

BETWEEN TWO FIRES. AUSTRIAN AND ITALIAN POLITICAL
VIOLENCE IN THE AUSTRIAN LITTORAL 1914–1918*Petra SVOLJŠAK*Milko Kos Historical Institute ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, Ljubljana
University of Nova Gorica, Vipavska 13, Nova Gorica
e-mail: petrasv@zrc-sazu.si

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the political violence against civilians in the Austrian Littoral during the First World War in the context of total war and the violence provoked by the war. The violence against civilians reflected on the three levels: violence on home territory, violence against enemy civilians and violence during the occupation. The aim of the article is thus the analyses of the policy of violence of Austria-Hungary and Italy, the latter after the occupation of the Slovenian ethnic territories. The article is based on the research of the authoritarian Austrian war regime and the occupation policy of Italian occupier, the latter in the context of the war aims and the fourth Italian war independence.

Key words: First World War, violence, Austrian Littoral, war absolutism, Italian occupation

TRA DUE FUOCHI. VIOLENZA POLITICA AUSTRIACA E ITALIANA NEL
LITORALE AUSTRIACO 1914–1918

SINTESI

L'articolo analizza la violenza politica contro la popolazione civile nel Litorale Austriaco durante la Prima Guerra Mondiale in un contesto di guerra totale e la violenza da essa provocata. La violenza contro i civili si rifletteva su tre livelli: violenza nel territorio domestico, violenza contro i civili nemici e violenza durante l'occupazione nemica. Il contributo vuole analizzare e paragonare le politiche di violenza dell'Austria-Ungheria e dell'Italia, nel caso di quest'ultima durante il periodo di occupazione militare del territorio etnico sloveno. L'articolo si basa sull'analisi del regime di guerra austriaco e delle politiche di occupazione italiane e, per quanto riguarda la seconda, nel contesto degli obiettivi di guerra di quella che veniva considerata dalla retorica italiana la quarta guerra d'indipendenza.

Parole chiave: Prima Guerra Mondiale, Litorale Austriaco, assolutismo militare, occupazione italiana

INTRODUCTION

“Intentionally or incidentally, The Great War was a laboratory for the Twentieth Century: an experimental site to probe the practice of violence and to optimise its effects on men and material. More specifically, the zones of invasion and military occupations provided a full-scale testing ground for population displacement and repression [...]. To some extent these zones became the laboratories of an atypical front whose “artillery” and “gas” took the form of exodus, deportation, forced labour or concentration camps,” wrote Annette Becker at the beginning of the chapter on captive civilians in the Cambridge History of the First World War (Becker, 2014, 257). The violence against civilian population could be certainly framed by the concept of total war and mostly related to the term *atrocities*, already used *“by contemporaries as a breach of morality or the laws and customs of war; the victims are usually defenceless persons (non-combatants or disarmed combatants). [...] ‘Atrocities’ are distinguished from the legal term ‘war crimes’, first used in this sense by the British jurist Lassa Oppenheim (1858–1919) in 1906 to mean breaches of the laws of war; to attempted to confine the effects of military violence to combatants”* (Kramer, 2017). Acts constituting “atrocities” were often “war crimes”, but the perspective is different: the term atrocities reflects the cultural framework, whereas war crimes concern the legal aspect of these deeds.

The term was again used by John Horn and Alan Kramer in their study of the German atrocities in Belgium and France in 1914, which has been lately put under severe criticism, lacking any convincing argument (Horn & Kramer, 2001). Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace issued the *Report of the international commission to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan wars*, where the violence against civilian population during the Balkan wars had been attributed to the barbaric peoples, or, as a Greek officer remarked: *“When you have to deal with barbarians, you must behave like a barbarian yourself. It is the only thing they understand,”* (Carnegie, 1914, 95).

The atrocities were thus ascribed to the national jealousy, greed for territorial expansion, to mutual distrust that pushed towards what at the times seemed to be the most brutal war of modern times (Carnegie, 1914, 265). The assumption was, according to John Horn, that *“the rule of war would make such conduct less likely in the ‘civilized world’,”* (Horn, 2014, 565), but already the first months of the First World War on the “civilized” part of the European battlefields proved this assumption wrong, to such an extent, that caused the reaction of Sigmund Freud, who expressed his disillusionment of the war in *Thoughts for the Times of War and Death* (1915): *“Not only is it more bloody and more destructive than any war of other days, because of the enormously increased perfection of weapons of attack and defence; it is at least as cruel, as embittered, as implacable as any that has preceded it. [...] Moreover, it has brought to light an almost incredible phenomenon: the civilized nations know and understand one another so little that one can turn against the other with hate and loathing. Indeed, one of the great civilized nations is so universally unpopular that the attempt can actually be made to exclude it from the civilized community as ‘barbaric’, although it has long proved its fitness by*

