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**ARMED RESISTANCE  
IN SLOVENIA:  
SLOVENIAN  
PARTISAN ARMY  
1941-1945 IN  
RELATIONSHIP TO  
THE YUGOSLAV  
COMMAND**

**THE FORMATION OF ARMED UNITS OF THE RESISTANCE  
MOVEMENT IN SLOVENIA**

Two weeks after the attack on the Soviet Union, the leadership of the until then illegal Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ) in the already occupied and divided Kingdom of Yugoslavia decided to initiate resistance against all four occupiers

(Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary) and the newly founded Independent State of Croatia, to organise guerrilla resistance units and to compel its members to join these units and start an armed struggle.<sup>399</sup> The objective of the resistance struggle was national liberation, but it also included a hidden and decisive agenda that the KPJ would assume an important role in the future government system, if not come to full power during the struggle and particularly at the end of the war.<sup>400</sup> As it is usual for guerrilla warfare, local circumstances were important in the organisation of the resistance because resistance units could only develop from the bottom up, i.e. from local forces and resources which are necessary for any armed struggle. The leadership of the KPJ, which at the same time took over the leadership of the resistance, decided also at higher levels on a distributed principle because the new occupational borders which divided the state territory – Yugoslavia was divided into 11 different occupational areas – represented a great obstacle for achieving their aims because of different conditions for crossing them and different occupational policies. The organisational policy of the guerrilla warfare was at the same time also in line with its general orientation in the domestic politics, which advocated a Yugoslav state, but one that consisted of more (at least five) nations forming national administrative units, which was contrary to the unitary model of the previous Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1941, the politicians encouraged the creation of national guerrilla commanding units (the so called Main commands of Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Sandžak, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Macedonia), which could lead the guerrilla units on their territories more easily in times of difficult communication with each other. The KPJ tried to oversee and guide the activities of these guerrilla units.<sup>401</sup> For this purpose, the leadership formed the Main Command of the Yugoslav National Liberation Partisan Detachments,<sup>402</sup> mostly consisting of the most powerful political leaders, members of the highest political bodies with Josip Broz Tito, the Secretary-General of the KPJ, as the highest supreme commander.<sup>403</sup> The

399 Pero Morača: *Jugoslavija 1941*. Beograd, 1971, pp. 162–168. Jože Pirjevec: *Tito in tovariši* [Tito and Comrades]. Ljubljana, 2011, pp. 93–94. Gino Bambara: *La guerra di liberazione nazionale in Jugoslavia: (1941–1943)*. Milano, 1988. Jozo Tomasevich: *War and revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945. Occupation and collaboration*. Stanford, 2001.

400 Janko Pleterski: *Nacije, Jugoslavija, revolucija* [Nations, Yugoslavia, Revolution]. Beograd, 1988. Branko Petranović: *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji: 1941–1945*. Beograd, 1983. Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia*. Bojan Godeša: *Priprave na revolucijo ali NOB?* [Preparations for the Revolution or the National Liberation Struggle?]. In: *Slovenski upor 1941*.

401 See Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši*, pp. 91–98.

402 The military leadership named itself the Main Command of the Yugoslav National Liberation Partisan Detachment in September 1941, the Main Command of the Yugoslav National Liberation and Volunteer Army in January 1942, and from November 1942 it was called the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments. – *Vojna enciklopedija*, 10. Belgrade, 1975.

