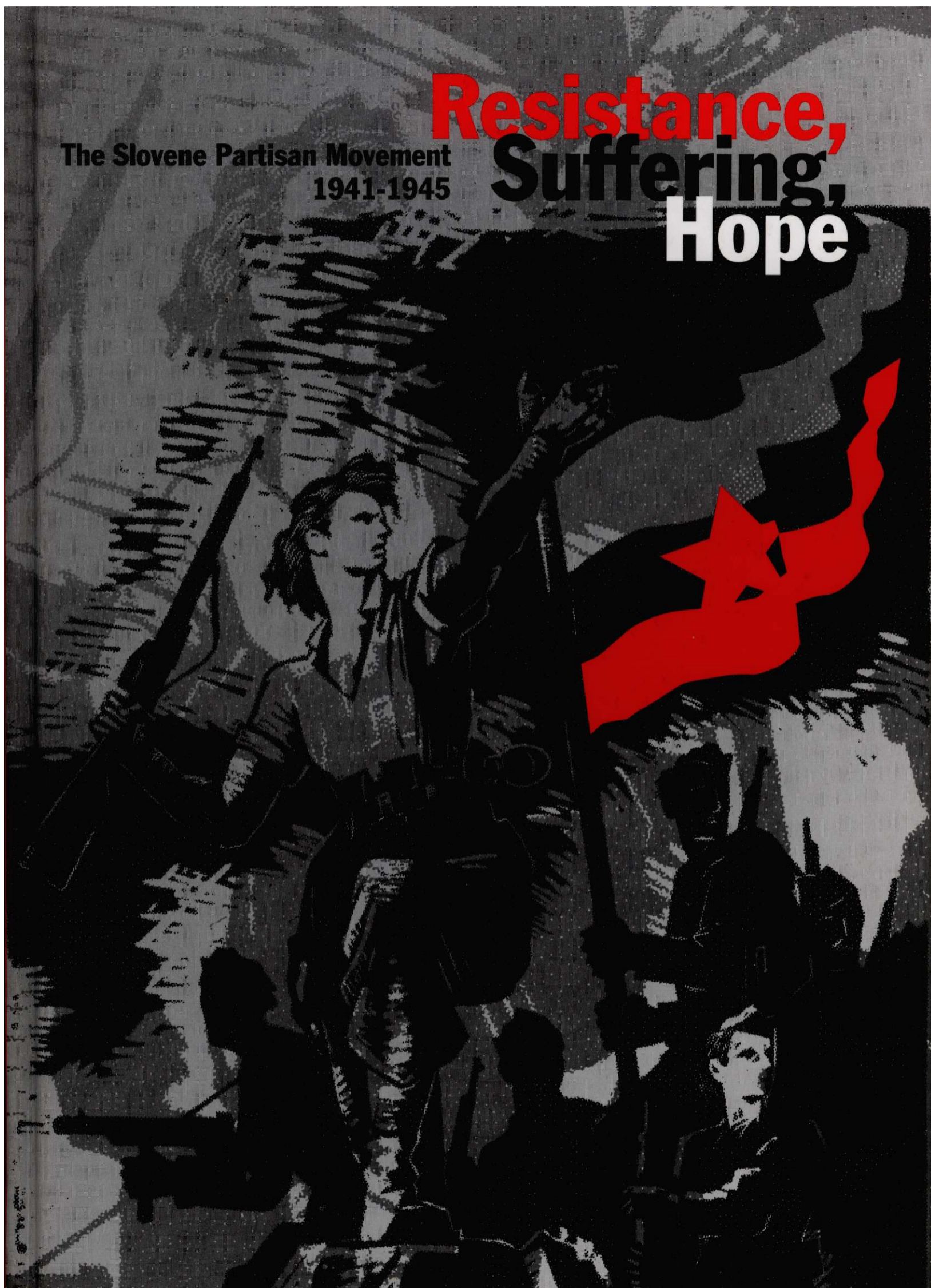


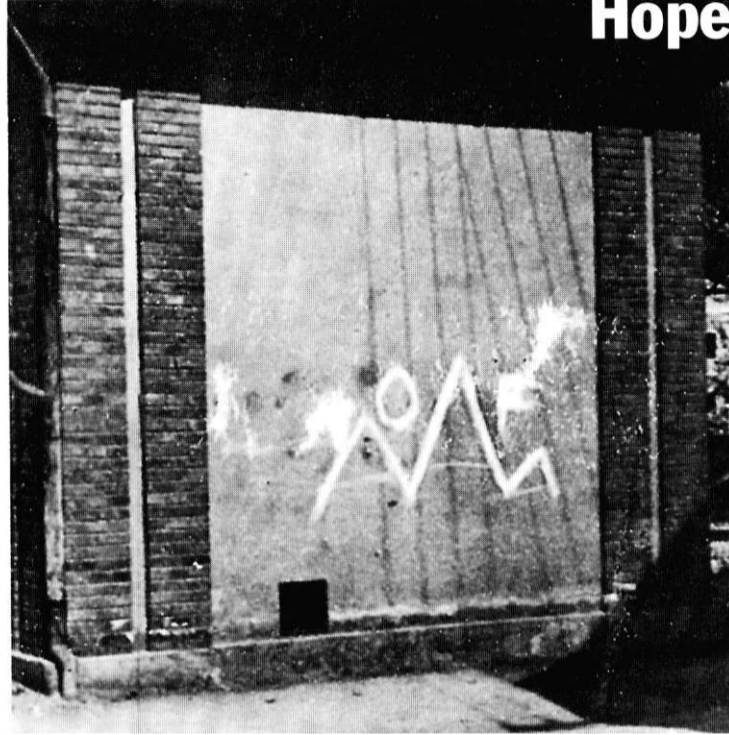
The Slovene Partisan Movement
1941-1945

Resistance, Suffering, Hope



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Nikolaj Pirnat: A Partisan during a storm attack, 1944

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Slovenia's Road
to Sovereignty

Janez Stanovnik



Slovenia - like the EU - is a child of victory over Nazism and Fascism. The principle of national self-determination proclaimed in the Atlantic Charter enabled a small nation to attain sovereignty, develop a democratic government and become a "success story," with a market emerging from a socialist economy.

After the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, a centuries long ruler of the Slovene people became an integral part of the Third Reich. It was only a matter of time before Hitler invaded Yugoslavia (April 6, 1941), in which the majority of Slovenes lived after World War I. As Croatia under the Ustaša regime proclaimed independence, Slovenia was isolated from the rest of Yugoslavia, which had been occupied by several aggressors: Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and, of course, Germany. The small region of Slovenia - with somewhat more than one million people living in it - was condemned to annihilation by neighboring invaders and was, territorially, cut into pieces.

Foreign occupation triggered a spontaneous instinct for survival. This probably had several roots and causes: a reaction to the brutality through which the Nazis intended to Germanize and even exterminate the population under their occupation (the same was true for Prekmurje, the northeastern part of the country, occupied by Horthy's Hungary); a sentiment of shame and anger as the armed forces of the Yugoslav Kingdom capitulated in a couple of days; and finally a revolt against the former civilian and religious leaders who hastened to express loyalty to the new rulers. There were also no doubt ideological factors at work: nationalism, class antagonism, religious feeling, etc. In short, when Hitler was an absolute master of most of the continent and Mediterranean basin, a small nation in the heart of Europe rose in militant resistance.

British colonel Peter Wilkinson, who was the leader of the SOE mission "Clowder" to the Slovene partisans, wrote at the end of 1943 in his report to the British government:

"Since the time when Andreas Hoffer rose in Tyrol against Napoleon, Central Europe has not witnessed such a popular uprising as I have seen in Slovenia ..."

Historiography today generally accepts that the Liberation Front (Osvoobodilna Fronta - OF) started the resistance a fortnight after the armistice with Belgrade was signed. This requires some explanation. It is true that the OF organized the resistance - which spread like a wildfire - but it could not have started it. The Liberation Front was an informal coalition, initiated by the communist party. But the party was at that time "just a small sect" of fewer than 1,000 members, as asserted by Boris Kidrič, one of its leaders. They found allies among the Christian Socialists (dissidents of the Catholic party, who were strongly anchored in trade unions and had the support of the student's club "Zarja" [Aurora] and some intellectuals) and among the gymnastic association "Sokol" (Falcon), rooted mainly in the young, urban middle class, and, finally, among writers, artists and scientist. This heterogeneous group could not have triggered such a "hurricane", as Josip Vidmar called it, of popular uprising that burst out in the second part of 1941. The uprising was mainly a matter of spontaneous forces. "The masses were rushing in to the Liberation Front", wrote Rudolf Smrsu, leader of the military wing of the conservative camp, which decided to collaborate with the Italians, in a letter

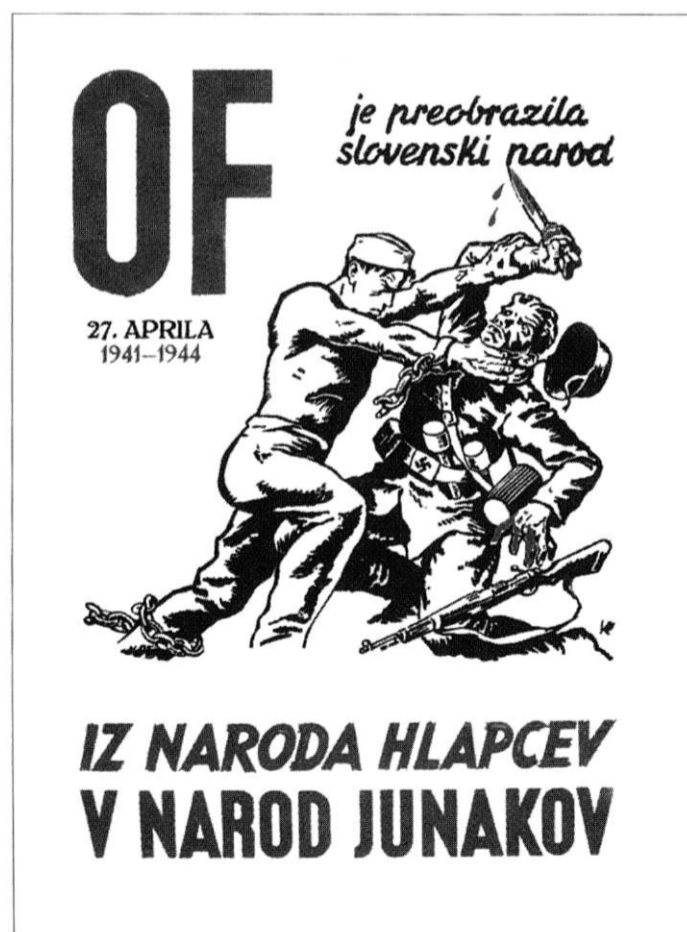
to the Royal government in London exile. The soul of the nation was hurt, to express it poetically, and reacted accordingly. The resistance therefore had deep and wide-spread support at its start in 1941. The decision of the plenary meeting of the Liberation Front on 16 September 1941, which proclaimed itself a national liberation committee representing the whole nation, was therefore a natural first step towards sovereignty.

There are several proofs of the popular support enjoyed by the OF in 1941:

When in Ljubljana on 29 October 1941 a "demonstration of resistance" was called-upon in memory of the first Slovene government after World War I, the streets were deserted and a national flag was flung from the tower of the Franciscan church on the main square. When the Nazis decided to deport the Slovene population from Poljanska dolina, a partisan unit ambushed and killed an entire German detachment of 45. The heroic battle of Drazgose followed, which was the first serious uprising in the territories that were to be annexed by the Third Reich (9-11 January 1942). In the area of the Sava and Sotla rivers, in eastern Slovenia, the German evacuation of the local population was accompanied by massive escapes into the partisan ranks.

By spring 1942 there was a wide-spread uprising in the entire territory occupied by Italian forces. The fascist high commissioner Emilio Grazioli wrote in a letter addressed to the foreign ministry in Rome on June 9, 1942:

"The military situation is even worse. Of the 95 municipalities, our forces control only partially 39 - our army defends just the military barracks and allows the insurgents to enter the settlements. Of 1936 settlements 1900 are under partisan control. Taking the number of population, we are controlling only one third. This includes the capital city of Ljubljana, which is firmly in



The OF transformed the Slovene nation, poster (Vlado Jordan, 1944)

our hands ... when the size of territory is considered, our control extends to only 10%."

Ljubljana was transformed by the Italians into the largest concentration camp in Europe: it was encircled by barbed wire and guardhouses. Formally the town was ruled by the Fascist occupier, but underground a sovereign Slovene "State" was emerging. Mussolini decided on a full-scale offensive and the "cleansing" of the so-called Province of Lubiana, illegally annexed to the Kingdom of Italy on May 5, 1941. He came in person to Gorizia, where he spoke at a public meeting:

"This country has degenerated to the point where the poisoned seeds should be exterminated by sword and fire...The local population sympathizes with the rebels and is supporting them. Before this process of disintegration reaches even worse consequences we must exterminate it. We shall do as Julius Caesar did with the rebellious Gaul: he set fire to the villages, killed the entire male population, while women and children he took into slavery far from their homes ..."

The brutality of the assault was unprecedented. Hundreds of civilians were killed, while tens of thousands were expelled from their homes and abducted and taken to concentration camps. The partisan forces were able to survive due to familiarity with the terrain and skillful maneuvering. The fascist occupier therefore changed the strategy and applied the old Roman rule "divide et impera." He accepted the offer of some leaders of pre-war political parties lead by the bishop of Ljubljana, Gregorij Rozman, who, according to a transcript found in the National archives in Washington, spoke to the commanding Italian general Mario Robotti in these terms:

"We the Catholics are abandoning our previous neutral stance and offering to help you, by doing the tasks which you would have difficulties to do, so that we shall deliver communists to you."

A special police force, called *Milizia volontaria anticomunista* (MVAC) was organized under Italian command. The bishop proclaimed to the faithful in a pastoral letter:

"Fighting communists is not a political but a religious matter!"

Thus the "religious war" started against the resisting compatriots, the majority of whom had been Catholic as well. The bishop of Ljubljana maintained though that all the partisans were godless bolsheviks, because the Liberation Front's leading force was the Communist Party. The membership in the party multiplied by six; bravery, not ideology, was the criterion of affiliation.

The existence of the quisling police force (MVAC) was possible mainly because of three factors:

- the Catholic church and some leaders of traditional parties tried to regain control over the population and to protect their material and political privileges,
- the cruelty of the fascists against the civilian population was such that it broke the will of some people devoted to the Church,
- during the swift "liberation" of a large territory of the Italian occupied part of Slovenia the outburst of the popular revolt, including criminal acts of personal revenge and ideological excesses, was so vigorous, that full control by a nascent local authority could not have been established.

The fratricidal war which ensued has left a scar even to the present and is being exploited for revisionist political purposes.

When Italy capitulated on September 8, 1943, the quisling military units (MVAC), deprived of protection, were easily defeated. Nazis, who took over from the Fascists, organized, in accordance with domestic conservative forces, a new formation called "Slowenisches Landeswehr" - Domobranci: Germans forced them to take an oath of allegiance to the "Great leader of the Third Reich". This compromised the collaborators, who had thus far enjoyed some sympathy among the ruling circles of the western Allies interested in conserving the Yugoslav monarchy. Miha Krek, the leader of the Catholic party in exile, wrote in "Vestnik" No. 10, 1951 p. 258:

"With the oath all the roots were cut, politically and diplomatically, for our action ... It was impossible to make the Allies understand anything any more ..."

The fact that the occupiers succeeded in organizing a paramilitary formation required the strengthening of the political unity within the guerilla movement. This was achieved by the "Dolomite Declaration", by which Christians and liberals yielded the formal leadership of the OF to the Communist Party and renounced the right to maintain their own separate organizational network.

With spring 1943 the second phase of the liberation struggle had begun: internationally with El Alamein and Stalingrad, when the war turned in favor of the anti-Nazi Alliance. One theatre of war approached Central Europe. The western powers demanded of General Draza Mihailovic, leader of the Chetnik movement (who was secretly collaborating with Italians and Germans), to at least start with sabotage actions. He refused, as this would turn Germans against him. The British therefore withdrew their military missions from his headquarters, and at the Teheran conference, in comporment with the Americans and Soviets, decided to support Tito's army, which engaged some 12 German divisions in the Balkans, preventing them from supporting Nazi forces in Italy and Normandy. In Slovenia at the time, small guerilla groups integrated into larger, more mobile units, brigades, and later divisions and corps - the nucleus of the Slovene national army. The western Allies sent military missions to all major partisan commands and engaged with them in several joint operations. After one of these, in which the rail link between Trieste and Austria was destroyed, general Maitland Wilson, Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East cabled to Marshal Tito:

"With admiration I have learned of the latest successes achieved by your units which greatly helped the Allied operations in Italy and France. These successes, particularly those in Slovenia, were of great importance because they have stopped the vital enemy supply links. Accept please and transmit to the units under your command the warmest praise and recognition."

The recognition of the partisan army as a part of the Allied forces changed its strategy. Western airplanes were regularly dropping supplies - explosives, weapons, clothes, sanitary material and medications, even some food - while partisans built two airfields on their liberated territories: in western Slovenia and in the south-east.

The blood-toll of the four years of partisan war was high. A study carried out by the Institute for Contemporary History in Ljubljana, established re-

cently that Slovenia lost 6.3 % of its total population during the war. Partisan units alone had 28,102 casualties, one third of the total victims on all sides, which amounted to 94,012. The losses among the collaborationist military forces were approximately half of those on the partisan side: 14,231, including the executions after the formal end of war. Almost 50 % of all victims were civilians, which should be compared to the figure of 10 % during World War I.

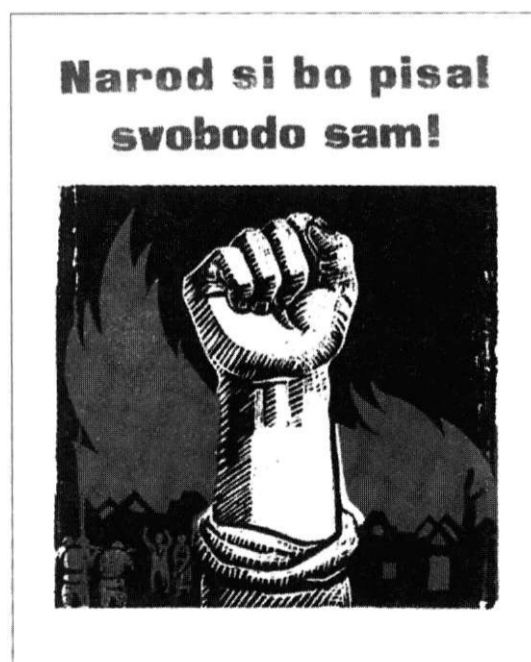
By the end of the struggle, on May 5, 1945, the leadership of the liberation movement nominated the first Slovene government, originating from the armed resistance and in accordance with the principles of national self-determination. All the members of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front consisting of representing of cofounding groups became ministers in this government. Thus the program that "after the national liberation the power in the country will be taken over by the Liberation Front as a whole" was implemented.

Alas, the promises that the Liberation Front would introduce after the end of war "a peoples democracy" and that all questions that went beyond the frame of national liberation would be resolved in a "true democratic way" were not fulfilled.

This led the country into a rather murky post-war period. Slovenia witnessed massive executions of "Domobranci" - returned by the Allies who refused to grant them the status of war prisoners as they considered them "voluntary collaborators with Hitler" (thus not covered by the Geneva and Hague conventions) - massive nationalization including small-scale artisan workshops, collectivization of peasant farms, persecution of clergy, and suppression of the free press and human rights. These events coincided with the development of the Cold War.

By mid 1948 - three years after the war - KPJ was excommunicated from the Cominform, the international "communist family", led by the USSR. A new life and death struggle broke out. Soviet secret police had their intelligence network spread throughout the country, including the top party and government leadership. This was a new "war-time"; true, with fewer human casualties, but no less suffering and risk. The country was saved by the

"The nation shall write its own destiny." (France Mihelic, 1943), poster



"partisan spirit": the fact that Yugoslavia survived is clear proof that mutual trust and patriotism among the partisans, who were now its leaders, was stronger than ideology. The CPY was from its start in the 1920's fully related and devoted to the USSR, the Comintern and Stalin. Now it was challenged by the very head of the ideological empire.

These events led the country into an "agonizing reappraisal" of the ideological background from which the socialist federal state was constructed after the war. The "patriotic and democratic partisan soul" of the resistance - which was subdued during the "Stalinist period" following the war - re-emerged. Within the communist party there was a strong current for "democratization" and away from "democratic centralism". Even stronger and more radical were the pressures of various dissident intellectuals. The west tacitly - and tactically - tolerated Yugoslavia's "independent road to socialism" and "non-aligned" policy. Internally the debate centered on "pluralism" - free expression of minds and creeds - and the introduction of private enterprises, without falling into the trap of crass social inequalities.

In order to "keep it afloat" Yugoslavia received considerable economic aid from the west after the Tito-Stalin split, particularly from the USA. This concealed the internal contradictions in the "workers' self-management system": continuity of the party influence in all major investment decisions on one side and workers' participation in enterprise management on the other. The "opening of the borders" and consequential large-scale economic emigration of "Gastarbeiter", helped public finances of the country ("workers' remittances"), while at the same time enhancing a free exchange of people and ideas. This favored at the end of the Sixties the take-over of political leadership in republics by younger and more liberal leaders like Stane Kavčič, Savka Dabčević-Kučar, Marko Nikežič, and Latinka Perovič. However, when the "old guard" sensed that its power was being threatened, it reacted vigorously: between 1971 and 1972 the young and intellectually strong leaders were removed and replaced by "yes-men". The consequences were political and cultural stagnation, increasing inefficiency of the economy and growing internal and international indebtedness.

This demise of the system - both political and economic - was evident and undeniable. The constitutional consequences for the federation became a matter of wide dispute. At this point, in the Eighties, in Slovenia the democratic/liberal trends from the war and post-1948 period were strengthened by the developments within the country and in 'eastern Europe' in general. The role of the communists and their ideology was compromised by failure of delivery. The critical reformist forces within the party were growing, while some, more radical, cadres, were even leaving its ranks. It became clear to everybody in Slovenia - whether "left" or "right" - that a move towards democracy and the free market was the only solution for the crisis. Not so in Serbia, where Slobodan Milošević took advantage of the prevailing confusion with the clear intention to reestablish a unitary dictatorship in Yugoslavia as a whole. The federal authorities - party, government, army - expressed in public declarations their will for democratization and a transition to a market economy, but in practice they pursued the old authoritarian policy. The liberal trends in Slovenia, developed by the civil society and accepted by the political leadership, were denounced by the top brass in the army

as "counter-revolutionary": the consequences of these semantic expressions inherited from the Stalinist vocabulary were clear to everybody.

In this threatening atmosphere Slovenia was faced with two fateful alternatives: the reformers of the Party - they called themselves "social-democrats" - favored a renegotiation of the constitutional agreement towards a "confederation"; the more radical opposition flirted with "secession". After some polemical discussion, both accepted a plebiscite over the issue. The new majority coalition (DEMOS), which first opposed the idea of a referendum as "adventurous", later strongly advocated it, insisting that the aim should be a relative rather than absolute majority vote - clearly indicating that they wanted to make it their own political project rather than a national one. President Milan Kucan succeeded in persuading the parties that only an absolute majority vote could have an international impact. On December 23, 1990, 88.5 % of registered voters opted for an independent state. This was as strong an affirmation of the will for national sovereignty as ever.

Six months later, at the end of June 1991, the Yugoslav army tried to prevent the implementation of the plebiscite. The brief war that followed was arrested by European diplomacy. The western diplomats and statesmen objected, however, to a "separation" of Slovenia from Yugoslavia, arguing that this would mean a violation of the Helsinki agreement on the "non-violability of borders". Thus a solution was found by Kucan and Robert Badinter, chairman of the juridical commission, created by the European Community in order to help undo the Yugoslav knot: a "dissolution" or "dissociation" of the Yugoslav federation. So the following historic fact was confirmed by the intricacies of diplomacy: Slovenia entered into the Yugoslav federation at AVNOJ II (1943) as a sovereign state. And now, when the former state was "in a state of dissolution" (Badinter), Slovenia could in accordance with the right to national self-determination leave it without violating the provisions of the Helsinki act.

Slovenia's transition to independence was thus made relatively peacefully, and by becoming the 172nd member of the UN the country's sovereignty was globally confirmed.

Slovenia won its sovereignty by saying NO to Mussolini, NO to Hitler, NO to Stalin and NO to Milosevic, and has thus become a member of the EU and today its proud President.

History of the Slovenes

Janko Pleterski

Catechismus

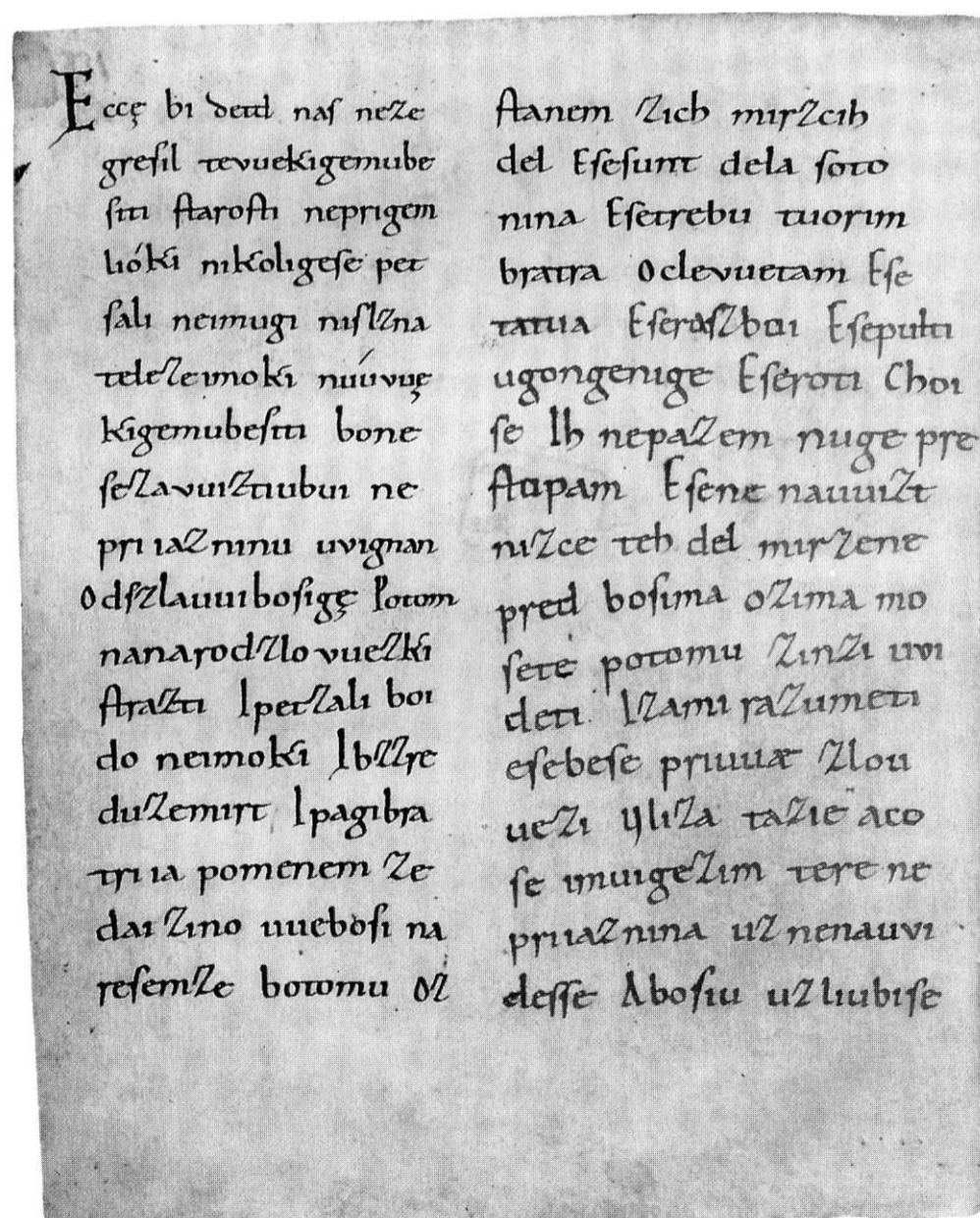
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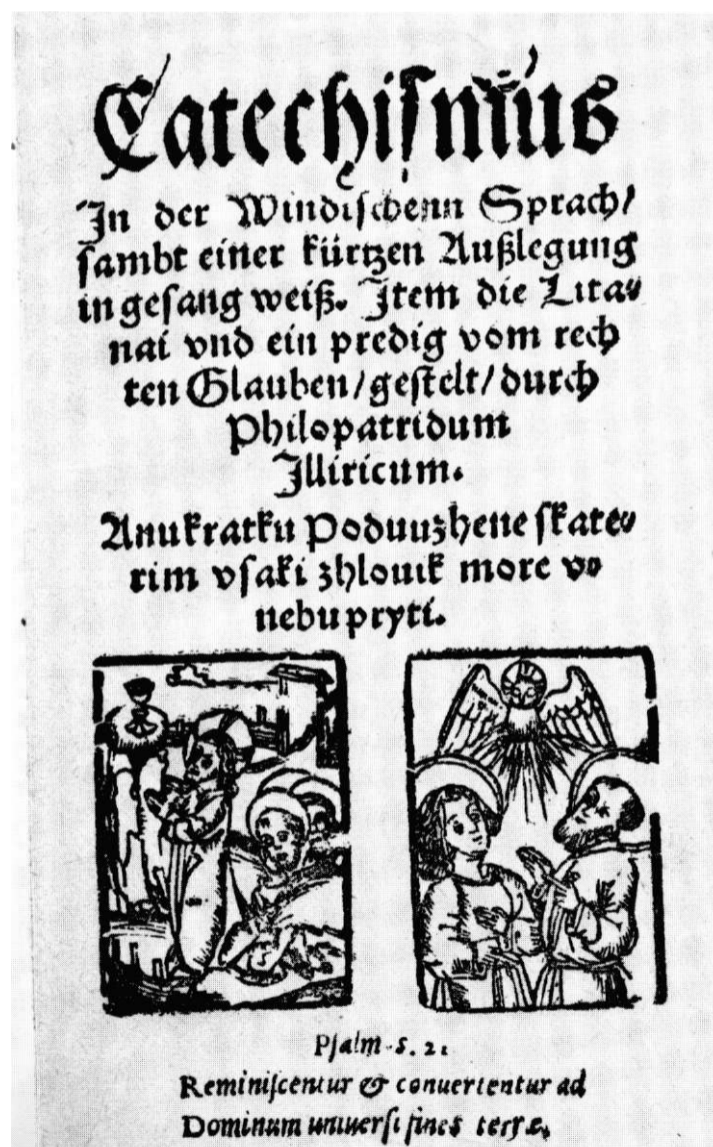
The Slovenes are of an old nation that evolved in the eastern Alps and northern Adriatic region from a millenary Slavic heritage. This was enriched by the influence of the original Romanized settlers and tribes that bordered on this unique junction of Latin, German, Ugro-Finnic and Slavic elements. The Slovenes set the foundations for their present state over the course of many centuries in parallel to broad cultural and political processes that were taking place in Europe. Before the onset of Christianisation, their ancestors had established the Principdom of Carinthia, the first Slavic proto-State ever to be created. Later the principdom was incorporated into Charlemagne's Empire. Christianisation, which spread from the north-west, favoured the production of the first written documents in a Slavic language at the end of the 10th century - the Freising Manuscripts. Christianity also took root under the south-western influence of the Patriarchate of Aquileia lying at the head of the Adriatic. Charlemagne eventually established a demarcation line between both spheres of influence along the central watercourse of the Slavic world of the time, the Drava river.

