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*The War is Over. What Now?  
A Reflection on the End of World War Two*

The end of the war. The fighting is over, it is peacetime. The weapons fell silent, but the peace that came all over the world was actually a time of great unrest – a time of excitement, desire to act, to eradicate the consequences of the war, physical as well as spiritual, as soon as possible. Everyone yearned for life to get back to what was normal for peacetime as quickly as it could. The unrest, brought about by the end of the war, was a consequence of overall excitement, since many questions, conflicts and changes were caused by the war, and they all needed solving. It looked like the world as it existed until then and the relations between countries and allies of that time would change, and so would also individual countries themselves. Governments, political systems and borders would be altered. The end of the war undoubtedly drove a wedge between the old and the new. It brought about a transformation of attitudes and realities. However, the changes took various forms, occurred in different areas and were not equally intense. They varied from country to country.

In Slovenia, World War Two officially ended on the same day as in the rest of Europe – on 9 May 1945. In the morning of that day, partisan units marched into Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. Even the day before combat took place in the outskirts of the city, since by defending Ljubljana the Germans and the members of the Slovenian Home Guard wanted to ensure the possibility of retreating to Austria in the north. To the Western allies! Partisans came to Ljubljana as messengers of a new era. The people, having secretly prepared for the reception for several days, making national flags with a red star in the middle, awaited them eagerly. With sincere enthusiasm! On that morning *Jutro*, the daily newspaper of the Slovenian liberal political camp, which kept opposing the resistance against the occupiers throughout the war because of its political opposition to the leadership of the resistance, was published for the last time. This was one of the indicators that the old was giving way to the new. However, despite the fact that the arrival of the partisans to Ljubljana signified the end of the old political world, represented by this newspaper, the *Jutro* newspaper hailed their arrival with the following words: *"We have weathered a terrible storm, and Ljubljana, desecrated by countless villains, also suffered terribly;*

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*but nevertheless it is overjoyed, enchanting and reborn, to proudly greet the Slovenian heroes and brothers who brought us freedom. (...) Ljubljana, the love of heaven and happiness... This is your day, the day of everyone alive. Rejoice, sing, and salute the army, government and homeland. And, above all – freedom."*

These words for the liberators of Ljubljana emphasize the concepts, which to a great extent define the dividing line between the old and the new. In the Slovenian example this especially holds for the army, which liberated the country, for the Slovenian partisan army and the government. Namely, the government was the expression of the new concept of homeland. The characteristics of the state became more prominent, and the People's Government of Slovenia (which arrived to Ljubljana the next day) was one of the clearest indicators of this new quality. It was a symbolic expression of the new situation in Slovenia. Among other related words, published in the newspaper which served as a means of propaganda for the invaders until the very end of the war, freedom was mentioned frequently. And righteously so. As the war ended, freedom only just started for the Slovenian nation. National freedom – the freedom of a nation. In April 1941 this nation was occupied by three invading armies, who divided its territory and condemned it to disappearance. And freedom – the freedom of the nation – obviously also meant a lot to those who politically and ideologically opposed the movement which fought for this freedom.

On the day when partisans marched into Ljubljana, World War Two ended in Europe. It was a war without a second name, like World War I, which is also referred to as the Great War. However, by almost all standards, World War Two was the largest military conflict in history. It was a war fought throughout the world – approximately 96% of the population at the time participated in it, 61 countries were involved, and military operations took place in more than a fifth of Earth's surface. But it was also a completely European war. It broke out in Europe and spread around the globe. 9 May – the day when the capitulation of Germany, the country chiefly responsible for the war, entered into force, is usually thought of as the day when World War Two ended. In the Far East military operations continued until the capitulation of Japan on 2 September 1945. Japan only agreed to capitulate after nuclear bombs were dropped on two of its cities. In Europe, despite the signed German capitulation, in reality the weapons fell silent as late as on 15 May 1945 in the Slovenian territory. On that day a short but tough battle took place between the Yugoslav partisans (at that time already the formal army of the Yugoslav state) and the retreating and fleeing German units and their collaborators.

World War Two cannot be seen as an incident with only one interpretation, for too many forces were involved in it. Winston Churchill's characterisation of this war, when he said it was unnecessary, was definitely very befitting, at least from the point of view of the world he represented. Namely, when he characterised this war as such in the preface to his monumental work *The Second*

World War, he already knew what its consequences were for the country he led and which was among the victors. It was the end of the old and the beginning of the new for the British Empire. Great Britain turned into a second-class world power, while the United States and the Soviet Union became superpowers. World War Two was not only a turning point for Great Britain – it was the beginning of a new era for the whole world. Including Central Europe.