403 Morača, *Jugoslavija 1941*, pp. 163–164. Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši*, p. 93.

organisers, leadership of the KPJ and Supreme Command considered the Partisan Army, as they named the members of the guerrilla units, as an unified army, even though this uniformity was not achieved for a long time, not in the organisational and even less in the operational sense. Each of the partisan armies operated in their respective Yugoslav regions under the leadership of regional political bodies and their own commands. The Supreme Command had the supremacy only by name. They all had to operate with their own forces, taking into account current circumstances that were more or less suitable for armed resistance. Soon after the beginning of the resistance in July 1941, great differences in the inner development and power of the resistance movement arose, even though its leaders obeyed the (very) general guidelines and instructions from the highest command of the party and its military command. In the beginning, the partisan army mobilized most quickly in Serbia and Montenegro, where it was joined by a huge number of members as soon as in the summer of 1941.<sup>404</sup> In 1941, the Supreme Command of national liberation units was forced to deal especially with the issues regarding the partisan units in Serbia, where the Supreme Command was located, and could interfere in other resistance territories only occasionally, in writing or through delegates and individual members, but mostly it had to rely on the initiative of the leadership of individual resistance movements which, as members of the KPJ, fully recognized the authority of KPJ leaders, the Politburo of the KPJ and personally equal the Main, i.e. the Supreme Command. The difference between the centralist hierarchy of the Communist Party and the military subordination was not that significant as to cause any problems to the leadership. The guerrilla therefore had support also on the organisational level and in operational methods of the Yugoslav Communist Party. The communists also attracted other political groups and individuals to the resistance, but mostly in an informal way. Only in Slovenia did the Communist Party of Slovenia formalise this cooperation with other political groups in the resistance organisation called the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation, in which the communists were the most important and most radical political party, but they did not have the greatest number of members. Other groups joined the resistance organisation with the aim of achieving national liberation, and not so much for the radical social changes.<sup>405</sup> This opened up a potential area of conflict between them and their national and revolutionary goals which affected the formation and goals of an armed struggle against the occupational forces, as well as the relationship between the national (Slovenian) and the Yugoslav leadership of the resistance movement. At the end

404 Morača, *Jugoslavija 1941*, pp. 169–182, 224–228, 447–452.

405 See Eva Mally: *Slovenski odpor. Osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda od 1941–1945* [Slovenian Resistance. Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation 1941–1945]. Ljubljana, 2011, pp 75–131.

of July 1941, the Slovenian communists included an armed force, which they also originally established in Slovenia, into the Liberation Front as its armed force, which was not the case in other Yugoslav regions.<sup>406</sup>

When, in September 1941, the leadership of the Slovenian resistance movement formally confirmed the fact that it will act as part of the Yugoslav resistance, the leadership of the Liberation Front, which proclaimed itself on the 16<sup>th</sup> September as a temporary national representation called the Slovenian National Liberation Committee, also arranged their relationship with the Yugoslav leadership of the armed resistance. The Slovenian partisan army was also formally included into the common Yugoslav partisan army. Its ordinance defined the inclusion of the Slovenian partisan units as an inclusion of an autonomous and complete organisation under the command of its Supreme Command into the military organisation which was under the command of the Main Command of the Yugoslav National Liberation Partisan Units.<sup>407</sup> Because the Liberation Front was a coalition, such an explicit decision was politically necessary, but at the same time it showed reservations of at least some of the political groups towards the current Yugoslav reality and the emphasized sensitivity of the Slovenian people towards the reinstatement of national sovereignty and especially towards their own military organisation which felt estranged to the Slovenians in the centralist state because it was under a strong Serbian personal and traditional predominance. Such inclusion meant that the Slovenian partisan army started to developed into a direction that was generally determined by the Supreme Command and the commanders attended a meeting of partisan commands in Stolice.<sup>408</sup> In winter 1941, following the directions of the Supreme Command, the separation from the *Yugoslav Army in the homeland* took place which was led by colonel and later general Dragoljub Mihailović. However, the Executive committee of the Liberation Front (the Slovenian National Liberation Committee was no longer active) became the formal supreme commander of the Slovenian partisan army and confirmed military appointments to the highest level.

Such relationship between the two levels of army organisation was in force until mid-1943, even though the partisan army in Slovenia, which was under the immediate command of the Supreme Command, experienced turbulent organisational and operational evolution. In this relationship, the Slovenian partisan units with their command were a separate and complete part of the Yugoslav partisan army, but they had their own forces and capabilities and were

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406 Damijan Guštin: Konceptualni razvoj partizanstva na Slovenskem leta 1941 [Conceptual Development of the Partisan Movement in Slovenia in 1941]. *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, 1992, No. 1-2, pp. 102–107. Morača, *Jugoslavija 1941*, p. 471.

