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*The Class and the Nationality:
the Example of Trieste 1945*

"Trst je naš" ("Trieste is ours"), "Trieste italianissima" ("Trieste, the most Italian of cities") – these so frequently heard, overused and worn-out propaganda slogans demonstrate very clearly the division in this city and its wider hinterland,¹ which has developed through decades and reached its peak in the end of World War II and the years after that. It is still present to a certain degree today. The flyer of the Italian Trieste national liberation committee, dispersed during the visit of the International Demarcation Commission in March 1946, states: "The question of the affiliation of Trieste is the question of life and death".² And in reality not only the people in the Trieste, divided into two blocks (in Venezia Giulia), but also many people in Italy and Yugoslavia were convinced that they were the only ones with the true arguments why this seaport together with its wider hinterlands should be annexed to their country.

In Venezia Giulia, a region of mixed nationalities, the Italian fascist authorities, ever since they rose to power in 1922, implemented violent measures in the context of the border fascism policy against the political left as well as against certain nations – a cultural genocide of the Slovenian and Croatian minorities, as their actions are referred to by the best experts on the fascist denationalisation policy in the Venezia Giulia, the recently deceased Trieste historian Elio Apih and the Slovenian historian Milica Kacin Wohinz.³ The Italian left was the politi-

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¹ The wider hinterland of Trieste is the area between the Austrian and Italian border (from 1915) and the so-called Rapallo border (from 1920) and the part of Udine province with Slovenian population, which was already annexed to Italy in 1866. Slovenians refer to this region as *Primorska* or *Slovensko primorje in Istra*, while Italians call it *Venezia Giulia*. This was also the official name for the territory of the Italian provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Pola and Fiume, which were under the jurisdiction of two military administrations between 12 June 1945 and 15 September 1947 – the western part (Zone A) was under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-American Allies, while the eastern part (Zone B) was under the military administration of the Yugoslav Army.

² Arhiv Republike Slovenije [Archive of the Republic of Slovenia] (hereinafter ARS), collection Zbirka gradiva informacijske službe na Primorskem (AS 1584), ae 187. National League flyers.

³ Elio Apih and Milica Kacin Wohinz also used this term in their discussions of the Slovenian-Italian cultural and historical commission, while in the report of this commission the term "etnična bonifikacija" ("ethnic improvement") is used. *Slovensko-italijanski odnosi 1880–1956*:

cal and ideological opponent of fascism, while the minorities were automatically its opponents, because by being born and identifying themselves as Slovenians or Croatians they could not understand that it was a special "mercy" to be allowed into the world of high culture, that it was a special "favour" to be able to become a part of a historical nation, that it was actually salvation from one's "barbaric" uncultured origins as a nation without history. Thus one of the founders of the cultural genocide policy, the fascist hierarch Livio Ragusin in his work *Politica di confine*, published in 1929, maintained that there are no national minorities at the Italian eastern borders, that there are only foreign groups without history, civilization, national awareness or intellectual class. These people were supposedly an inferior Slavic race, which should be, according to historical rules, assimilated by the superior Italian civilization by "colonization based on the example of the Roman Empire".⁴ At the same time, Slovenians and Croatians, with the exception of individuals who agreed to the cooperation with fascism out of opportunism or necessity,⁵ were also ideological and political opponents of fascism. According to Milica Kacin Wohinz, many Slovenians, including those in the countryside, joined the communist party because they believed in the principles of social justice and national equality. This combination resulted in the fascist neologism "slavocomunismo" or "slavobolscevismo", which brought together the ideological as well as racial stereotype and was used by the fascism at the border for the fight against two enemies at the same time.⁶ Slovenians belonging to the liberal or Christian-social organisations were also ideological and political opponents of fascism. The Communist Party of Italy (*Partito comunista italiano*, PCI) and other Italian non-fascist parties were forbidden in 1926, while the Slovenian Trieste (liberals) and Gorizia (Christian socialists) Edinost parties were outlawed in 1928, when the Italian-Yugoslav treaty of friendship was terminated.⁷

poročilo slovensko italijanske zgodovinsko-kulturne komisije = I rapporti italo-sloveni 1880–1956: relazione della commissione storico-culturale italo-slovena = Slovenian-Italian relations 1880–1956: the report of the Slovenian-Italian historical and cultural commission. Ljubljana 2001, p. 39 (hereinafter Slovenian-Italian relations). The term "bonifica etnica" ("ethnic improvement") was used by the Italian fascist authorities, and occasionally the terms "bonifica nazionale", "bonifica morale", "nazionalizzazione" and so on were also used. Milica Kacin Wohinz, Jože Pirjevec: *Zgodovina Slovencev v Italiji 1866–2000* [The History of Slovenes in Italy 1866–2000]. Ljubljana 2000 (hereinafter Kacin, Pirjevec, *Zgodovina Slovencev*), p. 62. *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije 1848–1992* [Slovene Contemporary History: from the Programme of United Slovenia to the international recognition of Slovenia 1848–1992]. Ljubljana 2005 (hereinafter Slovenska novejša zgodovina), 1, p. 539.