World War Two is usually described as a worldwide, global war, total, all-embracing, involving and affecting most of the population. Not only soldiers, but also civilians. Especially in the occupied countries. World War Two was primarily about conquest, which is otherwise characteristic of wars throughout history. But it was also a political war and a war of ideologies, a "war of the mind", as Joseph Goebbels, responsible for the Nazi propaganda, characterised it. World War Two was also a war for the preservation of the political acquisitions of democracy, threatened by totalitarianism built on national exclusivism and the praising of a single nation, which supposedly had the "right" to a worldwide empire. Besides conquest, evident from the invasions and occupations of states, resistance against the occupiers in these states was also characteristic of World War Two. Resistance movements were very different in size and efficiency, especially as far as military efficiency goes. But what they had in common was that the political left wing, especially communists, had an important if not decisive role in these movements (except in Poland). Despite the resistance movements being left-wing, they did not attempt to establish a revolutionary rule anywhere except in Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece. In Yugoslavia, the resistance movement evolved into a liberation movement with clear political goals of replacing the pre-war government. The Yugoslav resistance movement, having a role of a liberation movement, succeeded in doing that; the decisive factor for this success was the military power and success of the Yugoslav partisans, as well as the fact that the Western allies agreed to their goals, although gritting their teeth. Collaboration with the occupiers was also characteristic of World War Two. A new kind of collaborators, referred to as the quislings, came to light as a consequence of the occupation. The reasons for collaborating with the occupiers and the forms of collaboration differed from country to country. The differences between the forms of collaboration were as vast as the differences between resistance movements, their actions and their goals. In many occupied states, collaboration went well beyond the usual cooperation, set out by the international legislation in the so-called Hague Convention. This especially held true for Yugoslavia to a great extent, or for parts of the Yugoslav state under various occupiers. Collaboration acquired the characteristics of betraying the state and national interests.

Despite the fact that this was a world war, engulfing all continents, it was first and foremost a European war – a war for Europe, taking place in Europe. It was a fight between the countries which were victims of the German and Italian policy of invasion and territorial conquest, and the countries pursuing the crea-

tion of the so-called New Europe according to their own image (the totalitarian form of government and the Nazi attitude towards all other nations).

World War Two in Europe actually started and ended in the territory, geographically as well as politically referred to as Central Europe. The war that started in this territory and then spread over the whole of Europe was thus also highly significant for this territory. To a great extent, the causes of the relations, manifesting themselves after the war as the "Cold War", originated in Central Europe – the question of Trieste, Austria and Germany. All of these were consequences of World War Two, its beginnings and its character. There is extensive interdependence between the war, its nature, progress, consequences and post-war development in the individual countries. All the events in World War Two, and all of its phenomena actually reached their peak in Central Europe – from territorial conquest, ethnocide, genocide and collaboration to various forms of resistance. All of this influenced not only wartime events, but also post-war development.

The true end of the war in Europe, when the weapons fell silent and when military operations and armed conflicts came to an end, took place in Slovenia. Six days after Germany capitulated. The reasons why the war here did not end when it ended in the rest of Europe, can be found in the events during World War Two in the Yugoslav state, where the phenomena, characteristic of World War Two in Europe, were perhaps most prominent: occupation, resistance, collaboration. The reason for the continuation of armed conflicts in the territory of Yugoslavia and on the border between Yugoslavia and Austria, even after the German capitulation has already entered into force, was the fact that collaborators of all kinds and nationalities preferred some of the victorious military allies to the others. They wanted to surrender to the Western allies, some of them convinced that they would soon become their cooperators – collaborators on the basis of ideological and political differences, corroding the wartime alliance. This already pointed out the antagonisms of the world after World War Two, which surfaced soon after the fighting was over. Trieste was the first.

The historical development of nations and states in Central Europe had many common aspects. But at the same time there were also many differences. Histories of these nations and their states are comparable up to a point, in regard to the formation of the nations as well as their attitudes and values they hold towards their languages and cultures as the foundations for their realisation and confirmation as nations. But at the same time they also differ, despite many common points and similarities in the political and economic development, which were consequences of the historical development of each nation and state. Differences also came to light during World War Two. Including many essential differences, stemming from different international legal situations in the time of war.

The countries of Central Europe did not see the division between the old and the new in the same manner, because their situations during the war varied as

far as their relations to other countries and nations were concerned, and thus they experienced World War Two differently. Some of them – Germany (Austria, which was incorporated into the German Third Reich "voluntarily" in 1938, has to be taken into account here, and the role of the Austrian Nazis in the occupied countries, for example Slovenia, also has to be underlined), Italy, Hungary, Slovakia and also the so-called Independent State of Croatia – were members of the Axis and the invaders or occupiers. In accordance with the will of the Nazi Germany and the fascist Italy, Slovakia and Croatia were independent in a way (probably understood from the viewpoint of their previous legal status). Croatia or Croatians had a double position in the war. On one hand Croatia was an independent state, recognised by the Axis, while on the other hand national liberation struggle took place there as well as in the other parts of Yugoslavia, with common leadership and the common goal of restoring the Yugoslav state, based on new legal and organisational foundations. The third kind of Central European countries were the occupied states, where the invaders carried out their occupation policy of denationalisation and violence, which had many characteristics of a genocide. These (Central European) countries were Slovenia (as a part of the pre-war Yugoslavia, just like Croatia), the Czech territory and Poland.