407 *DLRS, I*, doc. 40.

408 Morača, *Jugoslavija 1941*, pp. 479–489.

independent in their activities, if we ignore the periodical instructions of the Supreme Command regarding the military organisation and operational plans, which were given more as an advice. The operational leadership of the units was still conducted at lower levels, by the so called command of *detachment groups* and *operational zones*. The communicational abilities of the Supreme Command did not allow them to interfere with the command of the Slovenian partisan units at a strategic level. A special patrol of the Main Command which arrived on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1942 at the Supreme Command in Solanova kula in Bosnia after marching for one month was the first direct connection between the two commands since the member of Supreme Command Edward Kardelj left the seat of Supreme Command in February 1942.<sup>409</sup>

In autumn 1942, vague organisational models and competences caused the first serious crisis in the command of the military force of the Slovenian resistance movement. This happened during a huge crisis due to the Italian radical cleansing in the Province of Ljubljana, the armed collaboration and the beginning of the civil war. In November 1942, Josip Broz Tito, the commander of the Supreme Command, send the head of his headquarters, captain Arso Jovanović, and additional 11 officers to Slovenia, with a task to transform the Slovenian partisan units into militarily more effective formations. The reason for this decision were the pessimistic assessments about the possibilities and abilities of the Slovenian partisan army and its highest commanders, which were send by Josip Kopinič and Edvard Kardelj to the Supreme Command during the Italian offensive in 1942.<sup>410</sup> But the reason was also deeper, since it also concerned various aspects regarding the management of the relationships between the Yugoslav nations at the time when the leadership of the resistance movement decided to form its own Yugoslav unions.<sup>411</sup> The supreme commander Tito authorized Jovanović to implement the experience and organisation of the partisan units of the Supreme Command also in Slovenia. In fact, this authorisation made him a temporary commander of the Slovenian partisan army, with the right to personally shape its headquarters.<sup>412</sup> After arriving on the Slovenian territory, Jovanović, who was a former active officer of Yugoslav army, without sufficient political and diplomatic

409 Miroslav Luštek: O delu Glavnega poveljstva slovenskih partizanskih čet v letu 1941 [On the Work of the Supreme Command of the Partisan Troops in 1941]. In: *Ljubljana v ilegali, 2. Država v državi* [Ljubljana Underground, 2. A State within a State]. Ljubljana, 1961, pp. 72–90.

410 Bojan Godeša: Prispevek k poznavanju Dolomitske izjave [Contribution to Understanding the Dolomites Declaration]. *Nova revija*, 1991, No. 105-106, pp. 271–272. *DLRS, III*, doc. 97 and 138. Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Zbrana dela Edvarda Kardelja, 6, 38: Poročilo E. Kardelja J. Brozu Titu, 20 September 1942.

411 See Godeša, Prispevek k poznavanju Dolomitske izjave, pp. 601–603. Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši*, pp. 125–126.