the magnificent contributions to that community which it has made. We live in hopes that the pages of an impartial history will prove that that nation, in whose language we write and for whose victory our dear ones are fighting, has been precisely the one which has least transgressed the laws of civilization. But at such a time who dares to set himself up as judge in his own cause?" (Freud, 1915). Or as it was experienced by R. A. Reiss in his report *Report upon the atrocities committed by the Austro-Hungarian army during the first invasion of Serbia: submitted to the Serbian government*: “Never has a conflict been so fierce or so cruel as the present world war. As a matter of fact, one of the belligerent groups, not content with fighting the armies of its enemies, has considered it necessary besides to use every possible means of terrorizing the enemy civil population, which nevertheless ought to have been protected by the laws and conventions. [...] Necessity knows no law, said the Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Bulgars, and Turks, and without scruple they have massacred their prisoners and the civil population of the countries invaded by them, pillaged, bled, and devastated occupied countries and deported their inhabitants without regard to age or sex ; they have bombarded open towns, employed projectiles and other means of destruction condemned as barbarous and strictly forbidden by all conventions, and so have rendered themselves guilty of the violation of all that we had deemed sacred!” (Reiss, 1916, 5).

Even though the act of war acquired legal status and thereby became subject to the laws of war (1899, 1907), they did not specify whether a war was justified or not, but merely provided a code of rules governing the rights and duties of belligerents in an international war. The concern for the civil population in war, especially under the conditions of occupation, was primarily about the relationship between the occupant and the goods on occupied territory, and to a lesser extent on the rights and obligations of the occupying power to the civilian population; this is due to the sharp division introduced by the laws of war between the regular army and the civilian population. These laws protected the civilian population only if it remained peaceful in any situation. The civilians thus preserved their national status; since the belligerent power had no sovereignty over occupied territory they were not required to pledge allegiance to it. Article 45 of the IV Hague Convention stated that it was forbidden to compel the inhabitants of occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile power. At the same time, the inhabitants had to be subject to ordinances of the occupying power and were forbidden to perform hostile acts against the occupant or to obstruct its military operations.

The violence against civilian population can be divided in three categories, taking into account a appropriate and useful Alan Kramer’s “classification”: violence on home territory, violence against enemy civilians and violence during the occupation (Kramer, 2017).

The “honors” of the combination of all three categories were given to the Austrian Littoral during the First World War.

AUSTRIAN POLITICAL PERSECUTION IN THE AUSTRIAN LITTORAL

The cases of internal warfare against civilians usually refer to the exceptional and extraordinary cases, such as Armenian genocide, the killings of the Galicians by the

Austro-Hungarian army (30.000 without trial), the interior refugees in Russia, and a policy of scorched earth in Russian retreat in 1915 in Lithuania, Latvia, etc. On the other hand, all the belligerent states introduced more or less severe emergency measures and emergency regimes to take over the social, economic, and industrial control, to discipline the home front and to arrest, confine, intern, to concentrate those negative, dubious, hostile elements that could in any way disturb the righteousness of the war effort. The main difference between the states laid in the executive power of emergency measures, i.e. the civil or military authorities that took control over the state, the introduction of martial law for the civil sphere and the temporary suspension of the parliamentary control over the governmental and/or military decisions.

Let us briefly take a look at the Austro-Hungarian internal war, as Hannes Leidinger and his colleagues defined as “Habsburgs schmutziger Krieg” (The Habsburg dirty war) (Leidinger, Moritz, Moser & Dornik, 2014), referring also to the system of extraordinary legislation, which worked almost exclusively against its own citizens. The beginning of the war and already the July crisis brought a new dynamics in the Habsburg civil life, which was defined by the introduction of extraordinary measures provided by the legislation from 1912, so called Dienstbuch J-25a (*Orientierungsbehelf über Ausnahmeverfügungen für den Kriegsfall für die Reichsräte vertretenen Königreiche in Ländern*) which contained directives for the coordination of all the necessary provisions of military, economic, legislative and political character. The Ministry of war established a special institution, the War Surveillance Office – *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* (KÜA), which soon became a symbol of Austrian (but not also of the Hungarian) authoritarian regime (Scheer, 2010). The KÜA, “*which was designed to spy on Austrians, resident foreigners, displaced people, and POWs held in foreign camps,*” (Judson, 2016, 392), called upon reporting any suspect foreign element that could harm the state security and put it into the frame of patriotic duty towards homeland in war. The legal position of the KÜA was challenging, according to the Slovene jurist Lojze Ude it represented a secret office of Austrian dictatorship during the war (Ude, 1960, 4). The office was supposed to take control over both parts of the monarchy, but the Hungarian part in fact executed civilian control over the citizens and the political, i.e. civilian authorities functioned as a mediator between civilian and military authorities.

