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*Božo Repe, Kornelija Ajlec**

Occupation Borders 1941–1945 through Diplomatic Archives, People’s Lives and Remnants on Location**

About the project

Despite the abundant bibliography, totalling almost 13,000 units, occupation borders in the Slovene ethnic territory during World War II have only been dealt with in part. Thus far, historians have paid most attention to diplomatic decisions, and in specific segments also to on-site negotiations. In Slovenia, the question of occupation borders was most often addressed by Dr Tone Ferenc,¹ while in the period of Yugoslavia this subject was dealt with by several historians, including Ferdo Čulinović, who penned the first book on the question at hand and is still regarded as a fundamental work.² As evident from the sources stated in the scope of this and other articles published in this miscellany, the bulk of sources are kept in the Military Archive in Belgrade, which keeps a considerable number of valuable microfilms, particularly those originating from the German archives. Key archives for diplomacy-related issues in this context are part of the national archives of the former occupying states, whereby it should be pointed

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** The paper at hand was produced in the scope of the national research project *Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population* (J6-8248), which is financed by the Slovenian Research Agency. Additionally, it contributes to the national research programme *Slovene History* (P6-0235), which is financed by the Slovenian Research Agency as well.

1 Among others: Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi v Sloveniji 1941–1945*; Ferenc, *Nacistična in raznarodovalna politika v Sloveniji v letih 1941–1945*; Ferenc, *Aneksionistična in raznarodovalna politika okupatorjev v Sloveniji*; Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 1, Razkosanje in aneksionizem*; Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 2, Raznarodovanje*; Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 3, Nasilje in izkoriščanje gmotnih sil za potrebe okupatorskih držav*; Ferenc, *Nacistična politika denacionalizacije u Sloveniji u godinama od 1941 do 1945*; Ferenc, *Le système d'occupation des Nazis en Slovénie*; etc.

2 Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije*.

out that in the case of Germany these archives were transferred from Bonn to Berlin after the German reunification. This transfer does not pose a problem, as the research considered in this work has shown that such documents can be traced. Naturally, some materials are kept in Slovene archives as well.

The research project entitled *Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and the Lives of the Slovene Population*, which is popularly referred to simply as *Occupation Borders* (Slovene: *Okupacijske meje*),³ addressed this issue comprehensively, considering several aspects. Structurally speaking, this research consisted of several phases, as does this article.

Phase I included: 1. an overview of a rough division of the Slovene territory on the highest diplomatic level and the related Axis powers treaties that were based on the principle of the debellation of Yugoslavia; 2. an exploration of the territory's military occupation and marking out the occupied space on location, where occasional conflicts occurred between occupiers that were otherwise allies; 3. study of the concrete delineation of borders on the basis of border commissions; 4. a survey of modes of fortifying borders. In doing so, we were able to detect common characteristic features and differences between these borders and the respective occupiers' border regimes.

Phase II of the research was conducted on location. Joint historical and geographical work resulted in an exact calculation of the entire length of all borders (640 km) and in an outline of their course.⁴ Geographers from the Anton Melik Geographical Institute at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (henceforth referred to as GIAM ZRC SAZU)⁵ included in the research group transferred archival diplomatic, military and other maps to the modern-day Global Positioning System (GPS). Both parts of the research group, i.e. geographers and historians,⁶ traced these borders on site, marking them out and identifying their

3 The Facebook page used for disseminating research procedures and results bears the same name. It contains all eyewitness testimonies and other materials gathered thus far: <https://www.facebook.com/OkupacijskeMeje/> (accessed in February 2020)

4 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 188.

5 Members of the research group from the GIAM ZRC SAZU are Dr Matija Zorn, Dr Mateja Breg Valjavec, Dr Rok Ciglič, Dr Mateja Ferk, Dr Primož Gašperič, Dr Matjaž Geršič, Dr Mauro Hrvatini, Dr Drago Kladnik, Manca Volk Bahun, and the young researcher Jure Tičar.

6 Historians and members of the research group from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana, and the Institute of Contemporary History include Dr Božo Repe, Dr Kornelija Ajlec, Dr Bojan Balkovec, Dr Jožef Božidar Flajšman, Dr Aleš Gabrič, Dr Bojan Godeša, Dr Darja Kerec, Dr Peter Mikša, and the young researcher Maja Vehar. Dr Attila Kovács from the Institute for Ethnic Studies participated in the team as an external associate. Students from the Department of History participated in the project as well, some of them in the scope of seminars in the academic years 2017/18 and 2018/19 and others more intensely as part of student part-time work. Matevž Šlabnik, Blaž Štangelj, and Daniel Siter co-created local exhibitions; Marko Berkovič, Domen Kaučič, Lea Knez, Tjaša Konovšek, Jernej Komac, Tadej Madjar, and Maruša Nartnik conducted interviews on location, and Ivan Smiljanič carried out archival research.

remnants. Geographers produced detailed maps of all occupation borders featured in our exhibitions or publications.

Phase III was dedicated to a systematic collection of testimonials,⁷ their processing, preparation for publication, and analysis. The interviewees belonged mostly to the last living wartime generation that witnessed occupation borders as children. In many cases this was the last opportunity to record their memories because, sadly, a few interviewees have died in the meantime.

This structure outlined at least a rough historical picture that conveys the occupation borders’ importance for the Slovenes’ fate on the national level, as well as that of border areas and individuals. When discussing the occupation borders, the extent of the occupiers’ ethnocidal and genocidal actions, the altered demographic and national structure of the Slovene territory,⁸ as well as the oppressors’ other activities were writ large. There was no room for Slovenes on the map of new, Nazi Europe, where the German Reich extended from Norway’s North Cape to the last Greek island, and from Moscow to the Channel Islands. Unburdened by any ideology that is otherwise typical of the exploration of World War II, the research results provide a realistic insight into the enormous effort and energy required for Slovenes’ survival and resistance.

The research follows the concept of so-called *public history*,⁹ and paints a picture of historical narration that is different from that presented thus far in terms of context and subject matter. It focuses on the examination of history from the bottom-up, on the history of individuals whose lives were shaped by great players’ decisions and who – provided that they were not resettled – had to live along the newly established or newly fortified borders that were outlined by the occupiers, trying to sustain themselves by secretly crossing the border, working their land on the other side of the border, by smuggling, looking for a *modus vivendi* with the occupiers and their collaborators on the one hand and partisans on the other.

Life along the occupation borders brought about hundreds of tragic and comical stories, seemingly small but also representative of both the condemnable and courageous actions that mankind is capable of. With the project in question we managed to prevent at least a fraction thereof from falling into oblivion.

7 There were 184 interviews recorded between June 2017 and February 2020; their durations ranged between 30 minutes and three and a half hours. There were 260 segments published from these interviews on the project’s Facebook page. The interviews are available on the Zgodovina.si YouTube playlist: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRtNtrQJTHOwr9R_8Rgj1KXtJo1T7nB0o (retrieved in February 2020).

8 For instance, as a consequence of the total expulsion of the Slovene population from northern Dolenjska, the regions of Posavje and Obsotelje along the border with Croatia, as well as, in part, from areas situated along the Italian-German border. This was followed by the settlement of the German population in a strip of the territory extending 100 km in length and 25 km in width.

9 Working with people on location, publishing results in real time, interacting with the local milieu (forestry offices, local societies and interested individuals), inclusion of students of history, etc.

The Occupation of Yugoslavia and the Diplomatic Delineation of Borders

Hitler sought to connect the Balkan states and Germany as much as possible even before the onset of the war. Romania got the worst of it: according to an oil pact signed in 1940, Romania had to sell oil to Germany at a very low, prearranged price and cede Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, a part of Transylvania to Hungary, and Dobruja to Bulgaria. The German troops controlled all Romanian strategic structures, and German instructors led the Romanian army. Romania was part of the Tripartite Pact from November 1940 onwards.¹⁰ Due to its connections with Germany, Hungary also obtained territories at the expense of Slovakia, and joined the Tripartite Pact in 1940.¹¹ Economically speaking, Bulgaria was completely subordinated to Germany. Having entered into the pact on 1 March 1941, Bulgaria immediately saw a large number of German soldiers arrive in the country.¹²

Initially, Hitler did not regard the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as a military target, and thus did not want to attack it. On the other hand, Yugoslav politics was confusing and contradictory in this period of increased tension before the beginning of the war. This was a result of internal politics and the fact that Yugoslavia had no allies immediately before the attack of the Axis powers, only Western Allies moral support. On account of its indecisive policy Yugoslavia avoided active interference with conflicts throughout Europe for almost two years. Without the support of the great powers and due to significant pressure exerted by Nazi Germany, Yugoslavia initially declared neutrality. However, the pressures increased soon after that, and in early March 1941 Hitler tried to convince Prince Paul, the Yugoslav regent, that it was necessary for Yugoslavia to join the Tripartite Pact. Hitler even informed the regent of Germany's forthcoming attack on the Soviet Union,¹³ hinting as to why Yugoslavia should join the pact. However, the country persisted in wavering because it was faced with an outburst of strikes in the years 1939/40, a result of a fall in wages and various economic and political crises brought about by the onset of war in Europe. The government put down these strikes by means of severe measures, banned the operation of trade unions and decided to establish a concentration camp in Bileća, in modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. Firearms were used against participants of the demonstrations held on 14 December 1940 in Belgrade. At the same time the government announced a rent decree, food reserves, requisition, price caps for food, and even introduced bread and flour stamps in early 1941. However, as early as in the spring of 1941 the authorities were no longer able to control the situation. Large demonstrations broke out when Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact

10 Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 8–27.

11 Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II*, 91–93, 137–138.

12 Miller, *Bulgaria during the Second World War*, 37, 45–46.

13 Kitchen, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union*, 48.

on 25 March 1941 became known. Assisted by the British intelligence service, a group of officers led by the Yugoslav Air Force generals Borivoje Mirković and Dušan Simović carried out a coup, declaring King Peter II an adult, doing away with the regency and, concurrently, confirming the accession to the Tripartite Pact.¹⁴

The new government, consisting of representatives of the Yugoslav Muslim organization, the Slovene People's Party, and the Serbian Cultural Club,¹⁵ gave public assurance that the Pact remained in force. At the same time, the government engaged in secret negotiations with the United Kingdom to leave the Pact. On account of the discord, confusion and conflicts among the different factions within it,¹⁶ the new government was incapable of ensuring consent both in terms of internal or external policy. With the German Army having conquered most of Europe, the United Kingdom fighting for its existence, and the Soviet Union's non-aggression treaty with Germany, the new government had no room to manoeuvre. Fearing Germany, it did not even dare to order a total mobilization. This political agony was put to a stop only by the war. Enraged due to Yugoslav unreliability, Hitler decided to attack along with his military allies.¹⁷ Having made territorial promises, he had no difficulty convincing neighbours of Yugoslavia and Greece to take part in the attack on both countries, giving them a relatively easy task because the Yugoslav army's weaponry was outdated, rendering it unable to offer much resistance.¹⁸ The territory was split in a traditional manner, i.e. into a war zone and rear area, and the military doctrine was based on experience gained in the Balkan Wars and World War I, i.e. waging front warfare. It was unable to implement mobilization in the few days, less than a week, it was given, managing to mobilize only half of a total of 1,200,000 conscripts. The General Staff planned the defence of the entire 3,000-km long border, along which weak fortifications had been built in the pre-war years. The Yugoslav Army would gradually withdraw southwards, where it would open a new "Salonica" front together with its allies, which was easily prevented by the attackers' mobile troops.¹⁹

14 Repe, *S puško in knjigo*, 9–10.

15 The Serbian Cultural Club was a political organization. It was founded in 1937 and strove to form Great Serbia within a federal monarchy.

16 *Inter alia*, the conflicts stemmed from the fact that almost half the ministers in the new government came from the previous one that had been overthrown.

17 *Ibid.*, 10.

18 On the eve of World War II, the Royal Yugoslav Army had enough ammunition for 75 days of infantry operations, 100 days of artillery operations and up to a week of anti-aircraft defence. In total, it had 110 tanks, 60 of which were from the period of World War I and 50 of which were the state of the art and had been purchased the year before. This implied that tank units lacked experience and were poorly trained. The air force consisted of 459 aircraft of all types; meanwhile, the navy had only 32 vessels at sea and another four on the Danube. Additionally, in: Welcome to Yugoslavia, the Prekmurje Slovenes!" More in: *Vojna enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, IV, 250–252; Čulinović, *Slom stare Jugoslavije*, 162–168.

19 Terzić, *Slom kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 250–252.

The attack on Yugoslavia began in the early hours of 6 April 1941. Having been provided detailed information by informants from the ranks of the Volksdeutsche, Ustashe and other fifth columnists, the German *Luftwaffe* initially attacked airfields and other important military structures and, later on, cities. The brutal attack on Belgrade is particularly well known. Penetrating from Austria and Bulgaria, German motorized troops and infantry followed suit. The king and the government left the country, and on 17 April representatives of the High Command of the Yugoslav Army signed an unconditional surrender. The bulk of the Yugoslav army was captured and the country dismembered,²⁰ with Slovenia suffering this fate in a mere six days. The German Army penetrated from the north and advanced via the Slovene territory towards the Croatian cities of Varaždin, Zagreb, and Karlovac. When the Germans successfully completed their campaign to Zagreb and Karlovac, cutting off Yugoslavia's western part from its centre, the Italian troops, arriving from the annexed territories on the other side of the Rapallo border on 11 April,²¹ began to advance in the direction of Ljubljana and Kočevje, continuing towards Bosnia from the northern side and towards the Adriatic from the southern one. The Italians expected to be met with strong resistance, but this did not happen. Concurrently, the Hungarian occupying troops marched to Prekmurje. Initially, the Yugoslav Army's defence fought along the border – its troops were poorly organized and only partly mobilized and they retreated to the country's interior. During their retreat, the Yugoslav troops set ablaze many military depots and intentionally destroyed the infrastructure, e.g. a railway viaduct near Borovnica, to prevent the occupiers from making use of it. The defence line consisting of fortifications and bunkers, which was referred to as the Western Front and, subsequently, popularly known as Rupnik Line, remained unused. In Gorenjska, near Gozd-Martuljek, just one group of volunteers engaged in a conflict with the Italian troops. Other volunteers, who gathered despite the opposition from the Yugoslav Royal Army and refused to collaborate with the Communists, gathered in Novo mesto. This group was about 3,000 strong, some of its members were Communists but the bulk were emigrants from Primorska who considered the war to be an opportunity to change the western border. Starting from Dolenjska, they set off towards Zagreb and partly towards the Adriatic coast. The majority of them were quick to return because the Independent State of Croatia was established as early as on 10 April by the collaborationist Ustashe movement.²²

20 Repe, *S puško in knjigo*, 12.

21 Additionally on the Rapallo border in: Ajlec, Zorn & Mikša, *Zapadna jugoslavenska granica*, 91–97.

22 Ibid., 12–13.

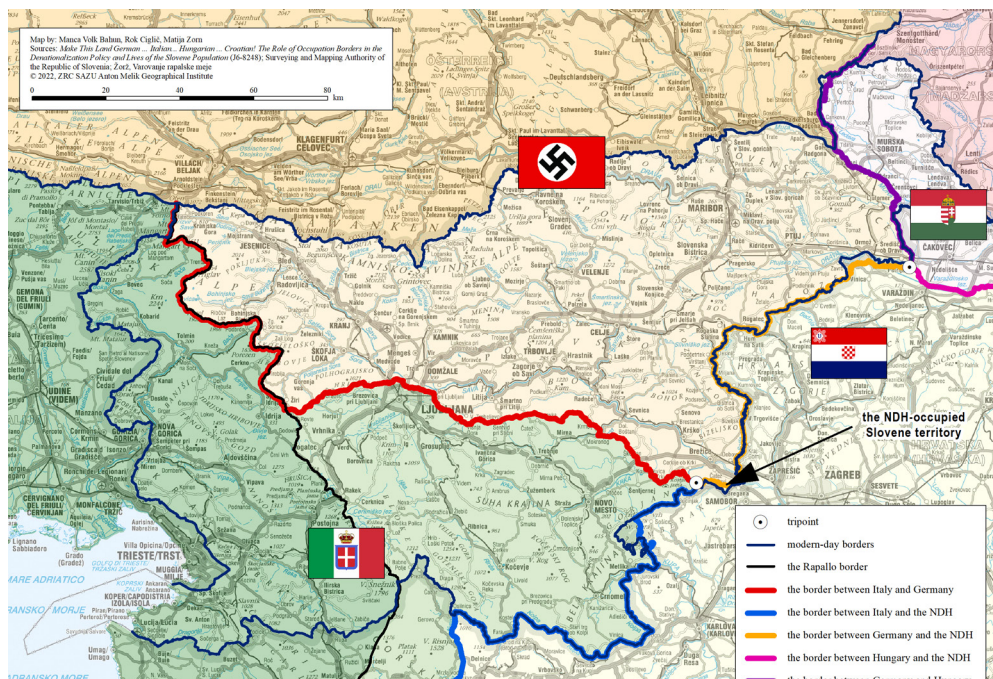


Fig. 1: A map showing occupation borders in Slovenia.

General Characteristics of Occupation Borders in Slovenia

During World War II, four occupation regimes – the German, Italian, Hungarian and the Croatian Ustashe regimes – divided Slovenes into four state entities and, in the ethnic sense, sentenced many to death also by resorting to genocidal methods. Due to these measures used by the occupying forces, the division by four occupiers, as well as due to the growing political divide, World War II marks one of the most significant moments in the history of the Slovene nation, which managed to survive but remains deeply affected by it to this day.

The German and Hungarian occupiers regarded the occupied areas as their own national territory. Germans intended to turn the Slovene territory into the German Reich's southern border, similar to in the past, when Slovene lands were a march of the Frankish Empire and the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy.²³ German aspirations for the Slovene territory were also present in the interwar period, when demands were made to change the borders in favour of Austria and, subsequently, Germany. Austrian and German journalists wrote that Slovenes populated “the German cultural soil” and blocked their route

23 They appropriated Koroška, Gorenjska, Štajerska, the valley of the river Meža, Obsotelje, Posavje, as well as four German villages in Prekmurje.

to the Adriatic. Failing to show the presence of the German population throughout the area of interest, they declared the majority of Slovenes to be *Windische*, i.e. people speaking a Slavic dialect who were German in spirit. The civil administration, which was introduced on 14 April 1941, would be of a temporary nature. The German occupation zone was divided into administrative units, all of which were headquartered in Klagenfurt and Graz and whose officials were exclusively Germans. According to the original plans, this territory would be integrated into the Reich on 1 October 1941. Up to that point the administration of the occupied provinces would be adjusted to the neighbouring provinces of Styria and Carinthia (which was done), and the Slovene question would be “irrevocably” solved. This implied the destruction (ethnocide) of Slovenes as a nation. The formal annexation was put off due to personnel-related issues and, subsequently, the development of the National Liberation War. The intended integration did not take place, but in practice they acted as if the area were part of the Reich. The Nazi regime was introduced immediately, racial and other laws entered into force and compulsory mobilization was introduced at a later point. The occupied provinces were given the same status as Alsace, Lorraine and Luxembourg. They were to be legally and formally annexed to Germany as soon as possible. The Hungarians regarded the occupation of Prekmurje, which was handed over to them by Germans, as a rectification of one of the injustices stemming from the Treaty of Trianon after World War I. Hitler assigned the central, economically poorly developed part of the Slovene territory to Italy. Unlike the Germans and Hungarians, the Italians did not regard their occupation zone, which they integrated into Italy and named the Province of Ljubljana (Provincia di Lubiana), as their national territory. Stemming from the period of the Risorgimento (the aspirations for the unification of Italy in the 19th century), their belief was that their national borders extended as far as the Julian Alps, which had been achieved with the Treaty of Rapallo after World War I. In the case of Italy, the empire’s expansion was modelled after the Roman example and their views were purely pragmatic, i.e. seeking to keep Germany as far away as possible from the Rapallo border. The occupied territory would become Italian in the national sense (i.e. populated by Italians) by the end of the war or soon after that.²⁴

The Independent State of Croatia got the smallest occupation zone, even though the Ustashe had drawn the borders of Great Croatia in the Triglav mountain range before the war and expected that they would get hold of the bulk of Slovene territory.

Out of all key motives for World War II, the revision of state borders that were introduced after World War I is without a doubt the most disregarded one, as well as the most forgotten in international bibliography. The revision of borders was done to the detriment of small nations, including Slovenes, who were divided between four different state entities and who saw new state borders between the Axis powers being outlined in their territory. These borders were not drawn merely on paper, they were transferred

24 Ibid., 20–22; additional reading, e.g.: Biber, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933–1941*.

on site and made a deep cut in the day-to-day lives of the Slovene population. They followed solely the logic of dividing the territory, and aimed to achieve a rapid and violent annihilation of the Slovene nation. Barring the border with the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which followed mostly the former ethnic division of the territory or (in part) former administrative borders, all the borders were new. Other borders did not have historic predispositions and were outlined arbitrarily. The border with the NDH is the only border that is still in existence.

Nazi Germany divided its part of the occupied Slovene territory into two temporary administrative units: Lower Styria and Gorenjska with the valley of the river Meža. After a few months, their respective headquarters were relocated to Graz and Klagenfurt from their original locations in Maribor and Bled. They were led by heads of the civil administration. Anticipating a swift integration into the Reich, both administrative units were reorganized according to the German principle of districts and counties, German offices were introduced, as were the German racial laws. The German border with the NDH and Italy became the southern border of the German Reich, and was regarded as its buffer zone. After the occupation forces had attacked Yugoslavia, Italy also obtained territory behind the Rapallo border: the bulk of Dolenjska and Ljubljana with its surroundings as far as the river Sava. The so-called Province of Ljubljana, which was integrated into the Kingdom of Italy, was established in the newly obtained territories. The Rapallo border remained in force because Primorska was regarded as being part of the Italian national territory and the Province of Ljubljana was yet to be Italianized. After Italy's capitulation in 1943, the entire territory remained formally part of Mussolini's Fascist republic but came, in fact, under the Nazi administration. The Province of Ljubljana became part of the so-called Operational Adriatic Coastline Zone with headquarters in Trieste. Prekmurje was handed over to the Hungarians by the Germans. Having taken over the authority, they established the military administration that was divided into two parts and subordinated to the Command of the military-administrative group of the Southern Army, which was initially headquartered in Subotica and later in Novi Sad. As early as in August 1941, the military administration was replaced by a civil one. Thus, began the process of integration of the occupied area into the Hungarian state.

Prekmurje was divided into two counties, Vas and Zala, as was the case in the period of Austria-Hungary. The Independent State of Croatia, which was established immediately after the beginning of World War II, obtained five Slovene settlements: Bregansko Selo,²⁵ Nova Vas pri Bregani,²⁶ Jesenice na Dolenjskem, Obrežje and Čedem. These villages extended over an area measuring approximately 20 km², which was at the time populated by some 800 people.²⁷

25 Modern-day Slovenska Vas.

26 Modern-day Nova Vas pri Mokricah.

27 Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 10–11.

The extent of the ethnocidal and genocidal practice carried out by the occupying forces can be gathered from forcible migrations and crossings of borders – 58,522 Slovenes were taken to German and Italian concentration camps, 688 to Hungarian ones, around 400 to Croatian camps, almost 20,000 people were in confinement and subjected to forced labour, and 80,000 incarcerated. Additionally, 571 Jews from Prekmurje were deported, the majority of whom was murdered in Auschwitz. The Germans intended to expel between 220,000 and 260,000 Slovenes, but managed to expel only 63,000. About 17,000 people were able to escape across the German-Italian border to the German occupation zone. Some of the around 10,000 people who were expelled from the German occupation zone to the NDH managed to escape or enter legally the Italian occupation zone. Around 17,000 Gottschee (Kočevje) Germans left the Italian-occupied territory and were resettled in the Slovene areas situated along the Croatian border from which inhabitants had been deported (which makes the exploration of this border necessary, although the lack of oral sources poses a problem because there were no Slovenes there during the war, and Germans fled from the area after the war).²⁸

The occupation of the Slovene ethnic territory in 1941 resulted in five different border areas and borders. Namely, the border between Germany and Hungary, between Hungary and NDH, between Germany and NDH, between Italy and Germany, and between Italy and NDH. Despite the formal annexation of the so-called Province of Ljubljana to Italy, the Rapallo border remained in place, separating the Slovenes in Primorska from their compatriots. Only the border with Croatia, which was based on old delimitations, is preserved to this day. Research carried out by the GIAM shows that the length of all borders totalled 640 km. They ran from the marshy river basins of Mura and Drava as far as the summit of Triglav, from the river Sotla to Peč above Rateče, from Ljubljana's suburbs via the Polhov Gradec hills and the valley of the river Sora as far as Idrija and continuing onwards.

The occupying forces outlined their respective territories with borders that separated their occupation zones. The formation of all borders was accompanied by the violence of war, deportations, and escapes from one occupation zone to another. At the same time, due to both the demands of life and the partisan resistance – which that did not acknowledge the division and fought against it – the borders were crossed illegally on a regular basis. Inevitably, all this resulted in much trauma and broke off the traditional patterns of migration, agriculture, and commerce.²⁹

28 Ibid., 11–12. Additionally, on the occupation policy and the consequences of the occupation in: Repe, *S puško in knjigo*, 27, 32, 39, 51–53.

29 Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 12.

Individual Borders³⁰

The nature of borders in the Slovene ethnic territory during World War II differed, as did the modes of their identification on location. However, they shared the sequence of how they were defined: generally, decisions about the course of the border were made by politicians, subsequently (sometimes contemporaneously) this was followed by a military occupation and a provisional marking of the border, where disagreements occurred between occupiers even though they were allies. The exact delimitation was done by delimitation commissions if they existed. Finally, the border was cleared and physically protected by soldiers, which was done most consistently by the Germans.

No agreements were concluded or conferences held at the highest political level. Hitler roughly outlined the borders on 27 March 1941, and ultimately defined them with his *Directive on the Partition of Yugoslavia* on 3 and 12 April 1941 in one of his headquarters in Mönichkirchen near Vienna.³¹ Military occupations and marking the territory were followed by diplomats on location. Kurt von Kamphoener, a lower-ranking diplomat appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ribbentrop as his plenipotentiary, was the main German negotiator.³²

30 The description of borders is adapted from the central exhibition *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja* (Border Stones, Barbed Wire, Watchtowers and Minefields) that was produced by the research group in December 2018 and displayed at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. Additionally, it was adapted from the following regional exhibitions: *Rogaška Slatina kot obmejno mesto nemškega rajha* (Rogaška Slatina as a Border Town in the German Reich), *Idrija in Žiri kot obmejno območje, 1941–1945* (Idrija and Žiri as a Border Area), *Vinceremo, videt čemo* (Vinceremo, We Shall See) in Bela krajina and Dolenjska, as well as *Okupirana Ljubljana: mesto ob meji* (Occupied Ljubljana: A City along the Border). Materials displayed in the exhibitions throughout Slovenia are available online: <https://www.facebook.com/OkupacijskeMeje/> (accessed: in February 2020) and <https://www.okupacijskemeje.si> (accessed: in February 2020)

31 Discussed in detail in: Čulinovič, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije*, 49–78. See also: Ferenc, *Nacistična raznarodovalna politika*, 142 and Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 1. Razkosanje in aneksionizem*, 72.

32 Kurt von Kamphoener (17 July 1887, Istanbul – 11 February 1983, Garmisch-Partenkirchen) was a German diplomat. As a leader of the German delegation for the border-related questions in the years 1941–1943 he dealt with the border questions with Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, the Independent State of Croatia and was active elsewhere in the Balkans as well. He had offices in Bled, Ljubljana, and Rogaška Slatina in this period. Formally, he was subordinated to respective German diplomatic representations; however, in reality he reported directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop. His father was Louis von Kamphöener, a German officer and Ottoman marshal. He studied law at Oxford, Heidelberg and Göttingen. He worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1911 onwards. He worked in Madrid (1911–1913), Sydney (1913–14), Sofia (1916–18), London (1920–23), Liverpool (1923–26), and Madrid (1926–31). He became a member of the Social Democratic Party in 1930 and of the NSDAP in 1940 (he was probably pressured into joining). He helmed the Volksdeutsche Resettlement Commission in 1939, when *Volksdeutsche* were resettled from Polish territories that became part of the Soviet Union. Following the occupation and partition of Slovenia, he was a German representative with the High Commissioner of the Province of Ljubljana from mid-October to mid-November 1941. He was involved in the resettlement of the Gottschee Germans (PA AA, Italien. Die Umsiedlung der Deutschen aus der Provinz Laibach. Tätigkeit der Umsiedlungskommission. Pol. XII/8 vom 1941 bis 1942. R 105128). During the war, he was a communications officer of the German military-intelligence service (Abwehr) in Russia, Athens, Vrnjačka Banja and in Zagreb. Lieutenant Colonel O. J. Hale, a U.S. interrogator, described him as being “highly cultivated and critical of Nazis” in August 1945. (<https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/archiv/zs/zs-2066.pdf>). He was an U.S. prisoner of war in the years 1945–1946; however, he began teaching foreign languages in Hamburg as early as in 1946. He returned to the diplomatic service in 1950 and worked as a general

The Border between Germany and the NDH — the Reich's Southern Border

The border between Germany and the NDH measured approximately 100 kilometres in length, with the majority of the delimitation line running along the river Sotla. By and large, the new border corresponded with the ethnic and former administrative border that demarcated former state and political formations in the area in question, with the Sotla having marked the border between Slovenes and Croats for centuries. Along with the German border with Italy, this Lower Styrian border on the river Sotla became the southernmost protective border of the proposed thousand-year Third Reich. Consequently, the German administration conducted the ethnic cleansing of the border corridor; Slovenes were deported and replaced by the resettled Gottschee Germans, and the Reich's southern border was fortified and protected by its army. The initial fortification work had been completed by the late autumn of 1941. Barbed wire was installed along the border, as well as minefields and guard posts. In March 1943 decisions about the urgent construction of watchtowers were announced. Barbed wire, up to two metres high, was attached to wooden poles that were driven into the ground at equal intervals a few metres apart. The minefields along the wire were approximately two to four metres wide.



Fig. 2: The border crossing between Germany and the Independent State of Croatia near Harine Zlake (Podčetrtek).

consul in Istanbul up to his retirement in 1952. His biography was adapted from: Keipert (ed.), *Biographisches Handbuch*, s. v. Kamphoevener, Kurt von.

Crossing the border legally was an extremely difficult and troublesome undertaking that required a border pass. Plagued by shortages, people living along the border smuggled various goods across the border and crossed it illegally. Tobacco and meat were smuggled from Croatia and, in turn, their Slovene neighbours supplied salt, flour, sugar, coffee and even sulfate. Bread, butter, milk and eggs were exchanged between people living on both sides of the border, as were important letters.³³

October 1944 saw the Germans begin with the extensive defence and fortification work along the entire border. They built trenches, pillboxes and bunkers, whose remnants are clearly noticeable on location to this day. The local population was mobilized to do manual labour, even in areas 20 kilometres away from the border. Mines that were planted along the river Sotla were still responsible for many deaths even a decade after the end of the war.³⁴

The Border between Germany and Italy

The border between Germany and Italy had two short branches. To the south-east of the Province of Ljubljana the border ran from Ljubljana's eastern suburbs, to the north of Stična, Šentrupert and Krmelj, past Bučka, which was located on the German side, towards Zameško, where it reached the river Krka. From there it continued along the Krka, past Kostanjevica, which was located on the Italian side, in the direction of Bušeča Vas. In front of Bušeča Vas the border crossed the river Krka and reached the tripoint of Germany, the Province of Ljubljana, and the NDH in the proximity of Gadova Peč. A large boundary stone that had marked the border between the Austrian and the Hungarian part of the Habsburg monarchy was turned into a tripoint boundary marker.³⁵ A section of the border continued towards Štajerska as a border between Germany and the NDH as far as the next tripoint, namely that of the NDH, Germany and Hungary. In this section the delimitation generally corresponded to the border between the Hungarian and Austrian part of the former monarchy, or to the border between the Austrian crown lands Carniola and Styria on the one hand and with the autonomous Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia on the one other. The other section of the border, which ran in the direction of the Gorjanci hill range, became the border between Italy and the NDH. It ran across the river Kolpa as far as Osilnica, Čaber, along the river Čabranka as far as Osilnica, continuing to the west of Delnice as far as the Bay of Bakar.

33 Children of the Border, <https://www.facebook.com/OkupacijskeMeje/videos/854834978194414/> (accessed: February 2020) Recorded by Dr Božidar Flajšman Script and editing by Dr Božidar Flajšman and Dr Bojan Balkovec.

34 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 161.

35 The research group identified it on the basis of data from historical maps that was transferred to the GPS system by the GIAM (Dr Rok Ciglič). This border marker will be turned into a memorial. Tromejnik, https://facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1967256896847073&id=1964101180495978 (accessed: February 2020). Recorded and edited by Dr Božidar Flajšman. This holds true for all videos mentioned here.

In this branch, the border with Italy was a strategic (and economic) boundary. The river Sava lent itself to being a natural border, although Germans sought to control the area on the opposite bank due to its economic importance. The strategic nature of this decision is attested by the fact that the border ran along a hilly terrain that enabled the Germans to have control of the Italian border territory as well.

The second branch of the border ran to the north and west of Ljubljana via the Polhov Gradec dolomites as far as the former Rapallo border between Žiri and Idrija, reaching it near Spodnji Vrsnik. The Rapallo border ran from Peč above Rateče (present-day tripoint of Austria, Slovenia and Italy, at the time the border between Germany and Italy) across the summits of Peč, Jalovec, Triglav, Možic, Porezen, Blegoš, Črni Vrh nad Cerknim, Bevki, Hotedršica, Planina, Javornik, Biška Gora, Griž, Snežnik, Kastav and to the east of Matulji towards the sea. With the occupation, its role changed. Between Peč and the settlement of Spodnji Vrsnik the former border between Italy and Yugoslavia became the border between Italy and the German Reich. The new border, coming from the direction of Ljubljana, joined it in the proximity of Spodnji Vrsnik. That part of the Rapallo border that no longer demarcated Italy and Yugoslavia (from Spodnji Vrsnik to the territory to the east of Snežnik via Hotedršica) became Italy's "internal" border, which was still subject to control. Namely, the Slovenes in the Province of Ljubljana were in a particular position despite the province's integration into Italy. The Rapallo border remained in force in terms of police, customs and taxes. The Province of Ljubljana bordered on the expanded Province of Rijeka, the Province of Trieste and the Province of Gorizia. Travelling from the Province of Ljubljana to Italy was possible for passport holders, although not everybody was entitled to a passport. Tax and customs laws from the former state were still in force in all former Yugoslav provinces that were integrated into Italy.³⁶ Consequently, travel documents were required to travel from the Province of Ljubljana to Italy's interior. The boundary stone near Spodnji Vrsnik, which features the number 40, thus became some sort of a tripoint boundary marker identifying the border between Germany, Italy and the Province of Ljubljana.

The inscriptions on boundary stones standing on that section of the old Rapallo border that became the border between Germany and Italy were changed. Additionally, the Germans installed additional fortifications and put guards on the former Yugoslav side. Barbed wire was installed, and mines were planted along the delimitation line. To control the border, the occupier cleared large forested areas, demolished a few residential and auxiliary buildings and built watchtowers in prominent spots. These were about 30 metres high and strategically placed to control the area between two watchtowers. Additionally, both the German and Italian occupiers had troops stationed in the area to patrol the border on a regular basis. It was difficult to cross the border in order to work

36 Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 1, Razkosanje in aneksionizem*, 251.

the land, tend to meadows or see to urgent matters because border crossings were sparse, with guards or border controls often arbitrarily (dis)allowing the local population to cross the border. Consequently, the border was frequently crossed illegally, despite the risks and deaths caused by mines.

Following Italy's capitulation in September 1943 and Germany taking over the control of the Italian-occupied territory, the border was rendered irrelevant because the Province of Ljubljana, along with the neighbouring Italian provinces, became part of the so-called Operational Adriatic Coastline Zone, which was headquartered in Trieste. In part, the German army removed mines that had been placed along traffic routes and in meadows, and in some places even barbed wire that was then used elsewhere. Some sections of the border were still protected to prevent the passage or operation of partisan troops. However, it was only after the end of the war that this border area was properly cleared out. Formally, the border continued to exist because a fascist republic came into being in Italy's north (the-so called Republic of Salò), which was led by Mussolini, and the Province of Ljubljana continued to be part of it (but without Italian presence).

A peculiarity of the border between Germany and Italy is that it also ran in high mountains. This was not so much a matter of protection as it was about symbolically marking a space. It was based on the interwar Rapallo border, i.e. the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Geographically, the border ran along the divide between the Adriatic and the Black Sea watersheds. The existing boundary stones were used, with the letter D being carved on the boundary stones' German side, which replaced the letter J that signified Yugoslavia. The boundary stones' Italian side continued to feature the letter I.

The Rapallo border ran across Triglav, and so did the occupation border. The Germans, who "lost" Triglav after World War I, appropriated it once again — also symbolically because it was soon depicted on postage stamps. In keeping with the motto "No borders on this summit ever again!", the boundary marker on the summit of Triglav was removed by partisans in August 1944. On this occasion they hung a Slovene flag there.

High mountains were not easily traversable due to the relief, they were unpopulated and trails were scarce. Consequently, the border was heavily guarded mostly on passes and saddles, across which ran trails and roads (the Vršič Pass). Mountain huts that stood on the German side of the border and were in the interwar period managed by the Slovene Mountaineering Society were at that point in the hands of the German Mountaineering Society. A few huts still operated in the summer of 1941, but were abandoned later on. Many mountain huts were destroyed because they could be used as a shelter by partisans or refugees. The German *Zoll-Polizei* was stationed in the hut Aljažev dom in Vrata Valley in the autumn of 1941, which was at the time renamed Kugy-Haus. Nowadays, few remnants of the high-mountains section of the border are identifiable. It can be gathered from second-hand accounts that, being a symbol of the occupation,

boundary stones were removed systematically after the war and many of them were destroyed due to the harsh climate. However, they are preserved in some places, as are the remnants of barbed wire and even wooden poles to which it was attached.³⁷

The Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral (Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland)

The question of what would happen to the German-Italian border was raised after Italy's occupation. The German political and military leadership realized in the spring of 1943 that Italy would be faced with great political and military changes and was probably in for a military breakdown. They thus began both with military and political preparations. The basic orientation was that the German Army would occupy Italy and Italian-occupied territories; however, the question of how things would be regulated politically and in terms of borders remained open and was contingent upon the development of events.

Following the fall of the Fascist regime on 25 July 1943, the German High Command began to implement the preparatory measures. As regards politics and the borders, two tendencies collided. The first was annexationist and supported ardently by the *Gauleiters* of Carinthia and Tyrol. According to a plan devised by the Carinthian *Gauleiter* Dr Friedrich Rainer, the Canal Valley would be reintegrated into Carinthia and the remaining area would be divided into three parts: Istria with Trieste, Gorizia, and Carniola (initially only Dolenjska and Notranjska, later on also Gorenjska). Klagenfurt would be its centre, the German authority and the civil administration would be introduced, ethnic conflicts settled (playing the card of Italian-Slovene disputes). Additionally, they would organize the population's self-defence against Bolshevism and mobilize economic powers and manpower for the ultimate German victory. In doing so, they would achieve an old German goal, i.e. the annexation of the territory situated between Carinthia and Trieste to Germany and the Germanization of its population.

The other orientation, i.e. political and diplomatic, prevailed because Hitler insisted on it even though he agreed with Rainer's plans in principle.

Following Italy's capitulation on 8 September, the German Army began to disarm the Italian Army. On 10 September 1943, Hitler divided the German-occupied part of Italy into two parts, i.e. in the operational zone in the Apennines, to the south of them, as well as in coastal and Alpine regions and the remaining territory. The remaining territory was further divided into two zones: The Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, consisting of the provinces of Friuli, Gorizia, Trieste, Istria, Rijeka, the Kvarner, Ljubljana, and the Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills, consisting of the provinces of Bolzano, Trento, and Belluno. They were led by the *Gauleiters* of the neighbouring provinces, i.e.

37 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 162–164; Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 20–24.

Dr Friedrich Rainer from Carinthia and Franz Hofer from Tyrol. Only top Nazi leaders were made aware of this decree, because they did not want to make an impression that the authority of the Fascist government had been violated, namely the new Italian Fascist government was formed on 9 September, one day after Italy's capitulation, under German auspices in Munich. On 12 September the German paratroopers rescued Mussolini from confinement in the Gran Sasso, Abruzzo. Mussolini reorganized the government on 23 September, returned to north Italy and established the Italian Socialist Republic (the so-called Republic of Salò, named after its "capital" on Lake Garda).

Italy was thus divided into four parts: its southern part was controlled by the Allies, the territory under the German military administration between the front and the Apennines, Mussolini's Italian Socialist Republic to the north of the Apennines, as well as two operational zones that were up to the end of the war, i.e. for about 600 days, in a complicated legal and political position. As for the Operational Zone for the Adriatic Littoral, this complicated position was not related solely to the relations between Germany and the Republic of Salò, but also to the relations between Germany and the NDH, as well as between Germany and the collaborationist authorities. Naturally, Mussolini and Ante Pavelić wanted to have as much authority in the operational zone as possible, and collaborationist politicians in the Province of Ljubljana had their own plans as well. This resulted in a diarchy, in places even a triarchy, with Germans having the most say. On 20 September 1943 Rainer appointed Leon Rupnik as head of the provincial administration. Mussolini followed suit a week later, when he appointed Emilio Grazioli as High Commissioner and he arrived in Ljubljana (he had previously held this post between May 1941 and June 1943).³⁸ This evoked great fear and agitation among Slovene politicians, who claimed that they would refuse to collaborate if Grazioli returned. Consequently, Germans sent him back. Due to their weak position they needed Rupnik's collaborationist authority, even though they acknowledged the Italian authority over the Province of Ljubljana. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Salò protested, but the German decision was not reversed. In this altered situation, Rainer saw an opportunity to expand German authority through the operational zone as far as the Adriatic. Meanwhile, the collaborationist politicians in Ljubljana hoped for some sort of "autonomous" Slovenia under the German protectorate. This would be achieved with the unification of Gorenjska and the Province of Ljubljana that would form some type of "Gau Slowenien" and other Slovene parts would be incorporated after the war.

The collision of two concepts, the annexationist and diplomatic, also impacted the question of the borders. In relation to the Republic of Salò, both high commissioners wanted to convert the border of the operational zones into a real border. Border guards and customs would be introduced in the first stage, and these would protect and patrol the

38 Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 1, Razkosanje in aneksionizem*, 403.

border at all times. This would be followed by an economic blockade, the administrative adjustment to Germany and the introduction of the German currency. Although both High Commissioners were under Hitler's direct authority and thus possessed great power, they did not succeed. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs opposed the move, estimating that Mussolini's Fascist government, which was dissatisfied with the introduction of operational zones, would regard this as a new step towards the German annexation. Additionally, militarily weakened due to the Slovene (Yugoslav) and Italian resistance movements, the Germans could barely control the main communications and cities with the situation at hand. Their military power deteriorated with the approaching end of the war, although the violence that was inflicted only grew in intensity. In the event of a German victory, which was in truth impossible after Italy's capitulation and Allied victories on battlefields across the world, the annexationist policy would have become reality. The border in this space thus became subject to conflicts between Yugoslavia and the Allies, and Yugoslavia and Italy.³⁹

The Border between Italy and the NDH

The meandering border between Italy and the NDH turned towards the interior near the strait at the end of the Kvarner Gulf, making Bakar part of Italy and Kraljevica of the NDH.⁴⁰ It ran across hills and valleys to the west of Delnice (with Italy obtaining parts of Gorski Kotar and the town of Delnice remaining in Croatian hands). It did not ascend to the Rapallo border beneath Snežnik, but ran more to the south, to the benefit of Italy, where it reached Osilnica. Consequently, Italy obtained the extensive "horn" of the Rapallo border, including Čabar and its surroundings. From Osilnica the border ran along the river Kolpa as far as Božakovo, continuing on the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range/Žumberak as far as Trdinov Vrh, where it followed the former border between the Drava Banovina and Croatia in the direction of Gadova Peč. Seven Slovene villages beneath Gorjanci became part of the NDH that integrated them into its administrative system, where they were subject to forced Croatization and resettlement. The clergy were also resettled, and pastoral care was exercised only occasionally by monks from the Franciscan monastery in Samobor. To prevent the Slovene and Croatian partisans from crossing the border, the Italians intended to fortify the border in the Gorjanci hill range/Žumberak with a corridor of barbed wire and bunkers. Supposedly, no barbed wire was installed upstream of the river Kolpa, only fortified bridges and other structures. A mere six bunkers were built near Metlika in the spring of 1943 due to the capitulation. The border caused severe disruptions in the everyday lives of the local population, affecting most of all farmers who owned land

39 This entire chapter was adapted from: Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno. 1, Razkosanje in aneksionizem*, 397–403; Stuhlpfarrer, *Die Operationszonen Alpenvorland und Adriatisches Küstenland 1943–1945*.

40 Deutsche Heereskarte. Nordwestbalkan. Blatt Nr. 38/1. (Rijeka) Fiume. Kept in GIAM ZRC SAZU. See also the map included with the agreement between the NDH and Italy: *Ugovor o određivanju granica*, 49–51.

on both sides of the border. In their eyewitness testimonies, the natives of Žumberak with an Orthodox background stated that in their opinion the border was useful, because it prevented the Ustashe from coming to the Italian-occupied territory. They were protected in this regard by the fact that the former Yugoslav and Austro-Hungarian internal borders had been taken into consideration when outlining the border between Italy and the NDH. The area faced many difficulties during the war, and saw refugees fleeing from the NDH, particularly the Jewish population.⁴¹ A portion of the population was not happy with becoming part of Italy. A few attempts were made to integrate a part of the Črnomelj srez (Bela krajina) into the NDH (the Municipality of Radatovići) in May 1941,⁴² as well as an attempt to integrate entire Bela krajina into Nazi Germany.⁴³



Fig. 3: Sector boundary marker no. 12 on Prehodavci in the Julian Alps marking the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which also remained in use during World War II, delineating the border between Italy and Germany. Sector markers were 1 metre tall and 40 cm wide. “D” stood for Germany. The inscription 1920 signifies the year when the Treaty of Rapallo was signed.

41 Jožef Klepec, *Žide so okradli na Kolpi*, <https://www.facebook.com/OkupacijskeMeje/videos/2075158066056955/> (accessed: February 2020).

42 SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 2. Kotarska oblast u Jastrebarskom, Broj: 623, Pov.-1941. Jastrebarsko, dne 26 travnja 1941. Predmet: Radatovići općine pripojenje kotaru Jastrebarskom.

43 SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 4, Žandarmerijska stanica Dol. Suhor, Br. 79, 12. 5. 1941, Prijava sreskemu načelstvu Črnomelj.



Fig. 4: The Italian Army converted a house near the bridge across the river Kolpa near Metlika into a bunker.

In 1942, the partisan movement induced the Italian Army to fortify the border with the NDH, as had the Germans before them. Initially, they planned to fortify the border in the Gorjanci hill range, but subsequently decided to fortify it at the foot of Gorjanci, which implied that Gorjanci would be encircled. In Dolenjska, the fortification was begun in the east, shifting gradually westwards. Novo mesto, Šentjernej and Metlika were encircled with barbed wire and bunkers (the Germans followed suit after Italy's capitulation, e.g. Idrija and Logatec were encircled in full, other small towns in part). This did not stop the partisan movement, and as early as December 1942 the Italians were forced to leave small outposts, particularly those standing along the border.

From that point onwards, they stayed mostly the towns of Črnomelj, Vinica, Stari Trg, and Metlika. Metlika was almost completely encircled with barbed wire and bunkers.

Following Italy's capitulation in September 1943, Bela krajina was liberated and the Main Staff of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Slovenia was stationed here, as was the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front and other institutions. Up to the end of the war, Bela krajina saw only a few sporadic incursions by the German and Ustashe troops.⁴⁴

44 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 166–167; Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 25–26.

The Border between Germany and Hungary

Initially, Prekmurje was occupied by the Germans, who transferred it to the Hungarians in a ceremony held in Murska Sobota on 16 April 1941. About 90,000 people, some 15,000 of whom were Hungarians, lived in the Hungarian-occupied territory. The Hungarians regarded the territory under their occupation as a portion of their lost Southern Provinces (Délvidék). The population had mixed feelings about this, as the Hungarian minority and part of the pro-Hungarian oriented population were in favour of Hungary, while another part of the population favoured Germany. The German-populated settlements of Fikšinci, Kramarovci, Ocinje, and Rottenberg, being a part of the divided Serdica, were integrated into Germany. The border ran along the Lendava stream, and the Kučnica stream, a left tributary of the river Mura, also functioned as a line of delimitation. From the Middle Ages onwards this watercourse was seen as a natural delimitation between the German Empire and Hungary. However, during the occupation this stream identified the border between Germany and Hungary, not between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Austria. The tripoint thus became a border between two states.⁴⁵

The Border between Hungary and the NDH

An agreement about the border between Hungary and the NDH was never signed. This was primarily the result of disagreements over Banat and Međimurje, on which these two states had little influence, as Germany made decisions about the most important matters. In principle, Germany was more favourably disposed towards Hungary, which was an independent state and important ally, while the NDH came into being as a German protectorate. Concurrently, in terms of the NDH, Germany had to pay more attention to Italy than Hungary. Both states lobbied heavily for their interests in Berlin, with the Hungarians being significantly more successful because the Germans agreed to their demands for Međimurje as some type of substitute for Banat, which the Germans kept for themselves. Hungary obtained Međimurje and thus also a part of Slovene territory that was appropriated by the NDH (Štrigova, Razkrižje). The Croats promulgated their authority over this area after the occupation, but were unable to realize this due to the German occupation.⁴⁶

Tripoints

There were two tripoints in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, one of which stood in Prekmurje, namely that of Austria (after the Anschluss in 1938 with Germany) and Hungary.

45 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 167–168; Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 27.

46 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 168; Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 28.

The other tripoint, that of Italy and Austria (Germany) was in Peč above Rateče. The former became German-Hungarian in this section, while due to the annexation of the German-populated villages in Goričko and the integration of Prekmurje into Hungary this border was outlined anew and shifted westwards. Owing to the establishment of the NDH, the tripoint of Germany, Hungary and the NDH came into being in the modern-day Croatian Municipality of Svibovac Podravski, near Središče ob Dravi. The other tripoint remained the border between Italy and Germany up to Italy's capitulation in 1943. It continued to exist as a border between two states until the end of the war, namely as a border between Germany and the Italian fascist republic in the north of Italy. Subsequently, the former German-Italian border lost its function because Germany occupied the Italian territory and annexed it to the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral. The tripoint that came into being after the occupation at Spodnji Vrsnik near Žiri was specific and "internal" in one of its sections: it delineated Italy, Germany, and the Province of Ljubljana, which was formally part of the Kingdom of Italy but was still bounded by the Rapallo border as a kind of internal Italian border. This "tripoint" also became irrelevant with Italy's capitulation.

The tripoint near the village of Brvi beneath Gadova Peč was an old administrative border from the period of the Habsburg Monarchy, and separated the Austrian and the Hungarian part of the empire. Between 1941 and 1943 this was a tripoint of the Third Reich, Italy, and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), reaching deep into the territory of former Carniola. The former Austro-Hungarian boundary stone was given a new function. The research group identified its location on the basis of calculations, unearthed and marked it.

As time passed, the tripoint located to the south of Središče ob Dravi was forgotten. It was rediscovered by our research group on the basis of calculations obtained by comparing maps produced during World War II with modern-day maps that allow location errors that do not exceed 25 metres. The tripoint in the modern-day Municipality of Svibovec Podravski – here the Hungarian-occupied territory extended across the river Drava – does not exist anymore; it stood in a river basin that is often flooded and the river changes its bed. However, a few traces of defensive trenches are preserved.

The period after World War II saw the restoration of two tripoints (Peč above Rateče and the tripoint in the Municipality of Kuzma in Goričko, near the settlement of Trdkova) and after 1991 Yugoslavia was succeeded by independent Slovenia. The tripoint of Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary, which came into being after Croatia's independence, is "hidden" in the marshy area of the confluence of Velika Krka and Mura, in an area that is difficult to access.⁴⁷

47 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 168; Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 28–30.

Ljubljana as a Border City

By dividing Slovenia's central part between Italy and Germany, Ljubljana became a divided border city, whose centre was cut off from some of its suburbs. The Municipality of Ljubljana, which was at the time much larger than it is nowadays, was divided between Italy and Germany as well. There were three border crossings between Italy and Germany on the outskirts of Ljubljana. One of them was situated in Ježica, on a bridge across the river Sava. The Germans shifted the border on the river Sava, which was considered to be a natural border between Germany and Italy, to its right bank. They thus connected their territory in both parts of Ljubljana. They built a road along the river Sava, modern-day ring road Obvozna cesta, which is even today is popularly referred to as Nemška cesta (German Road). In the initial stage of the occupation, the railway tracks ran across the Italian-occupied territory. Initially, the Germans transported expellees from Gorenjska to Croatia and Serbia via Ljubljana's Italian-occupied parts. Inhabitants of Ljubljana gave them food and clothes when these trains made a stop in the city. Parallel to the ring road they built a new railway branch, running from Šiška to Črnuče. From Črnuče onwards, the railway tracks followed the modern-day tracks to Kamnik and forked right, running along the northern part of the industrial zone next to the street Brnčičeva ulica. The tracks terminate at the end of this industrial zone. From the fork to the end of the current industrial zone, the tracks measure upwards of one kilometre in length and run in the south-eastern direction. From this industrial zone the tracks ran towards the east for more than 7 kilometres. There remnants of the railway tracks are no longer identifiable because their course corresponds to that of the road from Črnuče to Dolsko, nor are they visible on Lidar images. The course of the current road diverges from the railway tracks to the south of Podgora pri Dolskem. Here the remnants of the tracks can be seen on site, as well as on Google Maps or Lidar images. A brief section of the railway tracks was straight, whereupon the railway line made a right turn towards the river, crossing the Sava and joining the Ljubljana–Litija railway line at the Laze railway station.⁴⁸ The railway embankment between Šiška and Črnuče is still visible, and a few concrete remnants can be seen down the former course, particularly in front of the bridge across the Sava, the modern-day road bridge.

Two border crossings were situated in Šiška, one on today's Celovška cesta, in the proximity of the Žibert inn, in front of what is now Prušnikova ulica, which was at the time the old Celovška cesta and ran through the city.⁴⁹ The other border crossing stood nearby, on modern-day Cesta Andreja Bitenca. These border crossings were located at

48 See more on this subject in a Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/OkupacijskeMeje/posts/2313451612227598> (accessed: February 2020).

49 The new Celovška cesta was built in 1977, whereupon the old one was renamed Prušnikova cesta.

a short distance apart, probably because Celovška cesta was a busy municipal street. Additionally, a tramway line ran along it, with trams operating across the border.⁵⁰ The operation of trams across the border was banned by the Germans in October 1941 and the line terminated at the last stop before the border, although the border crossing remained. The border crossing on the street Cesta Andreja Bitenca was probably built because at the time this road was considerably wider, and this was in fact the main traffic artery, running from Gorenjska to Trieste past Ljubljana, was used by waggons for transporting timber. However, with the introduction of the border during the war and the subsequent changes in urban planning, this road lost its importance.⁵¹



Fig. 5: The Italian-German border crossing on modern-day Podgorska cesta in Ljubljana, next to the intersection with Cesta Andreja Bitenca, along which ran the occupation border. This is a view of Ljubljana backdropped by fields and meadows, presently mostly covered with blocks of flats. Another border crossing was located nearby, near the intersection of Cesta Andreja Bitenca and Celovška cesta.

⁵⁰ Tram tracks in front of the border crossing are still seen on preserved photographs.

⁵¹ Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje Slovenije*, 169–170; Repe et al. *Mejni kamni, bodeča žica, stražni stolpi in minska polja*, 30–31.

Slovenia – A Concentration Camp

The occupation borders were part of a ramified occupying system that restricted the movement and strictly controlled the population's everyday life. Had satellite images been available at the time, they would have shown Slovenia as in effect a large concentration camp, whose borders were encircled with barbed wire, bunkers, minefields, and watchtowers. Similarly, many areas, or we could say sectors, were additionally encircled within this heavily guarded circle. The access to them was regulated by the same principle that applied to border crossings. They are symbolically represented by Ljubljana, which is the most famous example of an encircled city and is in this regard followed by Novo mesto. Encircling towns and cities with barbed wire was the *modus operandi* of Fascist Italy. The research considered in this work confirmed that Metlika, Semič, Višnja Gora, Ribnica, Kočevje, Trebnje, and Grosuplje were also encircled. These settlements were fully encircled and could be reached by using a guarded border crossing. Šentjernej was doubly fortified, and the Italian blockade of the border with Croatia was located to the south of this settlement. Črnomelj was partly encircled with barbed wire, as were a few villages in Bela krajina, where some houses were connected, fortified, turned into military posts and encircled with bunkers and barbed wire. If only one part of a town was wired, this was in the majority of cases due to the additional fortification of military or defensive posts. The research conducted thus far confirms that this was the case with the villages of Zilje, Griblje, and Podzemelj. Barbed wire surrounded the church on the summit of Trška Gora. Logatec, located on the other side of the Italian-occupied territory, was encircled by barbed wire as well. Areas were fortified with barbed wire, military posts, watchtowers, bunkers, minefields, and mines attached to barbed wire. These techniques resulted in restrictions of movement and contacts between individuals, families, and communities. People lived in a constant state of fear, and many were forced to cross the border and barbed wire secretly to secure basic necessities. Life was even more difficult in areas where the local collaborationist troops were in control, because the inhabitants knew each other very well.

Towns and cities encircled with barbed wire underwent a complete change if compared to the pre-war situation. For instance, Semič was encircled in July 1942 during the great Italian offensive. Barbed wire was installed around the city, as well as 11 defensive bunkers that were surrounded by trenches. Three border crossings led in and out of the city, protected by Spanish riders. The belfry was converted into an observation post or the highest defensive tower in town. A heavy machine gun and mortar were placed on it. According to a partisan report, 180 Italian soldiers were garrisoned in Semič, as well as 140 to 180 members of the Anti-Communist Volunteer Militia or the White Guard (Italian: *Milizia Volontaria Anti Comunista*, MVAC).⁵²

52 Adapted from the exhibition: *Vinceremo, videt čemo. Okupacijske meje v Beli Krajini 1941–1945*.

Following Italy's capitulation, the Germans either kept barbed-wire fencing or continued to install it. Areas that were liberated and controlled by partisans that the Germans could not reoccupy were the exception in this regard. However, they managed to reoccupy Idrija after a short-lived liberation by partisans in the autumn of 1943. In the interwar period Idrija was situated on the border between Italy and Yugoslavia, and from 1941 to 1943 between Italy and Germany. It was gradually encircled with barbed wire and fortified after the occupation, which highlights the town's importance in all state formations. Due to its position along the border and the mercury mine, the Italians built barracks in Idrija, as well as fortifications of the so-called Alpine Wall to the east and north of it. The Alpine Wall was an Italian fortification line on the Italian side of the Rapallo border.

Towns and cities were encircled with barbed wire in order to blockade them due to partisan attacks, but also to prevent contacts between the population and partisans, along with the movement of people, information and goods. However, even though it was protected by barbed wire people crossed the border on a daily basis to secure daily necessities, keep in touch with their relatives, and to find solace in religion. The partisan units crossed the border more or less successfully, leaving and entering areas that were encircled with barbed wire. The partisan movement gradually established a successful and ramified network of couriers that reached all fringes of the Slovene territory, successfully crossing all occupation borders.

Although the collective memory of barbed-wire fencing faded in the post-war decades, it left its mark on many locations, as well as in the subconscious minds of the respective communities and families.