For centuries, the Alpine Slavs remained divided among Habsburg and Hungarian regions, as well as the Venetian Republic. The first modern political movement came with the spate of uprisings of peasants and town dwell-

The emergence of the Slovene nation at the crossroads of the Pannonian, Alpine and Mediterranean cultures: The Freising Manuscripts were the first writings in Slovene (9th c.)



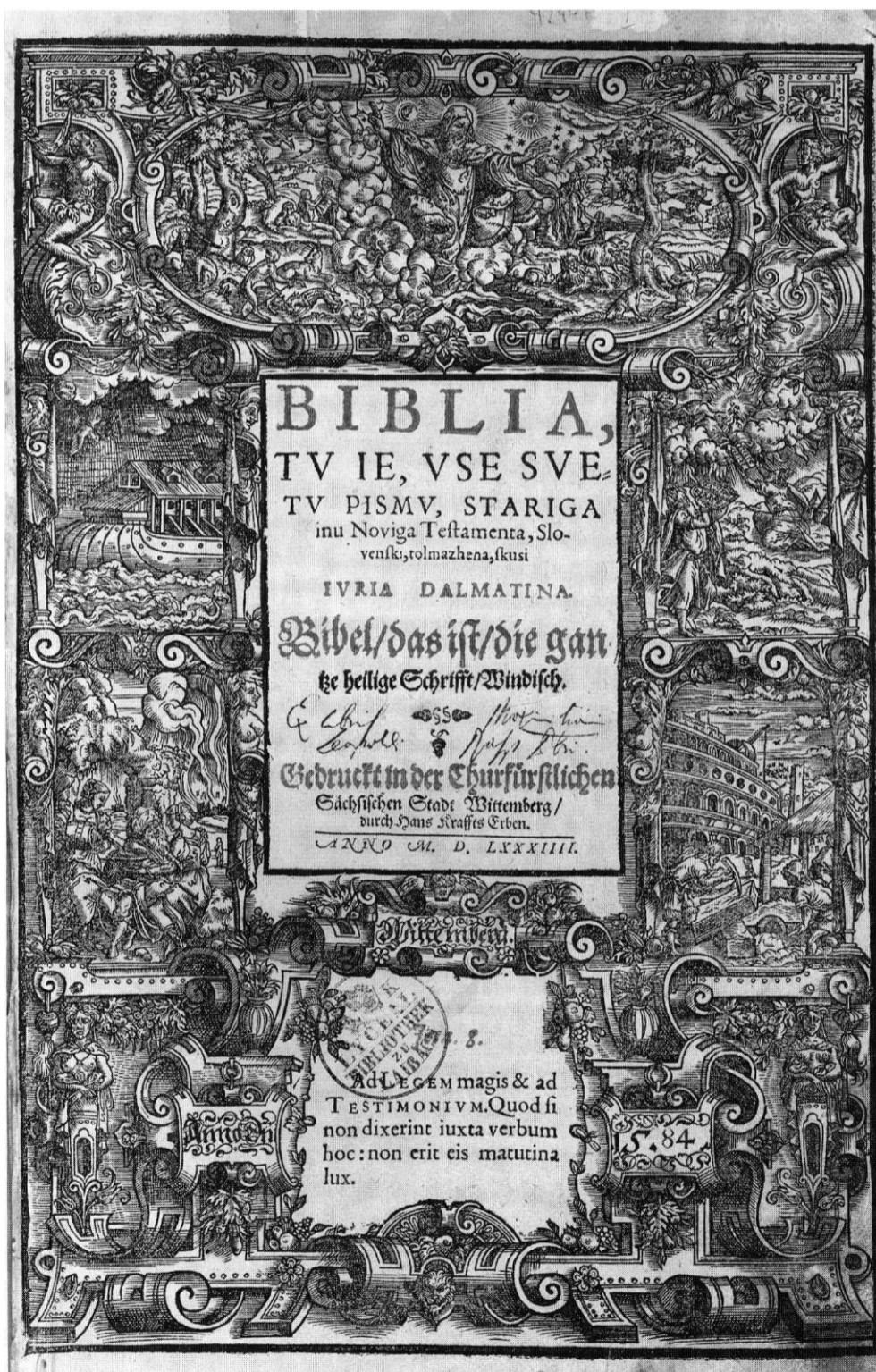
ers, provoked by the exploitation of local feudal lords and by Turkish incursions. A leaflet, written 1515 in German, declaring the triumph of the former over the Slovene peasantry in Carniola, was the first printed use of individual words in their idiom. Only a generation later (1550) the Reformation instilled the Slovenes with enough strength to develop their own literary language. This task was undertaken by Primož Trubar. He was also the first to use in the introduction to *Catechism*, his first book, the term "Slovene". This process culminated in translation and publication of the Bible (Jurij Dalmatin) and about fifty other books. By the time the Counter-Reformation triumphed across the Habsburg dominions, the Slovene literary language had already taken root, and the Catholic ecclesiastical elite aptly adopted it throughout the entire territory. What is more, the Church even took it upon itself to expand the repertoire of Slovene literary production. Under the influence of Jansenism, a religious doctrine that reiterated the demand for reliance on the Bible, the modern national consciousness surged to the forefront at the dawn of the Enlightenment (Marko Pohlin's *Grammar*, 1768). Following the birth of the first Slovene political programme during the Revolution of 1848 - the union of the divided nation into one political entity - its opponents accused the authors of this audacious project of trying to constitute a nation solely on the basis of a "Magna Charta of some grammar", with no historical right to support their requests.



Primož Trubar: *Catechismus*, Tübingen 1550. The Slovene Protestant and Reformer had to spend the major part of his life abroad. His *Catechismus* and *Primer* (*Abecedarium*), the first two Slovene books by which he laid the foundations of the standard Slovene language, were published in Tübingen. In the 16th century, Slovene Protestants published around 50 books.

Nevertheless, the foundations for the nation's rise had already been set. They were consolidated almost in parallel to the industrial revolution that was taking place in Europe in the second part of the 19th century. However, a considerable amount of time still had to elapse before the Slovenes managed to free themselves from the snares of the multiethnic Habsburg monarchy. The latter, while pursuing its path towards modern centralisation, according to western European models, was overtaken by the assertion in public life of languages spoken by the socially inferior population. This phenomenon, long concealed and contrasted, eventually grew into a decisive factor in spite of the Viennese government that, after the introduction of the constitutional life in the 1860s, passed into the hands of German liberals. In the name of

The front cover of the first Slovene translation of the Bible published in 1584 in Wittenberg by Jurij Dalmatin



"progress" they exploited their power for the purpose of systematic Germanisation to the detriment of their Slavic subjects.

Special emphasis in this process should be attached to the Catholic Church, which retained its supra-territorial character and emerged as a key protagonist in the development of peripheral, national "revivals" following the French Revolution. Once it set itself in opposition to German liberalism and nationalism, the Catholic Church, moreover, became the promoter of Slovene national consciousness. Its social and cultural activity, also aiming at "the child of Liberalism" - i.e., socialism - formed a sturdy Slovene civil society and at the same time subjugated it. Those segments of the society that were influenced by lay ideological currents remained in the minority until the period between the World Wars.

In 1846 the Slovene ethnic territory had a population of approximately 1,330,000. This number included 73,000 German or Italian speaking inhabitants, who mostly lived in urban areas (bourgeoisie, officials, nobility), not to mention the Hungarians in the area between the Mura and Raba rivers. Due to the electoral law, based on census, this segment of the population exerted a political influence that was disproportionate to their numbers.

Austria awaited the introduction of the universal and equal (male) suffrage for the Vienna Parliament in 1907. Only then did the Slovenes obtain a fair representation - 24 deputies - in an Assembly of 516 (the Slavs had 259 MPs and thus one more than half.) Nevertheless, owing to the distribution of constituencies, the Germans retained around 10 percent more deputies than they should have had in correlation to their number. At lower levels, in regions and municipalities, the so-called curial system, based on the census, remained in vigorous form.

Given the predominantly agrarian population, the Catholic camp was the major Slovene political and cultural force before WWI. Following the introduction of universal suffrage for the Vienna Parliament, Ljubljana was the only major city in which the liberals were able to win majority support. In Trieste the Slovene socialists crucially assisted their Italian comrades in securing all positions in the city itself, while the neighbouring constituencies elected a liberal Slovene. From the point of view of modernisation, the central issue of the Slovene society was whether it would be able to reach a comparable level of secularisation to that of other Middle European nations. This question was all the more significant given that politically engaged Catholics doggedly pursued the thesis stating: "Slovenia is ours. The liberals are free to either acknowledge that or undergo Germanisation, whereas the Socialists are evidently international by their own recognition." However, it was this partial democratisation that for the first time in history charted on the map of Imperial Austria the territory that largely coincided with that of "United Slovenia". Yet, the prospects to achieving this objective under the Habsburgs were bleak.

Most of the Slovenes were literate (in the Monarchy they lagged behind only the Germans, Czechs and Italians in 1910). However, the implementation of provincial languages in schools, offices, courts and public life, granted by law, depended on the distribution of power in municipal councils. It was for this reason that, until World War I, Slovene was more widely introduced as the language of instruction in Carniola than in other regions, although Slov-

ene education had made considerable progress in Lower Styria, especially in the countryside, and in the Primorska (Gorizia, for example, had a Slovene municipal school, but Trieste did not). The situation in Carinthia was worse: the language in the so-called "utruquist" schools was Slovene only in the first and, at best, second grades, thereafter exclusively German. At the onset of the 20th century all elementary schools in Carniola were Slovene, save in the Kočevje district, Bela peč and Ljubljana, where schools were also German. In Slovene schools German language was compulsory and vice versa, but German schools implemented this policy less consistently. In the frame of this battle for the minds Germans enhanced their educational efforts by establishing in 1880 a private School Association (*Deutscher Schulverein*), which created a network of kindergartens and elementary schools with the aim of spreading their language and culture in ethnically mixed areas. Rising in opposition to it were the Society of St. Cyril and Methodius (*Družba Sv. Cirila in Metoda*) and the Slovene Guard (*Slovenska straža*). The language of instruction was often subject to embittered political debates; the introduction of Slovene parallel classes in the Celje grammar school in 1895 even caused the fall of the central government.

The population census in 1910 confirmed the negative demographic trend of the Slovene territory, perceived by some contemporary observers as "the agony of the nation". It was generated by the agrarian crisis in the 19th century, which triggered massive emigration across the Atlantic and which placed Slovenia second only to Ireland. On the other hand, statistics confirmed that the traditional backwardness of the Slovene territory in relation to German areas was not diminishing; quite to the contrary. Such trends only further stressed the Monarchy's traditional characteristic, which was most painful for the Slovene nation: it was composed of historical regions within whose borders merely one third of the Slovene population was granted a certain autonomy, with the rest being condemned to remain a minority under German or Italian rule.

Irrespective, it should be said that a majority of the Slovene politicians persevered in the hope of improving the situation within the existing state, although constitutionally reconstructed. It was only at the end of World War I that the Slovenes almost unanimously pressed for the recognition of their nation as a sovereign entity and began emphasising their right to self-determination. The Emperor Charles I himself finally spoke on this matter on 16th October 1918, but by then his statement hardly sufficed for a relatively peaceful disintegration of the multinational Monarchy.

During the early years of the war all forms of political life were suspended and the alleged or true opponents of the Monarchy ruthlessly persecuted. A number of Slovenes were imprisoned and sentenced to death. After the parliament was reconvened in May 1917 by the new sovereign, following the death of Franz Joseph, the Slovenes developed a broad political movement, the only one of its kind in Austria, for the recognition of the nation's unity and autonomy.

In late October 1918, their MPs joined with the representatives of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in establishing the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, which later united with Serbia into a Yugoslav Kingdom. At the same time they experienced bitter disappointment at the Paris Peace Conference.

Whereas the main part of the nation managed to remain within the borders of the new state, the most vital, western part of the Slovene territory was awarded to Italy, while southern Carinthia was lost to Austria by a plebiscite. With the advent of Fascism, the Slovenes in Italy faced a surge of unprecedented violence, which soon forced them to respond with armed resistance accompanied by mass emigration, in particular of lay intelligentsia. In Austria the authorities decided to settle the Slovene question by Germanisation, based on the reproach of disloyalty to their Carinthian homeland. After 1938 Nazism further imbued this deliberation with enhanced brutality.

The Yugoslav state was of paramount importance for the Slovenes, regardless of Belgrade's pronounced centralism. The entire educational system, including the newly established university, was based on their language. In all structures of public life, economy and culture in particular, Slovene became the medium of pulsating creativity and civic progress. This change restored the self-confidence of the people, even though the central government promoted the idea of state unity on the French model that posed a major obstacle to strengthening the nation's identity. In economic terms, the Slovene moved into a favourable position of the most advanced element in relation to the less developed Balkan regions. In the absence of such rejuvenated self-confidence it would later be almost impossible to conceive their resistance against the Fascist and Nazi invaders. A crucial role in building the Slovene consensus on establishing a new state was also played by the belief that Yugoslavia was the only opportunity to recover the Primorska and eventually other lost territories.

The first parliamentary elections in Yugoslavia that were held in 1920 attract historians' attention still today, mainly due to the fact that the "Catholic" People's Party obtained no more than one third of votes (36.1%), with the other two thirds equally distributed between the liberals and the socialists. Based on this result the landscape of Slovenia in terms of secularism became almost equal to that of Austria after the first parliamentary elections just one year earlier. The experience of World War I had clearly left its mark on the Slovenes as well, while the new state allowed for a more liberal expression. Somewhat surprisingly, however, later elections restored the Slovene political landscape to its former appearance. This could be ascribed to specific conditions in Yugoslavia under which the Catholic party, after having made several quite contradictory shifts during the crisis of the kingdom in the Twenties and early Thirties, regained the prevailing influence. But it was by then only apparent, even though the "Clericals" assumed authoritarian control over the Dravska Banovina (as Slovenia was called) in 1935. Despite its surface appearance, the level of secularism in society revealed the continuation of the trend in 1920, even though it was now concealed by the electoral system.

By the late 1930s, the influence of the few Slovene communists, compelled since 1921 to work clandestinely, came to be noticed by the Christian Socialists and other political and intellectual groups. This, however, added fuel to the radicalism within the orthodox Catholic ranks. In the last years before the war, they raised their rumbling voice against socialism, which they strove to drive out of the nation, in the same way as they had once tried to stamp out liberal Catholicism - *pestis perniciosissima*. Now they aimed their

fire at the Communist Party and, even more so, at individuals within their own camp who had different opinions on the national question, conception of man, his freedom, ethical and social issues. Amid such an atmosphere, the diversity of views did not lead to dialogue but rather an exclusivist policy, which caused an irreversible split in the Catholic camp.

Yet, regardless of these developments, the secularized segment of the Slovene society remained politically and ideologically fragmented, in need of a unifying incentive. The latter did not arrive until the state had collapsed in the wake of enemy attack (April 6th, 1941). The dominant Catholic Party firmly entrenched itself in the view that it should put, by any means and at any cost, "organised atheism" to an end. Thus it rejected every possibility of becoming the promoter or at least participant in the struggle against the occupier. The Catholic Party was well aware that it was no longer possible to shut the communists and the entire left wing out from the all-national movement. Therefore it excluded the idea of resistance from its agenda as early as on the eve of the Axis attack on Yugoslavia. Its two ministers in the government communicated to the Germans in utmost secrecy that they were seeking a different way out for Slovenia instead of sharing their demise with the Serbs in collaboration with the Third Reich. They proposed two possibilities: either an autonomous Slovenia or a state consisting of Slovenia and Croatia, both under the Fiihrer's patronage.

The German and Italian occupying authorities arrogantly refused such an attempt. The calculation that the Slovenes could survive like some Jonas in the belly of a giant fish fell through. Nevertheless the People's Party leadership persevered in the conviction that they should perceive any form of resistance as evil that precluded them from achieving the most vital objective: expulsion of the eschatological domestic rival from the nation, which was to remain in their possession, even in death.

In view of such assessments, which stemmed from a totalitarian spirit, some Slovenes opted to collaborate with the Fascists and the Nazis against the Liberation Front and to persist in this until the end of the war. They thus cooperated with the destroyers of their own nation, which is one of the paradoxes of modern European history. During the course of World War II, this act placed them on the side of the Axis Powers.

What is most important for both the past and the future is that the Slovenes from 1941 to 1945 developed a resistance to the occupying armies that was disproportionately strong and essentially independent in relation to their number and military tradition - a resistance that grew by its own force into a four-year liberation struggle throughout the entire national territory. The assault concerted by the Axis Powers against Slovenia violated the norms of international laws of war. For instance, Nazi retaliation against the Slovenes for their self-determination in 1918, which entailed a long series of brutal measures, targeting even the priests as its promoters. It was precisely these actions that Vatican diplomats referred to in summer 1941 when cautioning the Catholics in the US and all nations under attack to mitigate the Papal prohibition of collaboration with the communists in defending their homelands from Hitler. No less retaliatory was the conduct of Hungarian Fascists, while Italians - having nothing conceivable to retaliate for - first saw to the annexation of the occupied Slovene territory. What is likewise worth mentioning

is that this decision was accompanied by the barbaric pulling down of the monuments of two Yugoslav kings in Ljubljana. This was an unprecedented act of savagery the aim of which was to scornfully deny the statehood of the occupied people. The Axis Powers pushed weapons into the arms of "peace-loving peasants" (as the Slovenes were called in 1848) and their brutality legitimized their rise in resistance. International laws of war cannot provide justification to either the occupiers or their collaborators - no matter how hard the latter are trying today to describe their actions as well-founded.

For the Slovenes this was a period of extreme risk and fateful decisions that were of central importance for the nation's existence. The question whether the struggle's aftermath would more likely resemble the English "Glorious Revolution" or the Russian October Revolution, was treated in the light of numerous factors stemming from both the past and the ongoing wartime events. At this point it should be reiterated that the Slovene nation was not granted the right to self-determination and unification as something self-evident. Quite the opposite, during World War II it had to exert all its strength to secure it again. And, just as much as the countries disputing over the chief culprit of World War I were eventually unanimous that it was not Belgium that had attacked Germany, the following truth might prevail in the ongoing dispute among the Slovenes about the chief culprit of the revolutionary wake generated by World War II: the collaboration of some Slovenes with Fascist aggressors could clearly have not contributed anything to mankind, and even less to a democratic outcome of the struggle.

During World War II the Liberation Front set the foundations for the Slovene republic, which obtained the Primorska and an outlet to the sea in Istria, east of Trieste. In a federation with other Southern Slavs, it was a state with a constitutionally granted right to self-determination and secession. The Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia charted a different development from that of the USSR and other related states, both in international relations and the formulation of its self-management system. The most serious obstacle that ultimately sealed the failure of this project was the persistent exclusion, even in constitutional terms, of democracy from political life. However, in the post-war decades the Socialist Republic of Slovenia marked a significant rise and transformation in cultural, economic, social, state and political terms. It was already in the 1950s that Slovenia consciously embraced influences from the West, opening its borders with Italy and the Republic of Austria. Despite restrictions aiming at publications of Slovene opposition from the other side of the border and particularly from political emigrants, the brisk personal traffic pushed into oblivion the Iron Curtain, which had divided Europe in two in 1946. The Slovenes and other Yugoslav nations quickly and effectively wrenched themselves free from the grip of the Cold War. In 1948 they resisted Stalin's Cominform; in August 1954 they signed the Balkan Pact on political and economic cooperation with Greece and Turkey; and in October 1954 they concluded with Great Britain, the USA and Italy an agreement on the division of the Free Territory of Trieste. In 1955 Yugoslavia acceded to the State Treaty on the Restoration of Independent and Democratic Austria, and by signing the Belgrade Declaration that same year normalised its relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of independence. In September 1961 the first conference of the Non-Aligned Nations took place in Belgrade,

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to which the Slovenes were deeply committed. In 1968 they extended unanimous support for the "Prague Spring" and - in order to prevent a possible Soviet aggression - the establishment of the Republican Territorial Defence, which constituted the origin of their own armed forces. The new constitution of 1974 reiterated the right of the Yugoslav nations to self-determination and recognised the precedence of republican over federal laws as a prerequisite for consensual decision-making on common issues. On November 10, 1975 Yugoslavia signed a series of agreements with Italy in Osimo concerning the final confirmation of the state border, transport and economic cooperation.

Imbued with intellectual tradition from the times of the national rise, the spirit of the resistance in World War II as well as the impulses of the post-war democratic world, Slovenia throughout all these years worked its way towards an all-national agreement in favour of democracy which finally materialised in State independence in 1991.

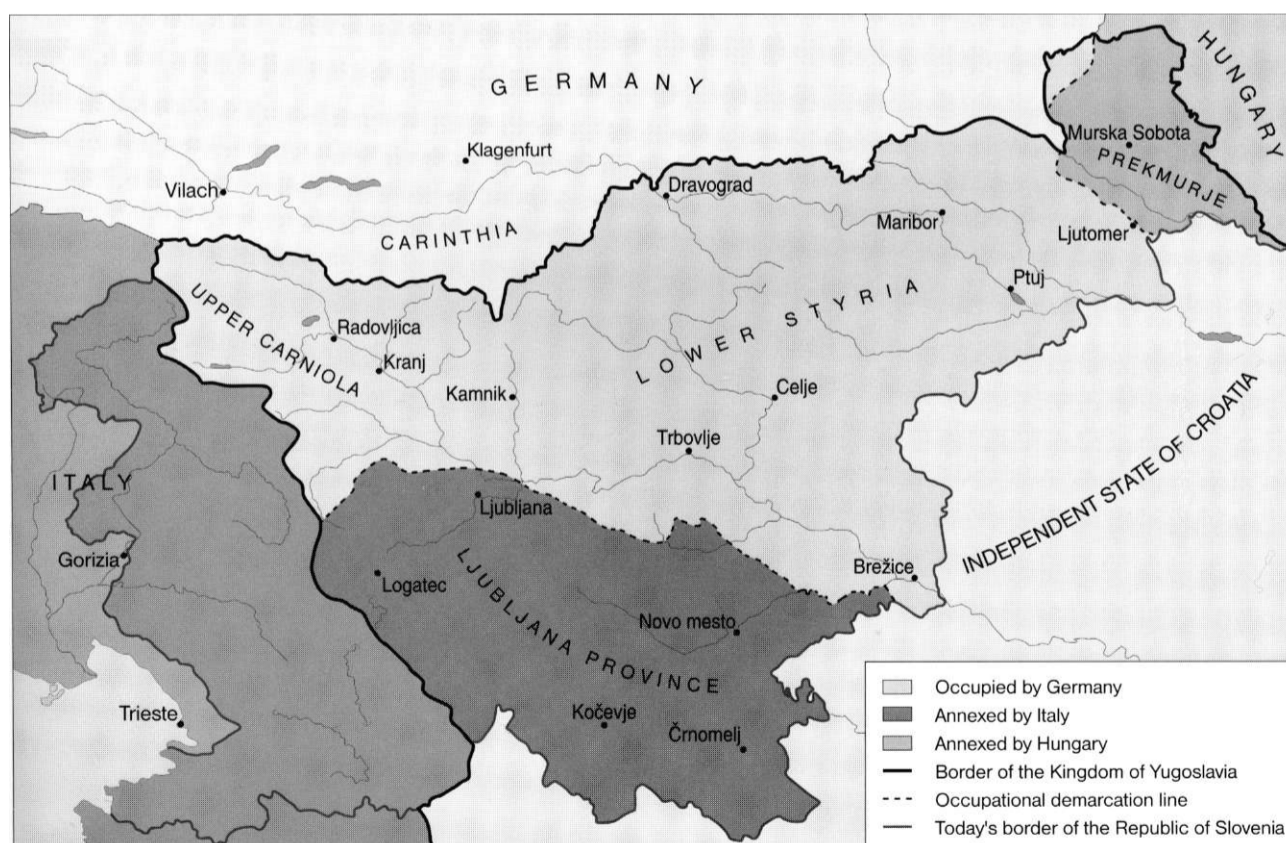
The Strategy of the Occupiers

Jože Pirjevec



The following story begins in 1848 when the March Revolution nearly destroyed the Habsburg Monarchy and gave rise to the ideas that new nation-states could be built upon its ruins. All Slovene neighbors started pondering the possibility of establishing an independent State, basing their claims not on natural, but historical law. The Hungarians called for independence within the boundaries of the lands of St Stephen's crown and it did not trouble them at all that by doing so they claimed ownership of the territory inhabited by a huge non-Hungarian population. The Italians wanted to reshape the Apennine Peninsula into a political unit, the strategic borders of which would overlap with the "limes" of Julius Caesar's Italy. The Germans strove for the restoration of a Reich that would encompass all Slovene lands excluding Prekmurje, with Trieste serving as gateway to the Mediterranean. These plans however were met with opposition from the Slovenes, whose national awareness was growing. The desire to become possessors of their own land led them to formulate the claim for a United Slovenia, basing it upon natural law. At the beginning, the aforementioned neighbors, who were politically, culturally and economically stronger, were not aware of this awakening or did not consider it seriously as they were convinced that a nation of peasants inhabiting the lands of Carinthia, Carniola, Styria, the Mura and the Raba region, Primorska (Littoral) and Istria could not become a serious impediment to the realization of their imperial aspirations. Yet in 1860 and 1861 when the Slovenes started to organize themselves politically after the implementation of the constitutional order in the Habsburg Monarchy, they launched a resolute and often extremely aggressive campaign of denationalization. By all means, they had to prevent Slovenes from advancing economically, socially and intellectually, and, consequently, developing into an autonomous national entity. This struggle lasted until World War I with various results, considering the variety of the ethnic and social situations in which it was waged. However, it should be pointed out that the Slovenes succeeded in defying

The partition of Slovenia during the occupation (map)



their adversaries in almost all areas of their settlement and that they rapidly developed into a mature political entity despite the unfriendly authorities of the Dual Monarchy

The end of World War I, which brought about the fall of the Empire, found the Slovene nation in an exceptionally difficult position as it had to struggle to survive in hostile international circumstances. With victorious Italy having occupied and then annexed the whole region of Primorska and impinged Austria yet assisting to control southern Carinthia, the peace negotiations, which took place after 1918, had catastrophic results for Slovenes.