So, the declaration of the state of emergency and emergency laws put the civilians of Cisleithania under military legislation in the territory of military authority, where the mobilizations had been authorized. As Deak and Gumz put it, “*the declaration of a state of emergency [...] changed the entire legal system of the monarchy.*” (Deak, Gumz, 2017, 1113), the breakdown of the *Reschsstaat* was, according to them, even the main reason for the dissolution of the monarchy (Deak & Gumz, 2017, 1106). The 13. paragraph of the Austro-Hungarian Constitution of 1867 (R.G.Bl. Nr. 142) enacted the freedom of speech and banned any kind of censorship, which could had been applied according to paragraphs 5 and 6 that enabled for the opening and confiscation of private letters in the case of the state of emergency and the political authorities could have executed a harsher surveillance over the civil societies. On 25, July, 1914 a decree was issued (R.G.Bl. Nr. 158), which suspended the paragraph on the general civil rights, i.e. personal freedom, inviolability of

private property, the secrecy of private letters, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, publishing, writing and art-representations. The decree banned periodic newspapers, their translations and abstracts, whereas daily newspapers were put under severe censorship. Only on 29, March, 1918 (R.G.Bl. Nr. 118), periodic newspapers with scientific contents could had been published again, but with limited work frame (Spann, 1991, 49).

In this *internal war* (Deak & Gumz, 2017, 1106), the collection of potential criminal acts was quite impressive and easily led to arrests, internments or confinements, also because the incriminations could be based on anonymous reports and denunciations, which became a very frequent tool of people's participation in the authoritarian war regime that even got the name of war absolutism, or, as T. Sheer put it: "*Although citizens suffered because of the harsh and oppressive measures, many of them used this war regime for their own interests,*" (Scheer, 2017, 1). Denunciations were the reflection of national, linguistic, cultural and personal relations and resentments, and national or linguistic affiliations were not the exclusive bases for the denunciations.

One of the first public announcements, published also in the Slovenian newspapers on August, 3, 1914 called upon denouncing the "*foreign subversive elements that are of the greatest danger for the security of the State,*" (Slovenski narod, August, 3, 1914). But the patriotic impetus reached such an extent that the office could not had handled all the reports and redirected the citizens to send the reports to the nearest police office. Thus, the responsibility of keeping eye on subversive elements was entrusted to regional authorities. The prewar ideological, political and ethnic prejudices had then taken the initiative to such extend, for example in Stiria, that the central authorities had to intervene because of an extremely high number of arrested Slovenian priests and other intellectuals (Moll, 2003, 253–283).

The Austrian Littoral thus could not had escaped this kind of patriotic actions. The police and military authorities had in fact prepared lists of suspected persons already before the war, which enlisted the names of 250 suspicious persons from the district of Gorica/Gorizia, Monfalcone and Tolmin, who could harm the monarchy in the case of war. As Janko Pleterski stated, the "Littoral" authorities did not work under the German nationalist pressure, as was the case of Stiria and Carinthia, but they had to deal with the Slovenes, the Croats and later also with the Italians (Pleterski, 1971, 27). The anonymous tips led to house searches and furthermore to arrests, internments and confinements of 305 persons from Austrian Friuli and Istria in 1914, mostly Slovenes and Croats, who were taken to the prison on the Castle of Gorica and later on to Ljubljana. The majority of them belonged to the middle class bourgeoisie (officials, lawyers, teachers, students, priest), for example the judge Alojz Gradnik, the lawyer Dinko Puc, vice state governor Alojz Franko, the candidate lawyer Gregor Žerjav, the politician and publisher Andrej Gabršček, etc. The later examination of the denunciations, presented also by the Yugoslav club in the Vienna parliament after its reopening on May 1917, proved the confirmability of the denunciations and even the personal revenges that were at the basis of the reports (Slovenski narod, 9, February, 1918, 2).

At the time, the measures targeted neither Austrian citizens of Italian nationality nor the so-called *regnicoli*, i.e. Italian citizens residing or working in the Habsburg Monarchy,

as the Austrian authorities did not want to risk a diplomatic dispute with then ally Italy. During the time of Italy's neutrality some Austrians of Italian nationality set out for Italy; according to some statistics, 2000 citizens left Gorizia, some of them left legally, but the Austrian military servicemen had to leave illegally (Svoljšak, 2011, 86). A month before the outbreak of the war between Italy and Austria-Hungary the desertions to the Italian army increased drastically, the *regnicoli* began to leave the town and the first flights to the safe hinterland had begun, especially wealthy and prominent families from Gorica left for the interior of the monarchy. According to the statistics, some 7000 inhabitants left the County for the Kingdom of Italy before the outbreak of the war (Svoljšak, 2011, 86).