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Summary

Božo Repe, Kornelija Ajlec

Occupation Borders 1941–1945 through Diplomatic Archives, People's Lives, and Remnants on Location

The three-year basic research project entitled Occupation Borders began on 1 May 2017 and will be concluded on 30 April 2020. It aims to examine the impact of borders, as well as their exact geographical delineation, with which four occupiers divided Slovenia, planning to wipe out its population. Unless they were deported, Slovenes had to adjust to the new reality of life along heavily entrenched and often deadly borders. These were mostly outlined where they had never previously existed and, consequently, cut deeply into the everyday lives of the local population, their daily relations with relatives and neighbours, while complicating the daily delivery of food and other supplies, religious observance, and other mundane tasks that are taken for granted in peacetime. The project is designed as a classic historical project, involving work in archives and libraries. However, the novelty of so-called public history is that it largely follows the bottom-up historical view. As a result, researchers focus more on interviews with individuals, the last living generation who personally experienced World War II as children. There were 184 interviews recorded in the course of the project, ranging in length from half an hour to three hours. They are complemented by extensive research on material remnants on site, ranging from boundary stones and trenches, to the remains of guard towers, bunkers, and wire fences, which were recorded and entered into GPS systems and maps. At the same time, project members ensure the regular dissemination of project results through online social networks, exhibitions, documentaries, lectures, scientific and popular articles, and by appearing in the local and national media, following the principle of exploring history for the largest public audience, as some 80 years ago these occupation borders affected almost every inhabitant of Slovenia.

Even those living far from the national borders could quickly find themselves encircled by barbed wire. The occupiers surrounded numerous Slovene towns in this manner, as they did national borders, thus transforming these towns into something similar to concentration camps. The tragic stories of secret paths of escape, many of which ended tragically, were shared by many interviewees. These stories have left a deep mark and been etched in their minds, as well as in those of their families, for decades.

*Matevž Šlabnik, Maja Vehar**

Idrija and Žiri as Border Towns 1941–1945**

Introduction

For almost three decades Idrija and Žiri were divided by a state border. Specific historical circumstances at the end of World War I resulted in the introduction of a new border in the Slovene ethnic territory, between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, or Yugoslavia. With the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo in April 1922, Idrija, which was occupied by the Italian troops back in November 1918, officially ended up on the Italian side of the state border, and Žiri on the Yugoslav one.¹ The delimitation line between these two states was outlined by concrete boundary stones. In the area at hand, the border ran between sector boundary stones 37 and 46. The former is located in Jazne and the latter to the north of the road from Kalce to Hrušica. A first-category border crossing stood between them on the road from Idrija to Žiri.² The so-called Rapallo Border has been subject to extensive research, both general and local, as well as part of tourist services in many places. However, the border between the Italian- and German-occupied area between Idrija and Žiri, which was introduced in 1941 and ran partly along the old Rapallo border, is yet to be explored in-depth, and thus remains, for the most part, unknown. Consequently, the occupation border is the main research focus of this paper. The research

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1 Zorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 24.

2 Ibid., 28–29.

associated with it was conducted in the scope of the project *Make this Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian!* Methodologically speaking, this paper is based on an overview of the existing bibliography, as well as archival materials, maps, photographs but also on on-site research that comprised the identification of possible remnants and eyewitness testimonies of people who experienced the occupation border themselves or who preserved the memory of it by recounting the experiences of the older generation. Making use of the obtained data, the paper will use visual materials to present the war-time events in both towns and the occupation border itself, namely its establishment, course, and impact on the population, as well as its fall.

Idrija – In a Firm Italian Grip

Particularly after the establishment of Fascist authority in Italy in the early 1920s, the Slovene population was subject to severe denationalization pressure, which manifested itself with the introduction of Italian commissioners as heads of the municipality, the removal of Slovene-language primary and secondary schools, a ban on Slovene societies, the Italianization of the public space and conscription into the Italian army.³

Idrija became an important centre for different military, police and civil offices in the interwar period. From 1934 onwards, when a border defence unit was established (It. Guardia alla Frontiera or GAF), the border area was divided into sectors. Alongside the GAF, in peacetime the sectors consisted also of the Financial Guard, the Fascist border militia and the *Carabinieri*; during the war, other units were used to consolidate sectors as well. These units were regarded as the first defence that would facilitate additional mobilization.⁴ In the final pre-war division of the GAF sectors, the Sector Command in Idrija was already under the authority of the XI Army Corps in Udine. The Idrija Sector was numbered XXII and included subsectors in Cerčno, Idrija and Črni Vrh.⁵

The command of a company with the so-called *tenenze*, i.e. subordinate units consisting of five or six brigades each, operated in Cerčno, Idrija, and Godovič in the scope of the VI Triestine Royal Legion of the Financial Guard.⁶ Members of the Financial Guard controlled the border in peacetime, monitoring smuggling, espionage and terrorism. During the war they operated as part of the defence forces.⁷ Being part of the Blackshirts, the Fascist border militia was in charge of border area. It was

3 Kavčič, *Pet stoletij rudnika*, 23; Mohorič, *Rudnik živega srebra*, 338.

4 Bizjak, *Italijanski obrambni načrti*, 310–311.

5 Žorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 111.

6 *Ibid.*, 65–66.

7 Bizjak, *Italijanski obrambni načrti*, 335.

primarily tasked with fighting the guerrillas and controlling illegal border crossings.⁸ A company command operated in Idrija in the scope of the Tolmin cohort.⁹ Additionally, the command of the *Carabinieri* squad and the command of the *questura* of public security with a special political squad operated in Idrija as well.¹⁰ On top of that, an office of the border police operated in Idrija, and a mobile section of Public Security No. 1 was established in March 1942 in Idrija, which was responsible for the persecution of politically unreliable persons.

The presence of the Italian Army in Idrija was symbolized most distinctly by numerous military structures that emerged in the town and its immediate surroundings from the 1930s onwards. Having been opened on 5 April 1933, the barracks on the hill beneath Kobalove Planine was the largest construction project of the Italian Army.¹¹ In accordance with the Italian military doctrine on the eastern border, where the protection of communication routes towards Italy was of vital importance, groups of fortified defence positions were also set up along important routes in the proximity of Idrija. A group of three fortifications, featuring an anti-tank wall and roadblocks, was situated near to the city centre in the gorge of the stream Nikova. Its task was to close the road to Vojsko.¹² Another group of fortifications located in the town's immediate proximity was situated in Podroteja, along the road from Godovič to Idrija, above the confluence of the rivers Zala and Idrijca. The passage to the Idrijca Valley was protected by the main fortification above the road. Opposite this, on the other bank of the Zala, stood a small fortification with a steel machine gun cupola, while a third fortification was built on the other bank of the Idrijca, above the mercury mine's Rake canal.¹³ The primary reason for the existence of Italian military fortifications along the Rapallo border ceased to exist with the beginning of World War II in Slovenia in 1941. However, the fortifications remained partly manned by armed soldiers and their importance grew once again with the development of the resistance movement.¹⁴

Soon after the beginning of World War II resistance was also organized on the Italian side of the old Rapallo border. Initially, activists of the National Liberation Army smuggled weapons across the heavily guarded border between the German and Italian territory, from Rovte to the Idrija region. Due to numerous military outposts and strict control of the population in the border areas any political activity was

8 Ibid., 338–339.

9 Žorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 67–68.

10 Pavšič, *Ob stari meji*, 49; Žorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 60.

11 Pavšič, *Ob stari meji*, 48.

12 Miha Ferjančič, Okoli Idrije so bile tri postojanke. <https://youtu.be/FjECdYCplEI>.

13 Jankovič-Potočnik, Rupnikova linija, 180; Juvančič, Mussolinijev utrdbeni pas, 171.

14 Borak, *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1*, 575.

Idrija in a Ring of Wire

As early as 17 September 1943 a numerically strong German reconnaissance team left Rovte for Idrija via Dole, but it was repulsed by partisans from Idrija's western side on the road across Kovačev Rovt. The Germans made a second attempt the following day, when members of the 71st Infantry Division originally wanted to penetrate Idrija from Godovič through the Zala gorge with five armoured vehicle.

However, following a failed breakthrough, they reached the suburbs of Idrija via Kovačev Rovt. Faced with obstacles and partisan fire, the column turned around, whereupon it was ambushed near Godovič, suffering three fatal casualties. On 22 September the German troops launched an attack in two columns via Veharše and Dole in the direction of Idrija and from Godovič to Črni Vrh.¹⁸ The latter failed and set Godovič ablaze, and despite having disabled the partisans' light cannons on the next day, they did not advance towards Črni Vrh. Instead, Črni Vrh was occupied by the other German column, which managed a faster penetration via Idrija. Before that it set fire many houses in Dole, Gore and on Medvedje Brdo. Armed with light weapons, units of the Idrija Detachment could not defend their positions successfully in the face of many German tanks and armoured vehicles. They thus began to retreat slowly, and on the morning of 23 September Idrija was under German military occupation.¹⁹

In line with the German policy in the newly occupied area of the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, which gave specific concessions to Slovenes in an attempt to diminish their resistance, Idrija saw the introduction of a municipal administration that was ran by the locals, not Italians. In a meeting held in early December 1943, the retired mine official Filip Vidic was made mayor. Following Vidic's death in June 1944, Karel Treven became mayor, a man who had previously been deposed by Italians in 1924, and was the last Slovene mayor before the Italians took control. However, the municipality was still subjugated to the Italian prefecture in Gorizia.²⁰

With the occupation of Idrija, the Germans hoped to be able to exploit the mercury mine, as this material was badly needed by their war industry. The city served as the occupier's base for numerous campaigns towards Gorenjska and the liberated territory in the area of Cerklno and Trnovski Gozd, the safe haven of partisan military units, field hospitals and print shops.

In Idrija, the German troops billeted in locals' houses, and did not use Italian military buildings.²¹

18 The first group consisted of the bulk of the 1st Battalion of the 901st Grenadier Tank Regiment and the second one of the 2nd Company of the 1st Battalion of the 901st Grenadier Tank Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 138th Gebirgsjäger Training Regiment.

19 Petelin, *Vojkova brigada*, 37–44; Marjan Beričič, Čigav si pa ti. <https://youtu.be/BNPde5c-2c>, 01:15–03:10.

20 Primožič, *Delovanje občine Idrija*, 98, 101.

21 Franci Pelhan, Idrija v žici in minah. <https://youtu.be/8qNRk1057gg>, 04:00–04:45.

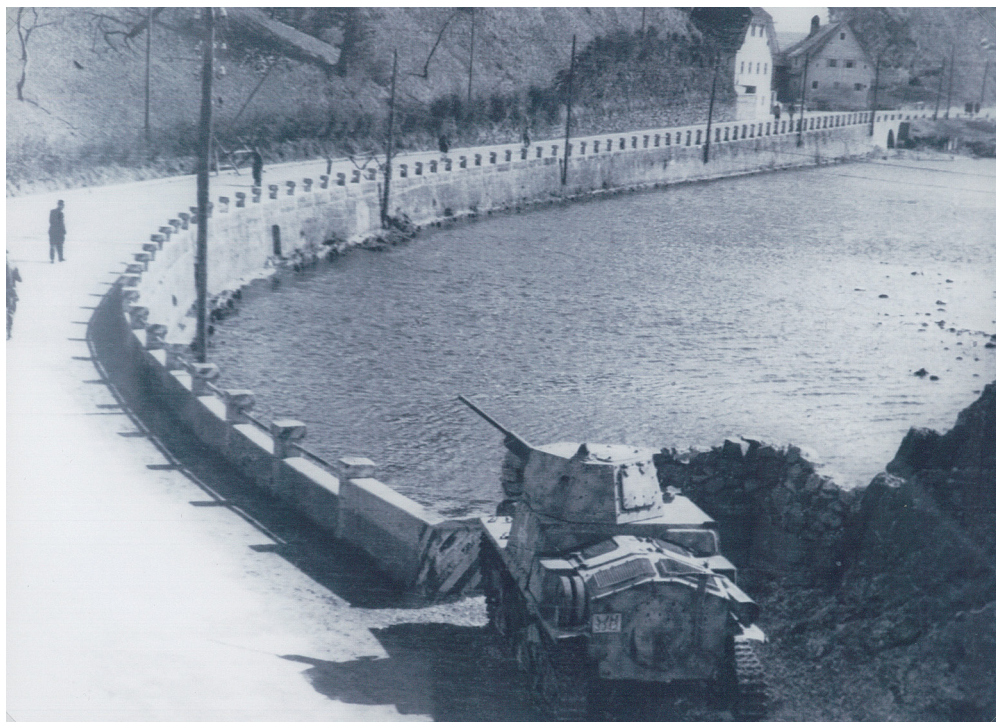


Fig. 2: A tank guarding a roadblock near Debela Skala on the main road from Idrija to Godovič.

An important element of German-occupied Idrija has been overlooked by historiography thus far. In order to have better control of the city, the Germans surrounded it with an approximately 6-kilometre long ring of barbed wire and placed mines in certain parts.²² This ring of barbed wire was additionally fortified with approximately 15 entrenched bunkers – referred to as *šticipunkti* by the locals – which enabled around 200 German guards to have permanent control of the city and road communications.²³ The population could leave this ring of wire with a pass issued by the German Command of the city.²⁴ The exact date when Idrija was surrounded by wire could not be established from the examined documents, but it was probably done shortly after the German occupation, as from 1943 onwards the city was surrounded by partisan-controlled liberated territories on three sides.²⁵

22 Pavel Pivk, *Šticipunkti*, <https://youtu.be/bmL5IVvSo7g>; Franci Pelhan, *Idrija v žici in minah*. <https://youtu.be/8qNRk1057gg>.

23 These guards were part of the 2nd Battalion of the 10th Police Regiment, which was stationed in Idrija until its retreat in the Spring of 1945. SI ZAL IDR 0133, Zbirka gradiva NOB, Idrija, II/SS-Pol.10/I C.

24 Balantič, *Ranjena kotlina*, 110.

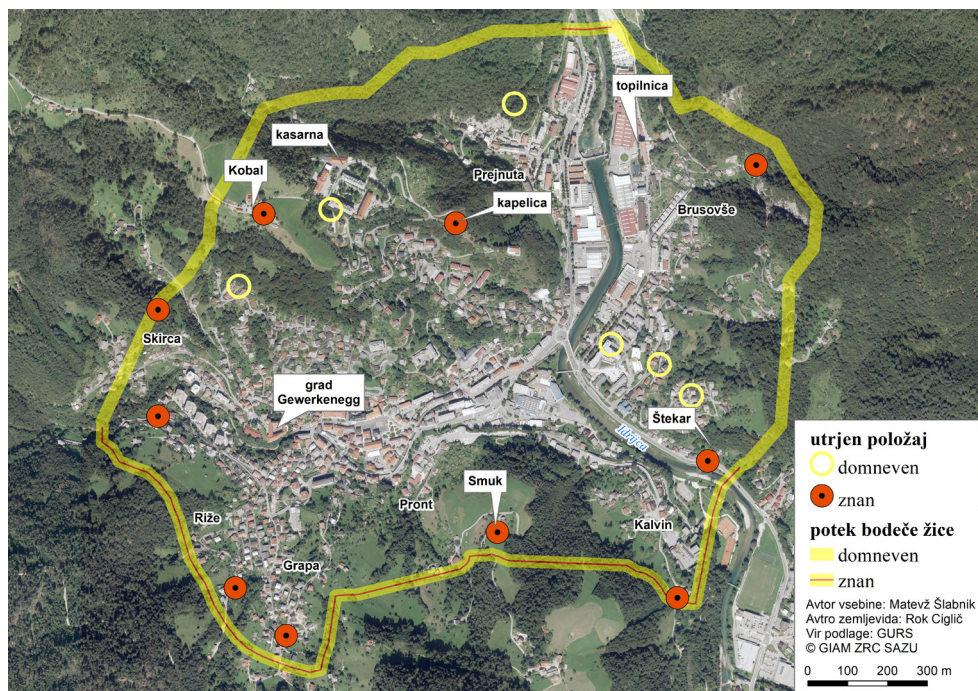
25 Petelin, *Vojkova brigada*, 200–201.

The approximate course of the barbed wire and the location of German bunkers could be outlined by means of partisan sketches and oral testimonies. The barbed wire and stakes between which it was stretched disappeared soon after the war because metal was scarce in the post-war period and also mines were cleared by the Partisan Army with the help of the German prisoners of war.²⁶ The information that, apart from Idrija, the Germans also surrounded Gorenja Vas and Poljane with wire in 1944 was found in the archival materials.²⁷



26 Franci Pelhan, Idrija v žici in minah. <https://youtu.be/8qNRk1057gg>, 00:00–02:50.

27 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, šk. 3, a. e. C VI31-11, Gorenja vas; SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, šk. 3, a. e. C VI31-9, Poljane.



Figs. 3a and 3b: This simulation of the German fortifications and the course of wire obstacles around Idrija during the German occupation was produced on the basis of a sketch made by the Intelligence Service of the 9th Corps (left) and oral sources.

The final months of World War II were devastating for Idrija. On 18 February 1945 the allies launched its first air raid on the city and caused severe damage to the mercury mine's structures. Up to April, this air raid was followed by nine additional air raids. The city centre was severely damaged, as was the mine.²⁸ The night of 28 April 1945 saw the end of the German presence in Idrija. The German troops and members of the Home Guard gathered on the road to Godovič to reach Vipava Valley, where they would join other retreating columns.²⁹

28 Mohorič, *Rudnik živega srebra*, 342.

29 Ibid.

Žiri during World War II

The tensions were felt in Žiri even before the war, for instance, during the construction of the Rupnik Line³⁰ and when Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact.³¹ The war became reality on 6 April 1941, with the German attack of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, when the army closed all important roads.³² Public offices were discontinued in Žiri on the following day and the civilian population was ordered to withdraw to the surroundings of Ljubljana.³³ Soon afterwards the Yugoslav Army blew up bridges and Žiri lost the majority of its connections with the neighbouring towns. On that same day the Italian Army fired cannons on Žirovski Vrh, although this was not of much consequence as the Yugoslav Army had already retreated.³⁴

The vacant town was occupied by the Italians on 11 April 1941 without a fight, and they set up their headquarters in the school premises. Contrary to the subsequent German occupation, the Italian occupation was milder (teachers were allowed to work, the priest stayed in town) and, consequently, disdain for the Italian Army can be identified in the locals' accounts, referring to the troops, for instance, as holiday-makers, the chicken army, etc.³⁵ The inhabitants of Žiri had a different experience with the German occupation, even though initially some of them were in favour of it.³⁶ Approximately 30 German gendarmes and finance officers arrived in Žiri on 27 April 1941; much like Italians before them, they found accommodation in important public buildings.³⁷ Administratively speaking, after the German occupation Žiri was part of the Kranj district and Ivan Seljak, who helmed the municipality in the years before World War II, kept his position as mayor. A strict occupation regime was put into force, German flags had to be displayed,³⁸ Slovene inscriptions replaced with German ones,³⁹ people's names and place names were subject to Germanization,⁴⁰ and a population census was conducted, as were deportations.⁴¹ German became the instrument

30 Additionally, in: Marković, *Vplivi krepitve fašistične*, 349–366; Košmelj - Beravs, *Spomini na utrjevanje*, 217–230; Stanonik, *Promet na Žirovskem*, 74; Naglič, *Dediščina rapalske meje*.

31 Pečnik, *Vedno sem rad zidal*, 121.

32 *Ibid.*, 122.

33 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 11.

34 *Ibid.*, 11.

35 Pečnik, *Vedno sem rad zidal*, 125–126.

36 The Žiri Parish Archives, Pečnik, *The Žiri parish chronicle 1900–1941*, 189.

37 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

38 An interview with Tone Rupnik, December 2018, the recording is kept by Maja Vehar.

39 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

40 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 41, a. e. B-I-1-1, Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in den besetzten Gebieten Kärntens und Krains.

41 Čeplak, *Narodnoosvobodilna borba na Žirovskem*, 55; Mrovlje, *Selitev se je*, 76–77.

of instruction in schools⁴² and adults had to attend German language courses.⁴³ This linguistic pressure was noticeable in settlements that became part of the Province of Ljubljana after the occupation. At Jureč, for instance, an Italian-Slovene school was organized for children from the Italian part of Brekovice in 1942.⁴⁴

The German occupation impacted the economy as well – produce or products had to be handed over⁴⁵ – and the population's everyday lives: vehicles were confiscated, traffic connections disrupted, there was no freedom of residence, a strict border regime was introduced, as were blackouts, a curfew was imposed, there was no priest, etc.⁴⁶ The realm of culture was affected as well – books and theatrical equipment were destroyed,⁴⁷ and cinematographic equipment was confiscated for the purpose of the German propaganda.⁴⁸ This propaganda was also spread by means of German periodicals and organizations that replaced the discontinued and dispossessed Slovene societies.⁴⁹



Fig. 4: A stamp used in Žiri during the German occupation.

42 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0405, Osnovna šola Žiri, šk. 1, a. e. 5-11, Kronika Osnovne šole Žiri.

43 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 44, a. e. C-VI-25, poster Wer deutsch spricht, bekennt sich zum mächtigsten Volk Europas!

44 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 3, a. e. B-Brekovice.

45 Additionally, on the subject: Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi 3*.

46 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 3, a. e. B-Brekovice.

47 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

48 Jan, *Od osvoboditve*, 19.

49 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 13; an interview with Tone Rupnik, December 2018, the recording of the interview is kept by Maja Vehar.

As a consequence of the occupier's denationalization measures in the area of Žiri, a portion of the population joined the National Liberation Movement.⁵⁰ Pressured by this movement, Germans fortified the old and new presbytery and Sokolski Dom. The windows on the ground floor were walled up, sandbags were placed around the buildings and walls were loopholed.⁵¹ Following attacks on German cars, the population was ordered to "cut down bushes along the road to a width of 50 metres."⁵² Household census forms were also used to control the population.⁵³ The decisive battles took place in October 1943, when the Operative Staff for Western Slovenia decided to attack German posts located in the proximity of the German-Italian border. These included three posts in Žiri, which were also included in the first stage of operations of units of the XXXI Division.⁵⁴ On 20 October 1943 units of the Vojko Brigade penetrated as far as Fužine. With partisans taking over the authority, the Germans lost the connections to some areas and, consequently, decided to retreat from Žiri.⁵⁵ Even though additional forces arrived from Škofja Loka,⁵⁶ they managed to retreat towards Trebija on 23 October 1943 only after eight hostages had been captured.⁵⁷ They took 20 carloads of footwear (more than 1,000 pairs of shoes) and materials with them.⁵⁸

Following the Germans' retreat, Žiri became part of the liberated territory. On 24 October 1943 the National Liberation Committee for the area of the administrative municipality of Žiri was established, the first committee of its kind in Gorenjska.⁵⁹ In February 1944 the new authorities gave the order to burn down all public premises,⁶⁰ where the bulk of cultural, educational and administrative activities took place. This represented a clear obstacle to Slovene schooling, which was restored in the scope of partisan schools in the spring of 1944.⁶¹ In addition, conflicts became a constant in the everyday lives of inhabitants, who felt pressure coming from all the belligerent players.⁶² Moreover, the town also suffered due to an Allied air raid.⁶³ In total, 333 inhabitants perished during the war, some of whom lost their lives due to the occupation border or the fortification of the town.⁶⁴

50 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 124.

51 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 22.

52 *Ibid.*, 24.

53 *Ibid.*, 22.

54 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 126. Additionally, in: Petelin, *Enaintrideseta divizija*.

55 *Ibid.*, 126.

56 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis II*, 38.

57 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 128.

58 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis II*, 38.

59 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 128.

60 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis III*, 15.

61 Jereb Filipič, Irena et al., *Ti si mene naučila brati*, 44.

62 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 1, a. e. A-VII-33, Poziv.

63 Mlakar, *Tabor v Žireb*, 60.

64 Zajec, *Vse žrtve druge*, 9–30; the Žiri Parish Archives, The register book of deaths of the Žiri parish 1941–2007.

Idrija in Žiri – Towns along the Occupation Border

Due to the occupation Idrija and Žiri became situated at a tripoint. More specifically, after Yugoslavia's capitulation, the implementation of Hitler's directive concerning the partition of the occupied territory and an agreement signed by Germany and Italy in July 1942,⁶⁵ the territories of the Kingdom of Italy, the Italian-occupied Province of Ljubljana and German-occupied area met in the proximity of both towns. As far as sector boundary stone no. 40, which stood near Spodnji Vrsnik, the new border ran along the old Rapallo border, branching off eastwards to the north of Šentjošt nad Horjulom, past Polhov Gradec as far as Šentvid pri Ljubljani.⁶⁶

On site, the border was outlined by German and Italian officers in late April 1941⁶⁷ and in the spring of 1942 the Germans began to install the fortification infrastructure. A wire mesh was stretched between 2-metre-high stakes, and where this was not possible three lines of stakes were driven into the ground and barbed wire was stretched between them. Three strands of barbed wire were laid on the the ground, measuring 2 to 3 metres in width, and different types of mines and hand grenades were laid along a 10-metre corridor.⁶⁸ The border was still outlined by the Rapallo boundary stones. We did not find new boundary stones in the area in question on the branch that forked in the direction of Ljubljana.

The border corridor on the German side was cleared,⁶⁹ deforesting an area measuring between 50 and 100 metres in width, and several residential and auxiliary buildings were demolished. The locals and labourers who were brought in for this purpose had to clear the forest and remove the buildings.⁷⁰ An example of the demolition was provided by Marija Jesenko:

“My grandparents and parents restored and remodelled all buildings that year, but they had to demolish them a year later, on 11 May 1943, because our home-
stead ended up standing in the border corridor. The order was issued by the Ger-
mans. My parents were left with two choices: they could demolish the premises
themselves and keep the construction material and their modest property or
have them demolished by the Germans. Having disagreed with the order, my fa-
ther and grandfather were tied to an apple tree in our garden. They had to make
a choice within five minutes, standing in front of the German soldiers' loaded

65 Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi I*, 72.

66 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, t. e. 44, p. e., B IVb-1, Vogels Karte des Deutschen Reichs und der Alpenländer.

67 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

68 Treven, *Grenki spomini*, 40.

69 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, š. 77, a. e. IIC-14, Stenski časopis.

70 An interview with Katarina Eržen, December 2018, the recording is kept in the project's archive.

guns. Under continuous guard, my father and grandfather were forced to partake in the demolition. A few workers from the nearby surroundings helped.”⁷¹



Fig. 5: The border between the German- and Italian-occupied territories was featured on the map entitled *Vogels Karte des Deutschen Reichs und der Alpenländer*. It was used in schools in Gorenjska, where German was the language of instruction.

71 Treven, *Grenki spomini*, 44–45.

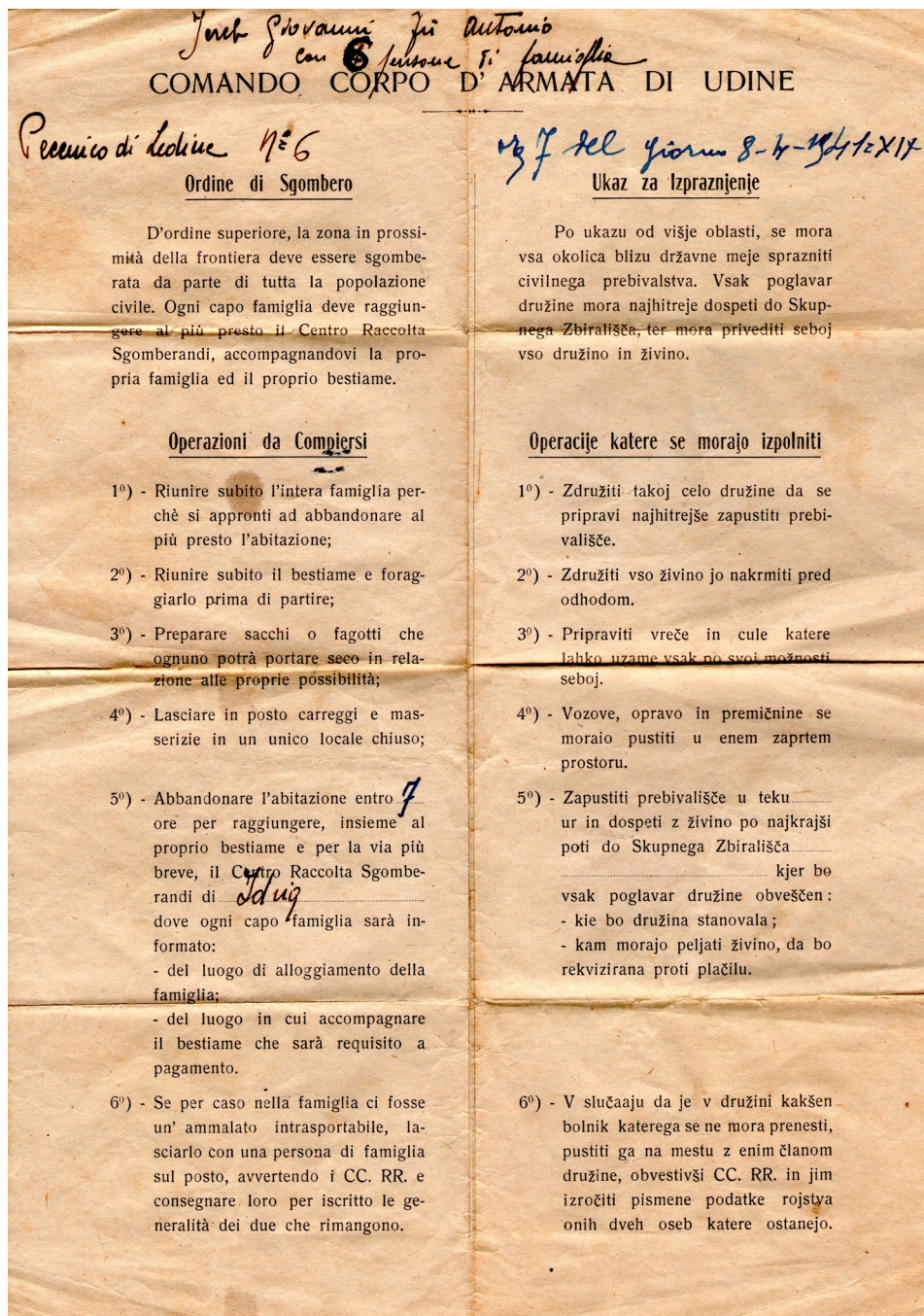


Fig. 6: Shortly before Italy's attack on Yugoslavia, the Italian authorities issued an order that the population of border villages must leave their homes within hours. The photograph shows an order to leave home to Janez Jereb from Pečnik near Ledine on 8 April 1941.

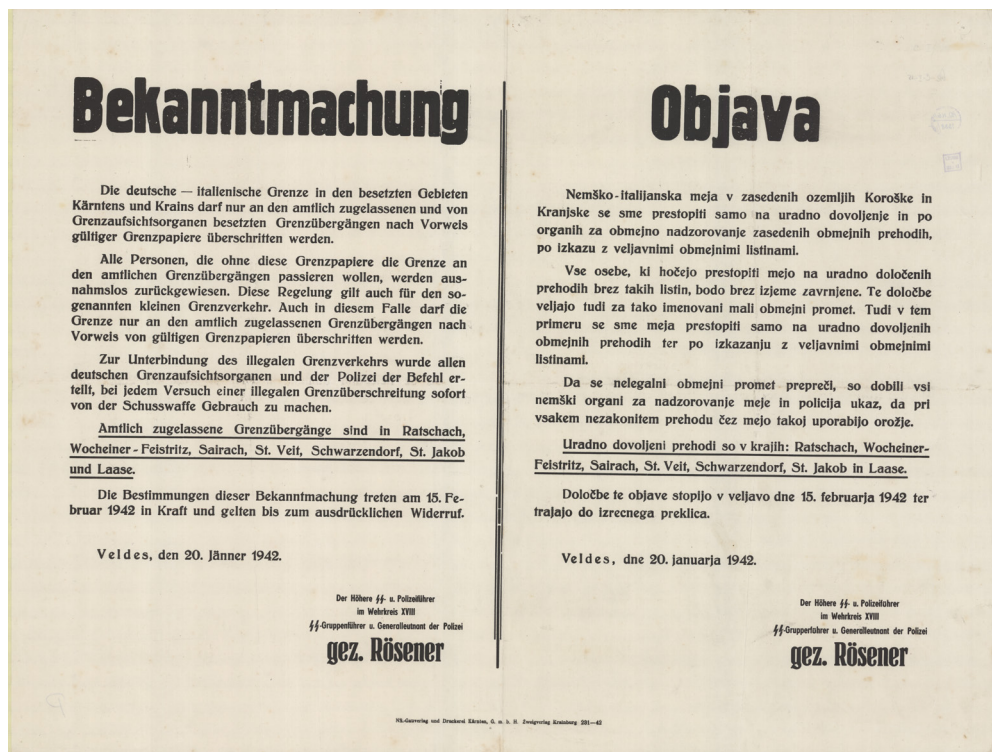


Fig. 7: The provision stipulating that the border may be crossed only with an official permit and valid border documents entered into force on 15 February 1942. An official border crossing was also in Žiri (Sairach).

Police and tax control were exercised on the branch of the Rapallo border that delineated the Province of Ljubljana and Kingdom of Italy. The regime on the German-Italian occupation border was stricter. Germans patrolled the border on a regular basis, doing rounds with dogs twice during the daytime and once during the night.⁷² Watchtowers were used in certain places to guard the occupation borders, the one that was the nearest to Idrija and Žiri stood near Lučine, on the Kovček hill above Suhi Dol. Owing to the introduction of the strict border regime by the Germans, the border was not easy to cross, but Žiri was one of the locations where this could be done. To cross the border, people had to obtain a permit,⁷³ which was not an easy undertaking. In their wish to preserve their incomes, contacts and carry out religious observances⁷⁴ – which was not

72 Stanonik, Nemško-italijanska meja, 99.

73 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, šk. 79, a. e. OK-C-15, Objava.

74 There was no priest in Žiri; consequently, children were taken across the border to get baptized, and adults got married across the border. An interview with Rajko Vehar, Žiri, August 2015, the recording is kept in the project's archive; an interview with Štefka Dolenc, Brekovice, August 2015, the recording is kept in the project's archive.

possible on the German side of the border – people resorted to illegal crossings, which were extremely dangerous due to the fortifications.⁷⁵



Fig. 8: The Rapallo sectoral boundary stone no. 40, which was a tripoint boundary stone during the occupation, signifying the border between of the Kingdom of Italy, the Province of Ljubljana, and the German-occupied area.

75 An interview with Mirko Jereb, Podlanišče, December 2018, the recording is kept in the project's archive.

The border was dangerous for children as well. Janez Žakelj recounted the following:

“Children played picking bombs on the Rapallo border. [...] On one occasion we brought them home, hid them in a pile of matchwood that my mother had readied for the stove. I hurried after her and used a rake to remove it from the stove. When my father came and saw me, he slapped my face.”⁷⁶

However, a child in the homestead Štel on Breznica was not as lucky. He found a hand grenade and kept it as a toy. He was aware that the adults would take it from him and hid it in his bed. The bomb then went off when he was playing with it, and the boy died.⁷⁷

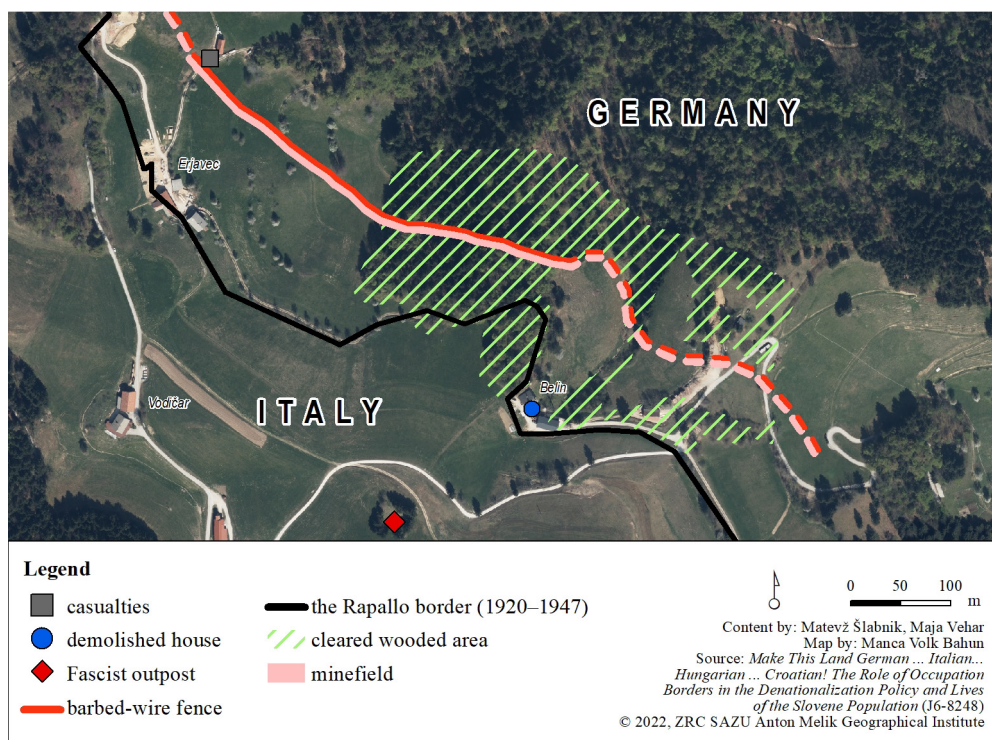


Fig. 9: Attracted by Italian wine, the German border policemen attended unofficial gatherings with the Italians on the other side of the border, in the Fascist barracks on Mrzli Vrh (above Vodičar), during the occupation. Following one of these meetings, the Italians escorted the Germans across the border and a mine was activated nearby. The map shows the location where a German and an Italian soldier died due to the explosion.

76 Jereb Filipič et al., *Ti si mene naučila brati*, 63.

77 Čadež, *Breza, brezna, Breznica*, 121.

Conclusion

The border discussed in this text remained dangerous even after Italy's capitulation, the German occupation of Idrija and their retreat from Žiri in the autumn of 1943. The German Army removed some of the mines, wire mesh and roadblocks, and such infrastructure was also partly removed also by the Partisan Army, and – to some extent – by the local population.⁷⁸ However; the bulk of physical obstacles were left behind. The process of thorough removal did not begin before the end of World War II, and took years to complete. The Yugoslav Army is said to have removed some of the obstacles, and landowners helped them identify minefields.⁷⁹ The former Rapallo border remained in place until the integration of Zone B of the Julian March to Yugoslavia. Consequently, the inhabitants of Žiri had to apply for a permit to cross the former Rapallo border up to 1947.⁸⁰ For Žiri and Idrija, an almost three-decade-long period of living on the border thus came to an end. Even though this fortified and dangerous border disappeared after a few years, as did the knowledge of it, its consequences were seen for much longer. The bulk of settlements that were in the past part of the Municipality of Žiri remained outside. Unlike the occupation border, the memory of the Rapallo border remains part of the historical memory. Nevertheless, the experiences of the generation that is referred to as children of the border remind us that such boundaries (either physical or mental) will not solve problems that mankind is faced with.

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78 Stanonik, Nemško-italijanska meja, 100.

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- Fig. 1, G. Žorž, The Rapallo Border Historical Society.
- Fig. 2, Photographed by Stane Kobal, kept by Matej Kobal.
- Figs. 3a and 3b, SI ZAL IDR 0133, The National Liberation War Collection, Idrija, an unmarked sketch, the Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Rok Ciglič, information on it by Matevž Šlabnik.
- Fig. 4, SI ZAL ŠKL, 0265, Občina Žiri, šk. 1, a. e. 11, no. 4436.
- Fig. 5, SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, t. e. 44, p. e., BIVb-1, Vogels Karte des Deutschen Reichs und der Alpenländer.
- Fig. 6, Dušan Lapajne's archive.
- Fig. 7, SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, t. e. 79, p. e., OKC15, Objava.
- Fig. 8, Idrija City Museum (Fototeka Mestnega muzeja Idrija). Photographed by: Darko Viler.

Fig. 9, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Manca Volk Bahun, information on it by Maja Vehar and Matevž Šlabnik.

Summary

Matevž Šlabnik, Maja Vehar

Idrija and Žiri as Border Towns 1941–1945

For almost three decades, Idrija and Žiri were separated by a state border. They became border towns at the end of World War I, when the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of SHS ran across the territory in question. During World War II, the German-Italian occupation border ran there. In both towns the occupiers carried out nationalist measures, while the Germans installed barbed wire around Idrija. Additionally, the occupation rendered Žiri and Idrija places near the tripoint of the Kingdom of Italy, the Italian-occupied Province of Ljubljana, and the German-occupied territory. The new border followed the old Rapallo border up to the sector milestone no. 40 near Spodnji Vrsnik, where a new branch continued eastwards, to the north of Šentjošt nad Horjulom, past Polhov Gradec as far as Šentvid pri Ljubljani. The border was defined in April 1941, and in the spring of 1942 the Germans began setting up the border infrastructure and clearing the border corridor (cleared forests, demolished buildings). Such a fortified border could only be crossed with an official permit and documents, and only at the Žiri border crossing. Police and tax control were also carried out at the branch of the Rapallo border that separated the Province of Ljubljana and the Kingdom of Italy. The occupation border was difficult to cross, and the locals had to resort to illegal border crossings. The border remained dangerous even after the Italian occupation, the German occupation of Idrija, and the liberation of Žiri in the autumn of 1943, because most of the border infrastructure remained on site. The process of the complete removal lasted several years after the war, while the former Rapallo border continued to exist until Zone B was integrated into Yugoslavia.

*Bojan Balkovec, Božidar Flajšman**

Occupation Borders in Dolenjska 1941–1945**

Dolenjska is a region that was not only cut off from other Slovene regions during the war, but was also divided between two occupiers, namely Germany and Italy. The bulk of the occupation borders ran along historical, provincial or similar old borders.¹ The border between Germany and Italy is an exception in this regard, as the delimitation line in Dolenjska was a completely new one. The Germans occupied the territory to the north of the river Sava. At first glance, Sava lends itself to being a natural border between Štajerska and Dolenjska. This holds true in the geographical sense.² However, things take a different turn when military interests or those associated with transport, security, etc. move to the forefront – these are important during a war, when a territory is under occupation, and, subsequently, when it is administered. The river Sava could serve as a suitable delimitation line between Germany and Italy if it were not for the importance of the area along it in terms of the economy and transport. The main communication route between Germany and the Balkans runs along this river. Settlements situated along it boasted important coal mines, and coal was a strategic raw material at the time. In terms of its dimensions, Sava would be large enough to serve as a natural barrier to protect the border from foreigners. However, another geographical aspect is important. It runs through a narrow valley that is difficult to guard. Consequently, the Germans

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1 For more details about the delimitation see Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje*.

2 On natural borders in the geographical sense see e.g. Kitamura Shuhei & Lagerlöf, Nils-Petter, *Natural borders*. Retrieved from: https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db_name=EEAMannheim2015&paper_id=1057 (Accessed on 3 January 2020).

connected economic and military-strategic interests and decided to outline the border to the south of the river. In Dolenjska, i.e. the area to the east of Ljubljana and the south of the river Sava, the delimitation line between Germany and Italy ran along a line that was situated between 10 and 15 km to the south of the river. It ran mostly on elevations that were used by Germans to control the territory to the south of the boundary line. A nice case of a strategically placed post is in the proximity of Bučka, where watchtowers allow not only for the direct control of the border, but also for a clear view of the interior of the neighbouring state. From watchtowers near Bučka, the Germans had a good view of Šentjernejsko Polje as far as the Gorjanci hill range, i.e. at least 7 km as the crow flies.³ The German-Italian border was outlined in the Directive for the Partition of Yugoslavia, which was prepared by Hitler on 3 and 12 April 1941.⁴

During the attack on Yugoslavia, the German troops advanced more rapidly than the troops of their allies. An important reason behind this was the Italian Army's unfounded fear of the Yugoslav Army. On 25 May 1941, General Robotti published a detailed description of the three-stage attack of Yugoslavia.⁵ Robotti wrote in his report that from 6 to 11 April they monitored and patrolled the terrain on the other side of the border. They took more decisive action after 9 April, when rumours about the disintegration of the Yugoslav Army spread. The demarcation line between the German and Italian troops ran from Grintovec, past Litija and Novo mesto, both of which were located in the German-occupied zone, past Vinica and Slunj and further towards the south-east. In Gorenjska, the demarcation line was corrected to the benefit of the Germans a few days later; in Dolenjska, it remained in place up to the beginning of June 1941. The Italian troops gradually occupied Suha Krajina, the southern part of Dolenjska, and Bela krajina.

During their attack on Slovenia, the German troops also occupied a territory that was set to become part of Italy after the division. The German troops thus arrived in Novo mesto, and the city was under their occupation for a few days. The aforementioned demarcation line was in force up to early June 1941. Roughly speaking, this line ran from Litija above Trebnje, between Hmeljnik and Mirna Peč and around Novo mesto. Novo mesto was occupied by the Italians. To the east of Novo mesto, the temporary demarcation ran along Mačkovec, crossing the river Krka in the direction of the bridge across the Bajer (Šajser) stream on the road from Novo mesto to Šentjernej. From this bridge the demarcation line ran towards the Gorjanci hill range.

In some places, the advancing German troops were greeted by the locals. Maypoles were erected and German flags hung out. In other places, the population refused to hang

3 Silvo Vene, *Strogo zastražena meja*. <https://youtu.be/uYoe-6wrSLw>

4 Repe, *Diplomatsko razkosanje*, 170 and footnote 11 on the same page.

5 Mikuž, *Pregled zgodovine*, Vol. I, 38 and pp.

out flags in acts of defiance of the German authority.⁶ The Italian troops that came after Germans to some of these areas demanded to be greeted in the same way. Maypoles were erected in honour of the Germans at Dolenja Straža. When the Germans left, the Italians demanded that maypoles be installed for them as well. The locals refused to do so, and also removed the “German” maypole.⁷

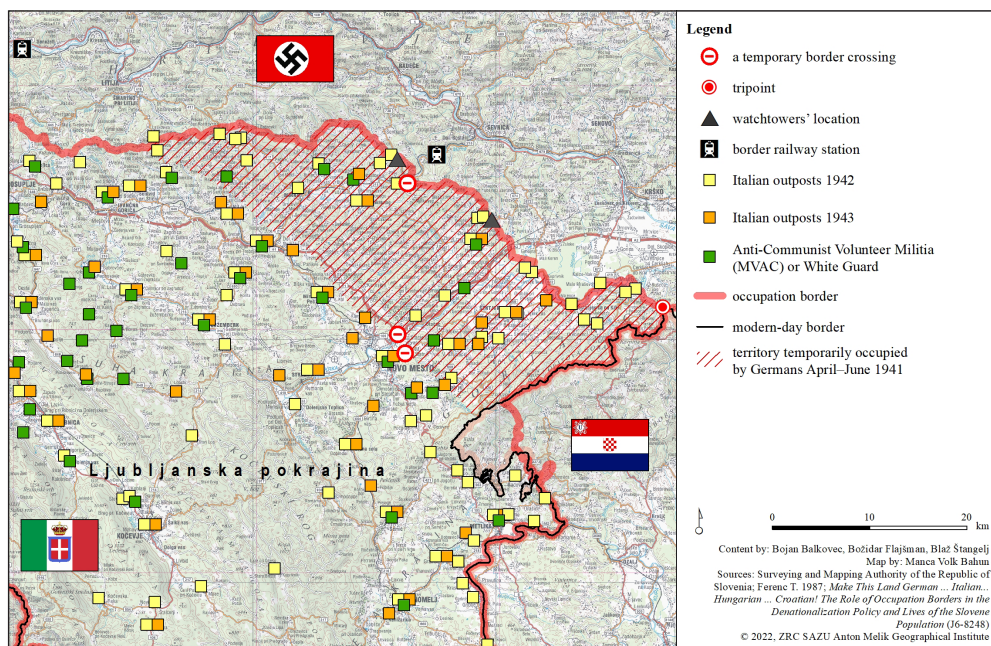


Fig. 1: The occupation border in Dolenjska. The hatched area indicates the territory that was from April to June 1941 temporarily occupied by the German Army.

There are at least two reasons why people were more favourably disposed towards the Germans than towards the Italians. Their aversion to the latter stemmed mostly from their experience on the Italian front during World War I. On top of that, the local population was aware of the violence inflicted on the Slovenes in Primorska (the territory which became part of Italy after the Rapallo treaty in 1920) by the Italians. And with regard to the Germans, one cannot ignore the powerful Nazi propaganda of the 1930s. Germany was depicted as a well-structured state, and its economy was more successful than that of Italy. Last but not least, many Slovenes worked in Germany and were familiar with the situation there.⁸

6 Topografija Gorenja Straža folder I, file cover 1, p. 2. Topografija Gornje and Dolnje Kamenje folder I, file cover 4, p. 1. Topografija Gornje in Dolnje Karteljevo folder I, file cover 4, p. 2.

7 Topografija Dolenja Straža folder I, file cover 2, p. 1.

8 Mikuž, *Pregled zgodovine NOB*, Vol. I, 58 and ss. Cf. the interview with Alojzom Stipaničem, Vincercemo, videt čemo, 3:17–3:52, https://youtu.be/dmSKMLqAF_s

- 2 -

ideje so ga zasledovali žandarji zato se je leta 1930 umaknil v Zagreb. Od časa do časa naprej so bili sestanki v gostilni Medic v Straži katere je vodil Uderman Dušan iz Novega mesta. Govorili oziroma vsi so se pogovarjali v delavskih težavah, ker so delavci iz tega stavkali. Navzoči so bili tudi Treven Karel in Sali Franc /Kafnar/ iz Vavta vasi Darovec Luka in Darovec Franc iz Straže ter delavci, ki niso slutili, kdo jih vodi v njihovem mišljanju.

Leta 1941. so tudi v Straži zbirali podpise za Nemce z velikansko propagando. Občina je dala svoj žig in to je marsikoga povedlo v zмотo. Zelošno pri vsem tem je bilo to, da so zbirali podpise napredni, razgledani ljudje, kot Treven Karel in Strumbelj Martin in nosila ključaste križe na rokavu. V Straži je zbiral podpise Medic Ivan odbornik občine Pračna. To razmarje je trajalo tri dni predno so se ljudje, ovedli, da je sovražnik eden in drugi. Mlajev niso postavili pa tudi zastav na obesili. Italijani so prišli iz Žužemberke skozi Stražo proti Dol. Toplicam in od tam na Reko ta prehod vojske je trajal od 7. ure zjutraj 9. aprila 1941. do 12. aprila. Ta dan so Italijani napravili iz Straže močno artiljerijsko postojanko z kolonelom na čelu z njim so prišli tudi karabineri in gozdna milica. Nastanili so se po hišah Straža - Vavta vas. Staš se je vselil v hišo Kuzenčič Jožefa št. 47. Gozdna milica B Vinter Jožetu masarju in karabineri v hišo Ventrinč Angela 30, lesnega trgovca. Leta 1941. je šla skozi Stražo neka elitna italijanska vojska. Govorilo se je da za njo pride nemška vojska takrat je vsa vas razobesila nemške zastave / torej se je vas res pripravljala na sprejem Nemcev/. Ko vojske ni bilo so zastave sneli. Le na eni hiši ni vaskla zastava na hiši Darovec Jožeta. V Straži se je utrdil artiljerijski bataljon s 16 topi in 800 možmi. Gozdnih miličarjev je bilo 6 do 8 mož in ravno toliko karabinjerjev. V jesenie leta 1941. so pričeli graditi lesene barake z betonsko podlago na njihah / v gradišču / na zahodu Straže. Barak so zgradili 11 do srede poletja 1942. gradili so pa še naprej. Začetku leta 1942. so barake in Stražo /en del/ zavarovali z bodočo žico v vasi od transformatorja pri Krki proti poslopju Darovec Franca tako, da je stanovenjska hiša ostala izven ograde, gospodarska poslopja pa v ogradi poleg so zgradili bunker zidan iz kamenja. Potem naprej proti cerkvi z bunkerjem na vrtu Darovec Marije. Tu so se obrnili pod hribom nazaj proti barakom do ceste Straža - Gor. Polje, kjer so zgradili zopet bunker in namestili zapornico preko ceste. Pod cesto so bile barake, ki so bile do Krke obzidane z 1 in pol metra visokim kamnitim zidom. Pri Krki je bil bunker napolnjen z municijo. V istem času so zgradili bunker na cesti ob mostu Straža - Vavta vas v Vavti vasi cesto pa prepredili z zapornico. Istočasno je izšel razglas, da mora biti od 7 uri zvečer popolnoma zatemnitev in nihče zapuščati stanovenja. Bunkerje pa so opremili s strojnimi.

Iz Straže so delali pohode do 6 km oddaljene kraje /Luka, Dol. Toplice Soteska, Volavče, Preproč in Drganja sela/. Do konca marca 1942. ni bilo nobenih žrtev. Prve žrtve so bile 28. marca 1942., ko so iz pohoda na Brezovo reber in Breto ujeli dva partizana Petriča iz Novoga mesta in še enega od Šentjaneja. Pripeljali so jih v Stražo in jih za barakami mučena ustrelili. Straža ni imela borb, ker je bila zelo močno utrjena. Le Italijani so na svojih pohodih v okolico aretirali osumljene ljudi ter jih pripeljevali v Stražo. 17. aprila 1942. je Aš Franc opozoril Darovec Franc /tudi podoficir/, da se sliši, da bojo, drugi dan Italijani odpeljali vse jugoslov. oficirje in podoficirje. Darovec se je za nekaj dni takoj umaknil preko Krke na osvobojeno ozemlje. Aš Franca pa so drugi dan edinega odpeljali iz Straže in ga internirali. Potem niso do meseca junija 1942. Italijani nikogar ne

Fig. 2: In places, signatures were collected in support of the integration into Germany.

Italians had no say in the division of Slovenia. Consequently, they made a quick decision to formalize the situation at hand. As early as 3 May 1941 an order was issued to integrate the Italian-occupied territory into the Kingdom of Italy.⁹ The territory that was temporarily on the other side of the demarcation line became part of Italy as well. The territory to the north and east of the aforementioned line was on the German side. The hatched area on the map on page 59 indicates this territory, and it can be seen that it was quite extensive, growing in size from the west to east and moving increasingly southwards from the demarcation line. The demarcation line between the Italian and German Armies was in force up to early June 1941.

At the beginning of June, the Germans relocated their troops across the new German-Italian state border. The Italians thus possessed the majority of Dolenjska, all part from its northern outskirts. On the right bank of the river Sava the state border between Germany and Italy ran between 10 and 15 kilometres to the south of the river. This corridor was somewhat wider in the eastern part of Dolenjska and in Lower Posavje. From the west to the east, the German-Italian border moved away from the river Sava, shifting southwards, reaching the river Krka to the west of Kostanjevica. It followed the course of the river Krka for a few kilometres and then made a turn towards the south. To the east of Gadova peč it reached the tripoint of Germany, Italy and the Independent State of Croatia.

Still, the delimitation in Dolenjska did not conclude at this point, and the border saw two additional changes taking place up to the autumn of 1941, the first one being near Krmelj, where the border between Germany and Italy was corrected. The German-Italian delimitation commission working on location from 13 September onwards made only a few small corrections.¹⁰ One of these happened due to the mine at Krmelj. Marjan Zaman from Hinjce maintained that, originally, the border was outlined in a manner that would see Krmelj be part of Germany. However, through an act of persuasion performed by the Italian owner of the mine Venčeslav Jakil Krmelj came under Italian authority. Consequently, the border ran immediately above Krmelj, i.e. between Hinjce and Krmelj, to the east of Tržišče, Zgornje Vodale, Telče, Pečica and to the west of Bučka.¹¹

The concrete foundations of a German watchtower are still preserved in their entirety in Hinjce. The Germans dug a bunker and trenches next to it. Marjan Zaman's farm stood nearby, immediately beneath the watchtower. He was a child at the time and was, just like others living next to the border, deported and their homes demolished. Marjan's family was expelled and taken to Germany.¹² Today a memorial commemo-

9 Mikuž, *Pregled zgodovine NOB*, Vol. I, 60. For more details about the legal perspective of the integration see Ferenc, *Fašisti brez krinke*, 32 and 33.

10 KS Tržišče v NOB, 11.

11 An interview with Marjan Zaman and Rafael Rafko Blažič, Tržišče, Hinjce, 24 October 2018. https://youtu.be/JM8lf_7ZGeY

12 Marjan Zaman, *Opazovalnica številka 4*, <https://youtu.be/OH7sbcZY4X4>

rating World War II expellees produced by Rudi Stopar stands in the location of the former occupation border, marked by barbed wire fitted to the wall and pavement.



Fig. 3: Marjan Zaman and Rafael Rafko Blažič standing next to concrete foundations of a German watchtower in Hinjce above Krmelj. Marjan Zaman's restored farm, which was demolished by the Germans because it stood in the border corridor, is visible in the background.

A similar story was recounted by Nada Štih in the nearby village of Goveji Dol.¹³ She and her family were expelled and sent to Germany in November 1941. The occupation border and a watchtower, whose concrete foundations are still preserved, were set up immediately next to their homestead. Nada's son Anton recalls that after the end of the war German helmets were used to scoop liquid manure.¹⁴

Ivica Žnidaršič from Bučka said:

“We were racially examined on 3 November 1941 and then expelled, as were all inhabitants of Bučka. We were forced to go, soldiers carrying weapons took us to Reichenburg/Brestanica and then to German camps.”¹⁵

13 An interview with Nada Štih, Goveji Dol, 24 October 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

14 Anton Štih, Čelade so uporabljali za zajemanje gnojnice, <https://youtu.be/lp1kRYnDwM>

15 Ivica Žnidaršič, Rasno so nas pregledali, nato so nas izgnali, <https://youtu.be/0Tr0myLaEsA>

Our interviewees were children during the war. Children were also subject to terror faced by deported families.¹⁶

The Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a quisling formation, was the fourth occupier partaking in the division of Slovene territory. Germany and the NDH signed an agreement about the border on 13 May 1941.¹⁷ In line with this, the Municipality of Hum in Croatian Zagorje became part of Germany. Clearly, Croats lobbied intensively and managed to facilitate a change to the border. The fact that a manor house stood in the proximity of Hum, where Antun Mihanović wrote the Croatian national anthem *Lijepa naša*, was an important Croatian argument. The minutes of the talks held by the Croatian Foreign Minister Mladen Lorković, General August Marić, who helmed the Croatian Commission for the Delimitation of the NDH and of the Third Reich, Siegfried Kasche, the German Ambassador in Zagreb, and Kurt von Kamphoven, the main German delimitation negotiator, reveal that they agreed to change the border in Dolenjska. Along with the sentimental Croatian reason noted above, an important role was played by the firm German position that the future motorway from Maribor to Zagreb must also run on German territory in sections situated on the left, i.e. Croatian, bank of the river Sotla. The Germans offered land owned by the Archbishopric of Zagreb in the proximity of Mokrice Castle as compensation. However, by August the German position had softened, when Hitler is thought to have said that the Germans do not wish to take parts of Croatian territory, meaning the left bank of the river Sotla.¹⁸

The final agreement stipulated that the villages of Bregansko Selo (Slovenska Vas), Nova Vas, Obrežje, Jesenice, Rajec and the slightly more remote village of Čedem become part of the NDH. A regulation was introduced, and the first five villages were integrated into the newly established administrative Municipality of Bregana. Established by the NDH, this municipality consisted of the aforementioned Slovene villages and a few villages from the Municipality of Samobor. The village of Čedem was not mentioned in this regulation. This may be due to its small size because it consists of merely a few houses. Naturally, the newly integrated Slovene villages became subject to the Ustashe judicial system, and became part of the Samobor court district. The Croatian State Archives and the State Archives in Zagreb keep a few fonds of the Samobor district – however, these contain no materials relating to Slovene settlements that were integrated into the NDH, or merely an odd mention.

For the villages that were integrated into the municipality of Bregana, the ecclesiastical and educational matters had to be regulated as well. The ecclesiastical question was important because the post of the parish priest in Velika Dolina was vacant.