412 SI AS 1487, box 5041, Pooblastilo A. Jovanoviću, 17 November 1942.

tact, implemented the organisational models of the units of the Supreme Command, enlarged brigades by including the enlisted men of the territorial detachments, degraded and appointed commanders of units, and forced political commissioners to replace the Liberation Front badges on their uniforms with KPY badges because he wanted to uniform the Slovenian partisan army with the practice of the central resistance group. He did all that without informing the Main Command, i.e. the leadership of the liberation movement.<sup>413</sup> His approach, which would be quite understandable in the hierarchy of a military organisation, sparked a harsh political reaction from the leadership of the resistance movement. After he returned to the headquarters of the leadership in Polhograjsko hribovje (20 km north-west from Ljubljana), he was confronted both by the leadership of KPS and the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front. The members of the latter asked if the partisan army is still under their supreme command, as it was since July 1941.<sup>414</sup> The leading officials of the KPS, who were committed to the party discipline and the leadership of the Supreme Command, but were also (national) leaders of the Liberation Front, found themselves in a dilemma which they solved with a compromise. The non-communist members of the Liberation Front leadership were satisfied with the formulation that Jovanović, the head of the Supreme Command, may reorganise the military organisation only in consensus with the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front. However, they actually allowed Jovanović to co-command the Slovenian partisan army together with the commander of the Main Command, to reorganise it from the so-called detachment groups to operational zones, and to relocate the commanders of headquarters and larger units for another two months until he returned to Supreme Command in Bosnia. The officers he brought with him and who should be appointed as commanders of the Slovenian brigades were, upon a compromise, appointed as deputy commanders and headquarters' heads of zones, brigades and battalions where they could use their military knowledge, but the commanders of these units remained Slovenians. And Šaranović, who was to become the new commander of the Slovenian Main Command, was appointed as the head of the Main Command. Considering the nationally-based reaction of the members of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front and some of the commanders,

413 *Zbornik dokumentov in podatkov o narodnoosvobodilni vojni jugoslovanskih narodov, VI. Borbe v Sloveniji* [Collection of Documents and Information about the National Liberation War of the Yugoslav Nations, VI. Battles in Slovenia]. Ljubljana, 1952–1986, doc. 109, 121, 136. Godeša, Prispevek k poznavanju Dolomitske izjave, pp. 604–605. Damijan Guštin: Vloga in pomen oborožene sile v narodnoosvobodilnem boju v Sloveniji 1941–1945 [The Role and Importance of Armed Forces in the National Liberation Struggle in Slovenia 1941–1945]. *Zgodovinski časopis*, 1991, No. 3, p. 473. Ivan Matović: *Vojskovođa s oreolom mučenika. Povest o generalu Arsi R. Jovanoviću načelniku Vrhovnog štaba NOVJ i njegovojtragičnojsudbini*. Beograd, 2001, pp. 281–309.

414 ZDPNV, VI/4, doc. 136 and VI/5, doc. 6, 12.

Edvard Kardelj summed up the entire conflict in a letter, in which he emphasized that because of the national-liberation character of the resistance movement, the commander of the partisan army on the Slovenian territory must remain a Slovenian.<sup>415</sup> This reflection remained in force until the inclusion of the Slovenian partisan army into the Yugoslav Army in spring 1945.

Only a few months later, in May 1943, the next important shift in the disposal of armed force occurred, which was connected to the strategic view regarding the Yugoslav alliance which was first developed at the 1<sup>st</sup> session of AVNOJ in November 1942. In May 1943, the secretary of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front and one of the leading communists Boris Kidrič, who was just explicitly criticized by the leadership of the Yugoslav resistance because of his reserved standpoint towards the Yugoslav community, proposed to the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front that they transfer their power to appoint the highest commanders in the Slovenian partisan army to the Supreme Command. The communists leading the Slovenian resistance movement had to once again encourage the Yugoslav integration processes. The Executive Committee discussed the proposal at their meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 1943. Its member Josip Rus (member of liberal group) turned the proposal into a discussion about the political structure of the future state, pointing out that the assignment of military authority to the Supreme Command without any guarantees about the federal structure of the future state means foremost the restoration of the previous relations in the state, i.e. Unitarianism, which was unacceptable for him and contrary of the Liberation Front programme.<sup>416</sup> However, the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front did consent to hand over their competences of a supreme commander to the Supreme Command and kept only an advisory role, which meant that the formal structure in Slovenia was again in line with the actual situation in other parts of Yugoslavia.

Upon the reconstruction of the Main Command in July 1943, Franc Rozman-Stane, one of the most competent operational commanders in the Slovenian partisan army, was appointed as the new commander of the Main Command of the Slovenian National Liberation Army (NOV) and Partisan Detachments (PO). He was nominated as a candidate by the Executive Committee and appointed by the supreme commander.<sup>417</sup>

415 DLRS, VI, doc. 46. Guštin, Vloga in pomen oborožene sile, pp. 474–475. Godeša, Prispevek k poznavanju Dolomitske izjave, pp. 605.

