfriendly examinations by various commissions. Upon their arrival on Canadian soil, the Employment Bureau took control of them and assigned the work: young men were assigned to the building of new railroad tracks, to forestry work especially to the north, and to various businesses in cities, while the young women were assigned to housework in private homes or as aides in various hospitals or sanatoriums. Many were sent to work on farms, especially to the western parts of Canada (Manitoba, Alberta). Thus the Slovenian new immigrants were dispersed throughout all of Canada, from Vancouver to Halifax, thousands of kilometers apart.

There were many instances where a Slovenian immigrant was completely by oneself, but as jobs were assigned, they were able to form smaller circles and social groups. In one case, around 40 men and young men spent the first days together and remained in the forests north of Kapuskasing; a larger group also worked on the railroad line La Perade in Quebec Province, and a smaller group assembled at the railroad line in Smithfalls, North Bay, and elsewhere. But these groups were constantly on the move as the job required. The same was happening at the railroad line in and around Toronto, both near and far.

When the term of the labor contract expired, they could move to the cities and search on the open market for jobs. The majority moved to the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, which became the focal points for Slovenian refugees that immigrated to Canada. A strong community also developed in Battawa by Trenton, and a smaller community in Montreal, where it was more difficult to find employment. A group of young men worked in London (Ontario), and others were working in the mines in Norand (Quebec) and in Sudbury (Ontario).

The girls were scattered too. The largest group remained in **Toronto**, a good number were in **Montreal**, and smaller groups in the areas of **Bellwile, Guelph, Pariz, Preston, Hamilton, Cemptville** (all in Ontario Province), in **Winnipeg** (Manitoba Province), and in **Quebec** province.

The wages for the contractual period were quite varied: the workers on the railroads earned the most; the most poorly paid were the girl-housekeepers and the farm laborers, who were receiving 40-50 dollars per month for working from dawn to sunset.

Despite everything, the spirit of Slovenian industriousness showed itself in Canada too. Some already purchased houses or at least a plot of land at the end of the contract period. There were cases where two or three persons purchased a house together.

Beginnings of Pastoral Ministry and Cultural-Social Activity

For a long time the new immigrants in Canada did not have their own pastoral minister. Dr. Janko Pajk came frequently to Toronto. **Dr. Jakob Kolarič CM came to Toronto in December of 1948 and from then on there was a regular Slovenian Mass at the Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa.** Attendance was meager at first, but **by the middle of 1949, 200 people were already coming.** In October of 1948, Dr. Pajk with the approval of the auxiliary bishop established in Toronto a **Slovenian Girls Marian Congregation**, with Dr. Kolarič as the director. At Easter of 1949 the young men also became organized and created the **Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.** Both societies jointly organized a dance held on the night before

Whitsunday in 1949, and on Sunday Moliere's *The Miser* was presented on stage. On Pentecost Sunday 1949, the two groups made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Canadian Martyrs in **Midland**. The chronicler concluded his 1950 report with the statement that all the environs and all the currents could not destroy the spirit and ideas that were the reasons why they left as a fragment from a small nation across the world to search for justice. "**Just like Hlapec Jernej [Farmhand Bart] of yore, today we are fighting for our ancient rights, for true freedom and a better life on Slovenian land at the roots of Mt. Triglav.**"¹⁶

The **next report** described **the organizing of a Slovenian parish and the preparations for constructing a church**. They foresaw that they could not be forever a burden to their host church, despite its gracious hospitality, so a committee purchased land in 1953, and a newly-elected committee (Jože Turk, president) immediately set to work. At the request of the Slovenian spiritual leader Rev. Dr. J. Kolarič, the archbishop of Toronto gave permission for the Slovenian community to become a parish with its own registration and financial records. The official title became **The Slovenian Parish of St. Mary, Help of Christians** [*Slovenska župnija Marije Pomagaj*]. Between March and May they already collected 10,000 dollars, so they submitted the church construction plans which were approved on July 2nd. Franc Gorše from Cleveland undertook the work for the interior decoration, while Clevelanders also helped in the payment for his services. The community from Montreal assumed the expenses for the main altar, and the Slovenians from Windsor and countrymen from Primorska paid for the side altars.

The organization **Caritas** was created for charitable activities. An important goal was the **establishment of Slovenian schools**, which at first had two tracks, determined by whether the child could already read or not. They had their own **singing group**, which also sang at the Masses. A **Young Men's Association** was also active. A Seminar Day was held for intellectuals. Two charitable organizations, unaffiliated with the parish, were active: **Catholic Action** and the **Missionary Circle**.

The **Dr. J. E. Krek Savings and Loan Association** was created in Toronto. Another organization was established, the *Slovenska Narodna Zaveza* [*Slovenian National Alliance*], whose goal was to spread the Slovenian program, starting with their own country.

Activities up to the year 1957¹⁷

In the beginning it was not clear what exactly the people wanted: whether a parish or a social-cultural hub, or only a church, or only a Slovenian Home. But the ideas became clarified. After the Archbishop of Toronto, Cardinal McGuigan, gave permission for the signing of the contract to construct a church, an agreement was signed with the Slovenian contractor F. Stojec. The original permit was limited to the construction of a hall in front of the church at an estimated cost of 37,876 dollars. Weather conditions delayed the completion date to March 14, 1954. They began a new collection; on March 24, 1954, the Cardinal also granted permission for the construction of a church, and by the end of 1954 the church already had a roof. The original plan had been somewhat modified: the church was built above the hall. The capacity was 500 persons for the hall, and 450 for the church.

The year 1954 witnessed many significant religious and entertainment events. They created the **SKAS** for Slovenian intellectuals; of the invited, 41% joined. *Caritas* was doing

¹⁶ *Slovenci v Kanadi* [*Slovenians in Canada*], ZSS 1950, 220-222; Perez reported about the Slovenians in Canada as of 1954, ZSS 1954, 260-263

¹⁷ Perez, *Slovenska skupnost v Toronto* [*The Slovenian Community in Toronto*], ZSS 1955, 249-253

well. The work of KA was likewise quite evident. The parish was publishing a magazine, *Božja beseda* [Divine Word]. The **Slovenian Drama Circle** [*Slovenski dramatski krožek*] was created, which already performed many plays. The parish had a library, run by the girls' Marian Congregation. The Slovenians organized regular field trips, dances, and cinemas. The SNZ started publishing its own newsletter *Slovenska država* [the Slovenian State]. Sculptor Gorše and painter Karmolc had exhibits of their works.

ZSS 1957 contained a report on the religious activity among the Slovenians in Canada and about the work at the Parish of *Marija Pomagaj* in Toronto.¹⁸ It also reported on the cultural activity of the Baraga Society and on the work of the drama club and the singing group. The *Slovensko gledališče* [Slovenian Theatre], under the direction of Vilko Čekuta, was fully operational, issuing a *Gledališki list* [Theatrical Newsletter] for each performance. There was also the *Slovenski kulturni krožek* [Slovenian Cultural Circle] for Slovenian intellectuals with university educations, and for those who were unable to complete secondary school. But the Slovenian Catholic Academic seniority ceased activity. "Even the [political] monthly *Slovenska država* often contained some article relating to the educational sector."

Montreal had a **Baraga Society**, but in the past year its activities were limited to parties. The same held true for the **Društvo sv. Jožefa** [Society of St. Joseph] in **Hamilton**, the hub for the Slovenians from Prekmurje. There was a **Slovenian school in Batawa**. In **Toronto**, the Slovenians from Prekmurje had just in the past year created a society named *Večerni zvon* [Evening Bell].

The **SLS** and *Slovenska Narodna Zaveza* [Slovenian Nationality Alliance] devoted their attention to nationalist and political activity. The former held several commemorations in the past year, and the latter worked mostly via the publication *Slovenska država*.

The fact that the **majority of Slovenians in Canada own their own houses** was a sign that they had managed their finances well, plus that the means for this had also been provided. **Various economic cooperatives were sprouting**, such as 'Triglav', a cooperative for Slovenian building-contractors in Toronto. The J.E. Krek Credit Union already had its own building near the Slovenian church. The Slovenian parish itself created '*Slovenija*', the **Credit Union of the Parish of Marija Pomagaj**. The economic cooperative *Triglav* purchased a house near the Slovenian church on 618 Manning Avenue and **reserved one room for the Slovenska pisarna** [Slovenian Bureau].

The situation in the years 1957-1959

The report about the year **1957** described how the new immigrants were able to purchase their own houses. The majority had been saddled with long years of painstaking bookkeeping. They often leased a portion of the house so they could more easily repay their mortgages. Co-ownerships have almost completely ceased; this method had enabled a quick payment-in-full for a house, but as the family way began to develop, so did the need to have something exclusively one's own.¹⁹

¹⁸ J. Kopač, C.M., reported on the Church *Marija Pomagaj* in Toronto, ZSS 1956, 13-15 and about the activities of the Slovenians in Canada, ZSS 1957, 157-163

¹⁹ ZSS 1958, 267-269; in the same issue, Otmar Mauser wrote about the Parish of *Marija Pomagaj*, ZSS 1958, 269-270

A new report arrived for the year 1958.²⁰ Slovenians had been scattered over all of Canada, but most of them became centered in the larger cities, such as Toronto and New Toronto, where they numbered a good 3,000. There were many young married couples, and some of the Slovenians remained single. In the last few years, the Prekmurje Slovenians experienced a marked growth rate in Montreal, where they numbered probably 1,000 at this time.

Slovenians were spread across various types of professions. All were seeking job security; fortunately, social security was becoming ever more readily available. Unfamiliarity with the English language remained a severe obstacle for some. In the beginning, this deficiency proved most difficult for those going to school; however, everything now indicated that more and more of them were self-employed or working in offices. A diploma opened the doors for many a person. Some of them were already teaching or doing scientific research at institutions of learning. Quite a few of them were still studying hard, which meant that in due time there would be quite a few professionals of Slovenian descent.

The situation in the year 1960²¹

The report mentioned the growth in numbers: the **registry at the Parish of *Marija Pomagaj* in Toronto noted 205 births between 1959 and 1960, and only 12 deaths. There were 108 Slovenian weddings. There was a noticeable stream of new immigrants, who were fleeing from the Red paradise in the homeland.**

The standard of living was high, but this also opened wide the doors to materialism. A Legion of Mary was established. They made the annual pilgrimage to Midland. The gymnastic parade at the *Slovenska pristava* [*Slovenian Farm*] was a special sight to behold. The Slovenian Sisters of Charity [*Usmiljenke*] took residence near the Slovenian church; they operated a daycare center for pre-school children, taught in the school, and helped with the publication of *Božja Beseda*. Rev. Kolarič was replaced by Rev. Kopač, and Rev. Sodja was the associate pastor. Slovenian missionaries visited a large number of areas, wherever Slovenians had settled, across all of Canada.

In Toronto there were two Slovenian schools, one at each parish. The Parish of *Marija Pomagaj* [Mary, Help of Christians] had 112 children in 5 grades registered for the 1959-60 school year, and the school at the Parish of the Immaculate Conception [*Brezmadežna Marija*] had 33 children in 3 grades. Both schools regularly presented numerous performances. A school also started in Sudbury.

Dramatic arts were fostered in Toronto by *SKPD Baraga* and its youth chapter *Mladi dom* [*Young Home*], and also by *Slovensko gledališče* [*Slovenian Theater/ Playhouse*]. Besides numerous plays, there were also many commemorations, such as for memorials, Slomšek, and others.

Slovenia Day has been celebrated in Canada since August 28, 1960 at the *Slovenska pristava*, located approximately 40 miles (64 km) from Toronto. Two institutions were still in operation in the financial sphere: the J. E. Krek Credit Union under the directorship of the SNZ, has been in operation for more than 7 years; the other was the *Hranilnica in posojilnica za člane slovenske narodne župnije Marije Pomagaj* [*the Savings and Loan for members of the Slovenian nationality parish Mary, Help of Christians*], which on August 2, 1960 celebrated its 3rd anniversary.

²⁰ Karel Wolbang CM, ZSS 1959, 209-227

²¹ Perez, *Zapiski o življenju in delu Slovencev v Kanadi* [*Notes on the Life and Work of Slovenians in Canada*], ZSS 1961, 185-189

Second to Toronto in number of Slovenians was the community in **Montreal**, which had its own clergy, the cultural society *Baraga*, and newspaper *Čolnič* [*The Boat*]. The third largest settlement was in **Hamilton**, Ontario; at the moment their spiritual leader was a Salesian priest, Dr. Tomc. Those in **London** (Ont.) also had their own society and their own social hall.

The “Canadian Letter” for the year 1962²²

There was **much prosperity in Canada**, comparable to that in the USA. The **situation for the Slovenians was good**. Because the **majority of Slovenians already held Canadian citizenship**, there was no problem crossing the border. Most of the Slovenian Canadians would travel to Cleveland, and a few further to Lemont.

The whole way of life was geared to getting as much enjoyment out of life as possible, which was having a detrimental effect on the Slovenians. Nonetheless the Legion of Mary was harvesting much success. Attendance was dropping at performances. Much hope was pinned on the **newly-established club “Naši upi – Naša nada”** [*Our hopes – Our expectations*], which was modeled on Canadian youth organizations. Its main objective was to draw the youth to the church hall for apostolic work, sports, and entertainment, and for socializing of course. In 1960 there were 77 weddings, and by September of 1961 they were already near this figure. In 1960 there were 149 baptisms, and already near this figure in September of 1961. The Slovenian schools had 270 children up to age 16.

In Canada there were **14 priests** working among the Slovenians, and **8 exclusively for the Slovenians**. Priests departed from Toronto for missionary work throughout Canada. The magazine *Božja Beseda* [*Divine Word*] compensated in part for their absence.

There were 7,000 Slovenians in Toronto and approximately 18,000 in all of Canada.

The idea to have an **inter-parish summer resort** was a godsend. Situated a good 64km outside of Toronto, it covered 24 acres, where there was a large picnic shelter, places for all sorts of sports, a swimming pool for adults and one for children. Many people gathered there each weekend.²³

A social **hall** was set up in Sudbury. In **London** (Ontario) they had their own **school**. In **Hamilton** they started a **fund drive for a church**.

“Slovenian freemen in Canada”²⁴

Peter Markeš stated at the commemoration of the Slovenian National Holiday, October 29, 1961: **“If Slovenia today is silent, then let the Slovenian freemen in Canada, America, Argentina, and elsewhere speak out.”** The report for the year 1962 would show that even the Slovenians in Canada were vigilantly on guard to protect Slovenianism.

The monthly religious magazine *Božja Beseda* and the newspaper for the Slovenian statehood movement *Slovenska država* were still being published. In 1962 the *Društvo Slovencev* began to publish *Slovenska misel* [*Slovenian Thought*].

²² A.A.S., *Kanadsko pismo* [*A Letter from Canada*], ZSS 1962, 208-210

²³ An acre is an English surface measurement, approximately 40.47% of a hectare; 1 ‘ar’ [1% of a hectare] is a square 10m per side, thus a hectare is 100m²; the resort covers approximately 97,126 m² or almost 10 hectares.

²⁴ A.Z. wrote ‘*O življenju in delu slovenskih svobodnjakov v Kanadi*’ [*About the Life and Work of Slovenian Freemen in Canada*], ZSS 1963, 231-238

In Canada, **each of the two Slovenian parishes in Toronto operated its own Slovenian school**. At the first parish, *Marija Pomagaj*, the school had 149 students registered in 5 grades for the 1961/62 school year, and it had a Slovenian library; in 1962 it expanded to 6 grades with 178 children. At the other parish, *Brezmadežna*, the school had 75 children and a choir; in 1962 the number of students increased to 90 children. Other cities also had Slovenian classes: **Montreal, London, Hamilton, and Sudbury**.

The cultural-arts programs were still active despite all difficulties. Slovenian singing was of course given the most emphasis. Numerous plays were staged. The work of the Prekmurje Slovenian folklore group in Toronto was noteworthy.

In Toronto, **both Slovenian credit unions** were still active: the one at the parish and the J. E. Krek Credit and Loan Union. Both were developing nicely. The parish's union, for example, in 1961 had 212,234 dollars in deposits of payable shares, and 280,142 dollars in receivables. Thus, each month had 10,000 dollars more in deposits than in withdrawals. Capital was increasing 7,600 dollars per month. In 1961, the total of loans granted amounted to 207,818 dollars, and the total repayments amounted to 134,559 dollars. The entire cash flow in 1961 was 1,370,836.90 dollars.

Both Slovenian parishes shared the *Slovensko letovišče [Slovenian Summer Camp]* near Toronto that was managed by a special board. Around 500 countrymen assembled there on the opening day of the season, June 10, 1962. The place was quite lively in the summertime. The annual **Slovenia Day** was celebrated there with large turnouts; 2,000 Slovenians attended in 1962.

The Year 1962²⁵

The *Slovenian Farm [Slovenska pristava]* had a high number of visitors all summer long in 1962. They held a blessing for the new constructions at the camp. To meet the growing needs of the parishioners, they purchased a **new house on Manning Avenue**. The national holiday was celebrated in the presence of the president of the NO, Dr. Miha Krek. The Slovenian Theater staged the play "*Miklova Zala*" and "*Mati*" [*Mother*]. The financial institution, The Savings and Loan of the Slovenian Parish, again enjoyed a successful year. They held an exhibition of Slovenian foreign publishing, where the writer Karel Mauser was the keynote speaker. SKPD Baraga staged Jalen's "*Dom*", and the accordion players held their own concert. They took the annual pilgrimage to Midland. As in every year, they held a commemoration to mourn for all the massacred Slovenians. They celebrated the 1,100 anniversary of the arrival of Sts. Cyril and Methodius among the Slovenians. Slovenia Day IV was held on August 4, 1963 at the parish farm, with a large attendance of Slovenians from Canada and the USA. The DSPB held commemoration for the 20th anniversary of the victims of Grčarice, Turjak, and Kočevje.

The same article reported briefly on the Slovenians in Winnipeg; the community had approximately 1,000 countrymen, representing approximately 100 Slovenian families.

Up to September, 1966

There were several reports between 1964 and 1966. The **first** covered the activities of both Slovenian Toronto parishes, the improvements at the Slovenian Summer Camp, both financial institutions, the activity of the SKAS, and the Slovenian Theater. Because the pastor Prebil

²⁵ K. Kranjc, *Kronološki pregled delovanja Slovencev v Toronto od septembra 1962 [Chronological overview of the activities of Slovenians in Toronto since September 1962]*, ZSS 1964, 295-301

withdrew the parish's sponsorship from the Cultural Society Baraga, this society merged with *Društvo Slovencev* which thereby added 'Baraga' to its name. The society of the Prekmurje Slovenians, *Večerni zvon*, was still active. The SLS was active politically, but there was no news about the *Slovenska narodna zveza*. The *Telovadna zveza* [*Gymnastics League*] was quite active, but there was not enough space for it in the church hall; the group had its own property of 200 acres (approximately 80 ha) in the north by Bankroft, where they held their own Sunday Masses. This property was ideal for skiers and hunters. The Slovenian Sisters of Charity left quite suddenly and almost secretly, and returned to Slovenia.²⁶

The **second report** spoke about the countrymen in **Toronto**, about the activities of the two Slovenian parishes there, and again about various organizations. The **Slovenian Home** [*Slovenski dom*] was a new item; they purchased the land with a suitable building in the autumn of 1964 and at the time of the report they were still remodeling the building. It also mentioned various shows. It emphasized the construction of a new rectory.

Next it reported about **Montreal**, which had more than 3,000 Slovenians. They had their own parish, church, and a hall under the Church of St. Vladimir. They also purchased their own farm of 5 acres (approx. 2.5 ha). They had their own Slovenian school. There were 135 weddings and 248 baptisms from the time the parish was established in 1957 until 1965.

Hamilton is a city about 40 miles from Toronto in the direction towards Niagara Falls. Although they did not have their own organizations, they were able to make their case to have their own parish. They constructed a large hall with great difficulty; the church was not completed yet and the work has just stopped.

There was also a Slovenian parish in **Winnipeg**, Manitoba Province, some 1,300 miles to the west of Toronto. It was the smallest parish, altogether only 530 countrymen. But it was significant, because it was the point of departure for all of western Canada.

The **third report** for the year 1966 started with the two Slovenian **Toronto** parishes and about their activities, and then about Slovenia Day, the SLS-KDS and the **Sava** organization. The article mentioned the large number of new Slovenian immigrants in **Montreal**, and spoke about the Slovenian church and rectory and about the Slovenian Farm, and also described life in Montreal. The reporter maintained that there were more and more Slovenians there, particularly ones from Prekmurje. He reported that there were now around 1,000 Slovenians in **Hamilton**. The "**Slovenian Community Center**" had two halls, but only the lower one was completed. Since last year they had a Slovenian school with three grades. After a long hiatus there was again a report on the Slovenians in **Sudbury** and in **Windsor**. There were few Slovenians in **Sudbury**, a city of nickel, gold, and silver mines. But they did have their own singing group and a Slovenian school with 13 children, operating at the Croatian parish. In **Windsor**, next to the USA border, there were more Slovenian families, who had their own Parents Committee, which in 1966 started the **Frederik Baraga Slovenian Course**. They presented a nice program for the end of the school year in 1966. The report expressed delight over the extensive work by the Slovenians in Canada, but also concern because Slovenian literature was not making its way into Slovenian homes and there was too little reading in Slovenian.

²⁶ Lojze Ambrožič Sr., *Delo Slovencev v Kanadi od sept. 1963 do sept. 1964* [Activities of Slovenians in Canada from Sept. 1963 to Sept. 1964], ZSS 1965, 333-337; *Zapiski o delu Slovencev v Kanadi, od septembra 1964 do septembra 1965* [Notes on the activities of Slovenians in Canada from Sept. 1964 to Sept. 1965], ZSS 1966, 378-383; *Poročilo iz Kanade* [Report from Canada], ZSS 1967, 304-308. Lojze Ambrožič Sr. is the father of Cardinal Dr. Alojzij Ambrožič, the Archbishop of Toronto until the year 2006.

From 1967 to 1969

In the following years, there were three reports covering the lives of Slovenians in Canada. The first covered the year 1967. The second report was longer and divided into short sections. The third report, covering 1969, was similar in form and content to the previous year's report. The article mentioned **Holiday Garden**, situated some 40 miles from Toronto towards the SE, which covered 40 acres (16 ha) and was owned by a group of shareholders; it was a summer resort camp with two pools, a *balinca* [*bocce*] court, a covered stage for dances, modern rest rooms, a large kitchen, a cellar for alcoholic drinks, a modern children's playground, a concrete-block building for selling food and beverages, etc.; and that it was a favorite and popular place.²⁷

The year 1971²⁸

The report began with **Toronto** and its two parishes with an exhaustive presentation of their activities. Among other things it mentioned that vice-postulator Tone Zrnc was preparing a motion picture in color and with soundtrack about Bishop Baraga. The reporter described the Slovenia Day XIII at the Slovenian Summer Camp at Bolton, where the main speaker was Dr. Victor Antolin, who unfolded deep thoughts on how to assimilate into Canadian culture and national solidarity. The article included many photographs from this event, several of these being group photos, such as the folklore group *Biser* [*Pearl*], a **female quintet**, and **female members of the Slovenian Gymnastics Club**. It had a separate report on "Caravan 72", a multi-cultural festival; for this event, the Slovenians hosted the ethnic pavilion *Ljubljana* in the church hall of *Marija Pomagaj* which had 8,000 visitors; among the 44 participating nationalities, the Slovenians were with the best. The article also mentioned that the **singing group Vrba** [*Willow*] celebrated its 20th anniversary. The article described the activities of all the organizations, one by one, and mentioned for the first time the **Slovenian Hunting Club** [*Slovenski lovski klub*].

The report about **Montreal** followed a similar pattern, mentioning the Slovenian school, parish life, the Slovenian Summer Camp, and the Vacation Home.

The report on **Hamilton** described the various activities, the work at the parish of St. Gregory the Great, the performances and celebrations, and the Slovenian Park (23 acres along Route 6 near Highway 401).

For **Windsor**, the report mentioned its cultural, religious and spiritual life, Slovenian publishing, but also some disconcerting news, such as interpersonal conflicts.

In **London** (Ontario) they had a **Slovenian cultural and social club**. Even though there were only around 400 to 500 Slovenians, they did have their own **Slovenian Home**. However, they were unable to have liturgies in Slovenian, except for Christmas and Easter.

The **Kitchener-Waterloo** vicinity was home for around 100 Slovenian families. **Since 1960** they had the *Sava* society, which nearly died out after the White Carniolans created their own society **Bled**. But *Sava* recovered and was now doing well; it had its own property, where it planned to build a Slovenian Home. They already had their own summer camp with a pool and a temporary stage. The Slovenian Park was for the Slovenians who lived in the areas of Hamilton, Guelph, and Kitchener, all equidistant from the park.

In **Sudbury** they were trying to preserve Slovenianism with various shows and performances. At their summer camp by Lake Wolf they sometimes had a Slovenian Mass. Outside choirs and folklore groups came to visit.

²⁷ Lojze Ambrožič Sr., ZSS 1968, 259-271; ZSS 1969, 296-308; ZSS 1970, 216-226

²⁸ Otmar Mauser, ZSS 1971/72, 320-341

Slovenians began to settle in **Battawa** in 1948/49; only 60 to 80 in number, all men. Later a few girls came, and then families in 1951. In the first years they had a mixed choir, directed by Drago Ložar. For a few years they also maintained a Slovenian school and had various presentations. Almost all the countrymen subscribed to Slovenian newspapers.

In **Winnipeg** they centered their community on a Slovenian parish, which was now administered by Jože Mejač. In 1971 they had a whole line of shows and celebrations, which were well attended. Around 200 countrymen attended the festive dinner after the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Winnipeg Folkorama was similar to the Toronto Caravan. The weather was favorable for the Slovenians, so the Slovenian pavilion had a good number of visitors. The Slovenian Club celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1971.²⁹

Lethbridge, Alberta, had in the beginning around 30 Slovenian families, a **Slovenian Club**, and lively cultural activity. They even attempted a Slovenian school in 1969, but there was not enough interest for it, even though they had enough teaching strength. But they did have their own choir to sing at Slovenian Masses. A special celebration in 1971 was the First Mass by Martin Dimnik. Because the city had no industry, many countrymen moved elsewhere. The ones who remained succeeded economically, but Slovenian cultural activity was hampered by their numerical inferiority.

In **Edmonton**, Alberta, the Slovenians had their own club already since 1973, and in the beginning were much livelier. They purchased an old school, remodeled it, and constructed additions. They now had a place to hold their various cultural and entertainment events.

In **Calgary**, Alberta, the pattern was similar: they purchased a 120-year-old school, remodeled it, and now had a place for meetings and a hall for shows that could accommodate 200 persons.

The Memorial Cross in Midland

The final report from Canada described the **erection of a Memorial Cross in Midland**, which was the result of a joint venture by both organizations of Slovenian anticommunist fighters, as represented by their respective publications, *Vestnik* and *Tabor*.³⁰ The cross 'was erected for the 30th anniversary of the Vetrinj Tragedy in memory of the slain heroes and all others who during the Communist Revolution in Slovenia lost their lives in defense of freedom, Faith, and their homes'. The site for the cross was *a propos* not simply because Canadian Slovenians went there on an annual pilgrimage, but also for its Stations of the Cross and its church, built to honor the Canadian Martyrs, French Jesuits who after long tortures were martyred by the Huron Indians.

²⁹ E. Pogačar in January 2007 sent a newspaper clipping which contained a brief report on the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Source: Msgr. Norman J. Chartrand, "*Zgodovina nadškofije Winnipeg*" [*History of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg*], Editions du Signe 2004, Strassbourg, Francija; "Pictorial Directory of Lourdes (Slovenian) St. Anthony of Padua (Hungarian) Churches", Winnipeg MB 2003. It mentions that the first Slovenians came to Winnipeg in 1930; that 15 families, refugees fleeing communism, arrived between 1946-1950, and that the majority of the countrymen – around 200 families – settled during the years 1956-1960. They purchased an old church in 1962 and renovated it; it was consecrated on June 23, 1963. It lists 9 pastors (Lazarist Order), from Joseph Mejač in 1963 to the last one, Stan Gacek, whose pastorship began in 2003.

³⁰ *Spominski križ v Midlandu, Kanada [Slovenian Memorial Cross in Midland, Canada]*, ZSS 1973-1975, 460-461

2. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Law on Immigration of “European democrats, who became victims of totalitarianism”

After World War II, the increased immigration of Europeans to the USA was made possible by a law enacted upon a proposal by President Truman, allowing the USA to accept 200,000 “**European democrats, who became victims of totalitarianism.**” This move by the USA provided much satisfaction to the refugees who had fled from communism but were being smeared by the entire world as being traitors or collaborators.

At first, only individuals, individual families or small groups were arriving in the USA. Among the first Slovenians to arrive were Bishop Dr. Gregorij Rožman, the president of the NOS Dr. Miha Krek, and quite a few university professors and intellectuals. It would be fitting at this point to quote an excerpt from a report made years later: “**A great task awaits the immigrants to the USA: to represent our case before the most influential citizens in the world and to revitalize the Slovenian old-time immigrants.**”

The initial stages of immigration

The law that enabled 205,000 refugees to immigrate to the USA also stipulated the condition that **each immigrant must already have a place to stay and a job guaranteed by a “sponsor”**. This was of course impossible for many a person, but carried extraordinary significance for all those who received “sponsors”. The immigration was carried out with help from the IRO, federal organizations (the so-called commission for “examinations”, consulates, immigration authorities) and private organizations (religious, charitable, ethnic). The task of the private organizations was above all to locate sponsors, mediate between sponsors and refugees, and forward the refugees to locations throughout the USA. One of the most active organizations was the **National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC)** which was instrumental in finding sponsors in the USA and providing assistance for 40% of the immigrants.

Working along with the NCWC on behalf of the Slovenian refugees was the *Liga slovenskih katoliških Amerikancev* [*League of Slovenian Catholic Americans*], based in Cleveland. Its president at the time was Msgr. Oman, and Dr. Miha Krek its secretary. The NCWC in New York had a special department, the **Slovene Desk**, which was directed by Rev. Bernard Ambrožič, OFM. By September 25, 1949 LIGA succeeded in bringing already 800 Slovenian refugees to the USA, and the immigration still continued.³¹ LIGA also obtained non-Slovenian

³¹ Towards the end of World War II, the **Slovenian-American Ethnic Council** [*Slovensko-ameriški narodni svet*] was created, which included all Slovenian organizations, such as the KSKJ and the SNOJ, all parishes with their societies, and other Slovenian groups. Because this organization, under the influence of Evgen Kristan and Louis Adamič, decided to support Tito, the KSKJ and all the parishes along with their societies immediately left and created the **League of Slovenian Parishes** [*Zveza slovenskih župnij*]. Its first president was Msgr. Matija Butala, the pastor in Joliet. This group later developed into the League of Catholic American Slovenians [*Liga katoliških ameriških Slovencev*]. This period also produced an important book by Rev. Bernard Ambrožič, “Should Slovenia be Sovietized?” The full responsibility for LIGA rested with Rev. Bernard and Msgr. Franc Gabrovšek. LIGA received much support from the newspaper *Ameriška Domovina* and from the KSKJ’s gazette, *Amerikanski Slovenec*. Credit for the fact that *Ameriška Domovina* remained pro-Catholic was due in large measure to the Governor of Ohio at the time, Lausche, who urged the newspaper’s owner, Debevec, to refrain from joining the leftist press. Professor Lipovec assumed the role of editor from his arrival until his retirement, while his wife managed the women’s corner. After the death of its owner, Debevec, *Ameriška Domovina* was *de facto* in the hands of Prof. Lipovec; after his retirement, the former daily paper became a weekly, then was printed three times a week, and currently only twice a month. At the KSKJ, the most influential person was its Main Secretary, Joseph Zalar. At the plea of Odilo Hanjšek, KSKJ raised \$30,000 dollars to purchase printing presses for *Mohorjeva družba* in Celovec.

sponsors, above all among English-speaking farmers. According to estimates, nearly half of the sponsors were non-Slovenians. The majority of the Slovenian sponsors were businessmen and farmers, especially around Cleveland.

Due to the sponsorship requirement, the new immigrants were scattered over 28 States in the USA, but 83% (592 persons) were centered in 6 states that contained the strongest Slovenian communities: Ohio 272 persons, New York 104, Minnesota 76, Illinois 58, Wisconsin 46, and Pennsylvania 33. Sponsorships would direct some subsequent new arrivals to Virginia and North Dakota.

ZSS 1951 carried a report on the refugee immigration to the USA. It described both immigration laws, the original and the addendum, and then gave details about the immigration. At the **end of 1950** there were around 1,700 refugee-immigrants in the USA. **At least 800 more were expected to come**, which would bring the final total of immigrants to **2,500**. The majority remained in Ohio, especially around Cleveland, and the rest were scattered across 36 states.³²

Getting Accustomed to the New World

The Slovene Desk at NCWC was publishing a monthly newsletter "*Novi Amerikanec*" [*New American*]. The new Slovenians were being incorporated into pre-existing Slovenian support groups and were subscribing to Slovenian newspapers. Many an old-timer expressed the hope that the newcomers would invigorate cultural life. Only this "will strengthen ethnic awareness, the lack of which is letting already second-generation Slovenians in the USA to drown in the sea of foreign land." What might help this turnaround was the fact that there were among the new immigrants almost 40 Slovenian priests, 16 Slovenian university students who received grants at USA universities, and also several dozen university students who probably would not be able to continue their studies. Above all, quite a few intellectuals had already come or would be coming.³³

The USA was a totally new world for all the newcomers. The first questions on each person's mind was how will I get a job and what kind will it be? But in the end, employment was not a difficulty because the sponsor had obtained the initial work for each person. It was most difficult for the intellectuals, who at first grabbed at any sort of work whatsoever; at the same time they were learning the language and trying to convert European diplomas, at which some had quickly succeeded. By 1950 the NCWC obtained 19 scholarships for Slovenian students.

In 1950 the minimum wage was \$0.50 an hour and the average income for an unskilled worker was 27 dollars per week; the current average was at least 500 dollars per week.

Slovenian cultural life in North America received a fresh impetus from the émigrés, that is, the refugees from Austria and Italy. The communist propaganda that these émigrés were traitors with blood on their hands severely hampered this renaissance. As a result, the immigrants were forced to look for places for their activities first among Slovenian parishes and their halls, and even here they did not always find acceptance. More than a few Slovenian Homes looked at

³² Summary of immigrants by state: Ohio 516 or 30%, New York 256 or 15%, Illinois 188 or 11%, Minnesota 151 or 9%, California 96 or 6%, Wisconsin 93 or 5%, Pennsylvania 86 or 5%, North Carolina 73 or 4%. These states contained 85% of the immigrants (1,460 persons), and the other 40 states had 15%.