Due to different situations of various nations and countries in the time of World War Two, the historical events during and after the war varied. This had an influence on the nature and forms of antifascism and collaboration in the Central European countries, resulting in different forms of resistance movements in individual states and the relations between them, as well as in the differences and common points of the collaboration phenomena in these states. Differences, caused by the situations in the individual countries and their status during World War Two, could also be seen in the post-war development, and they manifested themselves in the relations between the victorious and the losing sides, attitude to the liberators, attitude to the German minority and the question of the borders. Regardless of the degree of revolutionary attitude and clashes between classes, the question to what degree the old would be reinstated and to what degree society would be transformed was of essential importance. In what way and to what extent will a line be drawn between the old and the new? What changes occurred and in what way were they achieved in the individual Central European countries after World War Two?

Different roles and situations of various nations and countries during World War Two had a great influence on the events in these states immediately after the war and also later. By all means there is obvious interdependence between wartime events, the character and the progress of the war, as well as its consequences in the individual countries. The most obvious case is Germany, which caused the war and bore the consequences until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in the end of the 1980s and the reunification of the two German countries, created because of World War Two events. Yugoslavia was also an example of this

– during the war, revolution took place and the government was changed, and that had consequences for the post-war events in Yugoslavia.

The end of World War Two was a turning point for the whole world. As the war ended, the old pre-war world disappeared. Symbolically as well as in reality. Not only in Yugoslavia, where revolutionary changes took place during the war, but also elsewhere. The end of the war already brought about all of the phenomena, characteristic of the post-war world: the changes of borders and territories, relocation of population, introduction of new political situations and systems. After the war, all of this took place more or less under the influence of the relations, characteristic of the Cold War, since the "Iron Curtain" ran exactly through the geographical region of Central Europe. In Central Europe, the consequences of the Cold War in its initial period were among the most evident in the world.

Due to the differences in the situations of individual countries during the war, the end of the war and the liberation were also understood differently from country to country. That is especially evident now, after the fall of the Berlin Wall – time and space are often disregarded when evaluating the historical events during World War Two and in the period immediately after the war. History is seen and discussed merely from the political viewpoint. Without paying any attention to historical facts and circumstances.

There were many consequences, influencing the post-war events in the individual countries. Mostly they were political and territorial. The political changes represented the true changes from the old to the new in many aspects. They also involved social changes, essentially transforming societies, which was especially true of the countries led by the communists. Namely, as the war ended, new political relations formed in Central Europe, influenced especially by the Soviet Union with its army, liberating (conquering) certain countries. Here, as well as in Yugoslavia, where a change of government was carried out during the war (political revolution), also accepted and recognised by the Western allies, the national became class-oriented; or, adherence to class started having a decisive role, even though it was "masked" with the political system of the so-called people's democracy. In Yugoslavia, of which Slovenia was a constituent part, a system of people's democracy was officially established; but in fact, in regard to the power and the role of communists in the political life, "Bolshevism" or "sovietisation" was introduced, since all the power was in their hands. The rise to power during the war and seizing the power in the post-war period allowed the Yugoslav communists to carry out changes of the economy (changing ownership through nationalisation) and the society in a fairly "easy-going" and swift manner. In other countries, liberated by the Soviet army, the "revolutionary" eradication of the old and the establishing of the new was a bit slower and formally concluded in the beginning of 1948 with the introduction of openly communist authorities.

In Yugoslavia, the changes of the situation and role of the church as a fairly strong political factor before the war can be counted among political transformations, brought about by World War Two and its conclusion. With the constitutional separation of church and state, the possibilities for clericalism of any church ended. In the case of Slovenia and Croatia, this affected the Roman Catholic Church, which resisted this separation and the intervention in its property most resolutely among all churches. For the Roman Catholic Church, the constitutional separation from the state and its authorities (from the possibility of intervening in the political life) was a serious defeat. Namely, it lost its role of a political force, and with the agrarian reform it also lost its role of a material subject. However, it became the most organised and most critical opposition of the authorities, which the authorities answered with repression and also the severance of diplomatic relations with Vatican in the beginning of 1950s.

Territorial consequences were very important, sometimes representing a decisive turning point. Namely, the borders of several countries were changed. Some questions of borders or territories remained open and were being solved slowly for a number of years, which did not only cause crises in the relations between the countries competing for the same territory: these territorial issues resulted in major crises around the world, in conflicts between the political and military blocs created after the war, thus increasing the possibility of a war between them. The question of Trieste – would it belong to Yugoslavia or Italy? – was one of these issues, representing one of the critical conflicts between the former allies already in May 1945, immediately after the end of the war. At that time, Trieste represented a true "catalyst" for World War Three. It was the first of the public and obvious manifestations of the division of the world into blocs, and it is not a coincidence that Winston Churchill, referring to the division of the world after World War Two with the expression "the Iron Curtain", saw it as one of the borderlines. And the Trieste crisis actually lasted, more or less openly, for ten years. But the question of Trieste was not the only issue relating to territorial changes in Central Europe after the war. The most drastic change of the borders took place between Poland and Germany, as the border moved westwards into the German territory. There were also open territorial issues between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, and between Czechoslovakia and Poland. All territorial and border changes were also related to the relocations of the population.