The post-war period saw relatively favorable developments only for Slovenes living in Lower Styria and the Mura region where the border was determined mostly in line with their ethnic territory. After the disastrous year of 1920 when Slovenes suffered two more blows - October's plebiscite in Carinthia and November's Treaty of Rapallo defining the frontier between Italy and Yugoslavia - the nation was divided between four countries of which three - Austria, Italy and Hungary - fostered assimilation plans related to minorities living in their territory. In fact, Slovenes were confronted with the policy of cultural genocide that was executed in Italy and Austria, as well as Hungary, in harmony with the rise of the Fascist and National Socialist totalitarian regimes. Proceeding from this observation it could be argued that in the 1920s and 1930s Slovenes were the most endangered of all central European nations owing to the fact that their neighbors intended to assimilate their subjects of this ethnicity, often by employing not only psychological, economic, cultural and political pressure, but also physical violence. The following two statements by Mussolini and Hitler even before they came to

The Italian occupational army in Ljubljana, April 1941,
Jakob Preseren



power testify to their Slovene-related denationalization plans. Said the Duce-to-be on February 22, 1922 when visiting Pula: "When dealing with such a race as Slavic - inferior and barbarian - we must not pursue the carrot, but the stick policy ... We should not be afraid of new victims ... The Italian border should run across the Brenner Pass, Monte Nevoso and the Dinaric Alps ... I would say we can easily sacrifice 500,000 barbaric Slavs for 50,000 Italians ..." When talking to Prince Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg in 1928, the Führer-to-be said: "What really annoys me is the fact that within the past 500 years the Habsburgs and Austrian nobility could not Germanize those few kilometres spanning from the Alps to the Adriatic, and so the Germans did not enter Trieste, which should have been a German port."

When the Axis powers attacked Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, a year and a half after the outbreak of World War II, and partitioned it in accordance with

Ptujj Town Hall, April 10, 1941. In Styrian towns, the "Volksdeutsche" (ethnic Germans living abroad) seized power even prior to the arrival of the occupiers, decorated the towns in order to celebrate and prepared lists of Slovene patriots to be arrested



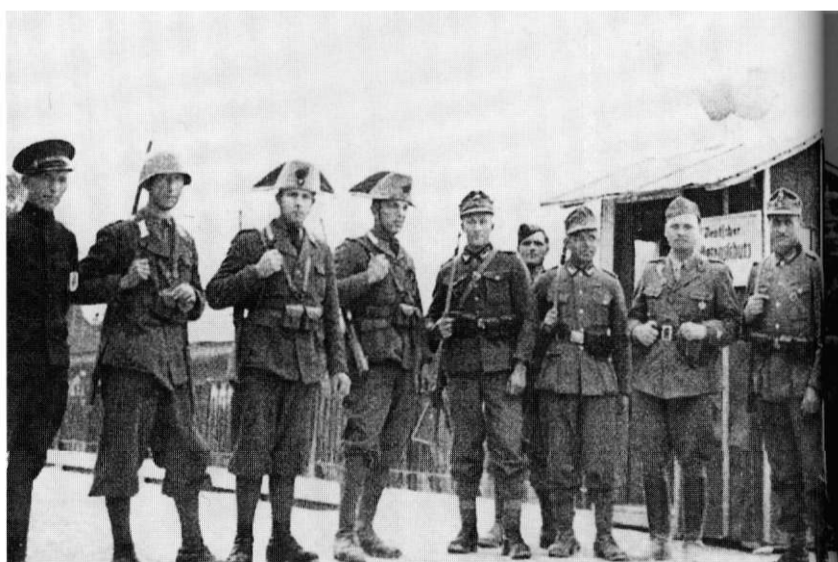
their territorial appetites, the Slovene-inhabited territory (Dravska Banovina) was divided into three parts. Upper Carniola, Styria, Slovene Carinthia and the northern part of Lower Carniola came under the Third Reich, Inner and the major part of Lower Carniola with Ljubljana were annexed by the Kingdom of Italy, while Prekmurje became Hungarian. The division itself indicated that the above-mentioned powers not intend to acknowledge Slovenes as a national entity, but rather erase them from the European map in accordance with their set policy. The most intense denationalization was carried out by the Germans, which is not surprising considering Hitler's order, given on April 25, 1941 during his visit to Maribor, where he celebrated the occupation of Lower Styria. Their fervor resulted in such terror as, according to the writing of the British secret service, was not suffered even by occupied Poland. This ruthless policy forced around 17,000 people to leave their homes, with the majority finding shelter in the Province of Ljubljana.

The definitive nature of the occupiers' partition of Dravska Banovina is also reflected in their decision to annex "their" part of the spoils to their own national territory, which was contrary to international law. Italy and Hungary realized their intentions on May 3 and December 16, 1941, while Germany deferred the scheduled annexation several times and in spring 1942 postponed it to the post-war period. However, Upper Carniola and Styria were subject to the civil authorities in Klagenfurt and Graz, which in fact meant that they were incorporated into the Third Reich. How definitive the border along the Sava river was supposed to be, at least as perceived by Berlin, is also reflected in the agreement with Rome on the migration of the Kočevje Germans from the "Province of Ljubljana" (the name the Italians used for their part of Dravska Banovina) to the surroundings of Brežice at the confluence of the Krka and Sava rivers, from where 35,000 Slovenes had been expelled. The decree was signed by Hitler himself, who followed the same procedure as in the case of a similar operation planned for the Germans from southern Tyrol, determined that there should be no stumbling block that could threaten the alliance between Italy and the Third Reich.

The "option" regarding which country to live in granted to the southern Tyroleans, incorporated into Italy after 1918, was not irrelevant to the Slovenes as the German authorities planned to resettle these "optants" on their territory from where, naturally, the indigenous population should be expelled. Therefore they conceived an elaborate policy that was in many re-

The Germans handing over power to the Hungarians in Prekmurje, Murska Sobota, April 16, 1941

The Italian-German border, May 20, 1941: A Slovene customs officer, an Italian Sardinian Grenadier, three carabinieri, an Italian officer and four German soldiers



spects only a radicalized variant of the one carried out before the outbreak of the war in Carinthia. In order to implement it smoothly, they first tried to get rid of the local secular and ecclesiastical intelligentsia in accordance with guidelines for the expulsion of foreign elements issued on April 12, 1941 by the SS Chief of the Reich Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich. Their plans to resettle from 220,000 to 260,000 people were hindered by the war. In a series of three forcible deportations, organized from June 1941 until the end of July 1942, however, they expelled around 60,000 priests, teachers and other intellectuals to Serbia and the Independent State of Croatia, and later on to Lower Silesia and the Sudetenland. Concomitantly, they banned anything Slovene and closed down all institutions - from libraries to schools - that had been the focal points of national culture. They Germanized topographic, proper and family names and confiscated public and, to a degree, private property. Furthermore, they embarked on a racial evaluation of the population and conducted it in line with their perverted biological, as well as political criteria. In fear for their lives and property, more than 90% of the population

Imprisoned Franciscan friars during forced physical exercises in the courtyard of the Maribor barracks

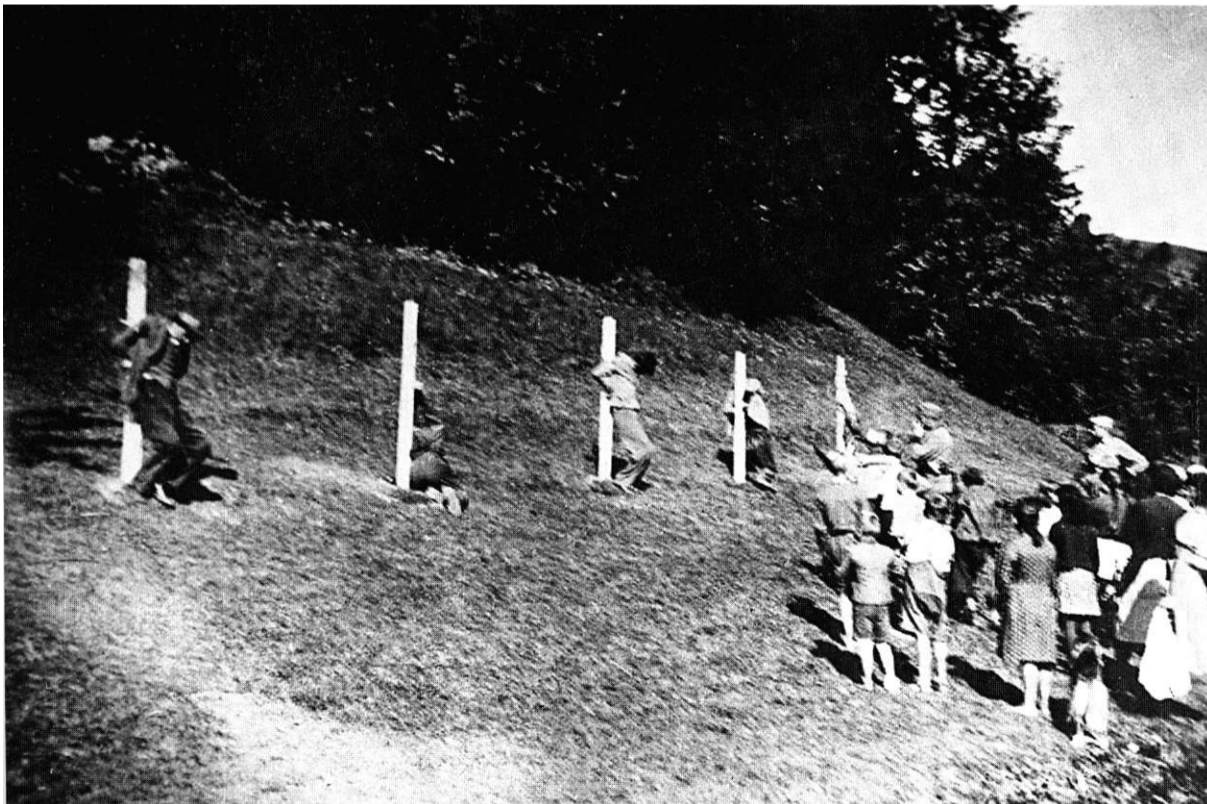
In Slovenia, the occupiers established ten internment camps in the following places: Maribor, Bori, Celje (three camps), Šmartno near Slovenj Gradec, Rajhenburg, Begunje in Upper Carniola, Šentvid near Ljubljana, and Goričane near Medvode. They were administered by two internment headquarters, with one being stationed in Bled (later in Radovljica and finally in Klagenfurt), and the other in Maribor. As in concentration camps, internees suffered physical and psychical torture, with one of the forms of torturing being physical exercises. Inmates were harnessed to carts and regularly beaten and confined in bunkers (in Šmartno near Slovenj Gradec and at Bori, they were enclosed in chimneys) owing to minor violations of the house rules. Priests had to empty cesspits by using small containers or their own hands and were forced to demolish the Orthodox Church in Maribor.



became members of the so-called Styria Homeland League (Steirischer Heimatbund) and the Carinthia People's League (Kärntner Volksbund), which would make their complete assimilation much easier. The extent to which Upper Carniola and Lower Styria were integrated into the Third Reich can also be inferred from the facts that both regions were subject to the "Lebensborn" programme, the aim of which was to create "racially pure" Aryans, and that Slovene children were relocated to foster families in Germany as if they had been Janissaries. The German authorities also recruited young Slovene men into the Wehrmacht and dispatched them to battlefronts from Russia to Norway and Normandy. When the Liberation Front started gaining ground in Styria and Upper Carniola, as well as Carinthia - the only land within the Third Reich that boasted a resistance movement - they responded resolutely to the partisans and tried to isolate them by intensifying violence against civilians. Around 15,000 people suspected of collaboration with the "bandits" were sent to forced labor camps in Germany, deported to concentration camps or subjected to bloody reprisals, arrest and torture. The occupiers established remand prisons that detained around 40,000 suspects, of which 2,860 were shot without trial, purely on the basis of a bureaucratic decision. When combating the resistance, the German army also took revenge on civilians by summarily killing them and by burning down their villages. In April 1942, local Nazis banished 917 Slovenes from Carinthia and resettled them in the environs of Lublin, in an area administered by the cruel SS leader from Klagenfurt, Odilo Globocnik.

In Primorska, the Fascist regime continued the denationalization campaign they embarked upon in the 1920s and 1930s. In the spring of 1940, the Fascists managed to behead the TIGR (the antifascist national defense movement) as the OVRA (Organisation for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-

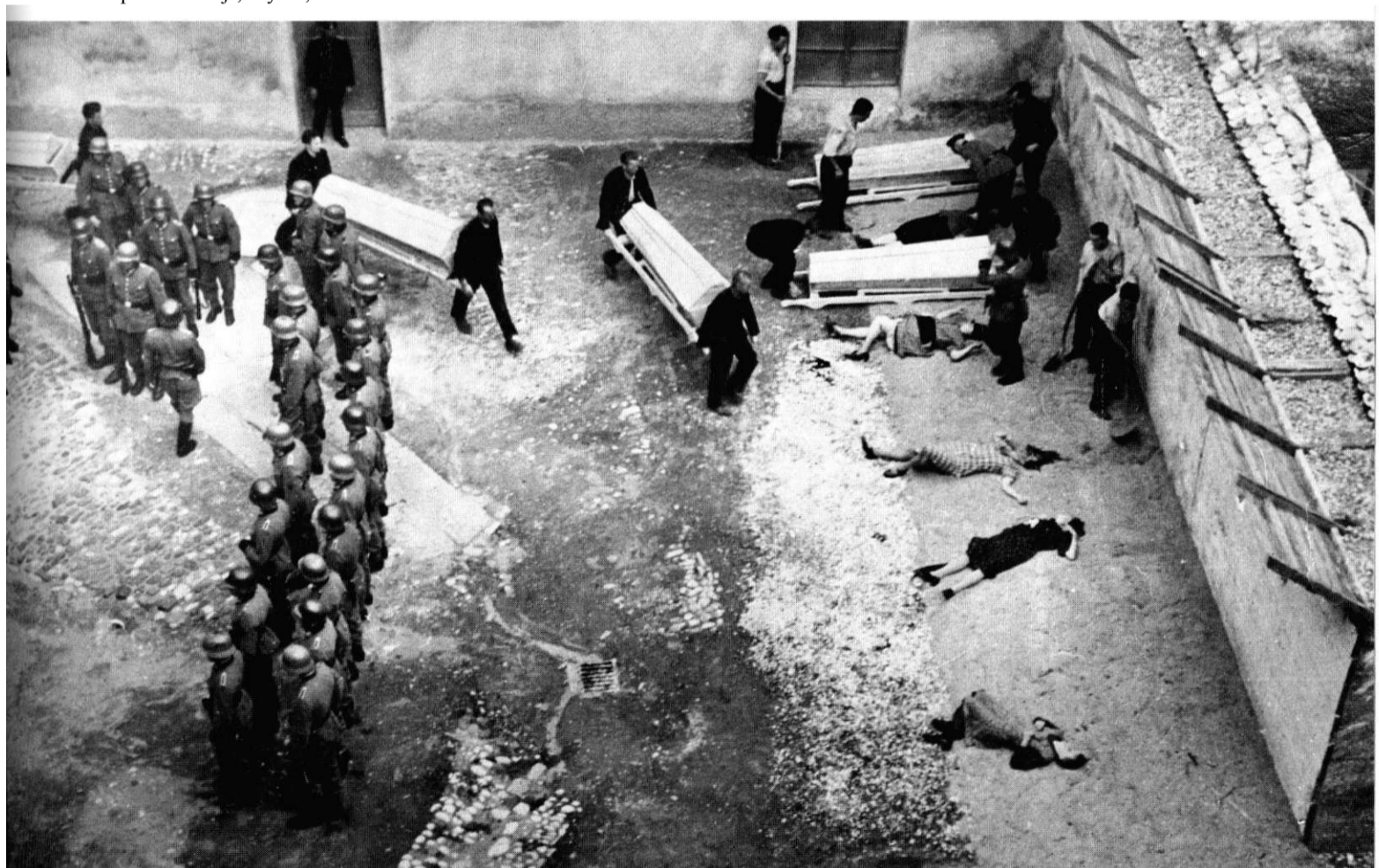
Shooting of hostages in the village of Spodnje Gorje near Bled, August 28, 1941



Fascism) arrested its 300 most important representatives. In order to demonstrate their determination to nip resistance in Venezia Giulia in the bud, the Italians organized a show trial held in December 1941 at the Special Court for State Protection in Trieste, sentencing the accused to long prison terms, and in the case of five of them, death. Others were executed the following year in Rome. Concomitantly, they interned all soldiers of Slovene and Croatian nationality in special labor battalions in southern Italy and Sardinia, and resettled the population living along the border to inland Italy from where they could return to their plundered and devastated homes only weeks later. Despite all measures taken, the Fascists regime could not prevent the Liberation Front from spreading throughout Primorska. As a result, it established a special General Inspectorate for Public Safety in Trieste, which boasted more than 1,000 collaborators and developed extremely cruel methods of repression. After the capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943, the reign of terror continued under the auspices of the Gestapo up to the end of the war.

In the Province of Ljubljana, the Italian authorities adopted different tactics. After the occupation of southern Slovenia, including the capital, the Fascist circles from Trieste advised Mussolini and his collaborators to apply there the same policy as had been used in Venezia Giulia for the past twenty years. Rome, however, decided that it would pay off to grant, at least temporarily, the newly subjugated Slovenes a certain amount of cultural autonomy in the hope that the Province of Ljubljana would thus become an attractive centre for Slovenes living in German-occupied areas. His megalomania made the Duce believe that he could spread his influence to the Danube region and the Balkans, where he expected the Germans to weaken owing to their forthcoming titanic battle with Russia. On the basis of these assumptions arising from unconcealed opposition between Rome and Berlin, the Province of Ljubljana

Female hostages shot in the Stari Pisker prison in Celje, July 22, 1941



was indeed annexed to the Kingdom of Savoy dynasty, thus becoming part of the Italian empire, although the Rapallo border was not abolished. The local population was granted Italian citizenship, but the new rulers had such little trust in them that they did not introduce conscription of combat-capable men. The Province of Ljubljana High Commissioner, Emilio Grazioli, mostly retained the administration of the ex Province Dravska Banovina and for a certain period even tried to govern the Province with the help of "consulta", an advisory body composed of several prominent Slovene politicians, economists and intellectuals. Concomitantly, he introduced bilingualism in public and cultural life as the first step towards "fascistisation" and gradual assimilation of the population. With the exception of conservative circles, this populist policy proved mostly unsuccessful. When compelled to face the rise of the Liberation Front, the indignant Fascist occupiers responded to Slovene "ingratitude" as resolutely as they could. The opinion that prevailed in the Italian government is clearly reflected in the following note taken from the diary of Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and Minister of Foreign Affairs: "Having dealt with incidental matters, he (Aldo Vidussoni, Secretary General of the Fascist Party) turned to political remarks and horrible proposals against Slovenes. He wants to kill them all. I took the liberty of saying they totaled one million. It doesn't matter - he replied firmly - we should model ourselves upon ascari (auxiliary Eritrean troops infamous for their cruelty) and wipe them out."

Such ideas circulated not only in Rome, but also among Italian generals in the Province of Ljubljana who believed that all Slovenes should be interned and resettled, thus adhering to Mussolini's pre-war plans. Even before the invasion of Yugoslavia, during the period when he and Hitler tried to convince Prince Paul of Yugoslavia to join the Axis, Mussolini suggested the following exchange: to deport Kosovo Albanians to Albania and repopu-

Italian concentration camp Gonars in 1942



late the area with Slovenes from Venezia Giulia. Contrary to the Germans, the Italians never developed their ideas - which envisaged the resettlement of the Province of Ljubljana with families of the wounded and killed - into definite operational plans. That, however, did not mean they did not carry out a number of reprisals and military operations aimed against the "bandits" and civilians supporting them, actions that will be hard to erase from the memory of the Slovene nation. To mention just a few: the Province of Ljubljana saw the deportation of 25,000 people, which equaled 7.5% of the total population. The operation, one of the most drastic in occupied Europe, filled up concentration camps on the island of Rab, in Gonars, Monigo (Treviso), Renicci d'Anghiari, Chiesanuova and elsewhere. Rab, where sanitary and living conditions were horrible, was especially notorious for high death rates as it served as an internment camp for not only combat-capable men but also for whole families, including children and the elderly. The Military Tribunal in Ljubljana processed 8,737 cases against 13,186 Slovenes and sentenced 83 people to death, of which 51 were executed. In addition, 412 peo-

Barbed wire encircling Ljubljana in spring 1942

In order to crush the resistance in Ljubljana, the Italians not only carried out massive raids with the support of informers, shot hostages, interned people in concentration camps among other measures, but also encircled the Slovene capital with 34-km of barbed wire, more than 60 bunkers with permanent garrisons, and numerous artillery nests. Outside this barbed wire circle, there was another composed of collaborators' posts (Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia). With the exception of a few days between the departure of the Italians and the arrival of the Germans, the town was encircled for as many as 1170 days.



pie were sentenced to life imprisonment, 3028 to thirty-year imprisonment, and many others to milder penalties. From April 1942 until January 1943, the Italian occupiers shot 145 people.

The cruelty exercised by Italian generals in order to suppress resistance of the Slovene nation is most plainly verbalized in the following reprimand issued by the general Mario Robotti during a counter-partisan offensive in the summer of 1942: "We do not kill enough!" The order was a logical outcome of the policy ordained by Mussolini himself in his megalomaniacal idea that he would become a Julius Caesar if he used the same tactic of burning the land as the Roman general had two thousand years previous during his conquest of Gaul.

In Prekmurje, the Hungarians took similar anti-Slovene measures as the Germans and Italians. They denied them their national identity, proclaimed them "Vendi" (an archaic name for the Slavs), made them use the Hungarian language in public life, and tried to incorporate them into their country as a subjugated tribe. When dealing with Slovene refugees from the region of Primorska, whom the Yugoslav authorities had resettled to Prekmurje after World War I, they showed no mercy. They interned 587 farmers - men, women and their children from the environs of Lendava - to the Särvär concentration camp (a separate part of the camp was occasionally used for temporary detention of political and other prisoners from Prekmurje and of Jews). The camp, infamous for its very poor living conditions, was housed in an abandoned factory of artificial silk in the Vas County, 25 km from Szombathely and a good 100 km from the Slovene-Hungarian border. Many a child would have died of hunger in there had not the Serbs from Backa (a region in Vojvodina, Serbia) offered them shelter in their homes at the instigation of the local Orthodox Church. The Serbs from Backa were the first and largest group in the camp. Owing to the fact that during the 1941/42 winter more than five hundred children died in the camp, the children, including Slovenes who arrived in the camp in summer 1942, were later on sent to foster families in Backa, which saved their lives. The three-year internment saw the death of 3 children and 1,200 adults, of which 35 were Slovene.

Since 1944, the Hungarian authorities handed over part of the internees to the German Gestapo, which sent them to the German concentration camps. After the German occupation of Hungary, all Jews from Prekmurje were also deported to German concentration camps from where the majority never returned. During the German occupation, 7,211 inhabitants of Prekmurje were deported to forced labour camps, and 1,259 to concentration camps.

After the capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943 and the disintegration of the Italian army and administration, the Province of Ljubljana and Venezia Giulia were occupied by the Germans, who combined them into a new unit called Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland (Operation Zone of the Adriatic Littoral). De iure the area remained within the framework of Italy or, more precisely, the Salö Republic established by Benito Mussolini with help from Hitler in northern and central Italy. In reality, the Germans treated the area as if it were a feudal domain and sought support of Slovenes willing to collaborate. This gave rise to a peculiar situation caused by the Nazis' triple attitude towards the Slovene population. In Carinthia, Styria and Upper Carniola, they continued the denationalization policy conceived

An unknown girl, one of the several hundred "stolen" Slovene children, in August 1942 in the internment camp in Celje



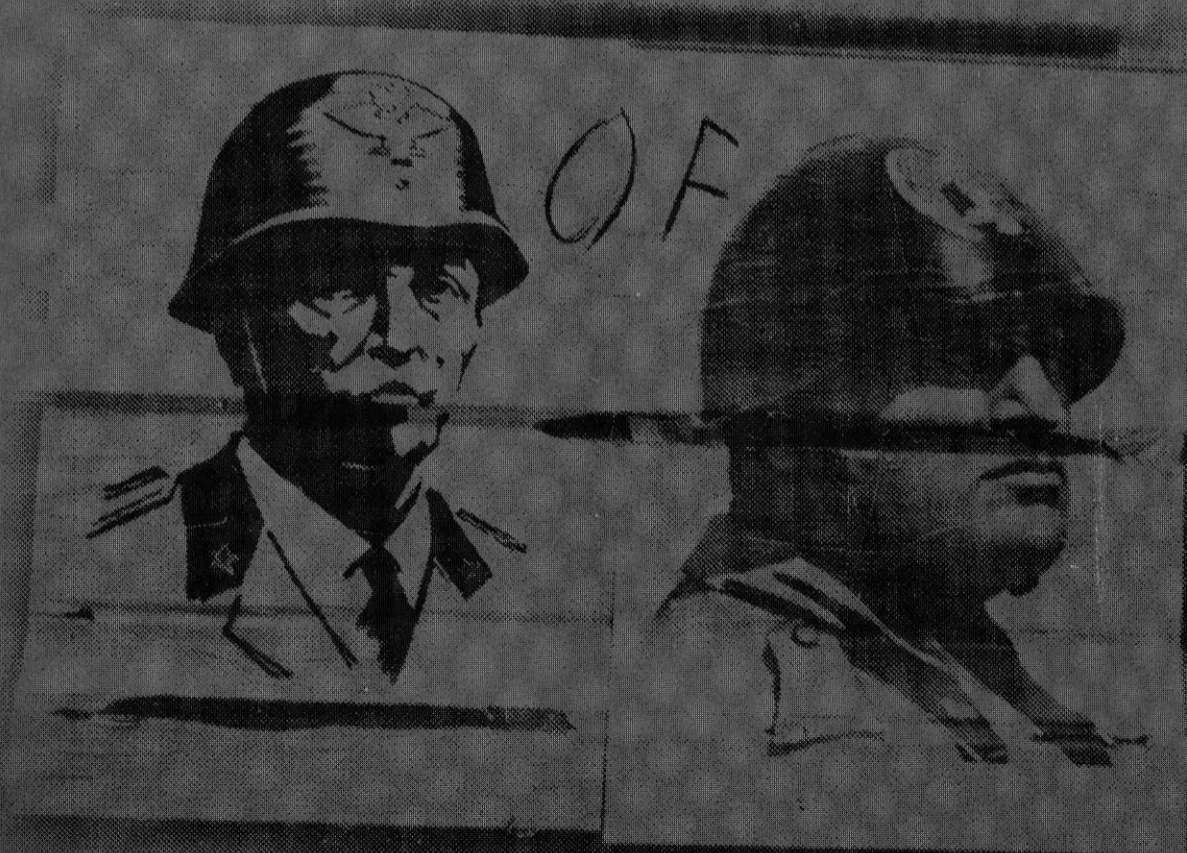
JOŽE PIRJEVEC

before and during the war. In the Province of Ljubljana, they tolerated a certain degree of cultural and political autonomy in exchange for unquestioning obedience from "Home guard" units to the Führer and his local representatives. In Venezia Giulia they, surprisingly, tried to improve the living conditions of Slovenes, liberate them from the lawless state brought about by the Fascists and partly allow them to use their mother tongue in public life, while disregarding the protests of local Italian dignitaries who complained in vain to Mussolini about the "pro-Slav" German policy. Those Slovenes who did not intend to jump at their offer (which was the case with the majority of the population) had to face a resolute response by the German military and police units and by collaborationist groups of various nationalities. In response to the "Slavic question", the German authorities also opened a special concentration camp with a crematorium in an abandoned building for hulling rice located in the Trieste suburbs where they interned and killed several thousand members of the resistance along with Jews.

To end, one should quote Hitler's farewell letter written to the Wehrmacht just before he committed suicide. He ended it with the following two sentences, which also make his last political statement: "The German people endured such hardship and sacrifice that I cannot believe they suffered in vain. Our goal should remain the Eastern territories as the German Lebensraum." Is there a shadow of doubt that in case of Hitler's victory Slovenia would not have been considered as part of that territory?

The Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation

Božo Repe



After the invasion of Yugoslavia during World War II, leaders of Slovene middle class parties either emigrated or (in the Italian occupational zone) embarked on active collaboration. Their defeatist policy was opposed by the formation of a new political bloc to which various organizations, associations, small political groups, and patriots of different ideological orientation adhered. Though not in a position of power before World War II, their representatives - cultural exponents, journalists, professionals, socially engaged writers, artists, etc. - had considerable impact on the formation of philosophical and political reality at the end of the 1930s. The only political party operating in the bloc was the illegal Communist Party of Slovenia (KPS), small but well organized, which gave impulse to armed resistance. Though the influence of this coalition, united first in an anti-imperialist and then the Liberation Front, differed depending on time and geographical area, the bloc developed into the most powerful political and military Slovene force during World War II.