³³ Dr. J.B., *Emigracija slovenskih beguncev v Združene Države Amerike (U.S.A.)* [*The Emigration of Slovenian Refugees to the United States of America (U.S.A.)*], ZSS 1950, 202-206

them with distrust. Only here and there a refugee might succeed in finding a person who would believe his account of what really had happened back home during the war.³⁴

Some Important Establishments by the Old Immigrants

In 1954, Cleveland had **8 National Homes**, some so spacious that they were even able to perform operas. They had their own **savings and loan banks**, with 30 million dollars from Slovenian depositors in circulation. These two financial institutions had been in existence for 34 years already. Anton Grdina was the president of his own bank since its reorganization in 1933. The bank had more than 1,000 shareholders, with \$600,000 in working capital and more than 6 million dollars in reserve. **The North American Bank** (or the **Slovenian Bank** as it was called) was established by **James Seliskar**. The bank had two branch offices, and also commercial ties with banks in Trieste.³⁵

LIGA and the establishment of new organizations

The **League of Catholic Slovenian Americans** [*Liga Katoliških Slovenskih Amerikancev*] paved the way for immigration to the USA; its main office was in Cleveland until 1959, when it moved to New York. LIGA tried to draw the new immigrants into its own pre-existing local chapters, or urged them to create new ones in places where they did not yet exist. When the *Novi Amerikanec* was still in publication, LIGA prescribed a sort of tax: each immigrant that it had helped should allocate at least 1% of his gross income for LIGA. This one percent did in fact start to come in, which enabled LIGA to continue to operate. Besides LIGA, the newly arrived immigrants, particularly in Cleveland, established a whole line of new organizations; some women joined the already existing KSKJ or *Ženska zveza* [*Women's League*].³⁶

An Effort for the New Immigrants to form their own group³⁷

Novak reported about the inclusion of the newcomers into existing organizations and about the **League of Slovenian Catholic Americans**. He wrote about the **first organization of the new immigrants** (August 21, 1949) whose aim was to link all the new immigrants in Cleveland; it even presented some performances. After the New Year 1950, the pro-tem committee convened a general assembly. Nande Novak was elected president; he declined the position and the committee never went into operation, so the new immigrants in the USA never obtained their own communal organization.

³⁴ Srečko Gaser submitted several reports about Slovenian immigrants to the USA. The first came from his lecture at the SKA Cultural Night in Buenos Aires in 1999. The second was a written report to the author, received August 12, 2006, that described the period after 1999. Gaser at his lecture at SKA in 1999 followed his introduction with a summary of the cultural life of the old immigrants, and then reported on the cultural activities of the new immigrants; the final report he sent covered the activity up to January 2007.

³⁵ Anton Grdina, *Glas iz Amerike* [*Voice from America*], ZSS 1955, 263

³⁶ Ivje, *Imigracija beguncev v U.S.A.* [*Immigration of Refugees to the USA*], ZSS 1951, 234-236; more about LIGA in ZSS 1952, 81-86

³⁷ Zdravko Novak, *Slovenska ideološka emigracija v Združenih državah Amerike* [*The Slovenian Ideological Emigration to the United States of America*], ZSS 1964, 253-277, to date the **most exhaustive account for the USA**

Slovenian organizations in 1954

Novak also reported which Slovenian organizations were active in the USA in 1954, above all those of the new immigrants – religious: the *KA* [Catholic Action], *Marijina legija* [Legion of Mary], *Molitvena zveza* [Prayer Circle], *Misijonska znamkarska akcija* [Mission Aid], *Duhovniški odbor* [Spiritual Committee]; cultural, educational, and professional: *Slovenska zamejska knjižnica* [Slovenian Foreign Library] (since 1945); *Studia slovenica*, directed by Dr. Janez Arnež since its establishment in 1956; the **Slovenian Research Center**, directed by Dr. Edvard Gobetz, lecturer at the state university in Cleveland; Slovenian foreign language radio stations; SAVA, a society of Slovenian college students in the USA; *Slovenska fantovska zveza* [Slovenian Young Men's Club]; *Slovenska dekliška organizacija* [Slovenian Girls Club]; *Slovensko katoliško akademsko starešinstvo* [Slovenian Catholic College Alumni]; *Klub Krog* [the Circle Club]; the drama society *Lilija* [Lily]; the Slovenian social group *Kres* [Bonfire]; *Prosveta* [Education]; *Baragov Dom*; *Slovenski oder* [Slovenian Stage]; the singing group *Korotan* (director Metod Milač); the singing group *Slavček* [Nightingale]; the Slovenian octet *Fantje na Vasi* [the Village Boys]; the signing group *Dom* [Home]; Tonkli's Orchestra; *Harmonikarji* [The Accordionists]; miscellaneous: *Zveza slovenskih protikomunističnih borcev* [Association of Slovenian Anticommunist Fighters], *Slovenska telovadna zveza* [Slovenian Gymnastics Association], the social club *Baraga*, *Štajerski klub* [Štajerska Club]; political: *Slovenska ljudska stranka* [Slovenian People's Party], *Slovenska narodna zveza* [the Slovenian Nation League], *Slovenska demokratska zveza* [the Slovenian Democratic League], *Slovenski narodni sklad* [the Slovenian National Fund]; outside of Cleveland: *Slovensko kulturno društvo Triglav* [Slovenian Cultural Society Triglav] in Milwaukee, *LIGA* [League of Catholic Slovenian Americans], Chicago chapter; events: One World Day in Cleveland, Captive Nations Week, and others.

Slovenian societies and organizations

1. *Baragov dom* and organizations based there³⁸

The space inside *Slovenska pisarna* [the Slovenian Bureau] was initially too small for larger events, so upon the initiative of Jakob Žakelj they purchased a house, called ***Baragov dom*** [the Baraga Home] to serve as a community center.³⁹ The new immigrants in Cleveland needed more space for their own organizations. The Slovenian Bureau at 6116 Glass Avenue was able to provide only a temporary haven. The vicinity did have a huge building, the Slovenian National Home, but at the time it was directed by people who favored the current communist regime in Slovenia. The Parish of St. Vitus numbered around 2,500 families and had two halls, but both were needed for the activities of all the parish organizations. The parish constructed a new building, which had a spacious and modern theater hall and gym, and here the immigrants received a place to hold their larger events.

The dream of having their own Home was achieved in 1956. A large two-story house located on a fitting site at 6304 St. Clair Avenue was for sale. A few individuals decided to provide the down payment. This association, named ***Baragov Dom*** [the Baraga Home], took ownership of the house on St. Clair Avenue and began to remodel the rooms. The *Slovenska pisarna* [Slovenian Bureau] was the first tenant to move into *Baragov dom* on February 1, 1958. Then almost each new immigrant society sought offices there: the youth group ***Kres*** [Bonfire],

³⁸ I. Ž. wrote about the *Baragov dom* in Cleveland in ZSS 1958, 264-265

³⁹ ZSS 1957

the singing group **Korotan** [the Choir], the singing group **Slavček** [Nightingale], **Slovenski oder** [Slovenian Stage], the **Slovenian School**, the board of anticommunist veterans, and others, and **even some old immigrant societies**: *Društvo Srca Jezusovega* [The Society of the Heart of Jesus], *Kranjsko Slovenska Katoliška Jednota* [KSKJ], and others.

The Slovenians who lived in the further eastern part of Cleveland belonged mostly to the Parish of the Assumption in Collinwood. The Slovenian old immigrants had their own Slovenian Home near this church on Holmes Avenue. These old timers were supportive and more understanding of the new settlers.

2. Slovenian parishes in Cleveland

In Cleveland in **1955** there were three Slovenian parishes with 13 priests, and 2 mixed parishes with Slovenian majorities (report by A.G. in ZSS). By 1999 there were in Cleveland only two Slovenian parishes: St. Vitus Parish and Assumption Parish [*Marija Vnebovzeta*]. In **2006** both parishes had large special collections for special projects. In this manner, at **St. Vitus** they were able to repair the leaking roof, clean the exterior of the church, completely remodel and paint the interior, and modernize the altar. The frescoes on the walls display modern Slovenian history; for example, the paintings on one wall depict Mary, Queen of Exiles, with Bishop Rožman among the refugees; on the other wall is pictured Mary, Queen of Martyrs, and depictions of the wartime and postwar mass killings. Credit for this and numerous other achievements belonged to the long tenure of Pastor **Jože Božnar**. The Parish of the **Assumption** undertook the construction of a new hall, called “the Parish Center”, and expansion of the parking areas by purchasing and razing adjacent houses. Current expenses were approaching 2 million dollars, despite the fact much of the labor was volunteer. The hall had a capacity of 500 persons seated at tables. The pastor Rev. **Kumše** himself was a hard worker, who beautified the areas around the church, the parish house, and the hall by planting many bushes and flowers. In 2006 the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary. The vast majority of the parish workers were immigrants and their offspring.

3. Slovenian schools⁴⁰

Each of the two Slovenian parishes in Cleveland has **its own Slovenian school**. The graduates of the 8th grade at St. Vitus visited Slovenia, their 3rd such visit, and the 2nd such visit for those from the Assumption Parish. Each student was responsible for the airfare, and the parents held various fund raisers to finance the other expenses. The teachers from both schools went to Slovenia each year to study Slovenian. Travel expenses were paid in part by these women themselves, part by the RS Bureau for Slovenians throughout the World, and part by the budgets of both schools; the school's sources of income were the proceeds from its various performances, such as Mother's Day or St. Nicholas Day, picnics, dinners, camping, Bingo, and raffles.

4. Church Choirs

Both **Slovenian parishes in Cleveland** have their own Slovenian and English **choirs**. The choir at St. Vitus was directed for many years by Mr. **Košnik**, followed by a North American, and then its latest director **Franci Coffelt**. The choir at Assumption Parish was directed first by **Martin Rakar**, followed by **Janez Rigler**, who had to resign due to illness; the next director was **Rudi Knez** until his retirement in 1997. The current director is a native, who became so enamored with Slovenian songs that he went himself to Slovenia to obtain new music material.

⁴⁰ ZSS 1954 has the first report about Slovenian schools in Cleveland (Dr. Miha Krek, *Slovenska šola v Clevelandu* [*The Slovenian School in Cleveland*], ZSS 1954, 259-260); Novak that same year reported about the Slovenian schools, in operation since 1950.

Josephine Imperl directed the church choir in **Milwaukee**. Because in 1999 the parish of St. John was no longer Slovenian, the choir most probably ceased to exist too. The same happened in San Francisco, where the Slovenian parish faded away; at one time it had a church choir directed by **Aleš Šimenc**. **Minnesota** also had a church choir and a men's choir, which sang at various performances.

5. Baraga Days

The **Baraga League** [*Baragova zveza*] organizes annual Baraga Days, which are held each year in a different place. In **2005** they were held in **Cleveland** at the Assumption Parish. The host city in **2006** was **Calumet, Michigan** where Baraga worked as a missionary.

6. Drama groups

ZSS had a report about the **Slovenian Stage** [*Slovenski oder*] in **Cleveland from 1950/51 to 1959/60**. In the following year there was a report about the **drama society in Cleveland named Liliya** [*Lily*], which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 1959, but the new immigrants had to revive the group since cultural activity had died out. The report described its seasons from 1953/54 to 1959/60.⁴¹

Slovenski oder [*Slovenian Stage*] no longer performs. It staged many plays. It staged its performances in the Slovenian National Home, and all profits went to the League of American Slovenians. When they began renovating the National Home on St. Clair Avenue, all scenery and other stage material was discarded, marking the end of *Slovenski oder*.

The drama society *Lilija* was more fortunate. It celebrated its 80th anniversary in 1999. The new immigrants received the support of the director of the Slovenian Home in Collinwood. Here they resurrected the society *Lilija*, which had been one of the founding organizations for the Home, but faded away already before World War II, and now was again revived under new direction. This Home was quite supportive of the new immigrants, explaining why *Lilija* was able to experience such resurgence, for in the beginning it staged two plays per year. Currently it stages only one play per year, in addition to a Mardi Gras party. The 1999 production was *Na Tankem ledu* [*On Thin Ice*], an adaptation of the North American movie "Boeing, Boeing". The society participates at all major performances. They also performed on tour in Canada and in Chicago. They also provided assistance at the visit of the Primorska theatrical community and at the visit of the Trieste Theater with the play "Halstat". They also played host to the thespian communities from Toronto and from New Toronto. *Lilija* had no performances in the past three years due to lack of new blood. Most of the youth go away to study at universities outside Cleveland or even outside the state of Ohio. *Lilija* still hopes that in the future somebody from these youth will make the effort to stage some new play. The last performance by *Lilija* was three years ago with the play *Vražja vdova* [*The Devil's Widow*] which they performed also in Lemont and in New Toronto, Canada.

7. Singing groups and ensembles

ZSS 1965 mentioned for the first time the Slovenian youth choir in Chicago, which had been successfully operating for 5 years already.⁴² In the first years of immigration, the children's choir *Slavček* [*Nightingale*] was established in Cleveland, but it disbanded after its director Miodrag Savernik became ill. Many of the singers from that choir currently sing in *Korotan* [*the Choir*].

⁴¹ ZSS 1961, 249-253.

⁴² ZSS 1965, 327-329 and 330-333

In Chicago, the choir *Naša Pesem [Our Song]* has been active for many years; its first director was **Brother Vendelin Špendov**. It still exists, although with fewer members.

The first singing group was called *Završki fantje*; it was directed by Mr. Košnik, and sang for a few years.

The singing group *Korotan* has this name since girls joined in 1952. Writing about its first concert, April 12, 1953, Dr. Rajko Ložar stated that its director, **Metod Milač**, possessed an indisputable artistic talent. After its fourth concert in 1956, Korotan's first album was released, "*Tebi in o Tebi pojem*" [*I Sing for You and about You*]; the second album came in 1960, "*Pod oknom*" [*Beneath your window*]; and the third album was issued at the choir's 10th anniversary in 1962. When Milač completed his studies, he moved to Syracuse, New York, whereupon **Lado Lempl** became the choir's director for two years until his death in 1964. Mr. **France Zupan** replaced him for several months, but had to quit working with the choir for health reasons. **Franček Gorenšek** (inž.) became the director in 1966. Already at his first concert, the choir was performing excerpts from the musical "The Sound of Music", and at each successive concert he presented his own arrangements: for example, in 1969 his musical score for "*Naša pesem*" [*Our Song*], lyrics by Marjan Jakopič. At its 25th anniversary, the choir had **90 members** and was by far the largest Slovenian singing group in the USA. In **1981** the choir **toured** together with the dancing troupe "*Kres*" **in Koroška and in Primorska**. After Gorenšek retired, the choir was directed by **Rudi Knez** until his retirement in 1999. Knez was succeeded by **Janez Sršen**. Each year, Korotan has presented a beautiful concert of folk songs and popular songs. Korotan went on tour through Slovenia in 2005 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the events of 1945 and released on DVD a new song, "*Pozdravljena zemlja – Po poteh mučencev*", [*Greetings my homeland – Following the paths of the martyrs*], **music by Metod Milač, lyrics by Pavle Borštnik**.

The year **2006** marked the 15th time that Janez Sršen organized a Christmas Choral Concert with the merged choirs from the St. Vitus Church and the members of *Fantje na Vasi*.

For many years Janez Sršen has also directed the all-male choir *Fantje na Vasi [The Village Boys]* as well as the youth choir at the St. Vitus Parish. *Fantje na Vasi* present an annual concert of folk songs and popular songs, even though all of them are no longer boys, but married men, with one exception. They have released two albums on CD with religious and classical music, entitled *Laudate Domini* and *Praise the Lord*, and one CD album of folk songs, entitled *Iz srca [From the Heart]*. The group had a successful tour in Slovenia in 1995. His youth choir presents a concert of Christmas songs at St. Vitus and other parishes.

The **Marjan Tonkli Orchestra** operated from 1954 to 1962, and then **Dušan Maršič** formed a new orchestra named *Veseli Slovenci [Happy Slovenians]* which played until five years ago; it released 3 record albums with an English and German title. The orchestra of Stane Mejač is still active. The orchestras *Veseli mornarji [Happy Sailors]* and *Veseli vandrovcji [Happy Wanderers]* were playing in 1964, succeeded in the 1970s by the Alpine Sextet. The sons of immigrants have their own currently active ensemble *Veseli godci [Happy Musicians]*.

8. Radio programs

Dr. Ludvik Leskovar reported already in 1959 about the Slovenian radio club in Chicago.⁴³

Shortly after the arrival of the new settlers, **Rado Menart** began a **Slovenian radio program** in Cleveland: at first just half an hour, and later a daily one hour program. Jumping

⁴³ ZSS 1959, 249-250

to his aid at the time were **Dr. Milan Pavlovčič**, **Dr. Stane Šušteršič**, and with his political commentaries, **Pavle Borštnik**. After Dr. Pavlovčič left, the program was led by a radio group under the direction of **Edi Mejač**. These programs later transferred to a different station and were broadcast twice a week, then as now from 9 to 10 a.m. on Sundays and from 6 to 7 p.m. on Wednesdays. These radio programs make free public service announcements for Slovenian organizations and broadcast the latest news from Slovenia.

There is also an English language radio program, directed by **Tony Petkovšek**. Here too various organizations can announce their events, while news from Slovenia is given in Slovenian by Dušan Maršič, the long-time leader of the ensemble “*Veseli Slovenci*” who play in the Avsenik style.

Tone Ovsenek hosts a bi-lingual Slovenian-English radio program each Saturday evening. The audiences are quite familiar with the musicians and singers, for quite a few ensembles and singing groups have toured here, such as *Gallus* from Celovec, the chamber music group *Ave*, the *Slovenski oktet*, the chamber music male choir from Domžale, the Slak ensemble, the Avsenik ensemble, and many others.

The cities of **Chicago** and **Milwaukee** each host a Slovenian radio hour too. Milwaukee is home to the cultural society “**Triglav**”, which organizes picnics in addition to the radio hour.

9. Kres

Bishop Gregorij Rožman supported the concept of a forming a **dancing organization for boys and girls** called **Kres** [*Bonfire*]. The first part of its performances would present the distinctive dances from the various regions of Slovenia with accompaniment by an orchestra, and the second half would show various customs of our nationality. The first board was elected on November 15, 1954 and its first president was **Stanko Vrhovec**. Its first performance was at a commemorative program with a symbolic dance to the song “*Lipa zelenela je*”, choreographed for the dancers by **Jožica Varšek**. Succeeding instructors were Breda Lončar, Eda Petek-Vovk, and Bernardka Mejač-Ovsenek. When Bernardka Mejač-Ovsenek had too many other commitments, Breda Lončar assumed part of the instruction. Former dancers from this group are now the current instructors.

Kres joined Korotan on a **tour through Koroška and Primorska**. It performs at all nationality shows hosted by the city and the Slovenian community. Due to unforeseen circumstances, **Kres** had no instructors from 1997 to 1999. They celebrated their 45th anniversary in 1999; this performance was choreographed by its former and current instructors. In the last few years, **Kres** has again entertained countrymen with annual performances since its 50th anniversary in 2004. A heartening sight to see that former performers are instructing new young dancers, whose numbers are increasing each year. Wherever Slovenians need to be introduced to the North American public, most probably the **Kres** dancers are there. This was especially evident in 2005, when **Kres** hosted the Slovenian Youth Days in Cleveland.

10. Slovenian newspapers

Novak listed the following **Slovenian newspapers in the USA** in his report in ZSS 1954: *Akademik*, *Brazda*, *Cirilmetodijsko gibanje*, *Domoljub*, *Domovina*, *la Cruco-Križ* (the official herald of Catholic Esperantists in the USA and Canada), *Med prijatelji*, *Minnesotski zvon*, *Novi Amerikanec*, *Ozare*, *Pregled*, *Posavski zvon*, *Prijatelj trpečih*, *Slovenska narodna zveza*, *Slovenska pisarna*, *Slovenski oder*, *Slovenska knjiga*, *Slovenija*, *Slovenska pravica*, *Vestnik*.

In 1999, only the following were still in print: *Ameriška Domovina* [*American Home*], *Ave Maria*, *Amerikanski Slovenec* [*American Slovenian*] which was the official herald for the KSKJ (*Kranjsko slovensko podpora jednota*), and *Prosveta* [*Culture*], the official newsletter for the SNPJ.

By 2006 there remained only *Ave Maria*, *Ameriška Domovina*, *Glas KSKJ-Voice of the KSKJ*, and *Amerikanski Slovenec*.

The monthly *Glas KSKJ-Voice of the KSKJ* carries news from all the various areas in the USA that contain a KSKJ chapter. Many old immigrants are members of this fraternal organization which pays death benefits for its members. It also offers various forms of insurance, medical for example, and annuities.

Only *Ave Maria* from Lemont is still entirely in Slovenian. The monthly magazine has been published since 1908 by the Slovenian Franciscan Center of the Custody of Holy Cross. Its present editor is Fr. Bernardin Sušnik OFM.

Professor Vinko Lipovec was for many years the editor of the once daily newspaper *Ameriška Domovina* [*American Home*]. Since 1999, the editor of its Slovenian section was Dr. Rudolf M. Šušelj, an American-born citizen of Slovenian heritage. In 1999, half of the newspaper was in English, and half in Slovenian.⁴⁴ As of 2006, Šušelj was still editor of the Slovenian section.

Tone Nemec was the editor of KSKJ's newspaper, *Amerikanski Slovenec*; of 8 pages, only 2 are still in Slovenian. The current editor of the Slovenian section is Marija Cerar-Hull.

11. Slovenska pristava

The Slovenian School Board at St. Vitus, aware of the inherent problems of leasing space at pre-existing Slovenian picnic farms, proposed the idea of having **their own farm**. The first meeting about this was on February 7, 1960, and on April 15, 1961 they purchased a large property, 70 acres (approximately 28 *ha*) of land that had woods, open fields, a vineyard, and a house with farm buildings. The place is near the city of Geneva, about 45 miles east of Cleveland. They organized the place, constructed a kitchen, bar, and a hall, and a small chapel was in the plans. The *Pristava* [*Farm*] was managed by a special board, which was elected by the shareholders of the SP [*Slovenska Pristava*].

The old hall at the Pristava, which was used as a refuge in the event of rain, was recently demolished and replaced by a new construction which has a capacity for 500 persons for rainy-day events. The kitchen and bar were also remodeled. With a few exceptions, all labor was by volunteers, but even so, the entire project cost around one million dollars. Each member was required to pledge \$300 payable over three years. Much money has already been collected; the hall already has a roof, making it useable in an emergency, although it is not yet completed. Upon completion, the hall will host in a place of honor a memorial plaque to Dr. Valentin Meršol, donated by the Slovenian-American Council [*Slovensko-Ameriški svet*].⁴⁵

In **2005** this council organized a **tour of Slovenia**. Its main purpose was two **unveilings: a memorial plaque in the Vetrinj chapel** to honor **Dr. Meršol**, and a **bust statue of the doctor at the Diocesan High School** [*Škofovi zavodi*] in Šent Vid nad Ljubljano where he had been a student.

The Pristava is sliced by a stream that runs through a 20m deep gorge that is spanned by the Škerbec Bridge [*Škerbčev most*], named to commemorate Msgr. Matija Škerbec, who spawned

⁴⁴ *O Ameriški Domovini v Clevelandu*, ZSS 1950, 184-185. - The owner of *Ameriška Domovina* is James Debevec, son of Jaka Debevec who started this newspaper. James does not know Slovenian. The newspaper was printed on very old machinery and operated at a loss due to low subscriptions; even this last remaining newspaper would have been lost had not a group been formed that purchased a new modern printing press and donated it to Debevec on the condition that he does not halt this newspaper.

⁴⁵ More about this council in the next chapter.

the idea for a *Slovenska Pristava*.⁴⁶ The bridge links the main picnic grounds to a wooded area where, for a small fee, members have the right to erect summer cottages and pay for their own electricity; in this way, many members spend entire months at the Pristava.

The original intent for the farm had been to provide a suitable place for a summer camp for the youth. However, now the place is made available to all Slovenian organizations; during the summer months, one picnic follows another, Sunday after Sunday, and occasionally on a Saturday: picnics by parishes, schools, the Missions, Prekmurje, Belokrajina, Primorska, and other specially-sponsored events. The swimming pool, which attracts the most visitors, dates to the beginning of the SP and needs to be replaced.

On a small hill called *Orlov vrh* [*Eagle's Peak*] stand a **memorial chapel** and signposts (crafted by Polde Omahen) that commemorate all the massacre sites in Slovenia. A Mass is said at this chapel each year to commemorate the killed Homeguards. The [Homeguard veterans] group "*Tabor*" holds its annual commemoration here, while the [Homeguard veterans] group "*Vestnik*" holds its annual commemoration where it had been held from the beginning, at Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine on Chardon Road. The Pristava also has a dance platform that serves as a stage for various performances. The Pristava has hosted all the Slovenia Days, all larger events and celebrations.⁴⁷

12. Poets, writers, and sculptors

Heading the list of poets are Karel Mauser, Marjan Jakopič, and Lojze Bajc, and of the writers, again Karel Mauser. All these authors were active in the Slovenian community in the USA.

Among the sculptors and painters, the **most famous** is **France Gorše**. He worked in Cleveland in 1952, and later moved to New York, then to Canada, and lastly to Sveče in Carinthia, where he opened his personal art gallery. There was a Gorše Exhibition in New York in 1968.⁴⁸ Earlier there were noteworthy exhibitions of sculptures (Gorše, Kramolc, Gregorič, Vodušek, club Lok, and others) and **exhibitions of Slovenian publishing** in January of 1958, August of 1961, and June of 1963).

Two other sculptors were Miro Zupančič and Jože Vodlan, both in New York. Another is Lilijan Brulc, the daughter of Slovenian immigrants from Joliet, Illinois, and Nancy Bukovnik, granddaughter of Tone Kmet, who was described by Louis Adamič in his story "The Old Man by the Window".

13. Researchers, publicists

Much credit for the promulgation and preservation of Slovenian culture belongs to **Professor Dr. Edi Gobec**: author and editor of at least eight books to date (Anthology of Slovenian

⁴⁶ Msgr. Škerbec was the pastor and deacon in Kranj before the war. He was a priest who was exceptionally active in social issues; he established various sorts of cooperatives. He was the catalyst for the construction of a covered wooden bridge that spanned a 30m deep chasm of the Kokra River, to link the parish church nestled between the boarding school and parish rectory on one side of the chasm to Planika on the other side. The people called it the *Škerbčev most*, so the communists demolished it immediately after the war since it was of course necessary to "liberate" Kranj from such a vital bridge. For his efforts on behalf of the Slovenska Pristava in Cleveland (Ohio, USA), Msgr. Škerbec received another bridge here in his honor.

⁴⁷ Srečko Gaser reports about the "Cultural Center" in Lemont; but the report on Chicago by A. Remec goes into more detail. The idea for such a center was proposed already 40 years earlier by some Slovenians (for example, Karel Mauser, Prof. Lipovec, Prof. Sever, Janez Grum) but at the time did not receive a favorable response from the Franciscans.

⁴⁸ ZSS 1969, 312

American Literature, From Carniola to Carnegie Hall, Slovenian Heritage I, and others), also the founder of the **Slovenian American Institute** (Slovenian Research Center of America). He taught a Slovenian language course at Kent State University for 25 years without pay. He was instrumental in getting the university to accept this class as a credit course.

Pavle Borštnik delivered political commentaries on the radio, wrote many columns in the newspaper *Ameriška Domovina*, and authored the book “*Pozabljena zgodba Slovenske ilegale*” [*The Forgotten History of the Slovenian Underground*].

Dr. Janez Arnež worked for many years in Washington, D.C.; in 1957 he founded **Studia Slovenica** together with Erik Kovačič. In 1993, this institute moved to quarters in the Bishop’s High School [*Škofovi zavodi*] in Šentvid; a branch remains open in the USA at Silver Spring, Maryland.

Dr. Jože Velikonja together with **Dr. Rajko Ložar** in 1992 and 1995 compiled the book “*Who’s Who of Slovene Descent in the United States*”.⁴⁹

The novel “*Poletje molka*” by **Marija Cerar-Hull** has also been published in an English translation under the title “Summer of Silence”.

Ludve **Potokar** was a lesser known author (“*Onstran samote*”) who resided for a while in Cleveland and died recently in Canada.

Zdravko Novak was instrumental in publicizing Slovenian émigré literature.

Well known authors of books, scientific research, or political commentaries include the likes of **Dr. Ciril Žebot**, **Prof. Vinko Lipovec**, **Dr. Mate Roessman**, **Dr. Uroš Roessman**, and **Prof. Janez Grum**.

14. St. Vitus Village

St. Vitus Village, constructed at St. Vitus Parish with voluntary donations, is a retirement community home for Slovenians: suites with one or two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, and bath. There are no vacancies for the 32 suites. When independent living is no longer an option, a resident transfers from here to a full-care senior citizen facility. The oldest resident at the Village is Mrs. Hirschegger (the mother of Zalka Likozar, widow of Jože Likozar) who celebrated her 101st birthday in 2006.

15. The Slovenian Bureau

The **Slovenian Bureau** [*Slovenska pisarna*] has been based for more than a year at the St. Vitus Village. The current manager is **Feliks (Srečko) Gaser**. Its main purpose is to serve as a subscription clearinghouse for Slovenian publications such as *Družina*, *Ognjišče*, *Duhovno življenje*, *Nova zaveza* and *Svobodna Slovenija*. It also sells various new and old books. It has sold in the USA and Canada 120 copies of the most recent book, “Slovenia 1945” by Cor-sellis-Ferrar (English and Slovenian versions).⁵⁰ The book by Metod M. Milač, “*Kdo solze naše posuši*” [*Who will dry our tears*] (Slov. and Eng.), is also very popular. The bookstore also sells old books that were donated by the children of older Slovenian émigrés who have died, since they themselves cannot read in Slovenian. The bookstore already has a room full of such books, and does not know what to do with them; they are trying to get them accepted by some library in Slovenia or the USA.⁵¹

⁴⁹ There are many more noteworthy postwar immigrant activists in the USA who toiled among their own kind or for the American public, that deserve mention. Many of these are listed in “*Vodnik po arhivskem gradivu Studia Slovenica*” [*Guidebook to the Archives of Studia Slovenica*] (Ljubljana 2005).

⁵⁰ The quickest way to order is by email: felixgaser@adelphia.net

⁵¹ Dr. Janez Arnež recently visited the store and conveyed quite a few old books to the archives at Studia Slovenica.

16. Slovenska Pristava Retirees

The **Slovenska Pristava Retirees** [*Upokojenci Slovenske pristave*] is a unique group that hosts an annual picnic at the Pristava. All the profits go to the Pristava, with the exception of the sales of the pork and sausage dinners, which go into the treasury of this group. From this treasury, each year a designated sum is donated to the Slovenian schools, Lemont, the Senior Citizen Home, and to both Slovenian Parishes. In addition, donations are sent to individual missionaries or priests. On a side note, the Slovenian schools receive financial donations at Christmas from other organizations too, such as *Korotan*, *Kres*, *Lilija*, and *Fantje na vasi*.

17. Tours from Slovenia

Various ensembles and singing groups from Slovenia come on tour almost yearly. In 1995-1996, *Slovenski oktet* and *Akademski pevski zbor* from Kranj came to the USA on tour and entertained Slovenians with their high-quality music and singing.

18. Slovenian businesses and professionals in the Cleveland area

Slovenian businesses include: PAKO Inc., owned by Pavle Košir, with 140 employees; TRV Inc., owned by Rudi Kolarič, with 40 employees; Sunset Industries, managed by the sons of I. Hauptman and F. Hren, with 17 employees; F&H Grinding, owned by G. Frank; Precision Grinding, managed by G. Šimen. There is a long line of Slovenian tradesmen (construction, woodworking, electricians).

There are also many professionals of every ilk (engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, accountants, nurses, etc.). Slovenians in general have excellent positions, and even more so their children, who had the opportunity for higher education.

19. Performances

The **15th anniversary of Slovenia's independence** was celebrated in June of **2006**. The new consul, **Dr. Zvone Žigon**, invited the old and the new immigrants to participate, a noteworthy request. The community was able to have the Slovenian flag fly over City Hall in Cleveland for an entire week, and for 3 days over the Ohio State Senate building in the capital city of Columbus, which was visited by busloads of Slovenians. At City Hall in Cleveland there was an exhibition of Slovenian arts and crafts, ethnic costumes, and dry goods. For an entire week, banners with the text "Slovenia Days in Cleveland" fluttered from telephone poles. Each Monday for a month there was a concert by some Slovenian group: *Kres*, *Fantje na vasi*, *Korotan*. The month-long celebration began on June 5 and ended on June 25 with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Pevec at St. Vitus Church, followed at 3pm by a celebration at the Slovenian National Home with performances by *Korotan*, *Fantje na vasi*, *Glasbena Matica*, *Melodija*, the Slovenian Junior Chorus, and the dancing troupe *Kres*. Here was also the initial performance by the touring *Slovenski oktet*, which later performed at its own concerts in Cleveland and in Pennsylvania. The actual conclusion of the celebration occurred three days later, when the president of the Slovenian government, Janez Janša, visited the Slovenians here before his state visit with the President of the USA, G. W. Bush. Janša spoke with the guests at the National Home and presented an award by *Slovenija v Svetu* (SVS) to Dr. Edi Gobec, the founder of the Slovenian Research Center, for his work on behalf of the Slovenians in the USA.

20. Gymnastics and sports

The only report about the Slovenian Gymnastics Club (*Slovenska telovadna zveza*) in Cleveland was printed in ZSS **1970** on the occasion of its 20th anniversary.⁵²

⁵² ZSS 1970, 228-229

21. Loss of influential persons

In the past few years, the Slovenian community **lost some influential persons** through death: **Dr. Mate Roesman, president of the American-Slovenian Council** [*Ameriški-slovenski svet*], which is temporarily being represented by Rudi Kolarič; in Washington, **Dr. Stane Šušteršič**, known as the unofficial tour guide of the capital of the USA, who worked for many years at Radio Free Europe and was also the co-founder of the Slovenian radio broadcasts in Cleveland, still broadcasting today.

The Slovenian community in Lemont⁵³

ZSS in 1955⁵⁴ printed a lengthy report about the commemorative days in Lemont (Illinois), and in 1965 an article about the 40th anniversary of Lemont.⁵⁵

a) Old immigrants in Chicago

Chicago lies on the shores of Lake Michigan and is the transportation crossroads for mid-western North America. Slovenians started settling in Chicago in the 1890s. At that time, approximately 60 families lived there, some in the northern part and others in the southern part of the city. Being good Catholics, some of these countrymen congregated in a church in a suburb which was already made available for use by the Czechs and the Slovaks. Here they came into contact with a Slovenian priest from Joliet, located 70 km away, where the Parish of St. Joseph was already active. Chicago Slovenians from the largest Catholic-based insurance organization KSKJ (*Kranjsko-slovenska katoliška jednota*) asked Rev. Janez Plevnik to found their own parish in Chicago. The diocese gave its approval on January 2, 1898, and already on May 2 that same year they purchased a starter church located at 1852 West 22 Place. This **Parish of St. Stephen** [*župnija sv. Štefana*] **became the focal point for religious Slovenians, who were socially-oriented too.** The Slovenians from Prekmurje, scattered throughout Chicago, as well as the Venetian and Primorska Slovenians, started to attend Mass at St. Stephen's too.

A Slovenian parish was also established in **Waukegan**, 50 miles north of Chicago, and then another parish for Slovenians and Croatians in the southern part of Chicago. Thus there was quite a bit of Slovenian life in the greater Chicago area, some of it linked to the Church, and some to the socially-conscious parishioners. **In 1919, the Slovenian Franciscans assumed the administration of the Parish of St. Stephen.** When [Franciscan] Fr. **Kazimir Zakrajšek** arrived, he achieved the construction of the parish school. The parish could now take care of the spiritual life and the education of the children, as well as social life and sports through various parish organizations. Soon Slovenians began to settle densely in the St. Stephen neighborhood. Around 1930, the parish numbered approximately 70 families and 300 single parishioners, plus 180 families that lived further away.

b) New immigrants

Between 1947 and 1950, the first **refugees** started to arrive, having left Slovenia at the end of the war in the face of the communist terrorism and Revolution. The majority of the

⁵³ This section is an edited version of a report by Andrej Remec; received by the author on July 24, 2006

⁵⁴ ZSS 1955, 181-186; Fr. Bernard Ambrožič OFM in ZSS 1956 (202-208) wrote an interesting article about the history of some Slovenian organizations in the USA.