16 Ljudmila Gramc, *Izgnali so nas v Šlezijo*, <https://youtu.be/fAoIwC9LMVs>

17 *Međunarodni ugovori 1941*, undated, 95.

18 Barić, General August Marić, 362 and 363.

Janez Gnjezda was the parish priest in Velika Dolina. Soon after the occupation, the Germans began with the resettlement of the locals, and Gnjezda decided to join them in Rottensluh, Germany. He soon returned, however, because he had matters to attend to in the Velika Dolina parish. There he was informed about suspicious dealings and advised to return to Germany, where he died in late 1944 as a result of an accident.¹⁹ We can only make indirect assumptions about how much time Gnjezda spent in his former parish after his return from Germany. The State Archives in Zagreb keeps scans of the register books of the Samobor parish. The entry about a baptism that took place on 19 September 1941 contains a note stating that baptism was performed by Janez Gnjezda, the parish priest in Velika Dolina.²⁰

The documents kept in the archives of the Archbishopric of Zagreb attest for the villages listed above that formal religious care was transferred to the parish priest in Samobor. On 14 September 1941 Franjo Salis-Seewis, Vicar General of the Archbishopric of Zagreb sent a memorandum to the parish priest in Samobor, Juraj Kocijančić, informing him that Slovene villages were allocated to his parish.²¹ The Vicar General from Zagreb wrote about the transfer of jurisdiction to the ordinariate in Ljubljana. In a memorandum dated 16 September, he wrote that the villages of Nova Vas and Bregansko Selo, which were formerly part of the Velika Dolina parish, were part of the Independent State of Croatia.” He maintained that these villages were the closest to the Samobor parish, and that its parish priest was tasked with the spiritual care in them. Additionally, he addressed a request to the Bishopric of Ljubljana to grant the necessary jurisdiction for the parish priest in Samobor or any other priest entrusted with this work.²² The official memorandum of the Archbishopric of Zagreb is kept in the Archives of the Archbishopric of Ljubljana. A draft of the Bishopric of Ljubljana’s reply to Zagreb’s request is kept in the preserved materials of the Velika Dolina parish. Dated 26 September 1941, the bishopric wrote a memorandum containing the authorization to transfer the jurisdiction for the afore-mentioned villages to the Archbishopric in Zagreb.²³

19 *Palme mučeništva*, 165. The book does not provide information about where Gnjezda obtained the information about the suspicion or who advised him to leave.

20 HDA, Matične knjige Samobor, DVD 387 (ZM-34C/1213) R 1934–1942, P 1921–1942.

21 The Archdiocesan Archive Zagreb, document no. 15693/1941

22 The memorandum is part of document 15693/1941. This is a manuscript, and based on the handwriting seen in other documents we can conclude that it was written by the Vicar General himself. This document was not signed and is probably a first draft.

23 A draft of a letter, NŠAL 10, The Bishopric Archive Ljubljana – parishes, Velika Dolina, no. 3565/1941.

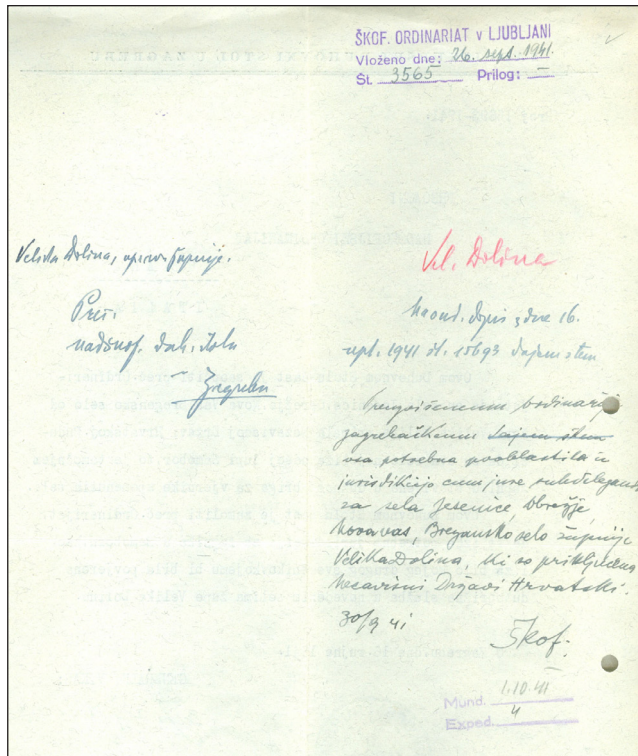


Fig. 4: A draft of the Archbishopric of Ljubljana's reply to the Archbishopric Zagreb containing permission for jurisdiction.

The Samobor parish priest, Juraj Kocijančič, paid a visit to these villages on Sunday, 21 September 1941. He wrote about this visit in a memorandum that was sent to the episcopal see in Zagreb two days later. Along with Kocijančič, these were also visited by a member of the Municipality of Samobor, a commissioner for the villages. Kocijančič greeted the parishioners in the Chapel of St Margaret at Jesence and informed them about the changes. He encouraged them to form a committee that would assist him in his work. He wrote that this committee would help him manage the chapel's property, assist him in all matters relating to religious life, including performing mass in the chapel and giving sacraments, particularly baptism. In the further course of his letter, Kocijančič mentioned that on that same day mass in the Chapel of St Magdalene was performed by the Franciscan Vladimir — whose last name is not mentioned — from the monastery in Samobor, who was a Slovene from the monastery in Brežice.²⁴ In his letter,

24 The Germans closed the Franciscan monastery in Brežice in April 1941 and demolished a part of the Monastery and the Church of Anthony of Padua. Subsequently, a German *gymnasium* stood in its location. Marija Čipić Rehar, *Franciškan v kolelju političnih sistemov v 20. stoletju*, in *Kronika I*, 2019, 123.

Kocijančič pointed out that appropriate books and lists ought to be obtained to resume writing register books. The problem was that some of the related documents were seized and taken away by the Germans. Kocijančič promised the villagers that “the Franciscan” – by which he probably meant to the aforementioned Vladimir – would perform mass every Sunday and on feast days in the Chapel of St Magdalene if they provided transport and food for him. He could also baptize newborns if their parents wished so.

The final part of Kocijančič’s report is interesting as well. He wrote that, initially, mass would be preformed in Slovene and in line with the Slovene book of rituals. Later on, decisions would be based on the instructions given by the authorities. He mentioned the authorities’ plans to establish a school. His final sentence is noteworthy from the point of view of greater-Croatian politics, to which the Roman-Catholic Church succumbed. “I believe that is necessary that some other Croatian priest goes to Jesenice in place of the Franciscan Vladimir, so that they get used to the Croatian language.” Finally, he informed the ordinariate in Zagreb that the number of believers totalled around 800.²⁵

Kocijančič mentioned the Franciscan Vladimir from Brežice, but the Franciscan’s supposed origin is not correct here. Marija Čipić Rehar provided the names of Slovene Franciscans and their respective origins in her paper,²⁶ and showed there was no Vladimir in the monastery in Brežice. Kocijančič must thus have been ill-informed and believed that all Slovene Franciscans in Samobor came from Brežice. Čipić Rehar listed all Franciscans from Brežice that were taken to Bregana and expelled to Croatia by Germans, and these were accommodated in the Samobor monastery. A Vladimir Bobek from S. Trojica in Slovenske Gorice was one of these Slovene Franciscans. Originally, Bobek was taken to Melje and from there to Croatia. Marija Čipić Rehar maintained that Franciscans from the surroundings of Maribor were expelled to Slavonska Požega and, subsequently, to different monasteries, one of which was that in Samobor. Bobek must have stayed in the Samobor monastery. This is attested by the register books of the Samobor parish. The entries about who performed the rite contain the name Vladimir Bobek and a remark that he was a Franciscan in Samobor. On 19 May 1942 Vladimir Bobek led the funeral of Helena Zobarič from Nova Vas, who had died of some disease two days before. His name is seen on the same page in the register book of deaths, and on 28 May he buried Ivan Štampek, an infant from Nova Vas.²⁷

The main reason for a priest to arrive in the villages considered here was to conduct funerals. This is attested by entries in the register books of deaths of the Samobor parish, which contain Slovene villagers’ records of deaths. Naturally, the register also

25 The Archdiocesan Archive Zagreb, document no. 15693/1941.

26 Marija Čipić Rehar, *Franciškan v kolesju političnih sistemov v 20. stoletju*, in: *Kronika I*, 2019, 124.

27 HDA, *Matične knjiga Samobor*, DVD 388 (ZM-34C/1215) U 1928-1942, P 1921-1942, M05817087.

indicates the cause of death, including fatal accidents on the occupation border. Entries in registers provide only the basic data on the deceased. Another aspect of the deaths that occurred on occupation borders is provided by the relatives of the deceased. Alojz Godec told us about the death of his 16-year-old brother Branko in the very spot where he was killed by a mine. Branko was taking livestock to pasture along the border, and accidentally set off a mine.²⁸

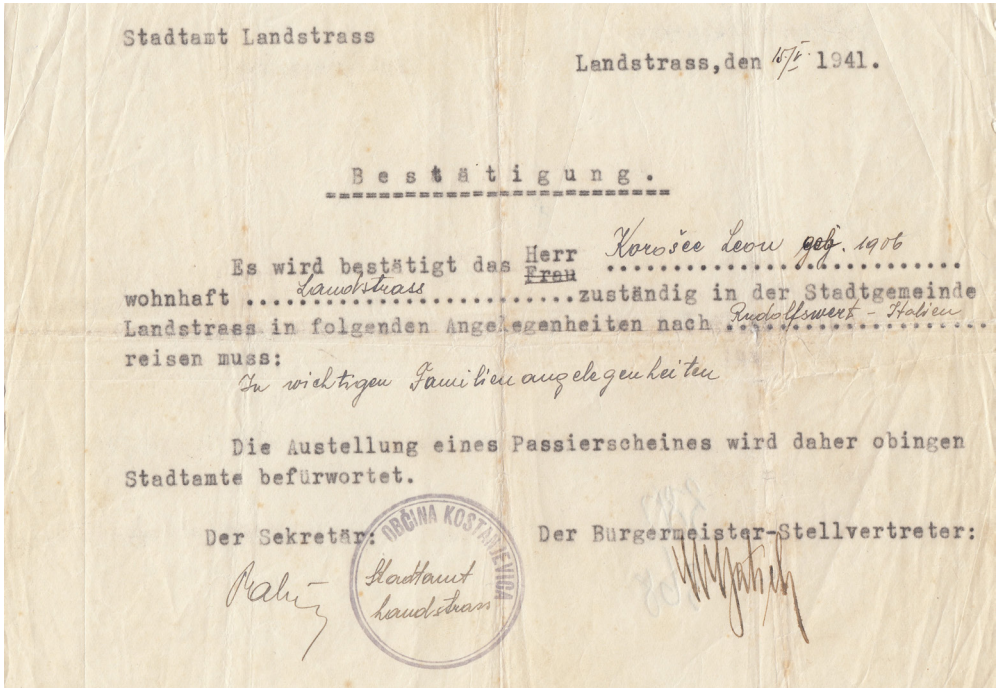
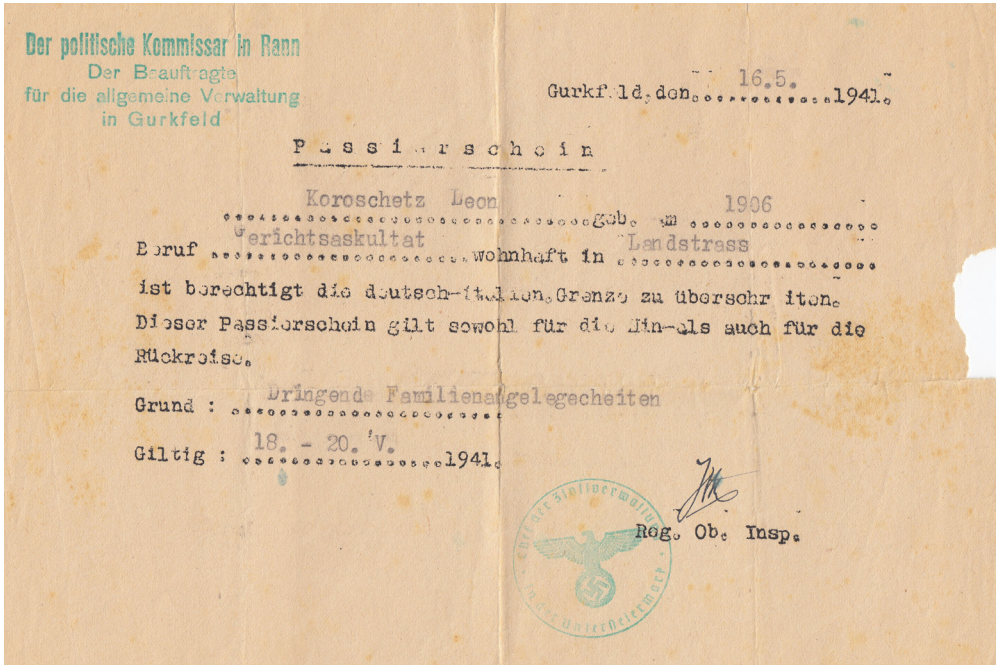


Fig. 5: Alojz Godec standing next to the monument commemorating the victims of World War II in Slovenska Vas. The last name in the right-hand column is that of his brother Branko.

Franc Gajski's story is even more harrowing. People could become victims of mines planted along the border for wanting to provide for their families. Franc Gajski (senior), his pregnant wife and their friend transported vineyard stakes across the occupation border in a remote spot, along the stream Ponikovski Potok. Gajski sent his wife to fetch water from the stream to quench their thirst. In the meantime, his friend stepped on a mine that killed him instantly. Franc Gajski was severely wounded, his wife returned quickly and he died in her arms. His wife was seven months pregnant at the time, and gave birth to our interlocutor a month and a half after his father's death.²⁹

28 Alojz Godec, Brata je ubila nemška obmejna mina. https://youtu.be/KQJUM_S7FqY

29 Franc Gajski, Rodil sem se po očetovi tragični smrti. https://youtu.be/_ULqMVEtglk



Figs. 6a and 6b: Leon Korošec's application and border pass for his trip from Kostanjevica to Novo mesto in May 1941.

Children from the villages that became part of the NDH attended school in Lug. Along with the Slovene villages, the school district consisted also of a few Croatian ones, in which the lessons were held in Croatian. The introduction of occupation borders caused much distress to the population. The occupying troops controlled the border and disrupted transport. The border control was introduced immediately, i.e. in April 1941, in the period of the temporary delimitation, and was in force up to June, with the area shown on the map on page 59. Two documents about the judiciary official Leon Korošec from May 1941 are kept in the Dolenjska Museum Novo mesto. At the time, Kostanjevica was still under the German administration and Korošec had to obtain a permit for his trips to Novo mesto. This was because Novo mesto was in Italy, and Korošec would cross the border at Cikava to get from Kostanjevica to there. A letter was sent from the Municipality of Kostanjevica to Krško about the required travel permit on 15 May 1941. The permit was issued in Krško on the following day, and was valid for travelling in both directions, i.e. also for the return from Novo mesto to Kostanjevica.³⁰ Later on, border passes were also needed for movement within the Province of Ljubljana. Their validity varied between a few days and a few months.

Border crossings were built after the final establishment of the border between Germany and Italy. They stood on roads leading from Novo mesto to Brežice and northwards, towards the river Sava. The border intersected the railway tracks between Sevnica and Trebnje. The border between Germany and Italy was almost impassable and highly dangerous due to mines and bombs. Farmers did not work their land on the other side of the border because of the scarce border crossings. Eyewitnesses remember that partisans crossed this border, deactivated mines and used them themselves.³¹ The system of watchtowers had a dual function, it was used to guard the border and to control the neighbouring territory.

State borders were not the only obstacle for the movement of locals. In the Italian-occupied part of Dolenjska, the Italians fortified significant spots due to their strategic importance. Naturally, this is done by every occupying army, and along with fortifications typical elements thereof include the construction of bunkers and fortification of individual buildings, and the Italians erected barbed wire around parts of or, in some cases, entire settlements. The Italian practice of surrounding parts of settlements in this way was not reserved exclusively for Ljubljana. This city, which was encircled with barbed wire, is merely the most famous and largest one that suffered this fate during World War II. The Italians surrounded settlements with barbed wire in their wish to cut them off from their surroundings, and in doing so they sought to prevent the resistance movement from connecting the countryside with the cities, and thus some functions

30 The Dolenjska Museum Novo mesto, Personal documents, folder Leon Korošec.

31 Jože Jankovič, Dotik z mejo je bil smrtonosen. <https://youtu.be/ciAlgV6LlsQ>

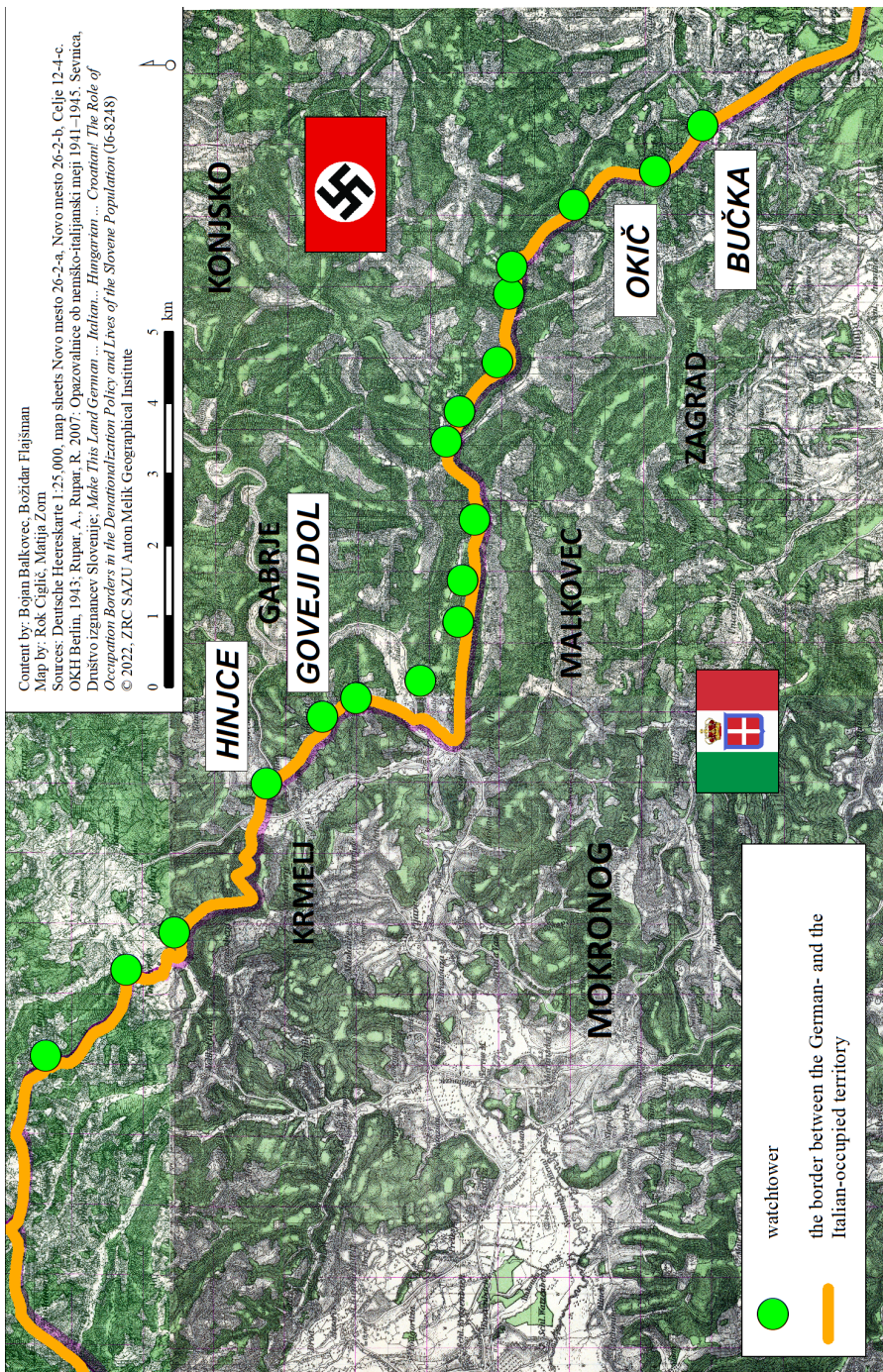


Fig. 7: A section of the German-Italian border between Krmelj and Bučka with the locations of German watchtowers.

Atlas okolja



18.1.2020 17:32:11

Merilo 1:1000

Fig. 8: The location of bunkers on the Škerlj estate in Novo mesto. Two structures standing along the road to Bela krajina were removed during the reconstruction of the house and of the auxiliary building. The remnants of the left-hand bunker are still identifiable in the meadow.

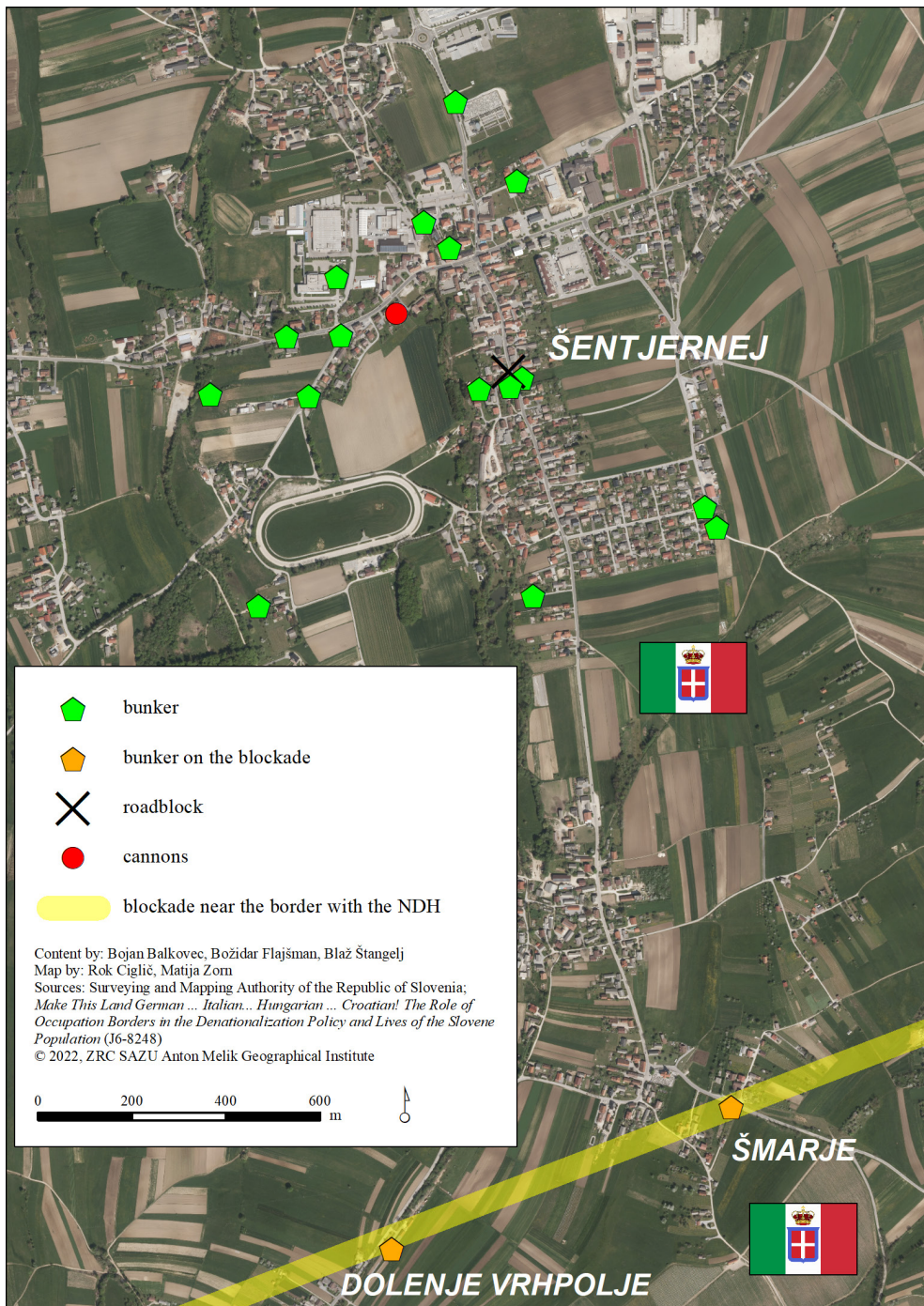


Fig. 9: A map depicting Šentjernej surrounded by wire and fortifications produced on the basis of a sketch kept in the Pleterje Carthusian Monastery.

of the resistance movement operated only within urban areas. However, a blockade of this kind hindered the lives of the entire population. To people living outside such cities and going to work there to factories, offices, etc. this posed a big problem. Farmers were faced with difficulties as well, as they could not bring their produce to the market in order to sell what could be sold in the wartime economy. Novo mesto could be reached via specifically designated locations, with bunkers and roadblocks standing on its arterial roads. Borut Škerlj's house, standing along modern-day Belokranjska cesta in Novo mesto, was vacated for the Italians and bunkers were installed around it. The remnants of one bunker are preserved and two bunkers were removed by the owners.³²

As already mentioned, Šentjernej was also surrounded with barbed wire as well. The occupying Italian troops encircled the town with two rings of barbed wire and bunkers. The first ring encompassed the town centre and the second one ran on the fringes. An artillery battery that fired upon partisan units in the Gorjanci hill range stayed in the town centre.³³ The town was decorated with Italian flags and portraits of Mussolini, as seen visible in the photograph *Dan mlačve* (Thrashing Day) that is kept in the Dolenjska Museum in Novo mesto.³⁴ The Italian defence line in the direction of the Gorjanci hill range ran in the proximity of Šentjernej, and consisted of bunkers, barbed wire and trenches.

According to Janez Kuhelj's testimony, the residential part of Šentjernej, which was almost entirely demolished in the period when the photograph was taken, stood to the right of the bunker. After the war, an unnamed inhabitant built a house, using the demolished bunker for building materials.³⁵

On 22 May 1944, nine months after Italy's capitulation, partisans provided a detailed description of the post in Šentjernej in the intelligence centre of the 15th Division. They said, *inter alia*, that there were between 180 and 200 members of the White Guard in the outpost and that they were heavily fortified with 21 large and 38 small bunkers.³⁶ The White Guard Battalion had a post in Dolenja Brezovica near Šentjernej from 15 October 1942 to 8 September 1943. We can read on the commemorative plaque fitted to the post's façade that 177 people, one of whom was the poet Ivan Rob, were tortured there, and 39 people were killed.

At the present, barbed wire fencing is installed on Slovenia's border with Croatia, in order to prevent unauthorized crossings by migrants. At first glance, the mode of guarding the border between Germany and the NDH with barbed wire is comparable to the use of such wire today. However, to repeat the words of Ljudmila Gramc, the Germans were the enemy; Slovenes and Croats are not, but we are separated by barbed wire.³⁷

32 Borut Škerlj, Trije bunkerji. <https://youtu.be/hoY5OPwzY6s>

33 Janez Kuhelj and Tone Kovačič, Topovi v Šentjerneju, <https://youtu.be/MvfOjgxs2U>

34 The Dolenjska Museum Novo mesto.

35 Janez Kuhelj, Iz ostankov bunkerja si je gradil hišo, <https://youtu.be/8uHhwsVYjoA>

36 ARS, SI AS 1859 VII. Korpus, te. 7, p. e 165.

37 Ljudmila Gramc, Mimo vasi so napravili mejo. <https://youtu.be/hZBKotxKgZA>



Fig. 10: An Italian bunker in Šmarje, which was photographed by Father Hugo Rožnik soon after the war.

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- Ljudmila Gramc, Dobova, Loče, 10 October 2018, Izgnali so nas v Šlezijo. <https://youtu.be/fAoIwC9LMVs>
- Marjan Zaman, Hinjce, 24 October 2018, Opazovalnica številka 4 <https://youtu.be/OHzsbcZY4X4>
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- Fig. 1, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Manca Volk Bahun, information on it by Bojan Balkovec, Božidar Flajšman, Blaž Štangelj.
- Fig. 2, Topografija Gorenja Straža folder I, file cover 1, p. 2. A copy of the typescript is kept in the Dolenjska Museum Novo mesto.
- Fig. 3, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, photographed by Božidar Flajšman.
- Fig. 4, The Archdiocesan Archive Zagreb, document no. 15693/1941
- Fig. 5, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, photographed by Božidar Flajšman.
- Figs. 6a and 6b, The Dolenjska Museum Novo mesto, Personal documents, folder Leon Korošec

- Fig. 7, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Rok Ciglič, information on it by Bojan Balkovec, Božidar Flajšman.
- Fig. 8, A detail displaying the location of remnants http://gis.arso.gov.si/atlasokolja/profile.aspx?id=Atlas_Okolja_AXL@Arso
- Fig. 9, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Rok Ciglič, Matija Zorn, information on it by Bojan Balkovec, Božidar Flajšman, Blaž Štangelj.
- Fig. 10, The Archive of the Pleterje Carthusian Monastery.

Summary

Bojan Balkovec, Božidar Flajšman

Occupation borders in Lower Carniola 1941-1945

When Slovenia was divided among four occupiers, Dolenjska suffered the most. Other provinces mostly remained undivided and part of the territory of the same occupier. Dolenjska, however, was divided among the Germans, Italians and the Independent State of Croatia. The border was drawn by the Germans and moved 10 to 15 kilometres south of the Sava River for military, economic and transport reasons. By June 1941, the Germans also occupied territory across the demarcation line, which can be seen on the map at the beginning of the chapter. Borders were immediately established and moved to new national borders in June.

Residents needed passes to cross the border. These were necessary immediately, even during the temporary military administration that lasted until June 1941. Residents of the Ljubljana region, which included Dolenjska, also needed permits for traveling within the province territory. As part of the Ljubljana region, Dolenjska was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy on May 3, 1941, by the King's decree. According to international agreements, the Germans left some villages in the east of Dolenjska and south of Brežice to the Independent State of Croatia. Such villages were incorporated in the newly established municipality of Bregana in September 1941, which included several Croatian villages. Church life was greatly affected in these villages. The Germans evicted the priests shortly after the occupation, as worship was banned in Germany. The villages that were annexed to the Independent State of Croatia had to regulate the manner of conducting masses and keeping the registers. Masses were occasional, and registers were kept in the parish of Sabobor, which was annexed to the villages. Shortly after the German occupation of parts of Dolenjska, the local population was gradually deported. Part of the territory between the Sava River and the state border was intended for *Lebensraum*. Some of the German settlers came from the territory around Kočevje, where they had lived for centuries, but the region was annexed to Italy during the war. In addition to those who lived near Kočevje, Germans from elsewhere were also settled there. The border was a major obstacle for the locals. It cut them off from their work, and, in the case of farmers, from their land. These lands thus remained mostly uncultivated, since crossing the border was restricted, in addition to the difficulties faced when transferring goods from one country to another.

As well as the new borders, the erection of various military facilities in the area was also a hindrance for locals. The Italians surrounded Novo mesto and Šentjernej with barbed wire. In many other places individual houses were cordoned off with barbed wire, fortified and equipped with bunkers, while the residents were simply evicted.

*Božidar Flajšman, Bojan Balkovec**

Occupation Borders in Bela krajina 1941–1945**

The Italian occupation zone, known as Provincia di Lubiana (the Ljubljana Province), comprised Notranjska, Ljubljana, the bulk of Dolenjska, Bela krajina or the area of the Črnomelj *srez*. Bela krajina was occupied in the spring of 1941.¹ By land, the border ran from Trdinov Vrh (or the Church of St. Gertrude to the mouth of Kamenica) to Kolpa near Božakovo, continuing along the river Kolpa as far as Predgrad. Even before 1941 the Črnomelj *srez* (or Bela krajina) included the then Municipality of Radatovići in Žumberak; consequently, the entire area was in 1941 occupied by the Italians.² With the Italian occupation, the border of the Drava Banovina became the border between Fascist Italy and Ustashe Croatia. The arrival of occupying troops evoked different responses. According to the eyewitness testimony of Marija Starešinič from Preloka, Jože Pokorn, the local parish priest said to the girls:

“Girls, there are uniform-wearing foreigners in Preloka now. If any of you goes dancing with them or socializes with them, you will not be worthy of a single Slovene young man giving you the time of day after the war, you will not be worthy of the Slovene sun to shine upon you.”³

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1 The Italian Army marched through Metlika in a parade on 4 May 1941. Rus, *Kronika mesta Metlike II.*, 15.

2 *Krajevni leksikon Dravske banovine*, 129.

3 An interview with Marija Starešinič, Preloka, 23 September 2017. <https://youtu.be/xuVmLPmkVgw>

In May 1941, unhappy that Bela krajina became part of Italy, individuals began to collect signatures to integrate Bela krajina (the Črnomelj *srez*) into Germany. It is evident from a report written by the Gendarmerie Dolnji Suhor that signatures were collected by 20 people from the villages in the surroundings of Suhor. Along with the inhabitants of the Municipality of Gradac and the Municipality of Semič, they took them to the German headquarters in Brežice between 5 and 8 May 1941, asking the Germans to occupy Bela krajina as soon as possible. This did not happen, even though the Germans assured them that they would come on 10 May, as set out in the aforementioned report.⁴ Anton Stipanič from Bela krajina provided the following explanation as to why people wanted to live under the Germans:

“Everyone was afraid of the Italians because the majority of old people had participated in World War I, they were on the Italian front and did not like Italians. Frankly speaking, if we must be occupied, the German occupier is better than the Italian. Many people worked in Germany, making good money, sending money home, my father being one of them.”⁵

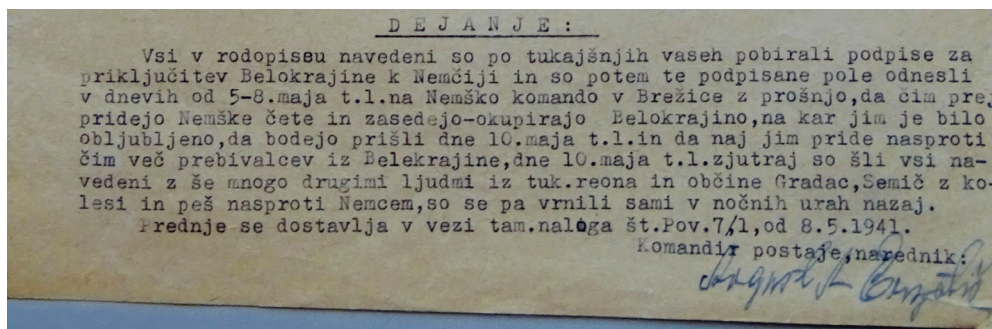


Fig. 1: Petitioning for the integration of Bela krajina into Germany. A detail of the report of the Gendarmerie Dolnji Suhor, no. 79, 12 May 1941, to the leadership of the Črnomelj *srez*.

There were some other complications on account of which the course of the border would differ from that outlined by the highest authorities. The Kotarska *oblast* in Jastrebarsko thus informed the municipality that the NDH Ministry of the Interior integrated it into the NDH (i.e. Independent State of Croatia) due to the wish of its inhabitants and that of the Žumberak Society from Zagreb (riješnje od 25. 4. 1941 br. 483 Pr. M.U.P. 1941)⁶

4 AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 4, Žandarmerijska stanica Dol. Suhor, Br. 79, 12 May 1941, Prijava sreskemu načelstvu Črnomelj.

5 An interview with Anton Stipanič, Ljubljana, 28 August 2017. From 3:15 to 3:53. https://youtu.be/dmSKMLqAF_s

6 SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 2. Kotarska oblast u Jastrebarskom, Broj: 623, Pov. -1941. Jastrebarsko, 26 April 1941. Predmet: Radatovići općine pripojenje kotaru Jastrebarskom.

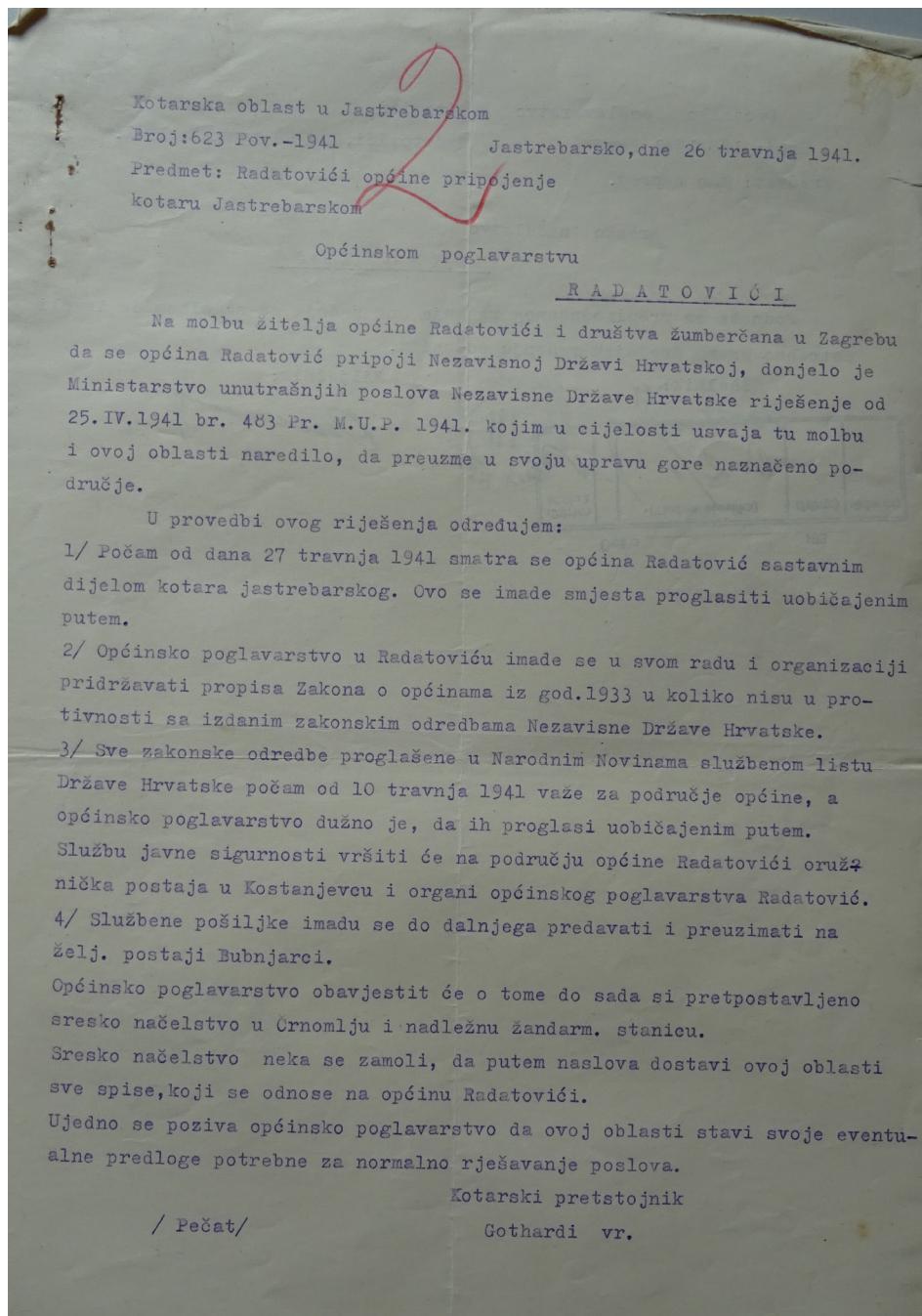


Fig. 2: A letter sent to the Municipality of Radatovići; the Kotarska oblast in Jastrebarsko informs the municipality that the NDH Ministry of the Interior integrated it into the NDH due to the wish of its inhabitants and that of the Žumberak Society from Zagreb.

However, there are no documents in the archives that would attest to this wish. Indeed, as can be seen in other documents and testimonies, the situation was quite the opposite. The Royal Civil Commissioner's Office for the occupied Slovene territory replied in writing to the district governor in Črnomelj on 3 May 1941, maintaining that the occupied territory was proclaimed to be an integral part of the Kingdom of Italy and constituted the Province of Ljubljana. Consequently, the entire Črnomelj *srez* was part of the afore-mentioned province.⁷ It appears that the matter was subsequently concluded, even though there were other complications with the delimitation commission that outlined the border between Italy and the NDH on site. A report produced by the Municipality of Radatovići on 5 November 1941 states that the NDH delimitation commission was in Radatovići on 21 October 1941 for mostly propaganda-related purposes, rather than activities associated with the topography or delimitation of the Kingdom of Italy and the NDH. We can read in the report that they were only interested in the people's frame of mind, such as to find out why a triumphal arch honouring of the High Commissioner in Ljubljana was erected in Radatovići, along with similar issues.⁸ The Croatian claims to Žumberak were also brought up by the Croatian foreign minister Mladen Lorković in his correspondence with the Italian ambassador in Zagreb. Lorković argued that Žumberak was part of Croatia and became part of Italy unjustifiably, with the integration of the occupied territories on 3 May 1941. These claims were refuted by Italian ambassador Raffaello Casertano in his first reply, which maintained that the delimitation line could be changed significantly.

Only small changes would be possible when placing boundary stones. Lorković's long reply contains a summary of Radatovići's historical development in the decades before 1941. He pointed out that in March 1941 arrangements had been made to remove the Municipality of Radatovići from the Črnomelj district and transfer it to that of Jastrebarsko, although this never happened due to the war. Lorković argued that the population of Radatovići were "of exclusively Croatian nationality". He claimed that the village was populated by 1,945 Croats and 36 Slovenes. Along with Radatovići, he mentioned Marindol as well, and on maps this is marked as being part of Italy, while before that it was part of Croatia.⁹ During the war, Marindol was part of occupied Slovenia.

7 SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 2. Kr. Civilni komisariat za zasedeno slovensko ozemlje v Ljubljani, I. No.216/1, Ljubljana, 3 May 1941. Radatovići, občina v sestavi sreza Črnomelj. The High Commissariat integrated the Municipality of Radatovići to this province with Regulation No. 21 on 9 May 1941. Glej *Službeni list za Ljubljansko pokrajino*, No. 39, 14 May 1941. Ferenc, *Fašisti brez krinke, dokumenti 1941–42*, 315.

8 SI AS 1790, škatla 3, mapa 1. Občina Radatovići, Broj:1 kom. pov./1941, Radatovići, 5 November 1941. Predmet: referat o dolasku i bivanju u Radatovići hrvatskog povjerenišva iz Zagreba za razgraničenje između Nezavisne države Hrvatske i Kraljevine Italije.

9 The correspondence between Lorković and Casertano was published in *Međunarodni ugovori 1941*, undated, 115–122.

OPĆINA RADATOVIĆI.

BROJ: 1 kom. pov./1941. Radatovići, dne 5. novembra 1941.

Predmet: referat o dolasku i bivanju u Radatovići hrvatskog povjerenstva iz Zagreba za razgraničenje između nezavisne države Hrvatske i kraljevine Italije.

OKRAJNOM GLAVARSTVU
/ na ruke g. civilnog komesara /
ŠRKOMELJ.

Dana 21. oktobra 1941. došla je u ovu općinu komisija za razgraničenje između nezavisne države Hrvatske i kraljevine Italije, koja se sastojala od 12 ljudi. Iako je svrha komisije samo to, da razgleda topografski položaj kraja, ista se pokazala da je došla više radi propagande, nego radi komisije-og posla.

Vidi se iz sljedećeg:

1.) Kada je komisija stigla u Radatoviće, vidjeli su članovi komisije nalazeće se još neodstranjene ~~slavoluci~~ slavoluce, koji su bili postavljani za doček ~~komesara~~ visokog komesara iz Ljubljane. Pitali su gđjicu Zoru Heras-ović: " Zašto su ti slavoluci ?". Ona im je rekla, da je bio ovdje dne 12. oktobra 1941. ~~komesar~~ visoki komesar iz Ljubljane, te da je to učinjeno njemu u čast. Zatim su je pitali: " Je li on došao samo radi vojske, i kao Italijani postupaju sa narodom". Našto im je ona odgovorila, da nije došao samo radi vojske, nego i da se lično upozna sa narodom i potrebama naroda, - a postupak italijanskih okupacijskih vlasti prema narodu, da ne može biti bolji i da dobijemo sve što nam je potrebno, a naročito živežne namirnice kao; rižu, brašno, mast, sapun, ulje, šećer, macarone pa čak i slaninu. Bila im je čudna i nevjerovatna ta stvar, pa su rekli, da to ne dobivaju niti u Rimu, a odakle bi to davali ovom narodu, dodali su: " To vas Italijani sada samo mite, da vas predobiju za sebe, a kasnije ne samo, da vam neće ništa dati, nego će vam i sve oduzeti ". Pitali su je zatim: jeli ona učiteljica ovdje ? Ona im je odgovorila da nije, nego je činovnica / sestra pomoćnica/, prije učiteljica u

Fig. 3: The first page of the report produced by the Municipality of Radatovići about the visit of the NDH delimitation commission in Radatovići on 5 November 1941.

The former partisan Gabre Bogdanović told us the following about the atmosphere among the people in Radatovići at the time: “The fear that the Ustashe would arrive was present [...] they knew that Radatovići supported the National Liberation War, people from Žumberak were the enemies of the NDH”.¹⁰ Another partisan from Žumberak, Janko (Janta) Goleš, from Vukšiči near Radatovići said: “We benefited from the border a great deal. The NDH was not allowed here, they knew – as did we – that an uprising was in store here. We have Orthodox roots.”¹¹ Radatovići, a Slovene village with a Serbian population, was lucky during the war. If it had not been part of Italy, the village would have been faced an Ustashe pogrom.

It can be read in the Italian minutes of a meeting held on 8 April 1942 between the Commander of the XI Army Corps and the High Commissioner of the Province of Ljubljana that a blockade of the Slovene-Croatian border was on the table as well. The High Commissioner said that he had reduced the number of Carabinieri, members of the Royal Financial Guard and of the border police on the German border to improve the control of the Croatian border. Additionally, he had adopted different measures, such as clearing wooded areas along the delimitation line to a width ranging between 100 and 300 metres, added barbed-wire obstacles, ensured that the river Kolpa could not be crossed outside border crossings, and that all boats, including Croatian ones, would be confiscated if caught near the Italian bank.¹²

On the subject of the Italian troops’ arrival in Metlika, Martina (Tinčika) Jug said that at the very onset of the occupation the locals, particularly children, swam in Metlika’s bathing site on Kolpa along with the Italian soldiers and officers, but later they needed border passes to leave Metlika that was encircled with barbed wire.¹³ The map of Metlika surrounded by barbed wire in Fig. 4 was produced on the basis of a sketch made by the partisans.¹⁴ Making use of the Italian plans¹⁵ and remnants of Italian bunkers, the map also features a section of the defence line against the Independent State of Croatia (i.e. NDH). The Italian troops did not install barbed wire along the border river Kolpa, but did protect bridges and other structures along the river. Moreover, while their bunkers were fully encircled with barbed wire, the posts were only encircled in part. On 1 March 1942 the Italian army, Carabinieri, Financial Guard and police had posts in the following settlements in Bela krajina: Radatovići, Radovica, Krmačina, Božakovo, Rosalnice, Metlika, Bušinja Vas, Suhor, Jugorje, Semič, Primostek, Podzemelj, Gradac, Krasinec, Črnomelj, Griblje,

10 An interview with Gabre Bogdanović, Hrast pri Metliki, 29 June 2017. <https://youtu.be/jCP2TTePVvo>

11 An interview with Janko (Janta) Goleš, Vukšiči pod Radatovići, 5 July 2017. <https://youtu.be/B9ejRZckQQU>

12 Ferenc, *Fašisti brez krinke, dokumenti 1941–1942*, 316.

13 An interview with Martina (Tinčika) Jug, Metlika, 19 August 2017. https://youtu.be/szQsP0R_lrM

14 SI AS 1865 Komanda vojne oblasti in komande mest VII. Korpusa, t.e. 211.

15 SI AS 1773, t.e. 773, Poveljstvo 14. pehotne divizije ...

Pobrežje, Adlešiči, Miliči, Žuniči, Preloka, Zilje, Vinica, Dol. Suhor, Učakovci, Sinji Vrh, Damelj, Hrib, Kot, Stari Trg, Dol, Laze, and Predgrad.¹⁶ The majority of them stood along the NDH border. We can read in *Kronika mesta Metlike* that the Italians began to build the Bela krajina section of the border (fortified line) with Croatia in the spring of 1943.¹⁷ Lojze Jože Žabkar, the parish priest in Črnomelj, wrote in his diary on 3 August 1943:

“Metlika – nothing but bunkers, wire, trenches. The Italians are still stretching wire (Rosalnice–Slamna vas). What for, with their empire crumbling? I have fond memories of Metlika – I was a chaplain there six years ago and felt wonderful. However, nothing is the same today.”¹⁸

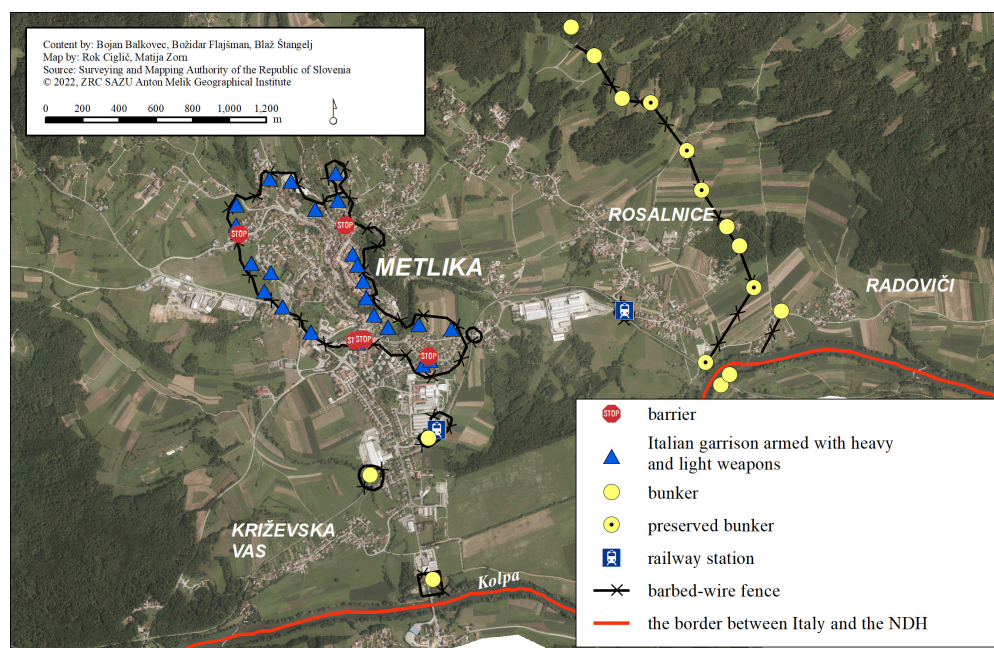


Fig. 4: A map showing the locations of the barbed-wire fence and fortifications in Metlika.

16 Ferenc, *Fašisti brez krinke, dokumenti 1941–1942*, 464.

17 Rus, *Kronika mesta Metlike II.*, 62.

18 Žabkar, *Izpovedi*, 89.



Fig. 5: The Italian Army converted a house next to a bridge across the river Kolpa near Metlika into a bunker. The back of the photograph has the date November 1942.

The border soon began to cause many problems, including economic ones. We can read in a communication dated 16 August 1941, which was produced by the Municipality of Metlika and addressed to the High Commissioner's Office for the Province of Ljubljana, that Croatian landowners who held land adjacent to Slovene-owned vineyards in Croatia made threats to Slovene winegrowers that they would not be allowed to transport their produce across the border. Additionally, they pointed out that many Croatian landowners exported hay, firewood, and so on from their land in Slovenia to the other side, and the local authorities did not cause them any problems. Therefore, they expected the same treatment from the Croatian authorities.¹⁹

The new border also caused smuggling. Ivan and Štefka Špehar from Breg, a hamlet situated between Damelj and Radenci in the Kolpa Valley, said that people smuggled mostly horses and food. Italians patrolled the border, and there was no barbed wire, while the Fascists in Špeharji issued day border passes. After Italy's capitulation, they transported Croatian civilians, holders of border passes issued by the partisans, to Slovenia. They used them to trade salt for maize.²⁰

19 SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 2. II comune di Metlika okolica, Občina Metlika okolica, 18 August 1941. Visokemu komisarijatu za Ljubljansko pokrajino v Ljubljani. V tukajšnji občini je 15 posestnikov, ki imajo svoje vinograde prek meje.

20 An interview with Ivan and Štefka Špehar, Breg ob Kolpi, 2 December 2017. <https://youtu.be/XDRfAl2IPcU>

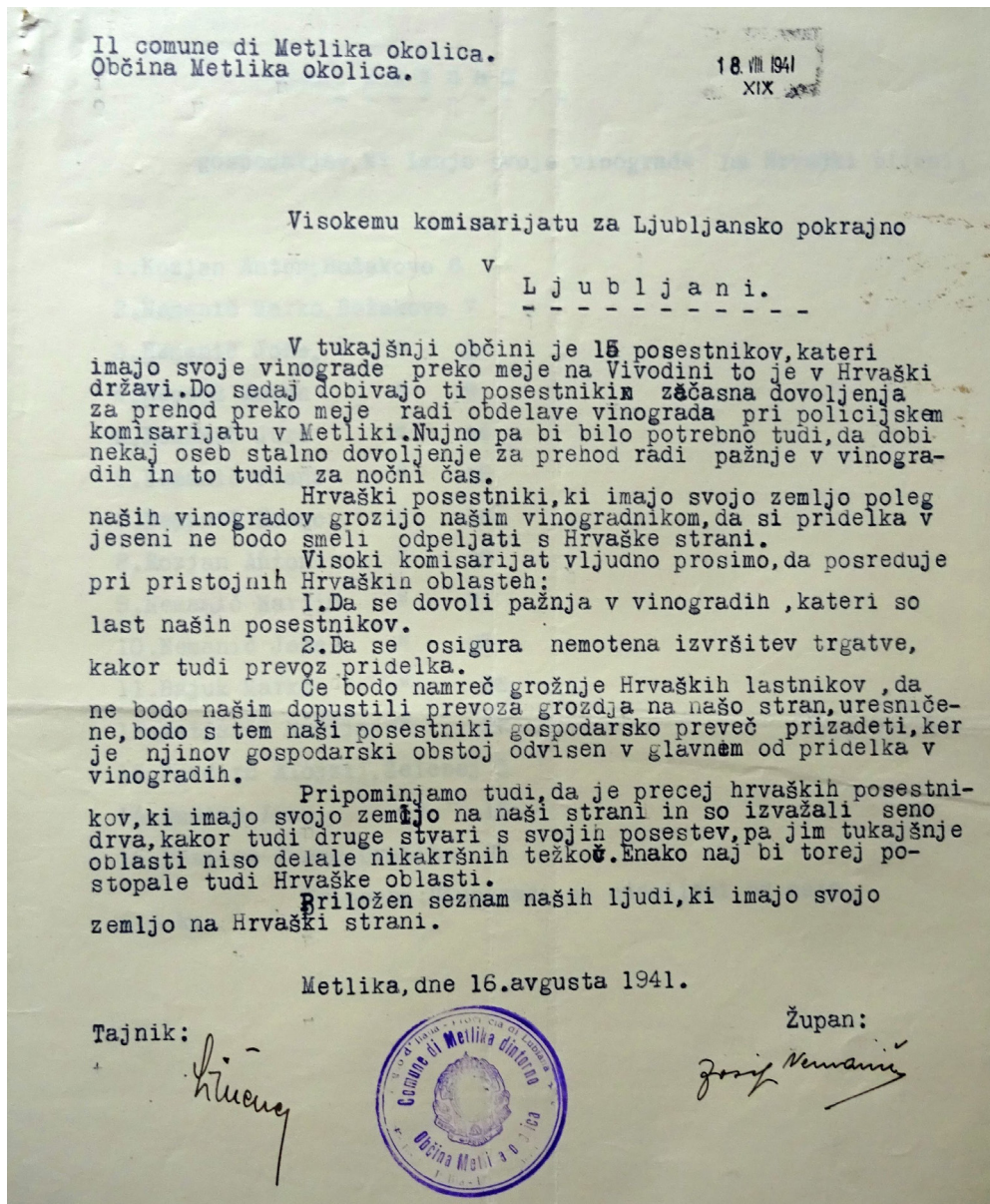


Fig. 6: A letter produced by the Municipality of Metlika describing difficulties that the border caused to winegrowers, dated 16 August 1941.

The following is the eyewitness testimony of Jožef Klepec from Krasinec:

“There were Italian soldiers on guard duty here. The Kolpa flows in a straight line for about a kilometre in both directions, making a slight turn near Griblje [...] A few Croatian citizens transported Jews across the river there. They were said to have been rich and people stole from them. People who took them across Kolpa stole from them. Once they reached the other bank they shouted ‘Italians, run, run’. The Jews jumped out of the boat, and they returned with boatloads of their things back to the Croatian side [...] The Jews had luggage on them, otherwise they had mostly money – gold and gold coins. I remember being in school and my father and mother going to Croatia to buy these gold coins and taking them to the dentist. It was high-quality gold, the entire valley used it to have their teeth done. Jews fled Croatia, I don’t know where they went”.²¹

In the Gorjanci hill range/Žumberak the Italians had a border post in Radatovići and Ostriž. Franc Kočevar saw Fascists set Bojanja Vas ablaze on 7 August 1942 because partisans had cut the telephone cable connecting these two border posts.²² Giovanni Cuccu Ivo, an Italian soldier who subsequently joined the partisans, wrote in his memoirs that the post in Radatovići was considered to be a penal post. It had a small garrison and was located in a remote location on a hill, and thus deemed very dangerous. On 4 December 1942 the Italian garrison left Radatovići and five days later Ostriž.²³ Žumberak thus became liberated territory as early as in December 1942, almost a year before Italy’s capitulation. Consequently; this area saw the emergence of many joint Slovene–Croatian partisan field hospitals, and the road between Brezovica and Radatovići was named the Road of Partisan Hospitals, with a commemorative plaque in Brezovica bearing witness to this. Danica Car from Brezovica has an abiding memory of the period. She still keeps a 50 *Reichsmark* note, a present from a wounded German soldier who was a patient of the local partisan field hospitals.²⁴ Anton Stipanič, a partisan from Gradec in Bela krajina, told us the following about the border: “We, partisans, did not acknowledge the border. We did not fight for Slovenia or Croatia, we fought for both of them together, for Yugoslavia.”²⁵

21 An interview with Jožef Klepec, Krasinec, 3 September 2017. https://youtu.be/dio_y0OITPY

22 An interview with Franc Kočevar, Bojanja Vas, 9 July 2017. <https://youtu.be/RkzrM-xplPc>

23 Cuccu, *Šestnajst mesecev med slovenskimi partizani*, 42, 54.

24 An interview with Danica Car, Brezovica, 3 August 2017. The recording is kept in the project’s archive.

25 An interview with Anton Stipanič, Ljubljana, 28 August 2017. <https://youtu.be/sRkD51Tf9KQ>

When the partisan movement gained more prominence, the Italians began to shoot hostages,²⁶ burn down villages²⁷ and deport people to concentration camps – first and foremost, to the island of Rab and to Gonars. Several Italian lists of internees are kept in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia.

The name Darinka (Darka) Šimec (married name Čop) is on one of them, as are the names of women from her family.²⁸ Along with her mother and three sisters, Darka was sent to internment to the camp at Kampo, on the island of Rab, and then to Gonars. When talking about her internment, she told us about an instance when the parents died and the children were on their own, with their skin virtually being eaten away by lice.²⁹ Ivan Starešinič, a partisan and accordionist from Žuniči, said that not a single villager of Žuniče went to an Italian concentration camp. They were lucky – trucks came to the village to take them away, but the Italian commander in Žuniči prevented their deportation.³⁰ According to the eyewitness testimony of Marija Starešinič from Preloka, the same situation happened in Bojanci because of the love between the Italian commander and Zora, a young woman from Bojanci. The Italian commander thus prevented villagers from being taken to internment.³¹ Clearly, the situation varied in different villages.