⁴ Kacin, Pirjevec, *Zgodovina Slovencev*, p. 62. Slovenska novejša zgodovina, p. 539.

⁵ To date just a little partial research has been carried out about the people who agreed to the collaboration with the regime, for example by Ervin Dolenc: *Naši Fašisti*. In: *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, 2000, No. 1, pp. 113–122.

⁶ Slovenska novejša zgodovina, p. 529.

⁷ Slovenska novejša zgodovina, p. 533. For more information see Milica Kacin Wohinz: *Prvi antifašizem v Evropi: Primorska 1925–1935*. Koper 1990. Egon Pelikan: *Tajno delovanje primorske duhovščine pod fašizmom: Primorski krščanski socialci med Vatikanom, fašistično*

During the war – the Italian occupation of the so-called Ljubljana province and then the German occupation of the Operation Zone of the Adriatic Littoral (in the time when violence and suffering reached its peak) – the opposition between fascists and anti-fascists became even tenser. Violence resulted in two-fold resistance. For the majority of Slovenians from the Venezia Giulia this was a struggle to preserve their nation, whose goal was not only liberation brought about by the defeat of the German occupiers, but first and foremost liberation from Italy, which meant the change of the border. One of the most prominent Slovenian Christian socialists from the Venezia Giulia, Engelbert Besednjak, wrote in his letter sent from Belgrade to his political ally in Venezia Giulia, father Virgil Šček, in the end of 1944: "All personal gains, factional aspects and considerations should be subordinated to this goal (liberation from Italy)".⁸ Thus many people, who otherwise opposed the "godless" communism, joined the side they believed would be capable to bring about this liberation – the "communist" Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation, which has since the beginning in principle supported the programme of the United Slovenia and thus also the change of the border, and at the same time managed to organise a strong resistance movement which became a part of the allied forces. For many Slovenians from Venezia Giulia this resistance also meant the struggle for social class liberation, since the Italian state in the context of the aforementioned policy of ethnic improvement severely interfered with their social structure. Therefore they supported the political option they believed would bring a better life for them and their families.⁹

Some Italians, although with different goals, also stood up to the fascist authorities, then the German occupier and those collaborating with them. Some of them thought that after the war the region, annexed by Italy in 1920 with the Treaty of Rapallo, should be included in a democratic Italian state within its current borders. They organised themselves in the National Liberation Committee of Venezia Giulia (Comitato di liberazione nazionale Giuliano, CLNG). Because of their demands for the preservation of the Rapallo borders, they ended up in conflict not only with the Slovenian liberation movement, but also with the central National Liberation Committee of Northern Italy (Comitato di liberazione nazionale Alta Italia, CLNAI), which was interested in close coope-

Italijo in slovensko katoliško desnico – zgodovinsko ozadje romana Kaplan Martin Čedermac. Ljubljana 2002.

⁸ ARS, Collection Edvard Kardelj (AS 1277), box 75, the letter of Engelbert Besednjak to Virgil Šček, 31 December 1944 (published in *Goriški letnik*, 1976, No. 3, pp. 258–267).

⁹ For the information on the standpoint of the Slovenian communists and the Slovenian Liberation Movement leadership about the question of the Slovenian Western border see Bojan Godeša: *Slovensko nacionalno vprašanje med drugo svetovno vojno*. Ljubljana 2006 (hereinafter Godeša, *Slovensko nacionalno vprašanje*), pp. 165–197. Nevenka Troha: *Slovensko osvobodilno gibanje in slovenska zahodna meja*. In: *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*, 2003, No. 1–2, pp. 63–85.

ration with Slovenians or with the Yugoslav liberation movement as a part of the allied coalition. In June 1944 CLNAI adopted a public proclamation addressed to the Italian population in Venezia Giulia, which for the first time (and the last time) sees the causes for denationalisation not only in fascism but also in the peace treaties concluded in the end of World War I.¹⁰ CLNG, except for the communists, rejected this proclamation and demanded that the term "the right of self-determination" in the text be replaced with "the rights of national minorities", which were included within the borders of Italy and also accepted by the legitimate Yugoslav representatives after World War I.¹¹ After the PCI Trieste federation seceded from CLNG in the autumn of 1944, CLNG adopted a declaration in December 1944, opting for a united Italy as fought for in Venezia Giulia in World War I, thus reaffirming the demands for the preservation of the Rapallo borders.¹²