⁵⁵ Fr. Fortunat Zorman OFM, ZSS 1965, 330-333

socialist-oriented Slovenians in Chicago swallowed the communist propaganda and lies about the Revolution back home; regrettably even fellow Catholics. As a result, the old immigrants looked down on the “new” immigrants and repeated the lie that they had fled from Slovenia because they had “blood on their hands”. This lasted for quite some time, until they got to know the refugees better. The tension between the USA and the USSR in the Cold War also had a palliative effect on this inter-immigrant atmosphere.

All the new immigrants were required to have sponsors who would guarantee room, board, and employment. Some of these sponsors were the old immigrants, and others were already from the ranks of the new immigrants. There were some families with children who in the beginning went to the parish school to learn English. Others, who were older and had jobs, went to secondary schools and to universities to learn English. The adults generally obtained employment in manual labor or in offices, while some opened up their own trades or stores. Between 1948 and 1950, there were around 250 Slovenian refugees in Chicago, while there were perhaps 5 to 10 thousand old immigrants in and around the city. The Slovenian school at St. Stephen Parish, named the Slomšek Slovenian School, was in session from 9 am till noon on Saturdays; at that time it taught around 50 students from refugee families.

After conditions in Yugoslavia eased somewhat, the so-called “**economic**” immigrants started to settle in Chicago. Many of these new arrivals came from Prekmurje with the explicit intention of self-employment, many in construction, metalwork, or retail. At that time there were around 700 of these “new” immigrants.

c) Changes in the St. Stephen neighborhood

But the **character of the inhabitants in the St. Stephen neighborhood**, which was mostly dense housing, started to change. The Slovenians were moving out to the suburbs with lawns and gardens around the houses, and Mexicans were moving in. The Slovenians were still going to the Slovenian Masses at St. Stephen Church, however fewer and fewer people were coming to evening entertainments or performances because they were afraid of the increased crime in the neighborhood. Concerned about the future, they began to think about having some sort of social and cultural home in the suburbs.

The Slovenian Franciscans had a large, beautiful monastery on a large property in the suburb of Lemont. In actuality, Lemont had been some sort of spiritual mecca for the Slovenian immigrants in the USA for more than 80 years. Fellow countrymen make frequent pilgrimages to Mary, Help of Christians, to whom the church is dedicated, and also to the **grave of Bishop Dr. Rožman**, who found refuge in Lemont in his final years, and whose material remains found refuge in its cemetery.

The thoughts and desires of the new immigrants in the greater Chicago area were turning to Lemont. For many years they could not reach an agreement and achieve their desire to settle in Lemont or to construct their Home there, so the new immigrant Slovenians purchased property elsewhere. But in the end, the situation changed.

d) The Slovenian Cultural Center in Lemont

The Parish of St. Stephen was steadily losing attendance and income, so the parish had to be closed. The Slovenians thereby lost a place for Slovenian Masses and social gathering. The diocese sold the Parish of St. Stephen to the Jesuits, who initiated here what is now the very successful school of Christus Rex. The loss of this parish brought the Slovenians to a consensus and a happy ending on the issue of a Home. **Obtaining a 99-year lease on a parcel from the Franciscan Fathers, they began construction of a Slovenian Cultural Center [Slovenski kulturni center] (Slovenian Home) in Lemont.** They solicited financial donations across the

USA. They again started congregating at the Franciscan hilltop Church of Marija Pomagaj for Slovenian Masses and in the Slovenian Spiritual Center dedicated to Blessed A. M. Slomšek. In the meantime they were building the Home with volunteer labor and with discounts on materials from fellow Slovenians in the construction business. The construction took approximately two years, and now they have enjoyed their own Home for nearly a decade already.

A Slovenian **architect, Vesna Rebernak**, created a truly beautiful and functional design that was approved. During the construction phase, the rare modification was simply to meet an overriding requirement by the local building codes; the excellent design kept construction costs low. Today they have a Home with a large assembly hall (capacity for 450 people), a stage and dance floor, a smaller hall that holds 100 people, a library, an office, a classroom, and a bar at the rear of the building at the end of the entrance hallway, and a modern kitchen.

After the Sunday Masses, the Home hosts dinners for small and large social gatherings. Performances on the stage are frequently presented by guest groups from other areas or from Slovenia, or from the school children. Evenings are reserved for music and dances, wedding dinners, commemorative events, and also memorial Masses. During the school year, the Home provides a monthly cultural hour, and memorials for personages worthy of recognition, the victims of the war and of the communist revolution, or other events in their history.

A pillar of activity is the **Slomšek Slovenian Saturday School**. The school enables the children to be taught the Slovenian language, history and culture, and also to make personal acquaintances. This forges bonds of friendship that extend to later years. At present, the student body contains 35 children and 7 adults. The hope is that the young generation from this school will take over this beautiful Home, this beautiful cultural center, once the hands of the older generation grow weak.

The planning and preparations for the Home, as well as its internal and external maintenance, is generally the result of volunteer labor. The Slovenians have several committees to manage this work. For example, some men mow the lawns around the Home and others perform the immediate tasks required at hand, the first-rate kitchen staff prepares traditional Slovenian dishes and other daily fare, the youth serve at the tables, all of which creates a friendly home-style atmosphere. At present the Home has approximately 500 adult members. The presentations are attended by members and their families, their friends including non-Slovenians, who are amazed at the beauty of the Home situated at a beautiful site below the Franciscan knoll.

The Slovenian Chapel in the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception is the Patroness of the USA. For this reason, North American Catholics constructed an enormous shrine in her honor in Washington D.C., the country's capital. The shrine is situated on a small knoll at the edge of the city. The Catholic University and a seminary are next to the shrine. In the shrine's upper and lower levels, individual nationalities were permitted to construct their own chapels in honor of Mary by whatever title is most honored in their countries. The Slovenians were able to obtain the last chapel space that was still available. Since 1968, Our Lady of Brezje graces a chapel in the National Shrine.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ ZSS 1969, 309-311 and a lengthier article in ZSS 1970, 230-232

3. South America

1. ARGENTINA⁵⁷

Number of immigrants

From Italy, 2,369 persons left for **Argentina**. By occupation: 422 were farmers, 1,055 laborers, 635 professionals; by marital status: 1,489 were single, and 880 married; by sex and age: 1,581 males (80 up to age 6, 68 to age 14, 40 to age 18, 1,233 to age 45, and 150 over age 45), and 788 females (88 up to age 6, 51 to age 14, 37 to age 18, 526 to age 45, and 86 over age 45). The refugees **from Austria** began arriving in Argentina from October 1948 to March 1949. After March 1949, only individuals or smaller groups were arriving, and after 1950, only those who had relatives (up to the 1st degree, i.e. 1st cousins) already living in Argentina, who obtained immigration permission for these refugee relatives. There were 98 persons that came by this manner.

According to the data by *Društvo Slovencev [Society of Slovenians]*, which later became *Zedinjena Slovenija [United Slovenia]*, there were **5,282 Slovenian immigrants** in Argentina in 1952.⁵⁸

Immigration period

The first report on the immigration to Argentina did not identify the places from where the refugees came. The article states that the refugees from Italy almost unanimously decided to go to Argentina for the following reasons: the Allies were pressuring them to emigrate, Argentina had its doors open to everyone, the reports about the socio-economic conditions in Argentina were favorable, many jobs and suitable wages were available, and so on.⁵⁹ The first arrivals, only two persons, came on January 25, 1947; one and a half months later came 6 more, and five weeks later another 6 persons. The immigration hotel was not yet open, and they had to be content with a humble hospice on Austria Street.

The Slovenians did not begin coming in larger multitudes until 1948, first from Italy, and as of October also from Austria. In addition to these large contingents, a few other ships did dock with a cargo of larger or smaller groups of Slovenians, but always only refugees from Italy. The immigration to Argentina from Italy was almost concluded by the end of 1948.

Was the mass immigration a success?

The mass immigration of Slovenians probably had the most success in Argentina. Most of them remained in the capital and its vicinity, and others went to Mar del Plata, Miramar,

⁵⁷ The Slovenian community in Argentina is not presented in detail, because it has written much about itself, and many significant books about the Slovenians in Argentina have already been published: Taras Kermauner, "*Slovenski čudež v Argentini*" [*The Slovenian Miracle in Argentina*]; Žigon, (see Sources); many doctoral and master degree theses about the settlers in Argentina, etc.

⁵⁸ For the entire section, see *Zbornik ZS*, 15-16. It also lists differing figures: 5,203 persons supposedly came by 1948, and around 800 afterwards. By 1960, 1,440 babies were born, 200 persons emigrated from Argentina, and 173 persons died. Thus, in 1960 there were 7,070 Slovenian settlers (Jože Rant, doctorate dissertation 1960, *Priloga Omnes Unun*, Excerpts p. 7)

⁵⁹ The first published report on this subject was an article entitled "*Slovenski begunci se razhajajo v svet*" [*Slovenian refugees scatter across the world*], *ZSS* 1950, 128

Chapadmalal, Bahía Blanca, Bariloche, Comodoro Rivadavia, even to Ushuaia and Río Grande in Tierra del fuego. The Slovenian theological seminary had moved from Brixen and remained in San Luis until 1951, when it moved to Adrogué in the south of Greater Buenos Aires. A larger contingent went to Mendoza. Because this group contained many important professionals and organized laborers, they created their own *Društvo Slovencev* [Society of Slovenians]. This created somewhat of a discord which was resolved after Mendoza's Society recognized the society *Zedinjena Slovenija* [United Slovenia] as the central ruling body. In response to the growing activities in various regions at the Slovenian Homes, upon a proposal by *Zedinjena Slovenija*, the Inter-organizational Council [*Medorganizacijski svet/MOS*] was created, which organizes numerous events each year. There are at present ongoing discussions again about the possibility of some sort of federation to embrace all Slovenian organizations in Argentina.

The weekly *Svobodna Slovenija* and the *Društvo Slovencev*

On New Year's Eve 1947, Miloš Stare proposed a biweekly newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija* [Free Slovenia], which became a weekly already with the 2nd issue. At present, the newspaper is published on 6 pages in tabloid format. *Svobodna Slovenija* began during the war in Slovenia as an underground publication for the voice of the Slovenian Legion. Miloš Stare published a few issues in Rome, and then transported the newspaper to Argentina. After his death, the weekly was published for a while by a consortium, until it became owned by the organization *Zedinjena Slovenija*.

In January of 1948, a few hundred new immigrants created the *Društvo Slovencev* [Society of Slovenians], which later changed its name to *Društvo Zedinjena Slovenija* [the United Slovenia Society]. This organization developed exceptional importance as an internal link and an external representative of the Slovenian community.⁶⁰

The initial years according to articles in “Zbornik *Svobodna Slovenija*”

The *Koledar-Zbornik Svobodna Slovenija* (ZSS) [Calendar-Almanac of Free Slovenia] contained regular articles about the immigrants in Argentina.⁶¹ Then in 1960 it published a summary entitled “*Pogled na prvih 10 let izseljenstvu*” [A Look at the First Decade as Immigrants].⁶²

⁶⁰ The expression ‘Slovenian community’ is an apt synonym for the postwar immigrants, since the pre-war immigrants refer to themselves as Yugoslavs.

⁶¹ ZSS was published annually from 1949 to 1970, then with a combined 1971/72 and a final 1973/75. A sampling of articles: Jože Košiček, *Kako smo prišli v Argentino* [How we came to Argentina], ZSS 1949, 166-167; Janez Hladnik, *Brezdomci so našli nov dom v Argentini* [The Homeless Found a New Home in Argentina], ZSS 1949, 168-169; *Društvo Slovencev* [Society of Slovenians], ZSS 1949, 171-172; *Slovenci v Buenos Airesu* [Slovenians in Buenos Aires], ZSS 1950, 133-137; I.L., *V Mendoza pojdite! Tam je lepo* [Come to Mendoza; It is beautiful], ZSS 1950, 138-146; *Učena Cordoba* [Cosmopolitan Cordoba], ZSS 1950, 150-151; *Provinca Tucumán* [Tucumán Province], ZSS 1950, 152-155; N.Č., *V deželi tekočega zlata* [In the land of flowing gold], ZSS 1950, 156-157; Rosario, ZSS 1950, 158-159; Janez Hladnik, *Dom v Argentini* [Home in Argentina], ZSS 1950, 180-181; *V argentinskih letoviščih* [In Argentine Summer Camps], ZSS 1950, 171-172; V.A., *Slovenci v Bariloche* [Slovenians in Bariloche], ZSS 1950, 173-174; *Slovenski naseljenci na Ognjeni zemlji* [Slovenian immigrants in Tierra del Fuego], ZSS 1950, 175; *Slovenci v Argentini* [Slovenians in Argentina], ZSS 1951, 231-234; Pavle Rant, *Argentinska pisma 1969* [Argentine letters 1969], ZSS 1969, 223-228; *Slovenci v Argentini* [Slovenians in Argentina], ZSS 1964, 301-303; Rudolf Hirschegger, *Kako je nastala slovenska skupnost v Mendoza* [How a Slovenian community developed in Mendoza], ZSS 1973/75, 355-359 etc.; Franc Pernišek, *Ob 25 letnici Društva Slovencev* [On the 25th Anniversary of the Society of Slovenians], ZSS 1971/72, 347-389, probably one of the best reports, with statistics and numerous photographs.

⁶² ZSS 1960, 221-284.

The ZSS article entitled *O argentinskih Slovencih leta 1964* [About Argentine Slovenians, 1964] was brief but included many photographs.⁶³ In 1965, Joško Krošelj wrote an article about the celebration of the 15th anniversary of SFZ and SDO and the 10th anniversary of *Slovenska kulturna akcija* [Slovenian Cultural Action].⁶⁴ In 1966, ZSS printed a letter “*Idealizem naše mladine*” [The Idealism of our youth], which praised the collaboration of the youth at Memorial Day-1965.⁶⁵ The same issue printed the article “*Spominske proslave v Buenos Airesu*” [Commemorative Events in Buenos Aires] which spoke about the celebration of the national holiday, the achievement of an open-air assembly in Ramos Mejía, at which they remembered Dr. J.E. Krek and Dr. A. Korošec, for whom on the 15th anniversary of his death they also held a commemoration on December 5, 1965 in the Slovenian Home.⁶⁶ M.M. (Marjan Marolt) presented reproductions of works by Slovenian artists in exile (B. Remec, F. Gorše, F. Ahčin, I. Bukovec, A. Makek, M. Zupančič, and J. Vodlan); this “collection” was inserted between pages 80 and 81 in the almanac.⁶⁷

ZSS 1967 contained a variety of articles. TD (Tine Debeljak) Jr. wrote about the Slovenian Theater in Buenos Aires, established in 1964, and its performances, especially because henceforth they would have their own stage available in the Slovenian Home.⁶⁸ In the context of the Slovenian theater, he mentioned the performances by the Theater Chapter of the SKA, children’s performances, the performances by the boarding house pupils at the high school in Adrogué, by university students, and by the theaters at Lanus and elsewhere. An article deservedly highlighted the 25th anniversary of *Svobodna Slovenija*.⁶⁹

In ZSS 1968, Marijan Marolt described the exhibitions of Slovenian artists,⁷⁰ and Dr. Tine Debeljak wrote about the premiers of new Slovenian dramas.⁷¹ L.R. reported on the Slovenian Theater in Buenos Aires.⁷²

In ZSS 1970, P.F. (Pavel Fajdiga) reported on the solemn commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Vetrinjški tragedy, which was staged also for the benefit of the Argentine public; it displayed many pictures.⁷³ T.M. wrote an article about the theater and concert performances in Buenos Aires.⁷⁴

The activities and **achievements of the Slovenian mountain climbers** was a tale in itself; for many years, ZSS had a special section dedicated to them: *Naši gorniki* [Our Mountain climbers].⁷⁵

⁶³ *Slovenci v Argentini* [Slovenians in Argentina], ZSS 1964, 301-303

⁶⁴ Joško Krošelj, *Nekaj zapiskov o slovincih v argentini* [Some Notes on Slovenians in Argentina], ZSS 1965, 342-345 (Author’s note: according to the style at the time, words in a title were in lower-case except for the first word)

⁶⁵ ZSS 1966, 383-384

⁶⁶ ZSS 1966, 385-387

⁶⁷ ZSS 1966, 387-388

⁶⁸ ZSS 1967, 309-311

⁶⁹ Kk (Košček), *Ob 25-letnici Svobodne Slovenije* [On the 25th Anniversary of Svobodna Slovenija], ZSS 1967, 322-323

⁷⁰ ZSS 1968, 257-258,

⁷¹ ZSS 1968, 278-281

⁷² ZSS 1969, 314-315

⁷³ ZSS 1970, 235-242

⁷⁴ ZSS 1970, 243-245

⁷⁵ ZSS 1955, 201-202; ZSS 1955, 202-203; ZSS 1956, 185-187, ZSS 1960, 37-57, ZSS 1964, 221-242, ZSS 1965, 115-136, ZSS 1966, 229-249, ZSS 1967, 217-251, ZSS 1968, 276-277, ZSS 1969, 151-168; ZSS 1970, 155-185, ZSS 1971/72, 195-224, ZSS 1973/75, 275-296

ZSS contained an article on the **Exhibition of Slovenian Publishing at the Slovenska pristava in Castelar**.⁷⁶ ZSS 1955 contained a description of the cultural life of Slovenians in Buenos Aires up to 1955. M.M. wrote about art paintings and the theater, and P.M. about music (singing groups in 1954) and about Slovenian artists.⁷⁷ There was a one-page report with two photographs about the Slovenian singing group *Gallus*, and ZSS 1960 had an article about the Slovenian singing groups in Argentina up to 1960.⁷⁸

Working for economic advancement and some sort of “economic emancipation” was significant. The article on Slovenian businesses in Argentina was important.⁷⁹ This topic included the *Exposlov 74 at Naš dom [Our Home]* in San Justo and *Exposlov 79 at the Slovenska hiša [Slovenian House]*, both organized by the Credit Union SLOGA.⁸⁰

The weekly newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija* was extraordinary important through all the years, particularly after the demise of *Zbornik Zedinjene Slovenije [Almanac of United Slovenia]* in 1998; the newspaper regularly reported on the life and labor of individuals and organizations within the Slovenian community in Argentina.

Društvo Zedinjena Slovenija “Zbornik dela v zvestobi in ljubezni: 1948-1998” **[The United Slovenia Society, “Anthology of faithful and loving work: 1948-1998”]**

The 50 years of the all-encompassing activities by the central and umbrella organization, *Zedinjena Slovenija [United Slovenia]*, was described in *Zbornik ZS [The ZS Anthology]* which had 4 sections.

Part 1 contains the actual summary of the minutes of the committee meetings. This section demonstrated the multi-faceted activism of this organization.

Part 2, perhaps the most important section, contained a brief description of the establishment, development, and activity of the **Slovenian Homes**: *Slovenska hiša [the Slovenian House]* in the capital city, *Slovenska pristava [the Slovenian Farm]* in Castelar, *Naš dom [Our Home]* in San Justo, *Hladnikov Dom v Slovenski Vasi [the Hladnik Home in the Slovenian Village]* in Lanus, *Slovenski Dom [Slovenian Home]* in Mendoza, *Slomškov dom [the Slomšek Home]* in Ramos Mejía, *Slovenski Dom* in San Martín, *Slovenski Dom* in Carapachay, *Slovenski Dom* in Berazategui, *Slovensko planinsko društvo [the Slovenian Mountain Society]* in Bariloche, *Počitniški dom [the Vacation Home]* of Dr. Rudolf Hanželič in Villa Dolores-San Esteban (Córdoba), *Slovenski dom* in Miramar, and the Slovenian shelter *Rožmanov dom [the Rožman Home]* in San Justo.⁸¹

⁷⁶ ZSS 1954, 274-275

⁷⁷ ZSS 1955, 258-261

⁷⁸ ZSS 1959, 267; Pavel Fajdiga, *Slovenski pevski zbori v Argentini [Slovenian Singing Groups in Argentina]*, ZSS 1960, 275-284; see also Kronist, *Naša zborovska dejavnost v Argentini [Our Choral Activity in Argentina]*, ZSS 1973/75, 360-376, which contains a historical overview and group photos; see also *Zbornik*, etc.

⁷⁹ See Pavle Rant, *Gospodarski položaj in uspehi poveljne emigracije v Argentini [The economic situation and achievements of the postwar immigrants in Argentina]*, ZSS 1956, 217-224; F.U., *Slovenska gospodarska podjetnost v Argentini [Slovenian economic entrepreneurship in Argentina]*, ZSS 1973/75, 323-354

⁸⁰ *Zbornik ZS*, 1998, *Društvo ZS* at the suggestion of its then president Marjan Loboda published *Zbornik ZS* with the help of gifts by patrons.

⁸¹ See also J.K., *Slovenska središča v Velikem Buenos Airesu [Slovenian Centers in Greater Buenos Aires]*, ZSS 1957, 221-227; Pavel Fajdiga et al., *Slovenski Domovi v Argentini [Slovenian Homes in Argentina]*, ZSS 1962, 234-245; Joško Krošelj, *Društvo Slovencev ob 10-letnici [The Society of Slovenians at its 10th Anniversary]*, ZSS 1960, 227-256; Joško Krošelj, *Društvo Slovencev ob desetletnici [The Society of Slovenians at its 10th Anniversary]*, ZSS 1961, 254-260

This section also described the annual *Spominski dnevi* [Memorial Days] from 1948 to 1997. It covered the *Slovenski dnevi* [Slovenia Days] from the 1st in 1956 to the 42nd in 1992.⁸² There was also a very extensive account about other events: from cultural to social to charitable; from commemorative (ex. the 40th anniversary of the May Declaration of 1917) to the presentations for the Argentine public, such as *Teden slovenske kulture* [Slovenian Culture Week], July 3-7, 1992. It listed the **ethnic and state festivals**: at the top of the list was the annual October 29 Celebration, which was “some sort of display of Slovenianism in opposition to December 1st”, a date not celebrated by the SPE in Argentina; from its unceasing work from the very beginning on behalf of personal and public freedom in the homeland, and later for the independence of and recognition for the Republic of Slovenia; each year since 1993, the holiday for Slovenian statehood is solemnly celebrated.

The review on Bariloche listed the most important **achievements of the Slovenian mountain climbers**, who stepped beyond the bounds of the Slovenian community and became a noteworthy force in Argentine and international circles. This group included the likes of Vojko Arko (faithful chronicler), France Jerman, Dinko Bertoncej, Janez Flere, Martin Jereb, Tonček Pangerc, Blaž Razinger, Ivan Arnšek, Boris Kambič, the brothers Jure and Peter Skvarča, and others. All of these were either state skiing champions for many years, or became the first to reach the peaks of designated mountains; as a result, their personal names now adorn many peaks and lakes, ex. the Valley of the Slovenians (Valle de los Eslovenos) by the famous mountain Cerro Capilla and Lake Nahuel Huapi’s branch lake *de la Tristeza*. In fact, in all the larger locations where post-war Slovenians settled, many town squares or streets were renamed, most often with the name “Republica Slovenija”, and many a time with the names of important countrymen.

The next chapters described the **work and status of Slovenian education in Argentina** from the beginning year 1949 to 1997. In the first years after 1953, when *Društvo Slovencev* with its consultants set to work on education, there were classes in the larger centers, and now 8 elementary grades, encompassing 400 students, were regularly operating. The *Zbornik* listed the names of the current directors of each course and the names of all the teachers. It also displayed charts with details on the number of students for each area for all the years.⁸³

Attendance was continuously increasing in the classes provided for Spanish-speaking students.

There was a separate article on the **non-school activities for the youth**.⁸⁴

Due to his importance, there was a separate chapter dedicated to the high school course “**Principal Marko Bajuk**”, created at the behest of Dr. Marko Kremžar and Milan Magister. The number of students, only 10 in 1959, reached a peak of 200 in the years 1975-1979; currently there are around 125 students. Each year the graduating class publishes their own yearbook, and as of 1991, those in the final year of the course travel to Slovenia, where they have the opportunity to become more fluent in Slovenian.⁸⁵

⁸² *Spominske proslave v Buenos Airesu* [Memorial Commemorations in Buenos Aires], ZSS 1966, 385-386

⁸³ On this topic, see also Martin Mizerit, *Zelena veja* [Green Branch], ZSS 1957, 173-181; Vital Ašič, *Slovenski akademiki v Argentini* [Slovenian University Students in Argentina], ZSS 1957, 205-209

⁸⁴ Pernišek, *Deset let slov. mladinske organizacije* [A decade of Slovenian Youth Organizations], ZSS 1960, 256-271

⁸⁵ Tine Debeljak Jr., *Slovenski srednješolski tečaj ravn. Marka Bajuka v Buenos Airesu* [The Slovenian Middle School Curriculum of Principal Marko Bajuk in Buenos Aires], ZSS 1971/72, 380-393, with statistics and pictures

Important in its time was the **university course for the Slovenian Section at the Buenos Aires branch of the Faculty for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies of the Ukrainian Catholic University of Pope St. Clement in Rome**, which operated from 1967 to 1972.⁸⁶ Dr. Tine Debeljak taught the Slovenian section.

The anthology also included the **major book publications**, as well as details about the Slovenian hour-long **radio broadcasts** and about the **work of Medorganizacijski svet/MOS** [the Inter-organizational Council].

In **Part 3**, the Anthology painted a picture of ZS with names, lists, and tallies.

Part 4 contained various addenda. *Zbornik ZS* briefly presented various documents: **key memoranda, declarations, and letters** addressed to the USA State Department, the International Red Cross, the Argentine foreign ministry, the Austrian government about the Slovenian minority in Carinthia (many times); likewise an appeal that Trieste remain international if it cannot be made to belong to Slovenia. Part 4 also included a lengthy summary in Spanish and in English.

Slovenska kulturna akcija (SKA) and its almanacs [Zborniki]

Slovenska kulturna akcija [Slovenian Cultural Action] published its own almanac about its activities for its 40th anniversary (1984) and its 50th anniversary (1994). M. Marolt wrote an article in ZSS about its art school.⁸⁷ Its work extended to individual disciplines (literary, painting, philosophical, etc.), although today there are fewer persons than in the beginning years. SKA organized many important performances, exhibitions, and cultural evenings. By the end of 2006, it had printed 183 publications.

There were outstanding personalities among the founders and creators of SKA: the only two surviving founding members are Zorko Simčič and Prof. Alojzij Geržinič; the others included: Dr. Ignacij Lenček, Ladislav Lenček CM, Ruda Jurčec, Dr. Tine Debeljak, Bara Remec, Marjan Marolt, Dr. Vinko Brumen, Dr. Milan Komar, and others. Slovenia after its independence recognized the contributions of many of them, living or deceased, to Slovenian literature, creativity in painting, etc. with various awards and reproductions of their works. In 2006 the President of the RS also gave one of his country's highest awards to the SKA for its work.

Spiritual-pastoral work

A personal account entitled "*Letopis 1947-1997 – 50 let slovenskega dušnega pastirstva v Argentini*" [A Chronicle 1947-1997: 50 years of Slovenian pastoral ministry in Argentina] provides much insight into this topic.⁸⁸ *Katoliška akcija (KA)* [Catholic Action] and *Vincencijeva konferenca* [the Vincentian Conference] worked in the realm of Slovenian spiritual ministry.⁸⁹ *Slovenska misijonska zveza* [The Slovenian Missions Circle] and *Južnoameriška Baragova zveza* [the South American Baraga League] were also active. The past directors of the Slovenian spiritual ministry were Msgr. Anton Orehar, Msgr. Dr. Alojzij Starc, and Msgr. Jože Škerbec; the current director is Msgr. Dr. Jure Rode.

⁸⁶ P.F., *Ukrajinska katoliška univerza papeža sv. Klementa v Rimu* [The Ukrainian Catholic University of Pope St. Clement in Rome], ZSS 1968, 236-239

⁸⁷ M. Marolt, *Umetnostna šola v Buenos Airesu* [The Art School in Buenos Aires], ZSS 1961, 214-216

⁸⁸ See Sources: *Letopis*; See also *Slovensko dušno pastirstvo v Argentini* [Slovenian spiritual ministry in Argentina], ZSS 1960, 272-273; Anton Orehar, *Spominska cerkev Marije Pomagaj v Buenos Airesu* [The memorial church of Marija Pomagaj in Buenos Aires], ZSS 1971/72, 394-396

⁸⁹ ZSS 1960, 274

The spiritual ministry publishes the monthly *Duhovno življenje* [Spiritual Life] with an insert for children, *Božje stezice* [Divine Paths], and each week volunteers distribute for free the weekly *Oznanilo* [the Bulletin].

Until 1960, *Duhovno življenje* often included as a supplement a report on the work of the **Slovenian Seminary in Adrogué**, also known as the Ljubljana Theological Faculty in Exile.⁹⁰

Slovenija v svetu [Slovenia in the world]

The difficulty of preserving conscientiousness of one's Slovenian heritage among the youth on the one side, and the ever growing biculturalism on the other, were probably the main factors that led to the composition of a new song "*Slovenija v svetu*" [Slovenia in the world], lyrics by Dr. Marko Kremžar and music by Prof. Jože Osana. This song has become some sort of hymn for the Slovenian political émigrés and their descendants, with its refrain: "Slovenia, my home without borders because I carry you within me; wherever my brood, wherever your child, you are there, Slovenia!"

2. BRAZIL

The first report from Brazil was entitled "*V deželi zelenega pekla*" [In the land of green hell].⁹¹ It contained a brief history and description of the country as well as the "person" of Brazil. It said that it was not easy to determine how many Slovenians there were and where they were, but estimated that there were probably around 1,000 of them. In 1950 there were very few of them, even including those before the 2nd World War. **A few hundred new arrivals** came after the 2nd World War.

Although quite scattered across this enormous country of 8,511,189 km², the Slovenians still had various organizations: mutual aid, cultural circles, school classes, singing groups. All these organizations became quite invigorated during the 1991 war for Slovenia's independence.

The settlement center for the new Slovenians was the city of **São Paulo** and its suburbs; some of them also settled in **Rio Grande do Sul, Goiás, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro**.

S.P.B. wrote an article about Brazil, a good land, with the subtitle "*Ob stoletnici prihoda Slovencev v Brazilijo*" [On the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Slovenians in Brazil].⁹² This very instructional report is of little interest to our purposes since he did not speak about the postwar immigrants until the very end of the article, though it's not clear if this was about the former refugees.

I.L.C. in ZSS **1962** disclosed some details about the lives of the Brazilian Slovenians.⁹³ After the **first priest arrived in 1957 to minister to the Slovenians in Brazil**, he began to assemble the Slovenians in São Paulo once a month in the church of the Holy Spirit. There were from 30 to 60 visitors. Then two more Slovenian priests came, so that **as of 1958 they had regular Sunday Masses. The old immigrants joined in from the very beginning. Because the entire community was politically undefined, they were on good terms with each other.**

⁹⁰ *Slovensko semenišče v San Luisu* [The Slovenian Seminary at San Luis], ZSS 1950, 147-149; ZSS 1956, 16-18; *Slovensko semenišče v Argentini* [The Slovenian Seminary in Argentina], ZSS 1956, 16-18; *Slovensko semenišče v San Luisu*, ZSS 1950, 147-149; Dr. F. Ž., *Slovenska zelenica v Adroguéju* [A Slovenian oasis at Adrogué], ZSS 1962, 219-222; See also previous chapters.

⁹¹ ZSS 1950, 231-234

⁹² ZSS 1960, 185-199

⁹³ ZSS, 210, 211

They started with **St. Nicholas pageants**; for this, some individuals travelled from as far away as Santos or Campiñas (100 km) and even from Rio de Janeiro (450 km). In May of 1961 the community moved to the church of St. Generoza, which had its own hall. Around 120 people gathered here for a Mother's Day commemoration.

M.M. (Marko Martelanc) reported in ZSS 1971/72 about the Slovenians in São Paulo.⁹⁴ He wrote that the Slovenians responded to the invitation to participate in "Immigration Sunday" from 1969 onward. The Slovenians were invited to participate on the 418th anniversary of the city of São Paulo on January 25, 1972. The pastor for the Slovenians, Rev. Lojze Ilc, was one of the 8 priests that concelebrated Mass with the archbishop. For the Offertory procession, Jožica and Anton Mestnik, dressed in Slovenian national costumes, carried the bread and wine. When the archbishop arrived at the square, he first wanted to greet the Slovenian contingent. When they presented the gifts to him, he gazed at the Slovenian children and exclaimed twice: "These are always faithful to me!" When the archbishop was appointed shortly afterwards to the rank of cardinal, on February 9, 1979 the second largest daily newspaper, *Folha de São Paulo*, printed 10 color pictures about Slovenia under the heading "Slovenia, 170km of sun in March and April".

Niko Žužek achieved a doctorate in Russian history; there was also a Slovenian, Dr. E. A. Fonda, on the doctoral review board. Noteworthy was the news about the **first Slovenian parish in South America**, which was created by Archbishop Pavel Arns on October 22, 1971; Rev. Ludovik Ceglar was appointed its pastor. The Church of the Blessed Sacrament, constructed by its one-time pastor, L. Ilc, was designated to be the parish seat.

The report mentioned some events at this parish: the first Slovenian wedding in São Paulo, which was attended by quite a few Slovenians, mostly from Gorica and Trieste. Almost all of them had beautiful homes, and some 20 of their children were university graduates. The parish choir sang at the wedding; its director was Eng. H. Slivnik, deputy director of the Siemens Company. This was also an opportunity for the old-time and the new Slovenians to get acquainted and sing together. Approximately 140 Slovenians went on a parish pilgrimage to "Nossa Senhora Aparecida". After the Mass, they were received by Cardinal Carlos Carmelo Vasconcellos Motta.⁹⁵

The years 2005 and 2006

H.Ž. (Helena Žužek) was the authoress of the "*Slovenci v Braziliji*" [*Slovenians in Brazil*] articles in *Svobodna Slovenija* for these years.⁹⁶ She stated that the life of the Slovenian community was quite active. The **Slovenian Brazilian choir "Coral Esloveno"**, directed by **Viktor Selin**, recorded and released its first CD (8 Slovenian and 3 Brazilian folk songs), which was introduced at the closing concert for the Slovenian community in December 2005, and was combined with the St. Nicholas pageant. A good number of Slovenians attended full-year the Slovenian lan-

⁹⁴ ZSS 1971/72, 316-320. – ZSS 1973/75 also contains a brief report on Slovenians in Brazil.

⁹⁵ ZSS 1973/75 also contains a brief report on Slovenians in Brazil.

⁹⁶ [Tr. note: In this footnote, the author explains his choice of the Slovenian word for 'Brazil'; this has no bearing on the English translation, however, the footnote is retained to keep the numbers in sync the Slovenian edition]. August 10, 2006, NO. 30, 3; Zbornik ZS, 13 contains the argument why I along with Marko Martelanc use the word 'o Brazilu' and not 'o Braziliji'. A new proof for the correctness of the word 'Brazil' is the fact that even those who speak about Brazil's Slovenians, use the adjectival form 'brazilskih', not 'braziljanskih'.

guage classes; they discussed their successful achievements in a closing brochure. Rev. Andrej **Lampret** travelled across Brazil; he also visited São Paulo, where he said a Mass in Slovenian in the Church of the Blessed Sacrament. The Brazilian Post Office issued a commemorative stamp in honor of Brother Ernest Saksida, who worked for many years in Mato Grosso do Sul and 45 years ago established a Don Bosco Boys Town in the suburb of Corumbá.