After Italy's capitulation in September 1943, Bela krajina became liberated territory that began to see an important part of national history unfold. The Main Staff of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Slovenia was stationed here, as was the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front and many other institutions. Up to the end of the war Bela krajina saw only a few sporadic German and Ustashe incursions. The Ustashe and Germans attacked Metlika,³² Vinica³³ and Adlešiči,³⁴ while the Germans bombed Črnomelj³⁵ and Dragatuš.³⁶

26 An interview with Peter Rauh and Milka Mihelič, Predgrad, 24 July 2019. <https://youtu.be/N6g9-YqvzNA>

27 An interview with Franc Kočever, Bojanja Vas, 9 July 2017. <https://youtu.be/RkzrM-xplPc>

28 SI AS, 1790, 2. škatla, 1. mapa, Elenco degli internati dal comune di Črnomelj.

29 An interview with Darinka (Darka) Čop, Črnomelj, 10 March 2018. <https://youtu.be/qDTSr9tPiro>

30 An interview with Ivan Starešinič, Balkovci, 5 June 2018. <https://youtu.be/FlixifP3kYTc>

31 An interview with Marija Starešinič, Črnomelj, 14 August 2018. <https://youtu.be/D3vrenYJBFA>

32 Zveza borcev NOV: *Metlika v plamenih*, 1964.

33 Polič, Belokranjski odred, 557–562; An interview with Ivan and Štefka Špehar, Breg ob Kolpi, 2 December 2017. <https://youtu.be/XDRfAl2IPcU>

34 Dular, *Adlešiči v Beli krajini*, 25, 26.

35 Weiss, *Od daleč je videla kako so padale bombe na mesto. Memento ob 70-letnici bombardiranja Črnomlja 3. oktobra 1943.*

36 Weiss, *Ves Dragatuš trpi, krivi in nekrivi. Memento ob 70-letnici bombardiranja vasi Dragatuš 5. maja 1944.* An interview with Tončka Adam, Dragatuš, 10 September 2017. <https://youtu.be/hHbwTk2T9ZI>



Fig. 7: Adlešiči after the arson committed by the Ustashe.

The brutality of the Ustashe remains etched in the minds of the population living along the border, as seen in the accounts collected as part of this project. When describing the Italians our interviewees also had some good words for them, which is not the case with the Ustashe. Along with the previously mentioned residents of Žumberak, Gabre Bogdanović and Janko Goleša, Marija Koležnik provided eyewitness testimony about the Ustashe. The house where she was born still stands in the proximity of the border crossing in Metlika, immediately next to the main road. She said the following about the Ustashe:

“The Ustashe came to Slovene territory for the first time in November 1943, when it was already liberated. They set fire our and our neighbours’ auxiliary buildings. Ours was on fire, as were those belonging to the Štupar family, the Vrtačič family, the Milčinovič family and to the Milek family in Križevska Vas. They set ablaze only auxiliary buildings. The Ustashe came to our house, lined us against walls and because they were locals from Croatian villagers – my father and my mother knew them well – they demanded that we tell them the whereabouts of my brother because they knew that he had joined the partisans.

We stood against a wall, waiting to be shot. Yes, I remember it all, but I do not remember what my parents said, something about a German officer coming and shouting at the Ustashe to leave us alone. They took our pig, and it was quite well fed. Of course, we put out the fire.”³⁷



Fig. 8: Marija Koležnik on the bridge across the Kolpa near Metlika on 9 February 2019. The house where she was born stands less than 500 metres from this bridge, and near to the present-day border crossing. The house that Italians turned into a bunker during World War II stood at the site of the sign featuring the flag of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union (see Fig. 5).

Katica Adlešič and Marija Kordež told us about the Ustashe looting and setting fire to Adlešiči.³⁸ Frančiška Tahija recounted how standing on the Croatian side of the river the Ustashe shot at children swimming in the Kolpa.³⁹ It was not on account of the Italian or, subsequently, German control that people did not dare to cross the border, but due to the Ustashe violence. Franc Zepuhar’s account of the situation is as follows: “There was a trader here at Suhor, he crossed the border to buy something. The Ustashe

37 An interview with Marija Koležnik, Metlika, 9 February 2019. https://youtu.be/1LFQUO_aY68

38 An interview with Katica Adlešič and Marija Kordež, Adlešiči, 28 October 2017. <https://youtu.be/07o0UM0hbbY>

39 An interview with Frančiška Tahija, Glavica in the Municipality of Bosiljevo, 5 June 2018. From 6:55 to 7:25. <https://youtu.be/yehSGt7Yvps>

got him and killed him on the spot. People did not dare to cross the border.”⁴⁰ The comparisons between the former occupation border and the modern-day barbed-wire fences on the border with the Republic of Croatia – set up to stop migrants crossing – are self-evident.⁴¹ As Franc Starešinič from Žuniči, a village in Bela krajina situated along the river Kolpa, whose house still features an Italian inscription *Vinceremo*,⁴² said: “The border is more closed now than it was then”.⁴³

Zilje — a case study

Zilje is a hamlet that in early 2019 was populated by 132 inhabitants.⁴⁴ In the 1931 census 241 people were recorded living in 45 houses. Italians arrived in the village at the beginning of World War II, and a house in Dolnje Zilje was turned into a fortified post. Initially, there were a few Fascists in the village, and later mostly members of the Financial Guard.⁴⁵

The post was used by border troops, because the river Kolpa was the border with the NDH. In the autumn of 1942 they were joined by privates.⁴⁶ The residents of a few other houses were forced to leave, and their properties fortified and connected with trenches to expand the post. A bunker was set up in front of it. The former residents had to be taken in by their neighbours.⁴⁷

In the first year of the occupation the Italians did not commit any hostile acts against the local population. Later on, with the growing partisan movement, different forms of reprisals followed. A new measure was introduced, namely the internment of the civilian population. The villagers of Zilje were also sent to camps as well.⁴⁸ The Italian soldiers took

40 An interview with France Zepuhar, Bušinja Vas, 1 August 2017. From 1:50 to 2:07. <https://youtu.be/q99ahOj7QJg>.

41 On a press conference held on 10 November 2015, Miro Cerar, Slovenia's Prime Minister, announced the government's decision that temporary barbed wire fences would be installed on the Schengen border with Croatia in the following days. http://www.vlada.si/medijsko_sredisce/sporocila_za_javnost/sporocilo_za_javnost/article/postavitev_tehnicnih_usmerjevalnih_ovir_na_schengenski_meji_nujen_in_zacasen_ukrep_56921/

42 Italian occupying troops wrote *VINCEREMO* (WE SHALL WIN) on the walls during World War II. According to Anton Stipanič's eyewitness testimony, anti-Fascists from Bela krajina added *VIDET ČEMO* (WE SHALL SEE). An interview with Anton Stipanič, Ljubljana, 28 August 2017. From 6:20 to 6:53. https://youtu.be/dmSKMLqAF_s

43 An interview with France Starešinič, Žuniči, 10 June 2019. <https://youtu.be/TOHwcuN8Fw>

44 The data on inhabitants is taken from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia's website: https://pxweb.stat.si/SiStatDb/pxweb/sl/10_Dem_soc/10_Dem_soc_05_prebivalstvo_10_stevilo_preb_25_05C50_prebivalstvo_naselja/05C5004S.px/

45 Gradivo za topografijo NOB, Bela krajina, I. snopič, 52.

46 Gradivo za topografijo NOB, I Snopič, Bela krajina, Ljubljana 1958, 52.

47 Jože Starešinič, *Vola so obesili v naš vodnjak*, 0:34 – 8:21, <https://youtu.be/iJeHZ6OYbXk>.

48 Jože Čemas from Zilje maintained that the captured were taken away in August 1943. His father told him that they had been taken away when maize started making corncocks. An interview with Jože Čemas, Zilje, 19 June

men from Preloka, making them walk to Vinica via Zilje.⁴⁹ In Vinica, they were gathered in a sinkhole, in the location of what is today a medical centre. A few individuals managed to avoid being interned on account of luck, e.g. such as the relatives of Jože Starešinič. A local from Vinica told his grandmother that Italian actions would not end well.⁵⁰

The captured villagers of Zilje were taken to Rab. A few families saw several men taken to camps. Jože Pokorn, the parish priest in Preloka, wrote to the Archbishopric of Ljubljana about the unbearable conditions and problems of internees' families. In a rather strident tone, the parish priest demanded answers and solutions "before the last internee dies."⁵¹ In his letter, Pokorn mentioned twelve dead parishioners.

The episcopal see sent him a list of the deceased, whose data had to be entered into the register and whose relatives needed to be officially informed of their deaths. Pokorn read the names of the deceased during mass, which was heard by Frančiška Čadonič from Balkovci, who was familiarly known as Biričina. Eyewitnesses said that she fainted.⁵² According to the eyewitness testimony of Frančiška Tahija, the parish priest Pokorn read the names of the deceased on 17 January 1943 during the service in the Church of St Anton in Zilje.

"... our parish priest from Preloka announced the deaths of villagers on Rab during service, those were difficult moments, the whole church cried, everybody cried [...] such moments cannot be forgotten."⁵³

Franc Čemas and his son Ivan were interned on Rab. The son was 20 years old. The food was so bad that internees looked for something to eat in horse faeces because an odd undigested oat seed could be found in it.⁵⁴ "Franc died there, Ivan returned because Franc gave his food to his son Ivan, so he survived and came back."⁵⁵

In the autumn of 1942 the Italians expanded their post in Dolnje Zilje by forcing the residents to leave three houses. A bunker was set up next to a roadside house, and a barn had to be demolished to make room for it.⁵⁶

2019. The recording is kept in the project's archive. The parish priest Jože Pokorn mentioned in his letter to the bishopric's ordinariate that the internees were taken away on 4 August 1942. His letter is kept in the Archives of the Ljubljana Archbishopric, in the documents of the Preloka parish.

49 Jože Starešinič, Zilje, 21 February 2019, Po sreči so ostali živi, <https://youtu.be/eN8mwTa0j6Y>, 0:36–0:52.

50 Ibid.

51 A letter dated to 10 March 1943 and addressed to the bishopric's ordinariate in Ljubljana.

52 Angela Žugelj, Prišle so osmrtnice na Faro, <https://youtu.be/yZQx25MPTIU>. Angela Žugelj said: "The Biričini woman fainted." The oeconym of Frančiška Balkovec's family was Biričini.

53 An interview with Frančiška Tahija, Glavica, 5 June 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

54 Jože Čemas from Zilje mentioned that he heard this from his uncle. An interview with Jože Čemas, Zilje, 19 June 2019. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

55 An interview with Frančiška Tahija, Glavica, 5 June 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

56 Jože Starešinič, Vola so obesili v naš vodnjak, <https://youtu.be/iJeHZ6OYbxk>.

However, the villagers told us that the Italian soldiers did not pose a threat to them, as there was an unwritten understanding that the partisans would not attack this post, and so the Italians did not cause problems. They knew about the partisans, but the villagers pointed out that both armies carried guns and they were unarmed, and thus had to submit to both sides.⁵⁷ The absurdity of the war and the consequences caused by different circumstances is indicated by the eyewitness testimony of Jože Starešinič about his grandmother and mother harvesting wheat about 500 metres from their house. The partisans approached them, making enquiries about the Italian garrison they were about to attack. Both women begged them not to do that because the garrison was not unkind to the villagers. On top of that, they feared that in retribution the Italians could burn down houses in the village that were restored with the money that their husbands made in America. Moreover, the Italians did not kill anyone in the village. Consequently, the partisans did not attack the post.⁵⁸ However, things became more awkward when the new Italian commander, who was not aware of the situation, arrived in the village.⁵⁹ Still, the village did not see any armed conflicts, although on one occasion shots were heard when the Italian soldiers garrisoned in the post wanted to have chicken for lunch – they shot a resident's chicken, and then paid for it.⁶⁰

Figure 9a shows a sketch of the post and the back of the same document features a detailed description of it. This document must have been produced at some point after November 1942, probably in the spring or summer of 1943. Members of the partisan intelligence drew a sketch on two pages and included details about the garrison. The post was thought to have been manned by 80 fairly heavily armed members of the Financial Guard. If the number is correct, there was one Italian soldier for every three villagers.

The garrison was believed to have been armed with two or three heavy Breda machine guns, up to two light mortars and four light machine guns. There were no guns on this list because every soldier carried one. Measuring up to three metres in height, bunkers were set up next to the houses and barbed wire stretched around the fortified houses. To ensure safe movement between bunkers, a 1.6-metre-deep trench was dug.⁶¹ The number of soldiers was probably lower, or it may have varied. Jože Starešinič

57 An eyewitness testimony by Jože Grdun, Zilje, 5 June 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

58 An eyewitness testimony by Jože Starešinič, Zilje, 21 January 2019. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

59 An interview with Franciška Tahija, Glavica, 5 June 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

60 An eyewitness testimony by Jože Grdun, Zilje, 5 June 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

61 SI AS 1851 Glavni štab narodnoosvobodilne vojske in partizanskih odredov Slovenije, 1941–1945, t.e. 59, p.e.1680. Obveščevalsko poročilo Dolne Zilje. This is a two-page intelligence report; one page features a sketch of the landscape with numerical marks and the other one a detailed description of buildings, the mode of fortification and weapons.



Dolne Zilje.
 Postojanka šteje cca 80 članov.
 Oborožitev: 2-3 točke, Brede, do 2 lahke
 baraba, in do 4 lahke mitraljeze.
 Nastanjeni so v treh hišah 5, 6, 7.
 Vsaka hiša ima okna zaskodana in opremlje-
 na z strel. linami. Okoli hiš kamniti
 bunkerji v višini 3 m, skori kamniti zid
 so line (strelne). Bunkerje pokriva 2 deska
 mišprot, obramba. Pokrili bodo tudi z zemljo.
 Hiše 1, 2, 3, 4 so pokrite s beto-
 nirani.
 Stev. 9 jarek v višini 1,60 m
 Črna vrta ovira.
 Postojanka se strjujejo.
 Lohod; moien od severne strani in
 voda in od Preloke.
 Nemogoč od spodnje strani ob Kolpi.
 Na hiši 8 in 11 osmatracišca z
 lahkim mitraljezem.

Figs. 9a and 9b: Two sketches of the post in Zilje produced by the partisans.

maintains that the post was manned by between 30 and 35 soldiers.⁶² The supplies for the garrison in Zilje were provided from Vinica or Črnomelj. They used locals for transport as well, mostly for transporting food.



Fig. 10: The demolition of the bunker in front of a house in Zilje along the road from Vinica to Preloka. The bunker was demolished immediately after Italy's capitulation. (The photograph is owned by Janez Uršič).

Up to the summer of 1942 the locals were able to co-exist with the Italians. They did not abuse the villagers, and – as noted above – are even said to have paid for hens when they felt like eating chicken.⁶³

Children attended school in Preloka and had to walk past the post in Dolnje Zilje. We cannot imagine how unpleasant it must have been for children having to walk past soldiers, bunkers and wire obstacles on a daily basis. The story told by Franciška Tahija (née Balkovec) might seem amusing,⁶⁴ but it is indicative of the pressure that children were faced with as they walked past the troops of different armies on their way to school.

At the end of the village they had to go past the Italians, while on a shortcut across the meadows and clearings they could run into the partisans. Their lives were disrupted

62 A conversation with Jože Starešinič, 21 February 2019. According to his grandmother's eyewitness testimony, there were about 20 men in their house and five or six in the other two houses, thus totalling upwards of 30 men.

63 An eyewitness testimony by Jože Grdun, Zilje, 5 June 2018. The recording is kept in the project's archive.

64 *Otroci meje/Children of the Border*, <https://youtu.be/0NZp3PfVdTQ>, Franciška Tahija, Buongiorno, 0:07-1:59.

by the war, and they faced many dangers and obstacles. Their education was also disrupted, although in terms of schooling the children in Preloka were lucky. The German troops simply walked through the village after Italy's capitulation, and from the late autumn of 1943 onwards this area was liberated territory.

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Fig. 3, SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 2.

Fig. 4, Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Rok Ciglič, information on it by Bojan Balkovec, Božidar Flajšman and Blaž Štangelj.

Fig. 5, Božidar Flajšman's archive.

Fig. 6, SI AS 1790, škatla 5, mapa 2. II comune di Metlika okolica, Občina Metlika okolica, 18 August 1941. Visokemu komisarijatu za Ljubljansko pokrajino v Ljubljani. V tukajšnji občini je 15 posestnikov, ki imajo svoje vinograde prek meje.

Fig. 7, The Bela krajina Museum Metlika.

Fig. 8, Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, photographed by Božidar Flajšman.

Fig. 9, SI AS 1851 Glavni štab narodnoosvobodilne vojske in partizanskih odredov Slovenije, 1941–1945, t.e. 59, p.e. 1680.

Fig. 10, Janez Uršič's archive.

Summary

Božidar Flajšman, Bojan Balkovec

Occupation borders in Bela krajina 1941–1945

The occupation border between Fascist Italy and the Ustashe Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in Bela krajina ran along the border of the Črnomelj district, from Trdinov vrh along the Gorjanci ridge and Žumberk to the Kolpa River near Božakovo, moving along the Kolpa River up to Predgrad. To prevent the Slovenian and Croatian partisan brigades from crossing the border, the Italians intended to fortify the border at Gorjanci/Žumberk with a corridor of barbed wire and bunkers. No wire fence was conceived along the Kolpa River, only fortified bridges and other structures. Due to their capitulation in the spring of 1943, the Italians only managed to build five bunkers near Metlika. The border cut deep into people's daily lives, especially farmers who had land on both sides of it. People along the border also faced the issue of refugees coming from the NDH, especially the Jewish population. Residents of Žumberk with Orthodox roots believed the border was quite useful, since it prevented the Ustashe from coming to the Italian area. In May 1941, there were individual attempts to annex the municipality of Radatovići, which was part of Črnomelj district, to the NDH, and an attempt to annex the entire region of Bela krajina to Nazi Germany. A strong resistance movement evolved very quickly, forcing the Italians to leave smaller border outposts as early as December 1942. From then on, they stayed in larger towns only, surrounding them completely or partially with bunkers and barbed wire.

After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, Bela krajina became a free territory where the headquarters of the National Liberation Army and the partisan detachments of Slovenia was set up in addition to the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front, and many other institutions. By the end of the war, only a few of individual invasions by the Germans and Ustashe had hit Bela krajina. Zilje is a small village on the banks of the Kolpa River. There was a crew of the Italian Guardia di Finanza, and the villagers had no problems with them. As in other places in Bela krajina, the Italian Army deported many men from Zilje to camps, where many of them died due to unbearable conditions.

Today, comparisons between the former occupation border and the current wired border with the Republic of Croatia are being made.

*Peter Mikša, Matija Zorn**

Obsotelje – the South-Eastern Border of the German Reich (1941–1945)**

Introduction

Following Germany's attack on Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia's capitulation in April 1941 and, consequently, the division of the Slovene territory by the occupying forces,¹ new state borders came into being. The border of the German Reich shifted to modern-day Slovenia's eastern border or to the south-eastern border of the former Austrian land Styria, where it bordered on the newly established Independent State of Croatia (NDH). In its southern part, it was bounded by the Sotla river basin (Obsotelje)² that stretches over five natural geographic units on the Slovene side of the border: the hills Boč and Macelj (the headwater region of the river Sotla), the Upper Sotla hills (the river's upper reaches), the Middle Sotla hills (Sotla's middle reaches, beneath the confluence with Mestinjščica), the Bizeljsko hills and the Krško plain (Sotla's lower

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1 Repe et al., *Mejni kamni*, 9–10.

2 Natek, *Posotelje*, 168.

reaches) towards the south.³ This chapter will provide an in-depth presentation of the border in the first two areas.

Jože Hederih, who spent his childhood in Dekmanca, a few metres from the river Sotla,⁴ the future border between Germany and the NDH, said:

“I remember the Germans arriving, the road was full of cars, motorbikes, carts, pedestrians. They were accompanied by German planes. They flew so low that I was afraid they might hit my head. I squatted near the cross at the end of the garden out of fear.”⁵

The New Borders and Border Areas

The borders between occupied territories were planned as future state borders. They were outlined on location by intergovernmental commissions up to the autumn of 1941.⁶ Hitler's guidelines, which were given on 3 April and published on 12 April 1941, served as the instructions for the partition of Yugoslavia, as did the subsequent intergovernmental agreements.⁷ Four border areas and borders came into existence, one of which was the border between Germany and the NDH. There were different regimes on these borders and, consequently, life along them was different as well. Some borders were much more fortified than others, they featured minefields, wire obstacles, etc. To enable better control of the border, all buildings were demolished in its proximity and wooded areas were cleared. This was done predominately with forced labour using the local population.

German-Occupied Slovene Štajerska

Hitler divided the occupied Slovene territories into two temporary administrative units. The eastern administrative unit Lower Štajerska (Lower Styria, *Untersteiermark*, for a while referred to as *Unterland* or *Südsteiermark*) encompassed the entire Slovene Štajerska, a small part of Prekmurje, a part of Dolenjska (Inner Carniola) and the Municipality of Zagorje ob Savi (a total of 6,782.12 km²). The western administrative unit consisted of Gorenjska (Upper Carniola), the river Meža valley and Jesersko (referred to as the Occupied Areas of Koroška (Carinthia) and Kranjska

3 Perko, *Geografija slovensko-hrvaške*.

4 At the present, a settlement in the Municipality of Bistrica ob Sotli, situated along the river Sotla and immediately next to the border.

5 An interview with Jože Hederih.

6 Celar, *Slovenija*, 37.

7 Colić, *Takozvana*, 115.

(Carniola) or *Besetzte Gebiete Kärntens und Krains*). The *Gauleiters* or district leaders of the NSDAP Štajerska and Koroška helmed the civil administration and were at the same time *Reichsstatthalter* or Reich governors. Nazi-oriented district commissioners from Austria were subordinated to them.⁸

A New Border on the River Sotla

With the introduction of the border, Obsotelje became a border area once again. This had been a border area in the period of the Roman Empire, when the border between the provinces Noricum and Pannonia ran in its northern part. From the High Middle Ages onwards the river Sotla constituted the border of the Holy Roman Empire, and within the Habsburg Monarchy Sotla was the border between Styria and Croatia or Hungary. Sotla was also a border river in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (subsequently the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), when it delineated the border between the Drava Banovina and Sava Banovina (subsequently Banovina of Croatia) and in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, when this river was the border between the Socialist Republics of Slovenia and Croatia.⁹ At present, this river constitutes the state border between Slovenia and Croatia, which is an internal border of the European Union regulated by the Schengen Border Code.

Owing to the foundation of the NDH and the expansion of Germany's state territory, the border between these two states had to be defined. Its course was outlined in an intergovernmental agreement that included a small-scale map on which the border was outlined.¹⁰ Article 1 of this agreement features the approximate course of the border:

“The Croatian–German border is defined by a line that runs from the tripoint: Croatia–the German Reich–Italy as far as the tripoint: Croatia–the German Reich–Hungary, which coincides with the former administrative border between the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia on the one hand and the Austrian lands Carniola and Styria on the other. The envisaged course of the border is indicated by the blue line on the enclosed map that is a constituent part of this agreement.”¹¹

The course of the border between Germany and the NDH was also addressed by periodicals, e.g. *Štajerski gospodar* from Maribor:

8 Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi*, 59–62.

9 Bajt, Vidic, *Slovenski zgodovinski*.

10 Hrvatsko-njemački državni ugovor, 13 May 1941.

11 *Međunarodni ugovori*, 24.

“In the presence of *Poglavnik*, an agreement about the delimitation between both states was signed by representatives of the Reich and the Independent State of Croatia in Zagreb on 13 May. This is the first agreement that the new Croatia concluded with the Reich. On behalf of Germany, the agreement was signed by the German Ambassador Siegfried Kasche and the Legation Councillor Kamphoesener, and on behalf of Croatia by the State Secretary Dr. Mladen Lorković and General August Marić. The new German-Croatian border is about 100 km long. In the east, the border begins at the tripoint near Varaždin and runs westwards to the south of Rohitsch Sauerbrunn [Rogaška Slatina, author’s note] and Windischland-berg [Podčetrtek, author’s note] along the Sotla as far as its river mouth into Sann [German for the river Sava, author’s note]. From here the border runs westwards along the shoulder of the Gorjanci hill range as far as a few kilometres before the settlement of Kalje; here begins the Italian demarcation line.”¹²

The Germans and Croats stipulated in two other articles that the final course of the border would be outlined by a Croatian-German commission that would take into consideration, first and foremost, economic factors. In accordance with the provisions stipulated in the agreement, a German-Croatian delimitation commission set off towards the border on the river Sotla on 14 May 1941, a day after the agreement was signed, to address minor border-related disagreements and make decisions about the final corrections and to conclude the delimitation (Fig. 1).¹³ The commission was headquartered in Rogaška Slatina, in the hotel Štajerski Dvor, where members of both delegations held meetings between late May and 30 October 1941.¹⁴ At the end of October the Croatian delegation relocated to Zagreb and Klanjec. The members of the German delegation remained in Rogaška Slatina, where all German-Croatian border-related questions were resolved up to 28 July 1942, barring that of the exact location of the tripoint of Germany, the NDH and Hungary.¹⁵

12 *Meja med Nemčijo in Hrvatsko*, 8.

13 *Določitev državnih meja*, 1.

14 PA AA Berlin, R 105127; HR-HDA-227.

15 PA AA Berlin, R 105131, Bericht Nr. 5, 1; PA AA Berlin, R 105131, 9 July 1942, 1.

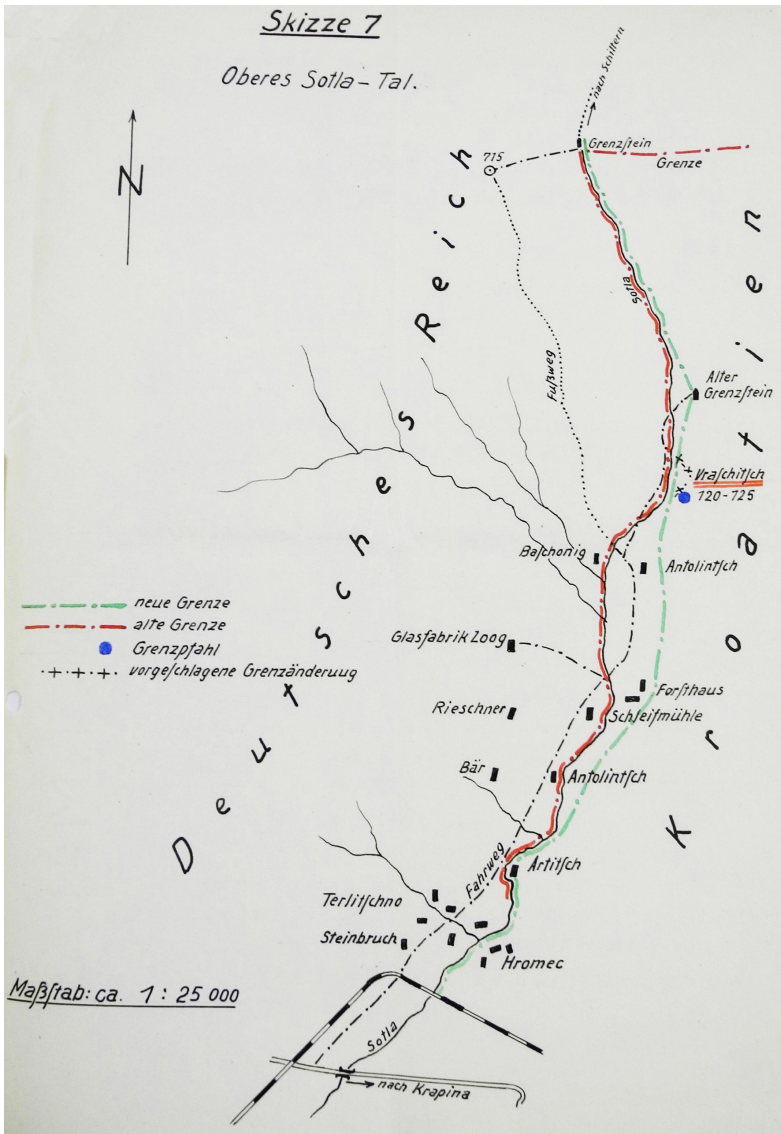


Fig. 1: A sketch produced by the German border commission showing the course of the border between Germany and the NDH between Dobovec pri Rogatcu (south) and Macelj (north) in a scale of 1:25,000.¹⁶ It shows three courses of the border: the “new border” (*neue Grenze*; green line), the “old border” (*alte Grenze*; red line), and the “proposed change of the border” (*vorgeschlagene Grenzänderungen*; black crosses). Additionally, the sketch includes three border markers: *Grenzpfahl* (blue dot) and two markings for “old” boundary stones (*Alter Grenzstein*), that delimited the Austrian and Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy (Fig. 2).

¹⁶ PA AA Berlin, R 105131, Niederschrift.



Fig. 2: An Austro-Hungarian boundary stone (right), separating two entities of the Habsburg Monarchy, and an occupation border stone (left; no. 18–7, marked also in Fig. 8), delimiting Germany and the NDH, standing next to each other near the spring of the river Sotla on Macelj. These boundary stones face Styria and Germany, where the Austro-Hungarian boundary stone features the letters “S D” (for *Styriae Ducatus*) and the occupation boundary stone the letter “D” (signifying *Deutschland* or Germany).

On the German side, the border regime had been introduced before the intergovernmental agreement was reached and the final course of the border defined. The border police posts began their operation as early as on 17 April 1941.¹⁷ On 18 April, during his visit of Maribor, Heinrich Himmler ordered that the gendarmes also be tasked with guarding the border with Croatia. Border guards did not begin to guard the border until the beginning of May, when district customs commissariats were formed, and the commissariats in Kozje and in Brežice were responsible for the area.¹⁸

Niko Pečnik wrote the following about the arrival of border guards in Bizeljsko:

“The NDH border guards and soldiers (on the river Sotla) began frequenting the inn. The majority of them were Austrians from the proximity of Graz or Leibnitz. They were older, probably unfit for the front.”¹⁹

17 This date refers to the post in Brežice; it guarded the border crossing in Dobova and (for some time) in Velika Dolina. Ferenc, *Tragedija Slovencev*, 387–388.

18 Ferenc, *Nemška okupacija*, 257.

19 Jogan, Kržan, *Bizeljsko*, 81.

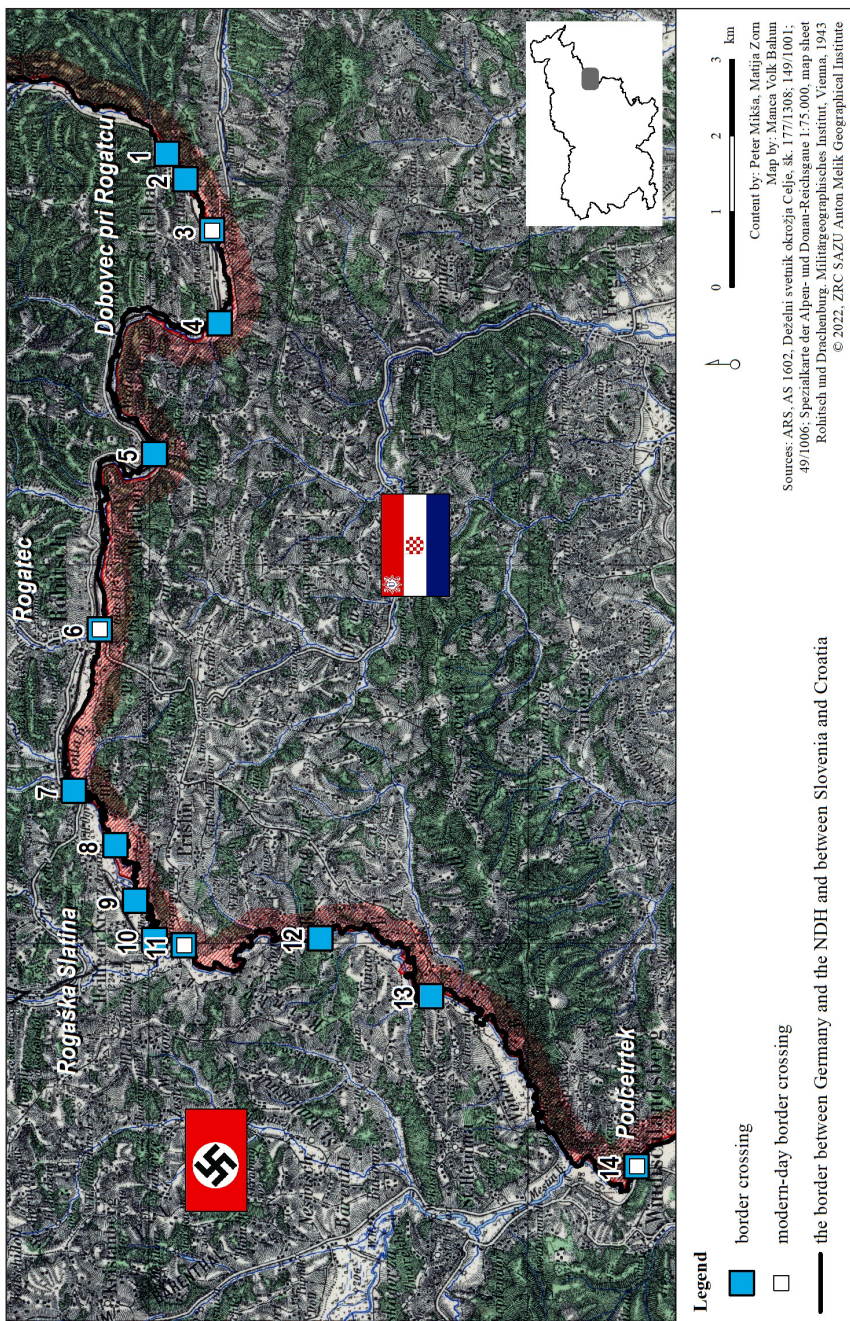


Fig. 3: A German map from 1943, produced by the Military Geographical Institute in Vienna. The map shows the border between Germany and the NDH on the river Sotla, between Dobovec pri Rogatcu and Podčetrtek. Along with WWII border crossings, the map shows also the location of modern-day ones.

There were six border posts between Sv. Peter pod Sv. Gorami (modern-day Bistrica ob Sotli) and Dobova, namely in Sv. Peter, Bizeljsko, Župevec, Kapele, Podvinje, and Dobova.²⁰ Border guards were stationed mainly in vacant presbyteries and public buildings, such as schools or different cultural centres, and were often billeted in the locals' houses.²¹

At some places the border crossings were set up relatively densely. Along the upper reaches of the Sotla, i.e. on the 33-kilometre-long border section between Dobovec pri Rogatcu and Podčetrtek, there were 14 border crossings,²² while today there are only four (Figs. 3 and 4).



Fig. 4: The border crossing near Harine Zlake (Podčetrtek; no. 14 in Fig. 3). A German border guard in the foreground and a Croatian one in the background. This photograph was probably taken in 1941 or early 1942, when the border was still not protected with wire fences. The current border crossing stands in the same location.

20 ARS, AS 1851.

21 An interview with Jože Hederih.

22 Mikša et al., *Rogaška Slatina*.

Germans Protecting the Southern Borders

Germans fortified the borders with minefields, wire fences, watchtowers and bunkers.²³ Branko Mikša²⁴ said the following:

“I remember sitting on my uncle’s lap, looking towards the guarded border and the German Reich was on the other side. Germans installed wire fencing and planted mines on the border.”²⁵

Germans demolished all buildings²⁶ and cleared wooded areas²⁷ in a 50-metre-wide strip of land, which gave them better control of the area.²⁸ This was done mostly with forced labour using the local population (Fig. 5).²⁹ A two-metre high wire mesh fence was installed in more prominent spots (Fig. 6), the fence was topped with three strands of barbed wire. Strings of barbed wire measuring two to three metres in width were installed unevenly on the ground behind it (Fig. 7), and infantry mines were planted in the width of a few metres. These mines were laid by the army, while other work was done by the forced labourers.³⁰

Jože Zbil from Imeno said the following:

“There was wire on the border. It was 1.2 to 1.8 metres high. Higher in some places, lower in others. It was certainly higher than the modern-day one [nowadays, wire fencing stands approximately in the same spots, author’s note]. The wire was four metres wide. The posts were set four metres apart. The wire was stretched from the top of one of these to the ground and from a second top to another post, forming a pattern of several intersecting strands. It was criss-crossed from both directions. There was a coil in the middle as well. The coil was stretched in the middle, between these posts. Barbed wire was stretched above the coil, between posts, as well. The area was mined and mines were hidden.”³¹

23 Mikša, Zorn, Rapalska meja, 626.

24 He was born in Zalug near Prišlin, in the Maganat homestead, next to the border.

25 An interview with Branko Mikša.

26 A story from the Polhov Gradec hills on the German-Italian border is well known. The delimitation commission outlined the border across a farmyard, which would mean that the homestead and its auxiliary buildings would be demolished as well. The family shifted the border somewhat lower and thus saved their homestead from being demolished. Nartnik et al., *Življenje Polhograjcev*, 102.

27 Owners could remove the lumber and use it for their personal needs. If they did not, it was removed by forced labourers and used by the Germans. They were not allowed to form piles with the lumber, and the branches had to be spread as widely as possible to prevent the undergrowth from growing. An interview with Milan Košir.

28 Germans installed wire and planted mines in accessible spots in the high mountains as well. An interview with Anton Hosner.

29 Mikša, Zorn, Rapalska meja, 626.

30 An interview with Albina Gobec.

31 An interview with Jože Zbil.



Fig. 5: The German defence line was built mostly by forcibly mobilized locals. The photograph shows a bunker that is being dug at Vonarje near Rogaška Slatina.



Fig. 6: Fences measured upwards of two metres in height on the German side of the border. Nevertheless, goods were smuggled across the border. A rare photograph depicting goods being smuggled across the border. It was taken in the proximity of Rogaška Slatina, probably in 1944.



Fig. 7: Nowadays, it is easy to imagine what the fortified border on Sotla looked like. The photograph shows a former border crossing (no. 9 in Fig. 3) between Germany and the NDH at Rjavica near Rogaška Slatina with a modern-day wire fence (the photo was taken in January 2020).
 Crossing the border is not allowed here.

A 30-metre high tower often stood next to the border, consisting of four double-logged posts topped with a roofed observation area measuring about three-by-three metres. It could be accessed with a ladder or wooden stairs. A bunker was built next to the watch-tower and a telephone line was installed.³²

“They had tall watchtowers, they were as tall as those used by hunters ... There were probably two or three spots in Rjavica, far from the railway tracks, they looked from there to see if anyone was coming.”³³

The delimitation commission divided the entire length of the Croatian-German border into two sections. The Croatian part of the commission controlled the marking of Section A (83 km; the southern part) and Section B (*Abschnitt B*; the northern part) was controlled by the German part of the delimitation commission.³⁴ There were 595 boundary stones standing in the former and 1,524 in the latter section.³⁵ Their numbering was officially concluded by December 1942, when the marking of the Croatian-German border was officially finished and a total of 2,119 boundary stones had been installed (Fig. 8).³⁶

Before having placed the boundary stones, the border was marked out with stakes.

The NDH complained: “The German authorities began to drive stakes into the ground for the wire fence, not precisely on the border, but these stakes are hammered in on the Croatian state territory as well. Wooded areas are being cleared and wheat is being cut down on both sides of these stakes, to a width of 60 metres, and great damage is being done to our people.”³⁷

The border could be crossed only at the official border crossings (Figs. 3 and 4), and the other, former local border crossings were encircled with wire.

“There was a bridge to the Croatian side on our house. There were a mill and a sawmill on the other side. The Germans demolished them when they fortified the border. If you wanted to cross the border, you had to go to Bistrice ob Sotli, Imeno or to Kumrovec on the Croatian side. There was no official border crossing between them. I don’t know if there was a bridge between them. They were probably demolished,” said Jože Hederih.³⁸

32 Mikša, Zorn, *Rapalska meja*, 626.

33 Mikša et al., *Rogaška Slatina*.

34 PA AA Berlin, R 105131, Bericht Nr. 4, 2; Bericht Nr. 5, 1–6.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Izveštaj Kotarske oblasti, 932.

38 An interview with Jože Hederih.

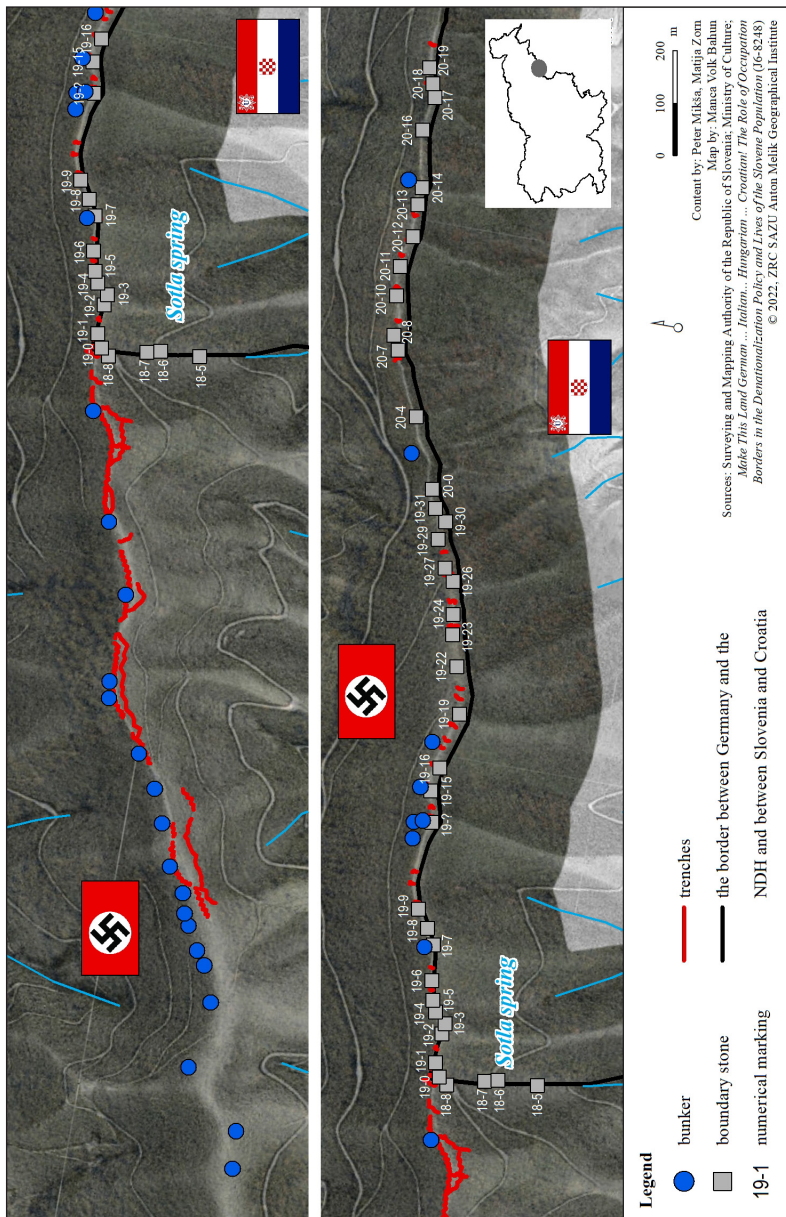


Fig. 8: On the ridge of Macelj there are numerous preserved boundary stones between Germany and the NDH. At the present, these boundary stones are the only boundary markers between Slovenia and Croatia. On average, these boundary markers stand about 50 metres apart. We can also see that trenches were dug and bunkers built on the German side of the border. The depicted section measures 3,140 m, with trenches totalling 2,450 m in length. We can see that, on average, bunkers were built 100 m apart, although in some instances the distance between them equalled merely a quarter of this length.

All of a sudden it was quite difficult to cross the border. “I remember crossing the border on my bicycle in 1942,” said Marjana Unverdorben from Rogaška Slatina, who lived on the Croatian side of the border as a child, in Zalug near Prišlin.

“I was with my uncle, who was from the Croatian side of the border. We had an agreement with the border guards to use the wooden bridge 500 metres from our house to cross the border. The bridge was guarded, we needed documents to cross it. My uncle removed the bicycle seat and took out a piece of paper.”³⁹

The construction work along the occupation border, i.e. between Macelj and Brežice, was begun in late October 1942. The fencing and other infrastructure was erected by the construction company Illner.⁴⁰ Within a year, the border was protected by a two-metre-high wire fencing (Fig. 6) in the proximity of settlements, or with a two-metre-high razor wire. Border guard posts stood in spots that required particular control. Vjekoslav Petek from Poredje remembers the beginning of the border’s fortification:

“I was there. How was the border fortified? They transported pointed spruce logs (some people pointed them, others sawed), they cut them down in the forest. Where there were no forests, they brought them in. This was done by the locals. Our people. Entire forests were cut down. The logs were hammered in and the wire was stretched out.”⁴¹

Jože Hederih said the following about the protection of the border:

“German soldiers, border guards, were stationed in Polje ob Sotli. They walked past our house as far as the village of Ples. That was their district. Then they came back. They walked slowly, in twos, every day and night. They always stopped by our house. They liked stopping there. At night, they would sit on the bench adjacent to the house. During the day they came in, especially in the wintertime. They stayed outside in the summer.”⁴²

Jože Zbil told us the following about the border guards:

“The bulk of these soldiers were on the Russian front. They came to Rogaška Slatina to convalesce in the hospital. They changed their uniforms and made

39 An interview with Marjana Unverdorben.

40 Siter, *Reka Sotla*, 151.

41 An interview with Vjekoslav Petek.

42 An interview with Jože Hederih.

them border guards. They were unfit for the war, they were severely injured or had to have surgery and were no longer sent to the front. That is why they were sent here, to the border. They walked past our house repeatedly, they patrolled the nearby hills to be able to see far. In doing so, they had the border under control, they saw if anyone tried to cross it illegally. The guards worked in twos. I think they had a 12-hour shift. I don't remember any watchtowers. But there were guard posts. They were relocated from one settlement to another to prevent them from making friends with the local population."⁴³

Mines were planted next to the barriers. A warning sign with a menacing inscription that read "Caution! Mortal danger" measuring 20-by-30 cm stood at every 500 metres.⁴⁴ Workers who laid explosive devices were involved in accidents:

"I remember when the Germans were planting mines one of them exploded and they brought in a German soldier, holding him under his arms. He said: '*Herr Kommandant, ich kann nicht sehen.*' His eyes were dug out or torn out by the explosion. I saw that, down there near Straža [Straža pri Rogatcu, author's note]. We played there as children and I remember this happening."⁴⁵

Wooden pillars, made mostly of spruce and beech wood, were sunk every two metres along the riverbed and the German Army stretched galvanized barbed wire between them.⁴⁶ In March 1943 decisions about the urgent construction of watchtowers were announced.⁴⁷

Large gates were a constituent part of the wire fencing at border crossings, in some places also a liftable wooden ramp. Mirko Halužan from Hum na Sutli recounted the following:

"The right guard would let you pass. Sometimes you had to bribe them a little. He would ask for two pounds of meat or bread, wine ... Then he would point to his watch, showing you when to come back so that he would be there again."⁴⁸

Life along the Border

"Ever since the introduction of the border we had no access to the Sotla. We had a well immediately next to it, cold drinking water. We couldn't use it, we

43 An interview with Jože Zbil.

44 ARS, AS 1602, 1–2.

45 An interview with Emil Kranjc.

46 An interview with Vjekoslav Petek.

47 Siter, *Reka Sotla*, 152.

48 An interview with Mirko Halužan.

had to carry water from the village for four years. We couldn't even use it for washing. I longed for the Sotla, I wanted to go swimming and fishing. We lived with the river, doing laundry, washing things in it," said Jože Hederih about the difficulties caused by the border.⁴⁹

His words are indicative of the problems that the local population had to face due to the border. The new border rendered swimming and fishing impossible, they had no access to water or drinking water, they could not do their washing and could not irrigate arable land during dry spells in the summertime.⁵⁰ Livestock was affected by it as well. Vineyards fell into ruin because they could not be sprayed with sulphuric acid to a sufficient degree.⁵¹

It was hard to cross the border for daily migrants travelling to work from Croatia to Germany. They were subject to constant and unpleasant border controls. Attendance of funerals and services in churches, visits of relatives and friends across the border were not valid reasons for being issued a permit to cross the border.⁵²

"I remember my grandmother's funeral, my father and I stood on the Slovene side of the border that was protected by wire and mines. We had to stand in the meadow and watch over the fence. This was in 1943. We watched the funeral with sadness. We were unable to sprinkle holy water on the deceased. A few people attended the funeral in Croatia and a few people stood with us on our side of the border," said Marjana Unverdorben.⁵³

Naturally, people crossed the border illegally as well. They smuggled various goods across the river, particularly those living next to the border.

"Our house was somewhat hidden, and goods were smuggled all the time, tobacco and salt, from one state to the other one. Exchanges took place. This happened between the house and the barn because it was somewhat hidden. Salt was pushed beneath the wire and tobacco was thrown over it because it did not weigh much. A small footbridge standing next to the mill was used to cross the river. The Sotla froze in the wintertime, and it was crossed on ice. In the summertime it was only ankle-deep and easy to wade," said Jože Hederih.⁵⁴

49 An interview with Jože Hederih.

50 An interview with Jože Hederih; an interview with Branko Mikša.

51 An interview with Ivan Ivić.

52 An interview with Branko Mikša; an interview with Marjana Unverdorben.

53 An interview with Marjana Unverdorben.

54 An interview with Jože Hederih.

Gabriela Krumpak, who was 21 when the war began, had a hairdressing salon in Rogaska Slatina. The shortages were acutely felt, and she smuggled goods herself:

“Goods were smuggled along the entire course of the Sotla. [...] I had a sister in Croatia – we bought tobacco in the black market, gave it to border guards along with a bottle of schnapps and they let us cross the border at a certain time. I had a hairdressing salon, I could not charge for my work, for instance, women paid for a perm with a cup of lard. Tobacco was smuggled, salt and sometimes bread. We got tobacco in Croatia. Smokers would do anything to get their hands on tobacco.”⁵⁵

Planks and ladders were used to walk through minefields (Fig. 6).⁵⁶ Wire fence was cut with hedge shears. Having successfully gone past barriers, people still had to cross the river Sotla. It was waded using pig scalders⁵⁷ by smaller groups and large groups of people swam across it in most cases.⁵⁸

The Sotla was crossed by the partisan 1st Battalion of the Zagorje Detachment in the winter of 1943:

“They had to swim across Sotla. Our combatants who could not swim were carried by other partisans, tying them with a rope to their backs, and pulled across the river so that not a single combatant drowned.”⁵⁹

In situations that called for a swift retreat they stormed bridges (e.g. Figar Bridge in Stara Vas) and crossed the border.⁶⁰

Casualties on the Border

Mines posed the greatest threat for the local population. They made it difficult or even impossible to access their fields or forests, and it took them considerably longer to reach shops, doctors or the church. Livestock could not be taken to pasture near the border. “A hen or a cow rummaging for food or touching the wire was blown up during the war,” said Jože Hederih.⁶¹

However, it was, first and foremost, people who fell victim to mines.

55 An interview with Ela Krumpak.

56 An interview with Jože Hederih.

57 A pig scald is a tub used by farmers to scald pigs and remove hair from their skin.

58 Kostevc, *Bizeljsko*, 27, 33; Teropšič, *Štajerska*, 253.

59 *Izveštaj politkomesara Zagorskoga NOP*, 16.

60 Kostevc, *Bizeljsko*, 33.

61 An interview with Jože Hederih.

“My uncle made a passage there because the border was fenced off and mines were planted along it. He cut the wire and made sure that there were no mines. He used this passage to go across the border on several occasions, mostly in the evenings. In 1944 – it was Easter – he wanted to cross the border again. My mother asked him not to go because it was a feast day. He replied that it did not matter, he was going anyway. Later that evening they were frightened by an explosion because they suspected what had happened. A guard must have noticed the passage and planted a mine there. While my uncle was crawling through the wire, he hit a mine with his arms and it exploded. He cried for help, he had injuries on his arms and his face. He was blind. My family brought him home and he lived for four days. They could not take him to the hospital. The remnants of my uncle’s clothes hung on the wire until the wire was removed after the war. Nobody dared to remove it before that. We, the children, looked at my uncle’s clothes for a long time and we remembered the incident well,” said Branko Mikša.⁶²

Jože Hederih said the following:

“When the war was coming to an end, boys were curious. A 16-year-old boy wanted to unearth a mine and he died. [...] His dead body hung on the wire for some time. I was terrified for a long time after that, I saw his image in my mind all the time. It happened near our house.”⁶³

Explosive devices that the Germans had placed next to the border were often removed by partisans and used in their campaigns. This is attested by a report from the area of Varaždin:

“...villagers living along the Croatian-German border pick up mines that had been laid by the Germans to fortify the border and hand them over to partisan groups [...]”⁶⁴

The Fortification of the Reich’s Southern Border in 1944

Anticipating a possible landing of the Allies in Istria and due to victories of the partisans and the Red Army in Serbia, the Germans began an extensive fortification of the southern border in the second half of 1944. It was heavily fortified with trenches, pillboxes and bunkers. The digging was done mostly by prisoners of war, and the local

62 An interview with Branko Mikša.

63 An interview with Jože Hederih.

64 *Izveštaj Kotarske oblasti*, 118.

population was often subject to forced mobilization of labourers as well (Fig. 5). Due to a large-scale project that encompassed a strip of land a few dozen kilometres long and a shortage of manpower, the digging was done by the German soldiers as well.⁶⁵

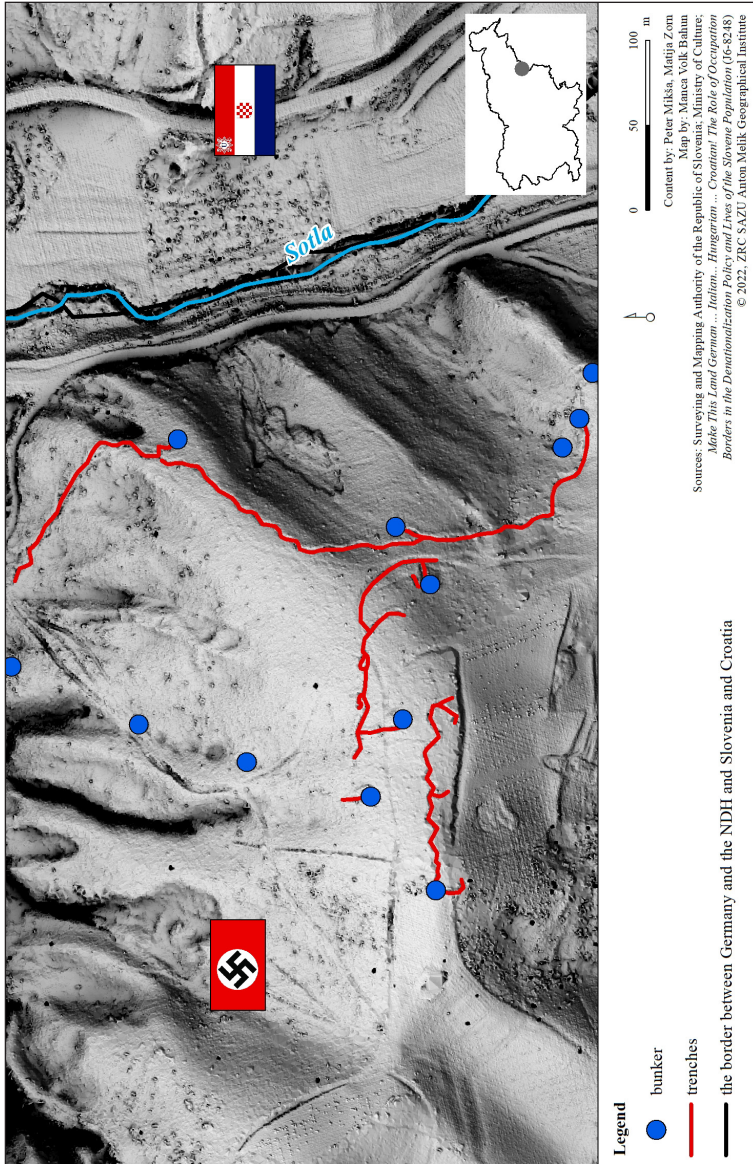


Fig. 9: Trenches and bunkers built on the right, German bank of the river Sotla, to the north of Nimno. Trenches and bunkers are identifiable to this day, as depicted by a detailed digital elevation model. Trenches in the figure have almost one kilometre in length.

65 *Šolska kronika*, 17–18.

“I remember them building anti-tank ditches along the road, parallel to it. They dug trenches as well. (Fig. 9). The digging was done by the Germans, the Gottschee Germans and other locals had to dig as well, even my cousin. She stayed with us occasionally. I was too young for that. This was around 1943, 1944. These ditches looked like a cellar, enclosed with timbers. I do not know where they got them. They used trucks, carts, even horses for transporting them. They used logs to make seats in ditches, a bench was made as well. My schoolmate and I used to walk along these ditches after school,” said Jože Hederih about the fortification of the border near Bistrica ob Sotli.⁶⁶

The ditches’ depth varied between 1.5 and two metres, a two-by-two-metre pillbox stood every 50 metres (depending on the terrain), and a large bunker was dug at a distance of approximately 100 metres (Fig. 10). It could accommodate 12 to 16 people and was covered with layers of timber and soil to prevent the interior from being damaged by an explosion. All these structures were fortified with logs. Timber was obtained from the nearby forests, and their owners were not recompensed for the damage.



Fig. 10: The remnants of a German bunker on Macelj. Bunkers on Macelj measured between five-by-five metres to seven-by-seven metres.

66 An interview with Jože Hederih.

Jože Zbil said the following:

“They simply came and took vast quantities of beech trees and spruce trees (other trees as well, as long as they were thick enough) and other kinds of timber for bunkers. They did not pay for it, they just took it. Each bunker consisted of three layers of round timber laid on top of each other, depending on the bunker’s size or length. Very thick timber was used, and soil was placed between individual layers so that a bomb lost its power. The bunker was not made of concrete. However, it was quite large. It could accommodate 16 to 19 soldiers. They had bunk beds. You can still see a pit in the bunker’s location. The trenches ran in a zigzag pattern”⁶⁷ (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: A trench on Macelj.

Life along the Border after the War

Wire fencing and mines remained on the border after the end of the war. The wire was of high quality and the local population used it for their own needs.

67 An interview with Jože Zbil.

“We went to the border to fetch wire and took it home so that we could fence in our homes. [...] Every farmer went to fetch it, it was beautiful, galvanized. Nothing like our brown wire, which was utterly useless.”⁶⁸

Soon after the liberation the Yugoslav Army arrived in the area to clear the border. The soldiers removed the border infrastructure and mines.

“Our army arrived and did away with the border. The posts were extracted, the wire coiled, a special team dealt with the mines. They had special instruments for detecting mines. The instrument was on a stick a metre and a half long, a detector,” said Jože Hederih.⁶⁹

Not all mines could be removed, however, and these were a constant cause for worry for the local population.