But a month before the Italian entry into war, the Austrian authorities began with the persecutions of Italian irredentists and after 24, May, 1915, the wave of political measures against the enemies of the monarchy reached its high point, cracking down on any Italian citizen in the monarchy aged between 18 and 50, and nearly any Austrian citizen of Italian nationality. Italian citizens who had failed to leave the Littoral by 25, May, 1915 were deported to the Katzenau and Wagna camps (162); women, children and elderly Italian citizens were sent back to Italy via Switzerland in compliance with the agreement on the exchange of civilians. As a result, the Austrian Littoral witnessed 2987 internments, 1895 confinements and 9866 expulsions to Italy (Cecotti, 2001, 73). The Mayor of Gorica Giorgio Bombig was interned and the County authorities moved to Vienna.

The opening of the Austrian parliament in May 1917 opened also the debate on political persecutions; the political prisoners were released, but the interpellations of the Yugoslav club did not cease until the breakdown of the monarchy. The political persecutions had also great impact on the Slovenian remembrance of the war and influenced the perception of the Hapsburg monarchy as the "prison of nations" for long decades.

ITALIAN OCCUPATION

The violence of the war was also triggered by the state of occupations, and the compressed history of war in the Slovenian case has proved the assessment right. Violence against civilians usually occurred, as shown by Horn, Kramer and Liulevicius (Liulevicius, 2005) and also in "Austrian" case (Austrian Littoral), during the first months of the occupation, in the Baltic case it followed also the retreat of the Russian army, whereas the period of the occupation usually represented a period of settling the occupying administration, with important differences between occupational policies, the main difference being the final aims of the occupiers, such as the so called *Kulturmission* of the Germans in the *Ober Ost* or the Italian redemption and "Cultural – bringing" policy in the occupied zones of the Austrian Littoral.

The final Italian decision to enter the war on the Entente side, enabled Italy for the beginning of realization of the final stage of the unification of the state (*quarta Guerra d'indipendenza*) by "redeeming the unredeemed territories" between Trento and Trieste, regardless of the fact, that these territories had been populated also by non-Italian population. The relations between the Slovenes and Italians in the so called Venezia Giulia (Julian March) were marked by growing Italian irredentism. The Italian reference to the

region according to the glorious roman past encompassed for strategic reasons also parts of the Austrian (Slovene) province of Carniola and stopped south of Rijeka/Fiume, which was nominated by Dante as the eastern limit of Italy. Thus, the Italian nationalists as well referred to Dante as a legitimizing authority for their own political and territorial claims. This region had been, long before the outburst of Italian or Slovene/Croatian nationalism imagined as a boundary region and the outbreak of the First World War certainly proved to be a cross-reference of many unresolved issues (Svoljšak, 2003).

In all three parts of the Austrian Littoral (Trieste, the County of Gorizia and Gradisca, and Istria), Slovenes, Croats, Germans and Italians lived side by side. However, a growing Slovene political and ethnic self-confidence, encouraged by economic growth, upset the Italian population and motivated them towards a frequently narrow-minded policy of ethnic defense, which contributed to straining relations between the two ethnic communities. Instead of establishing political links, ethnic affiliation prevailed over ideological views and there had been practically no Slovene-Italian cooperation, especially in Trieste. Besides the political irredentism, a so called cultural irredentism intended to develop Italian culture through dialogue and cooperation with South Slavic and German cultures and Trieste was intended to become a meeting point. This idea was developed by the socialist Angelo Vivante and took into consideration Slovene and Croatian ethnic groups and their cultural and political achievements, in fact his goal was to create the proper conditions for multiethnic coexistence in the region, but there was no reaction from the Slovene side (Vivante, 1912). The Slovenes felt the Italian irredentism as a direct threat to Slovenes ethnic and cultural interests in the region. On the other hand, Italy did indeed iterate preconceptions as to the intellectual and cultural inferiority of Slovenes, and these were further propagated in the context of its territorial occupations during and after the First World War, and even more so during the Second World War.

The relations between Italians and Slovenes were also marked by stereotypes. The average Slovenes' perception of Italians was predominantly negative, the outbreak of the First World War and the Italian proclamation of neutrality deepened the Slovene's mistrust and feelings of deception. The Slovenian politicians labeled the Italians as "promise-breakers" and thenceforth this epithet became a very popular stereotype, and henceforth Italy was seen as an unreliable ally and the Italians a hereditary enemy (Stergar, 1996). Italy's 23rd May 1915 decision to enter the war on the side of the Entente signaled the climax of Slovene negativity towards the Italians. It represented also the turning point in the Slovenian perception of war, even though they never expressed or "performed" disloyalty; thenceforth it was understood as a just and defensive war for national territory (Svoljšak & Godeša, 2014, 304–305).

