

ITALIAN POLICIES TOWARD CROATIANS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Developments Before the War

Italian policies toward Croatian territories during the Second World War represent a continuation of those pursued by the Fascists after they came to power in 1922. From its very beginnings, the *Fascio* (*Partito nazionale fascista*) had been an extremist nationalist party. When various Irredentist groups (*Pro Fiume*, *Pro Dalmazia*, *Italia irredenta*) linked up with the Fascists, irredentism became a key plank in the Fascists' foreign policy goal to achieve a "national and imperial Italy." This meant expansion into the Balkans and the eastern Adriatic Coast and transforming D'Annunzio's *mare amerissimo* into an Italian *mare domestico*. Through this means, the political and economic power of the Fascist empire would be attained.

These policies received an initial boost from the Allied nations through the secret Treaty of London in 1915 which promised Italy the Croatian territories of Istria, the Kvarner, the Dalmatian islands (other than Šolta and Brač) and the mainland areas of northern Dalmatia in return for entering World War I on their side. Italy took over these areas in 1918, even though these same territories had formed part of the new State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs formed upon Austria-Hungary's collapse.¹ The entry of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (*Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (SHS), called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1929) on 1 December 1918 with the Kingdom of Serbia forced Italy to reach an agreement with the SHS concerning the so-called "Adriatic Question." The Italians and Yugoslavs resolved their differences through the Treaty of Rapallo in 1924 (signed by representatives of the governments of Benito Mussolini and Nikola Pašić) pursuant to which Italy also received Rijeka. As a result, Italy obtained 10,000 square kilometers of Croatian and Slovenian ethnic territory with over 500,000 Croats and Slovenes whose national rights received no guarantees under any agreement. The Greater

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¹ The State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, with its capital in Zagreb, included those areas of Austria-Hungary populated primarily by these three peoples and existed for a little over a month until its union with Serbia and Montenegro on 1 December 1918.

Serbian rulers remained satisfied with having fewer Croats and Slovenes in Yugoslavia in order to more easily overcome their resistance to Serbian hegemony. At the same time, the agreement allowed supporters of Greater Serbia to overcome their differences with neighboring Italy at the expense of these same Croats and Slovenes.

From the first, systematic terror and forcible Italianization characterized Italian policies in those Croatian areas which found themselves within the Italian Kingdom. It commenced with the dissolution of all Croatian and Slovenian institutions, societies and schools and continued through the emigration (which took on the elements of an exodus) of numerous Croats as a result of persecution. Italians from Italy moved into their homes in order to change these areas into ethnically Italian ones. All of this caused the rise of resistance among Istrian Croats. In 1921, armed revolts of miners in Labin and Croat peasants in the Proština area broke out. This represented the first antifascist resistance in Europe. Even though the Italians suppressed these uprisings, the resistance of Istrian Croats did not end and took on new forms and methods.

Irredentist desires dominated Italian policies toward Croatian areas within the Yugoslav state in the interwar period. The Irredentists sought the destruction of Yugoslavia (seeing it as an artificial creation of Versailles), the annexation of Dalmatia and the creation of a Croatian state under Italian protection. Satisfying this goal remained tied to the evolving situation in the Balkans and Europe. Soon after Italy's annexation of Rijeka, Mussolini began to agitate in favor of Italy's annexation of Dalmatia, to cooperate with separatist movements in the SHS Kingdom and to work to isolate Yugoslavia diplomatically (especially by building ties with Bulgaria and Hungary). After the proclamation of King Alexander Karadjordjević's dictatorship (1929) and the founding of the "Ustasha - Croatian Revolutionary Organization," led by Dr. Ante Pavelić (which had the goal of forming a sovereign and independent Croatian state outside of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), Mussolini welcomed the Ustasha and allowed them to establish military camps in Italy. In 1932, the Ustasha, with direct Italian support, organized the "Velebit Uprising" in Lika. Italy hoped that the Uprising would destabilize Yugoslavia and lead to its collapse and the formation of a Croatian state under Italy's hegemony. This did not come to pass, and Italy had to wait for the right opportunity.

In the meantime, the fascist states began to mutually cooperate. In 1936 Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy reached an accord, later joined by Imperialist Japan, to form the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis.² Italy received assurances from Germany and Japan that the Mediterranean, including the Croatian Adriatic and the Balkans, would be an exclusive zone of Italian influence. Despite this, Fascist Italy had to take into account the interests and goals of the German Third Reich. This became evident in 1937 when, in keeping with German

² For more concerning Italian policies in this period, see Enes Milak, *Italija i Jugoslavija 1931-1937* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1987.).

desires, Yugoslavia and Italy entered into an agreement in Belgrade placing their political and trade relations on a new footing. The agreement confirmed their mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity. The Italian side pledged to stop supporting the Ustasha, provide the Yugoslavs with information concerning the Ustasha émigrés and allowed all Ustasha who wished to do so to return home.