416 DLRS, VII, doc. 66. Edvard Kocbek: *Listina. Dnevniški zapiski od 3. maja do 2. decembra 1943* [Document. Journal Entries from 3 May to 2 December 1943]. Ljubljana, 1967, p. 51. Tone Fajfar: *Odločitev. Spomini in partizanski dnevnik* [Decision. Memoirs and Partisan Journal]. Ljubljana, 1981, pp. 281–285.

417 Guštin, Vloga in pomen oborožene sile, pp. 474–475. Godeša, Prispevek k poznavanju Dolomitske izjave, pp. 606.

Even though the partisan army was one military organisation in Yugoslavia, which was divided into several more or less autonomous commands, the question about the future organisation of the Yugoslav armed force arose soon after the resistance movement decided on a political takeover. The question about the organisation of the army and under whose jurisdiction it would be also emerged with the formation of a federal state and, above all, the efforts that the resistance movement would be the successor of the Yugoslav government. Technical means, for example permanent radio connections, enabled a more direct command of the Slovenian NOV and PO on the strategic level and later partly also on the operational level. Since July 1943, the commander of the Supreme Command Josip Broz Tito independently conducted all appointments of the highest military commanders, not only in main commands, but also in their corps and divisions – also in the Slovenian ones. But this did not mean there were no regular consultations on individual staffing solutions with leading Slovenian political bodies.

At that time, the speciality of the Slovenian partisan army was more and more reflected in the use of the Slovenian language as the language of command and leadership. Tito gave the Slovenian delegation a clear, but non-binding answer to the question by major general Jakob Avšič, deputy commander of the Main Command, about the Slovenian army (a question about its status), which he posed on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1943 during a conversation one day after the 2<sup>nd</sup> AVNOJ session, namely that the Slovenian nation has a right to its army (in the future federal state), but in order to convince the allies that the Yugoslav state will not dissolve, transitional centralized measures will be necessary.<sup>418</sup> The argument Tito used was not without weight, but he completely left out the need for the centralisation for the takeover which was planned by the (communist) leadership of the resistance movement. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia in Jajce (in Bosnia) on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November 1943, which politically binding enforced the federal organisation of the future Yugoslav state, the issues related to the status of the army and military organisation of the future union was otherwise not mentioned at all.<sup>419</sup>

During the establishment of a federal state, state agencies and institutions, which was carried out from February 1944 to May 1945, the army was not even mentioned as a jurisdiction of the Slovenian federal unit, even though the partisan

418 SI AS 1670, box 432/1. Kocbek, *Listina*, pp. 539–541. Tone Ferenc: *Ljudska oblast na Slovenskem 1941–1945, 2: Narod si bo pisal sodbo sam* [People's Authorities in Slovenia 1941–1945, 2: The Nation will Shape Its Own Destiny]. Ljubljana, 1985, pp. 310. Guštin, *Vloga in pomen oborožene sile*, pp. 475–476. Veljko Namorš: *Tradicija NOB in enakopravnost jezikov v JLA* [Tradition of the National Liberation Struggle and the Equality of Languages in the Yugoslav People's Army]. *Nova revija*, 6, 1987, No. 57, pp. 104–118.