On 24, May, 1915, part of the Slovene ethnic territory of the Austrian Littoral turned into a battlefield and was, with part of *Friuli orientale* (and Trentino) subject to Italian military occupation. The inhabitants thus passed from Austrian "war absolutism", to the Italian administration that introduced new measures of control and protection of public order on its territories. These measures were on one hand the consequence of prejudice and poor knowledge of the conditions in the occupied territory, and on the other hand a reflection of military uncertainty and the security situation in the immediate rear of the

Isonzo Front. It should be pointed out, that the expectations of the Italian troops and their commanders regarding the welcoming on the occupied territories had not come true: the population did neither welcome the invaders, nor acted in a hostile way. Benito Mussolini was in fact very disappointed about the Slovene adverseness towards the Italians, which lasted through the end of the war (Svoljšak, 2003, 274).

At the beginning of the occupation, the Italian chief commander general Luigi Cadorna issued a command according to which it was necessary to hit with the exemplary force in order to maintain order and obedience among the occupied population. The first days of occupation were marked by numerous orders; the majority of them were prohibitions, which had, in Cadorna's view, the only purpose to establish conditions for a normal everyday life.

But before such normalization occurred, the civilian population faced some acts of extreme violence. Already on 29 May, 1915, the Italian troops opened fire against some 149 men from a Friulan village of Villesse in a rather strange circumstances and killed five of them. On 3, June, 1915 in the village Lucinico/Ločnik three men were killed without a trial and this practice continued for another two weeks. On 4, June, 1915 the Italian troops gathered all men (60) from the villages under the slopes of Mount Krn, accusing them of killing the Italian soldiers on their return from the bloody battles for Krn (the mountain was conquered on the 16th June in a night attack of Alpini troops). The Italians suffered great losses and thus the soldiers did not return to the positions, but they tried to escape the battles by accompanying their wounded comrades to the valley and hiding in the nearby woods. The missing soldiers were replaced by *Alpini*, who were described by a Slovenian peasant as mean and ferocious (Slovenec, 21 May, 1917, 3), but the Austro-Hungarian soldiers managed to reject all the Italian attacks.

During the escape from the slopes, the Italian soldiers even entangled in the combat with the Italian *carabinieri*, whereas the local population tried to avoid the fire. But not all of them managed to hide; two members of Fon family died on the field, hit by the Italian bullets. The Italian military authorities had to find a scapegoat for their military failure and they found it in the local population. They took the hostages, 61 men from the villages Krn, Vrsno, Libušnje, Smast in Kamno, across the river Soča and at the nearby village of Idrsko they questioned them with the help of an interpreter from a bordering Slovenian region Venezia Slava, but there was not a real trial, as the sentence was set in advance – the men were guilty of helping the enemy and of giving shelter to the Italian deserters.

Before the final act, the hostages had to dig their own graves and then the executional platoon shot every tenth men; they only spared a 17-old boy, who would serve as an Italian soldier after the war. Their remains were exhumed in 1920 and reburied at the cemetery of Kobarid. After the war the widows demanded the pensions from the Italian state, but were rejected because they were regarded as widows of the traitors, but the Slovenian attorney Henrik Tuma succeeded in proving their innocence and the wrongness of the Italian commander's decision. The rest of the hostages were taken to Kobarid, then to Cividale and finally interned to Sardinia, where the living conditions were very difficult. After three weeks, the younger internees (aged under 18 years) and those over 50 years were sent on the basis of the exchange of the civil population, to the Austrian camp

Waidhofen in Lower Austria. On the same day, 4, June, 1915, and in the following days 6 locals died under the Italian fire.

These violent measures were followed by the evacuation of the villages in the range of 500 meters from the operation zone; the basic reason was security and the devastation suffered by the villages proved them right. But the reasons for the evacuation were not always linked to the security measures, at least not in a sense of the inhabitants' security. They seemed more of an excuse, as they had referred to the non-loyalty of a mayor, the alleged killings of the Italian soldiers, the Austro-Hungarian deserter or to non-placing the white flag on the bell tower. The villages of the Upper Soča Valley, those of Kambreško, the hilly region between the Italian – Austrian border and the Soča river, and the western part of Brda – Collio were evacuated soon after the beginning of the hostilities. The population was given a couple of hours to prepare the necessary luggage and afterwards taken to the nearby intermediate stations, where they were vaccinated against infectious diseases and after a week of quarantine the trains took them to various Italian towns. The Italian refugee system did not introduce the refugee camps as the main tool of systematization of the refugees, which was the case in Austria-Hungary, but they dispersed the refugees all over the peninsula, provided them with accommodation and a day-allowance. The map of the refugee location is thus very diverse and tells a lot about the refugees' distress of living in a foreign environment, with few visits of the Slovenian priests, and letters via Swiss Red Cross to communicate with their dears in the Austro-Hungarian army (Svoljšak, 1991).