The division of the world into blocs and the Cold War, stemming from this division, can also be counted among the consequences of World War Two. Actually all Central European countries remained in the "Soviet sphere of influence", behind the Iron Curtain, which divided Europe. And after World War Two this fact influenced the development of countries in this region. Essential questions of international or inter-bloc relations, defining the concept of the Cold War (at least in the first two decades after the war), took place in the region we refer to as Central Europe: the Trieste question, the German question

including the Berlin Wall, the question of Austria, as well as resistance against the Soviet presence and the Soviet political and economic system in the Central European countries.

The loss of life was among the most obvious and most personal consequences of World War Two. The losses in Yugoslavia, and not only there, became a factor for the external and internal political aspirations of countries. Soon the loss of life in the war and because of the war became the means for proving the contribution of countries and nations to the struggle against Nazis and fascists. The dead among the defeated were simply forgotten. The Yugoslav numbers, describing the losses among Yugoslav citizens, illustrate how the dead served political or international goals after the war. On the basis of rough calculations and political decisions, the estimate of 1.700.000 dead Yugoslav citizens was already established as soon as in 1946, for the purpose of pointing out the role of the Yugoslav liberation movement at a peace conference. This placed Yugoslavia in the third place according to wartime losses, following the Soviet Union and Poland. Among the victorious states, of course, for none of the victors cared about the losses of the losers. For "internal" purposes – the intention of making Croatia feel guilty about the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustashe ethnocide policy – as many as 700.000 of these victims were supposedly killed or died in the Jasenovac concentration camp. Several decades later, the research and calculations proved these numbers were inaccurate and exaggerated. But the dead are still being counted, still for various, especially political, purposes.

The loss of life in World War Two, often referred to as the victims of the war, was connected to the war, its progress and its genocide character, as well as to the post-war retribution. The World War Two death toll should include people who lost their lives due to national, religious or other reasons, and also the victims of post-war retaliation. Mass executions of all kinds of collaborators were especially characteristic of the Yugoslav state. Most of these massacres, carried out by the Yugoslav military units without any judicial proceedings, investigations or verdicts, took place in the Slovenian territory. The victims included Slovenians (most of them members of the Slovenian Home Guard or the so-called Slovenian National Army, which the collaborating Slovenian military units transformed and renamed themselves into after the British military authorities turned them over to the Yugoslav army from the territories of the pre-war Austria, where these units had fled to from the partisans) as well as Croatians (members of the Independent State of Croatia's armed forces and also civilians, retreating with them to the Austrian Carinthia region, from where they were then extradited back to Yugoslavia by the British military authorities) and also members of the Serbian and Montenegrin Chetnik military units. Members of the German minority (most of them collaborated with the occupiers) and the so-called class opponents were also among the victims of the post-war executions in Yugoslavia. The German minority did not take on the role of the victim



only in Yugoslavia (as collectively responsible for the horrors, caused by the German invaders in the occupied states), but in other Central and Southeast European countries as well, for example in Czechoslovakia with the so-called Beneš Decrees. These decrees involved the property of the Germans from the Sudetenland, not their lives directly. The same holds for Yugoslavia and its so-called AVNOJ Decisions – the decree by means of which the Presidency of AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia) as the legislative body transferred the property of the German Reich, its citizens and the people of German nationality to the Yugoslav state in the end of November 1944, except for those who were members of the Yugoslav liberation movement, citizens of neutral states or those who did not collaborate with the occupiers during the occupation. However, many "Yugoslav" Germans, who failed to flee together with the German military units, were executed or exiled from Yugoslavia after the war.

This undoubtedly dishonourable (even villainous) retribution against wartime collaborators in Yugoslavia was kept completely quiet in Slovenia since the end of the war until the mid-1980s, when the process of political democratisation began. The so-called executions were not discussed in public. The graves of the victims of these massacres were unknown, wiped from the official memory. Not even their numbers are known. In Slovenia and Croatia, after these countries attained independence, the victims of post-war massacres of wartime collaborators became an important political topic. The dead became the political means of altering the assessment of World War Two in Slovenia; a large part of the discussions and evaluations of World War Two in Slovenia and Croatia in fact always focuses on the collaborators, executed after the war. In the recent years, systematic uncovering of these graves and grave sites as well as exhumations of the remains started in Slovenia, where immediately after the end of the war most of the victims of the post-war vengeance, carried out by the new authorities, were executed and buried. Due to the fact that there are over 500 of these grave sites in Slovenia, Slovenia is the "murderous epicentre" according to some historians; these sites are now being discovered and exhumed, also with the help of historians, and efforts are being made to establish the identity and the number of the people buried there. In the territory of Slovenia, the number of graves and grave sites of those killed after the war is truly high, since most of the post-war retribution of the victors against the losing side in World War Two took place in the Slovenian territory; however, it has to be taken into account that the reason for this is the geographical location of Slovenia, which is adjacent to Austria and Italy, where many armies fled to over the Slovenian territory from the Yugoslav partisans. Furthermore, the British, to whom most of the Yugoslav collaborators had surrendered, especially those from Slovenia and Croatia, extradited these collaborators to Slovenia as a part of the Yugoslav state. And in the territory of Slovenia they were executed because of their collaboration with the occupiers. While evaluating the reasons why so many grave

sites of the victims of post-war massacres are located in Slovenia, these facts should be taken into account. Above all, the exhumation of these graves, containing the remains of collaborators killed while fleeing the country as well as those executed in the post-war massacres, represents a kind of a "final settlement" of World War Two. Unfortunately, the piety involved in these exhumations is lost due to political aspects.