In 2006, the Slovenian community was visited by a group of young people from Slovenia who worked in the political sector; the Slovenian choir performed at a dinner in their honor, and the **president of the Zveza brazilskih Slovencev** [*League of Brazilian Slovenians*], **Martin Črnugelj** (*inž.*), delivered the introductory greeting. The Slovenians in Brazil also celebrated the 15th anniversary of Slovenia's independence. After Martin Črnugelj greeted the guests, Mrs. Helena Žužek Arenhardt gave a short speech on the goals of the Slovenians in Slovenia and in foreign lands; then the Slovenian choir sang some songs.

3. CHILE

ZSS reported about the Slovenians in Chile for the first time in 1950.⁹⁷ The first transport of refugees of various nationalities came to Chile in the spring of 1948; this group included a few Slovenian families. In August of 1949, an additional 57 Slovenian refugees arrived. There were 13 Slovenian priests in Chile. At the **end of 1949, there were altogether around 120 new Slovenians**.

The Slovenians were **scattered throughout Chile**, so it was difficult to imagine that there would be any larger community or organization.

M. Kr. had a new report in ZSS 1962.⁹⁸ There were supposedly altogether around 300 of the new Slovenians, but they did not live together, even though the **majority lived in the capital city of Santiago**. Here they came together for Sunday Mass and sometimes also held a show. There were several Slovenian priests in Chile, but due to the distances, they did not minister among the Slovenians (Rev. Trdan, Rev. Okorn, Dr. Pogačnik in Cura Cautín, et. al.).

Two persons deserved mention: **Mother Vincencija Kaplja** and the spiritual shepherd **Salesian Martin Marošán**. Rev. Marošán's accomplishment was that the Slovenians had their own newsletter, *Oznaniilo* [*the Bulletin*], which was meager but treasured. The first issue was on February 16, 1960 and it was published monthly.

M. Kaplja conceived the idea of a small Slovenian center outside the city and purchased it with an interest-free loan. Because it was impossible to think about construction yet, she started breeding pigs on the property, where unemployed Slovenians could get a job. Despite objections and ridicule, M. Kaplja did not relent. A horse barn was converted into a decent little house, and in 1960 the Slovenian Sisters of Charity moved in. However, the loan had to be repaid, so M. Kaplja begged for help from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which assumed the debt and thus became the owner of the property, but under the condition that the Slovenian nuns would always remain there to minister to the Slovenians. The Slovenians had the option to purchase the property if they so desired. Permission was given to build on the property. **The officers of Društvo Slovencev** [*Society of Slovenians*] **on February 14, 1960 approved the method to resolve this issue**.

M. Kaplja wanted to erect on this property a suitable hall, which she could use also for a chapel and for Slovenian cultural events. The plans were for the construction of a hospital clinic, a kindergarten, a school for homemaking, and a refuge for aged and disabled Slovenians. This Slovenian Home would always provide rooms for classes for Slovenian children and adults.

⁹⁷ *V deželi ognjenikov in potresov* [*In the land of volcanoes and earthquakes*], ZSS 1950, 230-231

⁹⁸ ZSS, 214-215

4. ECUADOR

The newly-arrived Slovenians found themselves left stranded on their own, but a Salesian priest, **Friderik Rijavec**, immediately took an interest in their plight. He was originally a missionary among the Hivar Indians (famous as headshrinkers), and since 1950 was the pastor in the old gold mining town of Zaruma and principal of the Salesian academy.

Several Slovenian priests came to Ecuador, but the majority of them soon departed to other countries; **only Andrej Križman remained**. The exact number of Slovenian refugees was not known as of 1950. But according to reports, due to their Slovenian industriousness they quickly got their bearings and were slowly making progress.⁹⁹

5. VENEZUELA

A few families left Carinthia by airplane and landed in **Venezuela**. Individuals arrived later, so that in 1949 there were around 150 Slovenians there who were employed in the most diverse occupations. Many remained close to the capital, Caracas, because many of them had office experience. The best wages were earned by those who were employed by the petroleum industry, but they also had the worst climate (Maracaibo Basin).

After the war, the country accepted more than 90,000 immigrants of various nationalities, various professions, and every sort of ideological orientation. The fight for survival in the beginning was very difficult in Venezuela. The immigrant came into the country with no money, the government cared for him for 4 weeks without pay in its own camp, and in the meantime he was required to find a job. Because many in this time period did not find local jobs, they had to take the most difficult jobs in the worst parts of the country.

Many of the agricultural colonies founded by the government ended in failure. In such instances the workers had nowhere to go, because there was too little work in the center of the country. But if the agricultural colony survived the initial difficulties, it began to succeed, because all its produce was selling well on the domestic market.

By 1950, 150 Slovenians had come to Venezuela, the majority from Austria, and several from Germany of their own accord or from Italy through the IRO. All received work immediately. Around 60 of them lived in Caracas, and 20-30 in Maracaibo, which had a reputation of being the hottest city in the world. The remainder were scattered throughout Venezuela. Housing conditions were terrible: there was a housing shortage in the capital city; as a result few Slovenians were able to live in decent apartments. The majority remained at their professions: tradesmen, laborers, or office workers. Wages were better than in the other countries of South America, but of course lower than in Canada or in the USA. Many of them saved up several thousand bolivars, because they wanted to move to the countryside, which was closer to their culture.¹⁰⁰

In 1956 "A Letter from Venezuela" reported that there were at that time around 300 Slovenians in Venezuela.¹⁰¹ The majority lived in **Caracas**, where it was easier to obtain employment, ordinarily the women as cooks and housekeepers, and the men as mechanics and bricklayers. Families with many children, who were unable to get housing in the capital city, were departing

⁹⁹ Ekvador, ZSS 1950, 243-244

¹⁰⁰ Dr. P.U., *Slovenci v Venezueli [Slovenians in Venezuela]*, ZSS 1950, 235-236

¹⁰¹ ZSS 1956, 296

to the interior, where over the years they achieved success. As an example the article mentioned the family of Anton Ilija, who first worked for a large landowner some 20km from Caracas, and then he was able to purchase for himself 15 ha of land in Güigüe, 150 km from Caracas. They worked at cattle farming and in 1956 had 20 cows; they also raised corn, planted yucca and black beans. The only difficulty was that their rights of ownership were not yet finalized.

In 1956, the Slovenians in Venezuela were **completely scattered**, so that it was impossible to think about any community organization. They only thing they desired was a Slovenian priest.

A new report on Venezuela appeared in ZSS 1961.¹⁰² It estimated that there were at the time in Venezuela around **280 Slovenian families and 60 unmarried persons**, altogether around 500 Slovenians. It was **impossible to speak about any organized life**; there were just too few of them and too few professionals. Nonetheless, some social gathering or cultural show did occur occasionally. They of course fostered sociability with mutual visitations, above all with their countrymen outside of Caracas. As many as 80 persons a year came together on such occasions for shows.

It was not possible to speak of any cultural life, but it was compensated in part by the monthly *Življenje* [Living] which the pastor mailed out. Ever since Rev. **Janez Grilc** came into their midst, they had a Mass in Slovenian each Sunday afternoon at 5 o'clock in the suburbs; around 40 attended regularly at the Mass, almost always the same people, who were at the same time the nucleus of the Slovenian community. They did not have a Slovenian school, but Rev. Grilc did teach catechism. They established a Sickness Fund for the poor and the ill, and also did not forget to support the Slovenian seminary in Argentina.

There was a new letter from Venezuela in 1962.¹⁰³ Numerically they did not increase; 10 countrymen had even emigrated. The attendance at the Sunday Mass in Caracas also did not increase. The priest, Rev. Grilc, regularly visited the Slovenians in the interior of the country. They got together only twice a year for performances: the St. Nicholas pageant and the commemoration of Mothers Day. *Življenje*, a small newsletter, was still being published regularly, and it was utterly necessary, especially for the youth.

From an economic standpoint, the Slovenians in Venezuela were not able to make much progress, because the economic situation in the country had deteriorated. Unemployment appeared.

In 1965 Janez Grilc sent a Letter from Venezuela.¹⁰⁴ He repeated that there were few Slovenians in this country. They had their own Sunday Mass in Caracas, here and there also some shows, such as for St. Nicholas Day or Mothers Day. There was also a smaller community in Valencia, some 150 km from Caracas, where he went once a month to say Mass. Slovenians from Maracay and Güigüe also attended these. There was almost no personal contact with the few countrymen in Barquisimeto and Maracaibo, but thanks to the monthly newsletter *Življenje* they stayed connected.

In 1970 there was a brief report from Venezuela.¹⁰⁵ The final report about the Slovenians in Venezuela appeared in ZSS 1973/75.¹⁰⁶ First he described the country and the people. According

¹⁰² *Med Slovenci v Venezueli* [Among the Slovenians in Venezuela], ZSS 1961, 190-191

¹⁰³ G. Kr., *Pismo iz Venezuele* [Letter from Venezuela], ZSS 1962, 218

¹⁰⁴ ZSS 1965, 337-338

¹⁰⁵ ZSS 1970, 227

¹⁰⁶ ZSS 1973/75, 461-463

to the data from the Yugoslav consulate, he estimated that there were **around 800 Slovenians**. He spoke about religious and ethnic conscientiousness, about shows and performances. With a Venezuelan director they prepared a choir and quite a few shows. For the 10th anniversary of the Slovenian community in Venezuela, they were visited by the director of Slovenian priests in foreign lands, Msgr. Kunstelj. The next generation of youth, growing from their ranks, no longer possessed the enthusiasm that was demonstrated by the refugees upon their arrival. Yet they maintained the Slovenian Sunday Masses and continued the shows and traditions.

Lojze Ilija, who wrote several books, worked in Venezuela. Two of his novels were published in 1961 and 1962 by the *Mohorjeva družba* publishers in Celovec: *Domače zgodbe* [Folk Tales] and *Gospod Šimen* [Mr. Šimen]. In 1971, for the 25th anniversary of the killings of the Homeguards, SKA in Buenos Aires (with sponsorship by the Slovenian Savings and Loan, S.L.O.G.A) published Ilija's novel about Homeguard life, *Huda Pravda*.

4. Australia

The start of immigration

The continent of Australia is 24,000 km from Slovenia.¹⁰⁷ This became the new homeland for many refugees. There were some Slovenians in Australia already **before 1941**; they had come with a group of Dalmatians from areas that were overrun by Italy. It is not known how many Slovenians migrated to Australia from 1948 until Slovenian independence because Australia regarded them as Jugoslavs.

Government policy towards immigrants

The Australian policy towards immigrants appeared to be very liberal-minded, however in those years the Australian government was implementing the so-called "White Australian Policy", that is, immigration limited to whites. Even Italians were later explicitly mentioned because the government feared they would settle in blocs. For this reason it began to demand that an immigrant have a "sponsor".

This official policy made it **difficult to establish any non-English publications**, even though the initial strict censorship had eased somewhat in a few years. Conditions changed considerably after the **Labour Party** came to power in **1972**. **Radio broadcasts in foreign languages** then became possible. However, the management positions at the state station SBS were held by

¹⁰⁷ ZSS regularly printed articles about the Slovenians in Australia: *S petega kontinenta* [From the Fifth Continent], ZSS 1950, 227-229; ZSS 1957, 148-156; ZSS 1961, 173-180; ZSS 1962, 248-254 also contains an excerpt from a book by Ivan Vrhovec, *Avstralija in nje otroci* [Australia and Its Children], Mohorjeva 1899, which was translated by Rev. Bernard Ambrožič OFM, under the title *O 'črnih Kranjcih' v Avstraliji* [About the 'Black Carniolans' in Australia]; Marko Naprošen, *O Slovencih v Avstraliji* [About the Slovenians in Australia], ZSS 1963, 211-217; ZSS 1970, 232-234. - Father **Bernard Ambrožič** in 1961 composed an interesting piece entitled *Mnenja o Avstraliji in njenih Slovencih* [Opinions on Australia and its Slovenians] in which he wrote responses to 21 questions by 12 immigrants in the country. - In 2005 Father **Valerijan** submitted a report via email through Mrs. Milena Brgoč (since deceased), one of the women who worked very hard on behalf of the Slovenians in Australia, who were always ready to offer any sort of help when asked. Unfortunately his report was limited to the spiritual-pastoral ministry. - The last, lengthiest report on Australia, forwarded by Marjan Loboda, was sent by **Cvetko Falež**, president of the Australian Conference of the World Slovenian Congress.

leftist elements, a situation that remains to this day. At the smaller private stations, organizations frequently had to make an agreement about the broadcasts. This depended on the orientation of a station. In Canberra for example, the station administration was leftist and the Slovenian Association had to share the broadcast time with Tito's association Karantania and as a consequence had only a half-hour program every two weeks. In its broadcasts Karantania attacked the Slovenian Association which responded to these attacks. Eventually the Association found that it had to defend its actions, and ultimately found itself being sued in court!

Employment

Australia-bound refugees had been required to sign a **two-year labor contract**. However the term was not strictly enforced; a new job could be taken before the expiration of the contract. The new immigrants were distributed among individual camps: in Bonegilo (Victoria), Cower or Bathurst (New South Wales/NSW). For the Slovenian refugees from Austria, the nicest place was St. Mary's Hostel, which was directed by their beloved commander at the Spittal DP Camp, Major M.L.F. Jarvie, assisted by Miss Mitchell.

The Slovenians were scattered **across all of Australia**: from the red burning deserts in Central Australia to the jungles of New Guinea and to the Blue Mountains of the beautiful New South Wales (from Perth to Sydney and Darwin). The Slovenians in New South Wales were the first ones to establish strong community ties. What they needed most in the first year was a Slovenian priest.

Australians sent the people from the initial camps to the most diverse parts of the country that needed factory works and other laborers. Some were employed as seasonal workers to pick fruit and grapes, most of them into the Murray River Valley, and others departed to the north to the sugar beet plantations. At the end of their indenture, most departed to wherever it was easiest to obtain jobs; most thus moved to Melbourne, fewer to Sydney, and some settled in other larger cities, and a handful to Tasmania or to distant Perth.

Employment could always be found. It was more difficult to obtain housing, so in the beginning many persons shared the rent and space for a single room. This quickly convinced them to think about purchasing their own homes. Because Slovenians by nature were thrifty, they quickly saved enough money to purchase modest houses of their own. Purchase prices for houses at the time were 5,000 pounds, although only a down payment of 10 to 20 percent was required.

Many men worked in the construction of tunnels, dams, and electricity-producing plants in the Snowy Mountains (NSW). This is to say the Australian Government decided to divert the waters on the Eastern side of the continent towards the interior which previously rushed directly to the ocean and to use them to generate electricity and to irrigate the fields along the river Murray. No doubt that there were many 'starting' difficulties for the émigrés. But then, the case became simple: anybody, unless it was one's own fault or from some unpredictable misfortune, could be very satisfied with his economic status in Australia. Few Slovenians were unemployed, even during the periods of economic crisis. For example, there were 100,000 unemployed in 1962, which meant that they did not want to work or were too picky.

About ten percent of the Slovenians were employed in the opal mines. The vast majority of Slovenians worked in factories. Some individuals have their own businesses: shoemakers, tailors, merchants, etc. Some made headway as special building-contractors. A few considered farming, but many were in clerical office work. There were some small business/factory entrepreneurs. There are not many university graduates among the first generation of Slovenians but this has in fact now changed, even though those that there are have relatively little contact with the community. Mrs. Ledinek was famous for her work with synthetic skin grafts for burn victims.

Compared to costs, income was quite good. A married worker had a bank savings account and constantly increased his deposits; this was the way to purchase a house as soon as possible, or at least a suitable plot for a future home. Many Slovenians already owned their own houses, even though from the beginning many sent large sums back to the homeland. There were of course also a few inevitable spendthrifts.

The majority probably came to Australia with the notion: each one for himself, and Australia for all. A very small percentage grew up back home in pre-war organizations, and after the war all organizations were communist and mandatory for the people. Despite this, some dreamed about some sort of continental-wide organization, however only individual groups were eventually formed.

The number of Slovenian immigrants

Joško Krošelj wrote on this topic in ZSS 1957 on the basis of data from the newspaper *Misli* [*Thoughts*]. It was difficult to state how many Slovenians there were, because in the beginning they were quite dispersed. *Misli* cited **several times the figure 10,000**. In a personal letter, one writer reported that there were 3,000 Slovenians in Sydney and elsewhere in NSW, another 3,000 in Melbourne and elsewhere in the State of Victoria, and at most 1,000 Slovenians in the remaining cities and states. Thus, the **maximum number was approximately 7,000**.

The largest Slovenian communities were in and around Sydney, in and around Melbourne, and a few hundred Slovenians in Adelaide and elsewhere in Southern Australia. A few settled in the capital of NSW, Canberra, 300 km south-west from Sydney and 600 km north-east of Melbourne and near the Snowy Mountains.

In 1963, fifteen years after their arrival, they were still asking themselves how many Slovenians there were in Australia, because upon arrival they were tallied as Yugoslavs, and the Slovenians born in Primorska as Italians, and those born in Carinthia as Austrians. Eventually the figure of 10,000 became accepted: 3,000 in Sydney, 3,000 in Melbourne, 1,000 in Adelaide, 1,000 scattered in other parts of the State of NSW, 1,000 likewise in the State of Victoria, and 1,000 for the rest of Australia. During this period, there was no chance for any regular contacts among Slovenians because they were scattered across the entire continent and were thus unable to create their own communal organizations. Rev. Bazilij, who had many contacts among the Slovenians, estimated their number was around 30,000 (including descendants).¹⁰⁸

Statistics are lacking because they were not registered as Slovenians when they first arrived. However, Australia at a general census now gives each inhabitant the option to list one's nationality and language of preference. Before Slovenia achieved independence, far too many Slovenians passed themselves off as Yugoslavs, but nobody knows how much this has changed. If the criterion for being a Slovenian was limited to a person who spoke the language, half of the second generation would be written off. Almost all of the youth speak only English, and very few know Slovenian well. The first-generation person who married a non-Slovenian most

¹⁰⁸ When they were compiling a list of addresses in Canberra in 1991 for all those born in Slovenia, including unmarried persons and those married to non-Slovenians, they obtained 110 addresses. They received nearly the same number of addresses for their descendants, that is, persons who were born in Australia; almost all of these were married to non-Slovenians, hence the problem of how to tally their offspring. Tripling the number of addresses yields a tally of 660 persons. In the year 2000, they visited the majority of the Slovenians in Canberra, who also furnished information about their relatives and decided whether or not they wanted to be considered as Slovenians; at this time they listed slightly more than 700 persons as Slovenians or their descendants.

probably uses English, so how does such a person identify oneself? According to the opinion of Cvetko Falež, the majority of these cases do not identify themselves as being Slovenians and most probably also do not speak Slovenian.

According to the **2001 census of Australia**, there were **6,685 persons born in Slovenia** (3,179 women and 3,506 men). A slightly smaller number **speak Slovenian: 5,066** (2,595 women and 2,471 men).

New Wave of Immigration

The first wave of migration began **in the fifties**. The majority of these were people who left Slovenia in secret. In order to be accepted by trans-oceanic countries, almost all of them presented themselves as political refugees, even though the majority came simply for economic reasons.

In the **1960s**, there was a new wave of immigration again, but this time they came directly from Slovenia. The majority was already arriving by airplane, and their **reason for immigration was purely economic**. It was also obvious that these had lived for some time under a communist dictatorship. This wave brought major changes in interpersonal behavior. For example, while organizations had in the past unreservedly taken an anticommunist stance, they had to cease this behavior on account of the new immigrants. As a result, there was ever less interest in organizations to argue for freedom and democracy. The people were growing more and more apathetic: rare was a person who was impassioned about a free Slovenia or about the rights of Slovenians in Yugoslavia. Almost nobody cared to discuss politics, and least of all about the postwar mass murders. And stranger still: the general opinion was growing that the Catholic Church possessed freedom in Slovenia and that nobody was persecuted on religious grounds. This was also a sign of ever increasing indifference, which shows above all that many were going to church only from habit, or going only for Christmas and Easter. These attitudes were increasingly permeating organizations too.

Spiritual ministry

This activity is mentioned first, because it undoubtedly enabled many to preserve Slovenian life in Australia, not only from its exclusively spiritual work, but also with its support for the creation of organizations, the construction of churches, halls, and cultural homes, the provision for education, singing groups, etc.

The first to care for the Slovenian community in Sydney were **Franciscans** who came from Lemont (USA), **Fr. Klavdij Okorn** and **Fr. Beno Korbič**. The two priests were guests of their Australian brethren, but independent as far as their work with Slovenians was concerned. Of special interest in Sydney were the pilgrimages, five times a year; thus, in addition to Sunday Masses, the Slovenians assembled five times a year for an afternoon procession, ordinarily each time at a different location.

Given the travel conditions of that era, the 300 km distance to Canberra was exceedingly far, the trip long and expensive. As a result, the two Fathers had to limit their work to Sydney. They returned to the USA before they could establish contacts with the other communities. The two Fathers did begin to publish the monthly *Misli [Thoughts]*, however many did not receive it. For the first two years, *Misli* was printed on a duplicating machine, and the Fathers mailed it to anyone whose address they knew.

Upon their return to the USA, the two Fathers left the spiritual ministry and the publication in the hands of **Fr. Rudolf Pivko**, who came to Australia after he was expelled from China. In order to keep the newspaper viable, Fr. Pivko **began to hold entertainment shows**, which the people loved to attend; attendance sometimes reached 800 persons.

Pivko received much needed help in 1955 when **Fr. Bernard Ambrožič** came to Australia. In 1956 a third Slovenian Franciscan arrived from the USA, **Fr. Bazilij Valentin**, himself a refugee at Peggetz, who had been the editor of Lemont's monthly magazine, *Ave Maria*. Fr. Bazilij settled in **Melbourne**, and Fr. Ambrožič continued to reside in Sydney. Fr. Bazilij also took care of the smaller settlements throughout Victoria and all of South Australia (Adelaide). The archbishop in Melbourne permitted him to use a deserted monastery with a small chapel and numerous rooms. He lived there, where he kept an office and a Slovenian hostel. This was not a parish, but did provide a haven for the priest's work.

Fr. Bernard had become quite debilitated, so Fr. Bazilij soon assumed the publication work for *Misli*. The spiritual ministry was almost a side job for these priests, for there was no great wave of people coming to the church. On the other hand, the Australian bishops did not permit the creation of nationality parishes, although the Slovenians themselves would have been hard put to sustain one.

With Fr. Bazilij assuming the role of editor of *Misli*, the publication also moved to Melbourne. *Misli* in this way enabled its readers to obtain a wider view of the southern part of Australia. Fr. Bazilij, in addition to his other duties, also waited for the shiploads of immigrants to arrive and helped those who did not know anybody there and needed lodging or jobs.

Fr. Odilo Hajnšek came around 1960. In the brief time that he worked in Sydney, he uplifted the church music and created a church choir. He also visited various places, including Canberra in 1962. Because he could not withstand living in Australia, he returned to Europe.

In the 1960s, **Fr. Valerian Jenko** came from Lemont. With the help of Fr. Bazilij he located a plot of land for a Slovenian spiritual center in Sydney. Because the Slovenians were beginning to move to the west of the city after 1960, Fr. Bazilij wrote letters to many a seller of real estate that he needed a church and where. The best offer came from a Presbyterian pastor of a church in Merryland. Archbishop Cardinal Gilroy granted the request to purchase it, under the condition that they themselves obtain the means. Eleven families immediately moved there. The church cost 20,000 dollars; they had 11,000 dollars in savings, and a bank loaned the rest. They remodeled the interior of the church, and on New Year's Eve 1966 they were already able to consecrate it.

Immediately after the consecration of the old church, they resolved to build a new church at the same site. The new Church of St. Rafael was solemnly consecrated by the Auxiliary Bishop of Ljubljana, Dr. Stanislav Lenič, on January 14, 1973.

In 1972 **two nuns** arrived to help the Franciscan Fathers with the ministry: they also **directed the Slomšek School**, worked at the printing of *Nedelja, Rafael*, did housekeeping, etc. The nuns of course had replacements, but their religious order toiled there 25 years, and then, due to the shortage of religious vocations to the sisterhood, they were **recalled to the homeland**.

Soon the Fathers purchased two houses nearby, which were razed and a large hall was constructed in their place, thanks to the efforts of building contractor **Ignac Drebenik** and of **Dušan Lajovic** for the financial aspect. The Archbishop of Ljubljana, **Dr. Alojz Šuštar**, blessed the hall in January of 1985. They created a parish committee with three departments. A drama group directed by Ivan **Koželj** was very active, which staged plays and prepared shows, which were sometimes presented by guest groups from other places that had larger Slovenian communities.

Fr. Tomaž Menart came twice to **Melbourne** for a brief stint; he was followed by **Fr. Filip Rupnik**. **Fr. Darko Žnidaršič** was the last help that Fr. Valerijan received. **Fr. Lorenc Anžel** worked for a few years in **Sydney**; he now ministers in Maribor. He was replaced by **Fr. Ciril Božič**, who later returned to Slovenia for a while, but is now stationed in metropolitan **Kew in Melbourne**. The Slovenians in **Wollongong** purchased an Anglican church. The Franciscans

from Sydney now have a Mass there every other Sunday for the Slovenians. The community constructed a hall behind the church. This community worked closely with the organization *Triglav*, however despite this liaison it was on good terms with the Franciscans and also worked together with them. In the 1970s several teaching nuns came to **Kew**, where they started with a kindergarten in a larger house they had purchased near *Baragov dom*.

A former army chaplain, **Fr. Filip Ferjan**, came from the USA to **Adelaide** in the 1960s. He remained for only a few years, mostly because some leftist-leaning persons in the community did not like him. **Fr. Stanko Zemljak** came from Slovenia to Melbourne, and in about a decade he returned to the homeland. He was followed by **Fr. Tone Gorjup**, who likewise soon departed. **Fr. Metod Ogorevc** also came, who after several years went to Lemont. When Fr. Ferjan left **Adelaide** to return home, he was replaced by **Fr. Janez Tretjak**, who built a new church there.¹⁰⁹

School, song, and folklore

In almost each area that had a larger number of Slovenians where a Slovenian priest would arrive, a **spiritual center** was established. All of these had Saturday schools for the children. The **majority of the communities** founded such schools. The instructors were not professional teachers. It is regrettable that in many communities the enthusiasm for Slovenian schooling **soon abated**, mostly because in some organizations nobody was pushing the children to true learning. Even the parents mostly wanted the children just to be entertained, and the children were going to school only so that they could socialize with their friends.

Yet **some organizations lasted for many decades**; the ones in the spiritual centers lasted the longest. Aleksandra **Ceferin** taught the Slovenian language for many years in Melbourne; she founded the *Inštitut za študij slovenščine v Viktoriji* [Institute for the Study of Slovenian in Victoria]. Thanks to her efforts, Slovenian language became a recognized subject at the high schools in Victoria, and was accepted for credit by the universities. In Kew, Draga **Gelt** worked for many years in the Slovenian School; she prepared many a cultural performance with the children.

Each spiritual center and some communities had or still have **choirs**. Their success depended mainly on their directors.

Communities and spiritual centers also fostered folk dances. Some settlements even had two such groups. They performed at special events and at events outside the Slovenian organizations. In Canberra, the group of children directed by the Ljuba **Vrtovec Pribac** had great success. They had many performances throughout Australia; with aid from the Slovenian government, the organization *Slovenija v svetu* made it possible for them to go on tour in Slovenia too.

Each year the Slovenian spiritual centers in Australia prepared a children's concert; Canberra already held its 24th concert in 2005.

Significance of the periodical *Misli*

Only one publication came from Australia on a regular basis, *Misli* [Thoughts], a monthly magazine on the religious and cultural life of Slovenians in Australia. A small duplicated piece at first, but it expanded and was printed. It appeared as a magazine in its 8th year of publication. The publication was cherished; when paying the subscription fee, many added a supplementary donation to its printing fund. The number of subscribers never exceeded 1,000. Each year for New Year's Day its subscribers received the Baraga Calendar of 32 pages.

¹⁰⁹ The Slovenian Franciscans published a book about their work in Australia.

For a long time, *Misli* was the only regular Slovenian publication. When Fr. Pivko arrived to help Fr. Bernard Ambrožič, the pair set a goal: 1,000 subscribers within a year and a monthly of 8 pages. Unfortunately, in half a year they did not even reach half of their goal. The people had grown too accustomed to receiving the publication for free.

Though published by priests, *Misli* was not a religious magazine. This was perhaps the very reason it began to spread and link the Australian Slovenians. It reported about the events and happenings among Slovenians, about the activities of the organizations in Sydney and Melbourne, and the like.

The paper also reported about the work of the Slovenian pastor from Carinthia in Austria, **Dr. Ivan Mikula**. He worked for some years in Perth, and then moved to Sydney. From there he launched visits to the Slovenians in eastern Australia, and then through various cities far to the north. He had monthly Masses in Canberra almost regularly. Getting together for Mass provided the Slovenians an opportunity to make personal and social contacts after the service; this stimulated some of them towards for more organized activity in clubs and various organizations.¹¹⁰

Misli also wrote very much about the **disagreements within the Slovenian community in Sydney**, which developed into actual discord and finally a break-up. There was much bickering at the time about the misuse of funds. Much criticism was aimed at Fr. Bernard on the grounds that he wielded too much influence on the community. Those who divorced themselves from the community created a **shareholders company and simultaneously the Triglav Society**. Triglav's board was always in the hands of the members of the shareholders group. Its members were mostly Slovenians from Primorska, but its ideological leader was a teacher and former Homeguard, Jože Čuješ, who bore a bitter animosity towards the Church. The Triglav Society withered away financially and was taken over by an Australian soccer organization, the Panthers, in which the members of Triglav became an insignificant appendage.

Slovenian print in Australia

In addition to *Misli*, a few other publications remain. The *Slovensko društvo [Slovenian Club]* in Melbourne published *Vestnik [The Herald]* for its own members. Each of the remaining organizations ordinarily had its own paper. The one in Canberra was called *Triglav*, but is now longer issued. *Slovenska Kronika [Slovenian Chronicle]* began publication in 1954, intended to be a monthly, but had to cease already in 1955.

Vlado Menart and Ljenko Urbančič within the framework of the *Slovensko društvo Sydney* began in 1958 to publish a liberal-oriented paper called *Žar [The Flame]*, a move that set them at odds with Fr. Bernard Ambrožič.¹¹¹ When the money and the paper died out, so did the mutual tension.

The Slovenian Club in Melbourne in 1962 published a collection of poems by Humbert (Bert) Pribac, '*Bronasti tolkač [The Bronze Door Knocker]*' in a printing of 300 copies, which was favorably received across the oceans too.

¹¹⁰ Mikula was in his 90s when he died. According to his wish, he was cremated and his ashes were buried in his family plot in Bače in Carinthia. His name was added to the tombstone, but ultimately some pro-Germans from his own family had his name removed even from there.

¹¹¹ Falež reported that Vlado Menart had been indentured to work for a larger North American firm, and because of this, quite a few Slovenians obtained managerial positions and jobs there. Menart later completed his law studies in Sydney and became a lawyer (barrister) at the Supreme Court. He was known to demand money, 10 pounds, from each Slovenian for whom he found a job, to be used to create some future Slovenian organization. He used this money to publish *Žar*.

Slovenian organizations and Homes

For a long time there was no Slovenian organization in existence. After various other nationalities began to create their own organizations and build their own Homes, the Slovenians likewise created organizations, which in the beginning were some sort of **Slovenian clubs**. Besides **Sydney** and **Melbourne**, the first organizations sprang up in **Brisbane**, **Canberra**, **Geelong**, **New Castle**, **Wollongong**, and **St. Albans**. Their activity was limited almost exclusively to dances. Here and there a **singing group** would surface, but soon die.

In 1957, the Slovenians in Sydney finally arrived at a plan and a fund drive to build a Slovenian Home. After a few unsuccessful attempts, they purchased a house atop a small hill outside the city. Despite being warned that construction was prohibited there, they started building. When the new Home was almost completed, they were forced to move. With the indemnity they purchased a new parcel of land and began building the new Home in Horsley Park.

Minor quarrels of a personal and organizational nature frequently surfaced in the clubs, and normal activity was hampered as a result. *Misli* often rued the absence of special announcements about the general activities of these organizations, since it wanted to keep its readers informed about events. In one instance, the editor of *Misli* did not learn about the election of the new president of the club *Planinka* [*Edelweiss*] in Brisbane until this news appeared in the Argentine newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija*.

Marriages to non-Slovenians

In Australia there were more Slovenian young men than girls. One of the reports states this caused a big problem: the young men wanted to first save up enough money, but the girls were reluctant to wait for a marriage proposal. This was the main reason for the ever increasing number of mixed-ethnic marriages.

University students

Some Slovenians enrolled in Australian universities. Those who held jobs had to attend mostly evening classes, which meant 5 years for "Diploma Courses" and 7 for "Degree Courses", whereas daytime classes were only for "Degree Courses". All theoretical studies had to be complemented by practical training. The country provided financial support for many students via the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme. At the registrations, the university registrars gave full credit for the courses from the Trieste Slovenian Science High School.

Slovenian immigrants by region

1. Melbourne

This city is in the State of Victoria. In the first years, these Slovenians seemed to have the most taste for community. They formed the *Slovenski klub* [*Slovenian Club*], which in 1962 was renamed to *Slovensko društvo* [*the Slovenian Society*]. Their goals were: camaraderie, mutual aid, and Slovenian culture. In the beginning they had around 200 members. They organized various dances, field trips to the countryside, and staged some plays and concerts. Its leadership positions were subject to term limits, an important feature for an organization. The society had its own newsletter, *Vestnik* [*The Herald*], its pages duplicated on a copy machine.

They initially collected 3,000 pounds for their *Slovenski dom* [*Slovenian Home*], but then the enthusiasm waned. They nonetheless did **purchase a Home under mortgage**. This enabled the society to have a permanent address, places for smaller meetings, and a few rooms available for residential rentals.

The Slovenians in Melbourne had rapport with the Australian public and often made a showing: at exhibitions, in Slovenian national costumes, with Slovenian dances, and so on. Melbourne

was the first place where Slovenian school began, with a chapter at St. Albans; they had 40 students. However, credit for this goes to the personal effort of a university student, Anica **Strnec**, who taught at both schools on Saturdays and Sundays.

Following the example of the Slovenian-Australian Society in Canberra, the Slovenians in Melbourne also sold their premises in the city and used the proceeds to purchase a larger parcel of land at the edge of the city and began to build a new Home.

In the 1970s, three new Associations appeared in Melbourne: Springvale, Jadran and St. Albans all of which are still active.

2. Sydney

This city of more than 4 million inhabitants is in the State of New South Wales. The Slovenians here created the organization *Slovenska zveza* [Slovenian Union]. For a while it produced various shows and had even its own “hostel” (overnight lodging) in the suburbs, and then everything froze. In 1958 the *Slovensko društvo* [Slovenian Society] was created, which operated much like the one in Melbourne, except that they were unable to assert themselves before the Australian public, perhaps because they did not want to acquire Slovenian national costumes. This group also passed from hand to hand. The society experienced so many internal tremors already that it was holding on to dear life with its scant membership.

In Sydney they tried three times to establish a Slovenian Home. The attempt in the years 1957-59 was the most promising, when a certain house, owned by the Sydney diocese, was already being called the Slovenian Home. However the house was only a rental, and the **co-operative** created for this venture did not attain the required funds, so they had to leave it. Then the co-op, in agreement with the Slovenian Society, purchased but was unable to pay for another house which was finally supposed to be the Slovenian Home in Sydney. The co-op was forced to sell it, and buried itself in the process.