419 *Drugo zasjedanje Antifašističkov viječa narodnog oslobodjenja Jugoslavije. Predsjedništvo antifašističkog viječa narodnog oslobodjenja Jugoslavije*. [Jajce] 1943, pp. 58–61.



army was presented and emphasised as a national Slovenian army in the propaganda appearances. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1944, the Main Command of the Slovenian NOV and PO officially introduced the Slovenian language in the units under their command.<sup>420</sup>

The projected need for decentralization was even more expressed after the strategic decision of the leadership of the resistance movement to accept a compromise which will lead to the international recognition of the authority of the resistance movement in Yugoslavia. The control of the army was very important in this process. By mid-1944, the principle of a unified Yugoslav Army which was fully subordinate to the central leadership finally prevailed in the leadership of the resistance movement, but not without opposition. The communists in the Slovenian and Croatian leadership of the resistance movement were pointing out that such organisation is premature because it is politically damaging as it weakens the national influence of the partisan army and with that the response of the population.<sup>421</sup> Perhaps that was the reason why centralization in the military field continued without distinctive systematic measures. In 1944, the Supreme Command acquired a number of new levers of leadership and command and, in the autumn of 1944, unified the military judiciary, organizational and formational regime, and introduced centralized awarding of officer ranks – first for commanders, then for political commissars.<sup>422</sup> The Supreme Command also started to interfere more frequently in the operational planning and execution of individual battles and operations. Although it did not approve of the announced far-reaching measures, the Slovenian leadership did not actively resist the centralization of the army. A message from Edvard Kardelj in autumn 1944 read: “The General Staff will be liquidated, but instead an army staff will be established at the same time.” The leadership of the Slovenian liberation movement was informed about the basic directions of the development of the military from the most competent sources as early as at the beginning of October 1944, although this process would affect the NOV and PO units lastly.<sup>423</sup>

The great military success of the national liberation army, which was recognized since the summer of 1944 by the British-American allies and the

420 Guštin, *Vloga in pomen oborožene sile*, pp. 475.

421 *Izvori za istoriju SKJ. Dokumenti centralnih organa KPJ. NOR i revolucija 1941–1945*, XVI. Belgrade, 1986, p. 350. Jerca Vodušek Starič: *Prevzem oblasti: 1944–1946* [Assumption of Power: 1944–1946]. Ljubljana, 1992, pp. 75–76.

422 Nikola Anić, Nikola Joksimović and Milan Gutić: *Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije. Pregled razvoja oružanih snaga narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta 1941–1945*. Beograd, 1982. Damijan Guštin: *Razvoj vojaškega sodstva slovenskega odporniškega gibanja 1941–1945* [The Development of Military Judicial Administration of the Slovenian Resistance Movement 1941–1945]. *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, 2004, No. 1, pp. 49–62.

423 *Dokumentu centralnih organa*, book 20. Belgrade, 1987, doc. 21, Pismo E. Kardelja CK KPS 1 October 1944, p. 169. Cf. *Dokumentu centralnih organa*, book 21. Belgrade, 1987, doc. 21, Zapisnik seje politbiroja KPJ 15 November 1944.

Soviet Union as an ally and the only Yugoslav force fighting against Germany and National Socialism, and the conquest of Serbia and the former capital Belgrade in cooperation with the Red Army triggered a new dynamics from the political and military perspective. From November 1944 to January 1945, the mobilisation of every male resident from Belgrade to south Macedonia was carried out, several new military units were established and the partisan army was renamed into the army of the Democratic and Federal Yugoslavia with three armies. This process ended on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1945 with the renaming of the Yugoslav NOV in PO into Yugoslav Army, which then founded the fourth army in Dalmatia. At the same time, the priorities of the operational activities of the Yugoslav Army changed – its most important tasks were the final operations and the breakthrough at the so called “Syrmian” and “Bosnian” front, which was established by the German army as it retreated to the north-west. The Supreme command considered the strong partisan forces in the hinterland, in Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia, as an important, but secondary force in the enemy’s hinterland, which would be gradually included in the existing units of the Yugoslav Army during the operations for liberation.<sup>424</sup>

Parallel to the agreement on military cooperation with the Soviet Union, the creation of a new organizational model of the Yugoslav Army began in the spring of 1945. The planned starting point was a unified army, in which military serviceman of different nationalities would unite into a unified Yugoslav force according to the formula of “brotherhood and unity”. In fact, this organisation was actually partly based on the idea of eliminating national differences in terms of the existing national mortgages, but in particular on the establishment of a military force that could provide external security and internal support for the implementation of an ambitious project of the transformation into a socialist society. With this, they finally rejected the idea that the Yugoslav Army would consist of national armies, which would mean a separate Slovenian part.<sup>425</sup>