The loss of life in World War Two and because of World War Two (victims of post-war retribution) in Slovenia is not only used by the current politics; it is also the subject of a systematic scientific historiographic studies. At the Institute for Contemporary History in Ljubljana, historiographic research has been systematically carried out for almost a decade, determining the names of Slovenian victims, killed during World War Two and immediately after it (until the end of 1945). Not only does this research determine the number of Slovenians who died in World War Two (approximately 96.000), it also establishes the cause of death and whether they were killed as civilians or soldiers, partisans, members of various collaborating formations or as soldiers, mobilised by the occupiers. Those individuals who lost their lives during or after the war because of this war, in a way also became historical subjects.

In regard to the consequences of World War Two or the changes that the end of this war caused in the individual countries, the evaluation of the war and its consequences varies among different "national" historiographies. Every nation or its national historiography bases its evaluations and explanations of World War Two on its own experience, viewpoints and assessments. These assessments, regardless of historical facts, are frequently influenced by the "current" politics, political systems or ruling governments and their attitudes towards the past, and they need and use history for their own purposes. New interpretations of history are being formed, which do not have much in common with the otherwise normal and necessary process of scientific revision in historiography. In Slovenia, controversial debates about the character of war, resistance and collaboration are taking place. In fact, we have witnessed attempts to depreciate and "criminalise" resistance and to vindicate (even glorify!) collaboration – due to anti-communist character. The intention of these "revisionists" is to present the actual losers as moral and political winners of World War Two in the light of new political circumstances after the fall of the Berlin Wall or communism, while criminalising the actual winners on the basis of their ideology or world view.

The end of World War Two is also understood and interpreted in different ways today. What it meant for the nations and what it meant for individuals. What it brought to the community and what significance it had for the individuals. These interpretations do not only vary from country to country, they also vary within individual countries. For example in Slovenia. The interpretation what the end of the war meant, who the actual winner was, is based on different kinds of understanding and appreciation of the character of the war, from occu-

pation to resistance and collaboration. For some people today, collaboration is a more important value than the struggle for national liberation. For the same reasons that people decided to collaborate with the occupiers during the war – because the struggle against the occupiers was organised and led by communists. Thus the entire fight against the occupiers is today first and foremost interpreted as a revolution. As something intolerable, immoral. It is not understood as a historical fact, which has to be discussed by historiography; it is seen as a political category.

On the other hand, in Croatia, for example, the "lamenting" of the lost statehood, represented by the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), keeps surfacing in the interpretations of the end of the war. This state is only represented as an expression of Croatian patriotism and sovereignty, while its "regime" is not frequently mentioned, and the policy of this regime and its activities are completely overlooked. Its genocidal character is kept quiet. Apart from "lamenting" the lost statehood, the victims of the Croatian nation after the defeat of NDH are also mentioned in the discussions about the end of the war. These are the victims of the post-war massacres and the suffering during the so-called Way of the Cross – the suffering of the members of NDH armed forces, extradited to Yugoslavia by the Allies in the first months after the war. Now certain interpretations keep appearing that this Croatian Way of the Cross did not start with the members of NDH armed forces being turned over to the units of the Yugoslav Army (especially to the units consisting mostly of Serbs), that in fact this Way of the Cross had already begun earlier, in the end of 1944, when partisans started conquering or liberating parts of NDH. So partisans are presented as "conquerors" of the Independent State of Croatia. At the same time the quality and degree of its independence or dependence on the German Reich and its armies are being ignored. It is not mentioned that NDH was in fact a formation established in accordance with the will of the Nazi Germany, the fascist Italy and Adolf Hitler himself.

The end of the war, after Germany surrendered and the weapons fell quiet, is also understood and presented through different concepts. As peace, following the war, and as victory (this concept is more widely accepted in the territories which experienced both military defeat and occupation; there the end of the war and the defeat of the occupiers is righteously understood as liberation). National liberation.

The victorious side had a different attitude to the end of the war than the losers. Even within single nations and states. Namely, the end of the war and the defeat of the main European occupier also spelled defeat for collaborators. The same goes for Slovenia. The end of the war brought military, political and also ideological defeat to those Slovenians who cooperated with the occupier. Thus the liberation of homeland did not mean freedom for them, like it did for the majority of their fellow citizens. They left their country together with the occupier in order to preserve personal freedom and their lives.