The gazette of the Liberation Front (OF) publishing the main items of its programme

Slovene Reporter of

September 20, 1941,

publishing the decision

of the Liberation Front

to establish the Slovene

National Liberation

Committee and to

incorporate the Slovene

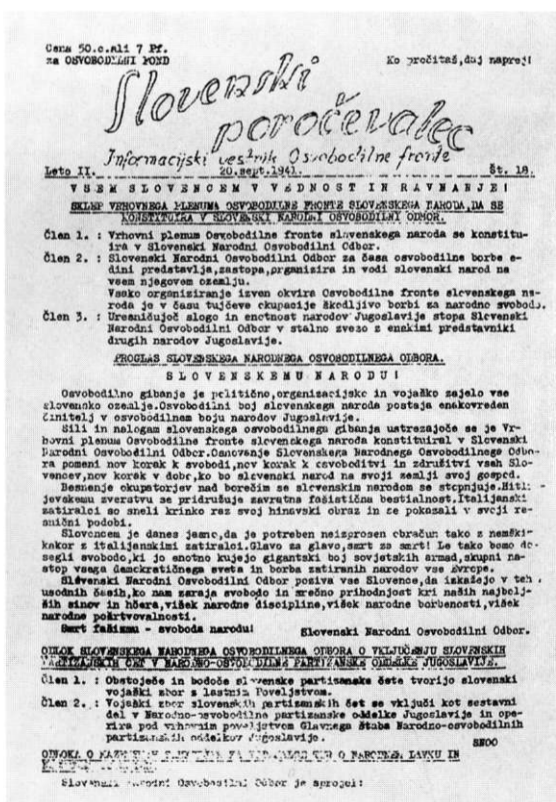
partisan army into the

national liberation

detachments of Yugoslavia

The founding meeting of the Liberation Front (OF) was held on April 26 (according to the earliest data, April 27), 1941. Organised by the KPS, the meeting was also attended by representatives of Christian Socialists (i.e., the group that in the 1930s withdrew from the Catholic camp in opposition to its growing rightist orientation), and the left wing of the Sokol (Falcon) gymnastics organization and some representatives of the intelligentsia. In the following months, the front was joined by a number of minor groups.

The founders occasionally worked together even before the invasion of Yugoslavia, although the Christian Socialists were represented by two factions that had not co-operated before joining the OF: workers, the majority of which were enrolled in the Workers' Unity trade union, and intellectuals (one of them was the distinguished writer Edvard Kocbek). The ideas of both groups were based on the views expressed by the Christian Socialist priest and politician Janez Krek at the turn of the 20th century. The intellectuals wanted the Christian Socialists to develop into an independent group within



the OF, which, however, would not become a party. They strove for a national and social revolution modelled upon democratic middle-class tradition and not upon that of the Russian Bolsheviks. They revealed their vision of the development of Slovene society in their wartime newspaper *Slovene Revolution*. The democratic wing of Sokol became an independent group in 1939 after a portion of the membership had been expelled from its umbrella organization for opposing its political and party orientation (the Sokol leadership supported the idea of a centralist Yugoslavia). Even as the group with the greatest number, the Sokols had also no intention of forming a separate party within the OF. They advocated adherence to the Slovene nation, a generally harmonious, welfare society, and a balance between man's physical and spiritual activity (in accordance with the maxim "sound spirit in a sound body"). During the war, a considerable number of young Sokols became members of the Communist Party. The intellectuals, mostly of liberal or leftist orientation, were an unorganized and heterogeneous group.

The founding meeting (of which remains no written record, only mentions in memoirs) gave prominence to standpoints of the KPS, whose views were dependent on the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Comintern. Hence the front was initially labelled "anti-imperialist", according to Stalin's view that both Fascist and Western countries were imperialist in nature and shared responsibility for the war. The initial period was characterised by limited operations, with non-communist groups staying in the background. The

The emblem of the Liberation Front (OF) on Italian posters depicting Vittorio Emanuele III and Mussolini



importance of the founding meeting, which concluded without any joint declaration, was not revealed until three months later when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Allegedly, the attendees agreed with five points proposed by Boris Kidrič on behalf of the Central Committee of the KPS:

1. The occupier's demagogy has proved successful for the time being, but there is a pan-Slovene mass movement on the horizon.
2. The Slovene nation will be liberated by its own forces.
3. People and circles responsible for the defeat and enslavement will support foreign conquerors.
4. The Soviet Union is the light and hope of the Slovene national liberation movement.
5. Work should begin immediately.

The policy of the KPS at that time can be inferred from a proclamation issued at the end of April stating that the Slovenes witnessed the worst tragedy a nation could possibly suffer; therefore they (including compatriots from Carinthia and Primorska) ought to unite "in a national front against the imperialist occupiers and oppressors." The document contained further the following calls:

- Against the partition and enslavement of Slovenia;
- For the liberation, independence and unification of the nation;
- For the brotherhood and unity of Yugoslav and Balkan nations;

The Assembly of deputies of the Slovene Nation in the beginning of October 1943 in Kočevje above them a quotation from a play by the most distinguished Slovene writer Ivan Cankar: "The nation shall write its own destiny." During wartime, 650 deputies, who had been either directly elected or delegated, elected the Slovene parliament called the Slovene National Liberation Committee (SNOO). Comprising 120 members, it was presided over by the OF Executive Council, which was composed of representatives of the OF founding groups. In spring 1944, it formed its sections (ministries) and functioned as the Slovene government until 1945.



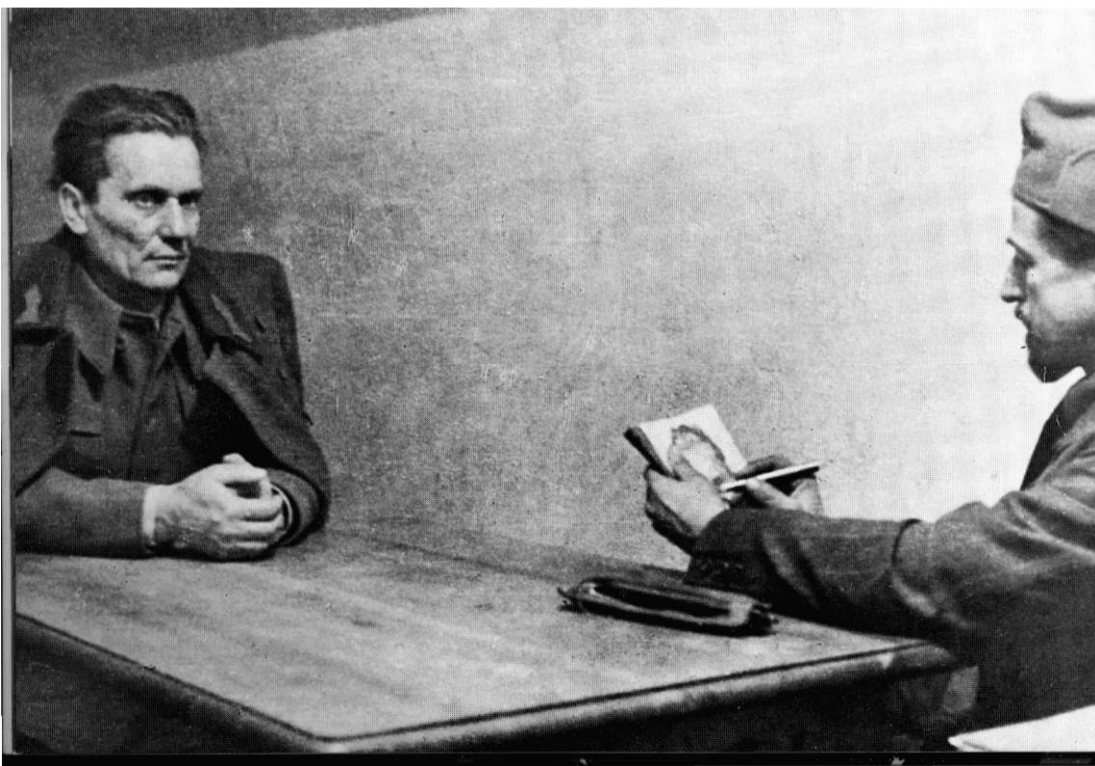
- For a fraternal community of independent nations with equal rights;
- Against the imperialist war;
- For each nation's right to self-determination.

The proclamation also appealed to people to resist the occupiers' violence, persecution, denationalization, cultural oppression, subordination of the Slovene language, dismissal of civil servants and economic sanctions. Furthermore, it mentioned that the policy of the middle class parties proved to be a complete failure and that the KPS was the only one entitled to lead the Slovene nation to liberation and victory, its duty being to create worker unity, union of workers and farmers, and "a strong liberation front of the entire Slovene nation." The communists saw salvation in the joint struggle of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, working classes from all around the world, oppressed and colonial nations, and in particular in the existence of "the giant and invincible force of the two hundred million Soviet people who, under the head of the Bolshevik Party and the genial leadership of the Great Stalin, build communism and realize ideals of the most progressive minds in human history."

The Communist Party anticipated that the war would weaken the imperialist tendencies of the countries involved and enable revolution to begin in Germany and Italy and spread to the rest of Europe. As a result, they issued several appeals to German, Italian and Hungarian soldiers to join them in their struggle.

The KPS resurrected the Slovene Reporter, a newspaper published during the 1930s when the future OF groups started working together (in autumn 1941, it became the official gazette of the OF). The newspaper published their proclamations and expressed their critical ideas regarding "the exploitative, oppressive, corrupt, treacherous capitalists." The communists viewed the loyalty expressed by the middle class parties to the Italian occupiers as treason. They emphasised that "the past broke in two" or, in other words, that there was no going back to the old, the situation before the war.

Like the middle-class camp, the communists stood for adherence to Yugoslavia (based, of course, on new grounds) despite the fact that the country had been partitioned. However, there were a few indications that in the



Bozidar Jakac, a member of the Slovene delegation attending the second session of the Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia in Jajce, Bosnia, portraying Marshall Tito, November 29-December 1, 1943

short period from spring until summer 1941 the leadership of the KPS was not certain about the restoration of Yugoslavia even if they were supposed to function as the link between the Slovenes and other Yugoslav nations.

In its first session, held on June 15, 1941, the Supreme Plenum of the OF adopted the "Maxims of Our Liberation Struggle", published on June 22, 1941 (the day when Germany attacked the Soviet Union). As a combination of a national and (revolutionary) class struggle, they stressed the following:

1. The Slovene nation's right to self-determination, including its right to secession and unification with other nations.
2. The liberation and unification of the partitioned Slovene nation, including Slovenes living in Carinthia and Primorska.
3. The brotherhood and unity of the enslaved nations of Yugoslavia and the Balkans in their struggle for liberation.
4. The Soviet Union as the leading force and chief support in the struggle for liberation of the Slovene nation and all oppressed nations, a model of coexistence between nations possessing equal rights.
5. The liberation could only be attained on the ruins of imperialism.
6. The oppressed nation could not become free without the struggle against its treacherous capitalists.
7. Brotherhood and peace between nations had to result from an anti-imperialist struggle that would make imperialism collapse.

The Slovene National Liberation Committee (renamed the Slovene National Liberation Council) meeting in its first session on February 19 to 20, 1944 in Črnomelj. Sitting in the first row are members of the British, American and Russian missions to Slovenia

The events of summer and early autumn of 1941 made clear that the war would last for a while, and the initial enthusiastic expectations of the communists that the Red Army would defeat the Wehrmacht and liberate



Europe, including Yugoslavia and Slovenia, vanished. Under these circumstances the OF formed its definite program, which laid emphasis on the issue of national liberation and deferred a decision on the form of government until after the war when the OF was supposed to assume power. With other groups, in particular the Christian Socialists, having considerable influence upon the program, the goals of the Communist class struggle were toned down considerably.

On November 1, 1941, the Supreme Plenum of the OF met in its fourth session and adopted the following seven conclusions:

1. The occupier should be opposed through a severe armed campaign.
2. The campaign is the starting point for the liberation and unification of all Slovenes.
3. Proceeding from a natural and vital connection between the Yugoslav nations, the OF does not accept the partition of Yugoslavia and works with all its might for brotherhood and unity of its nations. Concomitantly, it strives for affiliation with other Slavic nations under the leadership of the mighty Russia on the basis of each nation's right to self-determination.
4. By organizing the campaign for liberation and by inspiring the Slovene masses to action, the OF reshapes the Slovene national character. The Slovene masses, which are fighting for their national and human rights, create a new image of an active Slovene nation.
5. All the groups involved in the OF bind themselves to act fairly in their relations to one another.
6. Once the Slovene nation is liberated, the OF comes to power.
7. Once the Slovene nation is liberated, the OF introduces a consistent people's democracy. All issues beyond the framework of national liberation will be approached through the means of a consistent people's democracy.

In addition, they adopted the following two conclusions on December 21, 1941:

8. In accordance with solemn promises made by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, the decisions on the form of government of a united Slovenia and its foreign relations will be adopted by the Slovene nation itself after national liberation. The OF will enforce and defend this basic right of the Slovene nation by all means possible.
9. In Slovene territory, the national army grows out of partisan units struggling for national liberation and the National Defence conscripting all nationally conscious Slovenes.

Summer 1941 brought considerable enlargement to the OF and a growing coalition character to its summit. Talks and negotiations with other groups who had joined the OF or wanted to do so were underway. In addition to the leading role of the KPS, some of them disputed the OF's stance on the future Yugoslav government. In fact, it advocated federalism while some groups insisted on the re-implementation of the pre-war unitary Yugoslavia. Only after the split with the centrist liberals, especially with the group of Royalists called "Ancient Rights" (Stara pravda), did the OF adopt the conclusion on the form of government of the united Slovenia and its foreign relations.

In the field, the OF established a network that people enlisted in en masse. The organization was composed of the Supreme Plenum, which consisted of representatives of all the groups involved; the Executive Committee of the Plenum, composed of representatives of the founding groups (as well as of the Secretariat formed by a member each of KPS, Christian Socialists and Sokols); and of regional, district, local and field affinity groups that in fact covered every quarter of every town and every village. Initially, the OF leadership had its illegal headquarters in Ljubljana, then it moved to its hinterland base (near Polhov Gradec in Dolomites). From the spring of 1943 it operated in the so-called Base 20, a clandestine cabin complex built in the Kocevje forest. The base boasted electricity produced by a wood gas generator (smuggled from Italy during wartime) and all other necessary equipment and facilities, including the Jelendol hospital where even the most demanding operations were performed. In order to make the smoke arising from cook stoves invisible, they cooled it down using a special technique. The builders proved to possess incredible technical and organizational skills and inventiveness, as did the Slovene resistance movement in general. Despite frequent daily visits by couriers and activists and despite several enemy offensives, the leadership of the OF and national liberation movement remained undiscovered.

In the course of time, the OF developed into a stable organization with outposts all over Slovene territory, encompassing illegal workshops and printing works, which issued falsified documents and food ration cards and printed partisan money; hospitals (with one of them, the Franja Hospital near Cerklje ob Krki, having been turned into a symbol of humanity and a monument of European cultural heritage); a widespread courier network; various

The appointment of the first Slovene national government just before the end of the war on May 5, 1945 in the Primorska town of Ajdovščina



illegal humanitarian organizations that looked after the children of partisans and activists and collected resources and money for people in need of help; means of communication (it issued two main and a number of local newspapers and ran its own radio station called The Screamer), and a variety of other organizations. It was the only resistance movement in Europe that founded its own scientific institute. Hidden deep in the Kočevje forest, its collaborators conceived plans for the post-war social order, prepared studies on the border issue and dealt with other existential matters of the Slovene nation. In Ljubljana, the OF operated as »a state within a state«, while in the liberated areas it started establishing its own 'people's power'. The Supreme Plenum, also called the Slovene National Liberation Committee, functioned as the most important partisan body until October 1943 when elected representatives inaugurated the Slovene National Liberation Council (Parliament), which had its own chairmanship and committees in charge of various sectors. During the war, the partisan parliament met in one more session, held in February 1944 in Črnomelj, while at the end of war, on May 4, 1945, its chairmanship appointed the Slovene national government.

Handwritten certificate at the value of 500 liras and the obverse and reverse sides of the freedom loan bond at the value of lira 100 (equalling something more than € 10) issued at the end of April 1942.

The partisan economy was initially focused on supplying the units and the effectively arrayed apparatus of the OF. During that period, partisans acquired food and all materiel mostly through warfare, the confiscation of enemy dumps and voluntary collection of supplies organized by groups authorized by the OF. Forcible requisition of resources was allowed only exceptionally, though it was executed throughout the war. As early as summer 1941, the OF formed its treasury, in charge of all monetary operations. The partisan fiscal system also was established early. In autumn 1941, the Slovene National Liberation Committee issued the decree on a national tax levy in order to cover the expenses of the liberation movement and social aid. The tax had to be paid by all Slovenes from their own income. In addition, the committee also issued a tender for the freedom loan with a 5 % interest rate. The formation of liberated territories brought about an organized economy. The supply of the army (according to a rough estimate, a partisan needed a minimum of lira 24 a day to survive, which equals € 2.45 today) was first carried out by the OF field affinity groups



and then by the emerging bodies of the partisan authorities (i.e., national liberation bodies). The payment transactions of the liberated territories were first characterized by different handwritten or printed certificates issued by economic and financial sections of the authorized bodies in the liberated territories and by commanders of partisan units for the supply provided. The liberation movement guaranteed the lenders of financial and material resources that the principals and the interest rates would be repaid within three months after the liberation. In February 1944, the Slovene National Liberation Council met in Črnomelj and adopted the decision to form a common economic and administrative area in Slovene territory and to set up a central bank (Monetary Institute of Slovenia) that would issue cash vouchers in the total amount of lira 20 millions and be in charge of all financial transactions in Slovene territory, which was at that time a unique case in occupied Europe. Partisan money (cash vouchers) to the value of lira 1, 5 and 10 were printed by the partisan printing office in the Kočevski Rog forest in autumn 1944 in utmost secrecy. Their drafts, studies and designs were created by the most prominent Slovene painters and architects co-operating with the liberation movement. In addition, the Monetary Institute of Slovenia secretly issued savings books, encouraged people to save money, determined exchange rates, purchased foreign currencies, supervised the borrowing by the liberation movement, issued receipts for the resources repaid and bills, and received Allied loans. It was in particular Allied material aid that proved of tremendous importance for the economy of the liberation movement: from 1944, partisan workshops were able to produce articles even for the civilian population. 1944 was also marked by the beginning of the reconstruction of the economy in the liberated territories and by the conception of the first plans for its postwar continuation, including accelerated industrialization. Needless to say, the war caused great damage to Slovenia and its infrastructure, destroying or damaging more than 90,000 houses and residential buildings and more than 650 public buildings (hospitals, administration buildings, cultural facilities, etc.), 781 railway buildings, 1275 bridges, 11 tunnels, more than 60 % of railway lines and 70 % of locomotives. Only 160 km out of a total of 1129 km-long rail network could be used. As for road traffic, more than 40 % of bridges were demolished, while roads were mostly dug up and supporting walls destroyed. According to a final report issued soon after the end of the war (there were many other estimates issued, with the numbers differing), the damage was estimated to total almost US \$ 1 billion, with two thirds caused by the German occupier.

In the field of armed resistance, the OF organized the partisan army in forests and the units of National Defence in towns (urban guerrillas). It also established an efficient intelligence service (VOS), controlled by the Communists, which carried out a variety of bold attacks, liberated prisoners and collected information. Owing to the fact that it tended to get rid of people working with the occupier, which sometimes meant shooting people just because they strongly opposed communism, the VOS became somewhat dubious even during wartime.

The inner development of the OF underwent two phases: the coalition phase that lasted until March 1943 and the unitary phase after the Dolomite Declaration. By signing the Declaration (named after the hilly region near Ljubljana), all the founding groups excluding the KPS bound themselves to dissolve their associations. There were several reasons for the centralisation of the OF, which was demanded by communists and disputed above all by Christian Socialists: in addition to anticipation of the 'untimely' end of the war and the landing by the Anglo-American Allies, the OF wanted to prevent a split between its founding groups and to assure successful liberation, while the communists wanted to ensure their leading role in post-war Slovenia.

The establishment of the OF, its success in organising the national liberation movement and its seizure of power after the war were a source of considerable anxiety to the middle class parties advocating collaboration and "attendism" (waiting for the liberation in the hope of returning to an approximation of the pre-war status quo]. They were also met with explicit hostility by the leadership of the Catholic Church in the Province of Ljubljana (in Styria and Upper Carniola priests were expelled by the Germans, while in Primorska they had supported the local population already during its pre-war struggle against the Fascists, and later on joined the resistance). Pre-war politicians and the hierarchy of the Church regarded the OF as nothing but a communist organization. Their conviction was strengthened by unjustified liquidations executed by the VOS and by acts of revenge against civilians performed in the spring of 1942 in some liberated areas where certain partisan leaders started to carry out the "Second Phase of the Revolution", based on terror. Against their behaviour people organized the so-called village guards later on legalized by the Italians as the Voluntary Anti-communist Militia (Milizia volontaria anticomunista). Though the OF leadership condemned such measures, the reputation of the OF was tarnished. The two sides excluded one another from the political and military arena and denied each other the right to represent the Slovene nation. As a result, in some areas (including the Province of Ljubljana) the irreconcilable rivalry, rooted in the ideological and cultural struggle raging between the two World Wars, deteriorated into a fratricidal war. After the capitulation of Italy, the Germans fathered the establishment of new collaborationist units called the Slovene Home Guard. On Hitler's birthday, April 20, 1944, its members participated in a mass celebration swearing that they would fight against the partisans and that each of them would » ... conscientiously perform his duties to his Slovene motherland, which would become part of liberated Europe, that will be assigned to him during the joint struggle of the German armed forces led by the Führer of Great Germany, SS squads and police against the bandits and communists, as well as their allies ...«

The western Allies regarded the members of the Home Guard as collaborators and after the war handed them over to Slovene (Yugoslav) authorities, who had most of them executed without trial. The end-of-war attempt of the middle class parties camp to restore the pre-war authorities in Slovenia failed miserably. The Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (the partisan parliament founded by Tito in November 1942, which in its second session in Jajce a year later laid the foundation for a federal and republican order) was expanded with representatives of the last pre-war National Assembly. Soon after the victory, a joint Tito-headed government was appointed and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was renamed the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, later the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

The OF was one of the first political organizations that, following the occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941, decided to resist the aggressors and strive for a restored state based on new premises - equal rights for all its nations and a more just social order. It became an important segment of the Yugoslav resistance and from spring 1943 fostered close ties with the Western Allies, harmonising its military operations with them and often rescu-

ing their air force personnel. In addition it was also supported by the Soviet Union. Interestingly, the operations of the Slovene partisan army were depicted even in American cartoon strips. The OF preserved its special features throughout the war. There was no other Yugoslav republic that could boast such a well-organized resistance movement (elsewhere, the resistance was tied directly to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia). Even when operating under extremely difficult circumstances, the Slovene resistance, including its leadership, never left home territory. The OF made Slovenes more self-confident and turned them from »a nation of servants« into »a nation of heroes«, as was often said in those times. It showed great respect for cultural heritage, owing to which the Slovene nation had managed to survive for centuries. The partisans formed their own cultural groups and fostered incredibly well-developed and expressive fine arts, with exhibitions being held even during wartime. They organized partisan theatre (including puppet shows), music ensembles, folk dancing and other activities. Despite the war they published poetry and other books, and organized cultural forums at which they discussed key issues of Slovene culture. It was peculiar to the Slovene resistance that it named several units after local poets and writers. All cultural activities were characterised by strong propaganda and mobilization. In those inhuman times, they helped people lift their spirits, strengthened their national consciousness and encouraged them to fight.

The OF achieved the majority of its national and political goals, liberating the Slovene nation. Even if it did not manage to unite all Slovenes in one country (the goal of a United Slovenia), it succeeded in reincorporating Primorska to the motherland. Slovenes were granted the status of a republic within Yugoslavia, and for the first time in history they obtained their own constitution, parliament, government and the right to self-determination, including the right to secession. The shift in the social order (the introduction of socialism), resulting partly from the activity of the OF, gave rise to modernization processes, however radical and specific they might have been, which the former middle class elites did not want or were not able to carry out (women's suffrage and emancipation, separation of Church from State, industrialization, increased social equality). Though it had formally won the post-war elections (as part of the Yugoslav People's Front), the OF started turning over its power to the Communist Party and eventually adopted its program. In 1953, it was renamed the Socialist Alliance of Working People, the aim of which was to unite organizations and individuals of all beliefs under one roof on condition, however, that they were pro-socialist. In 1990, when Slovenia introduced a multi-party system, it lost its mass membership and transformed into the parliamentary Social Party that later on merged with the Liberal Democrats. Despite occasional differing views on its importance, the Liberation Front remains in the Slovene consciousness the organization that was able to mobilize and organize people into a resistance movement and a struggle for national survival during World War II. The day of its establishment is celebrated as the Day of Uprising against Occupation.

The Partisan Army –
Armed Resistance
in Slovenia during
World War II

Damijan Guštin



The liberation movement launched in Yugoslavia in July 1941 by the Communist Party (KPJ) under the leadership of Josip Broz-Tito, was explicitly orientated towards an immediate armed struggle against the occupiers, which gave it a special place and role in the European resistance. Being an inseparable part of it and, consequently, under influence of its basic orientation, the Slovene resistance was characterized by a strong military component even if the situation in Slovenia differed from that in Serbia and Montenegro. As early as July 1941, Slovene partisan organizers managed to form 15 armed groups in the area occupied by Germans and Italians. Within the same month they carried out their first attacks on enemy facilities, communications, soldiers and police officers, and even prepared a plan for an uprising of the wider population on July 27, 1941 (which, however, did not materialize).

With the immediate armed response to the invasion being one of the fundamental starting points of "national liberation struggle" as conceived by KPJ leadership, guerilla warfare was the natural result of the disparity of forces and available weapons. Such tactics did not require a large army and had a long tradition in the Balkans, and envisaged the wider population becoming involved in the resistance as soon as possible. Just as in other parts of Yugoslavia, the initial role in launching the struggle in Slovene territory was taken by the Communist Party, which however as early as July 1941 established a link between the armed units and the recently established Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation (OF). Thus the partisan army, as it was usually called (its official name was the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Slovenia), developed from a mere party militia into a fighting organization, with its status differing from that of the partisan detachments in other Yugoslav areas, as it was not - at least formally - under direct control and leadership of the KPJ. Striving to represent the whole nation, the OF regarded

First partisans at Krim near
Ljubljana, August 1941



the partisan army as the very origins of the Slovene national force. In view of the prewar situation in which the Yugoslav Royal Army was alienated from the Slovene mentality, such an addition of national attributes signified an important mobilization incentive for the Slovene population. Despite the war, the partisan army was supervised by civilians, more precisely by OF bodies, including KPS representatives, until the end of the conflict. Naturally, the partisan army was also a political organisation: since the very beginning it had political commissars representing the OF, who were almost exclusively KPS members. Concomitantly, it was led by military commanders, a structure based on that of the Red Army.

In summer 1941, Slovene territory witnessed few actions; yet even if they did not seriously endanger the occupational authorities, both the German and Italian military regarded them as a severe threat and immediately responded by introducing radical police methods. Members of partisan units were treated as "bandits", and a repressive apparatus determined to destroy them as well as the network behind them was organized. The Hungarians controlling the Prekmurje plain managed to nip the partisan formations in the bud so that in northeastern Slovenia armed resistance did not develop until 1944.

The most important issue during the initial period of resistance was that of recruitment. Though voluntary, once a partisan had sworn allegiance, they were expected to remain in the ranks until the end of war. In view of the repression that did not spare family members, the decision to join the partisans brought about a radical change in their lives. With the exception of the most conscious members of the political groups united in the OF, the enlistment of new recruits was based on persistent political work even if Slovenes were aware of the fact that in the long run the denationalization measures executed by the occupiers - especially Germans - would result in the death and extinction of their nation. The intensity of voluntary affiliation in the partisan army thus soon became dependent on the efficiency of propaganda, which was particularly evident in the campaign to persuade the



Blown up aqueduct behind the power station in the hamlet of Zasip near Bled, August 1941



Dead combatants of the Brežice Squad

DAMIJAN GUŠTIN

population to actively resist the Fascist and Nazi forces, or, in other words, to join the uprising.

In December 1941, the resistance succeeded in stirring the first clash that was more than local in character. Involving more than 1000 people from Upper Carniola, it was the first military action organized by the partisans that seriously endangered the occupational authorities, since it resulted in their withdrawal from ten municipalities. In order to regain control, the Germans brought up strong police reinforcement to the area. In January 1942, there ensued the battle in the village of Drazgose that revealed the military capacity of the insurgents: the enemy forces lost altogether more than 100 men, alarming the Berlin authorities, who regarded this as the most serious threat to any of the territories targeted for inclusion in the Third Reich.