The demand for the preservation of the victorious Italian World War I borders was maximalist. The Yugoslav demand for the border at the Slovenian ethnic border – meaning the border following the line of consistent Slovenian population in the countryside – can also be understood as such (and it was, in the Italian circles). However, there was an important difference between the two standpoints. Slovenian ethnic borders did not include any consistently Italian areas, but only the "Italian islands in the Slovenian and Croatian sea", meaning the cities where the majority of the population was Italian, while the Rapallo borders included extensive completely Slovenian areas. As an illustration I shall refer to the fact that, according to the 1910 census, in the area annexed to Slovenia after the 1947 peace treaty Free Territory of Trieste (Zone B of the without the Koper district), there were only 222 Italians among 182.474 inhabitants.¹³

Another part of the Italian anti-fascists chose class before nation and saw the hope of a better future in the communist Yugoslavia, therefore they affiliated themselves with the Slovenian Liberation Movement, the joint committees of the Workers' Unity,¹⁴ or the Garibaldi Units. At the same time, the leadership of the Communist Party of Slovenia (Komunistična partija Slovenije, KPS) gradually took over the Italian partisan organisations in Venezia Giulia through the policy of the Slovenian-Italian fraternity, and after the leaders of the Trieste federation were arrested in the autumn of 1944, it also took over the local PCI, which already in October 1944 entirely supported the pro-Yugoslav standpoints.

¹⁰ ARS, Collection CKKPS (AS 1487), ae 649. The report by Anton Vratuša to the Central Committee of KPS, 10 June 1944. See also ae 893.

¹¹ Galliano Fogar: *Trieste in guerra 1940–1945: società e resistenza*. Trieste 1999 (hereinafter Fogar, Trieste in guerra) pp. 151, 152, 158–159.

¹² Fogar, Trieste in guerra, pp. 206–209.

¹³ The information acquired with the 1910 census was published many times, for example in *Oko Trsta*. Belgrade 1945, pp. 141–152.

¹⁴ Godeša, Slovensko nacionalno vprašanje, pp. 161–164.

However, as the member of the KPS Committee for the Primorska (Slovenian part of Venezia Giulia) Branko Babič put it, some "practical problems" still existed.¹⁵ In December 1944 a joint communist party committee was established in Trieste, which actually functioned entirely in accordance with the directives of KPS. The leadership of the Slovenian liberation movement attempted to gain complete control over the Italian partisan units in Venezia Giulia, which would keep their internal independence, political leadership would be ensured for PCI, and they were to be cleansed of the "fascist elements".¹⁶ Before the end of the war the leadership of the Slovenian liberation movement also planned to establish a single mass political organisation, which would function on the same premises as the Slovenian Liberation Front. This did not happen; however, in the middle of April 1945 a joint Slovenian-Italian anti-fascist executive committee was established in Trieste, which functioned as a joint leadership of Slovenian and Italian organisations.¹⁷ After the liberation this committee assumed power; on 7 May 1945 it was transformed into the City Liberation Council Trieste, and it continued functioning as joint political leadership.¹⁸

After the war a large part of the Italian worker population in large centres like Trieste, Monfalcone and Muggia supported the Yugoslav demands concerning the border, meaning the annexation of the whole Venezia Giulia to Yugoslavia. They believed they would be annexed to a country which would become a part of the great communist family, led by the Soviet Union they saw as a shining example. Naively, they expected that Yugoslav authorities themselves meant communism.¹⁹ They often saw the Slovenian liberation movement as nationalist, partly also because of the propaganda of the opposite side, but partly also because Slovenians as "more reliable" held almost all key positions,²⁰ but the hope in the realisation of the communist society prevailed over the fear of being oppressed because of their nationality. Most of the Italian worker population in that region thus thought along the same lines as an important Italian communist from Monfalcone, Leopoldo Gasparini, who at the Gorizia region meeting on 3 July 1945 stated: "We are called upon to bring about a new order, not only in the Venezia Giulia, but also in Europe. /.../ We – Tito's

¹⁵ ARS, AS 1487, ae 1851. The letter of Lidija Šentjunc to CK KPS, 26 October 1944. file 535. The report of Branko Babič to the KPS Committee for the Primorska region, 28 October 1944.