Regardless of how anybody describes and understands the end of the war – for most people it meant victory against those who had started it and who had used all available means to achieve their military goals. Thus, for the occupied and oppressed nations and countries, the end of the war certainly meant liberation. However, the understanding of what freedom was differed between those who resisted the occupiers, rose up for their national freedom and fought a liberation war, and those who were content with the amount of freedom that the occupiers let them have. But even for these people, liberation of their occupied homelands meant freedom for their nations. Differences in the understanding of freedom, political freedom and freedom of entrepreneurship arose between individuals. In Yugoslavia, political monism with many elements of totalitarianism was introduced after the war, based on the Leninist guidelines of undertaking a so-called proletarian revolution. The freedom of certain individuals, especially those who represented the former authorities and those who were more prosperous, was certainly seen differently by the new authorities. Thus the end of the war brought many changes for them.

The perception of freedom also differed between the victors, who had been military allies until then. They also understood the freedom of individuals in different ways. Liberation of the world from the clutches of Nazism and fascism as forms of utter totalitarianism did not simultaneously mean liberation from all forms of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism manifested itself in new forms. As a communist rule under the pretence of the so-called people's democracy in all these countries (least of all in Yugoslavia): democracy, controlled by the communist authorities in the name of the people. In Yugoslavia, due to the revolutionary rise to power during the war, the communists took over as soon as the war ended (in half of the Yugoslav territory already before it formally ended), while in the Central European countries, liberated by the Soviet army, the total communist takeover lasted a while longer. But even there the end of the war meant an important dividing line between the old and the new. However, in the countries divided among the allies, who established their own authority in "their" respective parts, freedom took on a special form. For many German soldiers the end of the war meant the loss of their freedom (as much of it as they as soldiers ever had before), since they became prisoners of war. According to the estimates, as many as a million of them lost their lives in the allied – American and French – prison camps, which were improvised and opened quickly after World War Two. They died because of hunger and neglect. For a long time these "other losses", as they were referred to in the documents, were unknown and have not been mentioned for a long time after the war, until as late as 1990s. Soon after the war, the fate of the German prisoners of war also became the means for "settling the score" among the former allies, who became ideological and military opponents after the war. The West wanted to unload all responsibility for the victims among the German prisoners onto the Soviet Union. That was one of the manifestations of the end of the war.

The perception of this conclusion – who won, who lost, who became free and who did not – is today even more clearly reflected in the interpretations of the end of the war perhaps not only in Slovenia, but also in other countries, which suffered a similar fate during World War Two. This is not only true of the countries which "liberated" themselves after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also for countries with a long tradition of parliamentary democracy, for example Italy. In many countries the questions of resistance, collaboration and various perceptions and interpretations of these phenomena are also open.

However, in Slovenia those who interpret World War Two only as a "communist revolution" and a civil war (disregarding the fact that this revolution took place during the occupation and that one of the sides involved in the civil war was collaborating with the invaders) keep forgetting the occupation, the authorities of the invading armies, and their "policy" towards the Slovenian nation; therefore these people do not see liberation from the occupiers as the attainment of national freedom – they understand it as freedom only for those who sided with the liberation movement. Thus the concept of freedom is regarded as actual lack of freedom, and despite its relevance for the liberty of the entire nation, in contrast with the occupation and ethnocidal nature of the German occupier, it has a political and ideological dimension. However, we cannot ignore the fact that, due to the change of government which took place during the war, the end of the war and the national liberation meant a radical change for many people, especially for collaborators or supporters of the occupiers. Their freedom diminished. In many cases also personal freedom, since the new authorities imprisoned them, and also the freedom of property. In general, property was one of the means of the authorities interfering with the freedom of individuals. Confiscation of property was a form of punishment for the actual collaborators, as well as for those framed by the government. Many people suffered more because of the state interfering with their property and confiscating it than because of the loss of political freedom, which had not been worth much even before the war (despite the multiparty system, but with a dominant state regime party).

What meant freedom for some was not seen as freedom by others. Namely, the lack of freedom that some people perceived had social or class reasons. In Yugoslavia, where the changing of the government as the basic condition for the class revolution was taking place at the same time as the war against the occupiers, the aspect of class had a very important role, which was also confirmed after the war. Because the new authorities were convinced that collaboration was also based on class reasons, they dealt with the class aspect of the revolutionary process by persecuting those who owned significant private property and who in any way cooperated with the occupiers during the war. This was the so-called patriotic nationalisation. The basic means of achieving this was expropriation. The authorities disguised the class reasons for interfering with property as national reasons, and the confiscations were mostly a supplementary

punishment for wartime collaboration. In this way the new authorities did not only limit or confiscate property, which was nationalised and managed by the communist government; this was also the way of taking away or restricting drastically the political rights of the pre-war policy makers, including church – the Roman Catholic Church (the dominant church in Slovenia and Croatia) as well as the Orthodox Church. The change of the government came to pass and the revolution succeeded. The old gave way to the new.

Despite the fact that in this way the personal and political freedom of many people, as well as the freedom of property as the basis for their social, economic and political situation, was limited, with the end of the war and the defeat of the occupier they also achieved national liberation. As the war ended and when the enemy was defeated, everyone in the occupied countries achieved national liberation. Even those who were content with the amount of "freedom" given to them by the occupiers during the occupation.