Jože Hederih’s account continues:

“In some places they did not find all the mines, some of them remained and accidents occurred later on. I was afraid to go around the house as far as the Sotla, I was worried until this was forgotten.”⁷⁰

Branko Mikša’s account is similar:

“A squad of the Yugoslav Army came soon after the war. [...] They arrived with long spears, step by step, like a Greek phalanx. Their spears were four metres long and had a metallic tip at the end, it was approximately 40 to 50 cm long. They sank the tip in sand and looked for mines. Their food came from Rogaška Slatina and bread was baked here.”⁷¹

Clearing mines claimed many lives among the soldiers, and Emil Krajnc witnessed one of these accidents:

“A young man was killed near the glass factory in 1945, while he was clearing the border. Coal ash was beneath Straža, about five to six metres away from the Sotla, he was walking there when he was thrown in the air.”⁷²

Branko Mikša remembered how his father dealt with this predicament:

“Even though the soldiers had cleared the mines, some of them were not removed from the fields along the border. Even nowadays, people come across

68 An interview with Emil Kranjc.

69 An interview with Jože Hederih.

70 An interview with Jože Hederih.

71 An interview with Branko Mikša.

72 An interview with Emil Kranjc.

them when they dig there. We had land on the Slovene side of the border, and after the war the odd animal was killed when it stepped on a mine. My father bought a harrow to till the soil. He had it remodelled – a blacksmith made long knives and attached them to the harrow. He weighed it down and cows pulled it across meadows and fields on a long chain. I remember two instances when a mine was activated. Later on, it was still very dangerous. Many people got hurt because they found a mine. They lost an arm or their eyes. One of the neighbours stepped on a mine near Bajta and died tragically. Our mother was very afraid for us, the boys, after the war because there were still a lot of weapons in forests.”⁷³

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Fig. 11, Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, Photo by Matija Zorn.

Summary

Peter Mikša, Matija Zorn

Obsotelje – the South-Eastern Border of the German Reich (1941–1945)

The present-day border between Slovenia and Croatia was the south-easternmost border of the German Reich during World War II. The course of the border between Germany and the newly formed Independent State of Croatia was roughly determined in May 1941 in an intergovernmental agreement, while a German–Croatian Delimitation Commission was set up to determine the border on site. The Germans protected the border with a wire fence and minefields. In the most exposed spots, a two-metre-high fence topped with barbed wire was installed. Behind the fence, they laid a concertina fence, measuring two to three metres in height, built guard towers and bunkers, and dug trenches, whose remnants are still identifiable in the landscape. Border posts were also located in places where particular control was needed. The fortification of the border began in October 1942 and was further enforced in the second half of 1944. The defence line was built mostly by forcibly mobilized locals. The border was marked by a total of upwards of 2,000 boundary stones. These are still well preserved on the Macelj ridge, where they can be seen every 50 metres, representing the sole demarcation between Slovenia and Croatia in this area. Crossing the border was only possible at the border crossings, which posed a major problem for the local population, many of whom owned land on both sides of the border. In some places these crossings were numerous, e.g. there were 14 border crossings on the river Sotla between Dobovec pri Rogatcu and Podčetrtek. By contrast, only four border crossings are located on this section of the border at present. On the German side, older, mostly Austrian soldiers served as border guards, patrolling in twos. In Obsotelje, the border prevented access to the river Sotla, and thus to drinking water – both to people and livestock – it could also no longer be used for washing, fishing, and irrigation during dry-spells in the summertime. The fact that border permits could not be taken for granted indicates that attending funerals and religious ceremonies, or visiting churches, relatives and friends on the other side of the border, were not valid reasons for obtaining one. Even though the border was protected, smuggling was widespread as a result of severe shortages. The passage through the minefield was mostly made possible by boards and ladders, while the barbed-wire fence was cut with hedge trimmers, and border guards were often bribed. Mines posed the greatest danger to the local population. They made it difficult to access fields and forests, while routes to shops, doctors and churches were significantly longer. Grazing in the border zone was also hindered. On the other hand, mines were a source of armament for the partisans, although many lives were claimed by mines even after the war ended.

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The Establishment of the Hungarian Occupation Authority in Prekmurje**

Introduction

On the day of the coup d'état in Yugoslavia, Adolf Hitler, leader of Germany, issued an order to prepare an attack on its southern neighbour, which is known as *Weisung Nr. 25* (Directive 25). Owing to Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact, General Dušan Simović conducted a coup d'état on 27 March 1941; the pact had been signed two days before, i.e. on 25 March, by Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković and Foreign Minister Aleksandar Cincar-Marković. By attacking Yugoslavia and Greece, Germany sought to secure stability in the south of the Balkans.¹

Having won over Italy and Bulgaria, Germany also demanded Hungary partake in the military intervention against Yugoslavia. In exchange, Germany offered the so-called Southern Provinces (Délvidék) that Hungary had lost in Trianon after World War I. The Hungarian leaders were in a difficult position. If they had accepted the offer, they would have obtained territories populated by half a million Hungarians, but would have violated the Treaty of Eternal Friendship with Yugoslavia, which was signed in December 1940, and lost the sympathies of the West (the UK and USA). If they had not accepted the offer and had thus stood up to the

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1 Fischer (ed.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, 407–414, 579–581.

powerful ally that prior to that had helped Hungary partly materialize its revisionist goals, Hungary would have risked being occupied by Germany.² Weighed down by the burden of responsibility, the Hungarian Prime Minister Pál Teleki committed suicide and Regent Horthy and other ministers agreed to cooperate with Germany. However, they waited for the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) on April 10 and thus Yugoslavia's formal discontinuance. The Hungarian Third Army crossed the Hungarian-Yugoslav border the following day.³

From the Attack on Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941 to the Arrival of the Hungarian Troops in Prekmurje

The attack on Yugoslavia began on 6 April 1941 with early-morning bombings of Belgrade and other cities, as well as military and other infrastructure. The German 2nd Army penetrated the Drava Banovina from the north and the troops of the Italian 2nd Army from the west. Two divisions of the Yugoslav 7th Army and a few garrison battalions and border guards stood up to the attackers in the Drava Banovina. The 183rd Infantry Regiment of the 51st Army Corps, which was part of the aforementioned 2nd Army, was tasked with penetrating the eastern part of the Drava Banovina. The 219th Bicycle Battalion penetrated towards Prekmurje and crossed the German-Yugoslav border near Zenkovci in the early morning of 6 April, catching the 601st Garrison Battalion by surprise near Strukovci and capturing over 100 Yugoslav soldiers. The soldiers of the 219th Bicycle Battalion arrived in Murska Sobota at half past eight in the morning.⁴ They were received by the mayor of Murska Sobota, head of the *srez* (governor) and other representatives of the city.⁵ In the afternoon of that same day, a part of the 219th Bicycle Battalion headed towards Lower Prekmurje, which was in the evening reported by the leader of the troops: "A motorized scout unit of the bicycle battalion advanced via Beltinci, Hotiza, Dolnja Lendava, where it reached the Hungarian border."⁶ It is evident from this report that the bridges over the river Mura were blown up between Veržej

2 In the years 1938 and 1939, with the help of Germany and Italy, Hungary obtained the south-eastern parts of Czechoslovakia (the southern part of modern-day Slovakia, the majority of whose population was Hungarian, as well as Ruthenia or Carpathian Ukraine, populated mostly by Ukrainians or Ruthenians), and in 1940 the northern part of Transylvania from Rumania, also with the help of Germany and Italy.

3 On the Hungarian war-time politics and revisionism, as well as on Hungary's activities in the attack of Yugoslavia in Slovene, see Kontler: *Madžarska zgodovina*, 292–309; Göncz, *Zgodovina Madžarov*, 156–160. On the telegram sent from Budapest to Berlin on 5 April 1941, regarding the reasons for Teleki's suicide and Horthy's contact with Germans on 11 April 1941 about the pending occupation of the Yugoslav territories see: PAB, No. 351 and No. 383.

4 Ferenc, *Nemška zasedba Prekmurja*, 108–111.

5 Godeša: *Odmevi o razmerah v Prekmurju*, 188.

6 Ferenc, *Nemška zasedba Prekmurja*, 112.

and Mursko Središče and that only weak, scattered units of the Yugoslav Army remained in Prekmurje.⁷ Along with the aforementioned 219th Bicycle Battalion, other German units penetrated Prekmurje on the first day of the attack of Yugoslavia. They were positioned between Radgona and the German-Yugoslav-Hungarian tripoint. These units crossed the German-Yugoslav border in three sections and began their penetration to Prekmurje's interior, as far as the river Lendava. A portion of these units turned southwards the following day, i.e. on 7 April, and marched to Murska Sobota. Following the 183rd Infantry Division's occupation of Mura's right bank (Čakovec, the centre of Međimurje, had been occupied the day before), the remaining German troops in Prekmurje were tasked with occupation- and protection-related assignments. Two days later, on 10 April, the Germans introduced the military administration for the districts of Murska Sobota and Lendava, which was only short-lived because as early as 16 April the Germans transferred authority over the region on the left bank of the river Mura to the Hungarians.⁸



Fig. 1: The arrival of the Hungarian troops in (Dolnja) Lendava on 16 April 1941.

7 Ferenc, *Nemška zasedba Prekmurja*, 112.

8 Ferenc, *Nemška zasedba Prekmurja*, 113–115.

The arrival of the German troops in Prekmurje was received with gratitude by the local members of the German minority.⁹ They lived predominately in three villages along the north-western border, in Ocinj, Kramarovci and Fikšinci, and a small portion of members of the German community lived in towns of Prekmurje or in settlements along the north-western border.¹⁰

The Germans were also supported by many seasonal labourers, who worked in Germany, many of whom became members of the Kulturbund in the hope of having a better chance of finding jobs in Germany. According to the data of the District Governor's Office, there were 232 members of the Kulturbund in Murska Sobota in early 1941, of whom just 17 were Germans and the rest of them were mostly Slovene seasonal workers.¹¹ Teleki Béla, head of Zala County, reported about the sympathies of the young Prekmurje Slovenes for Germans in his letters to the Hungarian prime minister, and a large number of these young people did seasonal work in Germany in the year before the occupation (1940). In a letter dated 19 April, Teleki reported, *inter alia*, that German flags featuring a swastika hung in Slovene-populated settlements in the proximity of Beltinci when the Hungarian troops marched in the Dolnja Lendava district and in Međimurje and that it was mostly young Slovenes, who did seasonal work in Germany, who were in favour of the integration into the German Reich.¹² In his next letter to the prime minister, dated 26 April 1941, the county head informed him about the aggressive propaganda of the Swabian-German Cultural Association (Schwabisch-deutscher Kulturbund) from Murska Sobota. He pointed out that Jožef Pollak (Pollak József), leader of the Kulturbund in Murska Sobota, collected signatures in support of the area's integration into Germany and that he was supported by the German gendarmes who were still present in the Murska Sobota district.¹³ In his report to the prime minister of 6 May, the county head writes about the Greater-German propaganda that was being coordinated in Murska Sobota and had already spread to the Slovene-populated villages

9 Two eyewitness testimonies given by German soldiers who participated in the military operations during the occupation of Prekmurje show how well the German troops were received. More on this topic in: Ferenc, *Nemška zasedba Prekmurja*, 115.

10 In the first Yugoslav population census in 1921 there were 91,244 people recorded living in Prekmurje, of whom 1,903 identified as Germans or German as their mother tongue. The majority of people who identified German as their mother tongue, i.e. 1,743 people, lived in the Murska Sobota district; most of them lived in the settlements of Fikšinci (364 Germans out of a total of 381 people), Kramarovci (248 Germans out of a total of 253 people), Ocinje (321 Germans out of a total of 321 people) and Serdica (267 Germans out of a total of 739 people). Census takers recorded a total of 160 people identifying German as their mother tongue in the Dolnja Lendava district, most of whom lived in Dolnja Lendava (67 people out of a total of 2,529 people). More on the subject in: *Prekmurje, Seznam občin*.

11 Fujs, *Izbodišča madžarske okupacijske*, 181.

12 MNL ZML, IV. 401. b, 50/1941.

13 MNL ZML, IV. 401. b, 50/1941.

in the Dolnja Lendava district. He maintained that Hungarian district notaries¹⁴ that were sent to Prekmurje after Hungary's occupation were successful in their effort to stand up to this agitation.¹⁵

Members of the Hungarian minority were reported to have met the Germans' arrival in Prekmurje with a cold response.¹⁶ "They showed their national belonging by hanging out Hungarian flags."¹⁷ With the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia in Zagreb on 10 April, Hungary was no longer bound by the friendship agreement with Yugoslavia, which had been signed in December of the previous year, because formally Yugoslavia no longer existed. The following day, on 11 April 1941, units of the Hungarian 3rd Army began to penetrate Bačka and Baranja.¹⁸ The population of Prekmurje's eastern part responded to this news. On 13 April, a delegation of 32 settlements, including all settlements with a Hungarian majority along the Yugoslav-Hungarian border and 10 Slovene settlements, signed a minute in the headquarters of the district governor (*főszolgabíró*) in Lenti, asking Hungary and its leader Horthy to order the Hungarian Army and officials to occupy Prekmurje. They enclosed a list with 835 signatures.¹⁹

As evident from the previous paragraphs, some of the Prekmurje population looked forward to the arrival of the German or – after 16 April – Hungarian troops. However, the majority of Slovenes in Prekmurje "met Hungarians with hostility or distrust, at least, when the Hungarian authorities addressed them as their former compatriots."²⁰

The distrust that the Prekmurje Slovenes felt towards the Hungarian authorities can be gathered from a letter addressed by the head of the Zala County to the prime minister, when he wrote that the Hungarian Army had been received with a lack of enthusiasm.²¹

The Germans or the German Army transferred Prekmurje to the Hungarian Army on 16 April 1941, at a ceremony held in Murska Sobota. The Hungarian advance force arrived in Murska Sobota the day before, and the 2nd Körmenđ Battalion of the 5th Infantry Regiment from Szombathely marched through the city the following day.²²

14 It was pointed out in county head's letter that these were mostly district notaries (*körjegyző*) who had already held posts here in the period of Austria-Hungary and that they were mostly natives of Prekmurje.

15 MNL ZML, IV. 401. b, 50/1941.

16 Members of the Hungarian minority were concentrated in the settlements along the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, in the east of Prekmurje. According to the 1921 population census, they represented upwards of 15% (14,064 people) of Prekmurje's population (91,288 people). More on the subject in: *Prekmurje, Seznam občin*.

17 Godina, *Prekmurje 1941–1945*, 26.

18 Sajti, *Impériumváltások, revízió, kisebbség*, 156–157.

19 MNL ZML, IV. 401. b, 50/1941.

20 Fujs, *Izbodišča madžarske okupacijske*, 183.

21 MNL ZML, IV. 401. b, 50/1941.

22 Fujs, *Značilnosti madžarske okupacijske*, 65.



Fig. 2: A triumphal arch with an inscription that reads “Welcome to the celebration of our liberation” was erected in Murska Sobota to mark a ceremony held on 29 June 1941.

The periodical *Slovenec* wrote about the ceremony in Prekmurje:

“The ceremony marking the transfer of authority took place in the main square and was particularly cordial. Military and civilian representatives were gathered on a decorated platform. Mr Hartner, the mayor, and Mr Krantz, the dean, and others held speeches on behalf of the Prekmurje public. Hungarian red-white-green tricolors hung on houses and public buildings and many locals adorned their buttonholes with them.”²³

However, the periodical *Jutro* reported about the transfer of authority in Prekmurje in a different tone:

“A week after the occupation the Germans retreated from Prekmurje, leaving it to the Hungarians. People had no appetite for their Easter meals. There

23 Godeša: *Odmevi o razmerah v Prekmurju*, 188.

were no bonfires on Holy Saturday. Easter Sunday was quiet, as was Good Friday. The Hungarians came to Lendava and Sobota. Immediately, they made a proclamation in Hungarian and in Štefan Kuzmič's Prekmurje language. The old overlords, whose land was divided among peasants by the agrarian reform, arrived in Prekmurje."²⁴

The "old overlords" were greeted with great enthusiasm in settlements with a Hungarian majority, which is evident from preserved photographs that show a large number of people with Hungarian flags in Dolnja Lendava. We know from eyewitness testimonies that triumphal arches were erected in a few Hungarian villages (Dolga Vas, Domanjševci). Along with Dolnja Lendava and the surrounding settlements, the 9th Infantry Brigade of the Hungarian Army, which was responsible for the occupation of settlements in Lower Prekmurje (the so-called Zala County), marched also through Međimurje on 16 April.²⁵ However, it should be pointed out that, unlike Prekmurje, where the Hungarians immediately introduced the military administration, Međimurje did not see its introduction until 11 July 1941. Up to that point Međimurje witnessed some type of diarchy; along with the Hungarian Army, offices were also held by Croatian officials from the period of Yugoslavia.²⁶

New Political Borders and the Impact of Occupation Borders on the Population's Lives

During the military operations in Yugoslavia, the German *Führer* Adolf Hitler decreed its partition among the three occupying forces on 3 and 12 April. Italy obtained the south-western part of the Drava Banovina, Germany obtained Slovenia's central part and Hungary its eastern part, i.e. Prekmurje. Intergovernmental delimitation commissions immediately began their work and defined the border on 11 June 1941. In effect, the border between Hungary and Germany was outlined on the former border between the Hungarian and Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, the difference being that the settlements of Krmarovci, Ocinje and Rottenberg (part of Serdica), the majority of whose population were Germans and that were part of the Murska Sobota district in the interwar period (as well as in the period of Austria-Hungary), were integrated into Germany.²⁷

24 Godeša: *Odmevi o razmerah v Prekmurju*, 188–189.

25 Göncz: *Felszabadulás vagy megszállás*, 18–33.

26 Sajti, *Impériumváltások, revízió, kisebbség*, 163.

27 *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, 579–581.; Fujs, *Značilnosti madžarske okupacijske*, 65.



Fig. 3: The Hungarian and German gendarmes with civilians on the German-Hungarian border in 1942.

When defining the border between the German and Hungarian parts of the territory they did not consider the populations affected, as indicated by the cases of the settlements of Gerlinci and Fikšinci, where the border separated houses from their auxiliary buildings.²⁸ An interview with Rudi Gaber entitled “*Nacist je s škornjem potegnil mejo v Serdici*” (“the Nazi drew the border with his boot in Serdica”) is telling.²⁹ The disregard for the

28 Alojz Grah, Jože Gomboc, *Mama je hodila v štiri osnovne šole*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyn-2JrIC_k&t=6s, 2:30–4:15.

29 Rudi Gaber, *Nacist je s škornjem določil mejo v Serdici*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_1QrWi2Nbc, 0:10–1:04.

local populations³⁰ when defining the border culminated as early as in December 1941. At that time a few families – mostly Slovenes from Serdica or Rottenberg, which were integrated into Germany – demanded from Regent Horthy himself that Rottenberg be annexed to Hungary. They substantiated their request with the fact that Rottenberg had road connections only with that part of the settlement of Serdica which became part of Hungary, and that only a few forest roads connect them with German settlements, and also noted that all cultural and municipal institutions (school, church, cemetery, the municipal office, the state road) remained on the Hungarian side of the border. In August 1942 the Central Investigation Command of Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie (Magyar Királyi Csendőrség Központi Nyomozó Parancsnoksága) informed the Ministry of the Interior that the German head of Rottenberg had visited 24 pro-Hungarian individuals and notified them that they had to express in writing to which state they wanted to belong by 27 July 1942. At the same time, he threatened that if they opted for Hungary, they could share the fate of Karl Búček and Alojz Gaber. Búček – who signed the request addressed to Regent Horthy and Gaber were imprisoned by the authorities in the spring of 1941 because they were suspected of having engaged in anti-German activities.³¹ The German appetite for Prekmurje was greater than that, as along with the previously mentioned four settlements they also wanted to appropriate Petanjci (the spring of the eponymous mineral water) and an area near Krog, to the west of Murska Sobota.³² The questions of Serdica (Rottenberg), Petanjci and the area near Krog, as well as that of the agitation of members of the Kulturbund from Radkersburg among the Slovenes in Prekmurje with regard to annexing the left bank of the river Mura to Germany, were also raised in the subsequent years.³³ Nevertheless, the border-related questions could not be solved until the end of the war.

The border between the Hungarian- and German-occupied areas became a state border. It was outlined, fortified and protected on maps and on location. Border crossings were built at certain spots, e.g. near the settlements of Petanjci–Radenci, Cankova–Zelting (Zenkovci) and Cankova–Goritz (Slovenska Gorica).³⁴ However, despite the border crossings, protection and control, the interviewees pointed out that the border regime was not harsh.³⁵ That said, the new border cut sharply into the Slovene national fabric because it separated

30 According to Hungarian archival sources, Rottenberg was populated by about 800 people. MNL OL, K-64, 98 csomó, 1942. 41. tétel, Seregháza.

31 MNL OL, K-64, 98 csomó, 1942. 41. tétel, Seregháza.

32 Sajti, *Impériumváltások, revízió, kisebbség*, 163.

33 MNL OL, K-64, 98 csomó, 1942. 41. tétel, Seregháza.

34 A border pass for crossing the Hungarian-German border (Határszéli utiigazolvány magyar-német viszonylatban). It was issued on 31 December 1943 in Murska Sobota to Pálfay József jr. It is kept in the Lendava Unit of the Institute for Ethnic Studies.

35 Alojz Grah, Jože Gomboc, Mama je hodila v štiri osnovne šole, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly--n2JrIC_k&t=6s,3:50-5:00.

the Slovenes in Prekmurje from their compatriots on the right bank of Mura. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the Slovenes in Prekmurje and in the east of Štajerska could only make contact along the river Mura, where the retreating Yugoslav troops blew up bridges. Although the bridges were repaired by the occupying forces at a later date, it was considerably easier to control a border that ran in the middle of the Mura than on the land. On top of that, on the mainland section of the border between Hungary and Germany, in the north-western part of the region, along the stream Kučnica, and in the north, in the direction of the former tripoint, the Slovenes in Prekmurje had Germans as neighbours, which made contacts with their compatriots in Štajerska or central Slovenia significantly more difficult.

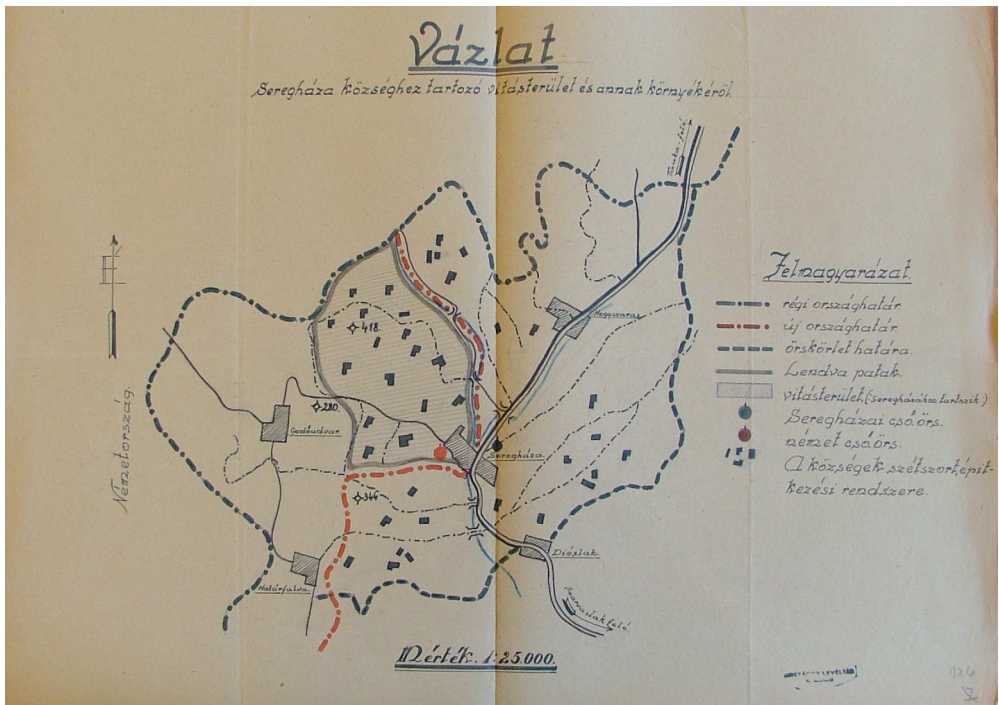


Fig. 4: A sketch of the German-Hungarian border near the settlement of Serdica (Seregháza) with the disputed area (vitás terület).

The integration of Prekmurje into Hungary removed the political border between the Slovenes in Prekmurje and in the Rába region. Consequently, “Slovenes in Hungary” were reunited in one state after having been separated by the Paris Peace Conference. Naturally, the nature of the border between the Rába region and Prekmurje was reflected in the everyday lives of the population, because familial, economic, cultural and other contacts were revitalized. This is also evident from the number of marriages between Prekmurje Slovenes and those from the Rába region. Solely in the area of the Gornji Senik/Felsőszölnök district

notary's office (körjegyzőség) – part of which were, politically and administratively speaking, the Prekmurje settlements of Trdkova and Čepinci – seven people from Prekmurje got married to Slovenes from the Rába region.³⁶ The new political situation united in one country the Prekmurje Hungarians with their compatriots, which was reflected in different realms of life, much like in the case of the Slovenes in Prekmurje and in the Rába region.³⁷

10	4	Állomások	1	15	
—	—	i. Budapest déli pu. Máv (30)	é.	20.35	—
—	—	i. Nagykauizsza Mávaut (1420)	é.	13.45	—
—	11.15	i. Alsólendva Mávaut (1421)	é	8.50	—
—	c			c	
—	14.20	i. Murszombat Korona-szálló	é.	7.35	—
—	14.25	Kisszombat		7.30	—
—	14.29	Vaspolony	▲	7.26	—
—	14.33	Rónafő		7.22	—
—	14.37	Vasnyires	▲	7.19	—
—	14.41	Lehonér		7.15	—
—	14.49	Zoltánháza		7.07	—
—	14.56	Bodóhegy		7.00	—
—	15.01	Vaskorpád		6.54	—
—	15.07	Radófa	▼	6.48	—
X	15.15	é.	i.	6.40	X
4.05	15.20	i. Felsőlendva	é.	6.35	17.55
4.17	15.32	Utelágazás f. m.		6.23	17.43
4.25	15.40	Magasfok		6.15	17.35
4.38	15.53	Felsőszőlők	▲	6.05	17.25
4.52	16.07	Alsószőlők		5.49	17.09
4.56	16.11	Szakonyfaivi bej. út		5.44	17.04
4.59	16.14	Rábatótfalu	▼	5.41	17.01
5.05	16.20	Szentgotthárd Központi szálló		5.35	16.55
5.15	16.30	Szentgotthárd pu.	i.	5.25	16.45
7.09	18.00	é. Szombathely Máv (10)	i.	—	14.05
—	22.47	é. Budapest k. pu. Máv (10)	i.	—	8.00

X = csak hétköznap közlekedik.
c = Felsőlendva-Szentgotthárd között csak hétköznap közlekedik.

Fig. 5: Bus timetable from Murska Sobota to Szentgotthárd via four villages in the Rába region during World War II.

Hungarian Military Administration and the Introduction of Civil Administration in Prekmurje

Having taken over the authority in Prekmurje, the Hungarians introduced the military administration on 16 April 1941. The military administrative commands in Murska Sobota and Lendava were tasked with creating the conditions for the introduction of civil administration. Formally, the administration was in the hands of the military, but in practice the Murska Sobota district and that of Dolnja Lendava operated from the

36 M. Kozár, *Holtomiglan – holtáiglan*, 167.

37 Kovács, *Dobronaki életképek – Podobe iz življenja Dobrovnika*, 217.

very beginning as constituent parts of the Vas County and Zala County. With a decree of 22 July 1941, the occupied territory was integrated into both border counties, whereby they sought to restore the situation from the period before the end of World War I. Consequently, the settlements of Budinci, Čepinci, Dolenci, Hodoš, Šalovci, and Trdkova, which were previously part of the Murska Sobota district, were annexed to the Szentgotthárd district. The settlements of Gödörháza, Magyarszombatfa, and Velemér, which were part of the so-called Trianon Hungary, were integrated into the Murska Sobota district. The situation with the Dolnja Lendava district was different. Settlements that were before World War I part of the Dolnja Lendava district and remained in Hungary after the war stayed in the scope of the district whose administrative centre was in Lenti. The district that had Dolnja Lendava as its seat had a branch office in Beltinci. The districts were divided into notary's offices (*körjegyzőség*) and were helmed by district notaries (*körjegyzők* or *jegyzők*) with wide powers.³⁸ The process of integrating the occupied territory in the Hungarian administrative system was legalized by the civil administration, which was introduced on 15 August, and finalized by the Hungarian parliament on 16 December 1941, when the Reintegration of Southern Provinces (*Délvidék* or *Bačka, Baranja, Prekmurje* and *Međimurje*) Act was passed.³⁹



Fig. 6: Anna Koltai, a secretary, in front of the District Notary's Office in Prosenjakovci during World War II.

38 Göncz: *Felszabadulás vagy megszállás*, 64–71.

39 Fujs, *Izbodišća madžarske okupacijske*, 179.

As stated above, the military administration was to “create conditions for the introduction of civil administration, which implied that all traces left by the Yugoslav state in the past 22 years had to be erased as soon as possible.”⁴⁰

The implementation of this policy could be seen in all spheres – political, social and economic. The first to be affected by the new authorities’ occupation policy were incomers from central Slovenia that arrived in Prekmurje after 31 October 1918. Most of them were officials, teachers, and colonists, and the Hungarian authorities deemed them unreliable.⁴¹

“Consequently, the first measure implemented by the occupying authorities was the dismissal of all Slovene officials and teachers. [...] When the cleanse was completed, the occupying authorities began to employ them selectively.”⁴²

It was stated in a previously mentioned letter that the county head addressed to the prime minister on 19 April 1941 that “the Hungarian population⁴³ awaits patiently the integration into the economic life and observes calmly the proceedings that were aimed at immigrants who do not belong here.”⁴⁴

The periodical *Jutro* also wrote about the dismissal of officials:

“All officials, including native ones, lost their jobs. The Hungarian authorities employed Hungarian officials in the post office, in the municipality [...] All mayors and municipal secretaries will be deposed and new ones will be appointed by the military authorities.”⁴⁵

An analysis of the newly appointed municipal officials in the District of Murska Sobota shows that not all state officials who worked for the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941 lost their employment. Out of a total of 67 “Yugoslav” officials in municipal offices in the Murska Sobota district the Hungarian military authorities employed eight people on 18 or 22 April 1941, including Ferdinand (Nándor) Hartner, the former mayor of Murska Sobota. All eight were natives of Prekmurje, but they were employed only after they had sworn an oath before the new authorities.⁴⁶ As a rule, officials who came from

40 Fujs, *Značilnosti madžarske okupacijske*, 65.

41 On how the Hungarian occupying authorities treated the Slovene intelligentsia, see Godeša, *Madžarski okupator v Prekmurju*, 193–201.

42 Godeša, *Madžarski okupator v Prekmurju*, 194.

43 This refers to the Hungarian population of the Dolnja Lendava district.

44 MNL ZML, IV. 401. b, 50/1941.

45 Godeša, *Madžarski okupator v Prekmurju*, 194.

46 MNL VaML, IV. 401. b. 797/1941.

central Slovenia or were originally not from Prekmurje did not get hired. Consequently, many of them left the region on the left bank of Mura. This was indirectly reported by Slovene periodicals: “The railway station in Pragersko is filled with people. It seems that the entire Prekmurje intelligentsia is here.”⁴⁷



Fig. 7: A signpost with Hungarian place names standing next to the fork towards Nedelica near Turnišče.

As mentioned before, the Hungarian authorities initially dismissed all teachers, whereupon they re-employed the locals, the Prekmurje Slovenes and Hungarians. Only a few Slovenes, newcomers who taught here, were re-employed, and only in the Murska Sobota district. In the Lendava district they only employed locals, and teachers who were newcomers were made redundant without exception. Some of the teachers who were originally from central Slovenia and held teaching posts in Prekmurje until 6 April 1941 were part of the Educational-Administrative Branch in Murska Sobota (Muraszombati Tanügyigazgatási Kirendeltség) that covered Međimurje as well. They were transferred to Međimurje because the bulk of Croatian teachers had left for the NDH. Along with teachers, natives of Prekmurje, the new school system was set up also by an older generation of teachers from Prekmurje, who had completed their education in Hungary before World War I. Standard Slovene was removed as a medium of instruction, and replaced with Hungarian and the Prekmurje dialect, which was referred to as Wendish by the Hungarian authorities. As to

47 Godeša: *Odmevi o razmerah v Prekmurju*, 193.

the medium of instruction, legally and formally speaking, there were three models in force in Prekmurje during the Hungarian occupation. In Hungarian-populated areas, Hungarian was the only medium of instruction. In schools in Slovene-populated areas, lessons were held in Hungarian and the Prekmurje dialect (Wendish) was used as an auxiliary language. The second group of schools, which was numerically smaller, included those in Slovene-populated areas, where six lessons a day were held in the Prekmurje dialect at the parents' request.⁴⁸ In secondary schools in Murska Sobota Hungarian was the only medium of instruction and the Prekmurje dialect (Wendish) was only taught as a subject.⁴⁹

Sorszáma.	Név.	Lakhely.	Családtagok száma.	Származási hely.	Nemzetiség.	Ingatlan nagysága.
41./	Pehor Iván	Bonice	4	Zgorice	Slovén	9.- kh.
42./	Marusics Iván	"	7	Görs	"	9.- "
43./	Miklós Olga	"	1	Kanal-Gorisa	"	9.- "
44./	Coerno Anton	"	2	Spollán	"	4,25 "
45./	Klino Iván	"	4	Pottau	"	8,75 "
46./	Valentinesics Lujza	"	3	Porine Görs	"	8,75 "
47./	Szobogár József	"	5	Bánica	"	8,75 "
48./	Podbersek Stefan	"	3	Görs	"	8,75 "
49./	Serpán Miklós	"	2	Bilje	"	2,50 "
50./	Peric Leopold	"	7	Ssant-Andor	"	8,75 "
51./	Peric Franc	"	5	Opati	"	8,75 "
52./	Polencsics Viktor	"	2	Bilán	"	8,75 "
53./	Obldik Mária	"	6	Ssan-Florian	"	8,75 "
54./	Benkó Franc	"	4	Csepvan	"	8,75 "
55./	Petrovosics Franc	"	8	Báta	"	8,75 "
56./	Arletics József	"	5	Opati-sselo	"	8,75 "
57./	Okretics Lujza	"	8	Kosztanjovica	"	8,75 "
58./	Kolenc Rafoel	"	5	Lakve	"	8.- "
59./	Lorbok Mária	"	3	Ssv.Tome	"	84.- "
60./	Trak Teréz	Pince	2	Tröbolje	"	7,75 "
61./	Bonsics Anton	"	4	Istria	"	8,75 "
62./	Bonsics Dinka	"	6	Salun	"	8,75 "
63./	Jelasics Iván	"	6	Jarenines	"	8,75 "
64./	Alexis Gasparo	"	6	Dragoseti	"	5,75 "
65./	Iván Romar	"	7	Kobarito	"	8,50 "
66./	Sirok István	"	2	Görgan	"	8,75 "
67./	Kriszianics Lujza	"	3	Volkonodla	"	8.- "
68./	Borsics József	"	6	Salun	"	8,75 "
69./	Bonsics Antonio	"	5	"	"	11.- "
70./	Csinerl Jakob	"	2	Jesovec	"	8.- "
71./	Antonovics Mariko	"	6	Herak	"	8,75 "
72./	Kolenc Viktor	"	5	Görs	"	4,50 "
73./	Susanik Martin	"	3	Csaraki	"	8,75 "
74./	Aszkovics Franc	"	5	Trieste	"	8,75 "
75./	Legán Alojs	"	4	Vergál	"	8,75 "
76./	Anton Jelasics	"	2	Linsgán	Horvát	8,75 "
77./	Raje Simon	"	4	Kringu	"	- "
78./	Paics Bosko	"	5	Ssv.Peter	Slovén	8,75 "
79./	Kriszianics Tomo	"	3	Botornya	Horvát	- "
80./	Szobogár Sztankó	"	4	Spollán	Slovén	- "
81./	Mersics Mattia	"	11	Vidói	Horvát	9.- "
82./	Marelja Blássa	"	10	Zemin	"	8,75 "
83./	Maretics Otilio	"	5	Marburg	Slovén	8,75 "
84./	Possedel Anton	"	4	Salun	Horvát	- "

Fig. 8: Page 2 of the list of colonists produced by the Hungarian authorities in January 1942.

48 Kokolj – Horvat, *Prekmursko šolstvo*, 384–392.

49 Kokolj – Horvat, *Prekmursko šolstvo*, 400–410.

Colonists who relocated in the vicinity of Dolnja Lendava in several waves in the interwar period were targeted by the authorities. All colonists and other immigrants who obtained land on the Esterházy estate through the Yugoslav agrarian reform were dispossessed by the Hungarian authorities as early as the summer of 1941. Following the unsuccessful negotiations with the Italian authorities about the transfer of colonists from Primorska and Istria, 587 people (or 589 if we add two children who were born shortly after their mothers' internment in the camp) were sent to the Sárvár internment camp on 22 and 23 June 1942.⁵⁰

Unlike newcomers, whom the Hungarian occupier regarded as unreliable, their attitude towards the locals was tolerant and friendly.

“Prekmurje Slovenes and their ancestors who were born in the area before 31 October 1918 were considered to be loyal citizens by the authorities. They had been subject to false propaganda and education for 22 years; however, they could be persuaded once again that they were Wends, which was considered to be the first step to their realization that they were, in fact, Hungarians. Education and propaganda were on the agenda, not repression.”⁵¹

The Hungarian Educational Society of the Wend March (Vendvidéki Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület – VMKE) was entrusted with the education and propaganda. Soon after its establishment, this society published the first issue of the periodical *Muraszombat és Vidéke (MÉV)*, which was published weekly until the end of the war. It was written in Hungarian, and a few articles were translated into the Prekmurje dialect or Wendish. Along with publishing the periodical *MéV*, this society organized the political and cultural life and sought to improve the area's economy.⁵²

In order to enable Prekmurje's swift integration into the Hungarian economy, infrastructure had to be built to connect Prekmurje with the Hungarian hinterland and the country's interior. A bus line on the route Nagykanizsa–Dolnja Lendava–Murska Sobota was thus introduced by the end of April 1941, and in early May Murska Sobota was connected with Szentgotthárd via the Rába region.⁵³ Following a request made by the leadership of Murska Sobota, in the second half of May 1941 the district centre was connected by bus with Gornja Lendava,⁵⁴ Rogašovci and Dolnja Lendava.⁵⁵ Additionally, the area was also connected with Hungary's interior with railway lines. Murska Sobota was already

50 Kovács, *Represszija v Prekmurju*, 186–195.

51 Fujs, *Značilnosti madžarske okupacijske*, 69.

52 Fujs, *Značilnosti madžarske okupacijske*, 68.

53 Göncz: *Felzabadulás vagy megszállás*, 22.; *MéV*, Year XXXV, No. 1, 4.

54 Modern-day Grad na Goričkem.

55 MNL VaML, IV. 401. b. 441/1941.

connected with the Hungarian interior via Hodoš in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and Dolnja Lendava via Dolga Vas. In the period of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav authorities removed the railway tracks between Hodoš and the state border, as well as between Dolga Vas and the state border. Initially, the employees of the Hungarian State Railway (MÁV) connected Murska Sobota with Körmend and the county centre Szombathely. In Murska Sobota, multiple-unit trains operating four times a day were introduced on 5 May 1941.⁵⁶ In early July Dolga Vas was integrated into the Hungarian railway system,⁵⁷ and by October 1941 Čakovec had been connected with Zalaegerszeg via Dolnja Lendava.⁵⁸ The infrastructural connections with the state's interior were built relatively quickly, but factories in Murska Sobota still faced with difficulties due to the changed economic situation. As evident from the article published in the weekly *MéV* on 17 October 1941, all four factories in Murska Sobota, Benko's meat processing plant, Dittrich's metal and tin factory, and Cvetič's and Šiftar's textile factories worked at half capacity.⁵⁹ Due to the April War and, consequently, the altered geopolitical situation, many seasonal labourers from Prekmurje had difficulties finding work. This problem was immediately addressed by the Hungarian military authorities, which sent some seasonal workers to large Hungarian estates.⁶⁰



Fig. 9: Laying railway tracks near Hodoš in 1941.

56 MNL VaML, IV. 401. b. 441/1941.

57 Göncz: *Felzabados vagy megszállás*, 46.

58 *MéV*, Year XXXV, No. 21, 4.

59 *MéV*, Year XXXV, No. 22, 3.

60 MNL VaML, IV. 401. b. 389/1941.

Through its operation the Hungarian occupying authorities sought to attract the indigenous Prekmurje population to their side; however, led by Štefan Kovač and in the scope of the Liberation Front, some of the left-oriented locals conducted several acts of sabotage in Prekmurje in the summer of 1941. The resistance movement had been crushed by the autumn of that same year, capturing the majority of activists, few of whom managed to avoid getting arrested and left Prekmurje. Consequently, "... the anti-occupation activity was quelled in this area until 1944".⁶¹



Fig. 10: The hanging of Evgen Kardoš and Štefan Cvetko in the courtyard of Murska Sobota Castle on 31 October 1941.

As previously mentioned, the introduction of the civil administration was officially confirmed on 16 December 1941 with the adoption of the act on the integration of occupied territories into Hungary. This meant that Prekmurje (as well as Međimurje, Baranja and Bačka) were officially no longer occupied territories, and became constituent parts of Hungary. In effect, the period of the introduction of the occupying authority in the region on the left bank of the river Mura was thus concluded.

61 *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, 620.

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Abbreviations

MNL OL - Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára
 MNL VaML - Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Vas Megyei Levéltára
 MNL ZML - Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Zala Megyei Levéltára
 MéV - Muraszombat és Vidéke
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Summary

Darja Kerec, Attila Kovács

The Establishment of the Hungarian Occupation Authority in Prekmurje

On the first day of the invasion of Yugoslavia, the German Army occupied the Prekmurje region. However, it did not stay there long, since on 16 April 1941 the province on the left bank of the river Mura (barring Kramarovci, Ocinje, Fikšinci, and a part of Serdica (Rottenberg) with a German majority) came under Hungary at a ceremony held in Murska Sobota.

The new border cut sharply into the Slovene national body, separating the Slovenes in Prekmurje from their compatriots on the right bank of the river Mura. On the other hand, the annexation to Hungary removed the political border between the Slovenes in Prekmurje and in the Rába region, as well as between the Prekmurje Hungarians and their compatriots, who were then reunited in one country, which was reflected in different areas of life.

With the takeover of authority in Prekmurje on 16 April 1941, the Hungarians introduced a military administration with military-administration commands in Murska Sobota and Lendava. Their mission was to create the conditions for the introduction of civil administration, which meant erasing all traces left by the Yugoslav state in the past 22 years. The implementation of this policy was reflected in all areas, from political and social to economic. All institutions were abolished and replaced with new ones, Slovene inscriptions were removed, and the Hungarian alphabet was introduced. Immigrants who came from central Slovenia to Prekmurje after 31 October 1918, were among the first to feel the occupational policy of the new authorities. Hungary deemed those people, who were mainly officials, teachers, and settlers, as unreliable. These settlers were the most exposed among the immigrants, as the Hungarians took them by force in the summer of 1941, and interned them at the Sárvár internment camp in June 1942.

In contrast to the immigrants, the attitude towards the locals was tolerant and friendly. The Prekmurje Slovenes, who were born before 31 October 1918, were considered to be loyal citizens by the Hungarian administration. They were considered to have been subjected to false propaganda and education for 22 years, but could be re-educated into believing they were Wendish, which was the first step towards accepting they were Hungarians. Although the Hungarian occupation authorities tried to win over the indigenous people of Prekmurje with their actions, part of the left-leaning locals carried out several acts of sabotage within the Liberation Front as early as the summer of 1941. The resistance movement was broken up by the Hungarians in the autumn of the same year; most of the activists were captured, while only a handful of them managed to evade arrest and flee Prekmurje.

Despite the relatively quick establishment of infrastructural connections with the homeland, which was one of the conditions for a speedy integration of Prekmurje into the Hungarian economy, the factories in Murska Sobota faced difficulties due to the changed economic conditions, while many seasonal workers found it difficult to find a job. The process of integrating the occupied territory into the Hungarian administrative system was legalized by the civil administration introduced on 15 August, with the adoption of the law on the re-annexation of Southern Provinces (Délvidék) – namely Bačka, Baranja, Prekmurje, and Međimurje – to Hungary on 16 December 1941.

*Blaž Štangelj**

The Italian Army's Closure of the Border with the Independent State of Croatia**

Introduction

Italy was one of four occupiers in Slovene ethnic territory during World War II. By installing barbed wire, building bunkers, fortifications and guarded border crossings beneath the Gorjanci hill range and in Bela krajina, the Italian Army sealed the border between the Italian-occupied Province of Ljubljana and the Independent State of Croatia. This project was entitled Closure of the Croatian Border (*Chiusura della frontiera Croata*). This paper is based on Italian (the 11th Army Corps and the Isonzo Division) and partisan intelligence records found in archives. This Italian project is only briefly mentioned in the bibliography dealing with World War II in Dolenjska and Bela krajina. It was Jože Penca who dealt with this subject the most, writing three newspaper articles about the topic.¹ They served as a basis and provided the starting point for this paper. Remnants that remind us of this border are identifiable on location to this day. Barring the older generation of locals, we can argue that the project has disappeared from the historical memory. This paper does not aim to point to the efficiency of the occupier's engineering military units, it seeks to call to mind one of the occupation borders in Slovene ethnic territory and inconveniences resulting from it.

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1 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Parts I-III, 17.

Plans for Sealing the Border with the NDH in 1942

In 1942, the Italian Army devised a plan to close the border with the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) that would be fortified with bunkers, military posts and wire fencing. This fortified demarcation line would run from the tripoint of Germany, Italy and the NDH, to the south of Gadova Peč, along the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range, via Trdinov Vrh. To the west of Trdinov Vrh the border would turn southwards as far as the railway bridge across the river Kolpa, in the vicinity of the village of Rosalnice near Metlika.² Based on a letter penned by Mario Robotti, the Commander of the 11th Army Corps, Jože Penca wrote that the following was envisaged to fortify the border corridor:

“a) a solid corridor of barbed-wire fencing, measuring 7 metres in width, clearing wooded areas in order to make the route surveyable, passable and controllable; b) a path that is passable at least for pack animals will follow the fencing; c) a system of solid structures that would accommodate the troops, allowing them to control the border and enable an efficient defence in the event of an attack; d) a telephone line between garrisons and between the superior command, as well as between the command and the nearest garrison.”³

The erection of 33 fortified structures was planned on the demarcation line, between the tripoint near Gadova Peč and along the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range.⁴ The demarcation line would be divided into four sectors, whose commands would be stationed behind the border, in the villages of Veliki Cerovec and Gabrje, in the Pleterje Carthusian Monastery, and in Kostanjevica. The headquarters of officer commands, of which 13 were planned along the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range, would be subordinated to sectorial commands. Respective officer commands would be in charge of the fortified structures on the border.⁵

Sealing the Border with the NDH beneath the Gorjanci Hill Range

The planned blockade of the border along the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range was not realized. It was decided that the fortified border would run along the foothills of the Gorjanci hill range, where they would make use of the existing communications and posts. In doing so, it would be easier to maintain and defend the demarcation line. The main purpose of the fortified border was to prevent the passage of partisans from Žumberak and the Gorjanci hill range to the villages beneath them, and thus prevent them

2 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part I, 17. Pavlin, *Petnajsta brigada*, 25.

3 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part I, 17.

4 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part I, 17.

5 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta 24. pehotnega polka, 14 April 1942.

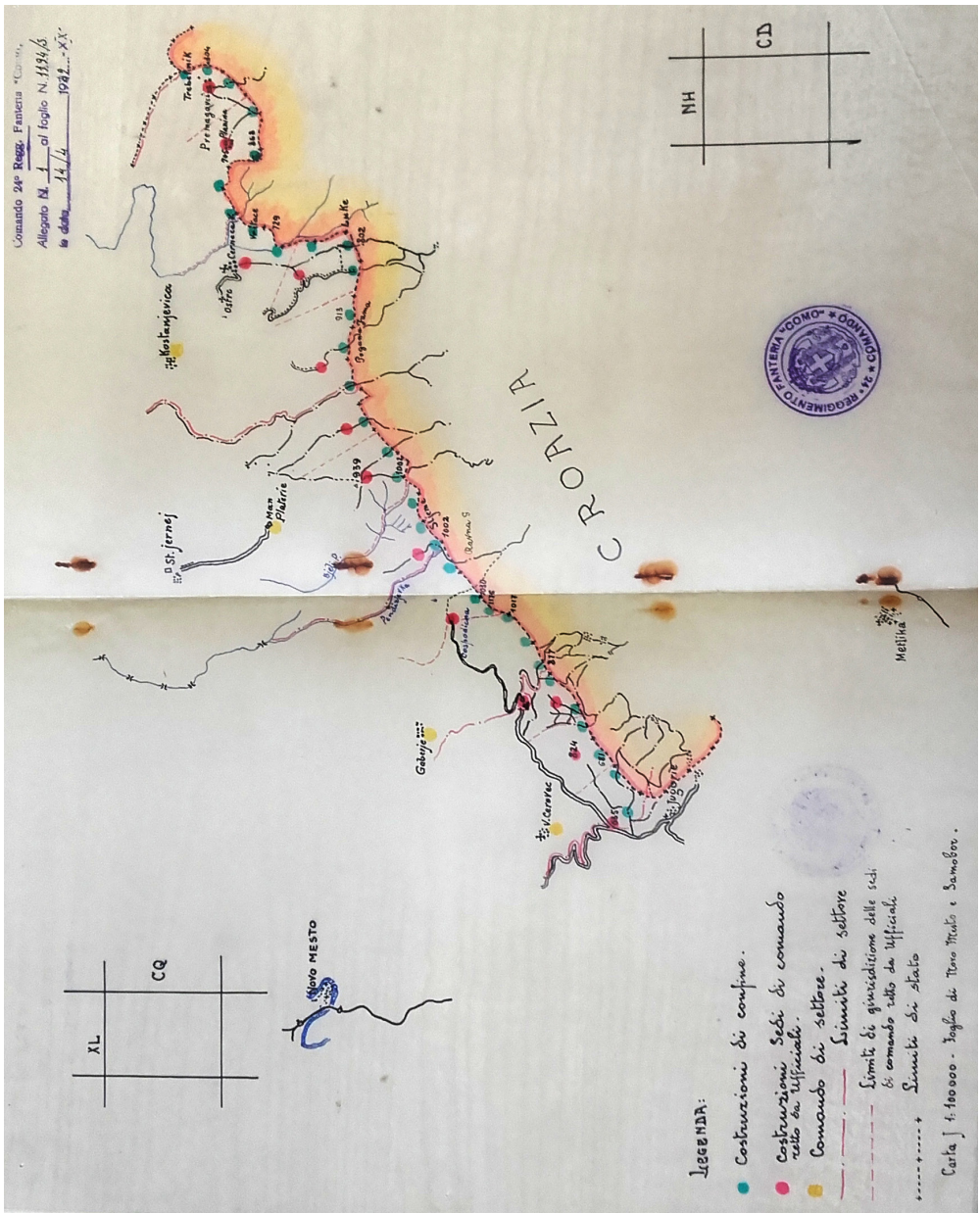


Fig. 1: A map depicting the course of the Italian blockade of the border with the NDH along the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range, 14 April 1942.

from obtaining food in these villages.⁶ The closure-related work on the border was done by the engineering unit of the Isonzo Division and by the mobilized locals.⁷ The locals' oral sources and a few partisan documents attest that those mobilized were paid a few lire for their work.⁸ The construction was protected by units of the Isonzo Division and of the Anti-Communist Volunteer Militia (MVAC).⁹

The fortified demarcation line consisted of barbed wire, bunkers, solidly built fortifications, houses that were turned into fortifications and border crossings or checkpoints.¹⁰ The barbed-wire fence measured 5.5 to 6 metres in height, between 1.8 and 2 metres in the middle section, and had the shape of a trapezoid. Barbed wire was stretched around wooden stakes, measuring 15 to 20 centimetres in diameter, and pegs with a diameter of 15 to 18 centimetres. This is how the barbed-wire fencing is described in the Italian and partisan documents.¹¹

Stanislav Sluga was mobilized by the Italian army to erect barbed-wire fencing in the Šentjernej valley. He remembers that barbed wire was installed in the following manner: six stakes were driven into the ground, forming a circle. Barbed wire was wrapped around them. The stakes were removed, and the wire was stretched, forming a 50-metre-long tunnel. Two barbed-wire tunnels were laid on the ground, one was placed on top of them, and all three tunnels were connected.¹²

Wooded areas had been cleared out before barbed wire was installed. The envisaged cleared-out strip of land measured about 300 metres in width, 50 inside and 250 outside the barbed-wire fencing. Since the clearance of wooded areas on the route of the barbed-wire fencing is mentioned throughout the construction of the fortified border, we can assume that they had not cleared the entire area before they installed barbed wire or bunkers and that forests were also cleared after the erection of barbed-wire fencing.¹³

6 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part I, 17. Pavlin, *Petnajsta brigada*, 25.

7 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Dopis poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccaria*, 15 June 1943. Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 1 February 1943, 30 July 1943, 14 August 1943. Stanislav Sluga, *Šest kolov se je zapičilo*, <https://youtu.be/j7qZi027gVU>, 0:07-0:45, 1:02-2:10. Oral source: Ana Rukše and Mihael Rukše, Gabrje, 16 February and 17 February 2019. SI AS 1851, t. e. 10, p. e. 284, *Poročilo OK VOS Bela krajina za CK VOS*, 12 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 11, p. e. 321 *Poročilo VDO za GŠ NOV in POS*, 5 August 1943. Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17.

8 Stanislav Sluga, *Šest kolov se je zapičilo*, <https://youtu.be/j7qZi027gVU>, 1:02-1:20, 2:55-3:23. Oral source: Ana Rukše and Mihael Rukše, Gabrje, 16 February and 17 February 2019. SI AS 1851, t. e. 10, p. e. 284, *Poročilo OK VOS Bela krajina za CK VOS*, 12 August 1943.

9 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17.

10 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo*, 30 July 1943. Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part III, 17.

11 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja*, 22 January 1943 and 1 February 1943. *Poročilo divizije Isonzo*, 3 March 1943. SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, *Skica situacije žične pregrade z bunkerji v šentjernejski dolini*, merilo 1: 25000, VDO, 10 July 1943.

12 Stanislav Sluga, *Šest kolov se je zapičilo*, <https://youtu.be/j7qZi027gVU>, 1:05-1:55.

13 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Napoved načrta poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja za gradnjo bodeče žice na meji*, konec februarja 1943. A communication by the Commander of the Isonzo Division Maccario about

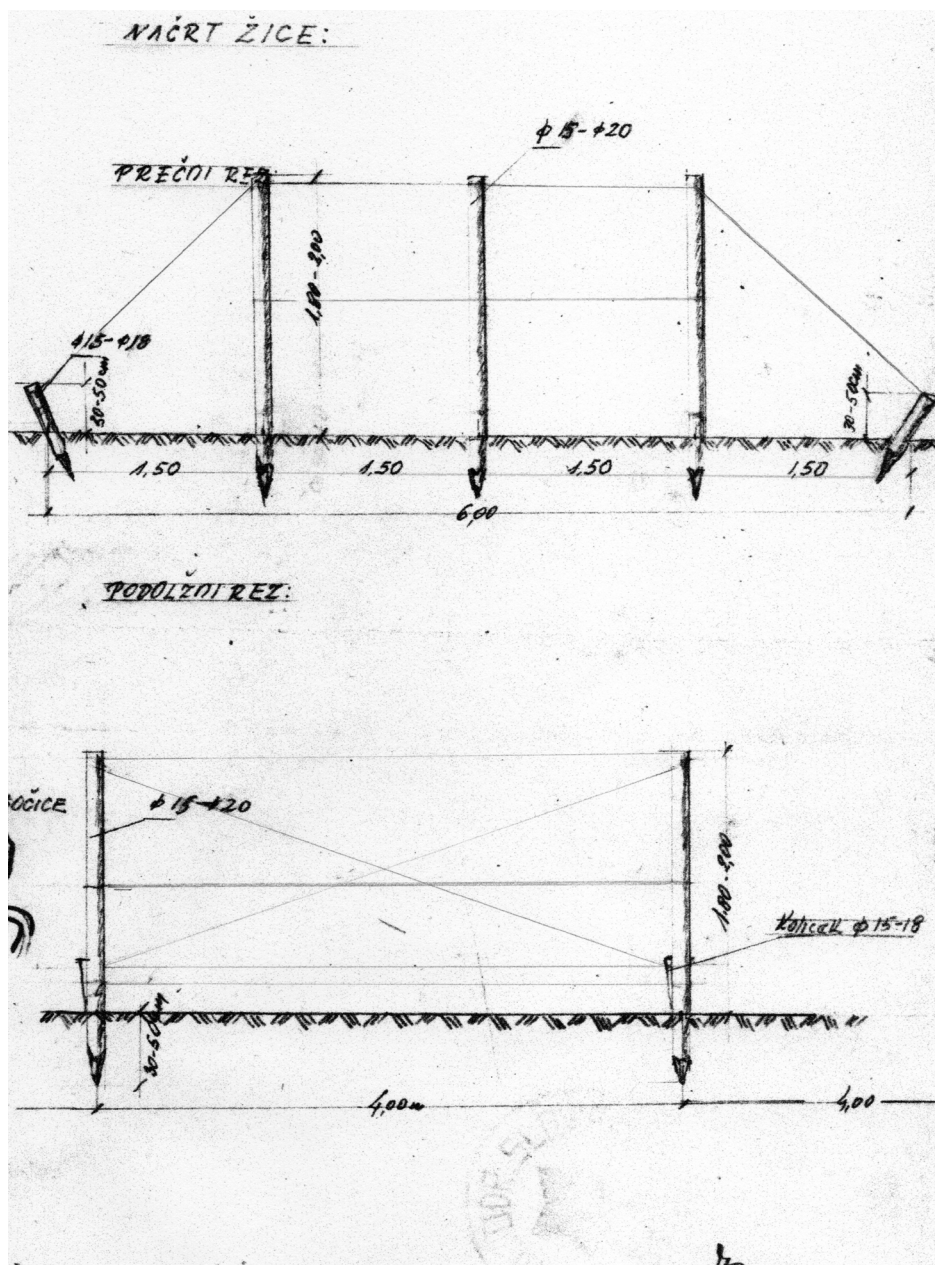


Fig. 2: A transverse and a longitudinal plan of the barbed wire corridor drawn by an informant of the East Dolenjska Detachment, 10 July 1943.

protecting the future barbed wire on the border, 30 June 1943. A report by the Commander of the engineering unit Pelissier, 14 August 1943. Stanislav Sluga, Šest kolov se je zapičilo, <https://youtu.be/j7qZi027gVU>, 1:05-1:30.

Sketches produced by the Isonzo Division at the scale of 1:50,000 show us the route of the fortified Italian border beneath the Gorjanci hill range and in Bela krajina, the process of its erection and plans that were not realized.¹⁴ Jože Penca described the course of the route on the basis of a sketch drawn by the Isonzo Division:

“They set about their work approximately 1,000 metres to the east of Kostanjevica, on the right bank of the river Krka, continuing on the apex of the hillock to the west of the village of Slinovce towards the south, to the apex of the hillock to the south of the Church of the Mother of God, where they turned westwards, crossed the road from Kostanjevica to Črneča Vas, the stream Studeno in the direction of the south wing of Kostanjevica Castle, the modern-day location of Forma Viva. Here, barbed-wire fence crossed the stream Obrh and the road from Kostanjevica to Orehovec, crossed the road to Kočarija and encompassed the entire hamlet of Zaboršt. [...] From Zaboršt onwards the fence ran slightly in the direction of west by north-west, at the spot height of 280, i.e. where the fencing intersected the path from Dolnja Prekopa to Kočarija and Vodenice, the location of two strongpoints manned by 12 soldiers. The main course turned towards the west by south-west and ran in an almost straight line up to the height of Orehovica or the Vrhovo manor house. The villages of Ledča Vas, Brezje, and Dolnja Stara Vas remained inside the fence and the villages of Volčkova Vas and Sela outside. The fencing crossed the border from Šentjernej to Pleterje to the south-east of Šmarje. [...] From Šmarje towards Tolsti Vrh the fence ran between Dolenje Vrhpolje and the hamlet of Žvabovo, via Jelše and Vajndol to Tičnica, continuing beneath the Vrhovo manor house, which was provisionally repaired and served as a base for units that installed barbed wire. With its elevation of 357 metres above sea level, Tolsti Vrh was one of the most dominant spots on this course. [...] Near Tolsti Vrh the course turned in an almost straight line across spot height 430, crossed the road from Brusnice to Gabrje, ascended Gomile to the west of Gabrje and descended to the valley of the stream Klamfar, continuing via the village of Pušče to Dolž. [...] As maintained by people who witnessed the border, the fence had reached the village of Pušče, approximately the halfway mark between Gabrje and Dolž, by 8 September 1942, when Italy capitulated.”¹⁵

14 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, karte, SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 31 May, 13 June, 28 June, 1 July, 30 July, 14 August 1943.