¹⁶ ARS, AS 1487, ae 630. The letter of Edvard Kardelj to the direction of PCI, 9 September 1944.

¹⁷ ARS, AS 1487, ae 3467. The letter of the KPS Committee for the Slovenian Primorska region to Rado Uršič, 9 April 1945. AS 1529, collection Boris Kraigher, box 1. The dispatch from Boris Kraigher to Boris Kidrič, 29 May 1945.

¹⁸ ARS, AS 1529, box 1. The dispatch from Boris Kraigher to Boris Kidrič, 29 May 1945.

¹⁹ ARS, AS 1584, ae 99. The report of the 3rd OZNA sector Trieste, 12 May 1945.

²⁰ ARS, AS 1584, ae 109. The report of the 3rd OZNA sector Trieste, 14 May 1945. ae 114. The report of the 3rd OZNA sector Trieste, 18 May 1945.

partisans, Slovenians and Italians – achieved a military victory, but now we also have to secure a political victory".²¹

In the end of the war the Slovenian partisans together with the Yugoslav Army units liberated and occupied all of Venezia Giulia, and also the parts of the Udine province with Slovenian population (valleys of Natisone, Resia and Torre, Canale valley). They were the victors who wanted to change the state borders and at the same time introduce socialism (communism), and simultaneously they were the avengers for all the suffering brought about by fascism and war. A great majority of Slovenians and those Italians who were, in the time of fascism, as the writer Guido Miglia wrote, destined to obey, serve or keep quiet, greeted them enthusiastically.²² Edvard Kardelj reported to Josip Broz Tito that Slovenians in Trieste, Gorizia and elsewhere in the Venezia Giulia "literally went crazy with enthusiasm about Yugoslavia" after the liberation.²³ The priest and Christian socialist Virgil Šček described the arrival of the Yugoslav partisans to Lokev near Sežana: "29 April 1945. At 5pm the first tanks showed up, Yugoslav soldiers sitting on them: they stopped in the village. People were surprised, ecstatic. They ran into their houses where they already had the flags prepared, they waited for the soldiers, yelling: Long live our boys! Women and men distributed cigarettes, flowers, drink. We saw eight boys and one girl on the first tank. They were shining with happiness because of the unexpected reception. A woman asked them: Where are you going? And they answered: To liberate Trieste!"²⁴

Those supporting the annexation to Yugoslavia, Slovenians as well as Italians, also agreed with the measures implemented by the Yugoslav authorities in the occupied Venezia Giulia in May 1945, including arrests and deportations, which were seen as punishment for fascist crimes.²⁵ However, they did not understand this punishment to such a drastic degree as it was carried out, meaning the mass executions, and they also protested the imprisonment of innocent people.²⁶

²¹ ARS, Collection Okrožni komite Komunistične partije Julijske krajine za Goriško (AS 1571), file 7. The report of the Gorizia district assembly, 3 July 1945.

²² Guido Miglia, Statement for the newspaper Republika, 20 September 1994.

²³ ARS, AS 1277, box 29. The dispatch from Edvard Kardelj to Josip Broz Tito, 5 May 1945.

²⁴ Virgil Šček: Lokavske starine. III. del, manuscript, p. 196. Kept by the Lokev parochial office.

²⁵ After the liberation and the occupation of Venezia Giulia in May 1945 the Yugoslav authorities arrested several thousand people. Some of them were released, others were transported to camps and prisons in Yugoslavia, and some were executed in the days after the arrest. More in Nevenka Troha: *Komu Trst: Slovenci in Italijani med dvema državama*. Ljubljana 1999 (hereinafter Troha, *Komu Trst*), pp. 43–72.

²⁶ ARS, AS 1584, ae 41. The report of the 3rd United Nations sector Trieste, 6 May 1945. ae 126. The intervention of Boris Kraigher with the Department for the Protection of People chief J. Sluga, 11 May 1945. ae 137. The intervention of the Gorizia Liberation Front for the imprisoned Italian anti-fascists, without a date, ae 142. The request for the release of the prisoners from the POW camp Borovnica. AS 1583, collection Mestni osvobodilni svet Trst, file 7a. Interventions for the release.