The Slovenian political leadership saw the situation as it existed by implication, i.e. a model of a special part of the army in the context of the future Yugoslav Army, as the form of military organisation they wanted during peaceful times. Therefore, in the first few months of 1945, they still cautiously sought to maintain, if not in fact then at least formally, one of the monuments of the national army, as Slovenian NOV and PO were understood and represented by then. However, the central Yugoslav leadership showed no understanding for such efforts, and Boris Kidrič, who was the last person who communicated the Slovenian standpoint in February 1945, tried to comfort the disappointed

424 Anić, Joksimović and Gutić, *Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije*, pp. 468–481. Tone Ferenc: Sklepne operacije za osvoboditev Slovenije [Final Operations for the Liberation of Slovenia]. In: *Osvoboditev Slovenije 1945*, pp. 110–135.

425 Vodušek Starič, *Prevzem oblasti*, pp. 197–208.

Slovenian leaders after returning from the liberated Belgrade that the promised national army is a matter of the future after the liberation.<sup>426</sup> In accordance with this, they renamed the Main Command of the NOV and PO of Slovenia into the Main Command of the Yugoslav Army for Slovenia after 1<sup>st</sup> March 1945,<sup>427</sup> which actually meant the annulment of NOV and PO of Slovenia as a special part of the common army, instead of explicitly renaming Slovenian NOV and PO. They also planned a gradual integration of its units into the Yugoslav Army, in line with the implementation of the operational plan of final operations which was intended to liberate the entire national territory, as well as the Croatian and Slovenian ethnic territories which constitutionally belonged to the Kingdom of Italy and Austria.

Slovenian NOV and PO continued to exist formally. Slovenian partisan units participated more and more often in the finishing operations of the four armies of the Yugoslav Army, and were a part of the Army behind the front line. VII<sup>th</sup> Corps was assigned to the IV<sup>th</sup> Army, although it did not become its organic part for another month. However, an inclusion into the IX<sup>th</sup> Corps was also indicated. Only in the first days of May 1945, during the final operations for the liberation of the entire national territory, the Slovenian partisan units came in contact with the bulk of the Yugoslav Army and then the time for its actual reorganisation came.<sup>428</sup>

## THE ABOLISHMENT OF SLOVENIAN PARTISAN ARMY AS A SPECIAL FORMATION

The majority of the Yugoslav Army liberated the entire area of the targeted territory in May 1945. During the operation and right at the end it included large Slovenian units. In accordance with the already prepared plan for the reorganisation of the Yugoslav Army into its peacetime composition,<sup>429</sup> which

426 SI AS 1487, box 1.

427 SI AS 1851, box 41, Knjiga depeš: Depeša 437, 3 March 1945.

428 Damijan Guštin: "Komanda Slovenije". Slovenski načrt vojaške uprave slovenskega ozemlja leta 1945 ["Slovenian Command". The Slovenian Military Administration Plan in the Slovenian Territory in 1945]. In: *Mikužev zbornik*. Ljubljana, 1999, pp. 169–185. Zdravko Klanjšček: Vloga NOV in PO Slovenije v zaledju jugoslovansko-nemškega bojišča v končnih operacijah za osvoboditev [The Role of the National Liberation War and the Partisan Detachments of Slovenia in the Hinterlands of the Yugoslav-German Battlefield in the Final Operations for the Liberation]. In: *Osvoboditev Slovenije*, p. 139.