15 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Parts I-III, 17.

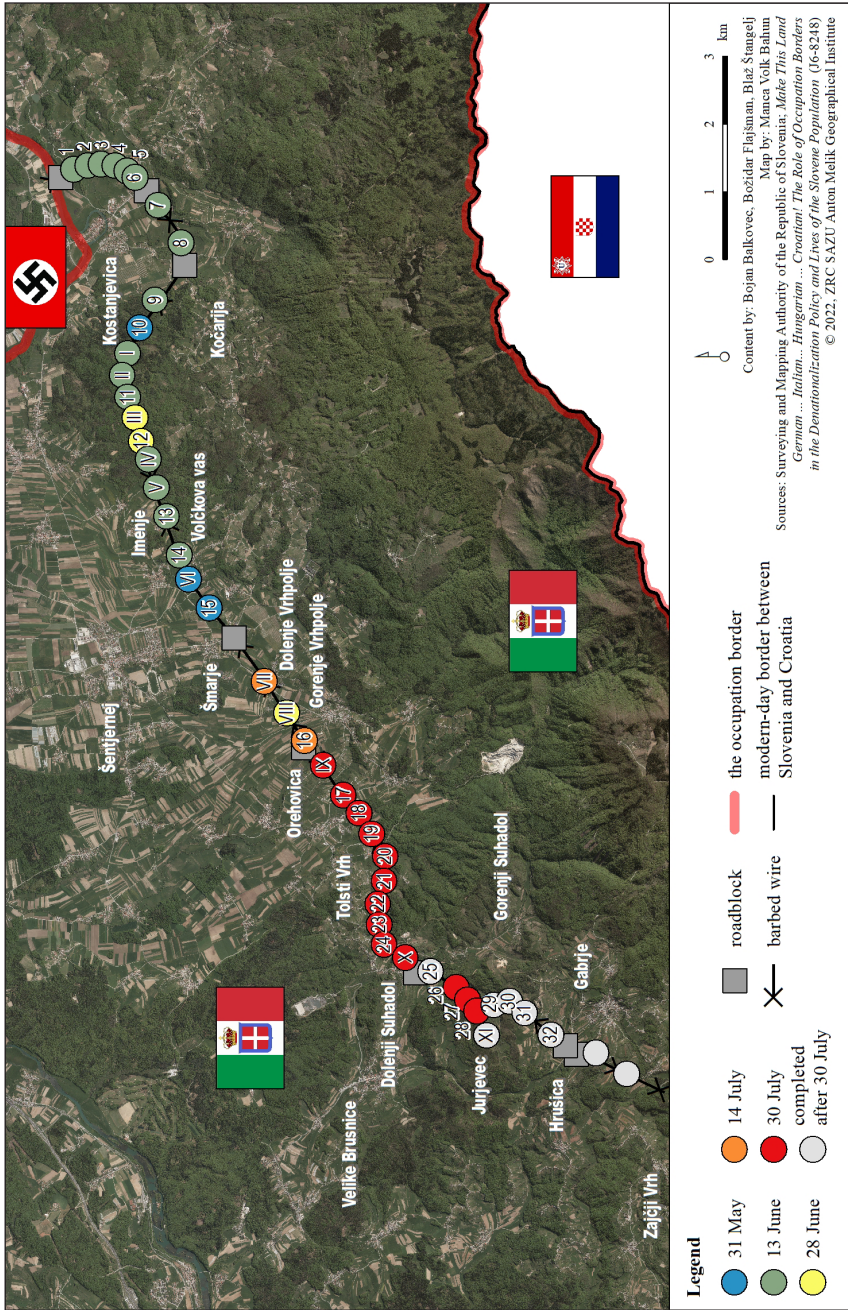


Fig. 3: A map depicting the sealed border with the NDH in 1943. It was produced on the basis of maps of the Italian Isonzo Division. The dating of bunkers (marked with Arabic numerals) and masonry fortifications (marked with Roman numerals) is indicated by circles of different colours.

The work came to a halt here. According to the plan, the fortified border would run along the course that was described by Jože Penca on the basis of a sketch produced by the Isonzo Division:

“In the vicinity of Dolž the border would turn southwards to spot height 887 – Oklinak, to the west of Trdinov Vrh, where it would join the fence from Božakovo that was installed via Gabrovec and Popovići.”¹⁶

On 1 January 1943 Gastone Gambarà, the Commander of the 11th Army Corps, informed his troops in a communication that, *inter alia*, he ordered that the border with the NDH must be sealed with barbed wire, as this would prevent partisans from crossing the border.¹⁷

M. Pelissier, the Commander of the engineering unit of the Isonzo Division, reported that the erection of the barbed-wire corridor had begun on 13 January 1943 near the village of Šmarje, to the south of Šentjernej.¹⁸ This was the start of construction works taking place upon the visit of Gastone Gambarà, the Commander of the 11th Army Corps. About 30 metres of barbed wire were installed that day, beginning in Šmarje and running in the direction of Kostanjevica. Barbed wire was erected in the shape of a trapezoid, measuring 5.5 metres in width, and some 16 to 17 kilograms of barbed wire were used for a metre of fence. Pegs and (load-bearing) stakes were driven into the ground to the length of another 30 metres. Snow and low temperatures hindered the erection of barbed wire.¹⁹ Barbed wire was installed by the engineering unit of the Italian Isonzo Division. Civilians were mobilized as well, and in the initial weeks they cleared forests on the envisaged route and cut pegs and stakes, drove them into the ground and stretched out barbed wire between them.²⁰

The construction of barbed-wire fencing was also detected by the partisan intelligence. The Field Company for the area of Gorjanci reported on the erection of the fencing to the Staff of the East Dolenjska Detachment on 24 and 25 January 1943. Their memorandum of 24 January 1943 reads:

“The Italian Army continues to build wire obstacles in the valley.”²¹ On 25 January 1943 they wrote: “The erection of wire obstacles continues. Two

16 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part III, 17.

17 Trgo, *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka ...*, Part VI, Vol. 5, 330, 334. Mikuš, *Pregled zgodovine NOB v Sloveniji*, 175-176. Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part I, 17.

18 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 22 January 1943 and 1 February 1943. Ferenc, *Kostanjevica na Krki in okolica 1941-1945*, 246. Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part I, 17.

19 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 22 January 1943 and 1 February 1943.

20 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 1 February 1943.

21 SI AS 1482, t. e. 5, Dopis Terenske čete za Gorjansko okrožje štabu VDO, 24 January 1943.

truckloads of wire arrive at Št. Jernej every day. This seems to be a large-scale construction. The word on the street is that it would run as far as Sušak. We are not entirely familiar with the purpose of this construction. It would be advisable if informants of our high commands look into the matter because this might be of extraordinary importance to our movement."²²

On 31 January 1943, 250 metres of barbed wire ran from Šmarje in the direction of Kostanjevica.²³ On 19 February 1943, the length of the installed fence totalled 1,250 metres, with pegs and stakes running approximately 400 metres more.²⁴ By 3 March 1943, there were about 1,600 metres of barbed wire installed, with pegs and stakes running about another 500 metres, namely between Šmarje and Volčkova Vas. The command of the Isonzo Division reported that day that barbed wire had been installed in the shape of a trapezoid, measured 6 metres in width, and that about 5,000 (load-bearing) stakes, about 3,000 pegs, and 27 tons of barbed wire had been used up to that point.²⁵

On 9 March 1943, Gastone Gambarà, the Commander of the 11th Army Corps, sent a communication to his subordinated units about his visit with Benito Mussolini in Rome. While there, Mussolini told him to complete the erection of barbed-wire fencing on the border between the Province of Ljubljana and the NDH as soon as possible, to prevent partisans from crossing the border. Gambarà told Mussolini that the Isonzo Division and the engineering unit of the 11th Army Corps regarded this task as an honourable duty.²⁶

Around 10 March 1943, the erection of barbed wire was begun about a kilometre to the north-east of Kostanjevica, on the right bank of the river Krka, turning towards the village of Zaboršt (in the direction of Šmarje, to the south of Šentjernej). There were 1,500 metres of barbed wire installed on the route from Kostanjevica to Šmarje by 26 March 1943, from Šmarje to Kostanjevica 1,600 metres.²⁷ By the end of March 1943, starting in Kostanjevica, barbed wire had been installed as far as the village of Zaboršt and wooded areas were cleared as far as spot height 280, about one kilometre from Zaboršt.²⁸ These sections joined on 12 April 1943 somewhere between spot height 280 and the village of Zaboršt.²⁹ The Commander of the Isonzo Division and the Commander

22 SI AS 1482, t. e. 5, *Dopis Terenske čete za Gorjansko okrožje štabu VDO*, 25 January 1943.

23 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja*, 1 February 1943.

24 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo*, 28 February 1943.

25 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Poročilo Poveljstva divizije Isonzo poveljstvu XI. armadnega zbora*, 3 March 1943.

26 *Trgo, Zbornik dokumenata i podataka ..., Part VI, Vol. 5*, 554–555. Vogrič, *Boj Belokranjcev*, 229.

27 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Telegram poveljnika divizije Isonzo generala Maccaria Poveljstvu XI. armadnega zbora*, 26 March 1943.

28 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Parts I and II, 17.

29 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Telegram Ciapparellija, garnizija Šentjernej Poveljstvu divizije Isonzo*, 12 April 1943.

of the 11th Army Corps praised Italian units for having completed the barbed-wire fencing between Šmarje and Kostanjevica.³⁰ They then continued to install barbed wire along the envisaged route from the village of Šmarje in the direction of Orehovica and Tolsti Vrh.³¹

To defend the barbed-wire corridor, they began to build fortified structures (bunkers) on the route from Kostanjevica to Šmarje in the second half of April or in May 1943.³² In this section the bunkers had been completed by 19 June 1943.³³ Bunkers were still built along the barbed wire.³⁴

Fortified border crossings were built on main roads between towns that were intersected by barbed wire. By 14 May 1943 border crossings stood on three routes from Kostanjevica, namely in the direction of Sveti Križ, Črneča Vas, and Orehovec, as well as on the road from Šentjernej to the Pleterje Carthusian Monastery.³⁵ On the road connecting Dolenja Brezovica and Vrhpolje barbed wire had been installed by 31 May 1943. They continued to install barbed wire and build bunkers on the envisaged route towards Tolsti Vrh, which was reached by 28 June 1943. Bunkers standing along the barbed-wire fence were built in stages.³⁶ On 28 May 1943 a partisan informant reported that the Italian Army was building 22 fortified structures or bunkers between the river Krka near Kostanjevica (the hamlet of Slinovce) and Šmarje pri Šentjerneju.³⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Pelissier, the Commander of the engineering units, wrote a report to the command of the Isonzo Division, describing the construction of the fortified corridor up to the end of May 1943 and work done in the course of this construction (the fortification, clearing forests). He conducted a check inspection of the construction of the fortified corridor between 29 and 31 May 1943.³⁸ Based on this report, Jože Penca wrote the following:

“1. Barbed wire: installed approx. 12 km. Pegs driven into the ground on the entire course, barbed wire stretched out between them along two-thirds of the course (shortage of wire). This equals the distance from Kostanjevica as far as one kilometre past Šmarje. The installing came to a halt towards the end of

30 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Telegram poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccaria Poveljstvu garnizije v Šentjerneju, 13 April 1943. Telegram poveljnika XI. armadnega zbora Gambare poveljstvu divizije Isonzo, 15 April 1943.

31 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Telegram poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccaria, 15 April 1943.

32 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 13 April 1943 and 27 April 1943. Promemorija o gradnji utrjenih objektov poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo M. Pelissierja, 24 April 1943.

33 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja Poveljstvu divizije Isonzo, Poveljstvo inženirije XI. armadnega zbora, 20 June 1943.

34 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 31 May 1943 and 28 June 1943.

35 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo M. Pelissierja, 14 May 1943.

36 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 31 May 1943 and 28 June 1943.

37 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis obveščevalca, 28 May 1943.

38 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17.

April because the garrison in Šentjernej failed to protect engineers and civilians involved in the erection. 2. Fortification work: a) the section from the river Krka to Kostanjevica Castle – three checkpoints completed on the roads between Kostanjevica and Sveti Križ, Kostanjevica and Črneča Vas, Kostanjevica and Orehovec, as well as seven strongpoints, each holding three shooters.³⁹ Everything is masonry and roofed. Finishing works and masking is underway; b) the section Zaboršt–Ledeča Vas: one masonry strongpoint completed, roofing and the construction of an observation post are underway, one strongpoint made of timbers is finished, as are five fortified wooden huts, the work on roofs and observation posts is in progress. Two armoured watch posts will have to be built in two different spots; c) the section Ledeča Vas–Šmarje: a wooden strongpoint is almost complete, the construction of three masonry strongpoints is in progress, of which one is masonry, one masonry structure for the Šmarje–Pleterje border crossing and one masonry strongpoint, both are which are in the final stage of the construction. 3. Clearing wooded areas between Kostanjevica and Prekopa is progressing relatively well, the work is done by the owners themselves. Little or almost nothing has been done between Ledeča Vas and Volčkova Vas because to lacking protection. Owners fear reprisal measurements taken by members of the resistance movement, who come in small groups and obstruct forestry workers with shots or outbursts of fire from machine guns. In the Kostanjevica–Ledeča Vas sector barbed wire is protected by a MVAC squad from Kostanjevica that is stationed on Prekopa and a MVAC platoon from Brezovica protects the Ledeča Vas–Šmarje sector.⁴⁰ 4. Supply of construction materials: the situation is alarming. Twenty tons of materials from Novo mesto are required for each kilometre of fencing, even though timbers and rocks are obtained locally. 5. The section Šmarje–Tolsti Vrh: during the inspection check he made an agreement with the Commander of the 3rd Battalion of the 24th Regiment that as soon as Tolsti Vrh is sufficiently fortified (this occurred after the attack of the Cankar Brigade) they would begin installing barbed wire from Tolsti Vrh towards Šmarje and involve garrisons equalling the strength of a platoon in the field defence system until solid strongpoints are built. In the following days, when the border crossings near Kostanjevica and Šmarje are completed, they ought to be manned by the Carabinieri and the Financial Guard, concludes Lieutenant Colonel Pelissier.⁴¹

39 Bunkers.

40 An informant of the Gorjanci Battalion reported to the East Dolenjska Detachment on 26 May 1943 that the post in Brezovica was manned by 80 members of the MVAC, who were armed with two heavy and four light machine guns. (SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Odrednemu obveščevalcu, 26 May 1943.)

41 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17.

The hill Tolsti Vrh is 357 metres high. The eponymous village with a wine-growing character sits on it and on its hillside. The Church of St Roch stands on the top of the hill,⁴² which is one of the most dominant spots along the course of the Italian closure on the border with the NDH. The Italian Army was stationed on Tolsti Vrh in late May 1943 and turned it into a fortification for defending the border fence whose construction was underway on the southern slope. Vineyards around the church on Tolsti Vrh were cut and concrete bunkers were built.

In some places, the existing vineyard cottages were turned into bunkers.⁴³ Jože Penca maintains in his article that vineyards were cut in a strip of land measuring up to 100 metres from the church.⁴⁴ It is stated in a report produced on 26 May 1943 by the Gorjanci Battalion that the Italian Army removed around 40 to 50 metres of vineyards around the church and that bunkers are built around it.⁴⁵ The Italian Army encircled its post that surrounded the church with barbed wire. An informant of the Gorjanci Battalion reported on 6 June 1943 that the said battalion fired shots on Italian soldiers on Tolsti Vrh. Consequently, Italian soldiers enclosed their post with two-metre-high planks within the barbed-wire fence. In doing so, they prevented partisans from identifying the soldiers' exact location and they could no longer shoot at them.⁴⁶

Seven bunkers had been built around the church on Tolsti Vrh by 5 June 1943.⁴⁷ On 26 May 1943, an informant of the Gorjanci Battalion estimated that the Italian garrison consisted of around 600 to 700 soldiers and that they had around 12 to 13 heavy machine guns, four light and two heavy mortars. The belfry was fortified as well, and there were two heavy machine guns in it. Additionally, he wrote that the Italian soldiers had broken into vineyard cottages on Tolsti Vrh and had helped themselves to some wine.⁴⁸ On 5 June 1943 another informant of this unit estimated that the garrison on Tolsti Vrh consisted of 80 soldiers.⁴⁹

On 9 June 1943 an informant of the Gorjanci Battalion reported that the construction of the fortified border along the foothills of the Gorjanci hill range continued in June 1943:⁵⁰

42 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17. *Krajevni leksikon Dravske banovine*, Tolsti Vrh, 481.

43 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17.

44 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part II, 17.

45 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, *Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Odrednemu obveščevalcu*, 26 May 1943.

46 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, *Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda*, 5 June 1943 and 6 June 1943.

47 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, *Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda*, 5 June 1943.

48 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, *Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Odrednemu obveščevalcu*, 26 May 1943.

49 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, *Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda*, 5 June 1943.

50 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo*, 31 May 1943 and 28 June 1943.

“Yesterday, on 8 June, a column of 62 vehicles arrived in Št. Jernej in two stages. They brought back the Italians from their campaign on the other bank of the river Krka. They brought a lot of wire and construction material as well. It seems that they will continue to install the wire.”⁵¹

Along with wire, they brought to Šentjernej food, hay, straw, planks and stakes for installing barbed wire.⁵² On 8 June 1943 an informant of the Gorjanci Battalion reported a rumour that could be characterized as propaganda produced by an Italian officer:

“I have something here, but it is not positive. Rumour has it that seven thousand Italians will be settled between Novo mesto and Kostanjevica. An Italian officer stated this, and he says that they did not build because of partisans or because of the British and that a bunker would be made every 10 metres along the barbed wire, and also that the British would not chase away Italians from Slovene soil.”⁵³

By 28 June 1943 barbed wire was installed as far as the eastern edge of the foothills of Tolsti Vrh. The construction of bunkers on the course of the border between the Vrh-polje–Šmarje (Jelša) road and the foothills of Tolsti Vrh was underway, while bunkers and other fortified structures standing along the course of the border between Šmarje and the river Krka near Kostanjevica were finished.⁵⁴

Consisting of barbed wire and bunkers, the fortified border ran along the southern hillside of Tolsti Vrh that was blanketed in vineyards. Vineyards were removed within a strip of land measuring around 100 metres or more along the fortified border.⁵⁵ The border ran along the village of Dolenji Suhadol and crossed the road to Gorenji Suhadol that was reached on 14 July 1943.⁵⁶ A border crossing was built on the road, with a gate made of barbed wire and housed an Italian guard.⁵⁷ From here, the border ran towards the hillock Jurjevec, which was an important strategic spot with its elevation of 430 metres. The construction of a large fortified spot on its summit was begun in the first half of July 1943. It would be used for defending the fortified border⁵⁸ that ran along

51 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis štaba Gorjanskega bataljona štabu VDO, 9 June 1943.

52 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda, 8 June 1943.

53 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda, 8 June 1943.

54 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 28 June 1943.

55 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part II, 17. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 1 July 1943, 30 July 1943.

56 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 1 July 1943, 30 July 1943.

57 Oral source: Terezija Paderšič, Dolenji Suhadol, 18 February 2019.

58 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17. SI AS 1851, t. e. 59, p. e. 1684, Dopis VDO Glavnemu obveščevalnemu centru pri GŠ NOV in POS, 20 August 1943.

the hillside of Jurjevec and stood 300 metres away from its summit.⁵⁹ The construction of a fortification (a fortified hut) and three bunkers was envisaged on the summit of Jurjevec.⁶⁰ On the nights of 13, 14 and 15 July 1943 the Šercer Brigade attacked Jurjevec, where the construction of a large Italian bunker was underway. The partisans' attack was not particularly successful because the Italian troops had a better strategic position that allowed for better defence. The partisans destroyed about 40 metres of barbed wire, and their units launched attacks on other sections of the fortified Italian border. They demolished a portion of the barrier and managed to pass through the gap.⁶¹

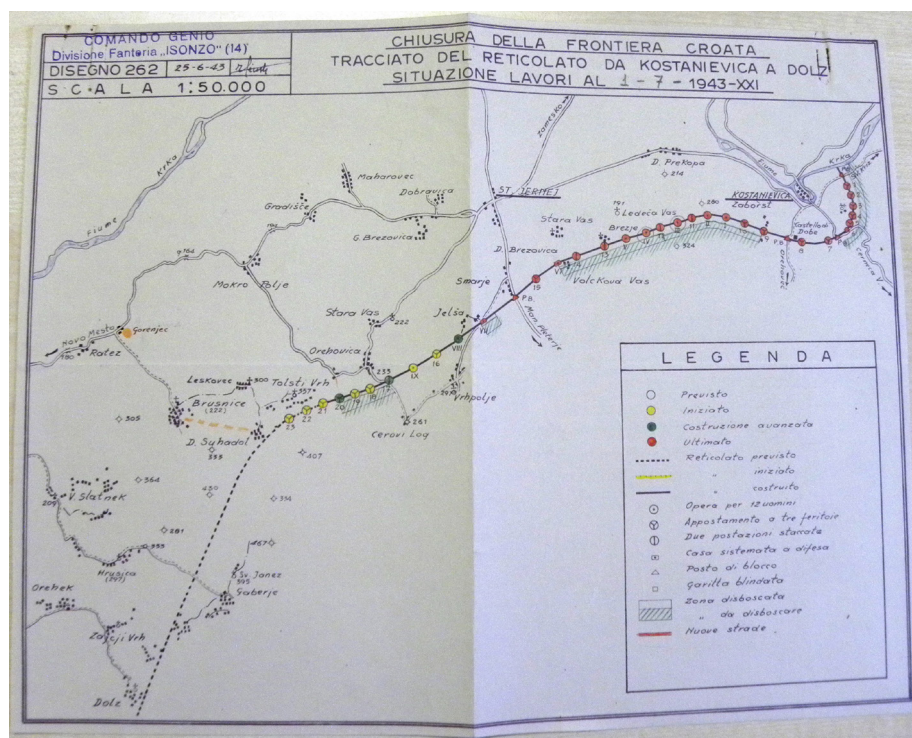


Fig. 4: A map depicting the sealed border with the NDH beneath the Gorjanci hill range, which was produced by the engineering unit of the Isonzo Division. It shows barbed wire and bunkers that had been built by 1 July 1943. Bunkers are marked with circles and connected with barbed wire. Red circles show bunkers that were completed, yellow and green circles indicate bunkers that were under construction. Green lines indicate clearing of wooded areas.

59 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 30 July 1943. Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943.

60 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 30 July 1943. Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17.

61 Guček, *Šercerjeva brigada*, 256, 258–260, 267–268. Stanko Kušljan, Pri belem dnevu je šla Cankarjeva brigada čez mejo, https://youtu.be/R1F6_91QCoo, 1:36-3:40.

The last preserved Italian sketch of the construction of the fortified border beneath the Gorjanci hill range shows the stage of the construction on 30 July 1943. Fortified structures (bunkers and buildings turned into forts) on the border, standing between its beginning in the proximity of the river Krka near Kostanjevica na Krki (the hamlet of Slinovce) and Dolenji Suhadol or the eastern foothills of Jurjevec (spot height 430), had been completed by 30 July 1943. Wooded areas along the border were still not cleared in specific sections. Up to that point barbed wire was installed as far as the southern slope of Jurjevec (spot height 430).⁶² The construction of the fortified border, consisting of barbed wire and bunkers, continued into August 1943 up to Italy's capitulation on 8 September 1943.⁶³

In August 1943 barbed wire was installed along the envisaged course of the border, on the slope beneath the summit of Jurjevec, via Rutovca, Kavce towards the hillock Gomila to the west of Gabrje. On 14 August 1943 barbed wire stood as far as the path between Gabrje and Hrušica; pegs and stakes were driven into the ground as far as the summit of the hillock Gomila (spot height 394), where a large bunker was planned.⁶⁴ The course of the barbed-wire fence intersected the route from Brusnice to Gabrje and from Gabrje to Hrušica. Border crossings with a barbed-wire gate stood in two spots where the fence intersected these two routes, guarded by the Italians. A new path was made to the hillock of Gomile, along with a path that connected Brusnice and Hrušica. It ran past Gabrje, which was outside the fence.⁶⁵

They continued to build bunkers along the barbed wire. The construction of bunkers along the wire on the hillside of Jurjevec (Rutovca, Kavce) began on 4 August 1943⁶⁶ and had been concluded by 14 August 1943.⁶⁷ A new path from Brusnice to Jurjevec was built from 30 July 1943 to 14 August 1943. The route had been dug out by this date and after it the path was levelled out, gravelled and drainage work was underway.⁶⁸

62 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 30 July 1943. Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943.

63 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Dopis poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccharia, 28 August 1943. Oral source: Terezija Ovniček, Dolž, 15 February 2019. Ana Rukše and Mihael Rukše, Gabrje, 16 February and 17 February 2019.

64 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943.

65 Oral source: Ana Rukše and Mihael Rukše, Gabrje, 16 February and 17 February 2019.

66 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943.

67 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943.

68 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943.



Fig. 5: Remnants of a bunker on Rutovca near the village of Gabrje, 9 February 2019.

On 9 August 1943 the intelligence centre of the 15th Partisan Division reported the following about the fortification of the border with the NDH:

“The Italians continue to install wire in the Šentjernej valley. The villages of Brusnice, Dolž, and Cerovec will be encircled. Comrade Breda reported that Gabrje and Igljenik would remain outside the barbed-wire fence.”⁶⁹

Construction of the fortified spot on Jurjevec was begun in the first half of July 1943, and was still in process in August 1943.⁷⁰ An informant of the Gorjanci Battalion reported on 18 August 1943 that the post on Jurjevec consisted of nothing but bunkers and was manned by 250 Italian soldiers.⁷¹

69 SI AS 1851, t. e. 9, p. e. 261, Dopis Obveščevalnega centra XV. divizije NOV in POS Glavnemu obveščevalnemu centru NOV in POS, 9 August 1943.

70 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943.

71 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda, 18 August 1943.

On 23 August 1943 the same informant reported that there were about 150 Italian soldiers on Jurjevec. They were armed with two heavy mortars, five heavy machine guns and an unknown number of light machine guns. He assumed that mines were laid along the barbed wire on Jurjevec.⁷² The garrison on Jurjevec stayed in bunkers standing along barbed-wire fencing.⁷³ Additionally, the informant of the Gorjanci Battalion wrote on 18 August 1943 that there were 150 Italian soldiers in Dolenji Suhadol and that they were stationed mostly in bunkers,⁷⁴ i.e. in bunkers standing along the fortified border.⁷⁵

In the second half of August 1943, barbed wire was installed and bunkers were also built in the area of the hillock Gomile (spot height 394), to the west of the village of Gabrje.⁷⁶ On 18 August 1943 the informant of the Gorjanci Battalion wrote also that there was a new Italian post in Gomile, stating that the some 200 Italians soldiers stationed there were building bunkers and installing barbed wire,⁷⁷ which was around 20 August 1943, and after that date wire installed in the direction of the village of Dolž.⁷⁸

A partisan sketch is preserved for the area of Gomile. It shows the course of the border fencing and six bunkers on the route from Gabrje and Brusnice, across the road from Gabrje to Hrušica, via the summit of the hillock Gomile (394 m) and onwards in the direction of the village Pangrč Grm, which is not seen in the sketch. This sketch contains no scale, date, stamp or author's signature. The first bunker on the sketch is located along the road from Brusnice to Gabrje, the next two above the road from Gabrje to Hrušica, in the direction of the summit of the hillock of Gomile. The largest bunker is drawn on the summit of the hillock Gomile and another two bunkers are drawn in the direction of the village Pangrč Grm.⁷⁹

These bunkers on Gomile were built after 14 August 1943 because they are not mentioned in an Italian report that bears this date.⁸⁰ A communication produced by the command of the Isonzo Division on 23 August 1943 stipulates which units are responsible for the protection of the border and mentions works in the area to the south of the route, between Gabrje and Hrušica.⁸¹ A partisan sketch of the bunkers on the hillock

72 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis štaba Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalni službi, 23 August 1943.

73 SI AS 1851, t. e. 11, p. e. 321, Dopis VDO za GŠ NOV in POS, 30 August 1943.

74 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda, 18 August 1943.

75 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943.

76 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo, 14 August 1943. Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943.

77 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda, 18 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 59, p. e. 1684, Dopis VDO Glavnemu obveščevalnemu centru pri GŠ NOV in POS, 20 August 1943.

78 SI AS 1851, t. e. 59, p. e. 1684, Dopis VDO Glavnemu obveščevalnemu centru pri GŠ NOV in POS, 20 August 1943.

79 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Skica žice in bunkerjev skozi Gomile pri vasi Gabrje.

80 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943.

81 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Dopis poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccaria Poveljstvu 24. pehotnega polka, 23 August 1943.

Gomile corresponds to eyewitness testimonies of two villagers, namely Ana and Mihael Rukša. They said that the bunker on the summit of Gomile was completed and two bunkers in the direction of Pangrč Grm were not.⁸²

From the hillock Gomile onwards the Italian Army installed barbed wire along the envisaged route, past Pangrč Grm, in the direction of Dolž.⁸³ The command of the Isonzo Division reported on 28 August 1943 that barbed wire would reach the area of Dolž in late August, totalling 27 kilometres in length.⁸⁴ By 8 September 1943 barbed wire had reached the hamlet of Pušče, which was located on the hillside to the north-east of the village Dolž, at the halfway mark of the fortified border between the hillock Gomile and Dolž. Vineyard cottages and vineyards stood on the hillside of the hamlet of Pušče.⁸⁵ Terezija Ovniček from Dolž remembered that the Italian Army had installed barbed wire approximately 100 to 200 metres beneath the Kranjec farm, in Pušče. The Italian Army left the construction site overnight, so to speak, abandoning left many rolls of barbed wire and pegs.⁸⁶ Jožefa Šaponja, who lived at Dolž at the time, also remembers barbed wire being installed. She remembers the conversations held by the locals in Dolž, wondering whether the hamlet would end up inside or outside the fence. She also remembers a vineyard, whose middle part was removed in a broad strip. It was located beneath the school at Dolž, in the direction of Pušče.⁸⁷ The removal of vineyards, forests and trees in the area of Dolž and Pušče was also mentioned in war damage claims against the Italian Army that were filed by landowners in September 1945. The most damage was done to a landowner who had lost some 1,000 vines, followed by two landowners who lost 500 and 600 vines, respectively, because of the Italian troops.⁸⁸

The following is mentioned in *The Dolž School Chronicle*, which was written retrospectively for the period between March 1941 and December 1944 in the 1950s:

“Italians and the White Guard arrived in Dolž in the spring of 1943. They stayed in the school building that had been burnt down. The cellar was not damaged and was converted into a bunker. The Italians and the White Guard worked together. However, there were no important battles at that time. They only stretched out barbed wire from Sela via Zajčji Vrh and Dolž. It ran from Kostanjevica and stopped at Dolž.”⁸⁹

82 Oral source: Ana Rukše and Mihael Rukše, Gabrje, 16 February and 17 February 2019.

83 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part III, 17.

84 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Dopis poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccaria Poveljstvu XI. armadnega zbora 28 August 1943*.

85 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci*. Part III, 17. *Krajevni leksikon Dravske banovine*, Pušče, 487.

86 Oral source: Terezija Ovniček, Dolž, 15 February 2019.

87 Oral source: Jožefa Šaponja, Novo mesto, October 2018.

88 SI ZAL, NME 24 Okrožni ljudski odbor Novo mesto - Okrajna komisija za vojno škodo Novo mesto, t. e. 10.

89 SI ZAL, NME 301, t. e. 2, *Osnovna šola Dolž, Zgodovinska kronika šole Dolž, 1941–1944*.

This text from the school chronicle is surprising in the part that says that barbed wire was installed via the villages of Sela and Zajčji Vrh. This is not mentioned in preserved Italian and partisan documents about the sealed border with the NDH from 1943. However, this chronicle was written retrospectively, and should be thus taken with a pinch of salt. Still, it is mentioned in documents that the Italian soldiers were stationed in the village of Zajčji Vrh in the second half of August 1943. The Commander of the engineering unit of the Isonzo Division reported on 22 August 1943 that he had relocated a portion of his troops to Zajčji Vrh, and most probably this was a group of soldiers that installed the obstacles in the section between Gomile and Dolž.⁹⁰ Additionally, Italian soldiers that protected the erection of barriers on the border and protected the road from Novo mesto in the section Stopiče–Orehek–Dolž, on which construction material and food was transported, were stationed in Zajčji Vrh or its surroundings.⁹¹ An informant of the Gorjanci Battalion detected the Italian troops on Zajčji Vrh, as well. On 27 August 1943 he wrote that an Italian garrison with its command was stationed there. He estimated that there were 300 Italian soldiers in this village.⁹²

Sealing the Border with the NDH in Bela krajina

The construction of the barbed-wire fence on the border with the NDH began in Bela krajina on 22 July 1943.⁹³ The fence on the border featured eight strands of thick barbed wire, measuring four metres in width and 160 centimetres in height. It began next to a masonry bunker with an armed guard on the left bank of the river Kolpa, next to the railway bridge near Rosalnice. The fortified border ran northwards, via the forest Boriha, and turned towards the north-west, in the direction of the intersection of roads from Metlika to Slamna Vas and Drašiči. It was installed by the engineering unit of the Italian Army under the command of the Isonzo Division and by mobilized civilians.⁹⁴

Barbed wire reached the intersection of roads to Slamna Vas and Drašiči on 14 August 1943, after about two kilometres of barbed wire had been installed.⁹⁵

90 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 22 August 1943.

91 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 22 August 1943. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Dopis poveljnika divizije Isonzo Maccaria Poveljstvu 24. pehotnega polka, 23 August 1943.

92 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Dopis Gorjanskega bataljona Obveščevalcu odreda, 27 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 11, p. e. 321, Poročilo VDO za GŠ NOV in POS, 30 August 1943.

93 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Dopis Poveljstva XI. armadnega zbora Poveljstvu divizije Isonzo, Poveljstvu divizije Lombardija in Poveljstvu inženirije XI. armadnega zbora, 12 July 1943.

94 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 30 July 1943 and 14 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 10, p. e. 284, Poročilo Okrožne komisije VOS Bela krajina za Centralno komisijo VOS, 12 August 1943. SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Obveščevalno poročilo s skicami, 19 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 11, p. e. 321 Poročilo VDO za GŠ NOV in POS, 5 August 1943. Vogrič, *Boj Belokranjcev*, 267–269.

95 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 11 August 1943 and 14 August 1943.

Six concrete bunkers were built along it between early August and the beginning of September 1943, and the construction of additional three bunkers was in the early stages.⁹⁶ The Italians continued to clear wooded areas along the envisaged route towards the Church of St Urban on Gabrovec in August 1943. They began to install barbed wire in this section of the route towards the end of August 1943.⁹⁷ The Italian guard that protected the erection of barbed wire fortified the Church of St Urban on Gabrovec and its belfry as early as on 14 August 1943.⁹⁸

It was planned that the barbed-wire corridor and bunkers would run from Gabrovec towards the north-west, past Popovići, as far as the western edge of the Gorjanci hill range, where it would be joined with barbed wire coming from the direction of the village of Dolž. However, the Italian Army did not realize this plan because of Italy's capitulation on 8 September 1943.⁹⁹



Fig. 6: A bunker near the village of Rosalnica, 28 March 2019.

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- 96 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943 and 25 August 1943. Rus, *Kronika mesta Metlike II*, 62.
- 97 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo Pelissierja, 14 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 11, p. e. 321, Poročilo VDO za Glavni obveščevalni center pri GŠ NOV in POS, 30 August 1943.
- 98 SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Obveščevalno poročilo Belokranjskega bataljona za čas med 8. 8. 1943 in 14. 8. 1943. SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, p. e. 1684, Poročilo štaba VDO za Glavni obveščevalni center pri GŠ NOV in POS, 20 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 59, p. e. 1684. SI AS 1851, t. e. 10, p. e. 284, Poročilo Okrožne komisije VOS Bela krajina za Centralno komisijo VOS, August 1943.
- 99 Penca, *Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III*, 17. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, *Zemljevid tras zapore meje proti NDH*, Poveljstvo inženirije divizije Isonzo, 14 August 1943.

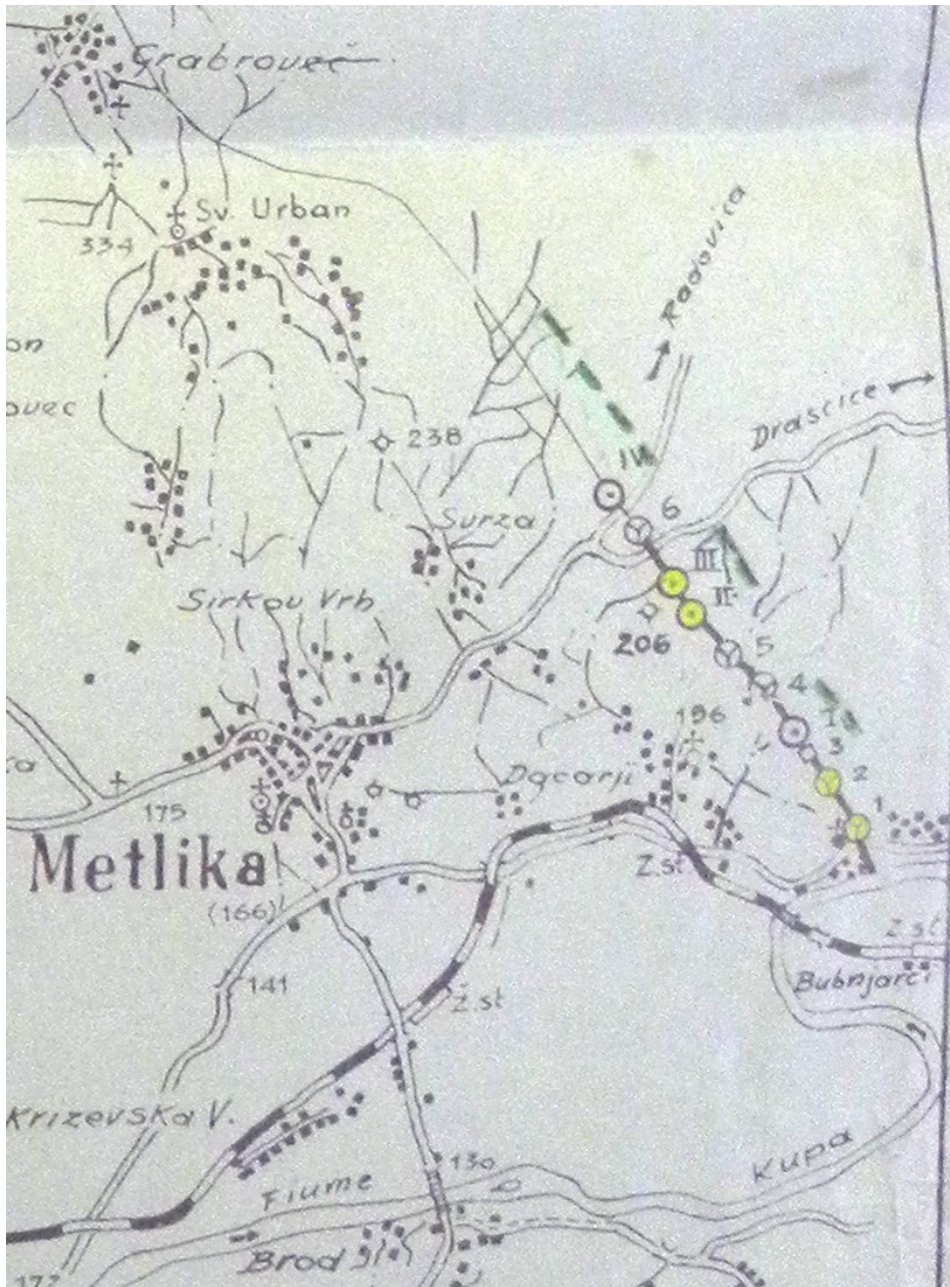


Fig. 7: A detail of a map produced by the Isonzo Division. It shows the construction of the sealed border with the NDH to the east of Metlika, 14 August 1943. Bunkers are marked with circles and connected with barbed wire. Yellow circles represent bunkers whose construction had begun by 14 August 1943. Other circles represent bunkers that were built at a later point. Green lines along the fortified border indicate deforestation.

The Epilogue of the Sealed Border with the NDH

Owing to Italy's capitulation, the closure of the border with the NDH remained an unfinished project. Around 27 kilometres of barbed wire were installed between Kostanjevica and the hamlet of Pušče, 46 fortified structures were built along this and another two were still under construction. These structures included 34 bunkers (some of which were made of wood, others were masonry) and 12 solid forts or large bunkers (two of which were remodelled existing houses) manned by a 12-strong company. The last bunker of this kind stood at the top of the hillock Gomile.¹⁰⁰ At least six border crossings were built along with bunkers next to the barbed-wire fence.¹⁰¹

Starting from the river Kolpa near Rosalnica, six bunkers were built in the direction of Gabrovec and Žumberak from the beginning of August 1943 to 8 September 1943, with three other bunkers still being under construction at that time. The last bunker was set up at a spot height of 206 meters, to the north of Rosalnica, in front of the intersection of the routes to Slamna Vas and Radovica. Measuring two kilometres in length, barbed wire was installed as far as this fork and continued in the direction of Gabrovec.¹⁰² It is unknown where the construction of the barbed-wire fence came to a halt. Taking into consideration remnants on location, we can assume that this happened approximately in the area of Berčice, to the south-east of the Church of St Urban on Gabrovec. This implies that another two kilometres of barbed wire were installed from the aforementioned crossroads in the direction of Gabrovec, i.e. a total of about four kilometres from the river Kolpa.¹⁰³

Following Italy's capitulation, the closed border with the NDH no longer served its purpose, and was not used as a defence line by the German Army. Partisan troops, civilians and field workers removed barbed wire and demolished the bulk of bunkers.¹⁰⁴

Remnants of the Italian fortified border beneath the Gorjanci hill range were still being removed in November and December 1943. The 3rd Battalion of the Gubec Brigade reported on 3 November 1943 that the German soldiers had collected Italian

100 Oral source: Ana and Miha Rukše, Gabrje, 16 and 17 February 2019. SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, skica žice in bunkerjev skozi Gomile pri vasi Gabrje. SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943. Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III,17. SI AS 1865, t. e. 211, Obveščevalno poročilo za štab VDO, 12 August 1943. Stanislav Sluga, Šest kolov se je zapičilo, <https://youtu.be/j7qZi027gVU>, 1:50-2:38, 3:24-4:38.

101 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Karta inženirije divizije Isonzo, 30 July 1943. Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III,17.

102 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Poročilo poveljnika inženirije divizije Isonzo, 14. August 1943 and 25 August 1943. SI AS 1851, t. e. 11, p. e. 321, Poročilo VDO za Glavni obveščevalni center pri GŠ NOV in POS, 30 August 1943.

103 SI AS 1773, t. e. 773, Zemljevid tras zapore meje proti NDH, Poveljstvo inženirije divizije Isonzo, 14 August 1943.

104 Penca, Nesojena meja pod Gorjanci. Part III, 17. Ambrožič, *Gubčeva brigada*, 360, 478. SI AS 1494, t. e. 2, Prepis poročilo RK KPS Gorjanci Okrožnemu komitetu KPS Novo mesto, 14 September 1943. Kušljan, Šentjerneje je bil trikrat ograjen, <https://youtu.be/g1-19cOIsW0>, 3:18-4:14.

barbed wire. Most probably, this occurred in the vicinity of Kostanjevica.¹⁰⁵ On 6 December 1943 the Gubec Brigade wrote the following instructions:

“Civilians, men, women or children, residing near barbed wire running beneath the Gorjanci hill range are ordered to collect barbed-wire obstacles and all stakes and hand them over to our field workers by 8 December 1943 at the latest. Our patrols will control this and inform us if this order is obeyed. Therefore, we warn you to take the matter seriously! On top of that, we order that all bunkers in your villages or in our vicinity disappear as soon as possible!”¹⁰⁶

No reports about the work done are preserved.

The locals used the construction material (stones, bricks) to rebuild their homes after the end of the war. Barbed wire was repurposed as well, and was used to fence in pastures and gardens, as wire mesh in slab foundations, for drying corncobs, and so on.¹⁰⁷



Fig. 8: Remnants of barbed wire in the area of Berčice near the village of Grabrovec, 28 March 2019. The location corresponds to the Italian map showing the sealing of the border with the NDH.

105 SI AS 1845, t. e. 2, p. e. 10, Poročilo III. bataljona Gubčeve brigade štabu Gubčeve brigade, 3 November 1943. Ambrožič, *Gubčeva brigada*, 413.

106 SI AS 1845, t. e. 1, mapa 2, ovoj 5, Odredba IV: bataljona Gubčeve brigade, 6 December 1943. Ambrožič, *Gubčeva brigada*, 478.

107 Oral source: Terezija Ovničec, Dolž, 15 February 2019. Ana Rukše and Mihael Rukše, Gabrje, 16 February and 17 February 2019.



Figs. 9 and 10: Remnants of barbed wire in the location of the border with the NDH in the vicinity of Dolenji Suhadol, 30 March 2019.

Near Rosalnice in Bela krajina, the locals demolished two bunkers after the end of World War II. Subsequently, they were not allowed to do this. Anton Kočever, a villager of Rosalnice, gave an account of these events in 2009.¹⁰⁸ Four Italian bunkers that were built on the border with the NDH are preserved until the present day. The foundations of a bunker that stood next to the railway bridge across Kolpa, the starting point of the barbed-wire fence on the border with the NDH in Bela krajina, are preserved as well.¹⁰⁹



Fig. 11: A bunker in the vicinity of the village of Radoviči, 27 December 2015.

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¹⁰⁸ Bezek-Jakše, *Od bunkerja do bunkerja*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ SI AS 1865, t. e. 211 Obveščevalno poročilo s skicami, 19 August 1943. Božidar Flajšman, Blaž Štangelj, *Utrjena linija med Italijo in NDH v Beli krajini*. <https://youtu.be/3WphYMxAkUw>, 0:10–0:25, 0:50–1:40, 2:13–3:02, 3:29–4:01.

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- Fig. 6, ARS, SI AS 1773, t. e. 773.
- Fig. 7, photographed by Blaž Štangelj.
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- Fig. 11, photographed by Blaž Štangelj.

Summary

Blaž Štangelj

The Italian Army's Closure of the Border with the Independent State of Croatia

In 1942, the Italian army drafted a plan to close a section of the border between the Province of Ljubljana and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). They intended to fence it off with barbed wire and fortify it with bunkers and military outposts. The original plan was not realized, however, and the fortified border that was built followed the actual border with the NDH along the ridge of the Gorjanci hill range and headed towards the river Kolpa. A fortified blockade of the border, consisting of barbed wire, fortified structures (bunkers) and border crossings, was built in 1943, at the foothills of Gorjanci, and from the river Kolpa to the east of Metlika, in the direction of Žumberk. It was believed that this blockade would prevent partisans in Žumberk and Gorjanci from crossing into the nearby villages and hamper their efforts to obtain food. The construction was carried out by the engineering unit of the Isonzo Division and the mobilized locals. The construction of the border blockade consisted of four stages. The first stage began on 13

January 1943, in the village of Šmarje (to the south of Šentjernej), when a barbed-wire corridor was built, measuring six metres in width and shaped as a trapezoid, in the direction of Kostanjevica. The second stage began around 10 March 1943, when a barbed-wire corridor was installed from the river Krka, about one kilometre to the east of Kostanjevica, in the direction of Šmarje. These two branches were joined on 12 April 1943, in the vicinity of the village of Zaboršt. This date marks the end of the first two stages. The third stage began on 13 April 1943, when barbed wire was installed from Šmarje along the planned route in the direction of Tolsti Vrh and the village of Gabrje. The third stage ended in the hamlet of Pušče, near the village of Dolž, where on 8 September 1943, following Italy's capitulation, the construction of the fortified border below the Gorjanci hill range was halted. Between Kostanjevica and the village of Pušče, 27 kilometres of barbed wire was installed, while 46 fortified structures (bunkers) were built, two of which were not finished. The fourth stage was the construction of the fortified border in Bela krajina.

The construction of barbed-wire fencing and bunkers began on 22 July 1943, in the vicinity of the railway bridge near Rosalnice, in the Metlika area. The fourth stage ended on 8 September 1943, with the capitulation of Italy. About 4 kilometres of barbed wire were erected and six bunkers were built, with three never finished. The plan was for the corridor of barbed wire and bunkers to go from Dolž to the western part of the Gorjanci hill range, where it would merge with the corridor running northwards from Gabrovec. The plans remained unfulfilled, as the Italian Army was stopped by their country's capitulation. The Italian guarded border blockade hindered partisans but could not prevent them from crossing the border. It was attacked several times, with certain sections of barbed wire being destroyed and penetrated. Following the capitulation of Italy, partisans and locals removed the bulk of bunkers and barbed wire. The remnants identifiable on site remind us of the former Italian blockade of the border with the NDH.

*Bojan Godeša**

“Theirs We Do Not Want, Ours We Do Not Give.” The Slovene Resistance Movement and the Question of Borders During the Occupation 1941–1945**

Contemplations on the extent of territorial claims made by the resistance movement can be defined by way of a maxim that became best known after Tito’s speech at the ceremony marking the second anniversary of the formation of the 1st Dalmatian Brigade on Vis on 12 September 1944, when he addressed the territorial claims for the first time:

“We are approaching a time when we will have to speak about the borders of our state. We have not addressed this subject throughout the war; but, I must say a few words about it. Our people have fought for freedom, for independence, for a better and happier future. However, the people have been fighting also for the freedom of our brothers that have suffered under a foreign yoke for decades. Our brothers in Istria, the Slovene Littoral and in Carinthia must and will be liberated through this fight and will live in freedom with their brothers in their homeland. This is the wish of us all and the wish of those over there. Theirs we do not want, ours we do not give. I have had to touch upon this question because we were too modest in this regard throughout the war.”¹

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1 Izvori, XIX, 122. Titov govor na proslavi ob drugi obletnici ustanovitve I. dalmatinske NOV brigade 12. septembra 1944 na Visu.

It has long been clear that Tito was not original in his speech, at least from 1966 onwards, when Janko Pleterški drew attention to the words of Boris Kidrič spoken at a conference of the Communist Party of Slovenia on Cink in the summer of 1942² regarding the principle about the border question (“We do not want to give away anything that is ours and we do not want anything that belongs to others”).³ Additionally, Prežihov Voranc concluded his text in a brochure entitled *O slovenskih mejah* (On Slovene Borders), which was written in 1942, with the wording “I do not want what is not mine – I will not give what is.”⁴

More recently Igor Grdina has pointed out that the motto “Theirs we do not want, ours we do not give” was used even before the war by the Serbian politician Milan Stojadinović.⁵ This leads us to believe that this is probably a universal motto and that we should go further back in history to look for its origin. Naturally, this does not alter its fundamental message and underpinnings, on which the resistance movement substantiated its national claims.

“The question of the borders is probably more pressing to us than it is to the British Empire. This is a specifically Slovene sensitivity that we have attempted to avoid with our general statements for a long time; however, this is becoming less and less possible. Having been divided for more than 1,000 years, Slovenes now feel that the old slogan ‘United Slovenia’ will be realized at last,”⁶ wrote Edvard Kardelj in a rather dramatic tone in December 1942 in his letter to Josip Broz Tito, outlining the importance of the border question for Slovenes.

His statement reflects the optimistic atmosphere that was present in Slovene society as to the possibility of realizing a “United Slovenia”, irrespective of the society’s political and ideological division. As repeated in his paper entitled *Aktualna poglavja iz mednarodnega prava* (“Topical Chapters in the International Law”), Lojze Ude, who was otherwise very cautious, said the following in a rather rapturous mood in a lecture held at an assembly of Slovene jurists in the liberated territory, at Suhor, on 11 October 1943:

“I think about our most sensible historical and political aspirations for united and free Slovenia. Now or never! Namely, such splendid alignment of political powers, which drive in their fight the final result of the war towards our goal of the free United Slovenia, is not likely to appear ever again.”⁷

2 DLRS, II, 98. Zapisnik partijske konference na Kočevskem Rogu 5. do 8. julija 1942.

3 Pleterški, *Osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda*, 241.

4 Godeša, Prežihov Voranc in reševanje mejnega vprašanja, 107–117.

5 Grdina, *Moda za vas*. *Dnevnik*, 10 May 2014. <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042657028/mnenja/kolumne/moda-za-vas->

6 Jesen 1942, 207: Poročilo Edvarda Kardelja dne 14. decembra 1942 J. B. Titu.

7 Ude, *Moje mnenje*, 116.

In line with the great expectations for the post-war expansion of the Slovene territory after the victory of the anti-Nazi coalition, in which lay the hopes and beliefs of an increasingly large number of people after Germany had attacked the Soviet Union, and after the initial shock following the occupation and partitioning of Slovene territory, numerous national programmes produced by various political groups or individuals began to pop up like mushrooms. Their fundamental characteristic features were immoderation and a complete lack of realism with regard to territorial claims that Slovenes would present before the Allies or at a peace conference. Subsequently, Fran Zwitter argued that, in terms of the struggle for realizing territorial claims, these suggestions did more harm than good.⁸ Some of these programmes extended as far as Udine and the Tagliamento in the west or even as far as the river Piave,⁹ in the north as far as Hohe Tauern – e.g. in the announcement *Vsem Slovencem* (To All Slovenes), which was published in Jerusalem by the emigrated members of the Slovene People’s Party (SLS) on 20 April 1941¹⁰ – and, possibly, via Semmering (Slovenized as Čemernik) as far as Wienerwald,¹¹ in the east as far as Lake Balaton and in the south as far as Varaždin and entire Istria.¹² Ljubo Sirc commented on these aspirations as follows:

“Had these demands materialized, future Slovenia would have had more Italian and German inhabitants than Slovenes. However, many addressed this issue by speaking about the need to resettle the foreign population across the border, in Germany and Italy.”¹³

In essence, this was an expression of (a lack of) political understanding of the international system and the Slovene role within it. They believed that the decision-making bodies, particularly the Western Allies, would have a complete understanding with regard to righting the historical wrongs that had been inflicted upon Slovenes in the past, or the events that they understood as such. Sirc described the atmosphere at the time with the following words: “As soon as Slovenes recovered after the defeat, they began to expect miracles from the Allied victory.”¹⁴ Stemming largely from poor knowledge of objective circumstances, this logic of complete trust in the fairness (naturally, as it was understood by Slovenes!) of the Western Allies (particularly after the publication of the Atlantic Charter) was naïve and acted as a form of psychological release after the initial

8 Zwitter, *Priprave Znanstvenega inštituta*, 258–276.

9 Sirc, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom*, 34–35.

10 SI AS 1660, sk. 6.

11 Sirc, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom*, 34–35.

12 Godeša, *Slovensko nacionalno vprašanje*, 297–305.

13 Sirc, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom*, 35.

14 Sirc, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom*, 34.

shock of the occupation, and from which a few euphoric moments that strengthened the otherwise dilapidated and downtrodden national consciousness could be made out.

However, as the international reality became clear, the subject at hand presented itself in a very different light. Franc Snoj, an émigré politician, wrote on 23 October 1941:

“United Slovenia appears to be obtainable now, with all our hereditary opponents being part of the hostile camp. However, London is filled with Italians, and Dr Krek may not say anything against the Italians, Hungarians or possibly even Austrians. All this is censored. He says that a mere handful of Englishmen are willing to speak about Trieste, which is regarded as an Italian city by everyone. [...] As to us and our demands, anti-Fascists are not much better than Fascists. There will be considerable problems with Italy, especially if it chooses to negotiate a separate peace, which is not excluded. As to Carinthia, the trouble is that we do not have a legal footing because we had lost the plebiscite, which had been led by the British delegate.”¹⁵

These realizations resulted in disillusionment and then more realistic territorial claims. As a minister in the Yugoslav government-in-exile, who strove to make the question of the border one of the priorities of the exiled government, Krek had to significantly relax the original maximalist demands, when he wrote that “it does not pay off to ask for more to get the minimum. We must take a realistic stand in the negotiations, defend it 100% and not give way.”¹⁶

More realistic territorial claims dominated the resistance movement at all times, and were based primarily on the ethnic principle, although even in this regard, initially at least, there was a “competition” with the domestic opponents as to who would turn out to be more “national”. Naturally, the importance of this “rivalry” with the anti-communist camp became less and less important and, subsequently, inconsequential because the resistance movement gained prominence and became the only legitimate body able to make demands before the international Allied community in terms of changing the border in favour of Slovenia or Yugoslavia.

The Slovene communists built their original position on the ethnic principle to delineate the territory of United Slovenia (based on the 1910 Austrian population census¹⁷) using the treatises produced by the experts in the Border Commission of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front, which operated in 1941 and in early 1942 and included experts such as Fran Zwitter, Anton Melik, Črtomir Nagode and perhaps a few others. They pointed out in their treatises, *inter alia*, that the national structure of

15 SI AS 1660, šk. 6. Pismo Franca Snoja 23. oktobra 1941 Izidorju Cankarju.

16 Mlakar, Problem zahodne meje, 314.

17 Zgodovinski pogledi na zadnje državno ljudsko štetje.

the (rural) hinterland that surrounds a city is the deciding factor in the delimitation of nationally mixed areas (referring to Lenin, even though this principle precedes him), which was important, first and foremost, in the substantiation of Trieste’s inclusion in United Slovenia. Concurrently, in a statement about Slovene borders the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia publicly expressed its position for the first time on 1 May 1942. The position that “along with the territory populated by Slovene inhabitants, the territory that was forcibly denationalized in the most recent imperialistic period” belongs in the liberated and united Slovenia as well” was substantiated by the border committee.¹⁸ Lovro Kuhar (whose pen name was Prežihov Voranc) maintained in his text entitled *O slovenskih mejah* (About Slovene Borders) that this formulation was of utmost importance, mostly from the point of view of territorial claims in Carinthia, because the inclusion of Klagenfurt/Celovec and Villach/Beljak was based on this.