Burned village of Drazgose. At the end of 1941, the western part of Upper Carniola witnessed a general uprising. It was stirred by the partisans who modeled themselves on the concept of resistance developed in central parts of Yugoslavia and wanted the area to become the centre of the national liberation movement in the Slovene territory. The uprising was also a response to the occupiers' severe violence against civilians and deportations. The most successful action, involving an attack on the German police battalion stationed in the village of Rovt, killed 45 policemen. In return, around 2,500 German soldiers and policemen attacked the main partisan unit situated in the area, the Ivan Cankar Battalion, on January 9, 1942 in the village of Drazgose. Three days of severe fighting forced the partisans to retreat. The Germans burned down the village, shot 41 locals, burned their corpses, and deported the rest of the inhabitants to camps. The battle resounded through the German army, compelling the German leadership to deter the formal inclusion of Upper Carniola into the Third Reich. Nevertheless, the uprising proved a failure for Slovenes, and the Germans strengthened their campaign of terror, methodically combed the region, tried to capture activists and partisans, and shot hostages.



In spring 1942, the focus of partisan activity moved to a smaller occupied area, the Province of Ljubljana. Successful operations carried out by tiny partisan units, which took advantage of the Italian defense strategy employed by the 2nd Army Group in Yugoslavia, facilitated the success of an uprising of wider dimensions. Around 4,500 partisans gained control of an area of 2,500 square kilometres from where Mussolini's military, police and administration had to withdraw despite the fact that there had been as many as 38,000 Italian soldiers in the province, with a ratio of 1 man per 6 inhabitants. The liberated territory became a supply base for the partisan troops until July's large offensive for which the Italian 11th Army Corp was reinforced with two divisions. At that time, the partisans seriously jeopardized the important railway connections between Postojna and Ljubljana and between Ljubljana and the Croatian town of Karlovac. During the offensive, the Fascist units did not spare the civilian population suspected of supporting the rebels: they killed around 1,200 captured combatants and civilians, and interned around 25,000. In August 1942, moreover, they encouraged the Slovenes opposing the resistance to join the Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia that helped control the countryside, thus hindering food supply, connections and OF propaganda work. When political efforts could no longer deter a fratricidal war,

Villagers from Zavrb above Cerknica digging their own graves, July 22, 1942

In order to carry out its large offensive, the Italian army stationed additional divisions and several other groups totaling 65,000 soldiers in the Province of Ljubljana. Lasting from mid-July to the beginning of November, the offensive revealed that the Italian goals and methods did not differ from those of the Germans. The Italians treated civilians with the utmost cruelty: interning them, shooting hostages and prisoners, and burning down villages. Even before the offensive began, they captured more than 17,000 men during their raids, abducted them to their barracks and checked them out with help of informers in order to eventually deport 2,663 people. Involving also the Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia, the offensive killed many civilians and around 1,000 partisans (out of around 4,500). Mussolini himself went to Gorizia (Gorica), where he convened a meeting with military commanders and the Ljubljana administration, in order to declaim the goal of the offensive: not only to crush the resistance and subjugate Slovenes, but also to expel them forever and to populate the area with Italians after the end of war.



the partisan units were ordered to launch a series of attacks on formations of collaborators in order to hinder their growth. Unfortunately, they were not successful: by summer 1943, the latter counted 6,200 men, thus outnumbering the partisan army.

The three-month offensive, during which the Italian units combed 90% of the province, brought about a thorough restructuring of the partisan army. In order to engage in manoeuvre warfare and not just in guerilla actions, four brigades were established. Despite their small size (each comprising only 600 combatants) they managed to inflict several crushing defeats on the Italians in the following months, with the two most severe being those at Bukovina near the border with Croatia in February 1943 and at Jelenov Zleb in March 1943. For the partisans, it was of utmost importance to gain ground in other Slovene regions, in the German occupational zone and in Venezia Giulia, an ethnically Slovene region ceded to Italy in 1920 by the Treaty of Rapallo.

Amid the 3rd Squad of the 1st Battalion, April 1943.

Active participation of women in the national liberation movement, including in fighting units, played a decisive role in their emancipation. In September 1943, the OF Executive Council introduced active and passive suffrage for all men and women older than seventeen years. That was the first time that Slovene women were granted direct suffrage (they were not allowed to vote in Austria-Hungary and in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Women comprised some 10% of all members in representative bodies of the national liberation movement. Already during the war, they established a mass female organization called the Slovene Antifascist Female Union the aim of which was to help them attain emancipation.



The capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943 brought a radical change to the status and fighting capacity of the partisan forces. Having disarmed half of the Italian units in the Slovene territory, the partisans gained materiel that provided the basis for massive enlistment in their ranks. They also defeated the demobilized Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia, with almost half of its members seeking refuge in German units. The OF Executive Committee decreed compulsory mobilization of all combat-capable men aged 18 to 45. Eruptive growth of partisan units was witnessed in particular in the region of Primorska where the Slovene population regarded the capitulation of Italy not only as the fall of the Fascist regime, but also as national liberation from the imposition of foreign power. As a result, around 12,000 recruits formed a defence line in the vicinity of Gorizia, thus for some time preventing the German forces from entering and occupying the region in accordance with their plans regarding Italy. A similar response was witnessed in the Province of Ljubljana where 19 new brigades were formed along with several divisions and two corps. It was during this period that the partisan army methodically developed its formation for the first time, stipulating the number of units and its members, implementing the chain of command, and introducing a ranking system and officer career stepladder.

With the Italians having left the scene, the German occupation first focused on major towns and the Ljubljana-Trieste-Venice railway. From the end of September until the end of November 1943 their fighting units carried out five thorough and comprehensive actions against the partisans, thus covering half of the Slovene territory, as well as Croatian Istria and Gorski Kotar.

Confiscated Italian weapons in Ribnica, September 10, 1943.

With the Italian government having declared unconditional capitulation on September 8, 1943, the national liberation army of Slovenia disarmed more than half of the Italian units stationed in Slovene territory, destroyed the majority of posts of the Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia and Slovene Chetniks, and carried out general mobilization. The region of Primorska witnessed a massive uprising. For some time, wartime Slovenia saw the largest liberated territory stretching from the Croatian border to Venetian Slovenia in Italy, with the Germans controlling only Ljubljana and some other major towns, as well as the most important communications.

Combatants of the Slander Brigade attacking a German row of trucks driving down the Lukovica-Krasnja road at the village of Trnjava, April 27, 1944

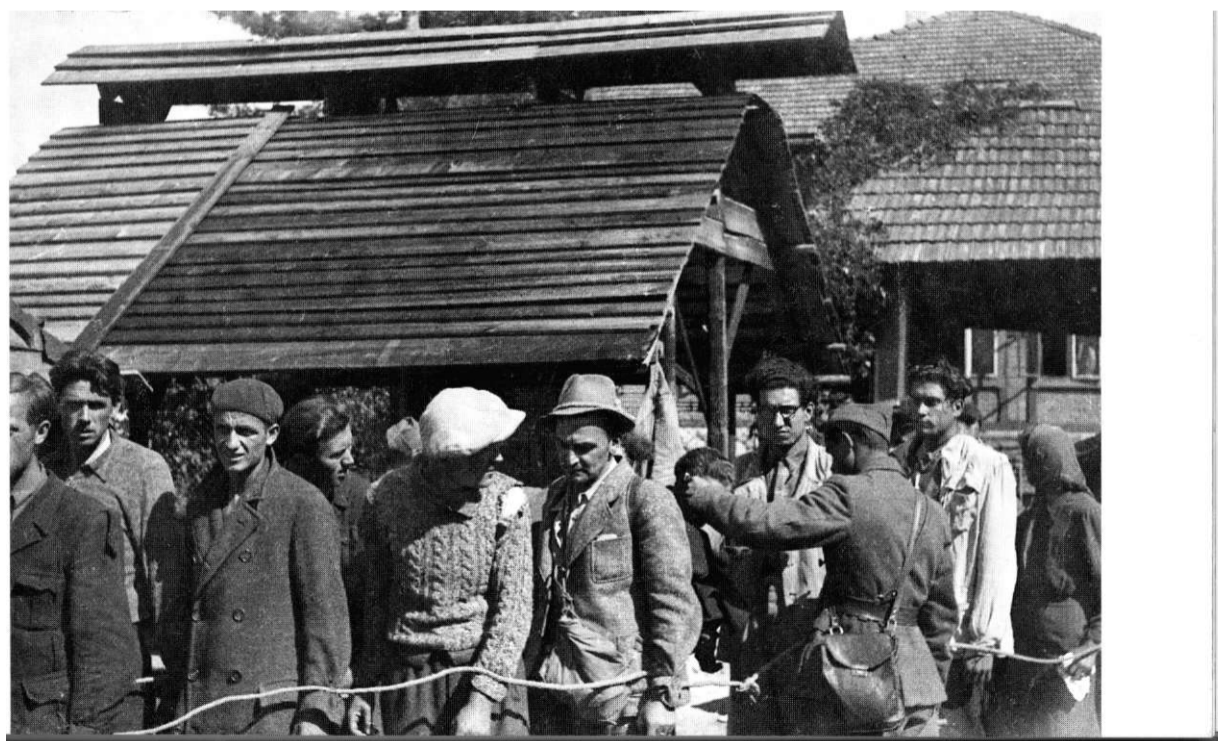


Yet the Germans did not manage to oust the partisans. Despite the loss of approximately a quarter of their men, the latter strengthened their position in some areas of the Province of Ljubljana that were of difficult access and in northern Primorska (including part of Upper Carniola), with both territories covering a surface area of some 700 to 1,000 square kilometres. As two nuclei of the liberated territory, they became home to temporary administrative and political authorities, supply and technical bases and numerous clandestine hospitals.

The Germans united the newly occupied western half of Slovenia into the Operation Zone of the Adriatic littoral. In order to exert control over the resistance, they set up the operational headquarters for "gang destruction" (Bandenbekämpfung) in Trieste and Ljubljana and, in need of additional forces, in October 1943 formed anti-partisan formations manned by Slovenes. The Slovene Home Guard (Slowenische Landeswehr). Security Council was not autonomous groups: its operation was directed and supervised by the German headquarters. The quisling formations fought against the partisans until the end of war, even after autumn 1944 when Tito reached an agreement with the legal Yugoslav government in exile. Particularly in the Prov-

Members of Home Guard units caught at Turjak, September 1943

Following the capitulation of Italy, some 700 members of the Voluntary Anti-communist Militia (White Guards) and Slovene Chetniks, as well as priests and theology students, took refuge in Turjak castle. The plan of Slovene middle class politicians to declare anti-communist (i.e., collaborators) units the legitimate Slovene army and hence part of the Royal Yugoslav Army in the motherland fell through, together with their expectations that Allies would disembark in Dalmatia. After a week of fighting, the partisans took the castle in September 1943. The major part of the Chetnik units had already been defeated on September 10, in the village of Grčarice in the district of Kocevje. The minority of the captives (around 100) were brought under extraordinary court martial from October 9 to 11, 1943, the rest were executed without trial. After the capitulation of Italy, altogether 414 captured militia members and 171 Slovene Chetniks were executed, while 100 were killed in fighting. Out of around 6,300 members of anti-partisan units (militia members and Slovene Chetniks), 2,400 were captured by the partisans, approximately the same number joined the Germans and formed the Slovene Home Guard army under their auspices, while the rest either joined the partisans or fled back to their homes.



ince of Ljubljana, they developed into a military force equal to the partisan army, so that during WWII Slovenia witnessed not only the struggle against the occupiers, but also a fratricidal war.

Having strengthened its position in late autumn 1943, the partisan army set itself a new objective: to bring the German military transport to a complete standstill by disabling the most important railway lines connecting Trieste-Graz and Graz-Zagreb on the one hand and Villach-Trieste and Villach-Za-

The transfer of wounded combatants of the 14th Division through the village of Paski Kozjakon February 19, 1944; the first man on the left is the priest Jože Lampret.

In January 1944, the best equipped and armed division composed of 112 male and female partisans was sent to Styria in order to reinforce local partisan units and the national liberation struggle in general and to turn the region regarded by the Germans as part of their Third Reich into a starting point for the expansion of the resistance movement to the edges of Slovene national territory: across Carinthia to Austria and across Prekmurje to Hungary. Conducted during harsh winter across dangerous Croatian territory, the exhausting march saw continual attacks first by the Ustaše and, once the elite division crossed the Sava river and was working its way through Styria, by the Germans, who quickly realized the political and military threat posed to them by such a large partisan unit and hence attacked it vigorously and repeatedly. Once the march was over, only 440 combatants were still able to fight, 367 were killed, 261 sent to partisan hospitals, and the rest captured or missing. One of the dead combatants was the legendary partisan poet Karel Destovnik- Kajuh.



greb on the other, with both being heavily protected (they were continually guarded by more than two divisions). In addition to large military operations, the partisans organized daily mining of the lines and their facilities carried out by small diversionary groups. By badly damaging some 20 km of tracks in the Baska grapa Valley in June 1944, it succeeded in stopping transport through the Soca (Isonzo) Valley for a few months, thus blocking the Villach-Trieste line. Having successfully attacked key facilities, they also disabled the Trieste-Ljubljana line (at the viaduct called Stampé's Bridge) and the Ljubljana-Maribor line (at the bridge across the Sava river in Litija) for quite some time. These attacks on communications comprised an important part of the Allies' plans to disable the communications along which the Wehrmacht transferred its personnel and materiel from Balkan to Italian battlefields. Even if it did manage to considerably hinder the enemy's military transport, the partisans could not bring it to a complete standstill on the

"The fourteen-year-old courier Pavel Setrajcic Palcek (Dwarf) sitting outside the headquarters of the Slovene Seventh Corps. He was repairing a hole in his sock by using a hand-grenade as a darning egg. Palcek was a courier carrying messages from one Partisan headquarters to another. Frequently he crossed enemy lines. Qualifications for being a courier were: intelligence, initiative, endurance, and a through knowledge of surrounding area. Couriers were supplied with the best boots and an automatic weapon. Palcek was unusually young for a courier"... Soon after I photographed him in 1944 he had been severely wounded by mortal fire. He recovered and, serving in an anti-aircraft unit, reached the rank of lieutenant colonel", wrote reporter John Phillips, who published the photograph in his book Yugoslav story. Until mid-1942, the communications between partisan units and their headquarters were mostly maintained by the Central Technical Committee of the Communist Party. After that, the partisans established a network of message relay points, a liaison battalion, radiotelegraph and telephone wire connections and several other forms of communication. Nevertheless, couriers remained the most important agents of communication as they distributed mail, the partisan newspapers, literature and propaganda materials, as well as accompanying activists and partisans on their expeditions to various parts of Slovenia.

Disarmed German army between
Dravograd and Pliberk, May 1945



most important lines, not even if helped by the Allies' air forces that attacked key railway facilities from the beginning of 1944 either on their own or on the basis of the intelligence provided by Slovenes.

In 1944, partisan warfare was characterized by dynamic alternation of offensive operations launched by the German and quisling forces on the one hand and the resistance army on the other. In addition to railway communications, the partisans attacked in particular those places that offered a passage between individual nuclei of the liberated territory or that provided the opportunity to expand their bases. Staunchly supported by the civilian population, they established three more nuclei in Styria (Kozjansko district, Upper Savinja Valley, Pohorje plateau) in summer 1944, and succeeded in mobilizing around 14,500 men in three months. With the occupational and collaborator forces stationed in strongly protected and fortified posts, the partisans' attempts were directed at taking these strongholds by storm and to a much lesser degree at manoeuvre warfare. The enemy forces manifested their offensiveness not only through repeated large and small operations during which they invaded areas under partisan control in order to wipe out



Members of the Slovene Home Guard units after the British returned them from Austrian Carinthia to Slovenia; Kranj, May 30, 1945. After the war, around 13,000 returned or captured collaborators were executed, mostly without trial.

Two partisans at the Duke's Throne in Gosposvetsko polje, Zollfeld in Austrian Carinthia, May 1945



their units, but also by committing violence against civilians in order to dissuade them from cooperating with "bandits". In doing so, they committed a number of evident violations of the laws of war rendering such invalid at that time; they tortured and killed civilians, destroyed civilian property, and killed prisoners.

In the months prior to the end of war, Slovene territory saw the approach of two fronts: the Balkan and the Italian. As a rear to both and as an area boasting communications vital for the withdrawal of the occupiers' troops, it became so important that the Germans tried not only to distance the partisans from the communications by all means possible, but also to destroy them. In autumn 1944, the resistance reached its largest size - 36,000 members - while the occupation forces composed of soldiers from various Axis countries increased to 122,000 men during the winter 1944/45. In March 1945, the Slovene partisans officially became part of the Yugoslav army, thus losing a degree of their operational independence. Their new task was to act as a force behind the front running from the Syrmia region to central Dalmatia formed by the Wehrmacht in order to fight the Yugoslav forces. Having suffered a number of blows during continual battles and, consequently reduced to 25,000 men, it rose again when the Slovene territory was approached by the IVth Yugoslav army, and participated in the liberation of Trieste, liberated the western edge of the Slovene ethnic territory in the Friuli region, and reached southern Carinthia, a region whose population was partly Slovene, at the same time as the British. The Slovene resistance movement expected and demanded that the ethnic borders be observed within the new federal Yugoslavia. Such claims were posed by the Belgrade government at the Paris

Celebrating the liberation of Trieste
May 3, 1945



Peace Conference in 1946; however without much success, since the Yugoslav army was forced to withdraw from part of the disputed territories as early as May and June 1945.

To summarize, the partisan army fought in an area that was strategically important above all owing to its transitional character, in an area destined to border as many as three Axis countries. Having fought both in territories that were ceded to Germany and Italy already before WWII and in those that were annexed by them in 1941, the Slovene resistance had to deal with one of the most difficult situations in Europe as both countries methodically strove to crush any form of opposition. By succeeding in considerably paralyzing German long-distance transport and by carrying out extensive military operations that compelled the occupiers to increase their forces in the area, diverting them from other crucial fronts, it successfully contributed to the joint struggle of the Allied nations against Nazism and Fascism.

The partisan army enlisted 75,000 soldiers, of which 4 % were female. Despite the occupiers' repressive measures, it was voluntarily joined by around 5 % of the Slovene population. The majority of combatants were of that origin, with around 7 % being of other nationalities. During four years of war, characterized by insufficient military equipment, weaponry and supplies, it developed from guerilla units into an organized formation that was officially part of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia, later renamed the Yugoslav Army, yet remaining independent until the last months of war. Owing to the conditions in which it operated, it

Joy at the liberation of Ljubljana,
May 9, 1945

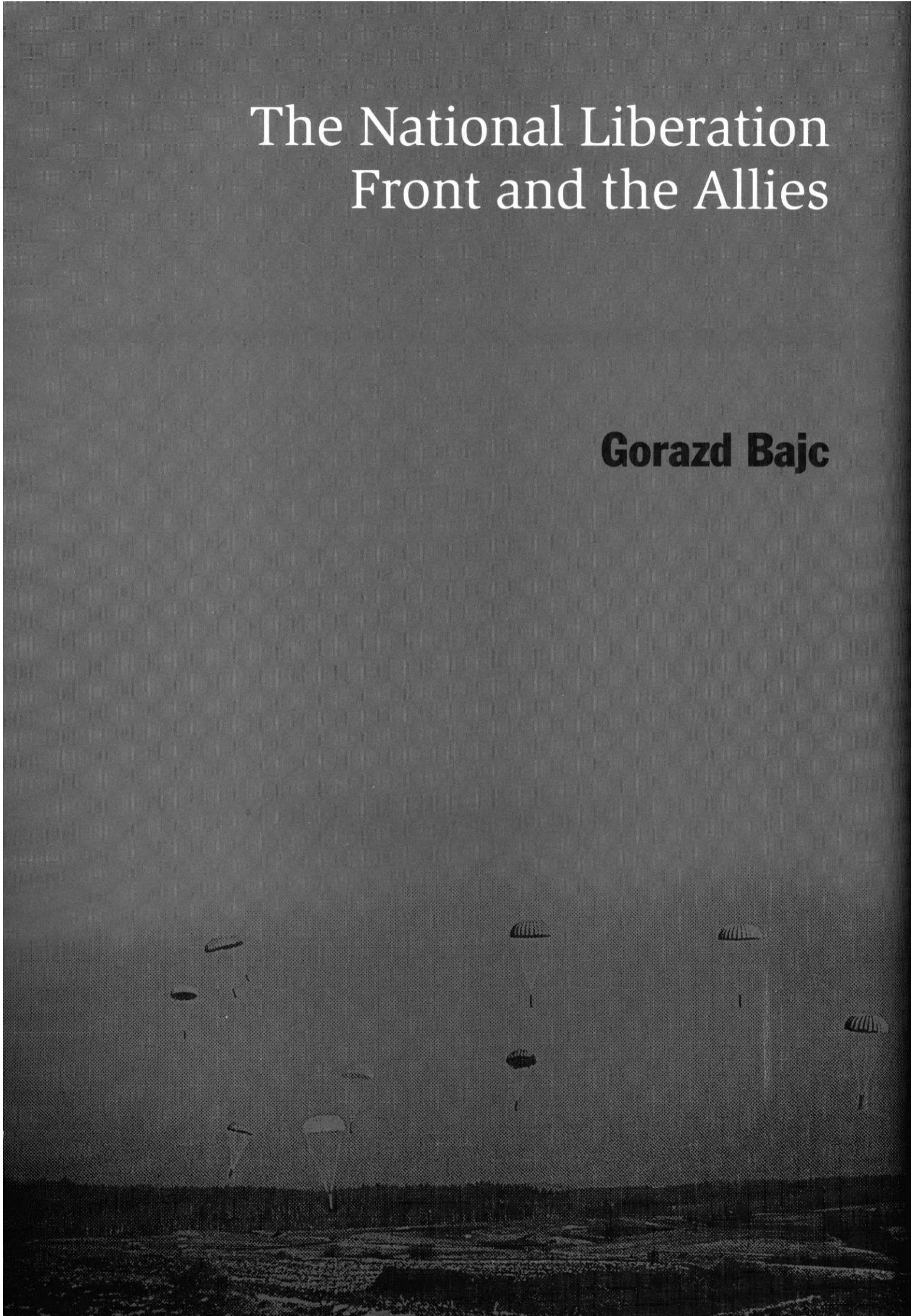


DAMIJAN GUŠTIN

was never able to obtain weaponry that would make it equal to the forces against which it fought. All that its members could invest in the struggle was outstanding courage, high combat morale and improvisation. It was only in that manner that they could achieve victories, though they also suffered heavy losses: more than 28,000 partisans were killed, which accounted for 37 % of the resistance forces; around 15,000 combatants were heavily wounded and ill; several thousands could not bear the extreme constraints of partisan warfare and deserted. The members of the resistance and the elite that led the national liberation struggle regarded the Slovene partisan army as one of the most important achievements of the national consciousness, as an armed brace of a state yet to be formed within the framework of Yugoslavia.

The National Liberation Front and the Allies

Gorazd Bajc



During World War II, the Slovene National Liberation Front became a partner in the Allied coalition against the Axis. When the resistance started in 1941, it was anything but self-evident that it would be given such a status. At that time, the great powers were not primarily interested in Yugoslavia, being focused on military and strategic developments on other fronts. And any interest at all in the Balkan country focused more on the Chetnik movement (Serbian rebels) led by Draža Mihailović than on Tito's partisans. The OF was only gradually accepted into the club of anti-Fascist or anti-Nazi movements along with international recognition of the latter. The Allies definitively acknowledged full recognition and support at the Teheran Conference (Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin) organized from November 28 to December 1, 1943.

The arrival of American and Soviet military missions to the celebration of the festival of Slovene and Croatian units, Metlika, July 9, 1944

The first British military mission led by the Canadian major William Jones joined the Slovene Partisans on June 27, 1943 after the Allies deciphered the German cryptograms in the second half of 1942, realizing that it was in fact Tito's partisans and not Draža Mihailović's Chetniks, as claimed by the exiled Yugoslav government, who fought against the occupiers. It was the access to the Mediterranean and the Italian front that gave prominence to the Slovene partisan movement. William Jones, who coordinated the work of the increasing number of Allies' liaison officers in Slovenia (altogether more than eighty by the end of war), was supervised by the American Captain James Goodwin and by the British lieutenant-colonel Peter Moore. In mid-March 1944, the Main Headquarters of the partisan Army hosted the Soviet military mission first led by the colonel Aleksander Patrahajcev and then by the lieutenant-colonel Boris N. Bogomolov. The special British mission operating from the headquarters of the IX Corp in Primorska was headed by the lieutenant-colonel Peter Wilkinson, while the Allies' officers active in Styria were led by the American major Franklin Lindsay.



Anti-Fascist resistance in Slovene territory preceded similar movements from other parts of Europe. After World War I, the Austrian littoral (renamed Venezia Giulia) was ceded to Italy. The Slovene and Croat population who lived there - around 500,000 people - immediately embarked on active resistance to Mussolini's denationalization policy. As early as the mid 1920s, they organized acts of sabotage, executions of traitors, cross-border transfers of literature and newspapers, and collection of intelligence, thus establishing a movement that could be regarded as the first anti-Fascist struggle in Europe. In spite of harsh repression it remained alive until 1941 when the majority of its members were arrested, tried and executed. Since the second half of the 1930s, this underground active operating in Venezia Giulia and in Ljubljana co-operated with western intelligence agencies: initially French, then British. After the beginning of WWII, they worked primarily with the Special Operations Executive (SOE), which had the task of assisting resistance in occupied Europe.

Though the invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941 almost completely destroyed the British secret network in the Balkans, some activities could still be carried out. London thus received reports on resistance and sabotage waged in Serbia and Slovenia, which however provided an extremely unclear picture of the situation. It was further blurred by pro-Chet-

Allies' help from the air, 1945

The Allies provided their military help mostly via transport planes that landed at makeshift airstrips (there were some ten across Slovene territory). In 800 flights, they ferried in light weapons for around 16,000 people, clothing and footwear for 9,000 people, several tons of medical supplies and food, and several hundred pieces of heavy weaponry (anti-tank guns, mortars - the testing of one of them killed the legendary partisan commander Franc Rozman-Stane - and a few light cannons).



nik propaganda, orchestrated by the Anglo-Americans themselves, ascribing the responsibility for some anti-Axis actions of Tito's (communist) partisans to the monarchist Mihailovic.

However, being in summer 1941 the only western nation that still fought Hitler, the British perceived the Yugoslav resistance as great political and moral support even if they possessed inaccurate information. Churchill and his intelligence services began therefore to consider the idea of contacting rebels as soon as possible by sending an exploratory mission to Yugoslavia. It had to get in touch with them, obtain insight into the situation in the field, and establish radio communication with SOE headquarters in Cairo.

The SOE initially focused on southeastern Yugoslavia as that area was home to Mihailovic's and Tito's headquarters. Over time, when they realized that those who fought most effectively against the occupiers and their collaborators were partisans and not Chetniks, the British saw the need to expand their operations into Slovenia and Croatia, though this was not immediately feasible.

Civilians boarding an Allied plane at the Krasinec airport in Bela Krajina in March 1945

The first clandestine partisan airport began operating in June 1944 near the village of Nadlesk in Loz Valley, receiving ten planes during the night, and twenty during daytime. It was abandoned in September 1944 after being jointly attacked by the Germans and their Slovene collaborators. A second airport was established at the Otok Meadow on the Kolpa river, and a third near the village of Krasinec (also close to the Kolpa), both serving as a landing for Allied and Soviet planes. The airports saw the evacuation of more than 300 rescued American pilots, 14 RAF members, 372 liberated British prisoners of war, 94 French soldiers, 29 persons of other nationalities who managed to escape from German concentration camps or transports, as well as more than 2,000 Slovene civilians, in particular women and children. All were evacuated to Italy.



The first British intelligence mission in Slovenia was carried out in March 1943, followed by a military mission in May. Soon a number of Britons, as well as Americans and Soviets - and even a group of Czechoslovakian informants - were active in Slovene territory, operating from the headquarters of the resistance located in the regions of Bela Krajina, Primorska, and Štajerska.