Fr. Odilo **Hajnšek** came to this wasteland in 1961. In a short time he set on its feet a strong **male choir**, a native **orchestra**, a **theater troupe**, and **Slovenian classes** for the children. His program even included **dancing entertainment** sponsored by Slovenia's **Karitas**. Even back then, some doubted that all this would prevail. The Slomšek School had two sections with some 50 children.

3. Adelaide

The city, approximately 800 km from Melbourne, is in the State of South Australia. In 1958 the Slovenians created a society, but due to the paltry number of members it was barely holding on to dear life in 1963. For a long time, absolutely no news about their activities was provided to the public except that in 1962 they had a St. Nicholas pageant.

Fr. Bazilij visited the Slovenians there once a month. He helped them create a new society. Some of the newer immigrants infused the saying brought from the homeland “No politics, no religion” and spread religious intolerance, so the society accepted a by-law that priests were not permitted to be members. The Society and the Church purchased adjacent properties, which increased the tension. With money that was willed by a deceased member, the Society built a wooden hall which became the first Slovenian Home in Australia. The Church and the Society later sold their properties and purchased parcels of land in more suitable locations.

The final grand achievement by Fr. Bazilij, in addition to the Baraga Home and the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Kew, was the construction of the modern old-age home ‘*Dom matere Romane*’ [Home of the Mother Romana]. Fr. Bazilij died in 1998, and Slovenians lost an influential personality who planted and defended traditional Slovenianism in Australia.

4. Canberra

In the beginning there were no more than 50 Slovenian adults in Canberra, the capital of Australia. These unmarried Slovenians, meeting one another in the single rooms of the camp where they lived, shared their desire to create a club and build a Home. On June 26, 1965 they convened the founding meeting for the Canberra Slovenian-Australian Society; only 36 persons were present. Six years later they began the construction of their own Home. Only 30 men showed up for the volunteer work. Despite all the difficulties, a few dozen Slovenians erected a social Home.

Construction of the Home was completed in December of 1971. The society's Home officially opened in the middle of 1972. Fr. Bernard, coming from Sydney, blessed the building. He was accompanied by the choir *Škrjanček* [*Skylark*], directed by Ludvik **Klakočer**. For this occasion, the Society in Canberra also assembled its own **mixed choir** under the direction of Aleksander **Tuma**, but the choir soon faded away. All Slovenian organizations were invited to this event. A good number of the members from these organizations accepted the invitation, because at this time there were not yet any ideological quarrels. Even though the Slovenians in Adelaide had opened their own hall a few months earlier, in point of fact the Home in Canberra was the first Slovenian Home in Australia.

5. Brisbane

Brisbane is the capital city of the State of Queensland, at the northeast part of Australia. There were only slightly more than 100 Slovenians there, but despite their small number this community was solid and very active. The society *Planinka* already held its 7th general assembly in 1962. They had monthly socials, a library, and since 1962 an official newsletter *Obzorje* [*Horizon*], published 4 times a year. According to *Obzorje* in 1963, they had 68 members and 316 pounds in the bank. Their main effort was the planned construction of a **Slovenian Home**.

6. Perth

In westernmost Australia – “far away from the world” – there was a larger group of Slovenians in Perth. It appeared that they would get together, but they did not form their own organization. It seems that they felt comfortable enough in the ‘Jugoslav’ community. A Slovenian Society was not created in Perth until 1998. Their sole contact with the other societies was the annual visit by Slovenian priests from Sydney.

7. Newcastle and 8. Wollongong

These two settlements are near Sydney, yet each soon created **its own Society**. Not much was heard about Newcastle. In Wollongong there were around 500 Slovenians, but their Society did not do much work; however they did attend the shows, mostly dances, although the Society's board worked hard to organize something more educational too.

8. Wodonga (by Albury)

A Society was created in the 1970s.

9. St. Albans

A Society was created in the 1980s.

The first Slovenian senator in Australia

ZSS 1973/75 carried a brief article about Milivoj (Mišo) Lajovic, the first president of the Society of Slovenians in Sydney, who became an Australian senator of the Liberal (conservative) Party.¹¹²

¹¹² ZSS 1973/75, 443-444. The article probably mixed up the two brothers, Milivoj (Mišo) and Dušan. Dušan Lajovic operated a factory; his father's factory **Tuba** in Ljubljana was returned to him, and he was now its majority owner. Besides the factory in Sydney, he had another one in New Zealand.

Pressure by the Yugoslav Embassy to cooperate with the Regime's Émigré Society

When the Slovenian Societies began moving into their own new Homes in the 1970s, the pressure continued and even increased for them to cooperate with Slovenia's *Izseljenska matica* [Émigré Society]. Some societies began to cooperate of their own accord. Almost all the societies yielded to the intense pressure, except Canberra and Brisbane. Such cooperation for many a society meant accepting financial aid from Slovenia's communist regime. *Triglav* apparently received "as a loan" 50,000 dollars via the *Slovenija-les* company. After Slovenia's independence, the new government demanded return of the money, and proposed that the money be distributed equally among all the societies, but was unable to achieve this. The *Matica* financed the visit of the *Planšarji* and also some other groups.

Slovenska izseljenska matica causes an ideological rift in Canberra

A member of the Society in Canberra visited Slovenia. When he returned, he told the society about the upcoming tour by the Lojze Slak orchestra and the singers *Fantje s Praprotna*. But he never mentioned that he had arranged this on his own through *Matica*. Enthused, the Societies from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Canberra convened and founded the *Zveza slovenskih društev v Avstraliji* [League of Slovenian Societies in Australia]. The Triglav Society came uninvited from Sydney. It was not until this meeting that they learned that the *Matica* was behind all of this. They rejected the visit by the poet Matej Bor, a visit that Fr. Bazilij opposed the most. They resolved that the only official guests would be the music groups. But *Matica* was able to prevail the position that it itself was the main guest, who was bringing along the Slak ensemble as a gift, even though Bor was no longer coming. This visit started an ideological rift in Canberra that has yet to heal.

A few months later *Matica* demanded that the Societies hang the Slovenian flag only if it sported the communist star. Some of the societies submitted. As for those who refused to yield, the *Matica* shunned them and spread all sorts of criticisms behind their backs. The Yugoslav embassy threatened to withhold granting visas to any of these holdouts who might want to visit Slovenia. When one of these went on a visit to Argentina, he was continuously attacked by *Matica*, saying that he was associating with the "White Guards" and "Nazis".

Matica when Slovenia became independent

Matica became a huge sensation in Slovenia when its computers were found to be linked to the government's intelligence service. Some sort of "foreign associate of *Matica*" came to Australia and contacted Alojz Kavaš, the president of the Society in Canberra at the time. Kavaš summoned a meeting of the representatives of the Societies in Australia, the members of the Organization for the Protection of Human Rights in Slovenia [Organizacija za varovanje človekovih pravic v Sloveniji/OZVČPVS], and the Yugoslav ambassador, Boris Cizelj. From Melbourne came one representative from the Council of Slovenian Societies in Victoria, two came from the Society in Sydney, three from the Triglav Society, and five people from OZVČPVS. Kavaš explained that he called the meeting because he was horrified by the exposure of *Matica*, an organization that he had supported and defended all these years. He felt used and betrayed, because he had always believed their lies. He wanted everybody to learn from the matter and talk about it. The members from OZVČPVS protested because they had been invited without being informed on the purpose of the meeting, and stated that they were not prepared to participate under the eyes and ears of the Yugoslav ambassador unless they could speak as free and democratic Slovenians. Ambassador Cizelj immediately accepted their conditions. The "foreign associate of *Matica*" straightway admitted that they had uncovered at *Matica* a link to UDBA

and that this proved that *Matica* was an extension of UDBA and the ruling Regime. One of the representatives from the Society in Sydney said: "I am listening, and suddenly all of us are now Slovenians. I was always a Slovenian and a Yugoslav. What would you like? That *Matica* all of a sudden doesn't mean anything anymore? They did a lot of good. I don't know what you want... etc." This demonstrated that some people even after the *Matica* affair in Ljubljana could not realize what was wrong with *Matica*. The link of the Societies to *Matica* was a link to the communist Regime, which some Slovenians could not accept. The ties of the Societies to *Matica* gave *Matica* power and the right to impose and expand its influence. It discriminated between "our people and your people" and by this was creating a rift between those who rejected the Regime and those who supported it. It caused personal enmity and quarrels, and most of all pressure and extortion on the members of the societies.

League of Slovenian Societies in Australia – Council of Slovenian Societies

Because the Triglav Society was not based on democratic principles, the League did not want to accept it as a member. The leftists constantly attacked the League for this reason. Nonetheless, the League **worked well for the first three years**. For example, after the first visiting tour from Slovenia (Slak, 1972), it **invited the quartet Savski val to tour in 1974**, although according to a report by the leader of the tour, Franci Kunaver, the guests were still suffering the effects of their visit back in the homeland. In **1975** the League invited the group **Minores**, which toured at all the Societies. The following year, the Slovenian Society in Canberra received a call from the Australian foreign ministry with a proposal for a **tour by the group Slovenski oktet** which would be flown in by Qantas Airlines to mark the start of flights between Sydney and Belgrade. At first the Society accepted the offer, but then it had to decline because the Yugoslav embassy was interfering. Later, two former members of the Society at Canberra again relayed an offer for the *Slovenski oktet* to perform there, but the Society declined, because both of them were agents for the Yugoslav embassy. Their recommendations to the other Societies to reject the offer were for naught. Thus the *Oktet* visited all the Societies except the one in Canberra. Two members were expelled from the Canberra Society as a result. In reaction, **Bert Pribac** created a **new society, Karantanija**, an act which was **in sync with the advice from the embassy: take over the society; if unsuccessful, create a new one**. The Yugoslav ambassador was the guest of honor at the first dance hosted by *Karantanija*. *Karantanija* allied itself with *Triglav* in Sydney and *Jadran* in Melbourne.

Three years later, Simon Špacapan became the League's president, and then the League went to sleep. After **Marjan Peršič** in Victoria created the *Svet slovenskih društev* [Council of Slovenian Societies], the League finally died out.

Spiritual life at the present

According to an article in *Misli*, which was confirmed also in the articles published in the ZSS annual anthologies, in the first decade the majority of Australian Slovenians were church-goers, however as far as living according to the Faith was concerned, they were shallow, lukewarm, superficial, and highly negligent. There were already many invalid marriages. They did send their children to Catholic schools, but at home hardly anything was done in light of their Faith. On the other hand, the group of conscientious, practicing believers was just as visible. It was difficult to say which group was larger. Many have grown accustomed to attending Australian churches, but whenever they had the opportunity, they liked to attend Slovenian liturgies.

Visits after Slovenia's independence

Slovenia's Bureau for Slovenians in the World and the Ministry for Culture both made various tours possible, such as by Big Ben and by the quartet *Do*. The Australian Societies organized

nice tours by the *Tržaški oktet*, the mixed choir *Gallus* from Celovec, and the *Suha oktet* together with the *Podjuna trio* from Austrian Carinthia. The most recent tours, organized by the Society SVS with the help of the RS and the Austrian government, included the likes of Marko Fink, Vivien Falež, and Nataša Valant.

Decline in conscientiousness of Slovenianism and in the activity by the communities

After the creation of the Australian Conference of the World Slovenian Congress [*Avstralska konferenca Svetovnega slovenskega kongresa/ASK SSK*], interest in these organizations was on the decline. After approximately a decade of activity, the SNS-Victoria was officially dissolved, and the rest of the councils died off, except for the Slovenian Nationality Council in Canberra [*Slovenski narodni svet/SNS ACT*]. There are still a few individuals in the Australian Conference [ASK] to keep the ASK active and the SSK viable. Activities are down in the Societies too, although in some places they still organize cultural shows and celebrate the annual memorials. Dances that used to be weekly or at least monthly have almost died out. Lawn bowling [*balinca/bocce*] is fostered mostly among the Primorska Slovenians and a little among the Dolenjska Slovenians. The average age of the members is unfortunately increasing. People who came to Australia in the 1950s as twenty-year-olds are now already seventy years old or older, and even many of these have already died.

The younger generation hardly ever joins the societies. Some were turned off by the quarrels, but as far as the majority is concerned, the parents did not know how to draw their children to Slovenianism and Slovenian culture. From the start, there were few Slovenian university graduates in Australia, and at any rate, these also felt socially uncomfortable in the societies. Those who graduated in Australia have far outdistanced their parents and for this reason rarely join the Slovenian organizations.

The future

The vast majority of Slovenians are old. Thus the societies and also the church centers are asking themselves what will happen ten years from now. They failed to attract the youth, and just like in Slovenia, the birth rate among newly-weds is low. The Australian government will most probably become the prime beneficiary of the thousands of dollars and the thousands of hours of labor invested in the Homes and the churches, which now are already worth millions. Will anyone know how to actuate this wealth for Slovenia? But compared to money, the main damage will be the loss of descendants for Slovenianism.



St Vitus Church. Cleveland, Ohio
Zaveza, 41, 37



Church in Lanus, Argentine *Zaveza, 55, 85*



Midland, Canada *Zaveza, 23, 91*



Church of St. Mary of the Assumption -
Collinwood- Cleveland, Ohio



Count N. Tolstoy, Maj. Barre, Cardinal
Ambrožič (Canada) *Zaveza, 33, 92*



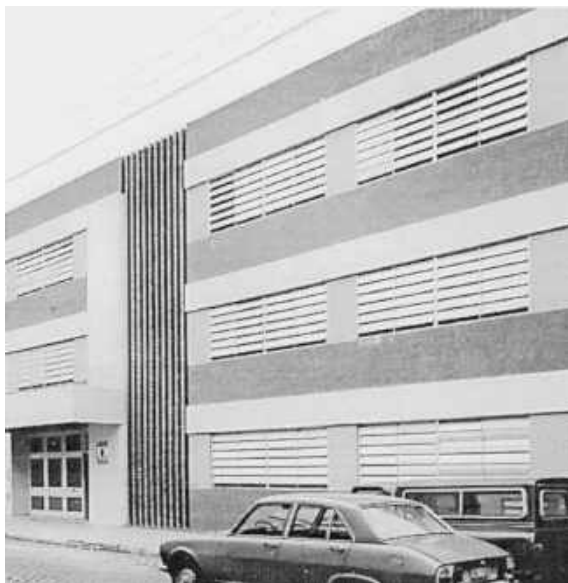
Protests against Kučan's visit

Zaveza, 42, 61



Homeguard memorial in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (USA)

Zaveza, 31, 81



Slovenian Home in Argentina

ZSS, 520

Slovenian Square in San Martin

ZSS, 552Façade of the Pristava in
Castelar, Argentina*ZSS, 525*Naš Dom [Our Home] in
San Justo*ZSS, 532*



Hladnikov dom
[Hladnik Home],
Lanus

ZSS, 536



Slovenian Park in
Mendoza, Argentina

ZSS, 542



Slovenian Home in Carapachayu

ZSS, 554



Slovenian Home in Barlioche, Argentina

ZSS, 559



Slomšek Home, Ramos Mejia www.slomskovdom.org



SLOGA Cooperative ZSS, 5739



Church of Our Lady of Brezje. Toronto, Ont. Canada
ZSS, 1967, 412



Interior of the Church of Our Lady
of Brezje ZSS, 1967, 416



Church of St. Gregory the Great and Rectory. Hamilton, Ont. Canada

SCSGV. 7



Slovenian Home
(1966). Toronto,
Ont. Canada

ZSS, 1967, 420



Baraga Home
(1966).
Melbourne,
Australia

ZSS, 1967, 402



Slomšek Home in Kew-Melbourne,
Australia

ZSS, 1967, 404



Slovenian Home in Melbourne, Australia

ZSS, 1967, 406



Memorial Chapel at the Slovenska Pristava in Cleveland, Ohio *personal, from the USA*



Massacre Sites memorialized at the Slovenska Pristava in Cleveland, Ohio *personal, from the USA*



At the Slovenska Pristava in Cleveland, Ohio *personal, from the USA*



Mass rally at Congressional Square in Ljubljana to protest the trial against "the Four", 1988

IZS, 391

16. Working towards Slovenia's Freedom and Independence

1. Cultural Work by the SPE

This book did not propose to describe the bountiful cultural activity and works by the SPE (*Slovenska politična emigracija*)[*Slovenian Political Emigration*], which is described only in part in the previous chapter. This section is limited to identifying the SPE's most important areas of work, above all mentioning sources that reported its activity.

Cultural work by the emigration

The ZSS printed reports covering the years from 1948 to 1975 about the cultural activity in Argentina and other countries where the refugees of 1945 were plying their cultural work through organizations that they just established.¹ These articles described the actions by choirs, theater troupes and staged presentations, literary activity and book publishing, the arts, etc.² The articles were not limited to the refugees, but also described the cultural activity of the Slovenian minorities in Austria and Italy.

“Honor to Slovenianism – pride to its people”

Zbornik Svobodna Slovenija (ZSS) from 1965 to 1975 ascribed and publicized “recognition” to individuals for their outstanding achievements in various professions, the arts, and sports, particularly mountaineering and skiing. The ZSS thus **brought recognition to the influence of the Slovenian émigré communities abroad**. The following persons were honored:

- 1965 - Dr. Franc Žajdela, Dr. Karel Vladimir Truhlar, D.J., Dr. Milan Komar
- 1966 - Dr. ing.Vojmir J. Bratina, Franja Golobova, Francé Goršé, Bara Remec
- 1967 - Dinko Bertoncej, Dr. Jože Jančar
- 1968 - Dr. Tine Debeljak, Karel Mauser, Dr. Ljubo Sirc, Dr. Jože Velikonja
- 1969 - Dr. Ivan Žužek D.J.; Prof. Dr. Alojzij Šuštar; Dr. Franc Mihelčič
- 1970 - the brothers Jure and Peter Skvarča
- 1971/72 - Dr. Rudolf Čuješ, Dr. Enij Alojzij Fonda, “2 of many” Andrej Majcen and Dr. Janez Janež
- 1973/75 - Dr. Branislava Sušnik, Dr. Bogdan Ciril Novak, Francé Jerman³

¹ There is a list of all the relevant articles in ZSS 1970, 292-293; ZSS 1971/1972; 1973/1975 – ZSS 1972/75 contains a sort of summary of all the activity that followed up to 1975: articles about businesses, the activities of organizations in Argentina, the émigré fine arts (painting), and the 30-years of émigré libraries

² This data needs to be supplemented with the data in Pertot I in Pertot II (see Sources)

³ ZSS 1965, 289-305; ZSS 1966, 311-346; ZSS 1967, 239-256; ZSS 1968, 175-212; ZSS 1969, 129-147; ZSS 1970, 177-185; ZSS 1971/1972, 225-247; ZSS 1972/1975, 297-315

Recognition by the society “Zedinjena Slovenija”

Since 1993 the society *Zedinjena Slovenija* [*Unified Slovenia*] recognized deserving individuals in the community during the celebrations of Slovenia Independence Day at the Slovenian House [*Slovenska hiša*].⁴

2. Working for an Independent and Unified Slovenia

Political action by the Slovenian Emigration

ZSS printed a listing of relevant articles up to 1970.⁵ Numerous other publications have written much on this topic, such as, the work of Dr. Janez Arnež 2000 and others (see Sources).

Much credit for fostering a true understanding of Slovenia and its problems is due to the fact that the SLS was not only a co-founder of several international organizations, such as *Krščansko demokratska zveza za Srednjo Evropo* [*Christian Democratic Alliance for Central Europe*], but it was also a constant co-worker with these groups.⁶

The Slovenian political emigration also never lost sight of the first Slovenian government of 1918, and solemnly celebrated the 50th anniversary of this historic event in 1968.⁷

The study of pre-war, wartime, and post-war history

ZSS has a complete listing of all related articles.⁸ The articles cover the conditions before 1945, the occupation and partitioning of Slovenia in 1941 (ZSS 1963, 52-55), and the Communist revolution (summary in ZSS 1970, 283-284).

Conferences on the political, economic, and social conditions in oppressed Slovenia

Numerous articles on these topics are found in ZSS under the heading “*Dokumenti-Razprave-Pričevanja-Spomini*” [*Documents-Discussions-Testimonies-Memories*].⁹ There is no compilation for articles printed in the volumes for 1971/1972 and 1973/1975.¹⁰

Various newspapers and magazines were published in Argentina, England, Canada, and other countries; some of these publications had a predominantly political or socio-economic content and therefore regularly printed articles and commentaries on these themes.¹¹

⁴ For the years 1993-1997, Zbornik ZS, 683-684; for the subsequent years, *Svobodna Slovenija*, in the last issue in June or the first in July

⁵ ZSS 1970, 284-285; articles from ZSS 1971/1972 and ZSS 1973-1975 have yet to be added

⁶ See the list in ZSS 1970, 284. – This is also confirmed by **Viri IV**, which show the significance of the fact that in 1991 the Christian Democratic Party was the strongest in Europe and that the Christian Democrats sat in the governments of the most important western European countries.

⁷ ZSS 1969, 168-240

⁸ ZSS 1970, 283-284 and ZSS 1970, 285-292

⁹ ZSS 1970, 285-292

¹⁰ ZSS 1952, 204, 217; ZSS 1954, 105; ZSS 1955, 92, 97; ZSS 1956, 36; ZSS 1958, 58, 71; ZSS 1959, 13; ZSS 1960, 23; ZSS 1961, 13, 31; ZSS 1962, 11, 24, 181, 186, 190; ZSS 1963, 7, 13, 82; ZSS 1964, 25, 34, 39, 48, 52; ZSS 1965, 33, 57, 73; ZSS 1966, 137, 158, 179; ZSS 1967, 122, 145, 183, 301; ZSS 1968, 55, 104, 138, 144; ZSS 1969, 260; ZSS 1970, 142; ZSS 1971/2, 115; ZSS 1973/75: 115, 135, 158, 178

¹¹ For example, *Sij slovenske svobode*, *Družabna pravda*, *Meddobje* in Argentina, *Slovenska država* in Canada, *Triglav* in England, and others.

Concern for the Slovenian minorities in Austria and Italy

Gorica and Trieste

ZSS had an exceptionally high number of articles about this, particularly from persons who were born on this ethnically-Slovenian land. These writings have historical significance.¹²

Koroška [Carinthia]

The articles about Koroška may be even more significant. The writings describe what went on behind the scenes for the plebiscite, and also the ensuing tragedy for the Carinthian Slovenians.¹³

Working for liberation

Only a part of all this action is covered in the ZSS.¹⁴ The newspapers and magazines that have been mentioned contain much information on this topic.

The United States of Europe – a condition for freedom

Ruda Jurčec published a significant piece of writing already in 1954 entitled “*Združene države Evrope – pogoj za ohranitev svobode v Evropi*” [*The United States of Europe – a condition for preserving freedom in Europe*].¹⁵ This sort of thinking *per se* led to the demands for broader ties between Slovenia and Europe, and also to the increasing pressure for more independence in Slovenia.

3. Efforts to Gain International Recognition for the Republic of Slovenia

Many officials in Slovenia in 1990-1991 were turning to Slovenians throughout the world and asking for their cooperation in obtaining international recognition for the RS. They later thanked them for the demonstrated aid.¹⁶

A general summary about the work of Slovenians abroad to gain international recognition for Slovenia is contained in **Viri IV**.¹⁷ Although mostly written documents are cited, the authors do describe in their prefaces the various actions, whether by organizations or by individuals.

The actions by Slovenians in the following countries are mentioned separately: USA (85-156), Canada (157-196), Argentina (197-238), Australia (239-268) and Great Britain (239-278).

¹² An index of the articles up to 1970 is in ZSS 1970, 305; also ZSS 1971/72, 7-56 and ZSS 1973/75, 239-274

¹³ An index of the articles up to 1970 is in ZSS 1970, 305-306; for the following years in ZSS 1971/72, 57-108 and ZSS 1973/75, 5-60

¹⁴ ZSS 1952, 204, 217; ZSS 1954, 105; ZSS 1955, 92, 97; ZSS 1956, 36; ZSS 1958, 58, 71; ZSS 1959, 13; ZSS 1960, 23; ZSS 1961, 13, 31; ZSS 1962, 11, 24, 181, 186, 190; ZSS 1963, 7, 13, 82; ZSS 1964, 25, 34, 39, 48, 52; ZSS 1965, 33, 57, 73; ZSS 1966, 137, 158, 179; ZSS 1967, 122, 145, 183, 301; ZSS 1968, 55, 104, 138, 144; ZSS 1969, 260; ZSS 1970, 142; ZSS 1971/2, 115; ZSS 1973/5, 115, 135, 158, 178

¹⁵ ZSS 1954, 171-182

¹⁶ Viri IV, 23-36

¹⁷ Already in the preface to Part IV, Matjaž Klemenčič and Milica Trebše Štolfa expressed gratitude to Prof. Dr. Peter Vencelj, “for amicably providing of documents that Dr. Vital C. Ašič as secretary had compiled and preserved on the basis of announcements by Zedinjena Slovenija”, as well as to individuals in the USA and in Canada. (Note the erroneous equating of the organization ZS with the weekly newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija*.)

ARGENTINA¹⁸

“The members of the Slovenian Political Emigration (SPE) in Argentina were not waiting unprepared for the birth of the country of Slovenia in June of 1991. This segment of the Slovenian community, politically and intellectually the most highly profiled in the world, has based its entire existence, explicitly acknowledged to be an inter-phase phenomenon, in the hope of bringing to reality two interrelated goals: to work for the end of the totalitarian regime in the homeland and the introduction of a parliamentary democracy on the one hand, and simultaneously a higher level of constitutional assertion for Slovenia on the other.”¹⁹ The first footnote added that the SPE aspired to these goals whether within a Yugoslav framework (a confederative model), or within the framework of an independent country of Slovenia.

They actually had to wait almost half a century for these dreams to come true. The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked a turning point in history that meant radical changes in Europe and brought down with itself all three socialist confederations (USSR, SFRJ, and CSSR/Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia). **The country of Slovenia owes the fundamental reason for its international recognition to the activation of the same principle that led to the unification of Germany, namely, the right of a nation of people to self-determination – in other words, not from a determination by some “assembly” in Kočevje or Črnomelj.** In the end, this self-determination was confirmed in Slovenia through a plebiscite that garnered an extremely high percentage of votes in favor of independence. Kristen reports (according to ZZS, 282) that the SPE in Argentina gathered 2,040 signatures, of which only 3 voted against independence.

The best proof that both grand goals of the SPE had been achieved with the independence of Slovenia and the election victory of the DEMOS coalition was that the *Slovenski narodni odbor* [Slovenian National Board], which regarded itself as a sort of Slovenian government in exile, issued a memorandum on June 26, 1991 that stated it was dissolving itself.

In the meantime, the organization *Zedinjena Slovenija* [Unified Slovenia] found itself at one of its most intensive phases. In the opinion of Kristen, this is clearly evident according to the archives which *Viri IV* have made public for the first time. The members of the SPE forged contacts, launched widespread correspondence with key individuals in Argentine societies, organized demonstrations and ethnic presentations. Of all the people involved, Kristen mentions only the writer Ernesto Sábato and the Nobel prize-winner for peace, architect Adolfo Pérez Esquivel. “*Zedinjena Slovenija*, as the lead political organization of the SPE, was patently successful at this activity (...) its lobbying in the critical months in 1991 reached the highest levels within Argentine political, economic, cultural and religious life, and in order to obtain support for Slovenia’s independence it turned also to the various ethnic communities (Hungarians, Poles,

¹⁸ Individual countries are presented in alphabetical order. – A lengthier article on the work for the independence and recognition of Slovenia is printed in Zbornik ZS (Part I, Chapter 9, 272-318) with the subtitles: 1. Preparation for the SSK and the new conditions; 2. To new challenges – new replies!; 3. Work for the recognition of the Republic of Slovenia; 4. Sincere visits and those of “the other kind”; 5. Personal testimony: “living history” (arh. Jure Vombergar, Božidar Fink, Dr. Marko Kremžar). Photocopies of documents and numerous photographs from this period are included.

¹⁹ Samo Kristen, *Delovanje slovenskih izseljencev v Argentini za neodvisno Slovenijo* [The work of Slovenian émigrés in Argentina for an independent Slovenia], *Viri IV*, 197; highlighting by the author JR for emphasis

²⁰ Kristen, 198

Ukrainians, Armenians, etc.)”.²⁰ Dr. Vital Ašič emphasized that these ethnic communities were large and wielded much influence on public opinion.²¹

Kristen mentions also the beginnings of cooperation with the organizations of Slovenians from the previous waves of immigration, and in particular the “Slovenianization” of the society *Triglav*, even though this actually occurred already before Slovenia’s independence.

Kristen ascribes special significance to the **demonstration on June 30, 1991**, four days after the intervention of Serbia’s Army inside Slovenia, as Argentine Slovenians in large number amassed in San Martín Square in front of the Foreign Ministry. The demonstrators, which included around 4,000 Slovenians, marched down the middle of Florida Street to May Square. At the diocesan cathedral, Msgr. Dr. Alojzij Starc offered a Mass at which the Slovenian choir Gallus sang. Similar demonstrations were held in Mendoza and in Bariloche.

On June 29, 1991, the daily newspaper *La Nación* printed an interview with the vice-president of *Zedinjena Slovenija*, Jernej Dobovšek (*inž.*); the article emphasized the massive support by the Slovenian immigrants to have governments recognize Slovenia’s independence, particularly the governments with Christian democrats.²²

Already in September of 1991, the ZS published a pamphlet “*Eslovenia Independiente*” that listed the moral and legal bases for Slovenia’s move to independence. Dr. Ašič through the ZS publishing company prepared a pamphlet with the same name, intended for a wider audience; the pamphlet contained various facts about Slovenia, and also quotations by well known writers about Slovenians (Ernesto Sabato, Milan Kundera).

The first country in South America to recognize Slovenia was Argentina on January 16, 1992.

In 1991 a new president of ZS was elected, Prof. Tine Vivod, currently the ambassador of the RS to Argentina; at a meeting of the executive committee of ZS on January 16, 1992, he thanked everyone who worked towards obtaining recognition for the RS. “We will never know about many people for what they achieved through their work or prayers. Without a doubt, we would have never achieved all this, had it not been for all this effort, our prayers, and the intercessions of the victims killed during the communist revolution.”²³

AUSTRALIA

The Committee to Safeguard Human Rights in Slovenia (OZVČPVS)

The Slovenians in Australia in general had little interest in politics. When things started to change significantly in Slovenia in the 1980s, they did not follow these events closely or they viewed them skeptically. Even more so, the more there was anything political on the radio, the more some criticized this openly.

²¹ The weekly newspaper *Svobodna Slovenija* printed much about the work to help Slovenia obtain recognition (ex.: 8/1/1991,1; 8/15/1991, 4).

²² Kristen (199, footnote 11) cites Kremžar, 78, that there was “quite a bit of surprise” when “the international world with the Holy See at the lead so quickly recognized Slovenia as an independent country.” Historians will be able to determine that it was a fortuitous circumstance that the Christian Democrats were the strongest and most unified party in Europe at the time. These people understood Slovenia’s problem. The *Zveza srednjeevropskih KD [Union of Central European Christian Democrats]*, which had been conceived decades earlier by co-founder Dr. Miha Krek in the name of the SLS, was regularly invited to attend the KD Congresses and then also became a member of the European Union of Christian Democrats.

²³ Zbornik ZS, 299

But after the Yugoslav Army imprisoned Janez Janša, Ivan Borstner, David Tasič and Franci Zavrl, a group of persons got together in Canberra and founded the “*Odbor za varstvo človekovih pravic v Sloveniji*” (OZVČPVS) [*The Committee to Safeguard Human Rights in Slovenia*]. The committee adopted the following program:

1. It would organize a protest march in front of the Australian Parliament, where some politicians would address the marchers.
2. They would collect signatures for a statement of protest against the Yugoslav regime and deliver the lists to the Australian Senate and the ambassadorial committee.
3. They would hold a protest march from the Australian Parliament to the front of the Yugoslav embassy.
4. The Slovenian Society at Canberra at a special meeting collected 10,000 dollars for a legal defense fund for the four persons arrested in Ljubljana.
5. They urged all Slovenian organizations to participate in the protest and help gather signatures.

Not a single Slovenian organization in Australia declined to participate. When the committee invited other nationality groups to participate, they received an even greater response. The Slovenians **numbered about 150**, but the majority of the marchers were Croats, some Macedonians, and a few others who joined on account of their personal ties to Slovenians.²⁴

Working towards independence²⁵

Stanka Gregorič in Melbourne published a two-week diary *Slovensko pismo* [*A Slovenian Letter*] and then *Glas Slovenije* [*The Voice of Slovenia*], which accurately reported on the events in Slovenia, but unfortunately they did not get wide circulation. At the suggestion by the Preparatory Committee of the World Slovenian Congress in Ljubljana, Stanka networked with influential individuals in Melbourne, including Fr. Bazilij, and in Sydney with Alfred **Brežnik**, **Dušan Lajovic**, and some others, which led to an assembly containing the majority of the representatives of Slovenians in Australia. The invitation to the SSK went to Canberra too, even though earlier there had been no reply to their offer.

A meeting of reconciliation occurred in Sydney, where everybody expressed the desire for peace and cooperation. There was also a proposal to establish an *Avstralska slovenska konferenca* (ASK) [*Australian Slovenian Conference*]. Each larger region would have its own *Narodni svet* [*Nationality Council*] and thus become an integral component of the ASK. In Canberra the OZVČPVS was renamed to *Slovenski narodni svet ACT* [*the Slovenian Nationality Council ACT*] and thus became an integral part of the ASK. Nationality Councils were created also in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, and later also in Queensland. The president was **Marjan Kovač**, secretary **Stanka Gregorič**, treasurer **Cvetko Falež**. Each Nationality Council resolved to send five delegates to the constitutional assembly in Ljubljana in June 1991, and then in fact did so.

²⁴ There was not a single Serb among the protesters, understandably of course since the protest was directed against the Serb Army, that is, the Yugoslav People's Army (JLA) [*Jugoslovska ljudska armada*]. Because the father of Senator Miša Lajovic came from Montenegro and Miša himself was closely tied to the Serbs in Australia, the senator declined to participate, even though he had initially promised to address the marchers.

²⁵ Matjaž Klemenčič, *Delovanje slovenskih izseljencev v Avstraliji za neodvisno Slovenijo* [*The work by Slovenian immigrants in Australia for Slovenia's independence*], Viri IV, 239-242; with the addenda of Cvetko Falež's article about Slovenians in Australia working for recognition of the RS

Alfred Brežnik opened the **Slovenski informacijski urad** [*Slovenian Information Center*] in Sydney. In the days before the plebiscite, the Australian Slovenians in short order collected 27 statements by the Slovenian societies. Protestors sent a letter, decrying the use of force by the Yugoslav Army, to the Australian Foreign Minister **Gareth Evans**, plus a list of what was happening in Slovenia to the president of the government, **Bob Hawk**, and to the representatives in the Australian parliament. Since the crisis in Yugoslavia was growing worse, the representatives of the various ethnic communities, Slovenian (Marjan Kovač, Alfred Brežnik), Croatian and Macedonian, met with the president of the government.

On account of the hostilities perpetrated against Slovenia by the Yugoslav Army, the Australian Slovenians prepared **numerous protests** at the **end of June, 1991**. On **June 28**, Slovenian immigrants **visited the embassies of the USA and the EU**; they asked the USA to champion the motion to stop the hostilities in Slovenia. On June 29, the **ASK organized a drive to obtain signatures on a petition, while Slovenian immigrants began a drive to send postcards to the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Approximately 13,000 postcards were printed**. The Australian politicians took this mail quite seriously. **At a publishing conference on July 4, President Hawk stated that "Yugoslavia can no longer exist in its current structure"** and that Australia will recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia if there were sufficient demands for independence within the two countries.