Only Italians were among those demanding the preservation of the Rapallo border, even though they were on the opposite sides during the war. The so-called defence of Italianism in a way brought together the anti-fascists and the collaborators of the liberation struggle, and fascists and/or those who collaborated with the occupier. For all of them the arrival of the Yugoslav units to Trieste represented a greater danger than the German occupation, despite the Nazi plans about Trieste being a part of the Third Reich. The writer Silvio Benco from Trieste wrote the following about the Yugoslav occupation in May 1945: "All around the world peace finally smiled upon the people, but Trieste was full of terror and pain. /.../ Never has Trieste suffered such a cruel deformation of its face and such perversion of its emotions."²⁷

The Trieste and Koper bishop Antonio Santin emphasized in June 1945 that Trieste had to put up with three tyrannical and police rules, one worse than the other.²⁸

Before the end of the war the Italian Trieste national liberation committee without the communists who, as mentioned before, seceded it in 1944 and openly joined the side of the Slovenian liberation movement, was, because of its continuous ideological and especially national prejudice against the so-called Slavs, torn between the awareness that the Slovenian liberation movement was a part of the allied forces and thus good relations with it were required, and the fear of the Slavic danger, which was a common point between this committee and the Italian collaborationist circles. Knowing that it could not find an excuse for this with the allies, the committee did not agree to the united Italian anti-Slavic front during the war or to a joint struggle with the collaborationist circles as well as German and Chetnik units against the Slovenian liberation movement.²⁹ However, because of its demands for the renewal of the old Rapallo borders, despite the fact that it guaranteed equality and autonomy for the minorities within these borders,³⁰ the Italian Trieste national liberation committee obviously completely opposed the demands of the Slovenian liberation movement, thus any communication between them was extremely difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, in the beginning of April 1945 the Liberation Front leadership in Trieste renewed the contacts with CLNG, severed in the autumn of 1944, and offered it the chance to participate in the Slovenian-Italian anti-fascist executive committee, but only under the conditions of the Liberation Front; the refusal of this suggestion would mean they became open opponents in the struggle for Trieste. Two representatives of CLNG came to the plenary meeting

²⁷ Silvio Benco, *Contemplazione del disordine*, pp. 7, 8. In: Troha, *Komu Trst*, p. 33.

²⁸ Archivio storico-diplomatico del Ministero degli affari estri (hereinafter ASDMAE), AP 1931–1945, Jugoslavia, b. 153, Political situation in the Venezia Giulia and Friuli, 4 June 1945.

²⁹ Fogar, *Trieste in guerra*, p. 236–239.

³⁰ The statement of 9 December 1944 argued for the equality of nations and fully equal rights for all citizens. Fogar, *Trieste in guerra*, p. 207.

of the anti-fascist organisations representatives in the night between 12 and 13 April 1945, where the Slovenian-Italian anti-fascist executive committee was established, but left the meeting before it ended.³¹ The final attempt of an agreement between CLNG and the Liberation Front took place after 20 April 1945, but once again it was unsuccessful, as were the discussions of military cooperation.³²

The dilemmas of the Italian Trieste National Liberation Committee are described vividly in the memoirs of its member Pier Antonio Quarantotti Gambini, who also describes the way that the pro-Italian anti-fascist circles in Trieste thought. Gambini writes: "We are not Slavs, we do not want to be brought together in Tito's federation. We are Italians and we want to remain Italian, including most Marxists among us. Even the simplest people know that here we speak Italian, not Slovenian and Croatian like Tito's propaganda claims. Is not the language you speak the most basic and decisive declaration of the allegiance to one's country?"³³ At this point we should obviously ask ourselves whether they were truly unaware of the fact that with their demands for the preservation of the "holy and untouchable" Rapallo border they simultaneously denied the same right of the allegiance of the territory in regard to the language they demanded for themselves to the Slovenians and Croatians. The Yugoslav soldiers, who liberated and occupied Trieste in the end of the war and did not speak Italian, were inferior to them, while at the same time they themselves did not understand the language of their neighbours.³⁴

³¹ The joint leadership was supposed to ensure the normalisation of life, the democratisation of the authorities and democratic elections. According to the proposal of the Liberation Front only those members of CLNG should be allowed to join SIAIO, for whom "the question whether Trieste should be annexed to Yugoslavia was definitely solved", and there were no such people in CLNG. The members of CLNG had second thoughts about military units in these discussions, and they also demanded that the city guard (Guardie civiche) be acknowledged; this was not acceptable for the Liberation Front, which considered these units collaborators. CLNG also demanded the majority in the Trieste parity committee, and based this demand on the fact that it supposedly represented the majority of the Italian population. AS 1491, collection Oblastni komite KPS za Slovensko primorje, box 112. The report of MK KP Trieste, 15 April 1945. Nevenka Troha: *Politika slovensko-italijanskega bratstva: Slovansko-italijanska antifašistična unija v coni A Julijske krajine*. Ljubljana 1998 (hereinafter Troha, *Politika bratstva*), pp. 42–44.