Violence against civilian population manifested itself also in the arrests and the internments of all men between 18 and 50 years of age and the local intelligentsia, who could had influenced the population about the intentions of the Italian occupation. During the first days of the occupation the Italian occupants were driven by the so-called *espionage psychosis*, which manifested itself in the uncontrolled net of rumors, fake news, hidden telephones, even in the tabernacles and the illegal crossings of the border. The information about the spies were overwhelming, the Italian newspapers even published the news about the shooting of the priest from Kobarid, who was supposedly accused of spying for the enemy by using the telegraph behind the altar and of informing the Austrian units about the Italian positions. It took them a month before the newspaper revoked the news.

But the spies were seen everywhere, on the front, in the hinterland and especially in the border area, where the Italian authorities noticed great fondness of the Habsburg monarchy. The arrested were accused of being filo-Austrians and spies, they were taken to the Island of Sardinia, where 2226 Austro-Hungarian citizens were interned by the end of 1917 (Svoljšak, 2003, 165). The Italian authorities were particularly vigilant about the Slovenian and Friulian priest, who were supposed to be not only potential spies, but also unconditioned patrons of the Dual Monarchy. Their archbishop Frančišek Borgia Sedej had addressed a letter to the priests of the Diocese of Gorica, asking them to stay by their parishioners despite of the possible Italian occupation and instructed them to act carefully and righteously in the relation to the occupiers, above all, they should not had acted in any way to provoke the revenge of the Italian authorities; this should had been also the stand of the local population. The archbishop Sedej, in contrast with his own instructions, left

his post for Stična. The policy of the Italian authorities towards the Slovenian priest was not unambiguous, some priest had to leave their posts, some were given the possibility to stay and assist the local population. Thus 21 clergymen, 6 of them were Slovenes, were arrested and escorted by carabinieri and the soldiers to the prison of Cremona under suspicion of espionage. For the first months of the imprisonment, they were allowed to perform masses, otherwise they had no freedom of movement. In September 1915 their situation changed and they could move around, under strict control of the authorities and they could even visit and assist the Slovenian refugees in Italy (Svoljšak, 2003, 179–218).

In the second half of June 1915 the situation on the occupied territories calmed down, physical violence ceased and the Italian authorities adopted more refined strategies of ethnic violence against the non-Italian population. The authorities aligned their actions with the political goals of the occupation, which main objective was to prepare the population for the postwar inclusion of the territories in the Kingdom of Italy.

Apart from dealing with administrative and public matters, run by a special office called the General Secretariat for Civilian Affairs (*Segretariato Generale per gli Affari Civili*), the primary task of the Italian Supreme Command was thus the organization of public administration in all spheres of public life. They ran a very active and effective social politics, which had two main goals: immediate and prompt help for the population, and the long-term objective of persuading the Slovene population about the benefits of living under Italian administration and care. A high-ranking Italian official felt that this policy was expensive, yet very effective (Ojetti, 1964, 37). However, all of the administration measures were based on the Italian presumption that Julian March, including the territories with the Slovenian population, and Trentino were part of Italian ethnic territory in the enemy's hands, which needed to be redeemed and returned to the nation once and for all. The basic tool for achieving a gradual but effective fusion of public life in the occupied territories with the "domestic" Italian life was language and its use in public. The first step was the introduction of Italian as the official language in public life.

The next step in reinforcing Italian in ethnically Slovene territory and setting the groundwork for the future was the systematic transformation or adjustment of Slovene personal and place names to fit Italian spelling. But special attention was dedicated to the education system that dealt with the youngest generations of the Slovene population and was the most prominent sphere of public life where an effective language policy could be carried out. The issue of introducing Italian curriculum, i.e. learning of the Italian language, Italian *Storia Patria* and *Geografia Patria*, together with completely reformed physical education because the Austrian was obsolete, was very delicate and had to take into account the actual situation and future plans for the annexation. The sensibility of the issue was well understood by general Achille Papa, who was the commander of the town of Kobarid and recommended a careful and slow penetration "*into this population without hurting their feelings, into their language, which they appreciate very much. [...] I hope we will gain affection, and with the affection of children we will also gain the affection of their parents,*" (Martinelli, 1989, 67).