On July 4th the members of the second generation of the Slovenian and the Croatian immigrant communities gathered in the Public Square in Melbourne. On July 15th Minister Evans received a delegation of Slovenian immigrants; it submitted approximately 40-pages of documentation that justified the demand for Slovenia's independence. Evans replied that he cannot do anything due to the change in conditions, particularly the Brioni Declaration, whereby Slovenia agreed to a 3-month moratorium on its drive towards independence. The representatives of the Australian Slovenians nonetheless still met with politicians, visited various embassies, and continued their efforts to obtain recognition for Slovenia's independence. They made contacts with the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Garry Hand, who after these visits issued a directive that the inhabitants from Slovenia must obtain visa permits for Australia at the Australian embassy in Vienna and not in Belgrade, which signified a **"tacit" recognition by the Australian government that Slovenia was no longer a part of Yugoslavia**.

In **August of 1991**, the representatives of the Australian Slovenians sent to President Hawk and the members of the Australian Parliament **many memoranda for demands to recognize Slovenia. Many thousands of people signed these petitions**; the Council of Slovenian Organizations in Victoria alone collected 1,500 signatures. Helen Lebar met with President Hawk on August 10th at an informal social evening organized by the Ethnic Community Council from Victoria. She emphasized the need to recognize Slovenia. President Hawk replied that he was watching the situation in Slovenia with concern, and that this issue was closely tied to the EU. Hawk received a Slovenian delegation in October of 1991; he stated that a premature recognition might cause harm, but that Australia would be among the first to recognize Slovenia.

In October, the Australian Slovenians handed to Slovenia financial aid in the sum of 266,875 Australian dollars.

Towards the end of 1991, the Australian Slovenians **organized several other noticeable actions**, including a protest in Canberra during a visit by the USA President George Bush (January 2, 1992). **Australia recognized Slovenia on January 16, 1992.**²⁶ When Slovenia's

²⁶ Viri IV, 242 contains a typographical error: the date was not January 16, 1991, but 1992. Argentina recognized the Republic of Slovenia (RS) on the same day. Canada and the EU recognized Slovenia one day earlier! The claim that Australia was the first of the "transoceanic" countries to recognize the independent country of Slovenia will be debated by those focused on the differences in time zones and in connotations of "transoceanic".

Minister of Defense, Janez Janša visited Australia, on February 8, 1992 he thanked the Australian Slovenians for their help and presented a medal to honor their successful efforts, particularly by the Australian Slovenian Conference, the Slovenian Nationality Councils, and all Slovenian Australians in general.

Although quite a few Australian Slovenian leaders were in Slovenia during the war for liberation, the protests back in Australia against the Yugoslav Army were still well organized and successful. Even people who had always been **passive by nature found themselves at the demonstrations and at the ramparts on behalf of Slovenia**. Even the **second generation joined in**, best of all at contacts with the Australian media and with the politicians, which provided convincing proof of the grave danger faced by the Slovenian people. The **enthusiasm and propagandizing for Slovenia's independence continued unabated**, until Australia as the first of the transoceanic countries recognized Slovenia.²⁷

Visitors from Slovenia before and after its independence

Cvetko Falež wrote quite openly about some events related to the efforts to gain recognition for Slovenia. The first **visit by politician Jože Pučnik** occurred before the [Slovenia] December elections of 1990. He also visited the Yugoslav ambassador, Boris Cizelj. When the ambassador was trying to make the case that Slovenia should secede from Yugoslavia, Pučnik said: "You know, I don't think this will work." The second visitor, already after the election of the Demos government, was the Minister of Slovenians Abroad, **Janez Dular**, who was even more **skeptical about Slovenia's independence**.

The Australian Slovenians were later visited by the Minister of Defense **Janez Janša**, the President of the government **Lojze Peterle**, Foreign Minister **Dimitrij Rupel** and others.²⁸ More political visits followed, including the president of the government Dr. Drnovšek and the president of the RS Dr. Kučan.

CANADA²⁹

At the end of the 1980s, the Canadian Slovenians likewise stepped into the World Slovenian Congress. On May 15, 1990 they established the *Kanadski slovenski kongres [Canadian Slovenian Congress]*, officially the **SSK – Konferenca za Kanado [the Slovenian World Congress – the Canadian Conference]**. In actuality it was just a matter of changing the name of the *Konferenca zdomskih Slovencev Kanade (KZSK) [Conference of Émigré Slovenians in Canada]*, founded in 1989. The founding meeting of the *SSK-Ontario Conference* was held in the old-age home *Dom Lipa* in Toronto. They elected a 15-member council for the Congress, which on June 29th at a general session elected the committees and the leaders of the KSK (president Dr. **Francé Habjan**, 1st vice-president Prof. **Dr. Srečko Pregelj**, 2nd vice-president **Stane Kranjc**, *et. al.*). The youth of the Slovenian societies met on December 2nd at Niagara Peninsula for the purpose of creating a youth KSK. A regional KSK for the Niagara Peninsula was created in Ottawa on December 9.

²⁷ See preceding footnote.

²⁸ Rupelj was accused of treachery because he was helping to defeat DEMOS.

²⁹ Milica Trebše Štolfa, *Prispevek kanadskih Slovencev k osamosvojitvi Slovenije [The Contribution by the Canadian Slovenians to Slovenia's Independence]*, Viri IV, 157-162

Interest in the situation in Slovenia increased considerably after the documents about the plebiscite were published in the most widely read ethnic newspapers (*Ameriška Domovina*, *Slovenska država*, *Prosveta*). The existing legislation did not provide for voting by émigrés, nonetheless 1,200 signatures were collected in support of an independent Slovenia.

In preparation for the June pan-Slovenian World Congress in Ljubljana, a regional KSK Conference chapter was formally established in Vancouver too, at the western part of Canada.

Several coordinating committees worked to network all the societies. Thus, for example, there was the *Zveza slovenskih društev* [*Union of Slovenian Societies*], established in 1985 in southern Ontario, which expanded in 1990 into the *Vseslovenski odbor* [*the Pan-Slovenian Board*].³⁰

The war in Slovenia caught the vast majority of Canadian Slovenians off guard, because they had no channels to inform the Canadian public about the situation in Slovenia. In addition, the majority of the members of the Pan-Slovenian Board were in Slovenia to attend the congress. So the preponderant part of organizing fell to **Jože Slobodnik**, the president of the Slovenian Economic Chamber in Canada. The new pan-Slovenian Board assumed the leadership role in coordinating the moral and financial support for Slovenia.

In June of 1991 this board created an **Information Center** under the directorship of **Cvetka Kocjančič**. The Center performed valuable work at providing information to the Canadian public, the Canadian government, and the Canadian-Slovenian communities. It published an 8-page report entitled "**Vojna v Sloveniji**" [*The War in Slovenia*] and presented the chronology of the events in Slovenia. The Center later published several issues of an informational bulletin entitled *Kanadsko-slovenska kronika* [*the Canadian-Slovenian Chronicle*]. The Center also helped to organize protest marches and events in support of an independent country of Slovenia. The establishment of an independent radio station CHAO in Brampton proved very valuable. The Pan-Slovenian Board created a radio station *Glas kanadskih Slovencev* [*Voice of Canadian Slovenians*] and broadcast on Tuesdays between 19:00 and 21:00 hours.

A special *Sklad za Slovenijo* [*Fund for Slovenia*] was created, directed by **Viktor Zelenkovič**. They collected much money by selling 700 Slovenian state flags, which were displayed in all the Homes – even in those who in the past did not want to hear anything about politics; they also sold T-shirts and caps with Slovenian symbols.

The Slovenian priests played a significant role. The **Archbishop of Toronto, Dr. Alojzij Ambrožič** wrote to the Canadian **Prime Minister Brian Mulroney** three days after the Yugoslav Army attacked Slovenia.

The members of the VSO (*Vseslovenski odbor*) and the KSK already a few days after the aggression against Slovenia devoted themselves to intense efforts to support Slovenian independence. On **June 28, 1991**, joined by Croatians and Macedonians, they held a **protest rally in Toronto**, where 3,000 persons had amassed. In **Edmonton** (Province of Alberta), representatives from the Slovenian-Canada Society visited the president of the provincial government already on June 28th. On June 30th Slovenians held rallies in favor of a democratic and independent Slovenia in **London** and in **Hamilton**. On July 1st Archbishop Ambrožič offered a special Mass for the homeland, attended by 2,000 Slovenians. In his homily, the archbishop stated that the world should support the wishes of Slovenia and Croatia, for they had decided to be their own masters. Archbishop Ambrožič issued a similar statement in the following days to the newspaper *Toronto Star*.

³⁰ Founded on December 10, 1990, its primary goal was to collect aid for the flood victims in Slovenia. This natural disaster brought together 27 cultural and sports groups and parishes in the Ontario region.

Around 1,000 Slovenians gathered again in the center of Toronto on **July 6th**. They peacefully demonstrated to the public and the government that the hostilities against Slovenia should be stopped. Similar demonstrations were organized in the main cities of the provinces inhabited by Slovenians. One month after Slovenia's Declaration of Independence, the **Slovenian Youth Council** also organized demonstrations to support Slovenian independence, where with songs and prayers they honored the victims of the Yugoslav attack on Slovenia. This peaceful demonstration had a strong impact on the Slovenians in Canada as well as the Canadian public.

More than **2,000 people assembled in Bolton on June 28, 1991 for Slovenia Day**. The entire day was dedicated to the declaration of independence by the country of Slovenia. The gathering with many notable speakers was the concluding act of all the generations of Slovenian immigrants who were rejoicing together with the homeland Slovenia at its independence.

However, **international recognition for the new country was still lacking**. This then became the **main test**. With thousands of letters they urged the president of the government **Brian Mulroney**, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Barbara McDougall**, to have Canada recognize Slovenia's independence as quickly as possible. Some Canadian Representatives also took up this cause. At the end of November, Slovenians organized a **visit by Slovenia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Dimitrij Rupelj**. The delegation from Slovenia met with the representatives of the Slovenian communities, and also with Foreign Minister McDougall, the members of the parliamentary opposition, and others. The visit failed to obtain Canada's recognition, but it fulfilled its diplomatic purposes. The links were preserved and the Slovenians continued their demands until Canada voted to recognize the independence of Slovenia on January 15, 1992, the same day as the countries in the European Union.³¹

The unity achieved among the Slovenians in working together for the sovereignty of the RS deserves special note. Many Slovenian individuals in Canada deserved the highest marks for their actions on behalf of the independence and the recognition of the Republic of Slovenia.

GREAT BRITAIN³²

A group of professionals of various nationalities assembled in London already in November of 1990 and created the **"Komite za zaščito demokracije v Jugoslaviji"** [*Committee for the Defense of Democracy in Yugoslavia*]. Its founders were two Slovenians, **Dr. Zvezdan Pirtošek** and **Dr. Marko Hawlin**, together with two Croats and one Albanian from Kosovo. Its primary task was to lobby the members in Parliament and non-parliamentary organizations, and also to forge links with the public media. In response to the threats by the Yugoslav government to intervene militarily in Slovenia, they organized a **protest march on January 19, 1991** in front of the Yugoslav embassy. The **protest rally on March 8, 1991 at Trafalgar Square under the banner "For democracy and against the military intervention in Yugoslavia"** had a much wider impact. The participants at this rally handed a **petition** with more than 400 signatures to the **Prime Minister, John Major**.

³¹ All archival media has yet to be collected into a single location. In Canada, a collection of 45 photographs and even the video entitled *Slovenija na barikadah* [*Slovenia at the Barricades*] remains in private hands. These were used in various exhibits in Canadian cities with greater concentrations of Slovenians.

³² Matjaž Klemenčič, *Delovanje slovenskih izseljencev iz Velike Britanije za neodvisnost Slovenije* [*The Work by Slovenian Immigrants within Great Britain for Slovenia's Independence*], Viri IV, 269-271.

Shortly thereafter the activism of the committee members changed to **overt support for Slovenia and Croatia**. The members attempted to educate the British public, which was not favorably inclined to independence for the individual Yugoslav republics. With personal letters they informed the most influential British politicians about the events in Yugoslavia, and also made personal contact with the state secretary in the British Foreign Ministry, **Douglas Hogg**, and the counsel on Yugoslavia at the same ministry, **Martin Uden**.

When the Yugoslav Army attacked Slovenia, the Slovenian section of the committee changed into the **Slovenian Crisis Center (June 28, 1991)**, and the former committee ceased its existence. The Crisis Center as a non-political group had no program and no formal membership, yet it succeeded at informing the British public about the events in Slovenia, sought support from politicians, political parties and various civilian organizations, and also launched some actions. In actuality it operated as a “**pressure group**”.

To address British public opinion, *The Slovenian Newsletter* was created on June 29, 1991; it collaborated with the various organizations of Slovenian immigrants, particularly the Slovenian Crisis Center. Other Slovenian organizations active at this time in London were the **Slovenian Information Center, the World Slovenian Congress – the Great Britain Chapter, the Slovenian Catholic Mission**, and others.

All these organizations took many actions while Slovenia was at war. On June 30, they **protested in front of the Yugoslav embassy**. At the suggestion of Zvezdan Pirtošek, they even organized a “permanent guard” in front of the embassy. They began to collect **signatures for a petition to the British government**, asking it to support the right of Slovenia to self-determination. The action on **July 7, 1991** had the greatest impact: **a mass demonstration at Trafalgar Square in favor of Slovenia's independence and against the hostile actions perpetrated against Slovenia**. The key speakers were Dr. Pirtošek, Dr. Hawlin, and Jana Valenčič. The British Green Party supported this action. Speeches were also delivered by representatives of other immigrant communities (Croatian, Albanian, Kurd, Lithuanian, etc.). Written statements supporting Slovenia were also sent by some representatives of the Labor Party and the Green Party. They also received the support of the president of Lithuania, the president of the Liberal-Democratic Party Padd Ashdown, the vice-president of the Conservative Party Sir Geoffrey Pattie, and others. The organizers obtained 1,000 signatures on the petition to the Prime Minister, J. Major.

Dušan Pleničar provided much assistance to the organizations and the SSK Conference; his printing shop printed posters and propaganda material for the Slovenian Crisis Center, and also numerous issues of *The Slovenian Newsletter*.

Five petitions addressed to Prime Minister Major were prepared in 1991, but only three were delivered. The most important was the one organized by Andrew Hartley while the war was in progress; it circulated throughout Britain.

The **lobbying in Parliament** played an important role, as did also the **numerous letters written by individuals**. Such was the case of a musician from Bedford, Joe Pogatchnik, who wrote to Mr. Major on June 23, 1991, and received a response on July 23 from J. Carmichael of the Foreign Ministry, who condemned the uses of force and the interference in the democratically-elected governments in Slovenia and in Croatia.

Great Britain **recognized the RS on January 15, 1992** in concert with the other members of the EU.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)³³

Slovenians in the USA had been **almost forever divided in two camps**, named the conservatives and the progressives. It would be more accurate to speak about the left and the center, or rather the mid-left and the mid-right sides.

Klemenčič admits that the **members of the Slovenian Political Emigration had always considered the possibility of Slovenia's independence. The "progressive" camp was almost more Yugoslavian than the Yugoslavs themselves.** (This *per se* already demonstrated what "progressive" signified!) After Tito's death and the increasingly menacing changes in Yugoslavia, the **gap in viewpoints on this issue was closing fast.** It would be difficult to say that this was some sort of **ethnic "homogenization"**. However, even among Slovenians the possibility appeared for some sort of limited cooperation between the two sides.

A group of émigrés, representatives from various organizations, assembled in 1989 at *Baragov dom* in Cleveland and created the **Združeni Amerikanci za Slovenijo** [*United Americans for Slovenia*]; its purpose was to support the Slovenian people in the approaching phase of a free and democratic republic. The Slovenian Minister Rupel was present at the time. This group at the time was still thinking about a Slovenia within the framework of a Yugoslavia. The intent was to inform Slovenian Americans on ways to influence the American political position on Yugoslavia. In March of 1990, the Union opened its home base in Euclid, Ohio, where Dr. Gobec worked; its purpose was to support the democratization of Slovenia. It organized a committee to aid Slovenia. According to the financial report, \$24,471.62 was collected; the money was expended to support Rupel's political party, the visit to the USA by Slovenian president Kučan, and a portrait of Bishop Baraga for Archbishop Šuštar – the latter expenditure apparently without the consent of the full board. It is not known where the rest of the money of the ZAZS went; as of March 31, 2006, \$14,471.62 remained in its treasury. The full committee, in actuality only an "ad hoc" group, disbanded in 2006, and its remaining funds were distributed among Slovenian cultural groups and Slovenian schools, and \$1,500 was used to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Slovenia's independence.

Because the board of the *Združeni Amerikanci za Slovenijo* was unable to commit to doing serious work, in January of 1990 Prof. Lipovec, Dr. Roesman, and other representatives of Slovenian émigré organizations convened a new meeting in the Slovenian Home on Holmes Avenue in Cleveland, where they created the **Slovensko-Ameriški svet** [*Slovenian-American Council*]; Dr. Mate Roesman was elected its president. They started a collection of money for the upcoming elections in Slovenia, to be used primarily to aid Peterle's political party. The first donor was Rev. Božnar who gave \$500 dollars; at that time they collected around \$87,000 which was sent to Carinthia. Next they took up a collection for the flood victims in Štajerska, a collection for bronze doors in the Ljubljana cathedral, and a collection at the start of the war for an independent Slovenia. Mr. Roesman persuaded Mr. Krofta, who still lived in Slovenia at the time, to donate \$100,000 dollars; the *Slovensko-ameriški svet* collected \$156,000 dollars, KSKJ in New York collected \$33,110 dollars, and Rudy Kolarič donated \$15,000 dollars. Altogether \$289,000 was collected and sent to Slovenia; of this total, only 5.6 cents of every dollar was used to cover fund-raising expenditures such as postage, telephone, printing, etc. Not a single organization or individual wanted to be paid for anything, thus all effort was completely for free.

³³ Srečko Gaser, based on data collected from the minutes of the United Americans for Slovenia, from the minutes of the Slovenian-American Council, and articles from various newspapers.

Even with so many already existing organizations, the Slovenian Americans yielded to the impetus to create new organizations, such as the *Ameriški znanstveniki za neodvisno Slovenijo* [American Scientists for an Independent Slovenia], the *Odbor za svobodno Hrvaško in Slovenijo* [Committee for a Free Croatia and Slovenia] and the *Ameriški odbor za neodvisnost Slovenije* [American Committee for the Independence of Slovenia].

During the preparations for the plebiscite, in 1991 **almost all the leading members of the Slovenian government visited the USA**. All the politicians at the time cooperated on this. Even before the plebiscite, committee members of various Slovenian organizations from Cleveland and other cities participated at the hearings held by the Foreign Policy Committee of the U.S. Congress. Thus, according to the report in Viri IV, the **editor of the newspaper *Ameriška Domovina*, Dr. Rudolph M. Šušelj** (misprinted as Susel in Viri IV) **on February 14th testified that the desire of the Slovenian people was to have an independent country of Slovenia**. The Slovenian immigrants supported this desire; proof positive was that **more than 6,000 letters of support** arrived at the address of the Slovenian Parliament.

Shortly after the plebiscite, the Minister without Portfolio whose responsibilities included the Slovenian immigrants, **Janez Dular, issued a written statement in which he begged all Slovenians living outside its borders to support the movement for Slovenia's independence**. The Slovenians from Cleveland already sent a reply in January of 1991 to the president of the government of the RS, Lojze Peterle. They also lent their support by **testifying before the European Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate**.

Two members of the U.S. Congress, both of Slovenian ancestry – Dennis Eckhart from Ohio and James Oberstar from Minnesota – were able to issue a joint declaration of the U.S. Congress on its position with regard to Yugoslavia. The Declaration, which was signed on May 14, 1991 by 12 members of Congress, was forwarded to the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker. Mr. Baker did nothing and **even during his visit to Yugoslavia in June of 1991 demanded that Yugoslavia be preserved**; this meant, 5 days before Slovenia's declaration of independence, he in effect gave the Yugoslav People's Army (JLA) a free hand to attack Slovenia. It was obvious that the émigré newspapers (*Ameriška Domovina* and *Prosveta*) **condemned Baker's visit and his statement**.

When independence was declared, Dr. Dular and the Minister of Information, Dr. Jelko Kacin, urged all immigrants and refugees to organize committees, collect signatures, go public, collect financial donations, contact foreign friends to inform them about the events in Slovenia. At this very time, the **World Slovenian Congress** was convening in Ljubljana; **several members of the political emigration were in attendance**, and upon their return to the USA immediately began to work to obtain recognition for the independence of Slovenia. **The response of the North American Slovenians to the Yugoslav attack was extremely strong**. This was evidenced in the letters to the homeland, and also in various cities that recognized Slovenia's independence already in the second half of 1991 (the City of Cleveland on June 26, 1991). **On June 27, Congressman Dennis Eckart warned the U.S. Congress about the problem of the attack by the JLA against Slovenia** and asked that the President of the USA and the State Department to support the democracy and economic reforms in Slovenia.

Slovenian Americans also started to collect donations through the *Slovenska narodna podpornja jednota* [Slovenian nationalist aid union] and the *Ameriška slovenska katoliška jednota* [American Slovenian Catholic Union].³⁴

³⁴ According to Viri IV, more than 2 million dollars in aid was collected in 1991-2. However, according to the treasurer's report, this figure applies to all the years after World War II, and not for 1991.

Klemenčič claims that these events were still a part of most recent history and therefore still unknown. However a few facts are known even now. First of all, Slovenians acted more in unison. On July 1, 1991, when the attack of the Yugoslav Army was at its height, the representatives of Slovenian fraternal aid organizations, Slovenian parishes, and Slovenian cultural organizations came together at the suggestion of Charles **Ipavec**, president of the Federation of Slovenian National Homes, and Matjaž **Jančar**. They assembled in the Slovenian National Home in Cleveland. They created the organization **United Americans for Slovenia**. This organization operated for almost 9 months, and its board met almost each week. The sole purpose of this organization was to put pressure in suitable ways on the USA government to recognize the RS. **Edmund J. Turk**, a former president of the Cleveland City Council and retired circuit judge, was elected president of this organization.³⁵

Societies, groups, and individuals across the USA sent **thousands of petitions for the official recognition of the country of Slovenia**. They also clogged the special telephone line to the White House; as a result, there were only two items were on the agenda for the October 8, 1991 meeting at the White House: the responses from the hearings on the candidate for the Supreme Court, Clarence Thomas, and the demands to recognize Slovenia's independence.

Even before this, many **volunteers** gathered at the sites of American charitable organizations on July 4, 1991. These volunteers **in an organized campaign wrote numerous letters to Senators, members of Congress, and the President of the USA. This writing campaign helped convinced high officials in Congress and in American institutions**. Senator John H. Glenn and Congressman Dennis Eckart sent to President Bush a joint resolution for a demand to recognize Slovenia. The governor of the State of Ohio, **George Voinovich**, also of Slovenian descent, wrote a letter to President Bush dated June 28, 1991 in which he asked for intervention at the actions of the Yugoslav Army in Slovenia; on July 3, the governor reminded Bush that during his 1988 campaign he made statements about the problem of persecuted nations in the case of Lithuania, and that the people were now asking why the president was not acting in the case of Yugoslavia the same way as he had acted against Iraq.

During the June War in Slovenia and later in Croatia, American Slovenians organized **many demonstrations** in support of Slovenian and Croatian independence. These demonstrations were held in all the larger cities, from the East Coast to the West Coast, and on front of the steps of the United Nations building and of the U.S. Congress. This was probably one of the reasons that the urban religious areas, where the Slovenian and Croatian immigrants had a strong influence, issued resolutions to recognize the independence of Slovenia and of Croatia many months before the RS was officially recognized by the USA government.

The reaction by numerous Slovenian organizations to the Yugoslav attack against Slovenia was exceptionally strong and extended deep into American public life, however President Bush **waited until April 7, 1992 to issue a statement that the USA recognized Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH)**.

At the 15th anniversary of Slovenia's independence, the Slovenian-American Council sent the following memorandum to the government of the RS and to the State Assembly of the RS:

³⁵ Viri IV claims that by the end of 1991 this organization included 659 American-Slovenian organizations of every sort, but more reliable sources speak only of 60 to 70 organizations.

Dear Sirs!

As Slovenians at home and abroad celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by the Republic of Slovenia, the Slovenian-American Council, the top representative organization for Slovenians in the USA, people who continuously supported and personally led the fight against the communist government to achieve a democratic Slovenia and who made significant efforts towards the success of this struggle by supporting the democratic opposition at the first free elections in April of 1990 in Slovenia after the Second World War, with regret has determined:

- 1. That the Slovenian state and its government have yet to condemn the crimes that the Communist Party and its Regime perpetrated from 1941 all the way to 1990,*
- 2. That it has not undertaken steps to provide a decent burial for those killed, to list their names, to restore their honor, and to apologize to their families,*
- 3. That it has yet to return all their property that was illegally confiscated, or to correct countless wrongs,*
- 4. That it still has not reversed the wrongful trial judgments, especially that of the late Bishop of Ljubljana, Dr. Gregorij Rožman,*
- 5. That it has not introduced in the schools an unbiased presentation of Slovenian history, specifically, starting with the end of the first Yugoslavia and thereafter,*
- 6. That it has not invited the political émigrés and Slovenian immigrants across the world to return home and help construct and preserve a Slovenian independent country.*

The Slovenian-American Council hopes and awaits that the government and the parliament of the Republic of Slovenia will now, when it is a member of the European Union and of NATO, find enough will, courage, and sense of decency, truth, and justice, to address the above-mentioned points as soon as possible and thereby open the doors to a better future for the Slovenian people and its independent country.

Cleveland, June 29, 2006

*On behalf of the Slovenian American Council:
Rudy Kolarič, Prof. Vinko Lipovec, Maruša Pogačnik*



City of Cleveland

RESOLUTION OF RECOGNITION

For Councilman Michael D. Polensek and Council President Jay Westbrook

By Councilmen Brady, Coats, Frangos, Jackson, Johnson, Lewis, Lumpkin, McGuirk, Miller, O'Malley, Patton, Pianka, Robinson, Rokakis, Rybka, Smith, Turner, Willis.

WHEREAS, this Council is most pleased to note that the Republic of Slovenia will proclaim its national independence from Yugoslavia on June 26, 1991 in the City of Ljubljana; and

WHEREAS, in the coming days, representatives of Slovenia will meet with some of the highest officials in the United States and Western Europe to obtain a better view of their impending independence; and

WHEREAS, Prime Minister Lojze Peterle will travel to Italy to meet with Italian Prime Minister Andreotti, and President Milan Kucan will meet with Italian President Cossiga and Pope John Paul II. In addition, Foreign Minister Dr. Dimitrij Rupel will travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with representatives of President Bush, the State Department and Congress; and

WHEREAS, the Slovenian Democratic Government of the Republic of Slovenia has received support from Slovenians across the United States, as well as Canada, in its attempt to gain national independence; and

WHEREAS, although the Republic of Slovenia knows that to proclaim independence and actually achieve it and gain international recognition is a challenge, it nevertheless wishes to move forward and gain the full support of its citizens for the betterment of its country; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that this Council recognizes the Republic of Slovenia for proclaiming its national independence from Yugoslavia on June 26, 1991; commends the outstanding efforts of the Slovenian Democratic Government for assisting in this declaration; and further joins with the Slovenian people in the Greater Cleveland community in celebrating this historic occasion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Clerk of Council be and she is hereby requested to transmit a copy of this Resolution of Recognition to Councilman Michael D. Polensek for proper presentation.



Jay Westbrook
Jay Westbrook, President of Council

I, Artha Woods, Clerk of Council of the City of Cleveland, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of this Resolution of Recognition.

WITNESS my hand and seal at Cleveland, Ohio, this Twentieth day of June, 1991.

Artha Woods
Artha Woods, Clerk of Council



Protest demonstration in Cleveland against granting of a honorary doctorate to the President of the RS, Kučan, May 13, 2001
Zaveza, 42, 59



Canada: front page of Kanadsko-Slovenska Kronika
VIRI IV, 168



Celebrating the independence of the RS, Buenos Aires, June 30, 1991

Corsellis, 96, 70



Australia: Slovenians in Sydney gather to celebrate after RS's declaration of independence

VIRI IV, 244



Honor Guard of the Slovenian Territorial Defense, the seed of the RS Army, during the raising of the new Slovenian flag
Premiki, 80/81



The first President of the independent Slovenian government, Prof. Lojze Peterle
Premiki, 80/81



The DEMOS government in DZRS

DZRS, 61



Visit by Pope John Paul II, 1996

IZS, 428

17. Sixty Years Later

1. If we had not left, most probably most of us would have been killed

Victims of the War and the Revolution¹

In 1945 there were **1,492,031 inhabitants** in the area encompassed by the Republic of Slovenia and **approximately 89,000 victims**. There were 70,922 victims killed during the war, and 13,898 after the war.

The **total number of victims represents a loss of 6% of the population of Slovenia**, which is close to the average for Yugoslavia.²

The greatest number of victims was in Dolenjska with 8.8% of its population, followed by Gorenjska with 6.5%, Slovenian Carinthia with 6.2%, Primorska with 5.6%, lower Štajerska with 3.6%, and Prekmurje with 1.8%. The following chart lists the numbers of victims from April of 1941 to January of 1946:³

Total Number of inhabitants	1,492,031
Category of Victims	
Civilians	35,717
Partisan units	27,135
Village Guards	846
Slovenian Chetniks	468
Slovenian Homeguards	13,406
Drafted into the units of Italy	1,172
Germany	9,759
Hungary	415
Jugoslav Army inside the Homeland	212
European resistance	93
Allied units	79
Total victims	89,404
% victims compared to inhabitants ⁴	6 %

¹ After eleven years, the *Preiskovalna komisija Državnega zbora o povojnih pomorih in moriščih* [The Investigative Commission of the State Committee on Postwar Murders and Massacre Sites] concluded its study in 2004, even though in actuality its work remained incomplete. The book of the selective works of Jože Pučnik, former president of that commission, contains much detail about the work and the conclusions of the commission.

Authors Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar and Mojca Šmarn present data collected as of April, 2004 in the anthology *Žrtve vojne in revolucije* [Victims of the War and the Revolution], 13-21, under a rather inaccurate heading, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne in zaradi nje (april 1941- januar 1946)” [Victims of and on account of World War II (April 1941- January 1946)]

² Other nationalities: Poles (the highest) 20%, USSR 13%, Netherlands 2.8%, France (only) 0.85 %!

³ Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar- Mojca Šmarn, o.c.; **the final sum is not tallied correctly, neither in the chart by Tominšek Rihtar and Šmarn, nor by Urbanc.**

⁴ The two authors wrote “per inhabitant”, which is incorrect by any measure!

Authors Tomišek and Šmarn add that **given the number of victims within the Slovenian anti-revolutionist side, Slovenia stands out in Western Europe with the exception of Italy.** They also write: **“In Slovenia, the postwar killings (at least 13,445 victims) represent 15% of the total number of victims.”**

Data as of 2005

In 2005 **P. Urbanc** compiled even more detailed statistics on the number of victims:⁵

1. Killed by the Germans	1,140
2. German Punitive Work Camps, bombardments	8,260
3. Mauthausen, Auschwitz, Dachau (leftists and the opposition)	2,961
4. Hostages, civilians killed in Ljubljana Province under Italian Occupation	2,640
5. Italian concentration camps (Rab alone, 4,000)	5,000
6. Driven off to Croatia, killed mostly during the NOB Revolution	1,000
7. Driven off to Serbia, killed during the Revolution, Srem (Serb region)	500
8. Partisans, couriers, agents of the KPS/OF, etc. ⁶	30,815

To these figures must be added those who were killed but do not fall under the category OF (more accurately, the Revolution):

1. The Red Terror in Ljubljana Province, April 22, 1941 to July, 1942	1,500
2. Second wave of Terror, September 1943 (Turjak, Kočevje, Grčarice)	900
3. Military losses (VS, Homeguards and Chetniks) up to May, 1945	1,200
4. The Vetrinj Tragedy (of 8,263 returned), killed	7,800
5. Homeguards, who remained home	1,500
6. Civilians killed after the war across the entire RS	3,500
7. Gypsies, a genocide perpetrated by the Partisans	500
8. Carinthia, Partisans and their Slovenian victims	1,500
9. Primorska, unliberated, Partisan losses,	4,437
10. Terrorism by the VOS in Primorska, Primorska Homeguards	950

The sum total is given as **72,742 deaths**. However, **still more victims must be added** to this figure: at least **15,000** of those **drafted by force into the German Army** who were killed in action; plus the Slovenians from Carinthia who were drafted into the German Army and killed in action; plus the Slovenians who were drafted by force into the Italian or the Hungarian armies and killed in action. The approximately **900 Slovenian Jews** and **2,000 Kočevarji** [Gottscheers] must be added to the total number of victims too.

These figures alone already give a grand total of **100,542 victims of the war and the revolution. For a nation of 1.5 million inhabitants in 1945, this total represents 6.7% of all Slovenians living on Slovenian lands.** Or stated differently, 1 of every 15 Slovenians was a victim of the war or the revolution.

The majority of the victims were in the best, meaning most fruitful, years of their lives.

⁵ P.Urbanc, *Primerjalno-pravna razčlemba temeljnih pogojev revolucije*, “Na poti”, 102-103. The sum total is apparently incorrect.

⁶ Urbanc writes: “This figure is high and suspect; the size of the number is attributable in part to the communist practice of sifting its mobilized ranks to eliminate all real or suspected “undesirables”; however, in Primorska, the Germans did kill at least 4,000 of those who were mobilized by force; the KPS killed, mostly in secret, within their own units or in their prisons in Črnomelj, at least 6,000 of its own Partisans, OF members, and agents, in addition to those who were executed within their own military units.”

An important distinction

Each person, even the worst criminal, has the same human rights. This is why the death of any person, no matter how unknown and unimportant to society, is a crime against human rights.⁷ But besides simple mitigating circumstances, other factors must be considered, because they represent the essential differences between one type of crime and another:

1. whether the **killings** were **individual or *en masse***;
2. whether it was a case of being killed in battle, or the **premeditated killing of prisoners and unarmed opponents**.

Every sincere searcher of truth can find in this distinction **the basic and essential difference between the KPS/OF and the anticommunists**.⁸

Other testimonies

There are many **personal testimonies**, whose purpose is not to write history or to write a simple autobiography, but to bear witness to the era.

One such example is the book by Metod M. **Milač**, *Kdo naše solze posuši* [*Who will dry our tears?*], with the author's simple subtitle *Doživetja slovenskega dijaka med drugo svetovno vojno* [*Experiences of a Slovenian student during the Second World War*].⁹ A cursory glance at the Table of Contents reveals all that Milač had to undergo: from the attack on Yugoslavia and the first year of the German Occupation to a few months of living among the Slovenian Partisans; from Italian imprisonment and the concentration camp on the Isle of Rab to his journey home and a Gestapo jail; from forced labor in the Auschwitz Camp to an escape during the evacuation of the camp; from working as a hospital orderly in Austria to constructing a defensive perimeter; from almost reaching home to the bitter and brutal treachery in Vetrin; and finally from uncertainty to a new beginning in the USA, where he began his multifaceted participation within the Slovenian community.

His friend, Dr. Janez **Rotar**, concluded his accompanying text at the end of the book with the following significant words: **Too much for one sole life, too much for any race of people whatsoever**.¹⁰

Testimonies-Admissions by Revolutionists, OF members, and former Communists

There is an ever increasing number of books on hand that were written by former members of the Party or of the OF, in which they openly admit that the historical blame for the civil war belongs to some of them, and above all to the Communist Party.