429 The organizational plan of the future army was prepared by a special group of the Yugoslav Army General Staff between March and the end of April 1945. The plan included the establishment of a single Yugoslav Army General Staff and the Ministry of Defence under the Government of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, without any authority of the federal units. The Yugoslav Army was divided into 7 armies and the Command of the city of Belgrade. Army areas were assigned to six armies (the seventh so-called Tank Army did not have an army area, but it should be formed in Slovenia). They wanted to abolish all existing federal Yugoslav Army staffs and corps, and reduce the number of divisions. – Đorđo Novosel and Ilija Nikežić: *Savezni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu, I*. Beograd, 1990, p. 54. Anić, Joksimović and Gutić, *Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije*, p. 527.

had to be implemented by 31<sup>st</sup> May 1945, a reorganisation in the recently liberated territory of Slovenia was carried out as well. On 18<sup>th</sup> May, the Main Command of the Yugoslav Army for Slovenia, as well as the staffs of the VII<sup>th</sup> and IX<sup>th</sup> Corps and IV<sup>th</sup> operational zones were dissolved. Of the six divisions of the Slovenian partisan army, only three were left after the reorganisation: the 14<sup>th</sup> division, which was included into the III<sup>rd</sup> army and then transferred to Vojvodina in August 1945, the 31<sup>st</sup> division of the IV<sup>th</sup> army, and the strongly reinforced 2<sup>nd</sup> division of KNOJ, to which 15 brigades and a team of detachments were added.<sup>430</sup> The territory of the federal republic of Slovenia was military administered by the territory of the IV<sup>th</sup> army, where the operational units of the IV<sup>th</sup> army were stationed. This army also established a military territorial administration with two areal commands (Ljubljana, Maribor) and the command of the city of Ljubljana.<sup>431</sup> In the area west of the Rapallo border, the western allies of the Yugoslav Army recognized the right to occupy the western part of the liberated areas; by 23<sup>rd</sup> May it occupied the area on the right river bank, and by 12<sup>th</sup> June the city of Trieste as well. Following the agreement between Tito and Alexander on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1945, the Yugoslav Army occupied the area of the east Primorska region, where it established a Military Administration of JA (VUJA) with headquarters in Opatija. Initially it was led by the commander of the IV<sup>th</sup> army.

## CONCLUSION

The Yugoslav resistance movement, which politically rejected the unitary political structure of the former state, which did not reflect any multinational aspects, soon run into similar problems of interethnic relations. This was also reflected in the formation of its military forces. Patriotism, which was based on nationalism, was an important factor for mobilizing the population for the guerrilla army, which was crucially dependent on the voluntary mobilization and support of the local population. The solutions which the resistance movement tried to implement under the leadership of the Communists were a compromise. They formally maintained some elements of the (Slovenian) national army, but in fact it was the communists who, in the name of discipline as well as their special objective of a revolutionary takeover, led the army into a similar centralist

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430 Lado Ambrožič: *Petnajsta divizija* [The Fifteenth Division]. Ljubljana, 1983, pp. 515–517. Drago Vresnik and Branko Jerkič: *Zaščita in boj za svobodo: 1944–1945. Poveljstvo Vojske državne varnosti – 1. Slovenska divizija Narodne obrambe, prva brigada VDV-NO* [Security and the Struggle for Freedom: 1944–1945. State Security Army Command – the 1st Slovenian Division of the National Defence, the First Brigade of the State Security Army – National Defence]. Ljubljana, 1999, pp. 309–322.

431 Guštin, "Komanda Slovenije", p. 184. Gojko Miljanić: *Kopnena vojska JNA, I*. Beograd, 1988, pp. 229–231.

organisational form as it was before the war in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia – which is imminent in the military organisation. However, this model took its final shape only when it was no longer politically decisive, since they seized power and became the political foundation of a new Yugoslav statehood during the final operations against the Nazi Germany in Yugoslavia. The army, which was named Yugoslav Army in the first post-war years, was, as the sum of all influences, an institution which clearly supported the centralistic revolutionary authority, despite the formal federal organisation of the state. The unrealised formal competence of the Slovenian federal state in the military field became something unspoken, but internally present in the internal political developments of the next 36 years of the socialist Slovenia.