Regardless of the differences in the understanding of the concept of liberty, everyone looked forward to the end of the war. Even Germans in Germany (there were some exceptions, but they were a minority and they did not often voice their opinion publicly), which is shown by various documentary films about the allied advance into Germany with the images of the people, enthusiastic or at least relieved that the horrors of the war are over, greeting the soldiers. Greeting Anglo-Americans, of course, for the "liberation" of Germany from the east had a different image – one of terror and violence against civilians, especially women. Their liberation meant bondage.

World War Two and its conclusion meant the end of the pre-war situation and the onset of something new all around the world. Including Central European countries. Here the changes were awesome and long-term. Perhaps the transformation or the consequences of World War Two were most profound in this area. This has yet to be dealt with, and the answers should be based on the cooperation of Central European historians. The anniversary of the end of World War Two, celebrated by the nations, living in this territory as nearby or distant neighbours "since forever", was one of better opportunities for this cooperation to begin. Especially now that all these countries (with the exception of Croatia) have been brought together within the European Union. By coincidence European Union was established on the same day as World War Two officially ended in Europe – 9 May.

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The anniversary of the end of World War Two in Europe (from the European perspective it is usually forgotten that the war on the Pacific and the Far East lasted until the capitulation of Japan on 2 September 1945) was a convenient

opportunity for us historians to once again focus on the end of the war<sup>1</sup> and its consequences, and to ask ourselves to what degree this meant the division between the old and the new in the countries belonging to the geographical, political and spiritual concept of Central Europe.

In the year when the world celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War Two, much was said and written about it, also by historians at numerous scientific meetings. Thus the Institute for Contemporary History from Ljubljana, as the central Slovenian scientific and research institution for the exploration of contemporary and recent history, prepared a scientific conference "*1945 – A Break Between the Old and the New: The End of the World War Two in the History of Central European Countries*" as a contribution of Slovenian historiography on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War Two.<sup>2</sup> The conference took place in Ljubljana on 29 and 30 September 2005 and it was attended by historians from nine Central European states: from Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Croatia, the Czech Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The historical circumstances of the progress and the conclusion of World War Two differed between various Central European countries, and that is why the basic questions, which historiography attempts to answer today, are different. At this conference of historians from Central European countries, the participants focused mostly on the political circumstances surrounding the end of World War Two, which represented the essential dividing line between the old and the new in the individual countries. This is an issue which Slovenian historiography refers to as "the takeover of power", representing a very diverse subject and involving many issues from the actual political preparations for the takeover to the organisation and functioning of the authorities and the opposition. The changes of the borders were among the more prominent topics as one of the characteristics of World War Two or its consequences (the territorial conquests of Germany, Italy and their "satellite states" during the war should not be forgotten). Especially in Central Europe, where after the war several cri-

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<sup>1</sup> Slovenian historians have already held several scientific conferences about the end of World War Two. In 1975 a scientific consultation took place, on the basis of which the collection of papers *Osvoboditev Slovenije 1945 [The Liberation of Slovenia 1945]* (Ljubljana 1977); in 1985, the fourth round table of the Yugoslav and British historians *Konec druge svetovne vojne v Jugoslaviji: zbornik referatov in razprav [The End of World War Two in Yugoslavia: collection of papers and discussions]* was organised (Ljubljana 1986); and an international scientific discussion *Slovenija v letu 1945 : zbornik referatov [Slovenia in 1945 : a collection of papers]* (Ljubljana 1996) took place in 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Co-organised by the *Central European Initiative* (CEI), the regional intergovernmental forum for the co-operation of Central, Southeast and East European countries, registered in Trieste, with the purpose of economic and cultural co-operation among member states. The conference was also financially supported by the *Javna agencija za raziskovalno delo Republike Slovenije* (Slovenian Research Agency) and the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia*.

sis areas shaped the relations between the countries and blocs. The so-called victims of war are a special manifestation of the consequences of World War Two – those who died during the war because of it, and those who died because of the war after it had ended.

The goal of the conference was that Central European historians would focus, in a scientific historiographical manner, on the common historical events on one hand, and on the specific and individual development of certain countries, on the other hand. How and to what a degree World War Two influenced the post-war events in these countries; what changes World War Two caused in the individual countries and how significant these changes were; and where these changes manifested themselves most obviously – these were the questions that the historians from the aforementioned Central European countries attempted to answer.

The following contributions attest to how historians dealt with these questions, how they presented their work, and what they saw as the most important issues concerning the transformation from the old to the new, caused by World War Two in their respective countries. At the same time these contributions also show which issues are being focused on in the individual states when dealing with the history of the consequences of World War Two. In the following publication we include the contributions of all those participants of the conference who wrote them. Only one of the participants, Professor Dr. Brunello Mantelli from the University of Turin, has unfortunately not prepared his contribution for the publication. At the conference he presented his work on Austria and the Austrians, who played their role in the Greater Germany, and on the "Austrian post-war legend" about them being the first victims of Hitler's appetite for conquest. This is one of the questions without a simple and one-sided answer, and thus Dr. Mantelli entitled his contribution *Ambiguities in the Case of Austria*. However, the question of Austria, its position and role, especially the role of Austrians in World War Two, is also significant for our own history – namely, for the creation of the Slovenian political or national ideal of the united Slovenia, related to the aspirations for the changing of the border between Yugoslavia/Slovenia and Austria as it was drawn after World War I.