A few years ago the book by Aleksander Bajt, *Bermanov dosje* [*The Berman Dossier*],¹¹ aroused much interest. Only a few chapter titles need to be mentioned: Part II, The final attempt for a nationalistic revolt; The bloody monopolization of the fight against the invader; Against the Chetniks instead of against the invaders; the British demand priorities; Mihailović is left

⁷ Because some countries still have the death penalty, the statement implies that persons who are legally sentenced to death are excluded.

⁸ Nobody would deny that there were some relatively few exceptions, such as the "*Črna roka*" [Black Hand] or the events at St. Urh and elsewhere, but these were instances of deeds perpetrated by lone individuals or small groups.

⁹ See Sources

¹⁰ See Sources, Rotar 1990 and Rotar 1989

¹¹ See Sources, Bajt

on his own; The Communists are in no hurry for resistance... but they are in a hurry for their revolution; The Revolution clad in the sheep's clothing of a national-liberation war; Passive resistance while Slovenia is Bolshevized?

The collaborative work, *Temna stran meseca [The Dark Side of the Month]*¹² also represented a huge turnaround. The tome has two parts: Revelations and Documents. The chapters in Part 1 bear these titles: The Face of Totalitarianism; Killings, Curtailments of Human Rights, Dispossession, Trials, Prohibitions; Prisons; The Party and the TIGRs, the Year of the Lead Bullets, Affair 57; School, Church, Emigration, Immigration; Ideology against the Arts; Searching, Rethinking. Part 2 presents the documents that support the claims presented in Part 1.

A testimonial book of tremendous significance, published posthumously, was *Skriti spomin [Hidden Memory]* by Angela Vode, a Party member since 1922.¹³ The commentary in *Zaveza* rightfully states that the priceless value of Angela Vode's book is that she pointed out two things that are diametrically opposed: the norms of humanity and the ideology of the Party. Her own life proved the incompatibility of this pair.¹⁴

A special sort of book, also a testimonial, is *Od osvobodilnega boja do banditizma [From Freedom Fighters to Bandits]* by Albert Svetina.¹⁵ Svetina, an aide to Ivan Maček, had a high position within the OZNA apparatus and was one of the first who sensed his duty to name the Party members and the Partisans as the criminal perpetrators.¹⁶ Spomenka Hribar wrote about trickery.¹⁷ Exactly what was this trickery through which the Party duped the majority of the nation? "The Party camouflaged itself with the OF, the revolution was hiding behind a fight for liberation, voraciousness was hiding behind a mask of slogans about equality, and while it was taking over the reigns of power, it spoke about how the golden sun of freedom would be shining, but in actuality what came to power was injustice, inhumanity, robbery, a bloodbath. Svetina claims that he organized the robbing, but not the murdering – his only role at this was to organize the sanitation cleanups and to cover up any traces."¹⁸

Three works in 2005

Another recent publication was a book by historian Jože Dežman entitled *Moč preživetja [The Strength to Survive]*, with the subtitle 'Reconciliation with My Murdered Parents'.¹⁹ The book's commentator in *Zaveza* No. 56 calls it "one of the most deeply moving Slovenian books". This is understandable, since the book describes how orphaned children "were coping with the loss of their murdered parents", how they were closing the wounds inflicted by the Partisan terrorists when they murdered their parents. After describing all the individual dramatic accounts, the historian Dežman summarizes what it was really all about in Slovenia during the war: "**When we ask ourselves, how was such an unleashing of violence possible, such**

¹² See Sources, *Temna stran*

¹³ See Sources, Vode

¹⁴ For more about Angela Vode's book, see Janko Maček, *Kako se je začelo [How it all began]*, *Zaveza* No. 56, 18-29; Maja A. Ficko, *Skriti spomini ali simfonija v rdečem [Hidden memories, or, the Red Symphony]*, *Zaveza* No. 56, 92-95

¹⁵ See Sources, Svetina.

¹⁶ The other person, in fact the only OZNA member, who broke his vow of silence already 16 years earlier, was Zdenko Zavadvlav

¹⁷ See Alenka Puhar, *Ukana [Trickery]*, *Delo*, Ljubljana, 4/13/2005

¹⁸ Alenka Puhar, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Mohorjeva, Celje, 2005

as what we experienced in Slovenia during the Second World War and the Communist Revolution, we must come face to face with the political decision that made violence the *modus operandi* for the revolutionary takeover of power. The fundamental interest of the Communist Party was to win the civil war.”²⁰

The commentator in *Zaveza* also mentions two Slovenian TV films that succeeded, at least partially and temporarily, in once again disturbing “the calm waters of the Slovenian public”.

The first film was *Zamolčani – moč preživetja* [*The Silenced Ones – the Strength to Survive*] by Jože Možina. “The scene, where in a clearing of some forest they unearthed out of a hole the body of a mother holding an unborn child inside and a rosary outside, is so moving that it could not fail to affect even the most unfeeling of human beings.”²¹

The second film presented *The Story of Dr. Boris Furlan*, who was talking about the freedom of a free person: to where it can bring someone, if the person is faithful to it. “She brought Furlan to the courts, where the slaves of totalitarian justice sentenced him to death... Wasn’t there anyone who could stop and ask: Wait, wait, who in the end were these people.”²²

Hundreds of explanations are possible, however Historical Truth is but one

It is now no longer possible for a person to shut off one’s senses – especially seeing and hearing – just because the person doesn’t like what he would see or hear.

Let them continue to say that there can be more than one truth, or even countless truths – however, only the narrations and explanations are “countless”! Otherwise one would have to grant that there are multiple subjective truths or individual truths or communal truths. It may be possible that the search for the truth might even be sincere, however such is not the case in this instance. The only excuse they can make is the fact that they were dead wrong about it.

A historical action, in other words, historical truth, happens but once and remains unchanged forever.

2. In Slovenia, the Only True Allies of the Western Powers were the Slovenian Anti-revolutionists

After all that has been said, it must be clear by now that the Slovenian freedom-lovers, who were fighting against communism and its revolution, can in no way be considered collaborators. Just the opposite is true: in Slovenia, they were the only ones who despite everything remained on the side of the Western Allies.

Forms of collaboration

Swiss historian Werner Rings described in his book the instances and forms of collaboration in Occupied Europe.²³ He differentiates 4 distinct types of cooperation with occupiers: unconditional, conditional, neutral, and tactical.

²⁰ *Zaveza*, No. 56, 5. Reading the works by various authors gives the impression that some of them equate the revolution with the civil war, while others differentiate between the two. If a distinction needs to be made, it lies in this, that the civil war was but a consequence of the revolution, but this does not absolve the KPS/OF for starting the civil war too.

²¹ *Zaveza*, No. 56, 1-2

²² *ibid.*

²³ Cited by Zdešar, 92

Unconditional collaboration means acceptance of the occupier's principles and ideals in theory and practice, readiness to serve and die in fighting for their common cause; acceptance of the goals of the occupier (the example of Quisling in Norway).

Conditional collaboration accepts in part the ideals, principles, practices of the occupier and cooperation at some social changes (the example of the "Head" of Croatia, Pavelić, with the Italians).

Neutral collaboration is for the benefit of personal survival; it recognizes neither the political nor the ideological principles of the occupier. Because it is unable or unwilling to influence the circumstances, it attempts to survive the period of occupation primarily for its own good and benefit, even though this directly benefits the occupier (the example of Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands).

Tactical collaboration is cooperation with the occupier in order to hide and conceal the resistance against the occupier. Even though the need for personal survival draws it to cooperate with the occupier, it remains its opponent. Its goals are opposite the occupier's and dictated by various reasons: mediation to stop the occupier's violence and to stop the killing of innocents, illegal aid to those in hiding, underground printing, networks and intelligence, preservation and encouragement of national pride and anti-occupation sentiment, preparation of material for the ultimate armed revolt, etc.

In Griesser-Pečar's opinion, **the Village Guard and the Slovenian Homeguard were examples of tactical collaboration**. A similar opinion is offered by B. Mlakar, who calls this type "**functional collaboration**".

The term 'collaboration' is not even *a propos*

Dr. Zdešar rightfully asks **whether the term "collaboration" even fits the historical reality of events in Slovenia**. For the word "collaboration" has the connotation of morally evil action, thus "treason" or "national treason".

In the Slovenian example of inevitable "tactical collaboration", there was absolutely no betrayal of Slovenian national interests whatsoever. Accepting weapons from the occupier but refusing to fight anywhere else except on Slovenian soil, and refusing absolutely to form as German military units (such as what occurred in other countries, a point that Mlakar explicitly stresses), must be called nothing other than **a legitimate link to the occupier for self-defense purposes without betraying the survival interests of the Slovenian nation**.²⁴ Instead of "tactical collaboration", a more apt expression would be "unavoidable contact".

The views of professor Albin Magister, who in essence concurs with Dr. Zdešar, need to be summarized here.²⁵ According to Magister, collaboration or cooperation can be something morally good or evil, thus permissible or impermissible. If we speak about impermissible collaboration, then who is the entity that can permit or forbid it? To whom? By what right? Any discussion about collaboration would be improper if it were viewed only from a legal standpoint. In actuality the only important way to go would be to evaluate the goals or intentions, a position that shows conformity with the historian Rings. What does the comparison of German goals on the one side and the anticommunist fighters on the other reveal to us? Cooperation (collaboration) with anyone is inseparably linked with the same, identical, or very similar goals,

²⁴ The statement is in Dr. Zdešar, 92; Mlakar's citation is Mlakar, 353

²⁵ These views stem from comments written upon reading the draft of this book; this is an excerpt from an email sent by Magister to Dr. Peter Urbanc.

which in no way are essentially different from one another. **The goals of the SD had nothing in common with the German (not only the Nazi) occupation force.** Thus this is not even a case of collaboration, permissible or impermissible.

The term 'collaboration' has many meanings. The most important – and the worst! – thing about this is that the term actually **encompasses two different, and ethically completely opposite, concepts.** This duality of meanings is, unfortunately, abused at will.

A 60-year-old outstanding debt

At the 40th Slovenia Day held on October 22, 1995 at the Slovenska Pristava in Castelar, near the Argentine capital, the final speaker was **John Corsellis**. Many of those in attendance recognized him from his work as a British "welfare officer" in the refugee camps in Austria. **"He emphasized that [the Homeguards] could not have been traitors, because they did not owe any allegiance to the communists; however, according to international law, they had the right to protect people and property. He stated that nobody was crying "collaboration" for the millions of Frenchmen, or the British who were cooperating with the Germans in the occupied Channel Islands and even doing so according to instructions from London at that."**²⁶

In the Corsellis-Ferrar book, Prof. Corsellis emphasizes that the British government even gave recognition and medals to those who in the interests of maintaining peace and order were collaborating with the Germans in the Channel Islands!

In Slovenia, finally after many long years, in general they no longer speak about "treason". However, they have not completely abandoned the slanderous term "collaborators".²⁷

The Influential Voice of the Catholic Church in Slovenia

The Slovenian Church issued important and by all means unbiased statements about the war-time and postwar events, wherein they included the people who left their homeland in 1945.

As early as July 11, 1945, the priesthood of the Ljubljana Diocese issued a **Memorandum** that was printed on the front page of the main Slovenian daily newspaper of the period, *Slovenski poročevalec*, dated July 14, 1945. When at the end they call to mind "our refugees", they state, that **with perhaps a few rare exceptions, "none of them were driven out of their homeland by a guilt-ridden conscience of having done anything wrong"**.²⁸

²⁶ Zbornik ZS, 499. Prof. Corsellis was quite fluent in Slovenian, however he spoke in Spanish. He presented some of his impressions from his recent visit to Ljubljana; he was amazed that they were still speaking there about the Homeguards as "traitors"; highlighting added by the author JR for emphasis

²⁷ How differently did other nations know how to behave, even the Serbs, whom some regard as "backward" and "Balkan savages"! The Serb community on December 21, 2004 proclaimed a change in the law on the rights of veterans, veteran invalids, and their family members: 174 representatives voted in favor of the equalization, only 24 voted against, and 4 abstained! The members of the Chetnik movement of Gen. Draža Mihailović were thus placed on an equal footing as the members of the Peoples-Liberation Struggle. All of the Chetniks would also be given public recognition, but would receive "Ravna gora" instead of "Partisan" medallions. Thus it finally came to equalization for the members of "the two anti-fascist movements in World War 2". In one sense, with this act, in Serbia not only the 2nd World War really ended but also the tragic attempt at a communist revolution. (See *Svobodna Slovenija*, 10/2/05, 3, 1).

²⁸ See Dolinar, o.c., 17ff.; The memorandum was signed by Anton Vovk, Dr. Franc Kimovec, Dr. Andrej Snoj, Josip Šimenc, Dr. Janko Arnejc, Stanko Perčič, Dr. Pavel Simončič, Fr. Teodor Tavčar, Fr. Ludovik Lederhas, Fr. Dr. Stanko Dostal, Ivan Špan, and Lovro Sedej. – highlighting by the author JR for emphasis.

The Slovenian Bishop's Conference [SŠK] issued a statement on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the world war; it stated that the 2nd World War is branded into the memory of the Slovenian people not only as a sad period of an occupation, but more so as **a period of a great national split and a civil war**. This wound has not healed even to this day. Among the tasks that the SŠK outlined on March 13, 1990 and have yet to be accomplished, it lists: **"To determine the full and complete historical truth about all the events from the beginning of the war till today"**.

The statement does emphasize that **some significant facts did come to light** during this period. **"There is no doubt that the majority of the Partisan fighters, who were operating within the framework of the Liberation Front, went into battle driven by their patriotism and a desire to liberate the Slovenian people**. These were for the most part religious people and had no intention of supporting a communist revolution and an atheistic ideology. Therefore we can state that **the Party exploited their patriotism** by using the liberation war to accomplish a revolutionary takeover of power."²⁹

The statement continues: **"In the same manner, there is no doubt that the majority of the Homeguards also wanted nothing other than a free and democratic Slovenia**. If the situation then ended in a clash with the Partisans, this did not happen because the Homeguards wanted Slovenia to remain an occupied country, but rather because they were opposed to having totalitarian communism reign over Slovenia. At the same time, they of course were hoping that the Western Allies would liberate Slovenia and that in this way Slovenia would be safeguarded against a communist dictatorship. **For this reason, they were not traitors to the people, as all the postwar political propaganda had labeled them."**

The bishops in this statement do express their regret that the Homeguard phenomenon had deepened the split in the people. "However, the **Homeguard started above all else as a legitimate self-defense** against the killings of the civilian population that were being perpetrated by the communist revolutionaries. At an objective and straightforward moral evaluation to produce all the reasons that led to the spawning of the Homeguard, **standing at the very front of the line of reasons is the revolutionist plan of the Party, directed by a foreign hand, to seize power and establish a totalitarian communist regime.**"³⁰

The statement adds that only in this way is it possible to understand the frightful fact that the OF killed many Slovenians already during the wartime, and that after the end of the war it killed *en masse* and murdered without any trials not only the captured Homeguards but moreover in the same manner also many civilians who were considered to be potential opponents of the new communist regime. "This revolutionist violence is what above all else instigated the Slovenian civil war. Today, just as we have cast off the strangleholds of a totalitarian society, we must in the same manner reject and renounce this revolution too."³¹

Will Great Britain apologize?

In 2006 a representative of the Labor Party, John Austin, submitted in the British House of Commons a proposition (EDM 1916) for a statement in which Great Britain would express its

²⁹ How does one reconcile this statement with the words of Spomenka Hribar: "The OF by its principles had no room for the person who wanted to be in the OF simply from a desire to fight for national liberation but objected to the Party's leadership role."?

³⁰ See Dolinar, o.c., 36-37

³¹ For the complete text of the Statement, see Dolinar, o.c., 35-37

regret for its forcible repatriation of 12,000 Homeguards to Yugoslavia in 1945, the majority of whom were slaughtered. To date, 60 British representatives have signed the proposition.

If this statement will ever see the light of day, **it would without exception bring about a shift in attitudes among many Slovenians**. At the same time it would bring at long last international acknowledgment “of the greatest genocide on European grounds perpetrated after the end of the Second World War” (Mojca Kucler Dolinar, Representative from the NSi Party).³²

The end of the Triple Great Evils

Without a doubt, the Second World War ended in 1945 with the military defeat of Nazism. Fascism had collapsed already in 1943. This hardly implies that these two ideologies, Nazism and Fascism, today no longer have any supporters and defenders around the world.

Luckily up till now the world has never come to a 3rd World War, which some people perhaps had been counting on for many years, while the vast majority of people were afraid it would erupt. Almost immediately after the end of the Second World War, the so-called “**Cold War**” began.

The **opinion that World War 2 in actuality ended only with the end of the Cold War** is gaining popularity. If we set aside other issues, such as, for example, the technological stagnancy of the USSR, there is no agreement about **what had the most influence on bringing about the fall and collapse of communism in Europe**: the appearance of Solidarity in Poland and its ascent to power, or the collapse of the Berlin Wall, or some other factors. But everything indicates that the collapse of the wall was but a **visual sign of the implosion of the communist socio-political theories and systems**. This also does not imply that Marxism-Leninism has completely disappeared from the earth, for it continues to enslave great masses and still continues to have followers in many a place.

Communism was in actuality fascism – at least that sort of communism which caused the suffering in Eastern Europe and which even now is practiced in China, Cuba, and elsewhere. The fascism of this sort in the former USSR and its satellite countries – including Yugoslavia! – collapsed under its own weight, in other words, was not defeated until the end of the 1980s.

Thus it is utterly foolish to speak about some sort of victory by the communist revolution in Slovenia in 1945, since it ended in defeat on account of its own complete failure, also since all in all it was from a historical perspective a short-lived phenomenon, even though it had held power for several decades. At least to all appearances the “revolution” vanished into thin air – of course after it had “liberated” the people from all sorts of things, including things that had represented almost the very essence of the people and which should have been left to continue.

The Republic of Slovenia actually has yet to explicitly condemn communism and its crimes. It also has not reversed the postwar unjust trial sentences. Neither has it put anyone on trial or condemned anyone for the genocide and the other crimes against human rights, which have no statute of limitations. As the SPE has stated in writing time and time again, the Slovenians who had to march in the **Great Slovenian Exodus** of 1945 and their descendants **do not seek revenge, but do demand justice**.

³² *Svobodna Slovenija*, 9/28/2006, No. 37, 1. – The author JR doubts that Great Britain would ever apologize; the British hold to the saying, “My country, right or wrong!”

The anti-revolutionists, defeated temporarily in 1945, experienced their long-awaited victory in 1991 with the true national liberation and the state independence of Slovenia.

3. Faithful Slovenians and Faithful Slovenian Descendants

The statements in the following two testimonials, coming from individuals who had the opportunity to observe the Slovenian community in Argentina up close, apply also to the SPE and their descendants in the other countries. Their testimonials are some sort of confirmation that **the émigrés of 1945 were true to the Slovenian people, incapable of committing any action whatsoever against their own people.**

The majority of the survivors of the SPE have established roots in other “homelands”. Thus the fear that gripped Slovenia during the Argentine financial crisis, especially in 2001, was baseless: “that thousands of Argentine Slovenians would flood the country on the sunny side of the Alps”, in the words written by the former ambassador of the RS to Argentina, Bojan Grobovšek.³³

The majority of those who had to leave their homeland in 1945, even those as children or teenagers, faithfully preserved their Slovenian heritage and unimposingly tried to pass it on to their offspring. Admittedly a really large part of the third and fourth generations probably do not speak Slovenian well, or even not at all, however **all of them are conscious and proud of their Slovenian heritage, and their offspring have become leading, hard-working, upright Slovenians.**

At the 46th anniversary of the Slovenian Home in San Martín, **Mojca Jesenovec**, a lecturer of Slovenian at the State University in Buenos Aires, stated in her speech: “One of your characteristics, for which you can be rightfully proud, is that you have preserved much more of Slovenianhood than merely the fading memories by grandparents or great-grandparents...” And she continued: “That Slovenianhood among you still breathes deeply and remains a part of your daily lives, was and still needs immense effort, energy, sacrifice, ideas.” And further: “Those of you who on Argentine soil sowed the first seeds of the future generations and laid the first stones for Slovenian homes, are today probably proud of your offspring, that you raised to love the Slovenian homeland and nourished with the fruits of Argentine soil (...) This was one of the things that first caught my eye, when a good three years ago I started to recognize you: **Slovenians and at the same time Argentineans**, and it seems that you picked only the best characteristics from both nationalities: hardworking, decent, temperamental, and open.” She also stated: “You have preserved Slovenian speech not for years but for decades, a speech that was for many of your fathers probably one of the few treasures that they could carry out of their country.”³⁴

Freedom and independence came to Slovenia just in time, so that today the mother country must help with the preservation of Slovenian consciousness. The former SPE also helps the homeland with ideas and treasures. **Grobovšek** writes in the cited work that those who will return permanently can help clear the air in Slovenia, in the same way that Slovenian visitors to Argentina can help clear up the ideas of the Slovenians in Argentina (author JR’s comment:

³³ *Ramišljanja o Bajuklandu [Thoughts about Bajukland]*, the first part printed in *Dnevnik*, 4/3/2005 (*Vera v Boga in domovino Slovenijo / Faith in God and in homeland Slovenia*) and Part 2 as a continuation (*Kot amiši, ampak iz Argentine / Like the Amish, except from Argentina*); it was later reprinted as a 4-part serial in *Svobodna Slovenija*, Feb-Mar 2006.

³⁴ *Svobodna Slovenija*, May 23, 2006, No. 19, 3

inasmuch as this is necessary and possible). Grobovšek himself points out that the Slovenians back home should also learn a thing or two from the Argentine (and other) Slovenians around the world. For this reason his statements are important, wherein he repudiates their disdainful view of the 1945 emigration, especially the Argentine:

“True, it is actually impossible for one not to bow deeply to the unselfish endeavors of the Argentine Slovenians to preserve the Slovenian culture and language, and for one to also hope to see somewhat more patriotism displayed in Slovenia. Maybe less of the sort of patriotism in national-costume male leather pants and female bonnets [*avba*], and in the blessing of horses, and probably more of the sort that nurtures the Slovenian tongue and teaches that Sistiana is Sosljan, Villach is Beljak, and last but not least, that the distant Bariloche region is a place where some mountain peaks and mountaineering routes were named by Slovenians. Also that sort of patriotism that finds expression in the non-commercial, community-centered nurturing of a superior culture that existed long ago in Slovenia in greater measure than it does today in an egocentric Slovenia. Patriotism that is neither nationalism nor xenophobia.”

Near the conclusion, Grobovšek says: “And let us be grateful that we have a piece of Slovenia over there far in South America. And that we have Slovenia also in many a place outside of our own country’s borders.” These words echo almost the same words as the hymn, “*Slovenija v svetu*” [*Slovenia across the world*].

The piece of Slovenia, that the political émigrés of 1945 knew how to preserve and nurture, passes on to their offspring and is displayed to their neighborhoods in all its beauty with no shame for their small numbers.

Povzetek

Začetno poglavje skuša odgovoriti na vprašanje: **“Zakaj so moji starši, stari starši ali celo prastarši morali zapustiti svojo rodno Slovenijo?”** Nato se na kratko **predstavi Slovenijo in Slovence**, potemo **pa se opiše stanje v Evropi in Jugoslaviji pred vojno, napad in zavzetje Jugoslavije**, predvsem pa **ravnanje treh okupatorjev s Slovenci**.

Ni mogoče tajiti dejstva, da je okupacija v **demokratskem taboru** izzvala **ustanovitev raznih odporniških gibanj**. V skladu z navodili londonske begunske vlade je šlo za tim. “evropski vzorec” odpora: najprej odpor, šele potem oborožena vstaja. Kmalu pa je prišlo tudi do **oboroženega upora**. Kratko je popisano gibanje polk. **Draže Mihailovića**, ki ga je begunska vlada leta 1941 priznala za Jugoslovansko vojsko v domovini (JVvD). Po zasedbi je Komunistična partija Slovenije (KPS) ustanovila proti zahodnim zaveznikom naperjeno **Protiimperialistično fronto (PIF)**, več kot mesec dni po nemškem napadu na ZSSR pa je **preimenovala PIF v Osvobodilno fronto (OF)** in začela z “oboroženim uporom”. Ker je KPS štela **samo 600 članov**, je našla maloštevilne “sopotnike” v **disidentih demokratskih strank** (predvsem v krščanskih socialistih in levičarskih Sokolih) ter zaradi tega trdila, da je OF zadeva vsega slovenskega naroda. Vendar je s tim. **Dolomitsko izjavo** leta 1943 KPS odstranila vse svoje “zaveznike”. **KPS/OF sta si prilastili izključnost do upora proti okupatorju s sklepom in njemu sledečim nasiljem**, po katerem Slovenski narodnoosvobodilni odbor “v boju proti okupatorju edini predstavlja, zastopa, organizira in vodi slovenski narod na vsem njegovem ozemlju” (16.9.1941). KPS je na svojo roko ustanovila **“Varnostno obveščevalno službo”(VOS)**, ki je takoj začela moriti demokratične voditelje in druge vplivne osebnosti.

Smemo trditi, da je do oboroženega odpora prišlo zgolj zaradi nenehnih in krutih umorov, ki so jih komunisti izvajali nad slovenskim ljudstvom. Predvsem ljudje na podeželju so se znašli med dvema ognjema: **na eni strani partizani**, ki so morili posameznike ali cele družine; **na drugi strani nemški ali italijanski okupatorji**, ki so izvajali nasilje nad istimi vasmi in istimi družinami. **Italijani** so že pred 1. marcem 1942 **zapustili 46 svojih postojank** in njihovo mesto so takoj zasedli partizani, ki so te pokrajine imenovali “osvobojeno ozemlje”. Ker okupator ni mogel ali ni hotel zagotoviti varnosti pred partizanskim nasiljem, je prišlo **spontano do samoobrambe**. **Prvi uspeli poskus je bil v Št. Joštu nad Vrhniko** (17. julija 1942). **Italijani niso imeli zaupanja v tim**. **Vaške straže (VS)**, zato jim **niso dovolili**, da bi se med seboj povezale in niso imele **enotnega poveljstva**. **Upravičenost silobrana VS** je slonela na haaški konvenciji, ki v členih 42 do 56 govori **o vojaških zasedbah**; vsa mednarodna praksa za zasedeno Evropo 1939-1945 kaže na take vrste sodelovanje, ni pa ni bila kolaboracija.

Septembra 1943 so partizani začeli napadati postojanke VS s tisoči novih mobilizirancev in z orožjem ter strelivom, ki ga jim je izročila razpadla italijanska vojska – kljub pozivom s strani zaveznikov in demokratskega tabora, da bi se skupno uprli proti nemškemu okupatorju. Več sto vaških stražarjev je bilo zajetih in množično pobitih v Jelendolu in Kočevju. Nekaj sto VS se je zateklo na grad Turjak, ki je padel po večdnevnem obstreljevanju; skoraj vsi ranjenci so bili takoj pobiti, okrog 800 zajetih pa so partizani odpeljali v Kočevje in Novo mesto, kjer so bili na skrivaj pomorjeni, razen nekaj ujetnikov, ki se jim je posrečil beg. V Kočevju so uprizorili parodijo sodnijskega procesa proti 21 ujetnikom, od katerih so jih 16 obsodili na smrt..

Rešili sta se dve skupini: novomeška pod poveljstvom **stotnika Vuka Rupnika**, druga (okrog 400 borcev) pa **z izpadom iz Turjaka**. Obe skupini sta prosili Nemce za zaščito. Odločitev za sprejem orožja od okupatorja sprva ni bila po volji demokratičnega vodstva v domovini, za večino prizadetih pa je bila to edina rešitev pred gotovo usmrtnitvijo. Nemci so se morali v Sloveniji zadovoljiti z vedno bolj trdno kontrolo nad domobranstvom, nikoli pa niso uspeli kaj več: "Tako so **Slovenci ostali med redkimi evropskimi narodi, ki niso imeli 'svoje' SS enote** – kot dela skupne evropske vojske proti boljševizmu." (Mlakar) Vendar se je **rastoči nemški pritisk** na glavno poveljstvo SD zelo pokazal ob domobranski prisegi.

Proti koncu leta 1943 so iz Ljubljane pomagali ustanoviti **Primorsko domobranstvo**, pozimi 1943-1944 pa so nastale prve domobranske postojanke **Gorenjskih domobrancev**. Obe ustanovi sta bili pomembni zaradi učinkovite obrambe pred partizanskim terorjem in za ohranitev oz. obnovitev slovenstva na svojih ozemljih.

KPS/OF se je vsa leta tim. narodnoosvobodilne borbe pripravljala na prevzem oblasti. V ta namen je bilo pomembno **po Centralnem komiteju KPS vodeno delovanje partizanske vojske (NOV) ter VOS** (oz. od febr. 1944 **Oddelka za notranje zadeve, Ozna**). Druga stran priprav je bilo "**revolucionarno sodstvo**" v različnih oblikah. Pomembno je bilo "**osvobojeno ozemlje**" v **Beli krajini**, ki je omogočalo dobavljanje oblek, obutve, orožja in streliva s strani zahodnih zaveznikov. Velik propagandni učinek so imeli **sestanki Tita s Churchillom**. **Zavezniki so zavrgli gen. Mihailoviča in leta 1944 pričeli podpirati Tita**, na podlagi pristranskih poročil članov zavezniških vojaških misij, med katerimi je bilo veliko prikritih komunistov ali njihovih simpatizerjev. Partizani so maja 1945 zasedli Trst in Gorico, a so ju potem morali predati zahodnim zaveznikom. KPS/OF sta v Ajdovščini (5.5.1945) sestavili prvo revolucionarno vlado.

Tudi **protikomunisti** so se skušali pripraviti na **konec vojne**. **Z datumom 29. oktobra 1944** sta katoliška SLS in liberalna JNS podali **narodno izjavo**, v kateri sta **zahtevali Zedinjeno Slovenijo, federativno in demokratično Jugoslavijo in njeno gospodarsko-družbeno preosnovo**. Ustanovljen je bil **Narodni odbor za Slovenijo (NOS)**, ki je izdal razne sklepe (ustanovitev Slovenske narodne vojske-SNV itn.). Tudi naj bi oblikoval narodno vlado, do katere je prišlo 4. maja 1945. Proti koncu leta 1944 in januarja 1945 so Nemci **zaprli veliko število protirevolucionarnih častnikov**, s čimer so preprečili priprave za oboroženo vstajo vseh demokratičnih sil v okviru JVvD. Tako je demokratski tabor izgubil možnost sposobnega in **enotnega poveljstva**. V demokratičnem taboru se je do vetrinjske izdaje ohranilo **naivno zaupanje v zahodne zaveznike**; delni vzrok je dejstvo, da kralj Peter do januarja 1945 ni hotel sprejeti dopolnilnega sporazuma Tito-Šubašić, ki ga je podpisal šele 2. marca 1945.

Revolucionarji so v letih 1941-1946 umorili 79 škofijskih in 9 redovnih duhovnikov ter 16 bogoslovcev med vojno, 54 pa po vojni. Ob koncu vojne je bilo v Sloveniji nekaj manj kot **1.000** duhovnikov, od teh pa **429** v sodnem postopku. **Namen revolucionarjev** je bil jasen: **spodjesti ugled in vpliv Cerkve in spraviti katoliško Cerkev v Sloveniji na kolena**.

Zaradi vdora titovske 4. armade ni bilo mogoče izvesti umika preko Primorske v Italijo in je preostala samo možnost umika čez Ljubelj v Avstrijo. Domobranci so predali orožje britanski vojski ob prehodu čez Dravo. Kljub obljubam, da bodo prepeljali SNV v Palmanovo v Italijo, so **Britanci z lažmi in zvijačami prevarali politično in vojaško vodstvo, da vozijo slovenske vojake v Italijo, v resnici pa so jih izročali titovcem**. Nekaj vrnjenih je pobegnilo in so se vrnil v Vetrinjške že prve dni, a predvsem vojaško vodstvo je sprejelo resnico šele tedaj, ko se je 30. maja vrnil dr. Janez Janež. Izročitev vseh civilnih beguncev, ki bi se morala začeti 1. junija, sta preprečila s svojim obiskom pri maj. Johnsonu dr. Valentin Meršol in maj. Barre. O tem angleškem izdajstvu nad SNV je v **sedanjosti znanih precej tujih očividcev in**

novo odkritih dokumentov. Sredozemsko severnoameriško in britansko poveljstvo sta ukazali prevoz beguncev v Italijo, poveljnik 5. korpusa, gen. Keightley, pa je sabotiral Alexandrova navodila in dovolil načelniku štaba 5. korpusa, Toby-ju Low (lord Aldington), da se je sestal in dogovoril s titovci. Tudi ni brez krivde britansko osebje v glavnem štabu za Sredozemlje. Drugače je ravnalo Državno tajništvo ZDA, ki je 8. avgusta 1945 vložilo formalen protest pri maršalu Alexandru, v katerem izjavlja, da odklanja britansko ravnanje, ki da je v nasprotju z zavezniško politiko.

Še vedno ni natančno znano, koliko domobrancev je bilo pobitih po vojni. Leta 1964 so emigranti v Buenos Airesu sestavili spisek, ki navaja številko 11.750. Mlakar je potem opozoril, da v tem seznamu niso navedeni tisti, ki so ostali doma in so jih zaprli pozneje. **Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino** v Ljubljani je **do konca leta 2005 ugotovil skoraj 13.000 Slovencev, ki so bili pobiti v Sloveniji po vojni.**

Sledi popis življenja in delovanja slovenskih beguncev v raznih taboriščih za preseljene osebe v Avstriji in Italiji. Obširno, čeprav zelo splošno, je poročilo o tem, kako so se taboriščniki razpršili po svetu in **kako so živeli ter delovali v državah, kjer so se naselili.** Skušali so ohranjati svoje vrednote, slovensko zavest, vernost, jezik, kulturo. Pomembno je bilo ohranjanje politične dejavnosti med njimi samimi in sodelovanje v raznih mednarodnih političnih organizacijah. Prizadevali so se boljše seznanjati domorodce s Slovenci, z njihovo narodno edinstvenostjo, s pravico do svobode, pa tudi s **pravico do politične samostojnosti.** Še preden je slovenski narod na plebiscitu leta 1990 odločno izrazil voljo do svoje lastne države, so v politični emigraciji obstajala močna gibanja slovenski državnosti v prid.

Protirevolucionarji niso bili kolaboracionisti. Dejansko **izraz kolaboracija za VS in SD ni primeren,** ker je šlo samo za "upravičeno samoobrambno povezavo z okupatorjem, brez izdaje življenjskih interesov slovenskega naroda".

"Najhujši fašizem je komunizem"(nemški filozof P. Sloterdijk). Ta režim se je v Sloveniji zrušil leta 1990. Zato ni mogoče govoriti o zmagi revolucionarjev v Sloveniji leta 1945. Protirevolucionarji pa so dočakali **začetek zmage z resnično narodno osvoboditvijo in z državno samostojnostjo Slovenije.** Zmago, v kateri v skladu z argentinskim izročilom ne bi smelo biti **ne zmagovalcev ne premagancev,** pač pa **zahteva po sojenju zločincem in po popravni krivic.**

Resumen

En el capítulo inicial se trata de responder a la pregunta: “¿**Por qué mis padres, abuelos o bisabuelos tuvieron que irse de su Eslovenia natal?**” Sigue luego una breve presentación de **Eslovenia y los eslovenos**. A continuación se describe a grandes rasgos la situación antes de la 2ª. Guerra Mundial, en Europa y Yugoslavia, la invasión de Yugoslavia y su ocupación, y, en particular, el trato dado a los eslovenos por sus tres ocupadores.