In early 1942, experts in the Border Commission did not agree with the initiative of the Slovene Communists who believed that the Slovene-Croatian border would have to be outlined as well, leaving the question at hand open at the time. It was only in 1944 that this question became a more pressing one – naturally, not in terms of delimiting the national border, but in the scope of defining the control of the Slovene and Croatian resistance movements.¹⁹

The position of the resistance movement on national and political goals was formed on the basis of findings presented by experts in the Border Commission and defined in a communique of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front on 1 December 1942, which was written by Kardelj:

“The Slovene nation shall not enter the new Yugoslavia as it did in 1918, as a nation with no merits or rights, as a nation whose fate and constitution was created by others. With its struggle and victims, the contribution of the Slovene nation to the common cause, the liberation, was matched by few nations in Europe. ‘Free and United Slovenia’ extending from Trst/Trieste to Špilje/Spelfeld, from Kolpa to Celovec/Klagenfurt shall join the new Yugoslavia with all rights that will make sure that the Slovene nation will be the only master on Slovene soil.”²⁰

In line with this and following Italy’s capitulation, on 16 September 1943 the Supreme Plenum of the Liberation Front issued a decree and “proclaimed the integration of the Slovene Littoral to the free and united Slovenia within the free and democratic Yugoslavia.”²¹ A similar decree also was issued by the Croatian resistance movement. These

18 DLRS, II, 18. Proglas CK KPS za 1. maj 1942.

19 Godeša, *Slovensko-hrvaški odnosi*, 117–164.

20 Jesen 1942, 193. Komunikacije IO OF dne 1. decembra 1942 o prvem zasedanju Avnoaj.

21 DOONGS, XI, 75. Zapisnik seje vrhovnega plenuma OF 16. septembra 1943.

documents were confirmed by the highest body of the Yugoslav resistance movement, the Presidency of the AVNOJ, at the AVNOJ session held in Jajce. In doing so, the national and political goals of the Liberation Front (and at the same time also of the Croatian resistance movement) were recognized as one of the key goals of the Yugoslav resistance movement as a whole, and as a part of its official political orientation. Following the conclusion of the second session of the AVNOJ, during his meeting with the Slovene delegation in Jajce on 1 December 1943, Tito – who had been made marshal following a proposal put forward by Josip Vidmar – pointed out that “it was not only the Slovene Army that was behind the liberation of Primorska and Carinthia, it was the entire Yugoslav Army.”²²

Systematic scientific work for the preparation of materials to lay the foundations for territorial claims at the peace conference began in January 1944, after the establishment of the Scientific Institute with the leadership of the Slovene National Liberation Committee. This scientific institution was specific and unique in many respects in the European context of the period. However, concerns that it was too early to engage in the scientific study of the borders were still present, as maintained by the Institute’s president Fran Zwitter after the war:

“At the time nobody thought that the question of the border was not important; but there were many illusions that we would get everything we wanted or everything that would be occupied by our army and that the scientific work was thus not needed. These were naive illusions that we did not have at the Scientific Institute.”²³

Several papers were written in this context, such as Lojze Dular’s *Gospodarske pripombe k referatu o mejah* (Economic Remarks about the Borders), Ivo Pirkovič’s *Donesek k vprašanju Trsta* (A Contribution to the Question of Trieste), and Lojze Ude’s *Nekaj načelnih pripomb k vprašanju o mejah* (A Few Remarks about the Question of the Borders), with Zwitter’s *Problem bodočih slovenskih meja* (The Problem of Future Slovene Borders) being of key importance. All these papers were discussed at a meeting of the Scientific Institute in March 1944, but were still of an internal nature. This changed in the summer of 1944, when Kardelj demanded that materials be prepared for the international public as well. Almost concurrently with Tito’s statement that the question of borders must be addressed, it was decided at a meeting in Kočevski Rog that Zwitter would write a paper entitled *Meje Jugoslavije A. Meje slovenskega ozemlja* (The Borders of Yugoslavia A. The Borders of Slovene Territory). In 1944 this study was sent to the

22 DOONGS, XI, 93. Zapisnik sestanka slovenske delegacije na zasedanju Avnoja z maršalom Titom 1. decembra 1943 v Jajcu.

23 Zwitter, *O slovenskem narodnem vprašanju*, 494–495.

Yugoslav leadership in Slovene, as well as in English and in Russian. His text begins with a discussion of the relations between cities and the countryside and highlights the ethnic principle as a basis, whereby small corrections are required for economic and transport-related reasons. In the west, on the border with Italy, the study demands the integration of parts of valleys of the rivers Fella/Bela, Dogna/Dunja and Raccolana/Reklanica because of the connection between Resia and the Canal Valley, the integration of Tarcento/Tarčent, Nimis/Neme, Attimis/Ahten, Faedis/Fojda, Torreano/Torjan and Cividale del Friuli/Čedad to connect the Venetian Slovenes with the rest of Slovenia, as well as the integration of Dolegna del Collio/Dolenje, Prepotto/Praprotno and the railway between Cormons/Krmin and Gorizia/Gorica, whereupon the border would run along the bed of the river Soča as far as its mouth. In the chapter about the border with Austria, the study addresses the border with Carinthia, highlighting the ethnic principle, which is disregarded near Lavamünd/Labot and in the line Magdalensberg/Magdalenska Gora–Hoher Gallin/Golinje. As regards Villach/Beljak, two variants were prepared and the entire Hermagor/Šmohor court district, extending as far as its western border, was demanded. Three corrections were demanded in Steiermark/Štajerska according to the ethnic principle (Soboth/Sobota, Leutschach/Lučane, Bad Radkersburg/Radgona) and one due to traffic-related reasons (the railway between Bad Radkersburg/Radgona and Spielfeld/Špilje). The study calls for a correction on the border with Hungary, in the Rába region with Szentgotthárd/Monošter. By and large, the Yugoslav representatives used this study as a basis for substantiating their territorial claims at the Paris Peace Conference.²⁴

Along with a significantly more balanced position on territorial claims, the resistance movement differed from their domestic opponents considerably in the belief that their active involvement in the shared struggle with the Allies against the Axis powers was of vital importance for materializing their national and political goals. This would ensure, along with their moral rights, an important starting point for negotiations at the peace conference, where the new borders would be defined.

In the autumn of 1944, when the question of the post-war regime began to come to the foreground, Kardelj wrote:

“The problem of these borders is thus becoming a general European political question and will have to be addressed in a manner that will not allow for a considerable discussion. In short, Italians must be faced with an inconvertible fact. [...] Considering the practice observed thus far, we can say that what is at the hands of our army will remain ours. You should strive to liberate as much territory as possible.”²⁵

24 Zwitter, *Priprave Znanstvenega inštituta*, 258–276.

25 Izvori, XX, 21. Pismo Edvarda Kardelja dne 1. oktobra 1944 CK KPS.

In line with this belief, the Yugoslav troops liberated Trieste in May 1945, well as the territory extending as far as the river Soča and arrived even in Carinthia. United Slovenia thus became a reality, even if only for a few days in May. Following the conclusion of the Trieste Crisis, the Yugoslav Army had to retreat from Trieste on 12 June 1945 and from Carinthia a few days before that. The Treaty of Peace with Italy was signed by representatives of 21 states (one of which was Yugoslavia) in Paris on 10 February 1947 (it came into force on 15 September 1947), the delimitation line between Yugoslavia and Italy (the 1920 Rapallo border was in force up to that point) was altered to the benefit of Yugoslavia (Croatia obtained the bulk of Istria, the islands, Zadar and Rijeka) and, consequently, Slovenia, with parts of Primorska and Notranjska being integrated into Slovenia. The Free Territory of Trieste was established as an independent state at the conference; however, the administration remained at the hands of the Allied military administration in Zone A and the Yugoslav People's Army in Zone B because an agreement about appointing a governor could not be reached by the UN Security Council. After the London Memorandum had been signed by the USA, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia and Italy in October 1954, the Free Territory of Trieste was divided between Yugoslavia and Italy. Subsequently, the final change of the border was confirmed with the Treaty of Osimo in 1975.

Unlike World War I, when several nation states came into being on the ruins of empires, including Finland, the Baltic states, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which is referred to as "Versailles Europe", the end of World War II in Europe did not result in a radically changed socio-political cartography.²⁶ This was not the purpose and goal of the Allies, who pointed out that in this regard they differed significantly from the Axis powers that sought to introduce a "new order" by drastically changing state borders. The Allies' plans for post-war Europe, first and foremost, strove for the formation of compact nationally homogeneous states that would ensure post-war stability in the space between the Soviet Union and Western Europe. Up to that point, this space was justifiably regarded as a source of various conflicts that had a significant impact on Hitler's rise and, consequently, on the beginning of World War II. The formation of nationally homogeneous states was, in accordance with the Allied goals, realized after the war by means of the migration of the population, not by moving the state borders. The consequence of this decision, which had been made by the Allies during the war, was the expulsion of national minorities from the states in this space, particularly the German minority and partly the Hungarian minority. Additionally, the "narrative" concerning the departure of the Italian population from areas that were integrated into Yugoslavia belongs, in essence, to this context.

In accordance with this philosophy only two radical changes of the borders came into being in Europe after the war (barring a few minor corrections); namely, the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union (naturally, with all related significant changes) and the

26 Calvocoressi et al., *Total War: Causes and Courses*.

change of the Yugoslav-Italian border, with the integration of a large part of Primorska. However, we have to draw attention to the difference that – in terms of changing the Rapallo border to the benefit of Yugoslavia – the Allies in the anti-German coalition were in principled agreement at all times. Even before 6 April 1941 the British government promised post-war support for Yugoslav territorial claims towards Italy at the peace conference if its representatives fought alongside the Allies. The Soviet Union was also favourably disposed towards a revision of the existing Yugoslav-Italian border in the early stage of the war, when the issue of who would rule Yugoslavia after the liberation was not yet relevant. In this regard, irrespective of their different post-war positions on the extent of the territory that was to be integrated into Yugoslavia, this attests to the shared belief that this position was justifiable, in contrast with the recognition of the Soviet Union’s post-war borders (without recognizing the integration of the Baltic states in 1940) and the related Polish “shift” towards the west, on the borders on the rivers Oder and Nysa and Germany’s territorial shrinkage. Namely, in this case, with respect to the situation at the time, this was actually more or less a confirmation of the existing state of affairs. In light of such structure of Europe’s post-war organization, the integration of a large part of Primorska into Yugoslavia (Slovenia) is all the more important. A unanimous decision of the Big Three about the justification of shifting the Yugoslav-Italian border to the benefit of Yugoslavia after World War II – despite their principled policy of the unchangeability of European borders – is to be understood in this context, first and foremost, as a remarkable exception or, better, as a unique decision in the scope of the agreed principled Allied policy in post-war Europe. It was based on the principle of unchangeability of borders and the recognition of the pre-war status quo, with the year 1938 as a starting point, i.e. before the beginning of Germany’s territorial expansion with the annexation of Austria.

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Summary

Bojan Godeša

“Theirs We Do Not Want, Ours We Do Not Give.” The Slovene Resistance Movement and the Question of Borders During the Occupation 1941–1945

The way in which the Slovene/Yugoslav resistance movement based its territorial demands on the ethnic principle was best expressed by Josip Broz Tito in his speech during the celebration of the second anniversary of the founding of the 1st Dalmatian National Liberation Brigade on 12 September 1944, in Vis, when he first publicly spoke about territorial demands: “Theirs we do not want, ours we do not give”, although it should be noted that this sentiment was not exactly original, and had been used before in different contexts by others. It can thus be seen as a universal slogan, which, of course, does not alter its basic message and the underpinnings on which the resistance movement based its national demands.

In December 1942, Edvard Kardelj described the significance of the border issue for Slovenes in a letter to Josip Broz Tito: “The question of the borders is probably more pressing to us than it is to the British Empire. This is a specifically Slovene sensitivity that we have attempted to avoid with our general statements for a long time; however, this is becoming less and less possible. Having been divided for more than 1,000 years, Slovenes now feel that the old slogan ‘United Slovenia’ will be realized at last.”

The statement reflects the optimistic mood that prevailed in Slovene society at the time about the possibility of achieving “United Slovenia”, regardless of the political and ideological obstacles. In accordance with the great expectation of the post-war expansion of Slovene territory after the victory of the anti-Nazi coalition, many national programmes of various political groups, as well as individuals whose basic characteristic was immoderation and complete lack of realism regarding territorial demands expressed to the Allies at the peace conference, began to grow like weeds.

The resistance movement, however, had always been dominated by substantive territorial requirements based primarily on the ethnic principle, as justified by experts in the Border Committee operating within the Liberation Front. Although in this respect, at least in the initial period, there was a certain “competition” with domestic opponents of who would prove to be more “national”. Of course, this “rivalry” with the anti-communist camp was becoming increasingly, and then completely irrelevant, since the development of events went towards enforcing the will of the resistance movement, which at the end of the war became the only legitimate carrier of demands regarding the change of the borders in Slovenia’s or Yugoslavia’s favour with the international Allied community.

The peace treaty with Italy, signed in Paris on 10 February 1947 (and which entered into force on 15 September 1947) changed the border between Yugoslavia and Italy significantly,

favouring Yugoslavia and thus Slovenia by annexing parts of Primorska and Notranjska. Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by the United States, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia, and Italy in October 1954 in London, the Free Territory of Trieste was divided between Yugoslavia and Italy. The definite change of the border was confirmed in 1975 by the Treaty of Osimo.

World War II in Europe – unlike World War I, when several nation-states emerged from the ruins of empires, from Finland and the Baltic States to the Kingdom of SHS, known as “Versailles Europe” – did not result in radical changes in socio-political cartography. It was not the purpose and the objective of the Allies, who particularly emphasized that in this respect they differed from the Axis powers, which sought to create a “new order” with a radical change of national borders. The Allied post-war plans for Europe were primarily aimed at creating compact, nationally homogeneous states, which would provide post-war stability in the buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, which was rightly considered the root of numerous conflicts that significantly influenced Hitler’s rise and, consequently, the onset of World War II. The formation of nationally homogeneous states was, in accordance with such Allied assumptions after the war, carried out by relocating the population rather than moving national borders.

According to such a philosophy, there were only two radical changes to the borders after the war, namely the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union and the change of the Yugoslav-Italian border, including the annexation of a large part of Primorska. The unanimous decision of the Big Three on the justification of moving the Yugoslav-Italian border in favour of Yugoslavia after World War II, despite their principled policy on the immutability of post-war European borders, must therefore be seen as a major exception in this context, or even as a unique decision within the agreed Allied policy on post-war Europe.

*Aleš Gabrič**

Borders and Restrictions**

The Borders and a Limited Supply

Whenever and wherever borders are outlined anew they make a deep cut into the lives of the population. They disrupt everyday life, separate family members, friends and acquaintances who end up on different sides of the border, make the traditional movement of goods difficult or even impossible. Many people cannot continue with their education due to the changed borders, nor go to shops, medical, cultural and other institutions. The new borders disrupt traffic connections that were used on a daily basis. People begin to wonder what is available to them, and when – or even if – the good old times will return.

The division of the Drava Banovina or the Slovene part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia made a deep cut in the people's lives, it ran much deeper than elsewhere in occupied Europe. This was because the delimitation between Germany and Italy was not based on old or natural borders as it ran more to the south than the former border between Carniola and Styria. In the case of Gorenjska, parts of the former Carniola were separated from its southern areas, with which they had shared the same fate for centuries. Prekmurje, which was integrated into Hungary, saw the old Hungarian border re-emerge on the river Mura and the border between Germany and Hungary in Prekmurje diverged slightly from the old one. Additionally, a few villages became part of the Independent State of Croatia when the new delimitation was outlined in a section of the Slovene eastern ethnic border. However, these two sections were short and were not

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etched as deeply in the conscience of the majority of the Slovene population as was the new border between Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.

Having been outlined in 1941, these new borders caused many difficulties to people living along them, many of whom now owned land on both sides of the border. Germany and the Independent State of Croatia introduced new border crossings in October 1941, others followed suit. Consequently, new border crossings were built, particularly those for people who had land on both sides of the border. Naturally, this meant that they had to obtain new papers.¹ Farmers living along these new borders recounted how they affected their work. Rudi Gaber from the village of Serdica in Prekmurje, which was divided by the new border between Germany and Hungary, mentioned that some owners of large farms faced difficulties because the mill that ground their produce ended up in the neighbouring state.²

The disruption of day-to-day operations was felt in Ljubljana as well. Following the introduction of the new border, passengers taking a tram from Šentvid to the city centre had to get off at the checkpoint, walk through the border control and get on the tram again. Those in charge of the tram service realized that this did not make any sense and caused considerable delays, and thus this line was simply cut short in October 1941, terminating at the tram depot, not far from where it began.³ German-occupied Štajerska and Gorenjska were situated across the border and had no direct connections because the traffic between them ran via Ljubljana. Not to be contingent upon the transport via a "neighbouring state", the railway line Laze–Črnuče–Šentvid nad Ljubljano was built to connect the railway of Štajerska and Gorenjska. This line began its operation in 1942 and was disassembled after the war.⁴ Gorenjska was administratively integrated into (Austrian) Carinthia, although there was lack of transport connections between them. The Germans built the Ljubelj tunnel to ensure better connections in the territory within this administrative unit. It was built by prisoners interned in the Podljubelj camp, a subcamp of the Mauthausen labour camp. The tunnel breakthrough occurred in 1944.

That people found themselves on different sides of the border became evident when former business partners or customers all of a sudden could not use the same currency to pay for goods or products. To expedite the integration of these parts into their state frameworks, the occupiers replaced the Yugoslav dinar with their respective currencies. Hungary was particularly swift in this regard, and introduced the pengő as early as in May 1942, while Germany and Italy followed suit in June, when the Reichsmark and lira were introduced, respectively. Everybody suffered damages,

1 Klasinc, *Okupacija dela slovenske zemlje*, 38–39.

2 Gaber, Nacist je s škornjem določil mejo v Serdici. https://youtu.be/j_IQrWi2Nbc

3 Brate, Tadej: *Ljubljanski tramvaj*, 110–112.

4 Rustja, Proge, 315.

regardless of on which side of the border they ended up, and the exchange rates imposed benefited the occupiers and hurt the local population.



Fig. 1: Tram Line 1, January 1942, operating a shorter line, only as far as Šiška.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of the state authorities is to provide the most basic supplies to the population, which is not easy to do in wartime, particularly in areas divided by new borders. In occupied Slovenia, this was particularly problematic in the largest Slovene city, whose gravitational surroundings shrunk considerably. Farmers from Ljubljana's southern or eastern suburban areas, who had previously sold their produce in the Ljubljana market, could continue to do so. However, those coming to the city from areas to the north of Ljubljana had to discontinue their operation because they ended up living on the other side of the border. In the days immediately after the attack on Yugoslavia supplies were lacking in many areas. In the weeks after the occupation the new authorities thus introduced decrees associated with the provision of necessities.

It was not the occupation of Slovene territory itself that brought about supply-related restrictions to the civilian population. World War I – when what was thought to be a short war turned out to be an exhausting, years-long military conflict that resulted in severe shortages on the fronts and behind them – was still a recent memory, and many states introduced food rations even before the conflicts began or immediately after that. Germany and Italy introduced food rations before the April War in 1941. Slovenes were familiar with the restrictions introduced by the occupation authorities because in 1939, in the year when the war began, Yugoslavia had already introduced control over foodstuffs.

From October 1940 onwards, the food office Prevod was in charge of the food supply of the population in the Drava Banovina. It was responsible for maintaining the food supply along with the acquisition and distribution of basic living items. Due to the war in Europe the price of basic foodstuffs began to increase and the authorities adopted regulations that introduced price ceilings, although these could not prevent soaring prices. Two meatless days, which were introduced in May 1940, were an obvious indicator of shortages. This implied that meat could not be bought at the butcher's or in shops for two days in a week. A lower standard was also noticeable in the case of bread, and the regulations stipulated a low percentage of wheat flour and increased shares of other ingredients, particularly corn flour. In the Drava Banovina, food stamps, initially for flour and pasta, were introduced in early 1941, which implies that shortages were not caused by the war but were certainly aggravated by it. This holds true particularly for Ljubljana, which was cut off from its hinterland, after 1942, when the city was encircled with barbed wire, and the provision of food supplies was also hindered in areas under the Italian occupying administration.⁵

Italians took over the food office Prevod after the occupation. In the first year of the war the food coupons regulated individual's daily food ration, which equalled about 1,030 calories a day during wartime.⁶ However, newcomers from the north of Slovenia who did not have the right of domicile in the Province of Ljubljana were not entitled to coupons. Germany managed to secure more food supplies and, initially, food coupons for different foodstuffs – equivalent to 1,213 calories a day – could be obtained. However, the differences among recipients in the German-occupied area were considerable. Initially, the attempts to modernize agriculture in the German-occupied areas resulted in more agricultural produce, and farmers had surpluses. However, they could not dispose of them freely, and were obliged to hand them over to the state. The distribution of food was based on the Nazi racial classifications. Citizens of the German Reich were entitled to more than the so-called *Schutzangehörige*, i.e. non-German inhabitants of

5 Šorn, *Naši želodci so kakor vrt*, 333.

6 Šorn, *Življenje Ljubljančanov*, 191.

PRIVATLEHRANSTALT M. KOWATSCH
MARBURG a/D., OBERE HERRENGASSE 14

Zahl: 76/1941. Schuljahr: 1940/1941

ZEUGNIS

Fräulein S a w e t z Irene,

geboren am 6. Februar 1925 in Lorenzen / Draufeld

hat den »Einjährigen Handelskurs Kowatsch« in Marburg a/D. vom 9. September 1940 bis 30. Juni 1941 vollständig besucht und in den einzelnen Gegenständen nachstehende Erfolge erzielt:

Kaufmännisches Rechnen	vorzüglich
Buchhaltung mit Kontorarbeiten	vorzüglich
Deutsche Handelskorrespondenz	lobenswert
Handelskunde und Wechsellehre	vorzüglich
Warenkunde	vorzüglich
Handelsgeographie	vorzüglich
Deutsche Kurzschrift	lobenswert
Maschinenschreiben	lobenswert
Schönschreiben	vorzüglich

Im Zeitpunkte der Befreiung der Untersteiermark sind im Kataloge noch folgende Noten verzeichnet:

Slowenische Handelskorrespondenz	vorzüglich
Serbokroatische Handelskorrespondenz	vorzüglich
Slowenische Stenographie	lobenswert
Äussere Form der schriftlichen Arbeiten	sehr gefällig

MARBURG a/D., am 30. Juni 1941.

M. KOWATSCH
Handelschule
— Marburg Draufeld —
Herrengasse 14
Telefon 33-33

Für den Lehrkörper:
M. Kowatsch
Direktor.

Auf Grund der Zuschrift des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark v. 18. VI. 1941, E. Zl. 13641/1941 erspart dieses Zeugnis ein Jahr Lehrzeit im Handelsgewerbe.

Rangstufen der Noten: 5 = vorzüglich, 4 = lobenswert, 3 = gut, 2 = genügend, 1 = nicht genügend.

Marburger Druckerei, Marburg a. D.

Fig. 2: In June 1941 the new rules for trade were presented in German in Maribor. However, the majority had no command of this language and Slovene had to be used as well.

areas integrated into the Reich. Foreign labourers, Poles, Jews, and Romani were positioned even lower, and thus entitled to a smaller amount of food. The situation began to deteriorate rapidly when Germany began losing the war, when the bulk of the male population was mobilized and with the expansion of the resistance movement. Families whose members had joined partisans lost their right to food stamps. In late 1942 German authority holders in Štajerska realized that it had become increasingly difficult to secure enough food supplies for the population, and thus they began to reduce the stipulated quantity. The situation was even worse in areas where agriculture was not a primary economic industry, e.g. industrial towns in Gorenjska or in mining towns in the valley of the river Meža, because the level of self-supply was even lower there. However, the food provision in the German-occupied territory up to the end of the war was better than in the Province of Ljubljana. In the last month of the war the population of Lower Styria received coupons equalling 954 calories a day, whereas the inhabitants of Ljubljana received coupons equivalent to 674 calories. The end of the war did not bring about the end of shortages, as the transport network was destroyed to a large extent, there was a shortage of railway wagons, the land was not tilled and the next full harvest was months away.⁷

Incentives for the Economic Modernization on the One Hand and Stagnation on the Other

New borders resulted in very different perspectives on economic development. Areas integrated into Hungary and Croatia were not included in any ambitious economic plans due to their agrarian orientation and backwardness, as well as the fact that they were situated on the outskirts of their respective states. The German- and Italian-occupied areas were subject to very different economic developments designed by their respective occupier. The division of the Yugoslav and thus Slovene territory was planned by Germany, which appropriated the most developed parts of Slovenia. Gorenjska, Štajerska and Koroška (the valley of the river Meža) boasted more than 70% of industrial capacity of the Drava Banovina. This was the one of the most electrified parts of Slovenia (and Yugoslavia), and plans were made to build new hydro-power plants on the river Drava. The supplies of coal in the Zasavje region, which was well connected to the railway system, were important as well. Much like many others, this road crossed the river Sava, the natural border between Carniola and Styria, and with the new border, the most powerful occupier gained control of the most important traffic connection. The opportunities for the more rapid development of agriculture were sparse because in Yugoslavia the agricultural economy was rather stagnant,

7 Himmelreich, *Prebrana v Sloveniji*, 298–305.

as the produce from the state's south was cheaper. However, more attention was paid to agriculture in Štajerska and Gorenjska during wartime, striving for self-supply and seeking to make good use of the potential at hand.

Italian occupiers had more difficulties – even if we disregard Italy's lack of preparedness with regard to occupying the territory in question – because they integrated an area that was mostly agrarian in nature and whose agricultural industry did not show any real signs of modernization. Agricultural land was scattered, which had a negative impact on producing a food surplus. Ljubljana was the only important industrial centre, while elsewhere there were only small industrial plants. Upwards of one-quarter of industrial capacity of the former Drava Banovina belonged to Italy, with the majority of industry in towns being wood-processing plants that made use of the most important raw material in these parts – lumber. All of a sudden, Ljubljana, having been the administrative and cultural centre of the Slovene territory, became too large a city for a territory such as the Province of Ljubljana. Many Slovene intellectuals from the northern parts of the Slovene territory fled to Ljubljana from areas under German occupation, which aggravated the problem of providing the most basic supplies to the population there.



Fig. 3: A bilingual invitation to a fair in Ljubljana.

Germany introduced the new economic principles in the most systematic way. Its economic policy was had proven effective in Germany itself, and it occupied the most vital areas in Slovenia that had seen investments from Austria and Bohemia in the previous decades. Germany occupied the aforementioned states even before the beginning of the war, and had thus control over a portion of the Slovene territory's economic potential. After the occupation this share grew with the confiscation of the former Yugoslav property and that of the *banovina*, as well as with the confiscation of properties belonging to the discontinued ecclesiastical institutions and confiscated businesses. By controlling ownership of the bulk of economic concerns, Germany was able to transfer its policy of economic development, which was subject to military requirements, to Štajerska, Gorenjska and Koroška without difficulties.

Germany sought to integrate this territory into its economic system as closely as possible, and consequently planned to build new premises and modernize some of the existing industrial plants. These investments were, much like everything else in the state, tailored to fit the needs of Germany's military requirements. Consequently, traffic connections, mines and heavy industry plants had to function impeccably. Their employees were thus not the first to be conscripted into the German Army, and they did their obligatory military service in their workplaces. Moreover, with the resettlement of a portion of the population and the conscription of young men who were born in the same years, the Slovene territory was faced with a shortage of workforce, as did other parts of occupied Europe, and German industry thus exploited the labour of prisoners interned in camps. The most important industrial plant in the plans of the German occupiers was the bauxite and aluminium production company in Strnišče pri Ptujju. It had good growth potential, obtained ore in Hungary and had good railway connections due to its location near the river Drava that would provide electricity for its operations. There was a lack of workers, but this did not trouble the occupiers that much, as they began to use prisoners of war in the production and the labour camp was turned into a concentration camp. The construction of an aircraft parts factory in Tezno, Maribor, was associated with the aluminium production in Strnišče, as were plans for building new hydropower plants on Drava.

By integrating Ljubljana with its surroundings, Dolenjska and Notranjska, Italy obtained a territory with no significant mineral resources. Lumber from extensive forests was the most important raw material, but with partisan troops being stationed there the occupier was not able to exploit these large, wooded areas. The territory integrated into Italy was thus unable to provide sustenance for its population. Additionally, Ljubljana was a capital that was too large for an area with such a lack of development. Wood-processing plants were not updated, nor were other types of plants, whose development potential was even worse.⁸

8 Ferenc, *Gospodarstvo pod okupacijo*, 592–601.

The border between the German- and Italian-occupied zones thus also became a dividing line between parts of Slovenia where the (non-conscripted) local population could find employment or unemployment was on the decrease, and areas without a broader perspective of economic development. The border divided Slovenia's northern parts that had better organized supplies for the civilian population and its southern parts, where shortages became worse year by year. However, by the end of the year shortages were also felt acutely in the areas that had been less affected by the war up to that point.

Imposing New Identities

Occupation borders also outlined territories whose attitudes towards Sloveneness, the Slovene language and culture were very different. The German-Italian border was in this regard the most prominent dividing line. The Germans sought to Germanize the population as soon as possible, and tailored attitudes towards the language and cultural institutions to fit this goal. In contrast, the Italians introduced bilingualism, allowing Slovene to be used alongside Italian. Under German rule, the National Theatre in Maribor was discontinued and replaced by a municipal theatre that operated solely in German and had an entertaining, popular programme. Meanwhile, the National Theatre in Ljubljana was turned into State Theatre/Teatro di Stato (Staatstheater after Italy's capitulation) – the performances were still in Slovene but included many plays written by Italian authors. Slovene libraries in the Province of Ljubljana were allowed to operate (as much as they could, given the conditions), while the Germans destroyed Slovene books in their territory and banned Slovene societies. Slovene intellectuals were among the first to be placed on resettlement lists in the German-occupied territory, whereas in the Italian-occupied areas they were allowed to operate if they yielded to the demands of the new authorities. What these restrictions implied is illustrated by a memorandum that representatives of the most renowned cultural institutions handed in to the highest representative of the civil occupying administration. It was pointed out in this memorandum that the Italian Army “occupied a part of Slovenia” and they defended their right to the Slovene language and culture. Consequently, this communication was not spoken about. By contrast, in the introduction to *Dom in svet*, the only important Slovene literary periodical, which gave in to the new conditions and continued to be published, includes references to the great Italian Empire and Italian leaders, not to Slovenia.⁹

9 Gabrič, Slovenske kulturne ustanove, 42–45.

Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt

des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark

1941 Ausgegeben in Marburg am 25. September 1941. Nr. 43

Inhalt

Verordnung über die gebietliche Gliederung der Untersteiermark vom 20. September 1941. 315

Verordnung über die gebietliche Gliederung der Untersteiermark.

Nachdem die organisatorische Gliederung der Untersteiermark zum Abschluß gekommen ist, ordne ich auf Grund der mir erteilten Ermächtigung an:

§ 1

Die Untersteiermark gliedert sich in folgende Stadt- und Landkreise:

1. Stadtkreis Marburg an der Drau

2. Landkreis Marburg an der Drau mit folgenden politischen Gemeinden:

Bachern
Egidi in den Böheln (früher St. Egidi i. W. B.)
Frauenberg bei Marburg (früher Kromsch)
Frauheim
Freesen (früher Remschlag)
Georgenberg (früher St. Georgen a. d. Pöbnitz)
Gonobitz
Hagau (früher Oplowitz)
Hartenstein (früher St. Martin b. Windschgraz)
Hohenmauten (früher Hohenmauthen)
Hohentauern (früher Retschach)
Jahring
Jakobsthal (früher St. Jakob i. W. B.)
Kappel
Kerschbach
Kunigund (früher Ober-St. Kunigund)
Lapriach (früher Laporje)
Lorenzen am Bachera (früher St. Lorenzen ob Marburg)
Mahrenberg
Oberulsgau
Pankenstein (früher Heiligengeist in Lotsche)
Pölschach
Pragerhof (früher Unterulsgau)
Prettau (früher Pritchowa)
Raas (früher Maria-Raas)
Ranzenberg (früher Pöbnitz)
Reifing
Richterberg (früher Pamatisch)
Rotterberg (früher Podveleka)
Saldenhofen
St. Martin am Bachern
Schleinitz bei Marburg (früher Schleinitz)
Schobber

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Täubling
Wachsenberg (früher St. Margarethen a. d. Pöbnitz)
Waldegg (früher Mähling)
Weitenstein
Widerdriß (früher Radwald)
Windschfeistritz (früher Windsch-Feistritz)
Windschgraz
Witscheln
Wuchern
Wurz
Zelitzsch an der Drau.

Für die politischen Gemeinden Hartenstein, Richterberg, Waldegg, Widerdriß und Windschgraz wird eine **Außenstelle in Windschgraz** errichtet.

3. Landkreis Pettau mit folgenden politischen Gemeinden:

Allerheiligen bei Friedau (früher Allerheiligen)
Amtmannsfeld (früher St. Lorenzen am Draufeld)
Ankenstein (früher St. Barbara i. d. Kollos)
Benedikten (früher St. Benedikten i. W.)
Bergreusitz (früher Maria-Neusitz)
Burgstall in den Böheln (früher Heiligendreifaltigkeit i. W.)
Dornau bei Pettau (früher Dornau)
Dornberg (früher St. Wolfgang i. W.)
Friedau
Gölldorf (früher St. Johann am Draufeld)
Großsonntag
Haslach in der Kollos (früher St. Andrä in Leskowetz)
Jörgendorf (früher St. Lorenzen i. W.)
Kraag bei Friedau (früher St. Anton i. W.)
Kaisersberg (früher St. Nikola)
Kirchberg in den Böheln (früher St. Anton i. W.)
Krauschfeld
Leonard in den Böheln (früher St. Leonhard i. W.)
Lichtenegg in der Kollos (früher Lichtenegg)
Mallenberg (früher St. Georgen i. W.)
Margareten bei Pettau (früher St. Margareten)
Maxau
Monsberg
Mörtendorf (früher St. Marxen)
Pettau
Poltraun
Saurlich
Schillern am Donat (früher Schillern)
Stauden (früher Zirkovetz)
Steinberg (früher Poltschach)
Strahleck (früher St. Ruprecht)
Thomasberg (früher St. Thomas bei Friedau)
Trenn (früher St. Veit bei Pettau)
Unterböhlen (früher St. Leonhard bei Großsonntag)
Windschdorf
Winderdorf (früher St. Urban)
Wittmannsberg (früher St. Andrä i. W.)
Wurmberg (früher Grajenz).

4. Landkreis Cilli mit folgenden politischen Gemeinden:

Anderburg (früher St. Georgen an der Südbahn)
Andorf bei Cilli (früher Pietrowitsch)
Bad Neuhaus (früher Bad Neuhaus bei Cilli)
Bärenthal (früher Bärenthal)
Blachdorf
Cilli
Erlachstein (früher St. Marein bei Erlachstein)
Frazz

Figs. 4 and 5: The first two pages about the administrative division of Lower Styria, which brought about new official names of settlements.

These new occupation borders thus became boundaries of new official languages and attempts to create new identities for the local population. Leading German officials followed the instructions that said that this land that had been German once must become German again. How this was felt by Slovenes living along the new German-Croatian border is evident from the chronicle of a family residing in the proximity of Ormož. This chronicle was compiled by Ciril Vnuk and consists of family members' memories. His cousin Jožefa said the following about the fate of Slovene books: "At the very beginning of the occupation they had to take Slovene books to the municipality, some of the were supposedly burnt there and some of them people hid at their homes. [...] I hid my *Mohorjev koledar* (Hermagoras Calendar); it was the last one published in Yugoslavia and I took it to exile later on."¹⁰ Children of school age had to attend school at Krog, where lessons were held in German. My brother Milan said to me: "School was difficult, we could not speak Slovene properly, let alone German ... we did not understand a thing. Those teachers kept badgering us and yelling: 'Hunde, lendige Bande!'"¹¹

10 Vnuk, Družinski spomin, 74.

11 Ibid., 78.

Der Chef der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark
 Der Beauftragte für das Schulwesen

Zeugnis

Zuname Majhen, Vorname Antonia geboren
 am 28. April 1926, zu Lampendorf, in Untersteiermark

Der (Die) Schüler(in) hat im Schuljahre 1940/41 die dritte Klasse des Reals
gymnasium in Pettau besucht.

Auf Grund der im Zeitpunkt der Befreiung der Untersteiermark vorgefundenen Eintragungen wurde der (die) Genannte, wie folgt, beurteilt:

Religion	<u>vorzüglich</u>	Mathematik	<u>gut</u>
Slowenische Sprache	<u>gut</u>	Gesundheitslehre	<u>gut</u>
Serbokroatische Sprache	<u>gut</u>	Kunsterziehung	/
Deutsche Sprache	<u>gut</u>	Philosoph. Propäd.	/
Französische Sprache	<u>gut</u>	Somatologie	/
Lateinische Sprache	/	Zeichnen	<u>gut</u>
Griechische Sprache	/	Singen	/
Geschichte	<u>gut</u>	Turnen	<u>gut</u>
Geographie	<u>gut</u>	Werkarbeit	/
Naturgeschichte	/		/
Physik	<u>sehr gut</u>		/
Chemie	/		/

Marburg a. d., den 1. Juli 1941
 Der Beauftragte für das Schulwesen
 Im Auftrage:



J. D. Steaks

NOTENSKALA: 5 = vorzüglich, 4 = sehr gut, 3 = gut, 2 = schlecht, 1 = sehr schlecht.

Fig. 6: Antonija Majhen's report card at the end of the school year. Lessons were still held mostly in Slovene, but the names of people and settlements were Germanized.

Numerous German-language courses were organized to teach the older generation German. The periodical *Karawanken Bote*, a journal of Kärnter Volksbund and a gazette of head of the civil administration that was published in Kranj, soon began to publish a German-language course. Although it was published in two editions, German and Slovene, the periodical refrained from using the adjective “Slovene” as much as possible. In the Slovene editions the names of places were written in German, with the Slovene names added in brackets. In time, this publication came out in a single edition, alternating between both languages. Slovene prevailed, which bears witness to the fact that the process of Germanization did not achieve the planned results.

The head of the civil administration in Štajerska introduced German place names with the administrative division of Lower Styria, although these were followed by the old ones in brackets. Germanized names were usually old German place names, microtoponyms or simply translations from Slovene. There were also instances when completely new names were given, e.g. Zagorje became Edlingen.¹² To do away with (what they referred to as) the consequences of Slovenization, which was believed to have been carried out by the former Yugoslav administration in Lower Styria, exact instructions were given as to how to Germanize people’s first and family names. Much diversity was lost in the new versions because, for example, men formerly named Franc, Frančišek, Franjo or Fran were officially given the same name, i.e. Franz. Men formerly named Matej, Matija, Matevž or Tevž were renamed Matthias, while women named Ana, Ančka, Anka or Anica became Anna.¹³ To what extent, if at all, these new names were used in daily life is another matter.

The attempts that were made to change people’s identities did not have long-term consequences, because teaching German did not bring the desired results due to a lack of willingness to learn it by the locals, and there were not enough suitable teachers available. The Italians did not engage in such activities and followed a policy of bilingualism, unlike the Hungarians, who sought to impose a new identity to the population of the territory that they occupied. Old ideas from the period of Austria-Hungary were thus brought to life again. The Hungarian administration dealt a great deal with the national question, whereby they built upon the Wendish theory and sought to prove that Prekmurje was inhabited by Wends who spoke Wendish. The revived Hungarian Educational Society of the Wend March had to organize the social life and parades. In May 1942 this society began to publish the gazette *Muraszombat és vidéke*. Schools were entrusted with teaching Hungarian and many small towns saw new single-class schools being established.¹⁴ The periodical *Muraszombat és vidéke* published articles in Hungarian and Wendish, a mixture

12 Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark, 1941, No. 43, 25 September 1941, 315–318.

13 Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark, 1941, No. 48, 25 October 1941, 351–354.

14 Fujs, Značilnosti madžarske okupacijske uprave, 67–69.

of the local dialect, Slovene and Hungarian that was written in line with Hungarian orthographic principles. Wendish was taught in schools, as well. What kind of language this was is illustrated by its introduction in the central calendar of the Prekmurje Slovenes. In the last pre-war year, it was published as *Kalendar srca Jezusovoga za leto 1941*, and its last edition was entitled *Kalendar szrca Jezusovoga za presztopno leto 1944*. The former was published by Jožef Klekl and the beginning of spring under the heading "letni časi" (seasons) is indicated by "21. marca, ob 1'21 v."¹⁵ The latter, i.e. the calendar for the year 1944, was published by Klekl István and the section "létni csaszí" (seasons) the beginning of spring is indicated by the wording "sze zacsné marcíusa 20-ga ob 19. vöri".¹⁶

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Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt

des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark

1941	Ausgegeben in Marburg am 25. Oktober 1941	Nr. 48
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Verordnung

über die deutsche Schreibweise von Vor- und Familiennamen in der Untersteiermark.

Die ehemalige jugoslawische Verwaltung hat in den letzten Jahrzehnten im Zuge der Slowenisierung der Untersteiermark die Schreibweise der Vor- und Familiennamen in sehr vielen Fällen verälschert. Um die hierdurch entstandenen Unklarheiten über die richtige Schreibweise von Vor- und Familiennamen durch eine einheitliche Regelung zu beseitigen, ordne ich auf Grund der mir erteilten Ermächtigung an:

§ 1

(1) Vornamen dürfen in Wort und Schrift nur in ihrer deutschen Form gebraucht werden.
 (2) Die Familiennamen dürfen nur in der deutschen Schreibweise geschrieben werden.

§ 2

Vornamen

(1) Slowenische Vornamen, denen ein deutscher Vorname entspricht, dürfen nur in der deutschen Form gebraucht werden.
 (2) Welche deutsche Form jeweils der slowenischen entspricht, ist aus dem dieser Verordnung als Anlage beigefügten Namensverzeichnis zu entnehmen. Die Verwendung eines anderen Namens und einer anderen Schreibweise als der in diesem Verzeichnis angeführten ist nicht statthaft.

§ 3

Familiennamen

(1) In allen bisher in slowenischer Rechtschreibung geschriebenen Familiennamen sind die in der deutschen Rechtschreibung unbekannt Buchstaben durch die im deutschen Schriftgebrauch üblichen zu ersetzen, und zwar:

a) = ai z. B. Majster = Meister, Gajšek = Geiselschek,
 č nach Selbstlauten = ts; z. B. Kar = Kahr, Kováč = Kowatschek,
 c im Anlaut nach Mitlauten = z; z. B. Svarec = Schwarz, Jarc = Jartz,
 č = tch; z. B. Čiček = Tschitschek, Deđer = Deutscher,
 h im Innern oder am Ende des Wortes = ch; z. B. Lah = Lach, Gliha = Glicha, aber Hralovec = Hraschowitz.
 lj = li; z. B. Furjan = Furlan,
 lj = li; z. B. Ljubeč = Lubetz,
 nj = ni; z. B. Voljnak = Woschnak,
 š = sch; z. B. Filjager = Fischenger, Segula = Schegula,
 št = st; z. B. Štajnbah = Steinbach, Štepec = Stetzetz, Kristjan = Kristian.

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v = w; z. B. Cernovšek = Tschernowschek, Veingerl = Weingerl,
 z = s; z. B. Verzal = Warezl, Zemljit = Semitschik,
 ž = sch; z. B. Znuderl = Schnuderl, Blažek = Blaschek.

(2) Die in deutscher Schreibweise gebräuchlichen Familiennamen sind unverändert zu lassen.
 (3) In jenen Fällen, in denen Namen durch die ehemaligen jugoslawischen Verwaltungsbehörden in den beiden letzten Jahrzehnten nachweislich noch weiter verunstaltet wurden, wie Seršen aus Schräschön, Hengiman aus Hönigmann, Tilar aus Tischler, Dalčman aus Deutschmann, Stojšek aus Stönschegg, ist die frühere Schreibweise dann vorzunehmen, wenn diese in den vor dem Jahre 1918 ausgestellten Tauf- oder Geburtsurkunden des Namensträgers oder seiner Eltern nachzuweisen ist. Die in diesen Urkunden angewandte Schreibung ist in Hinsicht maßgebend.

§ 4

(1) In den Geburten-, Sterbe- und Familienbüchern dürfen nur noch deutsche Vornamen und die Familiennamen nur noch in der deutschen Schreibweise eingetragen werden.
 (2) Bei der Austerlegung von Auszügen aus den Geburten-, Sterbe- und Familienbüchern dürfen sämtliche slowenischen Vornamen, denen deutsche entsprechen, nur noch in der deutschen Form angeführt werden, das gleiche gilt hinsichtlich der deutschen Schreibweise von Familiennamen.
 (3) Allgemein dürfen in allen amtlichen Urkunden, Schriftstücken, Veröffentlichungen auf Namensschildern sowie bei der Unterzeichnung durch den Namensträger selbst die Vor- und Familiennamen nur noch in der dieser Verordnung entsprechenden Schreibweise verwendet werden.

§ 5

Über diese Bestimmungen hinausgehende Änderungen von slawischen Vor- und Familiennamen in irgendeiner anderen Form sind derzeit unstatthaft, da es sich in diesen Fällen nicht um die Rückführung in eine deutsche Namensform, sondern um eine Namensänderung handelt, die einer späteren gesetzlichen Regelung vorbehalten bleiben muß.

§ 6

Diese Verordnung findet auf alle ehemaligen jugoslawischen Staatsangehörigen in der Untersteiermark Anwendung. Sie gilt nicht für Personen kroatischer Volkszugehörigkeit. Als kroatische Volkszugehörige sind diejenigen anzusehen, die nach dem mit der kroatischen Regierung vereinharten Verträgen in den Verein »Napredak« aufgenommen wurden.

§ 7

Zuwiderhandlungen werden nach Nr. 9 meiner Verordnung vom 14. April 1941 bestraft.

Marburg an der Draa, den 20. Oktober 1941.

Überreithner.

Anlage

zur Verordnung des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark über die deutsche Schreibweise von Vor- und Familiennamen in der Untersteiermark

Männliche Vornamen.

Aleksander, Aiež, Saša	Alexander	Drago, Dragomir, Dragoslav	Karl
Alfonz	Alfons	Edvard, Edo	Edvard
Aljožij, Slavko	Alois	Emerik	Emmerich
Andrej, Hrabroslav	Andreas	Emilijan, Milar, Milko	Emil
Antonij, Tone	Anton	Erik	Erich
Avugustin, Avgust	August	Evgjenj, Evgen	Eugen
Blaž	Blauius	Evzebij	Eusebius
Bogdan	Friedrich	Feliks	Felix
Bogomir	Gottfried	Florijan	Philipp
Bolenski, Volbenk	Wolfgang	Franc, Franček, Franjo, Fran	Franz
Bolšidar, Božo	Balthasar	Fridrik	Friedrich
Branko	Theodor	Gabrijel	Gabriel
Čaharija	Rudolf	Osiper	Kasper
Čiril	Zacharias	Gregorij, Orega	Gregor
Čukelj, Florijan	Cyrill	Henrik, Hinko	Gregor
Danilo	Cvetko, Florjan	Herman	Hermann
Davorin	Daniel	Hrabroslav	Andreas
	Martin		

Figs. 7 and 8: The first two pages of the order that first names and family names must be written in German.

The occupiers' operation in the economic sphere left its mark in the post-war period as well, which cannot be claimed for attempts to outline new linguistic borders and the borders of new identities. It was undesirable during the war to highlight Slovenia, the Slovene language and culture, with all occupiers, including those that – at least for some

15 Kalendar srca Jezusovoga za leto 1941, 3.
 16 Kalendar szrca Jezusovoga za presztopno leto 1944, 3.

time – tolerated the use of the mother tongue by the local population. Throughout the war, the censors in Ljubljana's theatre saw to it that during performances – although they were in Slovene – the words Slovene or Slovenia were not used and that the words spoken in the plays would not hint at the (unjustifiability of) the new borders. Censors replaced “slovenska zemlja” (Slovene soil) with “Gorenjska zemlja” (the Gorenjska soil) in Anton Foerster's *Gorenjski slavček* to prevent people from thinking about the integrity of the Slovene territory. Additionally, a line in Linhart's play *Ta veseli dan ali Maticček se ženi* was censored because Germans did not like the supremacy of the German language being questioned. The censors removed Maticček's line “Honourable Sirs, I know that the new laws stipulate that justice may be sought only in German” from the work.¹⁷

REGNO D'ITALIA — PROVINCIA DI LUBIANA
KRALJEVINA ITALIJA — LJUBLJANSKA POKRAJINA

Scuola civica femminile a Lubiana
B. d. obš. št. meščanska šola v Ljubljani

№ di registro 16
Stev. vpisnice

**Certificato annuale
Letno spričevalo**

di *Jožina*
sint. fig. *Jožina*

nato(a) il *13 dicembre* 19*28* a *Ljubljana*
rojan(a) dne *13. decembra* v kraju *Ljubljana*

distretto *13. decembra* di religione *rom. cath.* frequentò
obraj *13. decembra* di religione *rom. cath.* is obiskoval(a) *13. decembra*

nell'anno scol. 1941/42 per la *prima* volta la *terza* classe
v šol. letu *1941/42* per la *prva* krat *terti* razred

di questa scuola e ha ottenuto i seguenti giudizi:
te šole in pokrajini naslednji uspehi:

Religione — Verouk	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>	Condotta	<i>ottima</i>
Lingua italiana — Italijanski jezik	<i>buono buono</i>	Vedenje	<i>ottimo</i>
Lingua slovena — Slovenski jezik	<i>molto buono pravdobro</i>	L' alunno(a) Učence(k)a	<i>ha compiuto la parte della lezione</i>
Storia — Zgodovina	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>	con risultato	<i>molto buono</i>
Geografia — Zemljepis	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>	2-3	<i>pravidoben uspehom.</i>
Aritmetica — Računstvo	<i>buono buono</i>		
Geometria con disegno geom. e tecnico — Geometrija z geom. in tehničnim risanjem	<i>buono buono</i>		
Notioni di ragioneria e corrispondenza — Knjižovništvo in korespondenca	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Fisica — Fizika	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Mineralogia e chimica con tecnologia — Mineralogija in kemija s tehnologijo	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Botanica e zoologia — Botanika in zoologia	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Igiene — Igiene	<i>molto buono pravdobro</i>		
Notioni di economia agraria, industriale e commerciale — Dok. v kmetijstvu, obrti in trgovini	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Doveri dei cittadini ed elementi di legislazione — Državljanske dolžnosti s osnovami zakonodaje	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Disegno a mano libera — Prostorsko risanje	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Calligrafia — Lepopis	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Stenografia e dattilografia — Stenografija in strojopisje	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Economia domestica — Domáce gospodarstvo - gospodinjstvo	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Canto e musica — Petje in glasba	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Educazione fisica — Telovadba	<i>ottimo ottimo</i>		
Lavori manuali — Ročno delo	<i>molto buono pravdobro</i>		

MATERIA NON OBBLIGATORIA:
NEOBVEZNI PREDMETI:

Lingua tedesca — Nemški jezik *buono buono*

Assenze giustificate *47* Ingiustificate *0*
Izostanki opravičenih ur neopravičenih ur


№ del protocollo *1176* *Lubiana* il *30 giugno* 1942-XX.
Stev. delovodnika *Ljubljana* dne *30. junija*

A. Linhart
capoclasse — razrednik

Clavatić Frilja
direttore — upravitelj

C 16 Casa editrice scolastica provinciale a Lubiana — Pokrajinska šolska založba v Ljubljani — T. 221/IV-42.


PROVINZ LAIBACH — LJUBLJANSKA POKRAJINA



F. Maderon - Ital
F. romana ream

Gymnasium in
ginnazija v

Caricini
Ljubiana



Katalogszahl 18
Stev. vpisnice

Jahreszeugnis Letno spričevalo

Podnik Marija Sohn - Tochter d. Anton - a
sfrn - hci

geboren am *23. März - 23. marca* 19*29* in *Ljubach - Ljubiana*
rojen(a) dne *23. marca* 19*29* v kraju *Ljubiana*

Bezirk *im. kat.* Konfession, besuchte
OKraj *im. kat.* (verlopfovedi, je obiskoval(a))

im Schuljahre 19*43* - *44* zum mal die *erste (1.)* *humanist.* Klasse
v šolskem letu *1943* - *44* mal die *erste (1.)* *humanist.* Klasse

dieser Schule und erhält folgendes Zeugnis: mal die *erste (1.)* *humanist.* Klasse
te šole in prejme naslednje spričevalo: *besten* razred

Religionslehre — Verouk	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Deutsche Sprache — Nemški jezik	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Slowenische Sprache — Slovenski jezik	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Italienische Sprache — Italijanski jezik	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Lateinische Sprache — Latinski jezik	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Griechische Sprache — Grški jezik	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Geschichte — Zgodovina	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>Die Schüler hat die</i>
Geographie — Zemljepis	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>Učenez(ka) <i>10</i></i>
Naturgeschichte — Prirodopis	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>10. humanist.</i>
Physik — Fizika	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>10. Klasse</i>
Chemie — Kemija	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>10. razred</i>
Mathematik — Matematika	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>mit <i>besten</i></i>
Darstell. Geometrie — Opisna geometrija	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>10. <i>besten</i></i>
Gesundheitslehre — Higiena	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>Erfolg beendet</i>
Grundl. d. Philosophie — Temelji filozofije	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	<i>uspehom doktorat(a).</i>
Kunstgeschichte — Umetnost	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Freihandzeichnen — Risanje	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Gesang — Petje	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Körperliche Erziehung — Telesna vzgoja	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	
Handarbeiten — Ročno delo	<i>besten</i> <i>odlično</i>	

FREIGEGENSTÄNDE — NEOBVEZNI PREDMETI:


Handarbeiten *besten* *odlično*

Betragen — Vedenje *besten* *odlično*

Versäumte Lehrstunden: *50* entschuldigt *0* nicht entschuldigt *0*
Izostanki: opravičenih ur neopravičenih ur

Geschäftszahl *404* am *30. Juni* 19*44*
Stev. delovodnika *Ljubach* dne *30. junija*

Podnar Kustine
Klassenvorstand — razrednik



P. Valica
Direktor — ravnatelj

Č 12 Provinzial-Schulbehördenverlag in Laibach — Pokrajinska šolska založba v Ljubljani — T 224-V.44.

Figs. 9 and 10: Two report cards from war-time Ljubljana. The first one was bilingual, Italian-Slovene, issued during the Italian occupation and features the Era Fascista date. The second report card is bilingual as well, German-Slovene, and was issued during the German occupation.

It is also notable that such policies affected how people could seek justice according to the new laws in the occupied territories during the war. If you were named Jože, you could seek it under this name only in the Province of Ljubljana. In Primorska, which was part of the Kingdom of Italy even before the war, a Jože sought justice as Giuseppe.

If he found himself in areas that were under Croatian control, he turned up at offices as Josip and as Josef or Jozef in those under German or Hungarian rule. However, after the war he became Jože once again. The linguistic and identity borders that were outlined in the Slovene territory thus had short-lived effects.

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Fig 1, MNZS, Photo Library, P_419, photograph: Jakob Prešeren.

Fig 2, Slovenian School Museum, inv. no. 5354.

Fig 3, MNZS, Photo Library, P_84a, photograph: Jakob Prešeren.

Figs. 4 and 5, Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark, 1941, No. 43, 25 September 1941, pp. 315–316.

Fig 6, Slovenian School Museum, inv. no. 5352.

Figs. 7 and 8, Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in der Untersteiermark, 1941, No. 48, 25 October 1941, pp. 351–352.

Figs. 9 and 10, Slovenian School Museum, inv. nos. 6001 and 5960.

Summary

Aleš Gabrič

Borders and Restrictions

The partition of the Drava Banovina, or the Slovene part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, cut into the lives of people more than anywhere else in occupied Europe. The new border even cut the tram line in the suburbs of Ljubljana, shortening it in the process. On the other side of the border, the two German-occupied zones remained unconnected, having previously been linked via Ljubljana. In order not to depend on transport through the Italian-occupied zone, they quickly set up new transport connections. Ljubljana was particularly problematic with regard to getting supplies to the population, since the hinterland that used to supply the city had shrunk considerably. Germany, Italy, and Yugoslavia introduced rationing before the April War of 1941, while the occupation only exacerbated the shortages. Germany managed to provide more food in its occupied territory than Italy. Although the attempts at modernization in the German occupation territory increased the agricultural output, with farmers even having surpluses, the produce was not at their disposal as they had to hand it over to the state. The distribution of food was also unequal, as intended by Nazi policies of racial discrimination.

Drawing new borders also brought different perspectives on economic development for the population. Only small and agriculturally underdeveloped areas belonged to Hungary and Croatia, while Germany took over the most developed part of Slovenia, which had more than 70% of the industrial capacity of the Drava Banovina. There was less potential for faster agricultural development, however, as it stagnated in Yugoslavia due to competition with cheaper products from the southern parts of the country. The Italian occupiers had more problems, since they acquired mostly undeveloped areas with only slightly more than one-quarter of the industrial capacities of the former Drava Banovina, mostly in Ljubljana. Germany introduced novelties with regard to production most systematically, aiming to integrate the territory into its economic system. The most important investment was the bauxite and aluminium plant in Strnišče pri Ptuj, attached to the ore coming from the Hungarian ally, and connected to the planned construction of an aeronautical parts factory in Maribor. Italy acquired territories without significant mineral resources, with the most important raw material being wood.

The occupation borders clearly outlined territories with very different attitudes to Slovenism, the Slovene language, and culture. The German occupiers tried to Germanize the population as soon as possible, focusing on language and cultural institutions to achieve that goal. They banned all Slovene cultural organizations and introduced German into the curriculum.

In contrast, the Italian occupiers introduced bilingualism and allowed both Slovene and Italian to be used in the administration. The new occupation borders thus became the frontiers of new official languages and attempts to create a new identity for the local population. To encourage the elderly to learn German as quickly as possible, the Germans organized numerous language courses, while both residents and towns were given German names. While the Italians did not use such measures (respecting bilingualism), Hungary tried to find a new identity for the population in their occupation area.

The Hungarian administration dealt with the national issue a lot, relying on the Wendish theory and trying to prove that Prekmurje was populated by the Wendish who spoke the Wendish language, a mixture of the local dialect, Slovene and Hungarian languages, which used Hungarian grammar.

*Matija Zorn, Rok Ciglič, Primož Gašperič**

State Borders in the Territory of Slovenia during World War II on Cartographic Materials Produced by the Occupying Forces**

Introduction

Historical events and landscapes are inseparably interconnected, because the former were contingent upon a specific landscape or impacted its further development or changes.¹

Cartographic materials are highly suitable for spatial understanding of a landscape in a specific period, as well as for monitoring the spatial dynamics of phenomena or processes over longer periods.² Cartographic sources are not merely a means for the spatial representation of phenomena, they are a credible document of the space (landscape), time and social conditions in which they were produced and can as such be regarded as first-hand sources. They often contain information not recorded in any other source

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1 Slukan Altič, *Povijesna kartografija*, 21.

2 Zorn, *Uporaba zgodovinskih*, 389.

(e.g. relief forms,³ geographical names, borders,⁴ traffic routes, watercourses⁵). As a source, they are used mostly in historical geography and environmental history, in association with changes in land use and cultural landscape.⁶

Their use for a quantitative examination of historical landscapes has been expedited by geographic information systems (GIS) that “liberated them from their static nature” or from being nothing but a print on a sheet of paper. Additionally, one should not disregard the improved availability of cartographic materials⁷ or different digital spatial data.⁸

Before the introduction of GIS, the use of cartographic sources was analogue, and maps were compared subjectively, i.e. by means of visual inspections. The results were thus contingent upon the readers’ interpretational ability. With the implementation of GIS, cartographic sources became digitalized, which allowed for an objective comparison with other spatial data.⁹

As is the case with all historical sources, cartographic sources are subject to a critical examination. One must be familiar with the historical context in which they were produced, because they reflect the needs of those who commissioned them. It is important to know if a map was produced by a cartographer who worked on site (and is thus a first-hand source) or if existing maps were used for its production (which makes it a second-hand source), which can bring about the inclusion of obsolete data. Last but not least, the authorship is also important because cartographers come from different cartographic schools, as is the technological development of mapping techniques, which is reflected in their accuracy. One must be aware also that a cartographic source may contain deliberate errors (e.g. military maps) or errors associated with the lack of knowledge of the landscape at hand.¹⁰

To monitor changes of the landscape (including borders), large-scale cartographic sources are particularly important. German and Hungarian military maps of this kind are discussed in this paper. They were produced in the period of World War II and show the then-current state boundaries in the Slovene territory. The representation of borders allowed for determining their respective courses between occupied territories of all of Slovenia and its immediate surroundings.

3 Gašperič, Zorn, Gorski relief.

4 Gašperič et al., Cartographic presentations.

5 Perko et al., Changing river.

6 Zorn et al., Kartografski viri, 208.

7 There are numerous digital cartographic collections of libraries and archives (Jenny et al., *Alte Karten*, 129, 144), such as maps that are accessible on the website Digitalna knjižnica Slovenije (<http://www.dlib.si/>), Open Culture (<http://www.openculture.com/2016/04/download-67000-historic-maps-in-high-resolution-from-the-wonderful-david-rumsey-map-collection.html>) or Mapire (<https://mapire.eu/en/>).