³² Teodoro Sala: *Crisi finale nel Litorale adriatico 1944/45*. Udine 1962 (hereinafter Sala, *Crisi finale*), pp. 142–145. ARS, AS 1491, collection Oblastni komite KPS za Slovensko primorje, box archive KPJK. The report A. Fonda Savio: Resurrection in Trieste, April 1945.

³³ Pier Antonio Quarantotti Gambini, (*Primavera a Trieste*). 2nd edition. Trieste, 1985, pp. 161, 162. Quoted in Troha, *Komu Trst*, p. 34.

³⁴ I shall quote the following text: "All offices in the city are in complete chaos. The leading posts are held by total analphabets. The citizens of Trieste can only laugh at the documents (passports, certain orders etc.), released by various offices: grammatically wrong, filled out incorrectly. /.../ And these people want Trieste and the coast. Return to your little village, if it is so beautiful; excuse me, go back to your thickets, filthy rabble." From *Cronistoria della Casa Religiosa dei Carmelitani Scalzi, Trieste, 27 May 1945*. In: Paolo Blasina: *Vescovo e clero nella diocesi di Trieste-Capodistria 1938–1945*. Trieste 1993, p. 121.

Thus, except for the communists and their sympathisers, the Italian anti-fascists did not expect the Yugoslav partisans in the end of the war as liberators, but rather like conquerors, new occupiers, who supposedly coveted the Italian holy territory. The report to the Italian government dating back to the middle of May 1945 says: "La città di Trieste italianissima – Trieste, the most Italian of the cities in regard to its blood, culture, emotions, language, history and tradition, is now in even a worse position than under the Nazi-fascist slavery. Is this the freedom, promised to the people, for which so much blood was shed?"³⁵ These convictions of theirs were even strengthened by the measures of the Yugoslav authorities after their occupation of Venezia Giulia, especially mass arrests, deportations and executions, which were understood as the elimination of Italians, as vengeance of one nation against another, although in fact they were punishment for fascist crimes and partly also the removal of those who would not recognize the Yugoslav Army as a liberator.³⁶

After the Yugoslav units retreated east of the so-called Morgan Line of demarcation on 12 June 1945 and the administration of Trieste and the rest of the Zone A of Venezia Giulia was taken over by the Anglo-Americans, this common interest in defending what was Italian brought the Italian anti-fascists together with their yesterday's enemies – the fascists, former fascists, or, as they can be referred to, the heirs of fascism and nationalism. The barriers which prevented cooperation among them during the war were gone. During the peace negotiations all of them came together in the joint pro-Italian block. Within this block right-wing extremism kept gaining momentum and the ideals of a democratic society, in the name of which the parties of the Italian National Liberation Committee still existed, were gradually forgotten. The National Liberation Committee for Venezia Giulia was not disbanded. It kept representing the pro-Italian democratic parties (the Action Party, liberals, socialists and republicans), and apart from defending Italianism, the aforementioned acts of the Yugoslav authorities in May 1945 also influenced their relations with the right-wing or the neo-fascist groups. The authors of the joint introduction to the publication *Nazionalismo e neofascismo* emphasize that small illegal groups of anti-fascists, which represented CLNG during the war, were not able to resist the nationalist and chauvinist advance into Trieste for a long time after the war, since the habits, the way of thinking and culture were still almost identical, except that now these attitudes were justified with the necessity of defending the nation. These attitudes were still founded, according to the introduction, on the assumptions which the political struggle of the Italian leaders had been based on ever since the previous century, like: Italians against Slavic communists, cities

³⁵ ASDMAE, Affari politici (hereinafter AP), Yugoslavia, box 149. Military report on the uprising of patriots in Trieste, 30 April 1945, 12 May 1945.