Es imposible negar el hecho que la ocupación provocó **en el campo democrático casi inmediatamente el surgimiento de varios movimientos de resistencia**. En concordancia con las instrucciones recibidas del Gobierno Real en el Exilio, en Londres, esta resistencia debía seguir el llamado “Modelo Europeo”: primero resistencia civil, luego sublevación armada.

Pronto, sin embargo, surgió también la **lucha armada**. Se presentan, por eso, brevemente las actividades del movimiento del **Cnel. Draža Mihailović**, designado por el Gobierno en el exilio **Ejército Yugoslavo en la Patria (JVvD o četniki)**. Después de la ocupación, el Partido Comunista Esloveno (KPS) fundó el **Frente Antiimperialista (PIF)**, orientado contra los Aliados Occidentales. A más de un mes de producido el ataque alemán a la URSS, KPS red denominó el PIF en **Frente Libertador (OF o partisanos)** y comenzó su “sublevación armada”. Como KPS en toda Eslovenia **sólo tenía 600 afiliados**, se buscó “compañeros de ruta” **entre los disidentes** de partidos democráticos (cristianos socialistas, izquierdistas de la organización liberal Sólkol-El Halcón), razón por la cual OF sostenía que ella era el asunto de todo el pueblo esloveno. Sin embargo, por la **Declaración de Dolomiti**, de 1943, KPS apartó a sus “aliados”. Mediante el uso de la violencia, KPS/OF se apropiaron de **la exclusividad en la lucha contra el ocupador**: una decisión (del 16/9/1941) establecía que el Comité Esloveno de Liberación Nacional era el único que “en la lucha contra el ocupador, representaba, defendía, organizaba y dirigía a todo el pueblo esloveno, en todo su territorio”. KPS fundó por su cuenta el **Servicio de Seguridad e Información (VOS)**, el que de inmediato comenzó a asesinar a los líderes democráticos y a otras personalidades influyentes.

Podemos afirmar que **no se habría producido una resistencia armada contra KPS/OF, de no ser por los incesantes y crueles asesinatos**, perpetrados por los comunistas contra el pueblo esloveno. En particular, la gente en la campiña se encontró **entre dos fuegos**: por un lado **los partisanos** que asesinaban a individuos o familias enteras, por el otro, **los ocupadores**, italianos o alemanes, que ejercían la violencia contra los mismos asentamientos y la misma gente. Los italianos **abandonaron** el 1º de marzo de 1942 **sus bases**; estos lugares fueron enseguida ocupados por los partisanos, que los llamaban “**territorios liberados**”. Como el ocupador italiano, no podía o no quería brindar seguridad, **surgió espontáneamente la autodefensa**. El primer intento exitoso fue el de Št. Jošt/Vrhnika (17/7/1942). El ocupador italiano, sin embargo, no tenía confianza en esas Guardias Aldeanas (VS) y por eso no permitía que estuviesen interconectadas ni que tuviesen un único comando. La legitimidad de la autodefensa se basaba en la Convención de La Haya, la que en sus arts. 42 a 56 habla de las ocupaciones militares; toda la praxis internacional en la Europa ocupada entre 1939 y 1945 nos hace ver este tipo de legítima “colaboración”.

En septiembre de 1943, con miles de nuevos reclutas y con las armas y municiones recibidas del ejército italiano luego de su rendición, los partisanos comenzaron a atacar las bases de las VS. Cientos de los integrantes de VS fueron capturados y matados masivamente en

Jelendol y Kočevje. Varios cientos de las VS se hicieron fuertes en el castillo de Turjak que cayó después de varios días de fuego de artillería; casi todos los **heridos** fueron de inmediato **fusilados**, unos **800** fueron capturados y llevados a Kočevje y Novo mesto, donde fueron **secretamente asesinados**, con excepción de unos pocos que lograron escaparse. En Kočevje, los partisanos escenificaron una parodia de enjuiciamiento contra 21 prisioneros, de los cuales 16 fueron condenados a la pena capital.

Se salvaron dos grupos: el de Novo mesto, bajo las órdenes del **Cap. Vuk Rupnik**; y otro, de **unos 400 hombres**, que por la fuerza se había abierto el camino desde el sitiado castillo de **Turjak**. Los dos grupos pidieron protección a los alemanes quienes los reconocieron como grupos de autodefensa contra los comunistas. Los dirigentes democráticos, en un principio, no estuvieron de acuerdo con la decisión de solicitar armas al ocupador, pero la mayoría de los afectados consideró que esta era la única salida para no ser asesinados. De todos modos, los alemanes tuvieron que conformarse en Eslovenia con un control siempre más estricto sobre los domobranci (Defensores Eslovenos del Hogar, SD) y nunca lograron algo más. **“De esta forma, los eslovenos quedaron entre las pocas naciones europeas que jamás tuvieron ‘su’ unidad SS, como parte de un ejército europeo conjunto contra el bolchevismo”** (B.Mlakar). Sin embargo, la **creciente presión alemana** sobre el comando general de SD se manifestó, en particular, en ocasión **del juramento de los domobranci**.

Hacia fines de 1943, desde Ljubljana se ayudó en la creación de los Domobranci de Primorsko (Litoral Marítimo), y, en el invierno 1943/4, también se fundaron los Domobranci de Gorenjska (Carniola Superior). Las dos instituciones fueron, en sus respectivos territorios, de mucha importancia para la conservación o la renovación de las instituciones eslovenas.

KPS, que estuvo planificando la toma del poder desde antes de la guerra, comenzó a prepararla más intensamente durante la “lucha de liberación”, o sea, la revolución. A ese fin era importante el accionar del **ejército partisano (NOV) y de VOS, dirigidos por el Comité Central del KPS**. Otro aspecto de esta preparación era la llamada **justicia revolucionaria**, bajo sus más diversas formas. Fue de significativa importancia el **“territorio liberado” de Bela krajina** (Región Blanca), ya que permitió que los Aliados les suministraran a los partisanos ropa, calzado, armas y municiones. De gran impacto propagandístico fue la **reunión Churchill-Tito**. Basándose en informes interesados, **los Aliados abandonaron al Gral. Mihailović y, en 1944, comenzaron a apoyar a Tito**.

En mayo de 1945, mientras los comunistas búlgaros y el Ejército Rojo soviético invadían salvajemente a Eslovenia Oriental, los partisanos ocuparon Trieste (Trst) y Gorizia (Gorica), lugares que por orden de Stalin pronto tuvieron que ceder a los Aliados. El día 5 de mayo de 1945, KPS/OF formaron en Ajdovščina (Vipava, Primorska) el primer gobierno revolucionario esloveno.

También los **contrarrevolucionarios** se preparaban a su modo para el fin de la guerra. Con fecha 29 de octubre de 1944, el católico Partido Popular (SLS) y el liberal Partido Nacional (JNS) emitieron una **Declaración Nacional**, en la que se exigía una Eslovenia Unida, una federativa y democrática Yugoslavia y las necesarias reformas sociales y económicas. Se creó el **Comité Nacional para Eslovenia (NOS)** que emitió varios decretos (la creación del Ejército Nacional Esloveno-SNV, etc.). NOS también debería formar el gobierno nacional, lo que se hizo el 4 de mayo de 1945.

Hacia fines de 1944 y en enero de 1945, **los alemanes arrestaron a muchos oficiales antirrevolucionarios**, con lo cual se frustraron los preparativos para la sublevación armada en apoyo de los Aliados Occidentales, en el marco de la JVvD. De esta forma, el campo democrático perdió la posibilidad de disponer de un comando único y capacitado. En dicho campo se mantenía hasta la llamada Tragedia de Vetrinj (Viktring, Austria) una **ingenua confianza en**

los Aliados; esto se debía en parte al hecho de que el rey Pedro hasta enero de 1945 no quiso firmar el acuerdo complementario entre su primer ministro Šubašić y Tito, y sólo lo firmó el 2 de marzo de 1945.

En los años 1941-1946, los revolucionarios asesinaron a 79 sacerdotes diocesanos y 9 religiosos, así como a 16 seminaristas durante la guerra y 54 después de ella. Al final de la guerra había en Eslovenia unos **1.000 sacerdotes, de los cuales 429 se hallaban procesados.** El objetivo de los revolucionarios era manifiesto: **desprestigiar a la Iglesia católica y ponerla de rodillas.**

Como la 4ª. Armada titoísta invadió el Litoral Marítimo Esloveno, resultó imposible el retiro hacia el Oeste y sólo quedó la posibilidad de repliegue por el Paso de Ljubelj a Carintia, Austria. Los domobranci, después de haberse abierto el paso venciendo a las tropas partisanas que habían ocupado los dos puentes cerca de Borovlje, tuvieron que entregar sus armas a los británicos, en el cruce del río Drava. Tanto ellos como los civiles fueron ubicados en los campos de Vetrinj.

A pesar de las promesas que el Ejército Nacional Esloveno (SNV) iba a ser trasladado a Palmanova, Italia, **los británicos lograron, mediante mentiras y subterfugios, engañar a los líderes civiles y jefes militares que los soldados eslovenos eran transportados a Italia, cuando de hecho los entregaban a las tropas de Tito.** Algunos de estos soldados se escaparon, volvieron a Vetrinj e informaron del hecho, pero sólo se dio crédito a esa versión cuando el 30 de mayo de 1945 se presentó el médico Dr. Janez Janež.

La repatriación a la fuerza de todos los civiles debería comenzar el 1º de junio, pero por la intervención del Dr. Valentin Meršol y del Mayor canadiense Barre ante el Mayor Johnson, luego de varios llamados telefónicos a sus superiores, el Mayor Johnson les comunicó que, según la decisión del Comando del Mediterráneo no se iba a entregar a ninguno más en contra de su voluntad.

En la actualidad se sabe mucho más de esta traición de los británicos, por los testigos oculares y los nuevos documentos descubiertos. El Comando Mediterráneo exigió el traslado de todos los refugiados a Italia, pero el comandante del 5º cuerpo británico, Gral. Keightley, sabotó la orden y, a pesar de habérselo prohibido el Comando, permitió que el jefe del comando Toby Low (más tarde Lord Aldington) se reuniera con los titoístas y acordara con ellos que los yugoslavos iban a retirarse de Carintia y, presumiblemente también, que les entregarían a todos los refugiados. Tampoco puede liberarse de toda culpa a los jefes británicos del Comando Mediterráneo. A diferencia de los británicos, el **Departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos** el 8 de agosto de 1945 **presentó una protesta formal** ante el mariscal de campo Alexander, en la cual declaró que rechazaba el proceder de los británicos porque éste se oponía a la política aliada.

No se sabe todavía exactamente cuántas personas “repatriadas” fueron masacradas. Los exiliados en Buenos Aires lograron en 1964 elaborar un listado con **11.750 personas,** pero más tarde el historiador Mlakar advirtió que faltaban los que se habían quedado en la Patria y fueron arrestados más tarde. El Instituto para la Historia Reciente, de Ljubljana, llegó a certificar, hasta fines de 2005, la muerte de 13.000 eslovenos asesinados por los comunistas después de la guerra y sin juicio alguno.

Es extensa la **descripción de la vida y las actividades de los refugiados eslovenos en los distintos campamentos** de Personas Desplazadas en Austria e Italia. Todavía más amplio, aunque muy general, es **el informe** de cómo los refugiados se dispersaron por el mundo libre, **cómo vivían y desarrollaban sus distintas actividades en los países donde se radicaron.** Ellos intentaron conservar sus valores, su conciencia eslovena, su fe, su idioma, su cultura. Fue importante su actividad política, tanto entre ellos como cooperando en distintas organizaciones

políticas internacionales. Trataron de hacer conocer a los nativos a Eslovenia y a los eslovenos, con su unicidad étnica, con su derecho a la libertad, pero también con su **derecho a tener su propio Estado independiente**. Después del **plebiscito**, realizado en Eslovenia en el **año 1990**, en el cual más del 90 % de los eslovenos se pronunció a favor de un soberano Estado esloveno, los emigrantes, en todo los países donde residen, desarrollaron fuertes movimientos a favor del reconocimiento de la República de Eslovenia.

A los sesenta años del gran éxodo esloveno se constata nuevamente que los contrarrevolucionarios no fueron colaboracionistas. De hecho, el término colaboración ni siquiera es adecuado en el caso esloveno, ya que se trataba sólo de “una legítima ligazón autodefensiva con el ocupador, sin traicionar los intereses vitales de la nación eslovena”.

“El peor de los fascismos es el comunismo” (filósofo alemán Peter Sloterdijk). El régimen totalitario comunista se vino definitivamente abajo en Eslovenia en 1990. De allí **que resulta impropio hablar de una victoria de los revolucionarios en 1945**, porque, si bien brutal, fue de relativamente corta duración y fracasó rotundamente. Por otra parte, **los contrarrevolucionarios pudieron comenzar a vivir el principio de la victoria con la verdadera liberación nacional y con un estado esloveno soberano**. Una victoria en la cual, de acuerdo con la mejor tradición argentina, no debería haber ni vencedores ni vencidos, aunque, sí, la exigencia de juicio a los culpables y la reparación de las injusticias.

Summary

The first chapter tries to answer the question: **“Why did my parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents have to leave their native Slovenia in 1945?”** To start, a brief background on Slovenia and Slovenians is presented. The next sections survey the situation of Yugoslavia before the 2nd World War, the invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia, with emphasis on how the three occupiers treated the Slovenians.

It is impossible to deny the fact that the occupation of Slovenia **immediately spurred** the majority democratic constituency to **form several resistance movements**. In response to the instructions received from the Royal Government-in-Exile at London, they followed the so-called **“European model” of resistance**: first passive resistance, then finally an armed uprising. But some **armed revolts** soon surfaced. A brief description follows of the activity of **Col. Mihailović**, appointed by the Royal Government-in-Exile to head the **Jugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVvD, or the Chetniks)**. In contrast to the democratic parties, the **Slovenian Communist Party (KPS)** immediately after the occupation created the **Anti-imperialist Front (PIF)**, its activism directed against the Western Allies. But it was only after Germany’s invasion of the USSR that the KPS renamed the PIF to the **Liberation Front (OF, or the Partisans)** and began its “armed revolt”. The KPS, numbering **only 600 members in 1941** (of a Slovenian population of 1,420,000), was obliged to search for **“partners” among the dissidents within the democratic parties** (Christian Socialists, leftist-oriented members of the liberal Sokol-Falcon group, and others). The inclusion of these “partners” enabled the OF to convey the impression that it represented a coalition for the cause of all Slovenians. However, in **1943 the KPS issued** the so-called **Dolomites Declaration that purged all its partners. The KPS/OF unilaterally proclaimed for themselves an exclusive monopoly in the fight against the occupiers**, and used violent measures to drive this point: in a resolution dated Sept, 16 1941, the KPS created the Slovenian Committee for National Liberation to be “the sole body to speak for, represent, organize, and lead all Slovenian People in all their lands in its fight against the occupier”. Without consulting its “partners”, the **KPS created the Security Intelligence Service (VOS)**, which immediately began assassinating democratic leaders and other persons of influence.

An armed backlash against the KPS/OF would never have developed, had the KPS/OF not assassinated hundreds of innocent Slovenians, with cruelty and without interruption. The inhabitants who lived outside city limits suffered most in the **deadly crossfire**: on the one side were the **Partisans**, who were assassinating individuals and entire families with impunity, and on the other side were the **Occupiers**, whether Italians or Germans, who retaliated savagely against the same villages and the same population. On March 1, 1942, the Italians abandoned 42 of their outposts; the Partisans immediately walked into this void, proclaiming them “liberated territories”. Since the Italian occupiers were not able or had no will to provide security for these inhabitants, the people **spontaneously established their own self-defense groups, called the Village Guards (VS)**. The first successful forerunner was created at Št. Jošt/Vrhnika on July 17, 1942. But the Italian occupiers did not trust the VS, so they refused to permit the VS to interconnect or have a unified command. The legality and legitimacy of the VS had its basis in the Hague Convention, specifically in Articles 42 to 52 that cover military occupations. The entire international praxis in the occupied regions of Europe between 1939 and 1945 demonstrated that this form of legitimate collaboration was the norm.

With Italy's surrender in September of 1943, the Partisans, swelled by thousands of fresh recruits and now equipped with the weaponry supplied by the surrendered Italian Army, began their attacks against the VS bases. **Hundreds of the VS fighters were captured and massacred en masse at Jelendol and Kočevje.** Several hundreds of the VS sought security at **Turjak Castle**, which was taken by the Partisans after several days of artillery shelling; the **wounded captives were executed on the spot**, and the remaining **800 captives** were shuffled to Kočevje and Novo mesto, where they were **slaughtered in secret**, save a handful who were able to escape. In Kočevje, the Partisans staged a parody of a judicial process against 21 hand-picked VS prisoners; the kangaroo court condemned 16 of these to death.

Two larger VS groups were able to save themselves. One of these was the unit from Novo mesto led by **Capt. Vuk Rupnik**. The other group, about **400 men**, had fought its way out of the encirclement at Turjak. Both VS groups requested the Germans to grant them protection, and the Germans granted them recognition as anticommunist fighters. Initially, the democratic leaders did not agree with the decision to receive weapons from the occupier, but the majority of those involved was convinced that this was the only recourse to avoid certain death. Incidentally, in Slovenia the distrustful Germans had to content themselves with ever increasing their overseeing of the so-called Homeguards (SD), but were never able to achieve more than this. **"In this way, the Slovenians remained one of the very few European nations who never had "their own" SS unit, as part of a united European Army against Bolshevism."** (B. Mlakar). But the increasing German pressure over the General Command of the SD was especially evident by the incident to administer the SD oath.

Towards the end of 1943, support was granted from Ljubljana to form a Homeguard in the Primorska Region (Maritime Coast), a section of Slovenian land that had been under Italy since the Rapallo Agreement of 1922. In the winter of 1943/1944, a Homeguard was also created in the Gorenjska Region (Upper Carniola). Both of these Homeguards were instrumental in the renovation and preservation of Slovenian institutions.

The **KPS** had been **planning to seize complete power already in pre-war times**, but intensified its efforts during the so-called "Fight for Liberation", in other words, a Communist Revolution. Key components for this goal were the **Partisan Army (NOV) and the VOS, with all the strings being pulled by the Central Committee of the KPS**. The other side of these preparations was the so-called "revolutionary justice" which adopted various forms. The most important element was the "liberated territory" of the Bela krajina (White Region, in the south of Slovenia), because its existence allowed the Allies to supply the Partisans with air-drops of clothes, boots, weapons and ammunition. The **Churchill-Tito meeting** had a crucial impact. On the basis of misinformation and one-sided intelligence, **the Allies abandoned Gen. Mihalović and threw all their support to Tito**. In May of 1945, while the Bulgarian Communists and the Red Army were savagely overrunning the east of Slovenia, the Partisans in the western part were occupying Trst (Trieste) and Gorica (Gorizia); however these 2 cities were soon abandoned in response to an order by Stalin. On May 5, 1945, the KPS/OF formed the first Slovenian Revolutionary Government at Ajdovščina (Vipava, the Primorska Region).

The **counterrevolutionaries** had also been making preparations for the end of the war in their own way. On October 29, 1944, the Catholic Slovenian Peoples Party (SLS) and the liberal Yugoslav Nationalist Party (later the Slovenian Democratic Party) issued a **National Declaration** that called for a United Slovenia, a democratic and federal Yugoslavia, and the necessary socio-economic reforms. The **National Committee for Slovenia (NOS)** was created; it issued several decrees, for example, the founding of the Slovenian National Army. The NOS also had the task of forming the new Slovenian Government, which it did on May 4, 1945, after a secret meeting on May 3rd of the Slovenian Parliament, comprised of the deputies that had been elected

in the last pre-war elections. During December of 1944 and January of 1945, the **Germans arrested numerous counterrevolutionary key figures**, thereby frustrating the preparations for an armed uprising to support the advancing Allies. The democratic side lost the possibility to have a single and able command to attain this goal. The democratic side continued to maintain its naive trust in the Allies, at least until the tragic poswar events in Vetrinj. Partial cause for this was that King Peter persisted in refusing to subscribe to the agreement between his prime minister Šubašić and Tito, until finally relenting on March 2, 1945.

During the wartime years of 1941-1945, the Communist Partisans assassinated 88 priests, plus 16 theology students during the war and 54 after the war. At war's end, Slovenia had approximately 1000 priests, but 429 of them had been taken away for trials. The aim of the Revolutionaries was clear: **to destroy the prestige of the Church and bring it to its knees.**

At the end of the war, the Yugoslav 4th Army had invaded the Slovenian Maritime Coast (Primorska), thus blocking this escape route to the West for the anticommunists. The sole path of escape lay to the north, across the Ljubelj mountain pass that led into Carinthia, Austria. After crossing the bridge across the Drava River at Borovlje, in order to proceed, the Homeguards were forced to hand over their weapons to the British. The civilian refugees and the Homeguards were funneled into two open-air camps at the fields of Vetrinj. **The British lied to the Slovenian civilian leaders and military commanders, and falsely promised to transfer the Slovenian National Army to Italy, whereas in an act of betrayal and with treachery they were actually handing over all the soldiers to Tito.**

A handful of the repatriated soldiers managed to escape, returned to Vetrinj and reported the truth, only to be met with skepticism from an ingrained blind belief in British honor; the truth was finally accepted when a physician, Dr. Janez Janež, who had been repatriated on May 19, appeared at Vetrinj on May 30. The forced repatriation of the civilian refugees was to have begun on the following day, June 1st, but Dr. Valentin Meršol and Canadian Major Barre interceded at the office of Major Johnson, who then conferred by telephone with his superiors at the Allied High Command for the Mediterranean, resulting in a surprisingly immediate decision that nobody would be returned against his will. **Today, much more has been brought to light about this British treachery, thanks to eye-witness testimonies and recently discovered documents.** The Mediterranean Command had indeed ordered that all the refugees were to be transported to Italy; however, the Commander of the British 5th Corps, Gen. Keightley, ignored this order and, in contravention to orders by the High Command, authorized the Chief of the Staff of the 5th Corps, Toby Low (later Lord Aldington), to hold meetings with the Titoists, where an agreement was reached for the Yugoslav communist troops to withdraw from Carinthia and, apparently, for the British to hand over all the refugees. There is room for conjecture about the involvement of some of the British personnel at the Mediterranean Command as well, including Fieldmarshal Alexander. In contrast to the scheming British, the USA State Department on August 8, 1945 presented a formal note of protest to Fieldmarshal Alexander, expressing that the State Department rejects the British proceedings because they are contrary to Allied policy.

The exact number of the murdered Slovenian Homeguards who were handed over to Tito is yet to be determined. In 1964, the Slovenian emigres to Buenos Aires formulated a list of 11,750 names; the historian Mlakar later noted that the list did not include the victims who did not withdraw but remained in Slovenia in May of 1945 and were later arrested. The Institute for Modern History in Ljubljana is able to certify that 13,000 Slovenians were killed without trials after the end of the war.

The remaining chapters begin with an extensive description of **life and activities of Slovenians in the refugee camps in Austria and Italy**. Much more extensive, though still general, is the **chapter on the dispersion of the refugees throughout the Free World, on their lives**

and activities in the countries where they established new roots. They strove to preserve their values, their Slovenian character, their Faith, their language and their culture. Just as important was their political activism, that was formed intra-nationally or in cooperation with various international political organizations. They endeavored to educate natives about Slovenia and the Slovenian people, about their unique ethnicity, about their right for freedom and **their right to make Slovenia a legitimate independent and democratic state**, which had been the goal of their side of the resistance movements. After the 1990 plebiscite in Slovenia determined that more than 90% of Slovenians expressed their will to live in a Slovenian sovereign state, Slovenian emigrants throughout the world threw in their support by lobbying for their states to recognize the independent Republic of Slovenia.

Sixty years after the great Slovenian Exodus, one can uncontestably state that the refugees of 1945 were not collaborators. In fact, the term “collaboration” cannot be applied at all to Slovenians, because in this case, there was only “a legitimate bond with the occupier, without betrayal of the vital interests of the Slovenian nation”.

The worst form of fascism is communism (German philosopher Sloterdijk). The totalitarian communist regime in Slovenia collapsed in 1990. Therefore, **it is impossible to claim that the Communist Revolution of 1945 achieved a victory**, because its reign of terror was but relatively short in historic terms, and furthermore, it eventually suffered a profound defeat. On the contrary, **the counterrevolutionaries could begin to bask in the victory of a real national liberation and with an independent state of Slovenia.** This is then the true victory, where according to the best of traditions, there ought to be neither the victors nor the defeated, but still the demand for the guilty to face justice and for the victims to obtain reparation for the injustice.

Abbreviations

SLOV. ABBREV	SLOVENIAN	ENGLISH	NOTES
AF	Antifašistična fronta	Anti-Fascist Front	
AVNOJ	Antifašističko veće narodnog oslobodjenja Jugoslavije	Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia	More accurately, since narodnog denotes nationalities: Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia
CK	Centralni komite	Central Committee	top-level executive committee of a communist party.
CK-KPJ	Centralni komite - Komunistična partija Jugoslavije	Central Committee of the KPJ	top-level executive committee of a communist party.
CK-KPS	Centralni komite - Komunistična partija Slovenije	Central Committee of the KPS	top-level executive committee of a communist party.
DOS	Državni obveščevalna služba	State Intelligence Service	The official name of PRIP
DS	Društvo Slovencev	Slovenian Society	
DSSS	Delavska socialistična stranka za Slovenijo	Workers Socialist Party for Slovenia	communist
IOOF	Izvršeni odbor Osvobodilne fronte	Executive Committee of the Liberation Front	
JA	Jugoslovanska armada	Jugoslav Army	Renaming 3/1/1945 of the partisan units formerly named the NOV and POJ
JDS	Jugoslovanska demokratska stranka	Jugoslav Democratic Party	liberal
JDSD	Jugoslovanska socialnodemokratska stranka	Jugoslav Socialist-Democratic Party	socialist
JLA	Jugoslovanska ljudska armada	Jugoslav People's Army	Jugoslavia's postwar army
JNDS	Jugoslovanska nacionalna demokratska stranka	Jugoslav National Democratic Party	
JNS	Jugoslvanska narodna stranka	Jugoslav Nationalist Party	liberal
JRZ	Jugoslvanska radikalna zajednica	Jugoslav Radical Alliance	
JSDS	Jugoslvanska socialnodemokratska stranka	Jugoslav Socialist-Democratic Party	socialist
JSS	Socialistična stranka Jugoslavije	Socialist Party of Yugoslavia	socialist
JSZ	Jugoslvanska strokovna zveza	Jugoslav Labor Union or Yugoslav Trade Union ?? Jugoslav Workers Union?	pro-Marxist
JVvD	Jugoslovanska vojska v domovini	Jugoslav Army in the Homeland	a.k.a. Chetniks (četnik). Unsundered units of the Yugoslav Army. Led by Draža Mihailović

KA	Katoliska akcija	Catholic Action	Organization to foster social work
KNOJ	Korpus narodne obrambe Jugoslavije	Corps for the National Defense of Yugoslavia	communist, former VOS
KP	Komunistična partija	Communist Party	by convention, simply called 'the Party'
KPJ	Komunistična partija Jugoslavije	Communist Party of Yugoslavia	
KPS	Komunistična partija Slovenije	Communist Party of Slovenia	
MVAC	Milizia volontaria anticomunista	Anti-Communist Volunteer Militia	Italian term for the VS. See Village Guards
NKOJ	Nacionalni komite osvoboditve Jugoslavije	National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia	communist
NL	Narodna legija	National Legion	non-communist underground, liberal/progressive groups
NO	Narodni odbor	National Committee/National Board	non-communist
NOB	Narodnoosvobodilna borba	National Liberation War	
NOO	Narodnoosvobodilni odbor	National Liberation Board, or, National Liberation Committee	
NOS	Narodni odbor za Slovenijo	National Board for Slovenia	non-communist organization formed at the end of the war, comprised of former representatives in pre-war Yugoslavia, to take on the responsibilities of the government until the Yugoslav government in exile returned and/or free elections could occur.
NOV	Narodnoosvobodilna vojska	National Liberation Army	
NRS	Narodna radikalna stranka	National Radical Party	
NS-SHS	Narodni Svet	National Council of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs	Coalition of political groups in the Austr-Hungarian Empire that in 1917 created the first government for the newly-created country of Yugoslavia on the basis of the May Declaration. Narodno vijeće (Croatian)
NS	Narodni Svet	National Council	Political caucus of all democratic-type political parties to assist the governor of Slovenia, created in April 1941 at start of World War II, to maintain some legitimate law and order during the invasion. Short-lived, banned by the Italian occupation government.
Nsi	Nova slovenija - Krščanska ljudska stranka	New Slovenia - Christian People's Party	
NZ	Narodna zaščita	National Protection	communist
OF	Osvobodilna fronta	Liberation Front	a front group during wartime for the communist party

OREL	Orel	Eagle	Youth club, physical fitness (gymnastics) and social, right-wing, pro-Catholic. Banned by the Yugoslav reign of King Alexander in 1931.
OZNA	Oddelek za zaščito naroda	Department of National Security	Communist secret police
OZVČPVS	Odbor za varstvo človekovih pravic v Sloveniji	Committee to Safeguard Human Rights in Slovenia	Australia, to help Slovenia gain independence
PIF	Protimperialistična front	Anti-Imperialist Front	communist-led anti-West front (anti-British), before Germany attacked the Soviet Union
PK	Pokrajinski komite	Regional Committee	communist-directed
PO	Partizanski odredi	Partisan Detachments	
POJ	Partizanski odredi Jugoslavije	Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia	
POS	Partizanski odredi Slovenije	Partisan Detachments of Slovenia	also, Partizanski oddelki
PRIP	Predsednikova informativna pisarna, preimenovana na Informativni urad Pokrajinske uprave	Presidential Information Office, renamed to Information Bureau of the Provincial Administration	A bureau working for for the president of Ljubljana Province under the German occupation
SD	Slovensko domobranstvo	Slovenian Homeguard	native paramilitary organization permitted by the Germany to provide for the safety and protection of the people against communist violence
SDO	Stranka demokratske obnove	Party of Democratic Restoration	1st rename of the KPS in 1990
SDS	Samostojna demokratska stranka	Independent Democratic Party	
SDSJ	Socialistična delavska stranka Jugoslavije	Socialist Workers Party of Yugoslavia	communist
SHS	Država Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov	State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs	Oct. 29, 1918 - Dec. 1, 1918
SK	Strokovna komisija	Trade Commission	labor
SKB	Slovenski katoliški blok	Slovenian Catholic Bloc	
SKOJ	Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije (Serb-Croatian)	Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia	Zveza komunistične mladine Jugoslavije (Slov.)
SL	Slovenska legija	Slovenian Legion	Underground resistance – Catholic, SLS
SLB	Slovenski ljudski blok	Slovenian People's Bloc	forum for Catholic organizations in hopes to achieve some sort of unity of goals during the war
SLS	Slovenska ljudska stranka	Slovenian People's Party	democratic principles, strong Catholic influence. Largest and strongest party in Slovenia. Created in 1892 as the Catholic Nationalist Party.
SNG	Slovenski narodni gledališče	Slovenian National Theatre	
SNOO	Slovenski narodnoosvobodilni odbor	Slovenian National Liberation Board	Communist, set up by OF, 8 commissioners

SNOS	Slovenski narodnoosvobodilni svet	Slovenian National Liberation Council	Communist, attempt to compose an assembly of representatives for a postwar government
SNOV	Slovenska narodnoosvobodilna vojska	Slovenian National Liberation Army	Communist,
SNV	Slovenska narodna vojska	Slovenian National Army	created at the end of the war by the Democratic Parliament as an amalgamation of all non-communist fighting organizations (SD, the underground Legions).
SNVZ	Slovenski narodni varnostni zbor	Slovenian National Security Committee	In Primorska, the counterpart of the SD in Ljubljana Province
Sokol	Sokol	Hawk	Youth club, physical fitness (gym nastics) and social, left-wing, liberal, leftist. The sole such group authorized to exist under the Yugoslav reign of King Alexander in 1931.
SP	Slovenski poročevalec	The Slovenian Reporter	Partisan-OF newspaper.
SPE	Slovenska politična emigracija	Slovenian Political Emigration	an abstraction for the émigré communities and organizations that worked to gain political freedom and independence in postwar Slovenia
SZ	Slovenska zaveza	Slovenian Alliance	A caucus for the non-communist underground resistance movement. It included all democratic-oriented political parties, resistance groups, and military formations. It attempted to unify all the various groups by a common program for wartime activities and postwar governance. 'Zaveza' has also been translated in wartime literature by its literal definition 'Testament', and 'Bond'. The connotations are covenant, contract, or agreement.
TIGR	TIGR (Trst-Istra-Gorica-Reka)	TIGR (Trieste-Istria-Gorica-Rijeka)	Slovenian anti-fascist resistance group in Primorska, non-denominational, began in 1922
VDV	Vojska državne varnosti	Army of State Security	Rename of the former VOS; military section of the OZNA
VOS	Varnostno obveščevalna služba	Security Intelligence Service	Communist assassination squads
vs	Vojni svet	War Advisory Board	3-member, superior military officers to coordinate the actions of the underground resistance group; non-communists
VS	Vaške straže	Village Guards	self-defense village militias vs. Partisan marauding bands of bandits. See MVAC.

VSSZ	Vojni svet Slovenske zaveze	War Council of the Slovenian Alliance	
ZDA	Združene države Amerike	USA	
ZDLS	Zveza delovnega ljudstva Slovenije	Union of the Working Class of Slovenia	
ZKS	Zveza komunistov Slovenije	Union of Communists of Slovenia	Rename of the KPS in 1952
ZS	Društvo Zedinjena Slovenija	Unified Slovenia Society	
ZSSR	Zveza sovjetskih socialističnih republik	USSR	

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Tisk in vezava “EDITORIAL BARAGA”, Baragovega misijonišča,
Colón 2544, Remedios de Escalada, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Shortly before the communist takeover of the government in 1945, almost 30,000 of a population of 1,420,000 Slovenians fled to Italy or Austria.

These refugees were impelled by a justified fear – the threat of death: either because they had actively fought against the communist revolution, which was launched under the mask of a national liberation organization that claimed for itself the sole right to fight against Nazism and Fascism; or because from their deep-seated principles they opposed this third Great Evil of the 20th century. Some of these refugees were captured en route inside their own country and killed before they could reach the safety of a foreign border. All those who reached Italy were saved, finding themselves in the hands of USA troops. The behavior of the British troops in Austria was less honorable: under the guise of transporting the refugees to Italy, the British betrayed 11 thousand Slovenians into Tito's hands. All the civilian refugees came within a hair's breadth of suffering the same fate.

This book begins with a description of the communist revolution in Slovenia during World War II, and the self-defense of the people against it.

The book relates the communist murder sprees during the wartime, with special emphasis on the post-war massacres. These wholesale killings were perpetrated in more than 500 locations scattered across Slovenia. These graves contain not only the victims of other nationalities whose numbers runs into hundreds of thousands, but also the bodies of more than 13,000 Slovenians who were killed without a trial. The book next depicts the life in refugee camps. A lengthier account portrays the world-wide journeys of the surviving refugees of 1945, how they preserved their national consciousness, and how they strived to free their homeland from the tyranny of communism. The book relates their efforts to get their newly-adopted countries to officially recognize the independent Republic of Slovenia.

The concluding chapter, "Sixty Years Later", attempts to bare the current thought within Slovenia about the victims of the war and the revolution in Slovenia, and also the judgment of former refugees of 1945 about the communist revolution and its 45-years of dictatorship. Meanwhile, the victims of the postwar massacres still await a single perpetrator to be brought to justice for this high crime of genocide.