The articles are organised in regard to their contents – foreign policy, revolutionary changes of governments, the questions of borders, the issues concerning the victims of the war, and the individual segments of the political and scientific life during the war, as they manifested themselves after the war.

Although the conference took place in the Slovenian and English language, we shall publish the contributions only in English with abstracts in Slovenian. The cause for such a decision is financial, as usual (the costs of translating and printing). Due to organisational reasons the publication is a bit late, and we apologise to the authors, especially those who sent their articles in a timely fashion in accordance with what we agreed on. However, in the end we can resort to the old saying: better late than never!



*Povzetek**Vojna je končana. In potem?  
Premišljanje o koncu druge svetovne vojne*

Za konec druge svetovne vojne v evropskem prostoru štejemo običajno 9. maj 1945. Takrat se je končala vojna tudi v Sloveniji. Zjutraj tistega dne so v Ljubljano vkorakale partizanske enote. Nastopil je mir. Vendar je bil ta mir, ki se zavaladal po svetu, ko je utihnilo orožje v resnici velik nemir. Družbeni in politični. Konec vojne je sicer pomenil konec vojaških spopadov in operacij, je pa pomenil tudi, da so bila odprta mnoga vprašanja, razmerja in spremembe, ki so bile posledica vojne in vse to je zahtevalo rešitve. Kazalo je na spreminjanje dotedanega sveta, dotedanjih odnosov med državami, med dotedanjimi vojnimi zavezniki, pa tudi na spreminjanja v državah samih. Spreminjale so se oblasti, politični sistemi, meje in ozemlja. S koncem vojne je nedvomno nastopil prelom med starim in novim. Stari, predvojni svet se je poslovil. Simbolično in dejansko. Prevrata je bil stvaren in v pogledih. Bil je v različnih oblikah, na različnih področjih in različno intenziven. Različen od države do države.

Druga svetovna vojna in njen konec je povsod po svetu pomenil večji ali manjši prelom s predvojnimi stanjem in začetek novega. Posledic vojne, ki so vplivale na povojno dogajanje v posameznih državah, je bilo več. Bile so predvsem politične in ozemeljske. Prav politične so v mnogočem predstavljale pravi prelom med starim in novim. Z njimi so bile povezane socialne spremembe, ki so družbo bistveno predrugačile, kar je veljalo zlasti v državah, v katerih so imeli odločilno besedo komunisti. Značaj preloma pa so imele tudi ozemeljske spremembe. Nekatera mejna oziroma ozemeljska vprašanja so bila odprta in so se reševala počasi še vrsto let po koncu vojne. Ozemeljska vprašanja so bila pogojevalec večjih kriz v svetu, kriz med politično-vojaškimi blokoma, ki sta nastala po vojni. Med posledice druge svetovne vojne je namreč treba uvrstiti tudi blokovsko delitev sveta in t. i. hladno vojno, ki je iz tega izhajala.

Kljub dejstvu da je bila to svetovna vojna in je zajela vse celine, pa je bila v prvi vrsti evropska vojna – vojna v Evropi in za Evropo. Šlo je za boj med državami, ki so bile žrtve nemške in italijanske napadalne oziroma ozemeljsko osvajalne politike, in državami, ki so želele v Evropi po svoji podobi (totalitarnemu načinu oblasti in nacističnem pogledu na druge narode) ustvariti t. i. Novo Evropo. Druga svetovna vojna v Evropi se je dejansko začela in tudi končala na ozemlju, ki ga geografsko in tudi politično označujemo kot Srednjo Evropo. Vojna, ki se je začela na ozemlju Srednje Evrope in se nato razširila po vsej Evropi, je imela tako tudi pogloblitve posledice na tem ozemlju. V prostoru srednje Evrope se je dejansko zgostilo vse dogajanje druge svetovne vojne in vse njene pojavne oblike, od ozemeljskih prisvajanj, etnocidnih in genocidnih pojavov, kolaboracije do različni oblik odpornišтва. To vse je imelo posledice

ne le v dogajanjih v času vojne, ampak tudi za povojni razvoj. Med vojno, njenim značajem, potekom in posledicami ter povojnim razvojem v posameznih državah je velika soodvisnost. Zaradi razlik v položaju posameznih narodov in držav v času druge svetovne vojne je bilo zgodovinsko dogajanje v času druge svetovne vojne in po njej različno.

Glede na posledice druge svetovne vojne oziroma kakšen prelom je konec vojne povzročil v posamezni državi, je tudi vrednotenje vojne in posledic pri različnih "nacionalnih" zgodovinopisjih različno. Vsak narod oziroma njegovo nacionalno zgodovinopisje izhaja glede doživljanje druge svetovne vojne in razlage le-te iz svojih izkušenj, svojih pogledov in svojih ocen. Mnogokrat bolj s političnim značajem kot izhajajoč iz zgodovinskih dejstev. Ta pa se namreč različno vrednotijo in razlagajo, glede na politično situacijo v neki državi.