³⁶ This viewpoint can also be seen in the texts and also literature from that time, especially by certain Italian authors. See the overview of the publications in Raoul Pupo, Roberto Spazzali: *Foibe*. Milan 2003. Troha, *Komu Trst*, pp. 43–72.

versus rural areas. Their actions were reactionary, they opposed any and all changes, and thus also impeded the Italian non-communist anti-fascism.³⁷ The defence of Italianism, which became the first and foremost value, was identified with the defence of freedom, culture, progress and also democracy. Trieste gradually became the final defence line against the threat coming from the East, while fascism was supposedly just a short episode in the thousand-year history of the Italian nation.³⁸

In the beginning of January 1946 CLNG adapted its programme to the demands of the Italian government, which did not insist that the Rapallo border be preserved, but suggested a border at the so-called Wilson Line instead.³⁹ In February 1946 a National League (Lega nazionale) was formed on the basis of the Austrian tradition, which may have declared itself as apolitical, but which was in fact, as the Yugoslav sources put it, "an exceedingly political concentration of the local reactionary forces", whose main goal was to defend Italianism.⁴⁰ It condemned the Slavic (Slovenian) imperialism and appealed to the Italians: "Italians, Slovenian imperialism is at Italy's door. Slovenians want our land."⁴¹ Yugoslav intelligence sources reported the existence of various pro-fascist movements in Trieste in August 1946, but which, according to their evaluations, were more nationalist than fascist. They supposedly got their instructions from Milan to stop their fascist activities and spread anti-Yugoslav propaganda. The report states that several groups were active in Trieste, and that the former fascists were involved with the majority of them, covering up their fascist activities with Italian nationalism.⁴²

The pro-Italian and pro-Yugoslav block started forming during the war, and the division between them was finally established at the end of the war and during the years of the so-called struggle for the borders which followed. This dividing line was not only ideological (class-related) or national, it was not just about the difference between fascism and anti-fascism, communism or anti-communism, Slovenians and Italians; instead, it was multilayered. It was about the combination of national interests despite ideological oppositions, and the combination of class-related interests despite national differences. It was up to

³⁷ *Nazionalismo e neofascismo nella lotta politica al confine orientale 1945–1975*. Trieste 1977 (hereinafter *Nazionalismo e neofascismo*), pp. 13–15.

³⁸ *Nazionalismo e neofascismo*, pp. 29–32, 45, 47. Giampaolo Valdevit: *La questione di Trieste 1941/1954: Politica internazionale e contesto locale*. Milano, 1986, pp. 114–116.

³⁹ *La Voce libera*, 1 January 1946. ARS, AS 1584, ae 421. Reports on the situation, unsigned, 5 and 8 January 1946. In 1919 the US president Woodrow Wilson suggested that the border should run across the clearly discernible national borders, but in the concrete suggestion this was not observed consistently, since his suggestion is practically identical to the border of Carniola and as such represents a compromise between the national border and the demands of Italy from the 1915 Treaty of London.

⁴⁰ ARS, Collection Glavni odbor KPJK (AS 1569), ae 273. The political situation in Trieste, without a date, probably 1947.

⁴¹ ARS, AS 1584, ae 187. National League fliers.

⁴² ARS, AS 1584, ae 230, intelligence report on the Italian reaction, 18 August 1946.

every individual which view was stronger than the other. Thus the struggle for being annexed to one or the other country unified these blocks internally. Simplifying the relations between these blocks merely with the concepts like "Italian fascists" and "Slavic communists", which once again became the synonym for opponents, burned down many bridges and further complicated mutual understanding and cooperation after the war.

The enigma "Trieste is ours" and "Trieste italianissima" was not formally solved until almost a decade after the war, when the London Memorandum was signed in October 1954. Today, Trieste is in Italy, while Venezia Giulia was divided between Italy and Yugoslavia, first with the peace treaty between Italy and Yugoslavia of 10 February 1947, and then with the aforementioned Memorandum. The border may have been a compromise between the demands of the two sides, but to a great extent it corrected the unjust provisions of the Treaty of Rapallo. The Slovenian and Yugoslav Liberation Movement made a significant impact on this course of events with its contribution to the victory over Nazism and fascism. The future of Trieste itself and of all the area around the border is not in continuous inflammation of nationalism and denial of differences, but in the realisation that differences can only enrich.

Povzetek

Razredno in nacionalno : primer Trst 1945

Italijanske fašistične oblasti so na narodnostno mešanem območju Julijske krajine vse od prihoda na oblast leta 1922 izvajale dvojno nasilje: proti politični levi in kulturni genocid nad slovensko in hrvaško manjšino, torej nad rodом (narodom). Prvi so bili njeni politični in ideološki nasprotniki, drugi pa so bili nasprotniki že s tem, ker so se rodili in čutili kot Slovenci oz. Hrvati. Druga svetovna vojna, italijanska okupacija v t.i. Ljubljanski pokrajini in nato nacistična okupacija Julijske krajine, so v vsej svoji krutosti ta nasprotovanja še potencirali.