8 Perko et al., *Od krtine*.

9 Rumsey, Williams, *Historical maps*, 3; Zorn et al., *Kartografski viri*, 209.

10 Zorn et al., *Kartografski viri*, 209; Gašperič, *Stari zemljevidi*.

Preparing Cartographic Sources for Obtaining Spatial Data

Historical sources must be prepared to use them in GIS. As a rule, they are subject to three stages of preparation:¹¹ digitalization, georeferencing, and vectorization. Digitalization is the process of translating a cartographic source into a digital form, usually by scanning, which results in a digital raster image. Georeferencing is the process of taking a digitalized cartographic source and placing it in a coordinate system. By using computer software (e.g. ArcGIS Desktop, QGIS, Erdas Imagine) this source is placed in its geographic location.¹² Topographic maps (1:25,000, 1:50,000), topographic plans (1:5,000), digital orthoimages (orthorectified aerial images) or digital cadastral maps can serve as a basis for georeferencing. The selection of the basis is contingent upon the accuracy that we want to achieve and upon the size and scale of the georeferenced source.¹³

A scanned map that is placed in a coordinate system can be used to read different elements on a map, i.e. borders in our case. A border is a linear feature, thus it can be vectorized as linear data. Vectorization is the conversion of a scanned raster image (or its elements) to a vector structure, which allows for additional spatial analyses. Vectorization makes sense particularly in the case of simple, distinguishable elements (e.g. roads, rivers, boundaries).¹⁴ A vectorized line of borders enabled us to carry out additional analyses, such as the calculation of lengths (Table 2) and overlapping with other spatial layers, e.g. natural elements (Fig. 10).

Errors can occur in all stages of data processing. These are associated with the source itself because their accuracy deteriorates with the age of cartographic sources. They can be associated with scanning as well, as a cartographic source can be damaged. Errors also occur in georeferencing (Fig. 3). This is based on the identification of reference points, i.e. points featured on old cartographic sources and modern-day cartographic material that serve as a reference for georeferencing. Practice has shown that reference points that were subject to no or slight changes, e.g. churches or intersections (Fig. 1) are the most reliable. Their number is contingent upon the size and scale of the map that we want to georeference. It is important that they are distributed as evenly as possible on a map that is georeferenced, as well as closely set in spots where the deviation in location is the most significant. This occurs mostly on the edges of maps, which is caused by the different cartographic projections in which maps were produced.¹⁵ Additionally, on some maps we can make use of degrees marked on them,

11 Bec, Podobnikar, Spreminjanje struge, 114.

12 The exact process is described in: Petek, Fridl, Pretvarjanje listov; Jenny et al., Alte Karten; Podobnikar, Georeferencing.

13 Zorn et al., Kartografski viri, 210.

14 Ibid.

15 Petek, Fridl, Pretvarjanje listov, 79; Zorn et al., Kartografski viri, 211.

which – taking into consideration differences between coordinate systems – allows for more accurate georeferencing (Fig. 2).

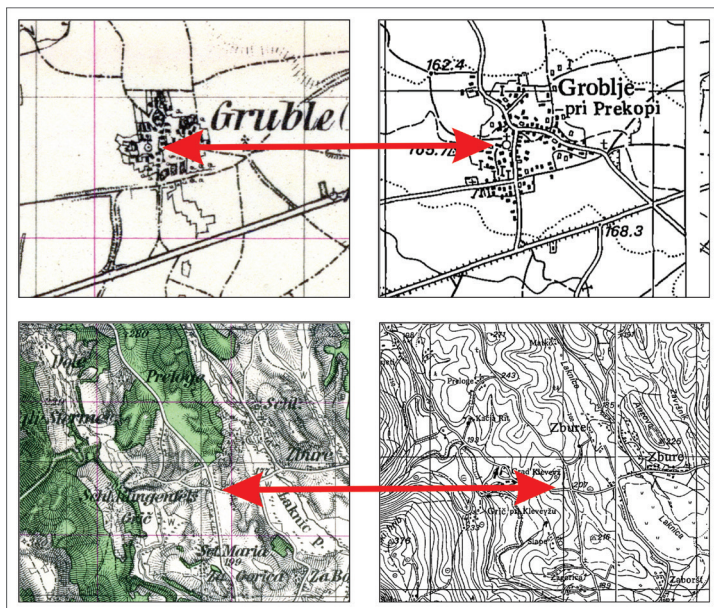


Fig. 1: Reference points are used in georeferencing; these are points whose exact location in a modern coordinate system is known. The most reliable are structures that have not undergone many changes over a long period of time. The details on the left show a church (above) and an intersection (below) on a German map in a scale of 1:25,000, which was produced during World War II. The details on the right show the same structures on a modern topographic map in a scale of 1:25,000.

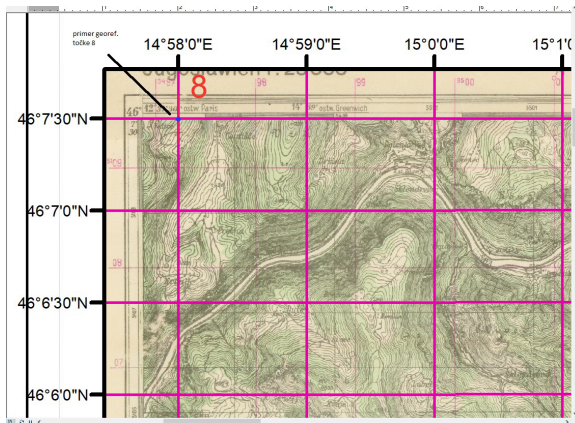


Fig. 2: When georeferencing German military maps from the period of World War II, a grid with degree intervals was also used, which can be seen on the maps.

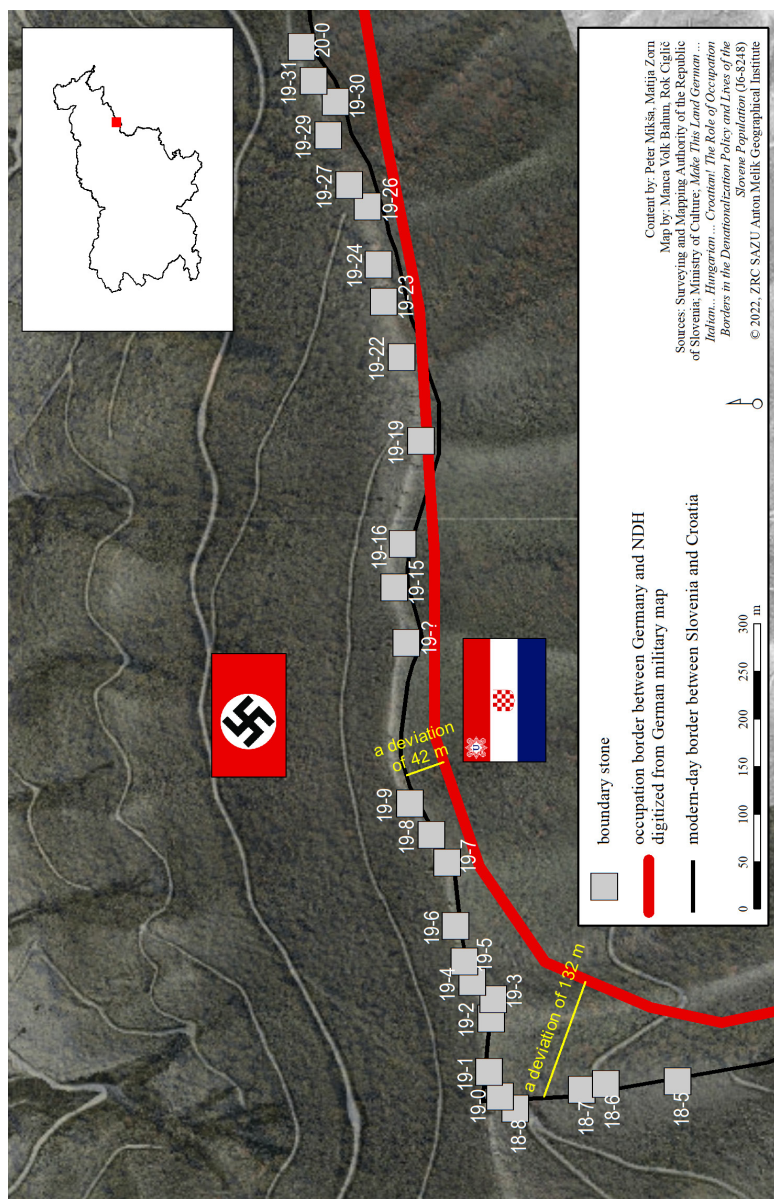


Fig. 3: We used mostly maps in a scale of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 (Table 1) to outline occupation borders. When georeferencing maps with these scales, positional errors can result in a few dozen metres. Small-scale maps, including 1:200,000, were available for some areas. In this case the error can exceed 100 m. The image shows the deviation of the occupation border between Germany and the NDH from the actual course that is on location, i.e. on the ridge of Macelj, represented by the recorded occupation boundary stones or by the modern-day course of the border between Slovenia and Croatia. Used georeferenced German military map from 1943 (map sheet Celje 33-46) is in a scale of 1:200,000.

Occupation Maps Used

The occupying states produced maps of parts of the Slovene territory that they occupied (Figs. 4 and 5), and this was seen as a basic need. These maps were uniform in one respect, namely they featured mostly foreign – i.e. non-Slovene – place names (Fig. 6).¹⁶ Germany¹⁷ could build upon the legacy of the pre-World War I German place names in former Carniola (*Gorenjska* and parts of *Dolenjska*)¹⁸, as well as in Styria (*Štajerska*) and Carinthia (*Koroška*). Similarly, the Hungarian occupation of Prekmurje could make use of the legacy of Hungarian place names before World War I.¹⁹ By contrast, the Italian occupying troops could not do this and, consequently, partial Italianization took place,²⁰ although not to the extent²¹ that was typical of the Italianization of Slovene territory in the area to the west of the Rapallo border after World War I.²²

We used 54 maps to determine the occupation borders, of which 44 were in a scale of 1:25,000, eight in a scale of 1:50,000 and two in the scale of 1:200,000. They were all published between the years 1941 and 1944 (Table 1). To determine the border between Germany and Italy, Germany and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), and Italy and the NDH, we used German *Deutsche Heereskarte* maps²³ that were published in 1942 and 1943 in a scale of 1:25,000 and bear the title “Jugoslawien”, along the Rapallo border those entitled “Italien”. Hungarian military maps in a scale of 1:50,000, which were published in 1944, were used to define the border between Germany and Hungary. The German maps were produced in Berlin by the Directorate for War Maps and Surveying (*Abteilung für Kriegskarten und Vermessungswesen*) of the German Army General Staff (*Oberkommando des Heeres*) and the Hungarian maps were produced in Budapest by the Royal Hungarian Cartographic Institute (*M. Kir. Honvéd Térképészeti Intézet*). They both used as cartographic basis maps in a scale of 1:25,000, which were produced in Yugoslavia in the interwar period and published in the 1930s. Italian pre-war maps served as a basis for a few German map sheets along the Rapallo border. Italian and Croatian maps that were published during the occupation were not used.

16 Buga et al., *100 Years of Hungarian*.

17 Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, 91.

18 E.g. on the basis of the “third” military survey of the Habsburg Monarchy (1869–1887) in a scale of 1:25,000 (www.mapire.eu/en/).

19 Ibid.

20 Geršič, Kladnik, Street name.

21 Fontanot, *The Italianization*, 36

22 Kacin-Wohinz, *Italijanizacija*, 186–187.

23 Oehrlí, Rickenbacher, *Deutsche Heereskarte*.



Fig. 4: A German map of Ljubljana's surroundings in a scale of 1:25,000 from 1943. The occupation border between Germany and Italy to the north of Ljubljana is marked. It says in the legend that the border's course is based on the minutes of the German-Italian Delimitation Commission from 13 September 1941 (source: Deutsche Heereskarte. Jugoslawien 1:25.000, Blatt Nr. 11-3-d Ljubljana (Laibach). Berlin: Oberkommando des Heeres, Abteilung für Kriegskarten und Vermessungswesen, 1943).



Fig. 5: A Hungarian map of the surroundings of Murska Sobota (*Muraszombat* in Hungarian) in a scale of 1:50,000 from 1944. The border between Hungary and Germany ran along the river Mura (source: *Muraszombat*, map sheet no. 5356 K, 1:50,000. Budapest: M. Kir. Honvéd Térképészeti Intézet, 1944).



Fig. 6: A detail of a Hungarian map (Fig. 5) showing the surroundings of Veržej (*Wernsee* in German) and Beltinci (*Belatinc* in Hungarian). Place names on the left (Hungarian) bank of the river Mura are written in Hungarian, on the right (German) bank in German.

Table 1: Maps used when outlining the course of occupation borders (a. FF Geo – Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, b. NUK – National and University Library, c. GIAM – Anton Melik Geographical Institute, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, d. HIM – Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum/Military History Institute and Museum, Budapest; DHk – Deutsche Heereskarte, VGIB – Vojnogeografski institut Beograd, Gk – Generalkarte von Mitteleuropa).

Collection	Year of publication	Scale	Map sheet	Map sheet number	Kept in
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-1-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Ogulin	39-1-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Ogulin	39-1-b	^a FF Geo

Collection	Year of publication	Scale	Map sheet	Map sheet number	Kept in
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Ogulin	39-2-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Bled	10-3-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Bled	10-3-b	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Bled	10-3-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Bled	10-4-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Bled	10-4-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Bled	10-4-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Trenta	14A-II-SW	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Triglavseen Hutte	26A-I-NW	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Sairach	26A-III-SO	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Polland	26A-III-NO	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Zarz	26A-IV-SW	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Circhina	26A-III-NW	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Tolmin	9-2-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Tolmin	9-2-b	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Tolmino	26A-I-SW	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Tolmin	9-2-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-4-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Samobor	27-2-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Samobor	27-2-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Samobor	27-1-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Samobor	27-1-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Samobor	27-1-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Celje	12-3-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Celje	12-4-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-4-b	^a FF Geo
DHk	1942	1 : 25.000	Celje	12-3-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Cerknica	25-2-b	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Cerknica	25-4-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Cerknica	25-4-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Ljubljana	11-4-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Ljubljana	11-4-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Ljubljana	11-3-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Ljubljana	11-3-c	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-4-a	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-3-d	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-3-c	^a FF Geo

Collection	Year of publication	Scale	Map sheet	Map sheet number	Kept in
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-1-b	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Susak	38-2-b	^a FF Geo
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-2-a	^c GIAM
DHk	1943	1 : 25.000	Novo mesto	26-2-b	^c GIAM
DHk	1943	1 : 50.000	Rogatec	13-4	^c GIAM
VGIB	1941	1 : 50.000	Ptuj	2	^c GIAM
DHk	1943	1 : 50.000	Ptuj	14-1	^b NUK
DHk	1943	1 : 200.000	Celje	33-46	^a FF Geo
Gk	1941	1 : 200.000	Ljubljana	32-46	^a FF Geo
	1944	1 : 50.000	Szentgotthárd	5256 K.	^d HIM
	1944	1 : 50.000	Feldbach	5256 NY.	^d HIM
	1944	1 : 50.000	Radkersburg	5356 NY.	^d HIM
	1944	1 : 50.000	Muraszombat	5356 K.	^d HIM
	1944	1 : 50.000	Petrijanec	5456 K.	^d HIM

None of the Slovene institutions that keep large scale maps (mostly in a scale of 1:25,000) showing a more detailed delimitation of the occupied Slovene territory have a complete collection of maps. Institutions that keep the bulk of cartographic materials of this kind include the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, the National and University Library in Ljubljana, as well as Anton Melik Geographical Institute of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In the case of the German military maps (*Deutsche Heereskarte*) relating to Slovenia, an institution abroad that deserves particular mention in this regard is the Military Geographic Institute (*Istituto Geografico Militare*)²⁴ in Florence that keeps the complete collection of maps in a scale of 1:25,000. As to the Hungarian maps, mention must be made of the Military History Institute and Museum (*Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum*)²⁵ in Budapest, which keeps all map sheets for the occupied territory in Prekmurje in a scale of 1:50,000.

24 Low resolution maps can be seen on the institute's website. <http://www.igmi.org/>

25 <http://www.militaria.hu/>. Acknowledgement: Dr János Suba and Ábel Hegedüs from the Archive of the Military History Institute (*Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum*) in Budapest helped us obtain maps. We would like to express our gratitude also to Dr Gábor Gercsák from the Department of Cartography and Geoinformatics, Faculty of Informatics, Eötvös University (ELTE *Térképtudományi és Geoinformatikai Tanszék, Informatikai Kar, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem*) in Budapest.

A Few Characteristic Features of Occupation Borders

With the occupation of the Slovene territory, there were four state borders in Slovenia in 1941 (Fig. 7): the border between Germany and Italy, Germany and Hungary, Germany and the NDH, as well as Italy and the NDH. In total, 665.5 km of occupation borders ran along the territory of modern-day Slovenia (Table 2). Totalling almost 277 km (i.e. almost 42% of all occupation borders), the border between Germany and Italy was the longest. It was followed by the border between Italy and the NDH (172 km or 26%), Germany and the NDH (133 km or 20%), and Germany and Hungary (83 km or 13%) (Fig. 8). Slightly more than half its course (51.3%) corresponds to Slovenia's modern-day borders, while the remaining part (48.7%) ran within modern-day Slovenia. The longest border running within the boundaries of modern-day Slovenia was that between Germany and Italy, i.e. 264 km or 95% of the border. The remaining borders had a higher share of the border that corresponds to modern-day borders: Italy and the NDH 171 km (99%), Germany and the NHD 115 km (86%), Germany and Hungary 44 km (52%) (Table 2, Fig. 9).

A few shorter sections of occupation borders ran outside modern-day Slovenia (39 km), mostly on Germany's borders (a good 25 km) and Italy's borders (a good 12 km) with the NDH; consequently, the total length of occupation borders in Table 2 exceeds 700 km.

With respect to relief units, the bulk of occupation borders (47%) ran along the beds of watercourses or in their immediate proximity. Considering Slovenia's dynamic relief, it is not surprising that 45% are followed by hilly and mountainous terrain. A good one-seventh of the border ran along ridges of mountains, hills or low hills, and almost one-third on their slopes. Just one-tenth of borders ran along the lowlands (Fig. 10).

The bulk of the Slovene territory, which comprised the area of the Drava Banovina in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was occupied by Germany, i.e. almost two-thirds. Almost 6% were occupied by Hungary and only 0.08% by the NDH. Almost one-third of the territory became part of Italy (Table 3, Fig. 11). Along with modern-day Slovene territory to the west of the Rapallo border,²⁶ Italy occupied more than 9,062 km² or more than 44% of modern-day Slovenia.

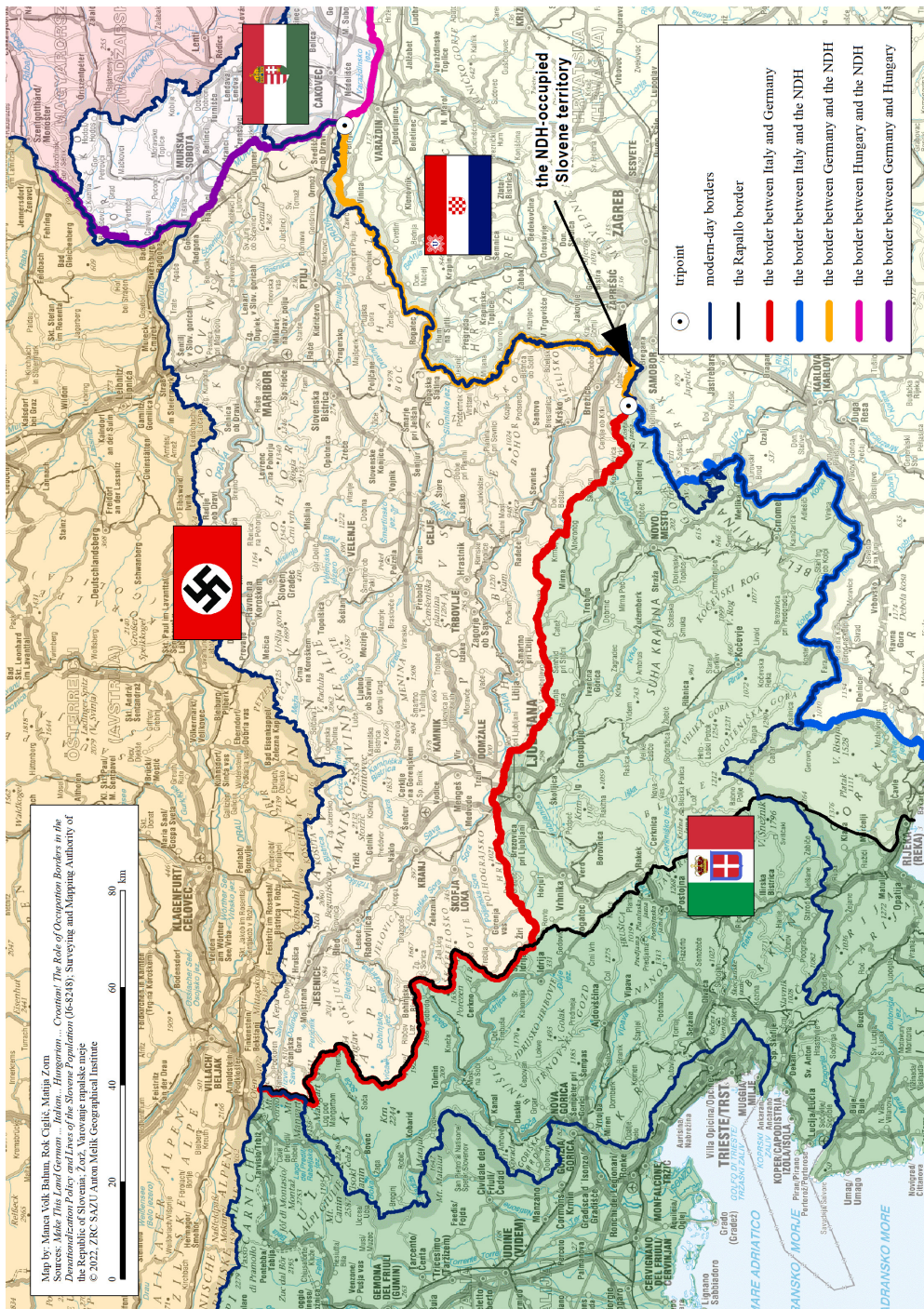


Fig. 7: The Slovene territory was divided among the four occupying states.

Table 2: The length of occupation borders on the basis of the vectorization of the borders' course on maps produced by occupiers. Column 2 shows the length of occupation borders that correspond to modern-day borders. Column 5 shows the length of occupation borders that ran within modern-day Slovenia. Column 8 shows lengths of occupation borders that ran outside modern-day Slovenia. The total length of occupation borders running in modern-day Slovenia is 665.5 km. The total length of all measured occupation borders (including those outside the modern-day Republic of Slovenia) is upwards of 704 km

Border	Running along modern-day border (km)	Share (running along modern-day border and within Slovenia) (%)	Running within Slovenia (km)	Share (running along modern-day border and within Slovenia) (%)	Share (running along modern-day border and outside Slovenia) (%)	Running outside Slovenia (km)	Share (running along modern-day border and within outside Slovenia) (%)	TOTAL (running along modern-day border and within Slovenia) (km)	TOTAL (running along modern-day border and within outside Slovenia) (%)	TOTAL (running along modern-day border and within outside Slovenia) (km)	TOTAL (running along modern-day border and within outside Slovenia) (%)
Germany - Italy	12.71	4.59	264.24	95.41	95.41	0	0	276.95	41.62	276.95	39.30
Germany - Hungary	43.59	52.24	39.86	47.76	46.99	1.36	1.60	83.45	12.54	84.81	12.03
Germany - the NDH	114.84	86.35	18.16	13.65	11.46	25.51	16.10	133.00	19.98	158.51	22.49
Italy - the NDH	170.59	99.12	1.51	0.88	0.82	12.39	6.72	172.10	25.86	184.49	26.18
TOTAL	341.73	51.35	323.77	48.65	45.94	39.26	5.57	665.50	100.00	704.76	100.00

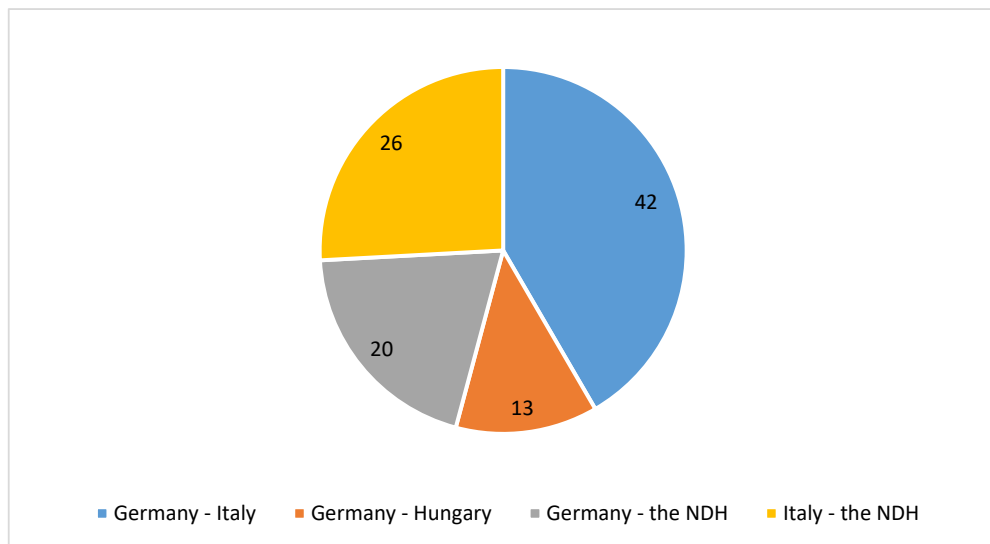


Fig. 8: Share (%) of respective occupation borders within modern-day Slovenia.

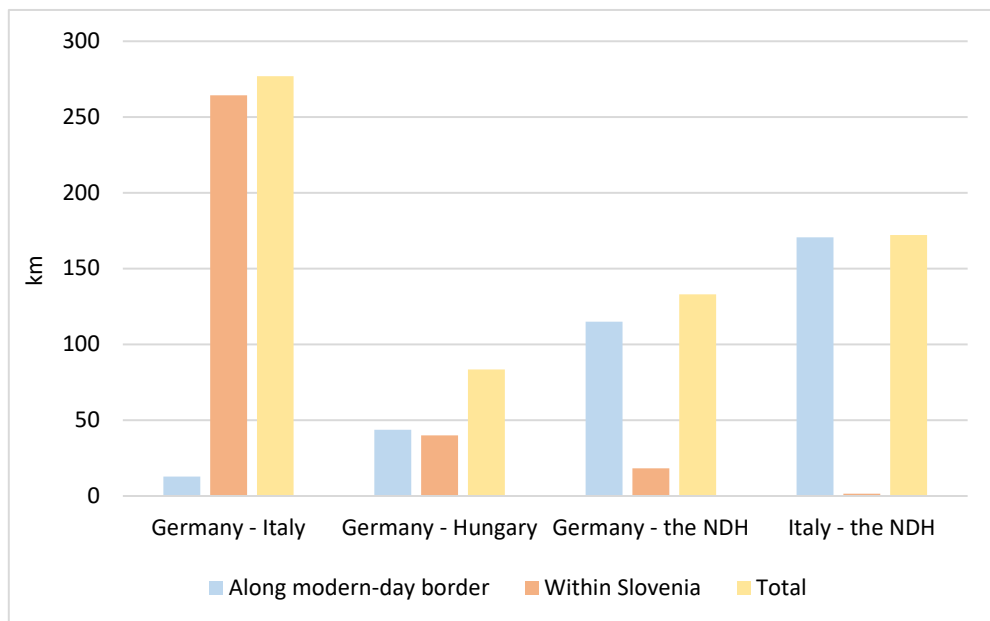


Fig. 9: Length of occupation borders within modern-day Slovenia and along Slovenia's existing borders and in total.

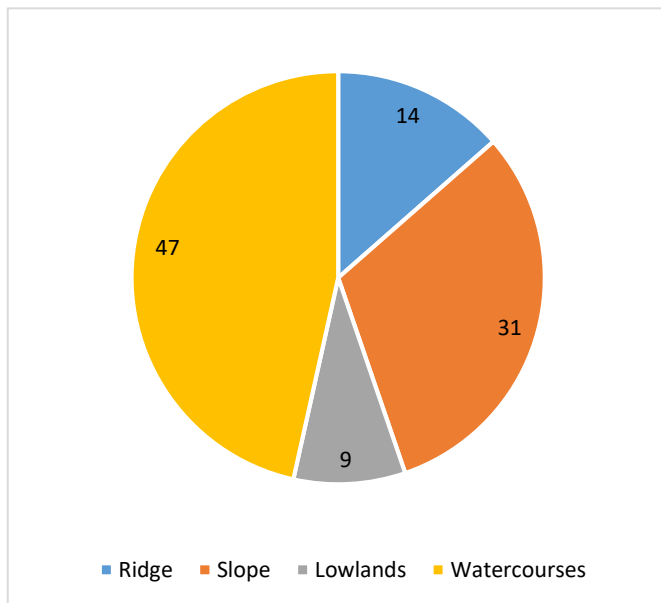
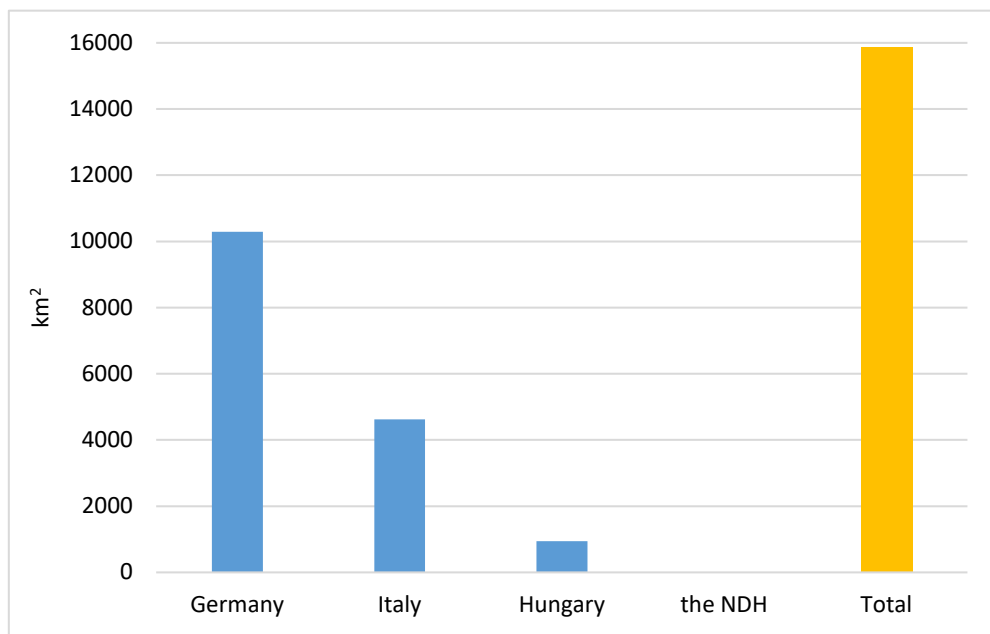


Fig. 10: The course of occupation borders along relief units (including the course of the borders outside modern-day Slovenia).

Table 3: Size of occupied areas in the territory of the former Drava Banovina during World War II.

Occupying state	Area (km ²)	Share (%)
Germany	10,291.0	64.85
Italy (Province of Ljubljana)	4621.2	29.12
Hungary	943.6	5.95
the NDH	12.0	0.08
TOTAL	15,867.8	100.00

Fig. 11: The division of modern-day Slovene territory (excluding the area to the west of the Rapallo border) among the four occupying states.



A Few “Deviations” of the Occupation Borders’ Course

When vectorizing occupation borders, we noticed that a few sections do not correspond to the modern-day border. On the border between Germany and the NDH these deviations were beneficial to the NDH (e.g. in the area of Obrežje, in the east of the Gorjanci hill range and Haloze; Figs. 12, 14 and 15), while in some places Germany occupied parts of the modern-day Croatian territory (e.g. the right bank of Drava near Ormož; Fig. 13). Additionally, Germany occupied a small part of western Goričko, which unlike the rest of Prekmurje, did not become part of Hungary (Fig. 16).

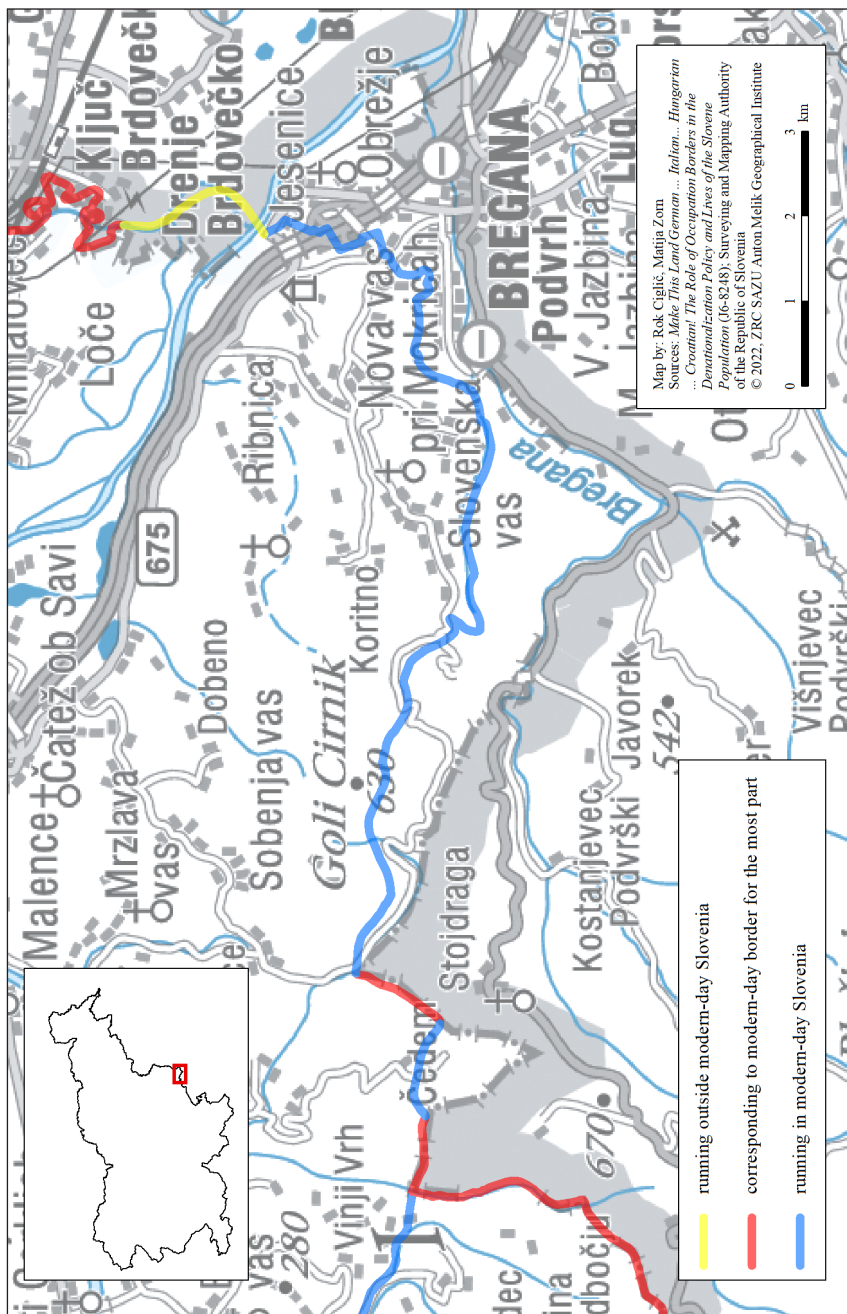


Fig. 12: The border between Germany and the NDH in the area of Obrežje and in the east of the Gorjanci hill range. The occupation border to the north of Sava ran to the “detriment” of the modern-day Croatian territory (0.9 km²) and to the west of Sava to the “detriment” of the modern-day Slovene territory (11.5 km²).

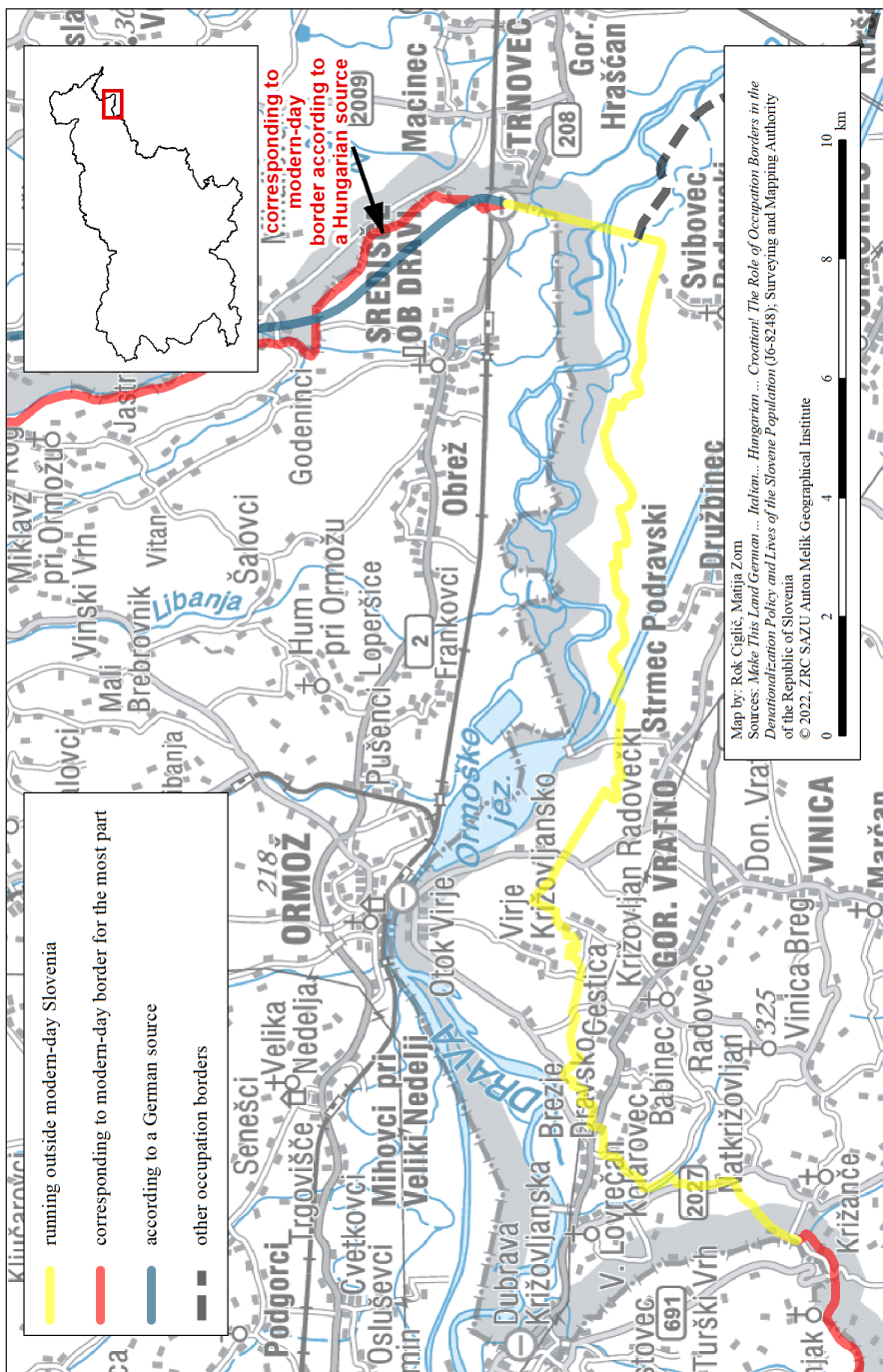


Fig. 13: In the area of Ormož, the border between Germany and the NDH ran to the “detriment” of the modern-day Croatian territory (37.5 km²).

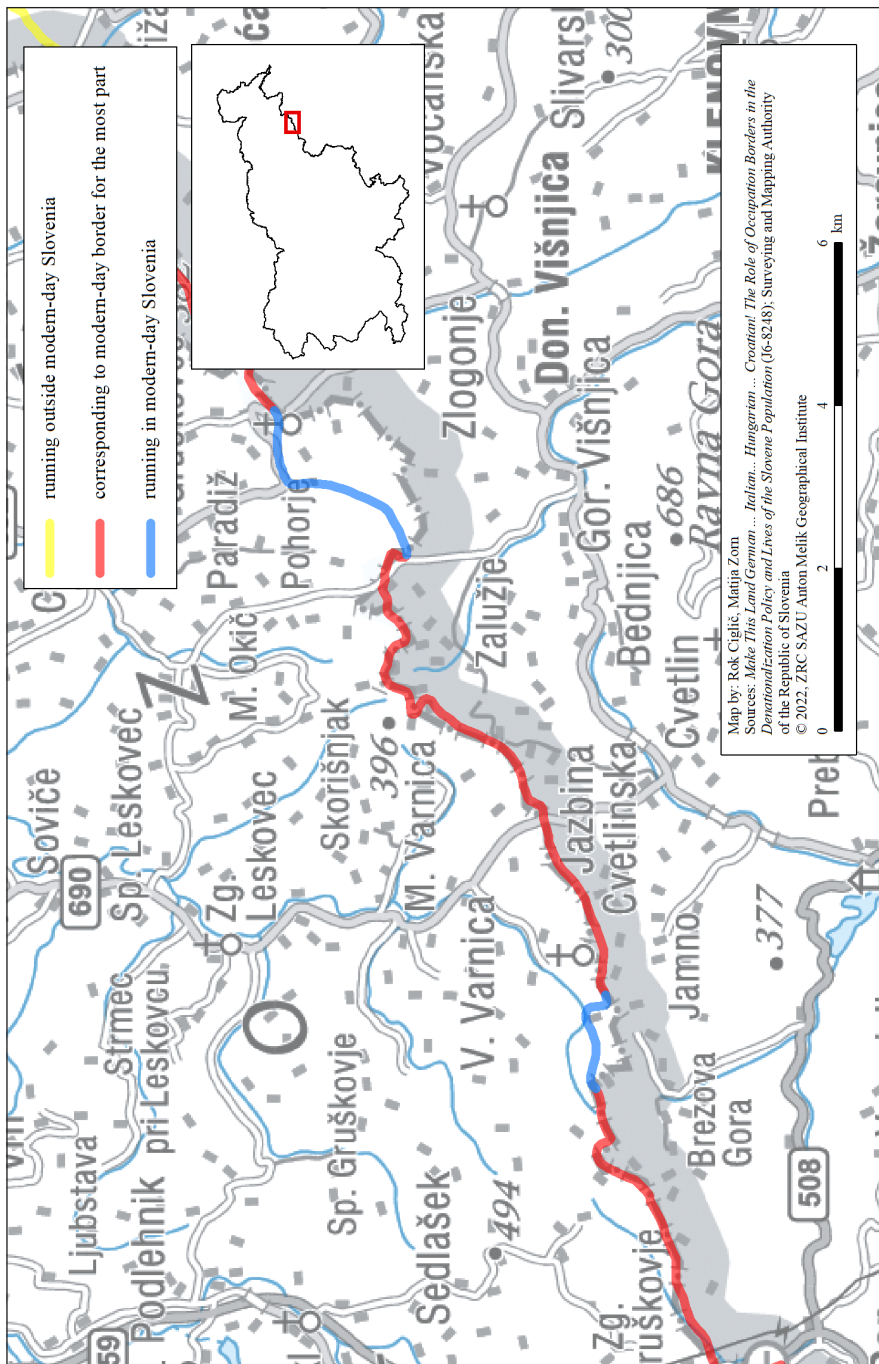


Fig. 14: In the area of Haloze, the border between Germany and the NDH ran to the “detriment” of the modern-day Slovenian territory (1.9 km²).



Fig. 15: A boundary stone between Germany (the engraved letter D for *Deutschland* is identifiable) and the NDH (numerical marking 30-0) in Haloze, near the settlement of Velika Varnica (Fig. 14). In front of it lies a demolished Austrian-Hungarian boundary stone that marked the border between Styria and Hungary. The Austrian-Hungarian border ran southwards and the occupation border eastwards, whereby the NDH obtained a section of the modern-day Slovene territory.

A few other “deviations” were associated with the used cartographic sources. Different sources produced by the same occupying state showed different courses of the border in the valley of the river Sotla. According to a large-scale map (1:25,000) the border ran along the Sotla, while a small-scale map (1:200,000) showed that the border ran on the river’s left (modern-day Croatian) bank (Fig. 17).

Different courses of the border can also be seen on maps produced by different occupying states, e.g. to the north of Središče ob Dravi. The course of the border between Germany and Hungary differs on the map produced by the Germans from that produced by the Hungarians. (Fig. 18)

The most significant deviations of actual occupation borders from those on maps occurred in Bela krajina (Fig. 19). Although German maps of this area were published in early 1943, the delimitation between Italy and the NDH is marked as “a temporary

course of the border” from early 1942. The situation with the surroundings of Kostel was similar. The border ran actually along the river Kolpa and in the Gorjanci hill range on the borders of the former Drava Banovina.²⁷

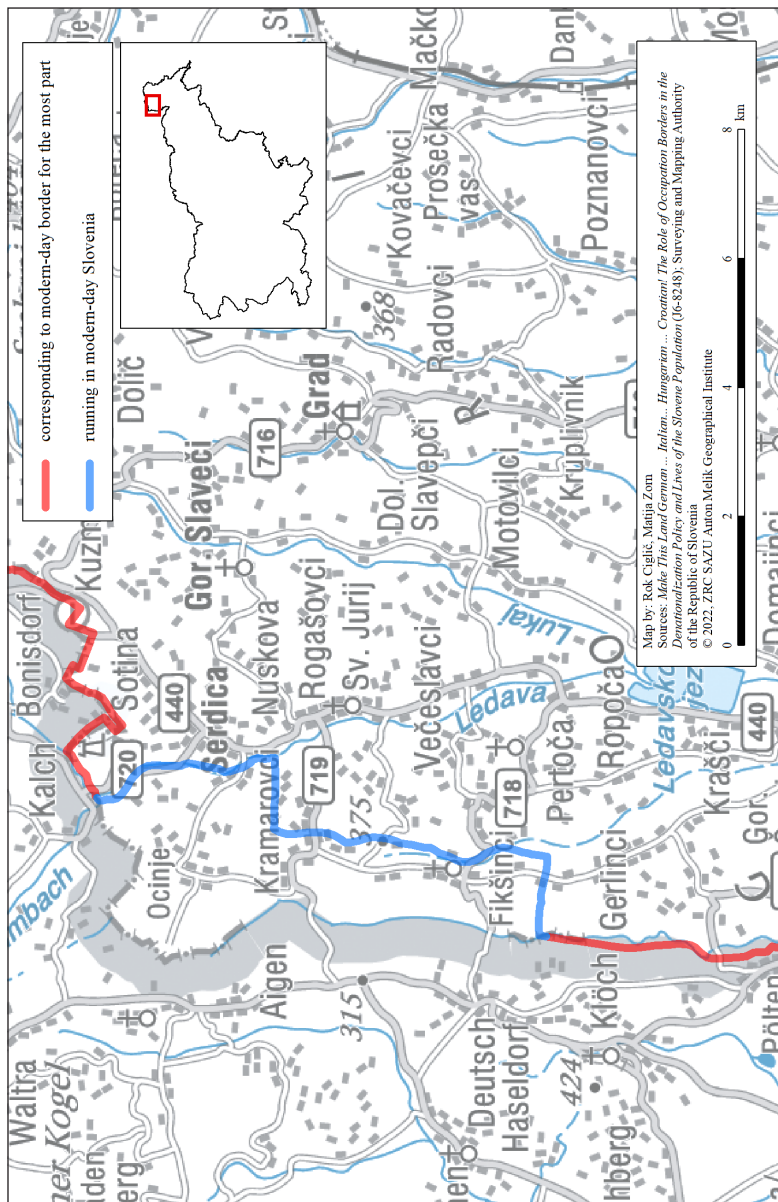


Fig. 16: In western Goričko the border between Germany and Hungary deviated from the modern-day border between Austria and Slovenia. Germany occupied 11.4 km² of Prekmurje.

27 Bohinec, *Kraljevina Jugoslavija; Krajevni leksikon*, 128.



Fig. 17: A section of the border between Germany and the NDH in the valley of the river Sotla according to two German cartographic sources. According to a small-scale map (see green line), Germany obtained 3.8 km² of the modern-day Croatian territory.

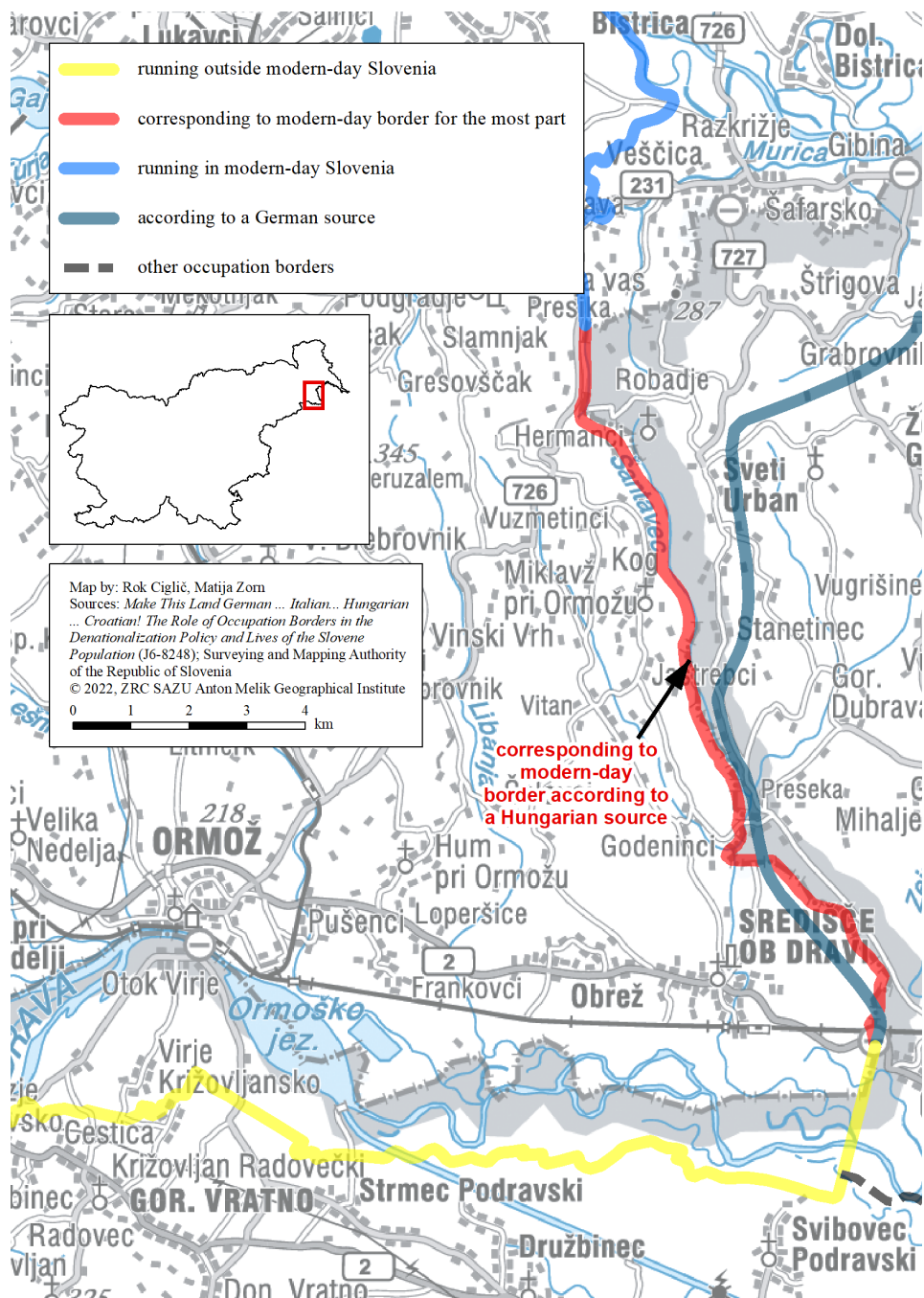


Fig. 18: The course of the border between Germany and Hungary to the north of Središče ob Dravi based on cartographic sources produced by different occupying states.

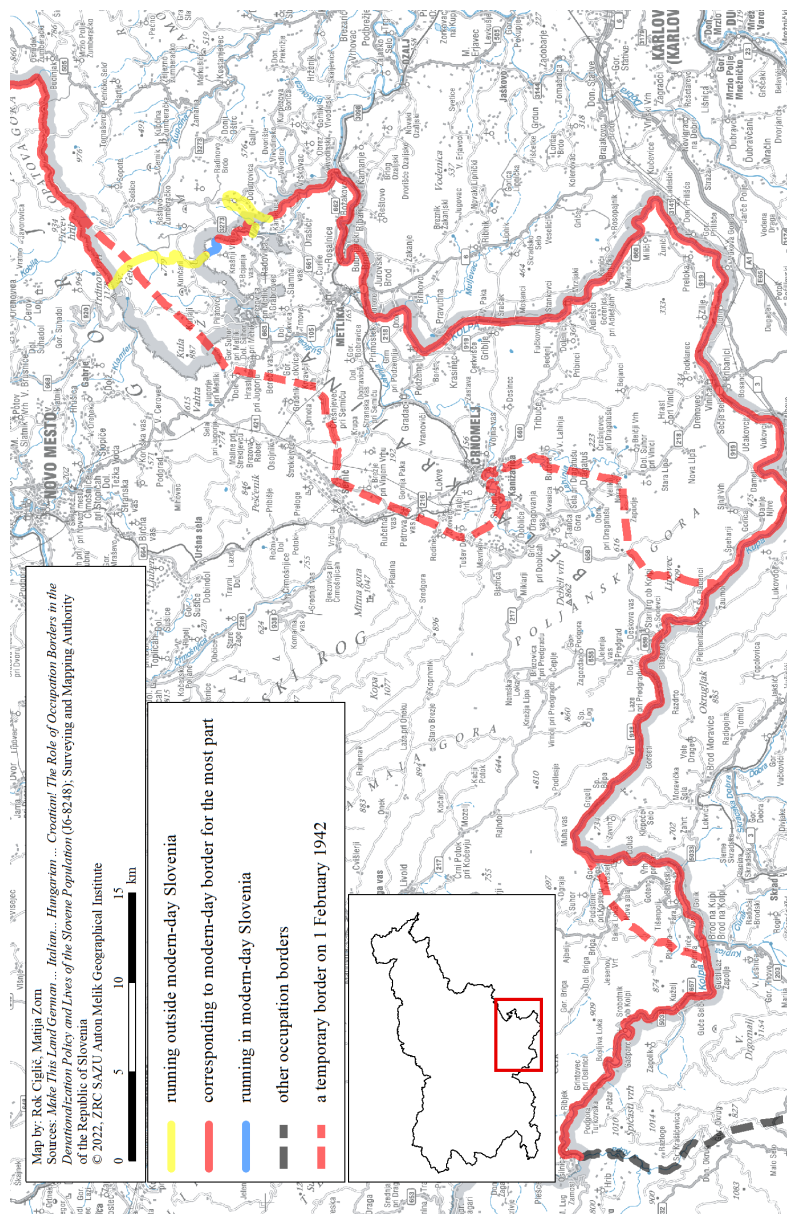


Fig. 19: The delimitation of Italy and the NDH in Bela krajina and Kostel. The “temporary” border from early 1942 was marked on a German map that was produced in 1943. The actual course of the border ran along the river Kolpa and on the Gorjanci hill range, as well as along the borders of the former Drava Banovina — the situation after 2 September 1931. On the Gorjanci hill range, the border ran somewhat more to the east than at the present; consequently, Italy obtained 38.4 km² of the modern-day Croatian territory. Somewhat more to the south, the NDH obtained 0.5 km² of the modern-day Slovene territory.

Conclusion

During World War II the territory of modern-day Slovenia was occupied by Germany, Italy, Hungary, and the NDH. A comprehensive on-site survey of occupation borders has not been conducted thus far. By digitalizing extensive archival cartographic materials, as well as processing and analysing maps by means of geographic information systems, we sought to show in the current paper the entire course of the borders in Slovenia during World War II, measure their lengths and analyse their course along natural units (rivers, ridges, lowlands). We listed a total of more than 665 km of occupation borders in modern-day Slovenia. The identified course of the border makes it possible to identify the remaining border infrastructure on location, and digitalized archival cartographic may materials facilitate further desk analyses.

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Summary

Matija Zorn, Rok Ciglič, Primož Gašperič

State Borders in the Territory of Slovenia during World War II on Cartographic Materials Produced by the Occupying Forces

Cartographic material is very useful when it comes to the spatial understanding of a landscape over a period or monitoring the spatial dynamics of phenomena and processes over long periods. Cartographic sources are not only a means of spatial representation of phenomena, but also a credible document of the space, time, and social conditions in which they were created. As such, they can be regarded as first-hand sources. Often, they contain data not recorded in any other source (e.g. relief, geographical names, borders, roads, watercourses). They are primarily used in historical geography and environmental history, in connection with changes in land use and cultural landscape. However, as with all historical sources, cartographic ones also require critical treatment.

The use of cartographic sources for the quantitative study of historical landscapes has been accelerated by geographic information systems (GIS). Historical sources must be adequately prepared before they can be used in GIS. Usually, there are three stages of processing: digitization, georeferencing, and vectorization.

Monitoring landscape changes (including borders) especially requires cartographic sources of larger scales. This paper deals with such maps made by the German and Hungarian armies during World War II, which show the state borders on Slovenian territory during that period. With the occupation of the Slovenian territory in 1941, four national borders were established: between Germany and Italy, between Germany and Hungary, between Germany and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), and between Italy and the NDH.

54 maps were used to determine the borders, 44 of them in scale 1:25,000, eight in scale 1:50,000, and two in scale 1:200,000. All maps were issued between 1941 and 1944. To determine the border between Germany and Italy, Germany and the NDH, and Italy and the NDH,

we used mostly *Deutsche Heereskarte* maps (1:25,000), issued in 1942 and 1943. To determine the border between Germany and Hungary, we mainly relied on Hungarian military maps (1:50,000), issued in 1944.

In total, there were 665.5 kilometers of occupation borders on the territory of modern-day Slovenia. The longest was the border between Germany and Italy, long almost 277 kilometers (almost 42% of all occupation borders). It was followed by the borders between Italy and the NDH (172 km or 26%), Germany and the NDH (133 km or 20%), and Germany and Hungary (83 km or 13%). More than half (51.3%) of the borders coincided with the modern-day borders of Slovenia, while less than half (48,7%) ran inside the modern-day territory. Germany and Italy had the longest border within Slovenia's present borders - 264 kilometers or 95% of the border. Other borders had a larger share of the border that coincides with current borders: Italy-NDH 171 km (99%), Germany-NDH 115 km (86%), and Germany-Hungary 44 km (52%).

According to relief units, the majority of occupation borders (47%) ran along watercourses or close to them, while only slightly less (45%) ran in the uplands. Only a tenth of the borders ran across lowlands.

The largest part of the Slovenian territory, which covered the territory of the Drava Banovina in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was occupied by Germany - almost two thirds (10,291 km²). A little less than 6% was occupied by Hungary (945 km²), while the NDH occupied 0.08% (12 km²). Almost a third belonged to Italy (4,621 km²). Together with modern-day Slovenian territory west from the interwar Rapallo border, Italy occupied as much as 9,062 km² or more than 44% of modern-day Slovenia.

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