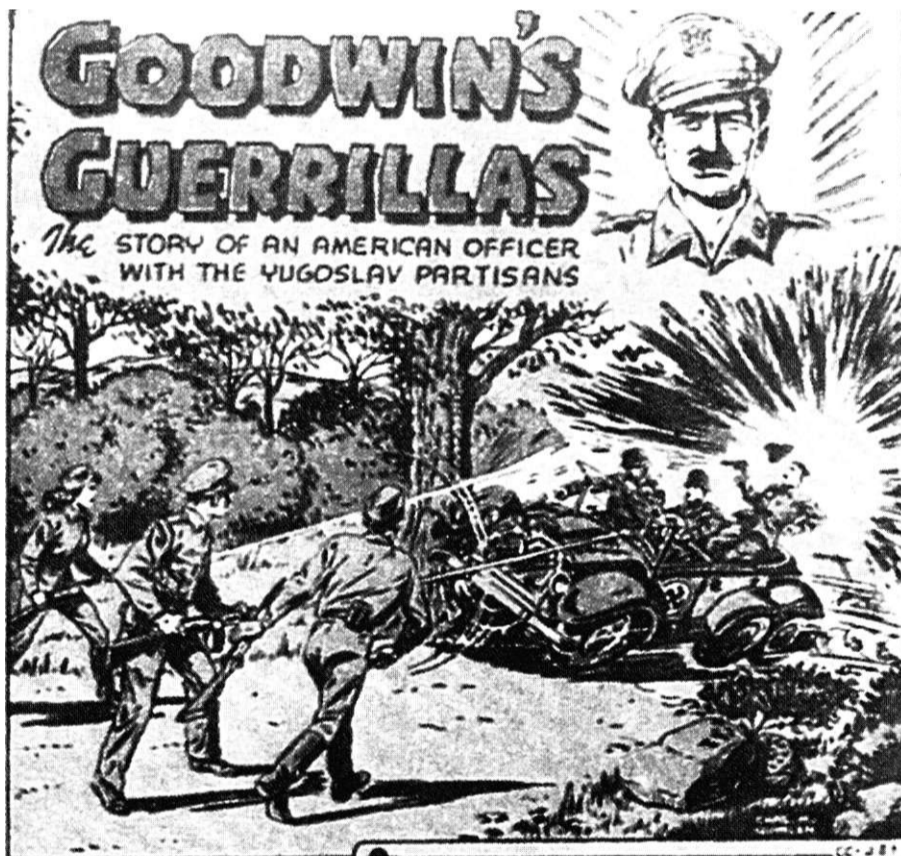
A partisan physician treating the wounded leg of Captain James M. Goodwin, the head of an Allied mission stationed at the Main Headquarters of the partisan army, September 20, 1944
Goodwin became a partisan legend in the USA. Life Magazine published a strip on his brave deeds in Slovenia on September 23, 1944, just a few days after he had been hurt in a partisan attack on the railway bridge across the Sava river in Litija. The twelve-hour-long march and attack on the bridge carried out by the British air force and Slovene partisans was documented by the most famous Allied photographer of the Yugoslav partisans, John Phillips, who shot a series of telling and deeply moving photographs.



They co-operated with partisans (e.g., in rescuing downed Allied airmen or escaped prisoners of war), transmitted and received radio messages, trained partisans in sabotage, and provided them with weapons, ammunition, food, medicine, etc.

In return for their help, the Allies expected the Slovenes to fight against the Axis and their collaborators as efficiently as possible. What they wanted most was for them to disable the occupiers' means of communication, in particular railway lines, and to collect intelligence.

The Anglo-American agencies - the SOE and the OSS (the American Office of Strategic Services) - were particularly interested in sabotaging the railway junction at Zidani Most and the nearby viaduct, as well as railway lines in Primorska connecting Italy to the Balkans. This activity was of vital importance as it hindered the Axis in their efforts to transfer soldiers and materiel needed by the Wehrmacht and their war industry. Sabotage reached its peak in the spring and summer of 1944 when the Allies were planning the Battle of Normandy (D-day: June 6, 1944) and wanted to divert German at-



IT WAS NOT LONG AGO THAT THE NAZIS CONSIDERED THEMSELVES HOBNAILED THROUGH THE BOMB-BUTTED STREETS OF BELGRADE - PILLAGING THE COVETED YUGOSLAV COUNTRY SIDE! BUT NOW THE "CONQUERORS" WAIT TENSELY IN THEIR WOODLAND OUTPOSTS - AWAITING THE DREADED GUERRILLA BATTLE CRY "ZIVLA ZAVEZNIKI!" - LONG LIVE THE ALLIES! LIAISON OFFICER WITH THE HEROIC FIFTEENTH BRIGADE, CAPTAIN JAMES GOODWIN HAS TAKEN PART IN THE CAMPAIGN THAT IS SWEEPING THE BERMANS FROM YUGOSLAVIA!



PT. SUZEMBERK - HEADQUARTERS OF THE SLOVENIAN PARTISAN ARMY

GERMANY IS NOW MENACED FROM THE EAST AND WEST! IF WE CAN DRIVE FROM THE SOUTH - WE'LL HAVE ADOLF PINNED ON THREE PRONGS!

WE HAVE A DEFINITE STRATEGY CAPTAIN GOODWIN NOTICE THIS PLAN IS BEING RUN THROUGH LITJA!

tention to other places in Europe. The most important operations conducted on Slovene territory and elsewhere in Yugoslavia were called "Bearskin" and "Ratweek".

The former was launched in June 1944 in order to co-ordinate attacks on railway lines that would bring German traffic to a halt for at least a week. The operation was strategically connected with the situation at the so-called Second Front: the Allies wanted to bring German divisions to a standstill on Slovene territory in order to prevent them from entering Italy where British Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander was waiting to launch his offensive. Having proved a complete success, "Bearskin" facilitated the success of the even more important "Ratweek": the sabotage of railway lines all over Yugoslavia.

Launched in September 1944, this new operation reflected the maximum engagement that could be provided by such a military formation as the Yugoslav partisan movement. Its success frustrated many German plans to withdraw their divisions from the Balkans in a disciplined manner and to supplement their forces in Italy. At the same time it helped the Allies threaten one of the last major German lines of defense, running across the Apennine Peninsula. The final results of the operation exceeded all expectations. The

Funeral of downed American pilots at Suhor, Črnomelj, April 5, 1945

The partisan rules on how to help downed airmen and escaped prisoners of war stated that the partisans had to do everything to save them, to immediately notify the liaison officer, to help the wounded and send them to hospital, and to bury the dead with all military honours if possible. The rules also read: "The Allied airmen who managed to survive have to be treated as our guests and therefore given a helping hand in all respects."



number of actions successfully completed across the whole of Yugoslavia was so high that, according to Anglo-American post-war reconstructions, it was almost impossible to count them all: there must have been several hundreds. As a result, the Wehrmacht suffered a severe blow in the Balkans and never managed to regain its previous operational capacity.

An Allied pilot talking to partisans in
March 1945; Griblje near Črnomelj



Partisan Health Care

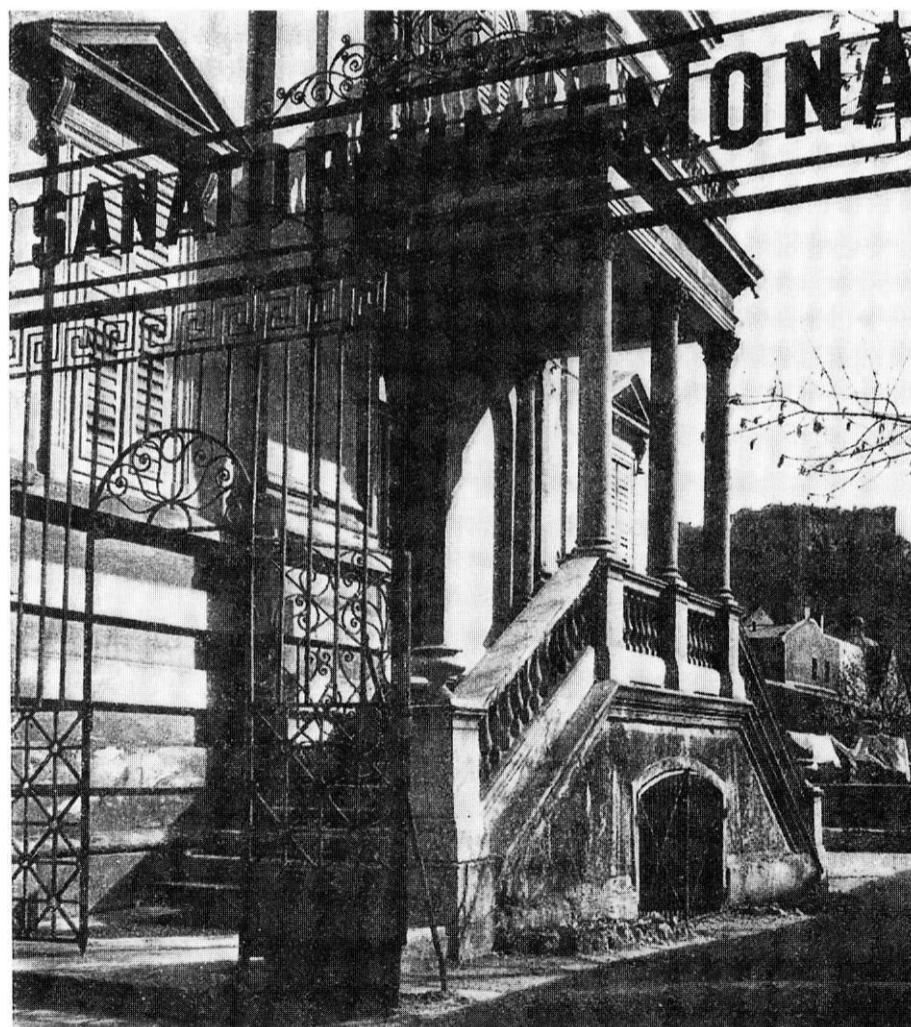
Janko Kostnapfel



This is a story about 22,000 registered wounded combatants and patients, several tens of hospital units, numberless male and female partisan physicians, surgeons, medical students, nurses, and thousands of stretcher bearers. It is also a story about young female nurses who snuck through the enemy fire in order to save the wounded, about care for the wounded during struggle and marches, about physicians working in clandestine hospitals in straitened circumstances where improvisation was a sine qua non, about carefully kept files on medical treatment, about a physician who constantly carried two phials of potassium cyanide in his pockets having sworn never to leave his immobilized patients had the enemy broken into the hospital, about a physician who kept a nursing room in the bunker of her house and died together with her patients after the enemy burnt it down, about betrayed patients sheltered in the karst cave who preferred to kill themselves in a suicide pact, together with their nurse Mimica, rather than to fall into the enemy hands, and about the care for downed Allied pilots.

Even when it came to the medical area, the German occupiers broke all international rules related to the civilian population. In June 1941, two months after the occupation, the Nazis broke into the hospital for mentally disabled in the town of Celje and closed it down. According to the male nurse Jože Ureka, "there soon spread the rumors that they intended to transfer the patients to Germany. And in mid-June they indeed took them all away by buses. At that time, the hospital was home to around 400 patients, half of whom were women. Only twenty patients, allegedly those who had just been received and those disabled in World War I, were sent to a hospital in

The entrance to the Emona Sanatorium in Ljubljana where wounded partisans were secretly treated at the beginning of the resistance



Feldhof. The rest witnessed a tragic end and were soon cruelly killed. Their relatives received a letter saying they had died of this or that disease, and even cynically offering them their cinerary urns in case they wanted them." The Germans killed the mentally disabled and old people from nearby nursing homes (altogether 500 people) with Zyklon-B gas in Hartheim Castle, 30 km from Mathausen.

In summer 1942, the Germans seized around 600 babies, children and minors from the occupied Slovene territory and imprisoned them in a school in the vicinity of Celje, with or without their mothers. These "stolen children", including babies, were literally snatched from the arms of their mothers - who were sent to German concentration camps from where the majority of them never returned - and compelled to wear small cards with personal data on them around their necks. They were sat or laid in baskets entrusted to German "nurses" and sent to children camps in Germany. To mention just one more example: many concentration camp internees subjected to Nazi medical experiments were of Slovene origin.

Such policies clearly indicated that the Nazi occupiers would show no mercy to the population, prisoners, internees, resistance members and in particular wounded partisans. As a result, the partisan health service and other organizations helping the civilian population were organized with special care and in complete secrecy. The Yugoslav Red Cross disintegrated after the occupation, yet in Slovenia parts of its network managed to survive and kept helping people, in particular internees. Thus 18 June 1944 witnessed the establishment of the Slovene Red Cross in the town of Gradac located in the liberated territory of Bela Krajina. In addition, the Liberation Front organized Slovene National Aid, a humanitarian organization run mostly

A nurse treating a wounded partisan during fighting, 1944



JANKO KOSTNAPFEL

by women, who helped prisoners, internees, underground activists, partisans and socially threatened population. Its operation was vital to Ljubljana, which was surrounded by barbed wire, bunkers and machine gun nests for as many as 1170 days, with the only nine legal exits from the town under strict control. Many activists of Slovene National Aid were also OF members, including around three hundred foster families. In addition to supporting the resistance and the civilian population in various ways, the organization also took care of more than one hundred and twenty children whose parents were either killed or went underground, to prisons, concentration camps or the partisan army.

As soon as the first partisan units were formed, they were joined by physicians, medicine students and nurses. Their activity was directed by the Central Medical Committee that closely co-operated with the OF leadership, as well as with the Main Headquarters of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Slovenia. The committee collected, sorted and delivered medical supplies to the partisan health service, and started educational courses for medicine students and nurses before they joined the partisans. The collection of medical supplies evolved in towns and in the countryside: people prepared bandages, looked for pure alcohol and drugs; public hospitals collected operation instruments, ether, analgesics, splints,

The military band of the Main Headquarters of the partisan army visiting wounded combatants in the Zgornji Hrastnik hospital, Kočevski Rog, 1944.

Partisan hospitals located in the Kočevski Rog forest employed not only physicians, but also the medical group that was part of the Soviet military mission. Since summer 1944, the New Zealand military surgeon Lindsay Rogers and his two assistants visited partisan hospitals in the area and performed several dozen operations. Interestingly, it was he who first used penicillin in Slovene territory. As for Slovene physicians, they were active not only in partisan hospitals, but also in Allied hospitals in southern Italy.



plaster and other materials needed by the partisans. All this was carefully prepared, packed and dispatched to fighting units and clandestine hospitals, often through friendly railway men.

Initially, public hospitals also treated wounded partisans. In the course of time, however, partisan health care had to adapt to the rapid growth of the resistance. All units, including squads and detachments, enlisted health care workers and stretcher bearers. As far as the medical area was concerned, each battalion or brigade was headed by a physician or senior medical student. In addition, the operative group of the Main Headquarters of the partisan army included a health care department.

The initial concept of partisan health care included the principle that medical assistance should be provided as close to the front line as possible. Therefore the army established surgery teams that, appropriately equipped, followed the planned actions and operated on the wounded as soon as possible in improvised facilities or in the open air in the immediate rear of the battlefield. Given the fact that heavily wounded combatants proved a burden to action and movements and required a lot of attention, the initial concept had to be updated. The OF leadership hence decided to erect clandestine hospitals to which they transferred the casualties once the battle was over, thus unburdening the fighting units and ensuring the wounded appropriate medical care and conditions for them to rest and relax. This Slovene concept of establishing a well-organized network of clandestine hospitals was a unique trait within the Yugoslav resistance, strongly contributing to more efficient treatment of the wounded and to unburdening the units.

Clandestine hospitals were first housed in simple bivouacs and later on in wooden sheds that were relatively well-equipped and supplied, with some of them boasting even sheets. Surgeons and medical students worked in special operating rooms. Interestingly, the hospitals observed the order of the day that allocated some of the patients' time to general education, as well as to pastimes.

The partisan physician Dr Lojze Štamcar binding up the patients in the Leseni Kamen hospital, Kočevski Rog, September 8, 1943



Between 1941 and 1945, Slovenia was home to 247 hospital units and pharmacies and 3 partisan airports (near Stari trg, Črnomelj and Metlika) from which the Allies in accordance with the OF leadership transferred severely wounded patients to Bari in southern Italy. Partisan hospitals and other medical units were located all over Slovenia: there were 54 in the region of Primorska (medical sector A), 89 in the north (sector B) and 104 in the south (sector C). The highest number of beds, around 700, was held by hospitals hidden in the forested plateau of Kočevski Rog, followed by the Pavla Hospital in the Trnovski gozd (forest) and by the Snežnik Hospital.

In addition to hospitals and organized medical assistance in fighting units, the partisan health care system also helped civilian patients not only in the liberated territory, but also in areas controlled by the enemy. Thus the liberated region of Bela krajina boasted a protected maternity ward. During the war, medical staff shared their experience via the Partisan Medical Bulletin (1944 saw the publication of ten issues).

The majority of partisan hospitals were never discovered, with only a few being demolished by the enemy. To mention just two cases: in September 1944, the Germans and the Slovene Home Guard jointly attacked the partisan airport and the group of Allies stationed at Stari trg. Soon afterwards, the quislings led by their German instructors invaded Bela krajina and during their brief occupation burnt down the school in the regional capital of Črnomelj and the hospital in the nearby village of Kanižarica.

The most famous partisan hospital was the Franja Hospital. Hidden in the gorge near the town of Cerklje ob Gori, it had its own power plant and X-ray apparatus. As an outstanding monument to humanity, it received the European Heritage Label in 2007 (when it was badly damaged by floods) and is being considered for inclusion in the UNESCO Register of Cultural Heritage. Another well-known hospital was the Pavla Hospital, named after its female superintendent (just like the Franja Hospital). Expecting the potential emergence of a second front in Istria and, consequently, an increased number of

A combatant with an amputated leg, 1944



severe battles, the partisan army leadership decided to make room in the afore-mentioned hospitals for possible new patients and to transfer the heavily wounded to Italy. The transfer from the Franja Hospital to the partisan airport located at Stari trg in the Notranjska region began in August 1944. The bearers, carrying 50 heavily wounded patients, descended the narrow gorge to reach the valley where they waded across the Idrijca river. Having walked for another fourteen hours, they ascended the steep Vojsko Plateau on the next day. At the nearby Hudo polje on the other side of the hamlet of Mrzla Rupa, they were joined by another 50 patients from the Pavla Hospital who had already been waiting for them in the forest along the road for seven days. The column crossed the forested plateau of Trnovski gozd, reached the hamlet of Predmeja, and in late evening arrived to the Otlica natural window where it rested for a while. It was there that the whole IX Corps, which




Partisan hospital in Stari log in the Kočevski Rog forest, September 1944.

organized and carried out the transfer, gathered for the first time. The view of more than three thousand partisans and one hundred heavily wounded combatants on stretchers was an imposing sight. The march went on and the column first crossed the Postojna-Planina road and then the Ljubljana-Trieste railway line guarded by special Home Guard units. The column, involving one thousand bearers, safely reached the airport from where the wounded and a fairly large group of downed Allies' pilots saved by the partisans were transferred to Italy.

To end this story with some numbers: in the 1940/41 academic year, the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Ljubljana enrolled 324 junior students, of which 267 participated in the national liberation struggle. Altogether 55 students died, with 6 of them being women: 38 were killed on the front, while 17 died as hostages or in concentration camps. Before the beginning of World War II, the Medical Chamber of Slovenia listed 757 male and female physicians. The national liberation struggle witnessed the participation of 225 physicians, of which 20 were killed on the front, and 25 died as hostages or in concentration camps, with the death toll thus amounting to 45 physicians, with 4 of them being women.

The citation of remembrance by General Dwight D. Eisenhower presented to the Franja Hospital for providing medical aid and treatment to American soldiers during WWII



**THE AIR FORCES
ESCAPE AND EVASION SOCIETY**

AWARDS THIS CITATION OF REMEMBRANCE TO


e^sPartizanska — Bofnjsnka — "franja"

*for outstanding courage in coming to the aid of
United States airmen during the period 1942 - 1945*

We can never repay you, but, we will never-forget . . .

Richard M. Smith
President - AFEES

April 7, 1997
DATE



PART OF A LETTER OF TRIBUTE

"The loss of every Allied plane shot down over Europe was a tragedy — every member of a crew that was found and saved and sent back to us brought joy to all his comrades. To everyone who joined in this great work and to each member of his family and to all who shared, in those days, his risks and dangers I send assurances of my deep and lasting gratitude."

Sincerely,
Dwight D. Eisenhower
Dwight D. Eisenhower

Slovenes published their first translation of Bible in 1584, established their first philharmonic orchestra in 1701 (which is still active today even if it has changed names several times), developed their narrative in the second half of the 18th century, and yet they had to wait until the 20th century to form their own state. Language was thus their basic element of national cohesion. For the last 250 years, they strove for the recognition of equal status in relation to other European tongues. For instance, the first Slovene secondary schools and university were opened less than one hundred years ago. Not surprisingly, Slovenes came to the conclusion that the nation rises or falls together with its language.

The Austrian Monarchy was anything but enthusiastic about their national aspirations. Moreover, Slovene territory witnessed increased pressure toward the end of the 19th century as it was the last impediment to the realization of the ethnically pure great Germany stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic.

As a result, at the end of World War I Slovenes were happy with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, forming together with other southern Slavic nations the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which did bring them partial independence. Owing to the plebiscite in Carinthia and the Treaty of Rapallo, however, they lost a third of their ethnic territory, which strengthened their perception that they were a threatened nation. This conviction was further confirmed by the rise of Fascism and Nazism that led to violence against Slovenes living in Italy and to brutal denationalization of the Slovenes in Carinthia.

When Yugoslavia was invaded in April 1941 the nation perceived the events as a definitive Nazi and Fascist attempt to wipe it out. That was indeed the case, in particular in the German-occupied territory (Styria, Upper Carniola) that witnessed these fundamental acts of ethnic genocide: the expulsion

A partisan rally in 1944



of some ten thousand intellectuals, devastation of libraries and publishing houses, burning and tearing up of Slovene books, complete Germanization of education and prohibition of the use of Slovene in public, mass shooting of hostages. Hitler himself paid a short visit to Maribor, the capital of Styria, ordering his henchmen to "Make this land German for me again". In central and western Slovenia, Mussolini employed similar measures, but in contrast to the Nazis temporarily granted the local population a certain amount of cultural autonomy in order to encourage collaboration.

With their national existence clearly threatened, Slovenes needed less than three weeks after the occupation of Yugoslavia to form an underground resistance movement, with its leadership being composed of many prominent cultural figures. In addition, the rebellion also reached the wider population, manifesting itself in latent and spontaneous forms mostly motivated and characterized by efforts to preserve the mother tongue and cultural tradition. Thus the occupation gave rise to mass creativity and sparked off a wave of poetry, not only as a form of self-encouragement and consolation, but also as a call to resist the occupiers. This poetic avalanche was heralded by the gloomy and passionate poem "Do You Know, Poet, Your Duty"? Written by the oldest, most famous poet of that time, Oton Župančič, it was secretly published under his pseudonym prior to the winter of the first year of occupation (1941). Naturally, the poems of resistance that followed it differed in artistic quality: they ranged from the finest to the simplest, all characterized by elemental anxiety and defiance. Spring 1942 saw the secret publication

Slovene National Theatre: A scene from Matej Bor's play 'The Ragged People', Črnomelj 1944



of the first collection of poems, titled *Let's Outstorm the Storms*, written by Matej Bor. Surprisingly, it was published in a print run of 5,000 copies, and can most probably be regarded as the first of its kind published in occupied Europe.

In order to meet the needs of propaganda and intelligence services, the resistance developed a network of underground printing presses across the whole of Slovene territory. During the war, Ljubljana, at that time encircled by barbed wire, was home to as many as 55 illegal printing houses of various capacities, with the most unusual undoubtedly being one that operated in a police courtyard. Naturally, many of them were discovered and their employees shot or sent to concentration camps, which yet did not prevent the Slovene people from establishing new ones. With their total number reaching several hundreds, they possessed simple technical equipment, mostly mimeographs and cyclostyles. Illustrations were usually made using linocuts from old linoleum. However, there were a few exceptions, amazingly well-equipped, with the two largest - both possessing modern machines - being located in the forest. One was hidden in the hills at an altitude higher than 1000 metres and employed some 100 printers; the other was situated in a gorge and boasted its own hydroelectric power plant. Interestingly, it also published a daily newspaper that was the only illegal daily by any anti-Nazi resistance in Europe. It was distributed through a well-organized network of relay couriers.

The offices printed all types of materials: agitation and propaganda leaflets, notes of radio news broadcast by the Allies, and even artistic monographs, bibliophilic publications, orthographic books (!) and partisan money. As the partisans were establishing a school system in the territory under their control, they even prepared textbooks. When a certain fairly large unit stopped for a rest during its night expeditions, its printers edited collections of poems. Thus in winter 1943, a remote snow covered forest saw the pub-

Disabled partisan choir,
Dragomlja vas, August 1944



lication of poetry by one of the most prominent young partisan lyricists, Karel Destovnik-Kajuh (who was killed only a few months later in February 1944).

With so many artists and other cultural figures involved in the resistance, the death toll among the intelligentsia was high: more than 100 of the most distinguished artists and many amateurs were killed. They were either shot as hostages, interned in concentration camps or fell on the battlefield. Their deaths were often bizarre and pathetic: the sixty-year-old literary historian Avgust Zigon was shot in the street, the caricaturist Hinko Smrekar was shot as a hostage, the writer Tone Cufar was shot during his attempt to flee from prison, the poet Miran Jarc became lost deep in the forest, with no traces left of him, the literary critic Ivo Brncic was slaughtered by Ustase in Croatia, another seven intellectuals (priests) died in Jasenovac, the Ustase-run concentration camp, while the bohemian poet Ivan Rob had shouted out the well-known Risorgimento maxim "He who has died for his homeland has lived long enough/ Chi per la patria muor, vissuto e assai!" before his Fascist executioners shot him for "criminal" activities.



A puppet created for the partisan puppet theatre established in 1944

The partisan movement also developed elemental theatre *sui generis*: in summer 1942, the first drama/agitation group headed to the half-liberated countryside, unfortunately managing to perform only until the first Italian offensive when it disintegrated, with only one member surviving until the end of the war. Interestingly, all major units formed cultural groups that were in charge especially of cultural and propaganda "rallies". In addition to singing, recitals, and speeches, such events involved above all rudimentary and mostly improvised theatre performances *a la commedia dell'arte*. Featuring typical comic characters, the plays usually had rapid denouements accompanied by spectacular sound effects, typically shooting. The reports mention some 300 sketches, of which only a few were written down. Later on, the so-called liberated territory - i.e., the territory under partisan control - witnessed the establishment of professional theatre, which gave momentum to artistic ambitions: the partisans translated and staged Moliere, and wrote and performed the first original full-length drama depicting the resistance.

Such theatre was in fact a defiant response to theatre in the occupied capital. As early as 1941/42, Ljubljana adopted the imperative of cultural silence; i.e., the provision of non-performing in the public or in any institution supported by the occupiers. Whoever "forgot oneself" was regarded as a collaborator.

The liberated territory also established a partisan radio (Liberation Front Radio - ROF), the predecessor of which was the underground radio *The Screamer* set up in 1942 in Ljubljana. Moreover, in 1944 the leadership of the liberation movement formed a scientific institute and a unique parliament called *The Assembly of Cultural Workers*. Disabled combatants united in a special Disabled Partisan choir that brought new artistic dimensions to the long tradition of choral singing that could not escape new circumstances. Implying team work and unity, choral singing possessed elements that were of vital importance to the rebellion.

To encapsulate: during WWII, high cultural awareness and affiliation was an important agent of the Slovene anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi resistance. The ethnic genocide posed a threat to Slovene culture; for that reason, the leader of the Liberation Front, Boris Kidric - characteristically, the son of a professor of literary history - claimed that the Slovene partisan struggle was in fact a cultural struggle. Similar views were held by Edvard Kocbeck, a distinguished writer and one of the first OF members (later forced to become a dissident), and by many others. For that same reason, each public performance carried out by Slovene artists under the auspices of the German occupational authorities received strong condemnation, being perceived as a perverted, not to say perverse form of collaboration.

Last but not least, the heightened intellectual awareness enabled Slovenes to establish a network of cultural and scientific institutions already during the resistance. As a result, after the collapse of Nazism in May 1945 the nation was able to function at all vital institutional levels without any major hiccups or standstills. Slovenes awaited the end of WWII as important allies of the anti-Hitler coalition, above all convinced that they finally won for themselves the status of a free nation possessing not only cultural, but also state, sovereignty.

First issue of the satirical magazine Pavliha from August 1944, publishing a caricature of Hitler and Goebbels losing the war on all fronts

"Comrades, our national liberation border has been trespassed! Come Back!" The caricature drawn by the distinguished Slovene painter France Mihelic in 1944 depicts the most eminent historian of that time, Dr. Fran Zwitter, director of the Slovene Scientific Institute operating under the auspices of the Presidency of the Slovene National Liberation Council. Established on 9 January 1944 by the OF Executive Council, the institute dealt with the occupational regimes, numerous question of the post-war social order, and above all with the issues of borders, the international status of Slovenia and its status within the future Yugoslav federation. After the war, its most prominent members formed the Yugoslav delegation attending the Paris Peace Conference. Composed of five units (historical and geographical, legal, medical, technical and economic, and educational), the institute was a unique feature of the Slovene partisan movement, testifying to its extraordinary organization. After the second session of the AVNOJ, Slovene partisans began systematically building Slovene statehood within the framework of the emerging Yugoslav federation and did not want to miss the opportunity to lay the foundation for the future scientific network even under tough wartime conditions.