Nasilje je rodilo upor, ki je bil dvojen. Za veliko večino Slovencev je bil to boj za ohranitev naroda in osvoboditev ne le od nemškega okupatorja, ampak tudi za spremembo meje in osvoboditev od Italije. Obenem je bil za mnoge med njimi ta upor tudi boj za socialno osvoboditev, saj je italijanska država v okviru politike t.i. etnične bonifikacije hkrati grobo posegla v socialno strukturo tamkajšnjih Slovencev.

Fašističnim oblastem in nato nemškemu okupatorju so se uprli tudi Italijani, a z različnimi cilji. Vsi so se borili proti fašizmu in za izgon okupatorja, razlikovali pa so se v pogledih na bodočnost. Eni so jo prepoznavali v demokratični italijanski državi v njenih dotedanjih mejah, med njimi tudi rapalske, drugi, ki so razredno izbiro postavili pred narodnostno, pa so svoj boljši jutri prepozna-

vali v nastajajoči komunistični Jugoslaviji, zato so se v okviru politike slovensko-italijanskega bratstva povezali s slovenskim osvobodilnim gibanjem.

Del Italijanov in tudi Slovencev v Julijski krajini je iz različnih razlogov pristajal na kolaboracijo z okupatorjem. Slovence je vodilo nasprotovanje "komunistični" Osvobodilni fronti, pritegnile pa so jih tudi nekatere koncesije, ki jih je za razliko od italijanskih fašistov nudil nacistični okupator, Italijani pa so v bistvu nadaljevali s fašističnim delovanjem.

Ob koncu vojne so skupaj z enotami Jugoslovanske armade enote slovenske partizanske vojske osvobodile in zasedle vso Julijsko krajino. Prišli so kot zmagovalci in tudi kot maščevalci za vse trpljenje, ki sta ga prizadejala fašizem in vojna. Velika večina Slovencev in del Italijanov, torej vsi tisti, ki jim je bilo usojeno ubogati, služiti ali pa molčati, jih je z navdušenjem pozdravila. Strinjali so se tudi z ukrepi, ki so jih izvajale jugoslovanske oblasti maja 1945, tudi z aretacijami, ki so jih doživljali kot kazen za fašistične zločine. Vendar ne za tako drastične, kot so bile izvedene, kot množične likvidacije. Hkrati so protestirali proti zapiranju nedolžnih. V okviru nastajajočega projugoslovanskega bloka so terjali spremembo meje, ki jim je pomenila komunizem in /ali/ združitev z matično državo.

Njim nasproten proitalijanski blok je bil nacionalno enoten. V imenu obrambe italijanstva ga je povezovala skupna zahteva po ohranitvi rapalske meje, ki je združevala tako protifašiste in sodelavce osvobodilnega boja, kot fašiste in druge, ki so pristajali na kolaboracijo z okupatorjem. V očeh mnogih Italijanov so namreč Nemci kljub svojim načrtom o Trstu kot delu Tretjega rajha predstavljali manjše zlo od preteče slovanske nevarnosti.

Proitalijanski del prebivalstva je bil tudi proti jugoslovanski zasedbi, ne le proti priključitvi. Jugoslovanskih partizanov niso sprejeli kot osvoboditelje, ampak kot osvajalce, v očeh mnogih, tudi protifašistov, so bili manjvredni barbari, ki so hlepeli po "sveti italijanski zemlji". To njihovo prepričanje je še utrdilo ravnanje jugoslovanskih oblasti ob zasedbi Julijske krajine, zlasti množične aretacije, deportacije in likvidacije, ki so jih razumeli kot odstranjevanje Italijanov, kot obračun enega naroda z drugim, čeprav so bile dejansko kaznovanje za fašistične zločine in deloma tudi odstranitev tistih, ki niso izenačevali Jugoslovanske armade z osvoboditvijo.

Ločnica med dvema blokoma, ki sta nastajala med vojno, se je tako dokončno oblikovala ob njenem koncu. Ni bila zgolj ideološka (razredna) ali zgolj narodnostna, saj ni šlo za razlikovanje med fašizmom in protifašizmom, med komunizmom in protikomunizmom ali za razlikovanje med Slovenci in Italijani. Boj za to, da bi pripadli eni ali drugi državi je oba bloka, ki sta bila sicer znotraj sebe ideološko pisana, poenotil, bolj kot kdajkoli prej ali pa pozneje. Poenostavljanje odnosov med njimi zgolj na pojme, kot sta bila italofašist in slavokomunist, ki sta ponovno postala sinonim za nasprotnika, sta podrla marsikatero mostove in po fašizmu in vojni še otežila medsebojno razumevanje in sodelovanje.