The education system, adapted to the war times by carrying out a special form of lessons in the so called education – recreation facilities, performed a double mission,

just like the Italian social policy, i.e. they took concrete care of the education, health, clothing and nourishment, on the other hand they were constantly trying to convince the population about the benevolence of the present and future Italian authorities. Children as future citizens of the Kingdom of Italy, were targeted in the most successful strategy of preparing the population for future annexation to the Kingdom of Italy. The thunderous propaganda activities were directed to *open young souls* for the new motherland and to prove that that the “redeemed territories” were a self-evident part of Italian state territory.

AFTERMATH

After the Austro-German army’s successful advance in the Twelfth Isonzo Offensive on 24, October, 1917, the Italian military administration withdrew from the Isonzo region to Padua and the 29-months physical occupation ended. But the Italian authorities kept in touch with the administration, in fact the accountings of the Slovenian communities were kept by the Italian administration and returned to the places of origins only after the war. Thus, the Italian authorities would not forget their control over the territory and hatched plans for postwar reoccupation in a year to come. The following period between November 1917 and the end of the war was a period of relative chaos, the Italian authorities left, but the Austrian local authorities were returning slowly and gradually. The displaced population slowly returned to their ruined homes, and provincial representatives of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy began organizing postwar reconstruction. The end of the war brought about the re-occupation of the Slovenian ethnic territories according to the stipulations of the London Memorandum (1915). The re-occupation was based on the activity of the same office with the same personnel and was thus enabled to perform the same and even harsher suppressive and violent policy towards the Slovenian and Croat population as it was carried out during the war.

The wartime Austrian political persecutions influenced and infected the postwar Slovenian attitude towards the Austria-Hungary and pictured a rather black-and white image of the former Slovenian homeland. On the other hand, the Italian occupation paved the way for the postwar Italian ethnic policy against Slovene population in the Julian March, but as Horn and Kramer put it in their study on German atrocities, the topic could be defined as a *history of denial*, it is still an undesirable topic in the Italian historiography and completely neglected by the European historiography.

MED DVEMA OGNJEMA. AVSTRIJSKO IN ITALIJANSKO POLITIČNO NASILJE V AVSTRIJSKEM PRIMORJU 1914–1918

Peta SVOLJŠAK

Inštitut Milka Kosa ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, Ljubljana

Univerza v Novi Gorici, Vipavska 13, Nova Gorica

e-mail: petrasv@zrc-sazu.si

POVZETEK

Članek analizira politično nasilje proti civilnemu prebivalstvu v Avstrijskem Primorju med prvo svetovno vojno, v kontekstu totalne vojne in nasilja, ki ga vojna povzroči. Nasilje nad civilnim prebivalstvom se je odražalo na treh ravneh: nasilje na domačih tleh, nasilje proti civilistom sovražnih držav in nasilje med tujo okupacijo. Politiko nasilja je Avstro-Ogrska izvajali v t.i. notranji vojni proti lastnim državljanom v Cislajtaniji. Politična preganjanja so bila rezultat izrednega stanja, ki je bilo razglašeno 25. junija 1914, s čimer so bile suspendirane državljanske pravice, uveden je bil vojaški nadzor nad civilisti ter je deloval na podlagi (anonimnih denuncijacij). Pregarjanja v Avstrijskem Primorju so bila najprej naperjena proti slovenskim izobražencem, s približevanjem vojne proti Italiji pa so se obrnile proti avstrijskim državljanom italijanske narodnosti.

Italijanska okupacija slovenskega ozemlja je bila rezultata italijanskih vojnih ciljev ter je bila namenjena med drugim pripravi civilnega prebivalstva na prihodnjo aneksijo h Kraljevini Italiji. Prvi tedni okupacije so bili zaznamovani s primeri ekstremnega nasilja proti civilistom, čemur so sledile aretacije in internacije slovenskih duhovnikov in vseh moških med 18. in 50. letom starosti ter evakuacija slovenskih vasi in begunstvo v Italiji.

Vojni absolutizem in politično preganjanje sta vplivala tudi na povojni slovenski odnos do Avstro-Ogrske, do katere je bil vzpostavljen izrazito črno-bela podoba nekdanje domovine. Na drugi strani je italijanska okupacija slovenskega etničnega ozemlja in italijanska etnična politika proti slovenskemu prebivalstvu Julijske Krajine še vedno zanemarjena tema tako italijanskega kot evropskega zgodovinopisja prve svetovne vojne.

Ključne besede: prva svetovna vojna, Avstrijsko Primorje, nasilje, vojni absolutizem, italijanska okupacija

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

R.G.Bl. – Reichsgesetzblatt.

Slovenec – Ljubljana, 1873–1945.

Slovenski narod – Ljubljana, 1868–1943.

Becker, A. (2014): Captive civilians. In: Winter, J. (ed): *The Cambridge History of the First World War. Volume III.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 257–282.