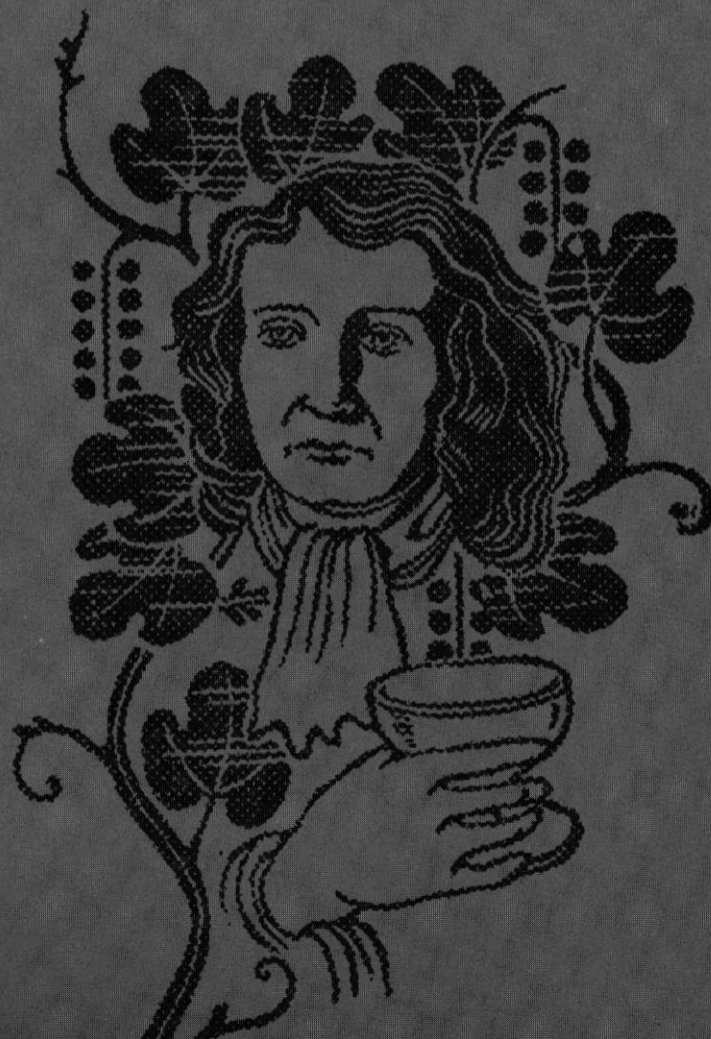
Ski jumping in Cerčno, January 21, 1945

In January 1945, the liberated territory situated just 20 kilometres behind the front line hosted the partisan "Olympic Games". "Those two January days in 1945 were simply wonderful: the sun was shining, there was plenty of snow, and the atmosphere was superb," remembers 83-year-old Franc Kocjan from Ljubljana who was the first to jump. "I was part of the team of the ski workshop established by the IX Corp and headed by the competition initiator Rudi Finžgar," he said in 2008, adding with pride that the workshop later developed into the renowned Slovene ski factory Elan. "My colleague Janko Štefe not only competed in riding breeches, but also did not want to separate from his pistol so he simply wore it behind his waist. The longest jump was made by Rudi Finžgar who jumped as many as 31 metres, which was unimaginable at that time. He was awarded with an English sub-machine gun." Another attraction for the viewers was patrol cross country skiing. Each contestant had to carry a gun and a knapsack with four bricks that were used instead of military equipment. "The games were watched by hundreds of locals and partisans and accompanied by a brass band. To top it all, the Allied planes flew above Cerčno and dropped parachutes of bright colours, thus dispatching us weapons and food." (Dnevnik, January 28, 2008)



The Image of the
National Liberation Struggle
in Slovene Poetry
of Resistance 1941-1945

Boris Paternu



In the "poetry of resistance" written during World War II Slovenes are well represented, as witnessed by four volumes published between 1987 and 1997 (2,300 texts, a fifth of those collected). The material was gathered during a research project at the Faculty of Arts of Ljubljana on the basis of documentary rather than aesthetic criteria; hence the poems display a range of artistic value, and were written by all social strata and in all environments: partisans, prisoners, concentration camp internees, soldiers forcibly mobilized into foreign armies, as well as immigrants to the USA. Geographically, the texts were composed not only in Slovenia, but also by Slovenes living in Italy, Austria and Hungary. Verbalizing personal experience and reflecting real historical events, these poems reveal "a collective undercurrent" as Theodor Adorno would say. Therefore, they can also be regarded as historical evidence, whether or not works of art.

Before immersing oneself in the large "collective undercurrent" sweeping through the bulk of the poetry from 1941 to 1945, it would make sense to first ponder the following question: what do these versified reflections and narratives tell us about people's decisions to stand up and fight for their country? Considering the brutality of occupational terror, it was anything but easy to make such a decision, as it posed a grave risk to everyone. In a certain sense, it was an ultimate decision as it involved individual destiny and collective fate at the same time. Anyone who found himself implicated in the resistance movement and uprising was more or less aware of that.

As can be inferred from the poems collected, the first and foremost motivation for such a decision had to do with national existence: it sprang from the primordial feeling of national and personal endangerment at a time when the two were impossible to differentiate. It is not difficult to understand this phenomenon, considering the fact that Nazis and Fascists sentenced Slovenes to national liquidation, to erasure from the map of Europe. Edvard Kocbek, the representative of the Catholic intelligentsia of the Liberation Front, wrote: "Each of us should seriously consider the fact that along with Jews, Slovenes were the only nation that Hitler sentenced to death and intended to annihilate, to take their land away even though he granted some kind of further national existence to all other nations, the Croats and Serbs, Czechs and Slovaks, Poles and Ukrainians, Norwegians and Dutchmen, etc."

Slovenes thus found themselves in a dramatic situation, both politically and psychologically, and were in such an overwhelming circumstance that the boundary line between national and personal existence was blurred. The issue of collective survival turned into an issue of personal survival. Therefore the decision to stand up against the enemy was not based on political or party affiliation. On the contrary, it came from the inside, from a deep resolution not to surrender without struggle.

The fact that the resistance was organized and led by communists was not a matter of real importance even to those who were alien or even opposed to them as they instinctively knew who the real rebels were. They followed those who addressed the issue of national existence from the right perspective, and who in a situation of utmost danger decided to rebel, as well as elaborate a path of hope. And whoever knew about Hitler and Mussolini's plans could see that collaboration was not the answer. Throughout Europe, all quislings were mistaken; in Slovenia, their mistake was double. Had Hit-

ler won, no wartime collaboration would have changed the fate of Slovenes. Even cautious circles that had doubts about both the partisans and their opponents used to say during the war: "Rather to join the devil in his fight for freedom than to die with Beelzebub!"

As evident from the large corpus of poetry, the second most important motivation for rebellion was based on social reasons, which was clearly reflected in poems not only by authors from working and rural backgrounds, but also by those of the intelligentsia. The need to radically change the pre-war social and political order was a fundamental part of the Slovene resistance. Social revolution was not only an inseparable part of the communists' program, but also that of the entire OE The poetry collected shows that even

Janez Vidic. Trilof Printing Office, Lithograph

The Trilof Printing Office began operating in April 1944 in Locnica near Medvode. Clandestine partisan printing offices first opened in Ljubljana, where they evolved from illegal technical units run by the Communist Party that were made available to the Liberation Front. In time, printing offices appeared all over Slovenia, reaching a peak in 1944 when they published 932 newspapers, brochures, books, numerous posters and leaflets, as well as top-quality graphics and partisan money. They also published a bibliophilic edition of France Preseren's famous poem 'The Toast' (Zdravljica) and other unique items.



BORIS PATERNU

though the ideas of a more righteous society differed considerably and were often vague and Utopian, they all sprang from the determination to change the social order. It was only the communists who knew precisely what they wanted and hence tried to direct the course of events towards the establishment of a proletarian society and seizure of power - even though they were not in the majority. In spite of different concepts, social transformation was an explicit and organic part of the Liberation Front, impossible to differentiate from the communist revolution. Interestingly, only a few poems of resistance, even those written by partisans, reflect an orthodox socialist orientation.

The front cover of Preseren's
The Toast' (Zdravljica), 1944



PREŠERNOVA
ZDRAVLJICA

A bird's eye view of this heterogeneous corpus would reveal the following: as can be inferred from many texts, the Slovene national and social awareness was disturbed in such an elemental and powerful way that it was impossible to confine people's reactions to the limits of communist ideology. The mental base of this revolutionary movement included a variety of currents ranging from communist and liberal beliefs to Christian religiosity, as well as some older ways of thinking, including Pan-Slavism.

Both motivational currents of the Slovene resistance, national and social, were intertwined with a third that was the most personal as it had to do with the issue of morality under conditions of a threatened personal existence. It was this motivation that supplied the other two: resistance was first and foremost an act involving personal courage and risk. There exists an incredible number of confessional poems that testify to extraordinary human power of defiance and persistence exerted even in the most hopeless situations and regardless of the horrifying predominance of the opposing forces of destruc-

Partisan school, 1944

The first improvised classes were held in partisan units themselves. Systematic establishment of partisan schools began after the capitulation of Italy. The network expanded and the schools followed the same principles: they organized teacher-parent meetings and teacher training sessions, observed curricula, and were even supervised. Working in modest circumstances, partisan teachers (male and female) tried to make up for the years when children had no classes. Based on the expectation that freedom would bring a new, more just social order, schools aimed at strengthening national consciousness. The 1943/1944 school year saw the operation of more than 430 schools employing 745 teachers, enrolling almost 30,000 pupils.



tion. Such will to live and fight could be observed everywhere: in the partisan army, a terrorized hinterland, prisons, and concentration camps across Europe. The entire history of Slovene culture does not possess a document that would reveal so much about the upright stance of the endangered nation during its struggle for survival so much as the poetry of resistance written between 1941 and 1945.

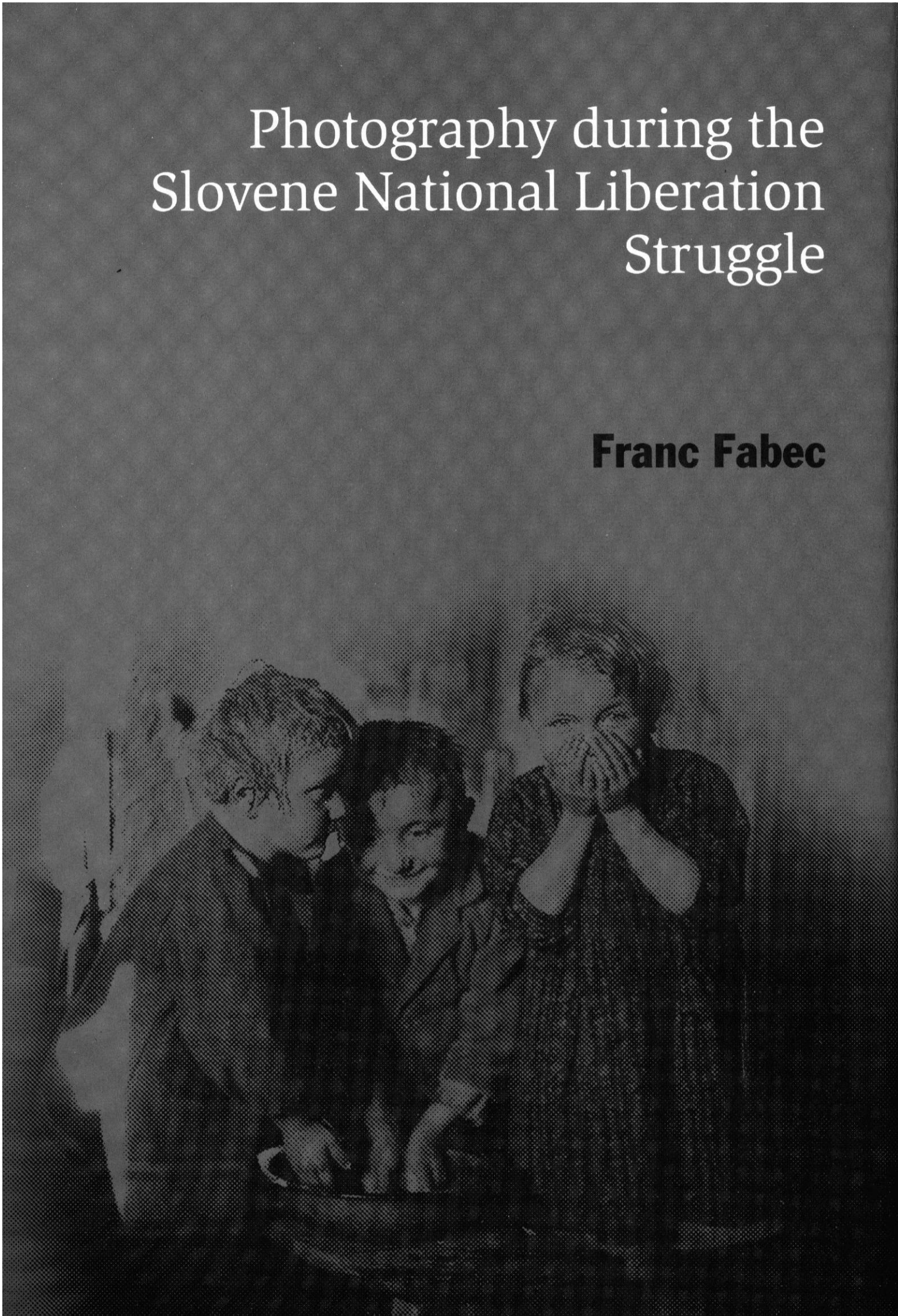
This poetry is characterized by three main subjects that make all the poems, ranging from the finest verses to lines written by unskilled authors, a coherent whole despite their varying aesthetic value and command of language. These three subjects are: resistance, suffering and hope. As the prime mover of rebellious acts, hope is the principal topic and a link between the other two.

The poems portray the Slovene resistance as a movement with spontaneous contents preventing it from being reduced to or disciplined within communist pragmatism that, needless to say, did play an important role and was indeed very influential. As a spontaneous form of perceiving and expressing the world, it could not be otherwise. The tense relationship between "politics" and "poetry" did not abate even during times of struggle, and was most clearly manifested in the "Birch affair" affair that broke out in the beginning of 1944 when an influential activist tried to confine partisan art to the framework of communist ideology. He strongly argued against the portrayal of lyrical 'still-lives' as such a type of art could express only personal feelings and, consequently, possessed no real ideological value. The affair revealed the attempt to ban personal or, in other words, autonomous art or at least to subject it to the needs of time. In her *Memoirs of Partisan Theatre* (published in 1966 in the magazine *Combatant*), the actress Vladosa Simcic recapitulated the doctrine of the eager ideologist in the following way: "I am not saying that we will no longer paint birches. It is just that birches will have to be related to the national liberation struggle. The trunk will have to support a rifle; the birch will have to be shot through by a sub-machine gun and so on." The activist's statement was not accidental nor without consequences. His idea was turned into an order issued in the Circular by the Main Headquarters to the Painters on January 29, 1944: "Still-lives and landscapes as typically depicted by bourgeois artists should not be painted." Yet the military leadership went too far: partisan painters, poets and critics firmly rejected the "Birch theory". The political leadership realized that it was not possible to suppress personal creativity without suppressing the resistance itself. The Slovene liberation struggle possessed such width and power that its commanders did not only lead its members, but were also led by them. Reflection on this wretched and even ridiculous "Partisan Birch" brought to memory another, older background. As early as 1916, the distinguished theologian and art theoretician Ales Usenicnik held similar views published in the Catholic magazine *Time*: "If an artist paints a few birches in autumn colors, the painting might be a masterpiece, though certainly not from the point of view of high intentions." Naturally, one could go even further back in time. The lure of ideological censorship is in fact the most prominent tradition of Slovene criticism, in particular in the field of literature. The only thing that changed was "the high intentions" in the name of which critics expressed their judgments and rejected some works of art.

The wartime spiritual temper is also reflected in the language of the resistance poetry, which is historical evidence per se. In the circumstances, the fundamental law of communication called for straightforward words expressed man to man. In poetry, too, preference was given to simple words capable of reaching the widest audience. Despite differences in style, metaphorical expressions were, as a rule, tied to unambiguous meaning. The poet Oton Župančič, renowned for his verbal virtuosity and artistry, was well aware of the fact that man was trapped in the struggle for survival and freedom, and hence called for a simple verbal ethos: "Tell it straight from the heart!" Language simplification was also typical of other poetries of resistance; e.g., Polish. Said the Polish poet and Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz in his 1981/82 Harvard lectures: "There arises an enormous simplification of everything ... Language regains its basic function — that of a tool used to attain a goal ... Given the fact that it can appear on a single sheet of paper, poetry was the main type of illegal literature during the war, more a document than an art form." In contrast to the Polish, the Slovene poetry of resistance was not as inclined towards expressing catastrophic feelings and, consequently, used language fragmentation to a much lesser extent. Stylistically, it built upon national classics and folk poetry and their typical forms. Since their primary school, Slovenes consciously and subconsciously regarded their poetry as a sign of national rebellion and self-assessment. Therefore it is not surprising that, when endangered, they spontaneously reached for this ancient weapon in order to participate in the modern uprising that was itself anything but poetic. Poems were written everywhere and more often than at anytime before. When the Slovene-born American writer Louis Adamič visited his motherland after the war, he could not but wonder at this phenomenon. He mentioned it in his novel *The Eagle and the Roots* (1970) in the form of a hyperbolic anecdote: "There was a popular joke saying that you were not a real partisan if you did not have a weapon and ammunition and if you did not write poems and were covered with swarms of lice. And that was almost indeed the case; poems were written by seventy to eighty per cent of Slovene partisans."

Photography during the
Slovene National Liberation
Struggle

Franc Fabec



The importance and evolution of photography during the national liberation struggle was closely linked to photographic activity before World War II. At that time, professionals and amateurs not only acquired technical knowledge, but also founded photo clubs that yielded some notable partisan photojournalists when they were closed down following the occupation of Slovenia. The resistance enabled them to pass their experience on to others, as well as to advance their artistic capacities.

Resistance photographers were naturally mostly needed for practical reasons: to take photos of underground activists for their fake identity cards and other documents and to collect materials that the Liberation Front (OF) and its Intelligence (VOS) used as documentary evidence of the occupiers' atrocities.

During the initial period, photographic studios co-operating with the resistance played an important role in preserving collective memory. As OF sympathizers, both professionals and amateurs copied photographs from films and plates that members of Italian and German occupational units had brought to laboratories, and thus they spontaneously started collecting invaluable documentary material, aware of the great risk they took. One such studio was run by the Šelhaus family in the town of Škofja Loka. As early as the beginning of the German occupation in 1941, it secretly copied films handed in by German soldiers, policemen and Gestapo members. Thanks to them, photographs portraying the cruelty of the Wehrmacht were preserved (e.g., a series showing the burnt village of Dražgoše), while other studios managed to save evidence of occupiers' atrocities committed in the region of Štajerska (e.g., photographs depicting hostage shooting in the Stari Pisker prison in Celje).

The most prominent photographers after the downfall of Yugoslavia were the engineer Miran Pavlin and Dr. Jakob Prešeren, who recorded all major events in the daily life of Ljubljana and its environs. By taking photographs of the letter "V" (victory), which appeared as early as July 1941 on walls and was later joined by "OF" (the abbreviation for the Liberation Front), Pavlin documented the emergence of the first forms of resistance. Jakob Prešeren captured the graves of hostages shot in Ljubljana by Italian Fascist squads and of those shot in Draga near Begunje by German occupiers.

The formation of the first fighting units gave birth to the first partisan photos as some members of the underground resistance brought their cameras along. Thus some partisans from the Krim Detachment photographed their newly joined colleagues who had left Ljubljana disguised as "groups of trippers" to metamorphose into combatants in the forest. Taken in August 1941, these early photos portray the formation of partisan units in the Ljubljana environs.

At the very beginning, partisan photography was a strictly clandestine activity entrusted only to certain members of the leadership. The spread of the movement gave momentum to amateur photography, mostly anonymous in nature, though some names are preserved. In addition, the period prior to the capitulation of Italy gave birth to a unique body of work by Dr. Janez Miličinski, who diligently photographed wounded combatants, their physicians and other medical staff. Capturing the sorrows and joys of their daily life, his photographs, taken in utmost secrecy, provide a vivid anthropological account of life in clandestine hospitals.

PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE SLOVENE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE



Propaganda photograph
of a Slovene partisan, 1944

The period ending with the capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943 was also marked by concentration-camp photography developed by Slovenes interned by Italians. Being very inventive, some internees managed to smuggle* their cameras into the camp where they secretly took photos and even developed film in an improvised darkroom (Gonars). The incredibly difficult conditions in which this was accomplished and its expressive power makes this type of photography particularly valuable. The majority of these unique documentary shots were taken by Ivan Marinček and Dušan Povh.

From April 1941 to mid-1943, resistance photography proceeded most successfully in the Province of Ljubljana. As elsewhere, partisan photographers had to deal with difficult conditions for taking photographs and acquiring material (lack of film and chemicals, continual persecution as well as lack of equipment). Some cameras were brought along by combatants themselves, some were seized from the occupiers, some were given to the partisans by the OF. Well-aware of the documentary importance of photography, the most prominent photographers intentionally recorded partisan life and, needless to say, had to display a great deal of inventiveness and exertion to preserve a visual depiction of the development of the partisan movement.

The very beginnings of an organized photojournalist service date to mid-1943. At that time, the partisans not only expected Italy to capitulate, but also possessed a fairly large amount of photographic material and witnessed an increasing need to launch efficient propaganda. As a result, the Executive Council of the OF gave custody of photography to the Group for Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop). At its session of June 28, 1943 the latter adopted the decision that the sections for newspaper editing, activist education and culture would be complemented by a technical section in charge of "general organizational tasks, correspondence, photography, propaganda, etc." As early as 1943, photography thus composed an essential part of the propaganda system.

After the capitulation of Italy this activity was expanded with more photographers joining the partisans, and witnessed an improvement in working conditions. Not surprisingly, the massive arrival of intellectuals (artists, teachers, physicians, etc.) into the ranks of the partisans spurred the development of cultural, educational and propaganda work. In the field of photography, the amateur and documentary manner of taking photographs was complemented with artistic ambitions.

In the beginning of 1944, the propaganda sections of the Main Headquarters of Slovenia (GS) and of the Slovene National Liberation Council (SNOS) established two photographic sections that employed combatants whose primary task was to take photos. In February 1944, they issued the "Rules on the Operation of the Photojournalist Service" that strictly determined the characteristics and tasks of the two groups. There was a vital difference between GS and SNOS photojournalists: the former were active in military operation units, the latter on liberated territory. Given the fact that the GS people were involved in many battles, continual movement and direct encounters with the enemy, they had to be not only bold, but also in excellent shape, often having to exchange the camera for weaponry. The SNOS photojournalists were either older partisans or those combatants who were not able to participate in direct conflicts owing to different reasons



FRANC FABEC

The funeral of the partisan commander Franc Rozman-Stane in November 1944 in Črnomelj

(they had been wounded or were not fit enough to endure battles and other forms of daily exertion).

Interestingly, these rules also stipulated appropriate motifs for individual sections. The GS photojournalists were supposed to portray mostly the leading officers in partisan units and the units during movements or battles, while the SNOS photojournalists were to capture atrocities and destruction caused by the occupiers and the developments on liberated territory. Such measures, partly limiting freedom of expression, aimed at centralizing and unifying the work of photojournalists from all partisan units. Thus the rules also decreed that all negatives had to be submitted to development and equipped with appropriate documentation so that the partisan leadership could establish a central photographic archive.

On April 27, 1945, members of both sections headed towards Trieste where they united into the photographic section of the Trieste headquarters. Upon their return to Ljubljana, all material collected was handed over to the Press Office of the Slovene Presidency, which later deposited it in the National Museum of Contemporary History.

The photographic section of the Slovene National Liberation Council preparing an exhibition in the Lackner Hotel in Črnomelj, December 17, 1944

The photojournalist service organized during the national liberation struggle confirms the fact that the Slovene resistance (1941-1945) was one of the best organized European guerilla movements during WWII. One of the things that make the clandestine photography of Slovene partisans unique is the fact that their beginnings date to the first months of the occupation, whereas elsewhere such services were established only towards the end of the war.



Partisan photography was one of the most advanced arts of partisan culture: about 150 registered photographers took more than 100,000 photographs (with the number of all people involved in photography being even higher). Despite difficult working conditions, the efficiency and constant development of the photojournalist service facilitated achievements that seem almost unimaginable if viewed from today's perspective (e.g., numerous photographic exhibitions organized in the woods and on liberated and half-liberated territory).

In addition, the photojournalist service employed many artists who poured their talent into their work, thus raising it above mere documentary value. One of them was the distinguished painter Božidar Jakac whose personal manner of taking photographs often brought him into conflict with his superiors who demanded that he stick to the rules and capture only the stipulated motifs.

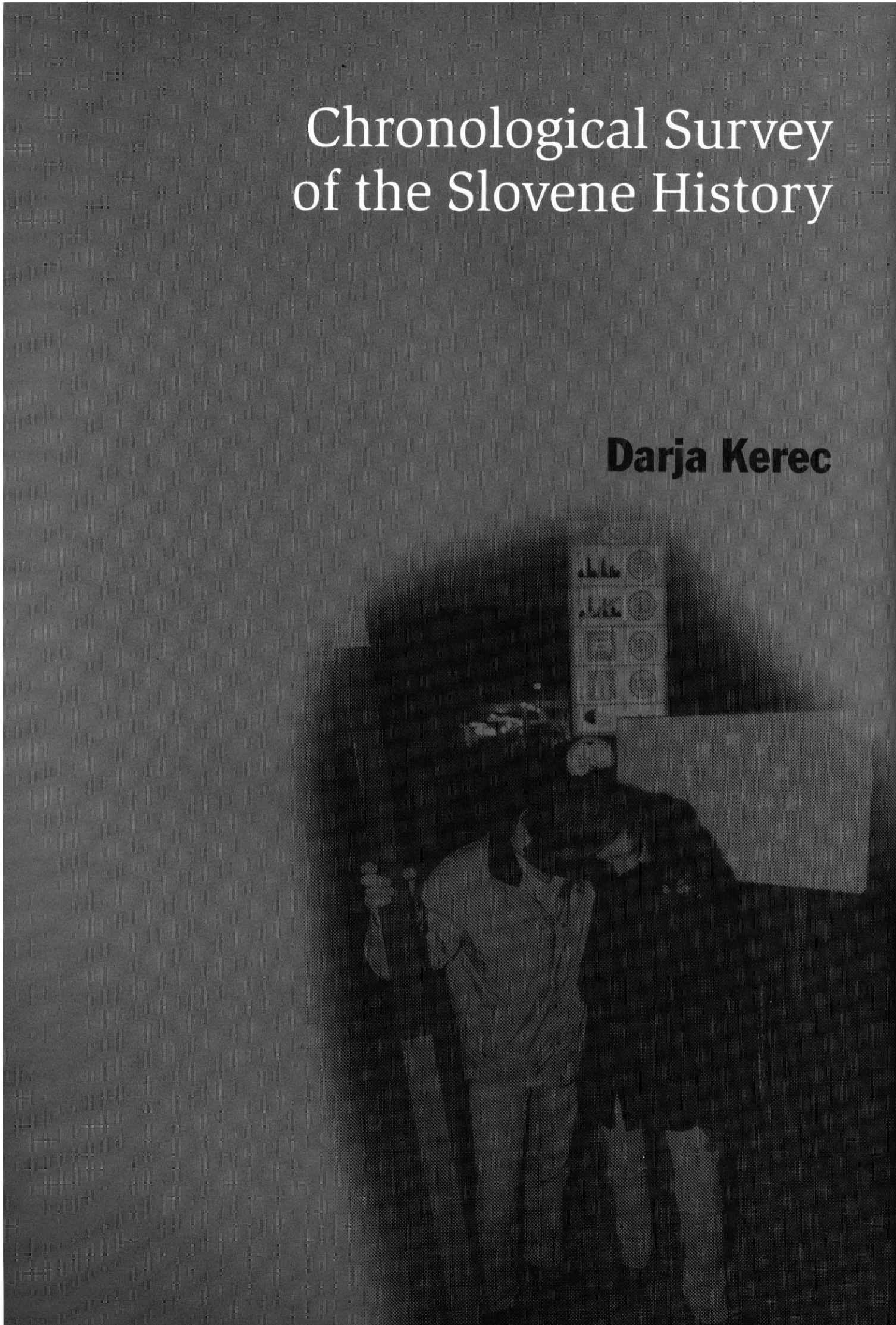
The activities of the resistance were also documented by Allied photojournalists. In 1944, the Algerian-born photographer John Phillips shot the acclaimed war coverage on a joint Allies and partisan action "Let's Destroy Communications" that was published in Life Magazine. Already during the war, western magazines and newspapers published photographs taken by Slovene photographers (e.g., a portrait of the partisan reconnaissance group disguised in white taken by Edi Šelhaus during the winter of 1944-45). After the war, some downed Allied pilots who had been rescued in Slovenia (Joe Maloney, Joe Rucigay, Bill Petty...) published their memoirs in the USA, Canada and Australia and illustrated them with photographs by Slovene photographers. Even currently, such books are still published by their relatives. The importance of partisan photographs can also be inferred from the fact that they are often published in professional journals and displayed at exhibitions all around the world. One of them, depicting the rescue of Allied pilots during the Slovene national liberation struggle, was held in 1997 in the Pentagon and Chicago.