Carnegie (1914): *Endowment for International Peace: Report of the international commission to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan war.* Washington D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Cecotti, F. (2001): Internamenti di civili durante la prima Guerra mondiale. In: Cecotti, F. (ed.): “Un esilio che non ha pari” 1914–1918: profughi, internati ed emigrati di Trieste, dell’Isontino e dell’Istria. Trieste, Gorizia, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, LEG, 71–98.

Deak, J. & O. Gumz (2017): How to Break a State: The Habsburg Monarchy’s Internal War, 1914–1918. *The American Historical Review*, 122, 4, 1105–1136.

Freud, S. (1915): Thoughts for the Times of War and Death <https://www.panarchy.org/freud/war.1915.html> (Access 30. 10. 2018).

Horn, J. (2014): Atrocities and war crimes. In: Winter, J. (ed): *The Cambridge History of the First World War. Volume III.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 561–584.

Horn, J. & A. Kramer (2001): *German atrocities, 1914: a history of denial.* New Haven, London, Yale University Press.

Judson, P. (2016): *The Habsburg Empire: a new history.* Cambridge (Massachusetts), London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Kramer, A. (2017): Atrocities (Version 1.1). In: Daniel, U., Gatrell, P., Janz, O., Jones, H., Keene, J., Kramer, A. & B. Nasson (eds.): *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War.* Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin, 2017-01-24.

Leidiger, H., Moritz, V., Moser, K. & W. Dornik (2014): *Habsburgs schmutziger Krieg: Ermittlungen zur österreichisch- ungarischen Kriegsführung 1914–1918.* St. Pölten, Salzburg, Wien, Residenz Verlag.

Liulevicius, V. G. (2005): *War land on the Eastern front: culture, national identity, and German occupation in World War I.* New York [etc.], Cambridge University Press.

Moll, M. (2003): *Erster Weltkrieg und Politische Justiz in Österreich-Ungarn: Empirische Befunde aus der slowenischen und deutschsprachigen Steiermark.* V: Luthar, O. & J. Perovšek (eds.): *Zbornik Janka Pleterskega.* Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 253–283.

Martinelli, V. (1989): *Achille Papa – Medaglia d’Oro. Un generale bresciano nella Grande guerra.* Brescia, Zanetti Editore.

Ojetti, U. (1964): *Lettere alla moglie: 1915–1919.* Firenze, Sansoni.

Pleterski, J. (1971): *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo. Politika na domačih tleh med vojno 1914–1918.* Ljubljana, Slovenska matica.

- Reiss, A. R. (1916):** Report upon the atrocities committed by the Austro-Hungarian army during the first invasion of Serbia: submitted to the Serbian government. London, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd.
- Scheer, T. (2010):** Die Ringstraßenfront. Österreich-Ungarn, das Kriegsüberwachungsamt und der Ausnahmezustand während des Ersten Weltkrieges. [Amtliche Publikation der Republik Österreich, Bundesminister für Landesverteidigung und Sport] (= Schriften des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums. Bd. 15). Hrsg. durch die Republik Österreich, den Bundesminister für Landesverteidigung und Sport und das Heeresgeschichtliche Museum, Wien.
- Scheer, T. (2017):** Denunciation and the Decline of the Habsburg Home Front during the First World War. *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 24.02 (April 2017), 214–228.
- Spann, G. (1991):** Das Zensursystem des Kriegsabsolutismus in Österreich während des ersten Weltkrieges 1914–1918. *Justiz und Zeitgeschichte VIII. Symposium Zensur in Österreich 1780 bis 1989 am 24. und 25. Oktober 1989*. Wien, Salzburg, Geyer-Edition.
- Stergar, R. (1996):** “Lahu niti pedi naše zemlje”: slovenski pogledi na Italijane ob napovedi vojne 23. maja 1915. *Kronika*, 44, 1, 69–73.
- Svoljšak, P. (1991):** Slovenski begunci v Italiji med prvo svetovno vojno. Ljubljana, Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije.
- Svoljšak, P. (2003):** Soča, sveta reka. Italijanska zasedba slovenskih ozemelj 1915–1917. Ljubljana, Nova revija.
- Svoljšak, P. (2011):** Gorizia (Gorica), a damned and sacred city between two fires. *Studia Historica Slovenica*, 11, 1, 79–109.
- Svoljšak, P. & B. Godeša (2014):** Italian interwar administration of Slovenian ethnic territory: Italian ethnic policy. rontwechsel: Österreich-Ungarns “Großer Krieg” im Vergleich. Wien, Kōl, Weimar, Böhlau, 303–323.
- Ude, L. (1960):** Boj za Maribor in Štajersko Podravje v l. 1918/1919. Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja.
- Vivante, A. (1912):** Irredentismo adriatico: contributo alla discussione sui rapporti austro-italiani. Firenze, Libreria della voce.