Children washing, Zgornji Čačiči,
1945



Chronological Survey of the Slovene History

Darja Kerec



550 ca. The first wave of northeastern Slavs settles in the territory of today's Slovenia.

7th-11th c. The existence of the Principedom of Carantania that unites part of Slovene ancestors. Its centre is at Krn Castle (today's Austrian Carinthia). It remains independent until 745 AD when it comes under Bavarian rule and, indirectly, under the empire of the Franks (to whom the Bavarians are subjected). It remains autonomous for another few decades, with the upper class electing local rulers. Between 820-828 AD, it is a Frank margrave (border province). The installation of Carantanian Dukes at the Prince's Stone (remnants of a Roman column) and later at the stone-made Duke's Throne at Zollfeld (Gospovetsko polje) near Krn Castle follows a special ceremony conducted in the Old Slovene language that eventually attracted the attention of distinguished scholars such as the French jurist Jean Bodin (16th c.). According to the romantic version of Slovene history, Carantania was the first Slovene state, while the inauguration of its Dukes was an expression of early democracy, which reportedly influenced even Thomas Jefferson and modern American democracy.

870-71 A Salzburg priest writes a text on the conversion of the Bavarians and Carantanians to Christianity (*Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*) in which he describes the struggle between western and eastern Christianity (with the former gaining prevalence in the territories inhabited by Slovene ancestors).

C. 1000 The composition of the Freising Manuscripts (*Brižinski spomeniki*), one of the oldest known Slavic documents, composed of two forms of confession and a short sermon on sin and penance. They are written in a mixture of Slavonic and an emerging, distinctive Slovene language.

1282 Rudolf of Habsburg acquires the duchies of Austria and Styria, and in the course of time other territories inhabited by Slovenes as well. In the mid 14th c., the Counts of Celje (Lower Styria) are strong rivals to the Habsburgs, yet their line dies out and in 1460 the Habsburgs acquire their estates. In 1500, they also inherit the County of Gorizia.

15th c. Turkish incursions into Slovene territory

15th-17th c. Peasant revolts

1550 The Protestant preacher and writer Primož Trubar, who was forced to leave Slovene territory, publishes *Catechismus* and *Abecedarium* in Tübingen, the first two books written in modern Slovene.

1584 Jurij Dalmatin publishes 1,500 copies of the Slovene translation of the Bible.

1628 Following the orders of the provincial Archduke, the Ljubljana bishop expels all Protestants who did not reconvert to Catholicism.

The fall of the Schengen borders at the end of 2007 (December 21) at the border crossing between the Italian town of Gorizia (Gorica) and the Slovene town of Nova Gorica ("New Gorica"). When the former, which is an old, ethnically mixed town, remained inside Italian territory after the determination of the Italian-Yugoslav border in 1947, Yugoslavia built a "new" Gorica in its immediate vicinity.
The boy is holding a border barrier until then used at the Nova Gorica border crossing.
Photo by: Matej Leskovsek, Mladina

- 1768** The Augustinian monk Marko Pohlin publishes the Slovene grammar book *Kraynska grammatika* in German.
- 1774** The Empress Maria Theresa introduces compulsory schooling. Primary school classes are taught in Slovene.
- 1797** Valentin Vodnik begins publishing the first Slovene newspaper, *Lublanske novize* (Ljubljana News). The newspaper is published until 1800 at 100 copies per issue and has 33 subscribers.
- 1809 October 14** Treaty of Schonbrunn. Austria cedes part of Slovene territory, Istria and portion of Croatia lying on the right bank of the Sava to Napoleon, who establishes the Illyrian Provinces, stretching from Carinthia to Dubrovnik (Ragusa). Lasting until 1813, Napoleonic rule includes many reforms in the fields of administration and education, thus winning approval of Slovene intellectuals. The peasants, however, are not in favor of it owing to high taxation and the preservation of feudal obligations.
- 1843 July 5** Janez Bleiweis publishes the newspaper *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (Agricultural and craftsmen's News) in which "Slovenia" is used for the first time as the designation for the common national territory.
- 1848 March 13** Vienna sees the outbreak of the revolution that spreads throughout the Austrian monarchy. Demonstrations are also organized in Ljubljana. Peasants call for the abolition of feudal taxes and obligations.
- 1848 March 29** *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* publishes the manifest of the Carinthian priest Matija Majar Ziljski arguing that all Austrian peoples - including Slovenes - should lead an autonomous life.
- 1848 April 20** The society called "Slovenia" (with philologist Fran Miklošič elected president) is inaugurated in Vienna, issuing the call for a United Slovenia (i.e., the first Slovene political program) and addresses it to the Emperor.
- 1861** First elections for the Austrian Parliament (Reichsrat): few Slovenes have the right to vote.
- 1866** Austria defeats Italy at the Battles of Custoza (in Lombardy) and Lissa (Vis), but is itself defeated by Italy's Prussian allies. The Treaty of Vienna cedes Venetian Slovenia to the former. Italians organize a plebiscite in the newly acquired region, conferring the right to vote to only a quarter of the population (of Friulians and Slovenes). Having been relatively autonomous under Venetian rule, people declare themselves in favor of the new kingdom, only to be disappointed by the new authorities as the latter soon launch an assimilation campaign.

1867 December 21 The Reichsrat in Vienna adopts the December Constitution that lasts until the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918. The Constitution grants equality before the law to all the nations and the right to use national languages in administration, schools and in public life. In practice, the equal status depends on interethnic relations in the six crown lands where Slovenes live. Slovenes hold the majority of seats only in the Carniola Diet.

1892 August Founding of political parties in Slovene territory (in 1895, the Catholic Society established in January 1890 is renamed the Catholic National Party / later the Slovene People's Party). The establishment of the parties reflects the hegemonic tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church and its demand that public life follow religious principles.

1894 November 29 Founding of the liberal National Party

1896 August 15-16 Founding of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party

1907 Cisleithania (the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary) introduces universal suffrage for men.

1908 October 6 Austria-Hungary annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina (which has been under its administration since 1878). This increases the number of southern Slavs in the monarchy and gives rise to the political demand for trialism - the division of the Monarchy into three parts (Austrian/German, Hungarian and southern Slavic) - while the northern Slav peoples (the Czechs, Slovaks and Poles) strive for the establishment of their own states.

1914 July 28 Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.

1915 April 26 Signature of the Treaty of London, a secret pact between Italy and the Triple Entente, according to which Italy, until then an Austro-Hungarian ally, is promised a large portion of South-western Slovene territory if it joins the side of Great Britain, France and Russia in the war.

1915 April 30 Establishment of the Yugoslav Committee in London, a political organization of Croatian, Serbian and Slovene political emigrants who strive for the formation of the Yugoslav state.

1915 May 23 Italy declares war on Austria-Hungary.

1915 May 24 The onset of fighting along a new front (Isonzo front) stretching from the Swiss border to the Adriatic. The most important (93-km-long) part from Mt Rombon to the sea runs across Slovene territory. By 28 October 1917 when the Italians are decisively defeated at the Battle of Kobarid (Caporetto/Karfreit), the area has witnessed 12 bloody offensives.

1916 November 21 Franz Joseph I dies after a 68-year reign and is succeeded by his great-nephew Karl.

1917 May 30 Anton Korošec, head of the Yugoslav Club in the Vienna Parliament, reads the May Declaration. The petition demands that Austria-Hungary become a triple monarchy (Slovenes have been in favour of "trialism" since the beginning of the century), with Yugoslavia being the new united state.

1917 July 20 The Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee adopt the Corfu Declaration envisioning the establishment of Yugoslavia under the Karadordevic dynasty.

1918 January 8 American President Woodrow Wilson issues Fourteen Points, advocating self-determination and the formation of an association of nations that will ensure peaceful development in the world.

1918 August 16-17 Ljubljana sees the establishment of the National Council for Slovenia and Istria, a political organization in charge of the attainment of national self-determination and co-operation within the formation of independent Yugoslavia (the council operates until April 30, 1919).

1918 October 29 Mass rally in Ljubljana organized by the National Council for Slovenia and Istria. The Council declares secession from the disintegrating Austria-Hungary and inclusion in the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs led by the Yugoslav National Council in Zagreb (under the presidency of Anton Korošec).

1918 October 31 Establishment of the Slovene National Government comprised of representatives of all Slovene political parties. Following the incorporation into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, it becomes a provincial government with limited power and is abolished when the Yugoslav Constitution is adopted.

1918 November 1 Major Rudolf Maister organizes voluntary military forces and seizes power in Maribor. The National Council for Styria appoints him general. Owing to his activities, Slovenia (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) manages to retain southern Styria, populated mostly by Slovenes in the countryside and Germans in the towns.

1918 November 3 Truce between the Entente and Austria-Hungary. Italian forces occupy Trieste, Primorska and Istria.

1918 December 1 In Belgrade, the declaration of the unification of the Kingdom of Serbia and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929).

1919 January 18 Beginning of the Paris Peace Conference

1920 June 4 Signature of the Treaty of Trianon by the Entente and Hungary. Prekmurje is ceded to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, having been occupied by the Yugoslav Army in summer 1919 following the Entente's approval.

1920 July 13 Italian Fascists burn down the National House in Trieste, the seat of Slovene organizations. Persecution of Slovenes follows. Mussolini's rise to power marks the beginning of forced assimilation.

1920 October 10 A plebiscite in southern Carinthia that was divided into two zones following several battles and a successful offensive by the Yugoslav army in May and June 1919. The majority (59%) votes for the inclusion of the Klagenfurt (Celovec) Basin into Austria. The area was inhabited by a mixed population (69% Slovenes, 31% Germans), which means that a large portion of the Slovenes (41% according to estimation) must have voted for Austria.

1920 November 12 Signature of the Treaty of Rapallo by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Italy, resulting in Venezia Giulia, Istria, Kvarner Gulf, Zadar and its environs and a few islands being ceded to Italy. Entering into force in February 1921, the Treaty guarantees no protection for the 500,000 Croats and Slovenes who are subjected to the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III.

1920 December 30 The Yugoslav government issues the so-called Obznana: the decree prohibiting all communist activities and introducing police prosecution of the Communist Party.

1921 June 28 Adoption of the first Yugoslav constitution, confirming monarchic rule, centralism and unitarism.

1922 October 28 The 'March on Rome' installs Benito Mussolini in power.

1923 October 1 Having implemented reforms conceived by Giovanni Gentile, Italy gradually (by 1927) abolishes all classes taught in Slovene and Croatian. It also suppresses all cultural, political and economic organizations of the two national minorities. Slovene is no longer allowed to be used in public.

1927 September Formation of TIGR (acronym from the following names: Trst, Istra, Gorica, Reka), a secret national revolutionary organization of Slovenes and Croats living in Italy that employs arms to fight against assimilation and for the incorporation of Slovene and Croatian territory into Yugoslavia.

- 1929 January 6** Following the assassination of the leading Croatian politician in Yugoslav Parliament, Stjepan Radic, King Alexander I of Yugoslavia imposes dictatorship.
- 1930 September 1-5** First Trieste Trial. The Special Court for State Protection tries 18 members of TIGR. On September 6, four of them are shot near the village of Bazovica.
- 1934 October 9** Assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia in Marseilles. Prince Paul of Yugoslavia becomes Regent for the minor King Peter II.
- 1937 April 18** The Communist Party of Slovenia (KPS) is established in the village of Cebine.
- 1938 March 12-13** German troops enter and annex Austria (the Anschluss). Carinthian Slovenes subsequently suffer stronger assimilation pressure than they did in the past.
- 1938 April 10** With more than 99% of voters in favour of uniting with Germany, a plebiscite confirms the annexation of Austria.
- 1941 March 25** Hitler and Prince Paul of Yugoslavia meet in the Berghof and reach an agreement on Yugoslavia joining the Axis.
- 1941 March 27** Serbian officers carry out a pro-English military coup in Belgrade. Prince Paul emigrates. King Peter II, still a minor, accedes to the throne.
- 1941 April 6** German, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria invade and occupy Yugoslavia. Slovenia is divided into German, Italian and Hungarian occupational zones.
- 1941 April 11** Ustasa leader Ante Pavelic, who organized the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia, declares the formation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH).
- 1941 April 27 (26)**, The Liberation Front (OF) is established in Ljubljana, uniting more than 15 organizations under the leadership of the Communist Party of Slovenia.
- 1941 May 3** The Province of Ljubljana (Italian occupational zone) is created by Italy.
- 1941 May 10** The OF publishes the first issue of its gazette, Slovenski porocevalec (Slovene Reporter).
- 1941 July** The OF begins armed resistance and forms its first partisan units.

1941 August The OF establishes the Security Intelligence Service (VOS) run by the communists, giving rise to "the terror" against collaborators.

1941 November 26 The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), led by Secretary General Josip Broz-Tito, organizes a military and political meeting in Stolice near Krupnje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is also attended by the commander and political commissioner of the main headquarters of the Slovene partisan army. The meeting adopts the decisions that the old authorities in the liberated territories should be replaced by new ones. Slovenia is criticized for its pluralism given the fact the OF concept of resistance differs from that of the Communist Party, and for lacking large liberated territories (which, however, results from its specific geographical features: small surface and well-developed network of communications).

1941 October 18 Heinrich Himmler issues the decree on the expulsion of Slovenes from the border regions along the Sava and Sotla rivers, which gives rise to mass deportations to camps in Germany and to Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia.

1941 November 1 The OF Supreme Council adopts the seven fundamental points of its program (another two are adopted in December 1941). They are published on January 21, 1942.

1941 November 17 The OF underground radio "KricaC" (The Screamer) broadcasts its first program in Ljubljana.

1941 November 23 Modeling itself on the OF, the London Committee, a political body of Slovene politicians in exile, issues the London Points, calling for the unification of Slovenes in the federal Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

1941 December 2-14 Second Trieste Trial: the Fascist Special Court for State Protection sentences 60 anti-Fascist members of the Primorska national and communist movement.

1941 December 12 In Rovte under Mt Blegos in Upper Carniola, the Cankar Battalion attacks and defeats a German police patrol (killing 45 policemen). As a result, Hitler postpones the incorporation of Slovene regions into the Third Reich, scheduled for January 1, 1942 for six months (eventually, the spread of the resistance manages to prevent that incorporation). Upper Carniola witnesses a general uprising that the Germans try to crush by all means possible.

1941 December 16 The Hungarian Parliament adopts a law calling for the annexation of occupied Prekmurje.

1942 January 9-11 During the general uprising in Upper Carniola, the Cankar Battalion is engaged in several battles against German police and

military forces. At the end of December 1941, the battalion manages to reach the village of Dražgoše. A bloody fight ensues January 9-11. When the battalion retreats, the Germans occupy and burn down the village, shoot 41 locals and expel women and children. The territory controlled by the Third Reich thus witnesses one of the first major anti-Nazi rebellions and subsequent Nazi disproportionate revenge.

1942 April 6 The Slovene Covenant (Slovenska zaveza) is taken in Ljubljana by a political alliance of bourgeois parties that are against the OF out of opposition to "godless communism".

1942 June 16 The Italians launch a major offensive against the liberation movement that lasts until November 4. Its goal is to crush the Slovene resistance. During the offensive, the Italian army kills civilians or deports them to concentration camps and systematically burns down villages.

1942 November 26-27 The Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) is established in Bihač, a town in western Bosnia. With the war raging, Slovene representatives cannot attend. Nevertheless, the OF supreme bodies approve its decisions, thus confirming that the Slovene resistance is a constituent part of the Yugoslav resistance led by Tito.

1943 January 8 German troops encircle and decimate the Pohorje Battalion at Osankarica deep in the Pohorje forest (Styria).

1943 March 1 The OF founding groups sign the Dolomite Declaration, acknowledging the leading role of the KPS and binding themselves to eventually dissolve their individual associations.

1943 May 12 Partisan units (the Gregorčič Brigade) manage to arrive to the eastern part of Venetian Slovenia; i.e., the edge of Slovene ethnic territory, and operate there for some time.

1943 July 25 Following the landing of Anglo-American troops in Sicily, Mussolini was deposed and arrested, king Victor Emmanuel III appoints Marshall Pietro Badoglio head of the Italian government.

1943 September 8 Capitulation of Italy. On October 13, Italy joins the Allies. Slovene partisans begin disarming the Italian army in the Province of Ljubljana and Primorska.

1943 September Partisans defeat Slovene collaborators at Turjak Castle near Ljubljana. The latter are represented by White Guard or Home Guard units that joined the Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia (Milizia volontaria anticomunista), formed in spring 1942, partly as a form of defence against partisan violence in liberated territories, and partly as a result of the anti-communist and anti-resistance orientation of the leadership of bourgeois parties and the Catholic Church in the Ljubljana Diocese. The

Slovene Chetniks (their first units were formed at the end of 1941, after the split between Tito and Draža Mihailović in Serbia) are defeated in the village of Grčarice in the Kočevsko district.

1943 October 1-3 Kočevje hosts the Assembly of Deputies of the Slovene Nation attended by 572 elected and 78 delegated representatives. They elect 120 members of the Slovene National Liberation Committee that become the supreme body of the new people's authorities.

1943 November 9 The Bosnian town of Jajce hosts the second session of the AVNOJ. Attended by the Slovene delegation, the session adopts its decision on the federal character of Yugoslavia and elects new bodies (the Presidency acting as the supreme authority between two AVNOJ sessions and the National Committee of the Liberation of Yugoslavia acting as government). AVNOJ becomes the supreme legislative and representative body of the Yugoslavia.

1944 January 6 The 14th Division starts its march from Bela Krajina to Styria.

1944 February 19-20 Črnomelj hosts the first session of the Slovene National Liberation Committee. Comprised of 120 representatives, the council is renamed the Slovene National Liberation Council (partisan parliament).

1944 April 20 The members of Home Guards units swear allegiance to the Führer and bind themselves to fight against the partisans (another Home Guards pledge takes place on 30 January 1945).

1944 June 16 Tito and Prime Minister of the Yugoslav Government in exile Ivan Šubašič meet on the island of Vis, reaching an agreement on the form of government after the liberation. The issue of the monarchy is left unresolved.

1944 October 9 Churchill and Stalin meet in Moscow, reaching an agreement on the division of the spheres of influence in Yugoslavia (50/50).

1944 November 21 The AVNOJ Presidency issues a decree on the confiscation of property of the occupiers and their collaborators.

1944 December 20 In Ljubljana the National Committee for Slovenia is established; mostly comprised of Slovene bourgeois politicians from the Slovene Liberal Party, the committee tries to act as an alternative government to the partisan authorities and proclaims the Home Guard units and the Chetniks the Slovene army.

1945 February 4-11 The Big Three Conference at Yalta: Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin reach an agreement on joint operations against Germany and Japan and on the issue of a uniform Yugoslav government.

- 1945 March 1** The National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NOV) is renamed the Yugoslav Army.
- 1945 March 7** The NKOJ resigns in Belgrade. A new temporary government of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia (DFJ) is formed, including representatives of the former Royal Government in Exile. Tito becomes Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, while Edvard Kardelj and Ivan Šubašič become deputy prime ministers (the latter is also appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs). The issue of dual government is finally resolved.
- 1945 April 3** After severe fighting with the Wehrmacht, the Red Army and the Prekmurje Partisan Squad enter Murska Sobota, the capital of north-eastern Slovenia.
- 1945 May 5** Slovene partisans and the Yugoslav Army liberate Trieste (Trst) and Gorizia (Gorica) and reach the Isonzo (Soča) river after a series of operations along the Adriatic coast that included the participation of the Overseas Brigades (formed by Slovene and Croatian prisoners of war who had been sent to northern Africa as Italian soldiers).
- 1945 May 3** Ljubljana hosts a session of the National Committee for Slovenia (comprised of representatives of pre-war bourgeois parties). The committee declares the existence of the Slovene state within federal Yugoslavia and adopts a decree on the government and on the army comprised of Home Guard members. Yet the attempt to install an alternative government fails. Together with the Wehrmacht and other quislings, both the Home Guard and politicians retreat to Austrian Carinthia.
- 1945 May 5** The Slovene National Liberation Council appoints the National Government of Slovenia in Ajdovščina, with Boris Kidrič as its President.
- 1945 May 9** Ljubljana is liberated.
- 1945 May 15** The end of WWII in Slovene territory, with the last occupational units having surrendered in Carinthia.
- 1945 May 26** The Commander of the British forces in Carinthia issues the order to return to Yugoslavia to the first group of Slovene Home Guard soldiers. Upon return, the majority (around 13,000) of them are executed without trial.
- 1945 June 9** An agreement between the governments of the USA, Great Britain and Yugoslavia that Tito shall withdraw his army in Venezia Giulia to behind the so-called Morgan Line is signed in Belgrade. As a result, Primorska is divided into two zones: Zone A of the Julian March comes under the Allied military administration and Zone B under the administration of the Yugoslav army.

- 1945 August 23** Yugoslavia passes an agrarian reform act.
- 1946 January 3** Enactment of the Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FLRJ): Slovenia becomes one of the six constitutive units with the right to self-determination and secession.
- 1946** Nationalization of private property in Yugoslavia (completed in 1948).
- 1946-47** Paris Peace Conference. On 10 February 1947 Yugoslavia and Italy sign a treaty regarding the new border. A large part of the former Julian March is ceded to Yugoslavia, with the exception of Gorizia (Gorica). The northern Adriatic coastal strip becomes the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT), officially under jurisdiction of the United Nations. In fact it is still divided into Zone A (Trieste and its environs) administered by the Allies and Zone B (the districts of Koper and Buje) administered by Yugoslavia.
- 1947 September 15** The new border between Italy and the FLRJ is operative.
- 1948 June 28** Bucharest hosts the second session of the Information Bureau. The international communist organization expels the KPJ, which gives rise to a serious conflict between Stalin and Tito. With all relations broken off, Yugoslavia is under threat of being invaded by the Soviet bloc. Help comes from the west, which is well-aware of the strategic and ideological advantages of Tito's "heresy".
- 1953 March 5** Death of Stalin; in September, Nikita Khrushchev is appointed Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Relations with Yugoslavia gradually improve.
- 1954 August 9** The Balkans Pact on Greek, Turkish and Yugoslav political, military and economic co-operation is signed in Bled. Yugoslavia thus establishes indirect link with NATO.
- 1954 October 5** Signature of the London Memorandum (also called Memorandum of Understanding) on the FTT. Zone A, including Trieste, is ceded to Italy, Zone B to Yugoslavia. With its border with Italy becoming relatively open, Slovenia attains a special position in comparison to other Yugoslav republics.
- 1955 May 15** Signature of the Austrian State Treaty. Also signed by Yugoslavia, the treaty re-establishes democratic, independent and neutral Austria. Article 7 stipulates the protection of the Slovene and Croatian minorities.
- 1955 June 2** The signature of the Belgrade Declaration on equal co-operation between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia marks the beginning of the normalization of relations between the two socialist countries.

- 1955 July 18-19** Tito, Nehru and Nasser meet at Brioni and establish the Non-Aligned Movement.
- 1960** The first issue of the opposition magazine *Perspektive* (Perspectives) that replaces *Revija 57* (Magazine 57). The magazine suffers the same fate as its predecessor: as of 28 April 1964 it is censored.
- 1961 September 1** Belgrade hosts the first summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- 1963 April 9** Yugoslavia adopts a new constitution and is renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 1967 May 7** Stane Kavčič becomes Slovene "Prime Minister" (at that time called President of the Executive Council). The liberal-oriented politician of the younger generation wants Slovenia to develop towards a market-based country (though still retaining public property), which often brings him into conflict with the central authorities. He is deposed in 1972.
- 1974 February 21** Yugoslavia adopts a new constitution that strengthens the federal order and confirms the self-government of all working people as the essential characteristic of its path to socialism. However, it introduces a complicated delegate system and reinforces the domination of the Communist Party in all spheres of social life.
- 1975 November 10** Yugoslavia and Italy sign the Treaty of Osimo, finally settling the issue of the border between Zones A and B of the former FTT.
- 1980 May 4** Josip Broz-Tito dies in Ljubljana, which leads to an economic, political and interethnic crisis in Yugoslavia.
- 1981 March** In Kosovo, demonstrators demand that the province be granted the status of a seventh Yugoslav republic.
- 1983** The Belgrade authorities adopt a new educational program in an attempt to standardize the curricula. This first move to increase centralization meets with strong opposition in Slovenia.
- 1986 January** Slobodan Milošević is appointed leader of Serbian communists.
- 1987 February 18** Slovene intellectuals publish their oppositional national program in the 57th issue of *Nova revija* (New Magazine).
- 1988 May 13** Formation of the Slovene Farmers' Union, the first opposition party. Owing to the valid legislation, it is still member of the Socialist Alliance of Working People (that succeeded the Liberation Front).

1988 June 3 Janez Janša, at that time a journalist of the magazine Mladina (The Youth), is arrested and charged with revealing a military secret (about the intention of the Yugoslav People's Army [JLA] to "calm down" Slovenia), which brings about the establishment of the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights.

1989 January 11 Foundation of other opposition parties: the Slovene Democratic Union followed by the Social Democratic Union in February, as well as others.

1989 May 8 The Slovene opposition publishes the May Declaration, a political program demanding a multi-party system and a sovereign Slovene state.

1989 September 27 The Slovene Republican Assembly (Parliament) adopts constitutional amendments that reinforce the right to establish a sovereign state, and annul the provision regarding the leading role of the League of Communists of Slovenia. Belgrade responds with strong political pressure, sparking off mass demonstrations. The JLA leaders plan to declare an emergency, but they change their minds, not wanting to violate the law at such a sensitive time.

1989 December 1 Ljubljana should be host to a "Rally of Truth" modeled upon Serbian mass rallies. Slovene authorities ban it.

1990 January 23 Slovene communists leave the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which brings about the disintegration of the party.

1990 April 8-22 Slovenia holds its first multi-party parliamentary elections, with the opposition united in the Demos coalition emerging as the victor. The election for the president of the collective Presidency of the Republic is won by Milan Kučan, the former President of the Presidency of the Slovene League of Communists.

1990 July 8 Mass service and mourning commemoration dedicated to executed members of Home Guard units in the Kočevski Rog forest. The symbolic reconciliation ceremony is performed by the Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar and by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Milan Kučan.

1990 December 23 Slovenia holds a plebiscite for a sovereign and independent state. The overwhelming majority (88.2 %) votes for independence. The plebiscite is to enter into force within six months after the adoption of the appropriate laws.

1991 June 26 Slovenia declares independence. On the next day, the Yugoslav People's Army attacks.

1991 July 7 Truce between the JLA and the Slovene army followed by negotiations between federal Yugoslavia and Slovenia on Brioni under the auspices of the European Community (EC)

1991 October 25 The last JLA soldier leaves Slovene territory

1991 December 23 Slovenia adopts a new constitution.

1991 December 9-11 Maastricht hosts final negotiations between the members of the European Community that reach political consensus leading to the creation of the European Union.

1991 December 15 Meeting in Brussels, foreign ministers of the EC states define criteria for the recognition of individual republics of disintegrated Yugoslavia.

1991 December 19 Germany recognizes Slovenia as of 15 January 1992.

1992 January 15 EC member states recognize Slovenia.

1992 May 22 Slovenia is admitted to the UN.

1993 May 25 Establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. No Slovenes are prosecuted.

2004 March 29 Slovenia becomes a NATO member (following the preliminary consultative referendum of 23 March 2003 attended by 60.2 % of the electorate, with 66 % voting for membership).

2004 May 1 Slovenia becomes an EU member (following the preliminary consultative referendum of 23 March 2003 attended by 60.2 % of the electorate, with 90 % voting for membership).

2007 January 1 Slovenia introduces the euro (replacing its former currency, the tolar).

2008 January 1 Slovenia takes over the EU presidency.

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The aim of authors is to reveal all dimensions and vitality of the partisan movement in Slovene territory during World War II to other European nations during the time when the European Union is presided over by Slovenia. Slovenes managed to develop their own resistance movement as part of the Yugoslav movement, with its fighting capacity having grown from 2,000 to 37,000 men at the end of war. As a close ally of the world's anti-Fascist coalition, the Liberation Front, the organization that politically led the Slovene resistance, emerged as one of the winners of World War II. The Slovene resistance to the occupiers was characterized by a unique feature. During the occupation, the Liberation Front managed to establish "a state within a state" that was governed by elected authorities and implemented its own economic and monetary systems, organized a network of clandestine partisan hospitals, workshops, printing offices, couriers, etc. The source of its vital power was culture, owing to which Slovenes have managed to preserve their national identity throughout centuries even without their own nation-state.

Resistance, Suffering, Hope discloses the source of Slovene strength, vitality and ingeniousness that eventually brought the Slovene people its own nation-state and the EU presidency. This book will provide the reader, familiar with the topic or not, concise and historically grounded answers to many questions related to the Slovene resistance movement during World War II; and, above all, demonstrable confirmation that the Slovene partisan resistance movement is a foundation stone of Slovene statehood and national existence.

Dušan Nečak

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