Mussolini held the remaining Ustasha group led by Ante Pavelić in reserve for possible future use. Simultaneously, the Italian Fascist leadership entered into unsuccessful discussions with representatives of the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka* - HSS) to resolve the so-called "Croatian Question" to Italy's benefit. These talks intensified during 1939.

Dr. Vladko Maček, the HSS President, refused to come to terms with Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano and instead reached an agreement with Belgrade. Because of the critical international situation in Europe and the looming war, Belgrade could no longer put off resolving the "Croatian Question" if it wished to save Yugoslavia from disintegration. 26 August 1936 saw the establishment of the *Banovina* of Croatia within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, only days prior to the beginning of the Second World War.³ The Croatian *Banovina* obtained a *Ban* (Vice-Roy), its own administration and Parliament (*Sabor*), as well as legislative, administrative and judicial autonomy which could not be modified or rescinded without its consent. Its territory covered 65,456 square kilometers and had a population of 4,024,601 (according to the 1931 census), of which 70.1% consisted of Croats, 19.1% Serbs and 10.8% others. It took up the area of the present-day Croatian Republic (other than Dvor on the Una and Baranja as well as areas then under Italy). It also included thirteen counties (*kotari*) in present day Bosnia and Herzegovina and Šid County in present-day Vojvodina in Serbia which had a majority of Croat population. It did not include eastern Srijem and the Boka kotarska.

All of the Serbian political parties (other than the Independent Democratic Party), Serbian nationalist and Greater Serbian organizations and societies, the Army and the Serbian Orthodox Church opposed the establishment of the Croatian *Banovina*. They considered it dangerous for Serbdom and the survival of the state. As a result, they formed the Greater Serbian movement "*Srbi na okup*" ("Serbs Together") with the goal to establish an administrative entity under the name "Serbian Lands" or Greater Serbia from the remaining six provinces to the south of the Croatian *Banovina* as well as those parts of the Croatian *Banovina* where Serbs constituted a majority and which the Serbs considered necessary for geo-strategic or political reasons. The goal of establishing a Greater Serbia at the cost of Croatia's historical territory has remained a constant theme among Greater Serbian and Chetnik political expansionist circles until our present day. Italy knew how to make use of this in its favor during the War.

³ Ljubo Boban, "Vanjskopolitička aktivnost vodstva HSS-a 1935-1941," *Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije*, volume 3 (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1990.), pp. 13-265.

The Ustasha also opposed the Croatian *Banovina* whose autonomy they believed had no guarantees, supported the internal consolidation and strengthening of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and prevented the establishment of a free and independent Croatian state. The Ustasha's positions coincided with Italian Fascist policies.

In 1939 Italy occupied Albania. Italy forced Albania's Parliament to agree to Italy's annexation of Albania and to accept the Italian king as Albania's own. In a secret memorandum to Hitler, Mussolini emphasized the strategic advantage held by the Axis powers in Europe in the pending war as a result of having obtained possession of the Czech lands and Albania. He believed it necessary to immediately take the entire Danubian basin and the Balkans at the beginning of the war and to economically use these areas for the continued successful running of the war. He emphasized Italy's need to postpone fighting until 1942 when Mussolini believed Italy would be ready to continue the war. Hitler, however, ignored Mussolini's proposal.

In 1940 Italy again turned to Pavelić and attempted to use him to quicken the tempo of events and realize its goals in Croatian territories. However, Hitler had other ideas. Hitler desired peace in the Balkans while war operations continued in other areas. This resulted in Yugoslavia's agreement to join the Tripartite Pact in Vienna on 25 March 1941. Previously, Mussolini had refrained from launching his planned military operations in 1940 against Yugoslavia and he decided to attack Greece instead. However, as a result of suffering defeats in Greece, he had to beg Hitler for assistance and Hitler agreed to provide it. The military coup of 27 March 1941 in Belgrade changed Hitler's judgment concerning the situation in the Balkans. Hitler determined to attack the Kingdom of Yugoslavia beginning on 6 April 1941.⁴

The Relationship of Croatia and the Fascist Kingdom of Italy During the War

As a result of the war (from 6 to 17 April 1941), occupation and division of the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a new stage began in the satisfaction of the expansionist goals and interests of the Third Reich and Fascist Italy over Croatian areas and the Balkans. The proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska* - NDH) took place in this context on 10 April 1941.⁵ The NDH consisted of the *Banovina* of Croatia, the remainder of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and east-

⁴ *Dnevnik grofa Ciana* (Zagreb: 1948), and *Tajni arhivi grofa Ciana 1936-1942* (introduced and edited by Dr. Bogdan Krizman) (Zagreb: 1952); Bogdan Krizman, "Odnosi Jugoslavije s Njemačkom i Italijom 1937-1941," *Historijski zbornik XVII* (Zagreb: 1964.). These works set forth the general activities and designs of Italian Fascist policies toward Croatian territories in the years noted in their titles.

⁵ For more information, see: Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1970); Bogdan Krizman, *Pavelić i Ustaše* (Zagreb: Globus, 1978); Bogdan Krizman, *NDH između Hitlera i Musolinija*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1983); Fikreta Jelić-

ern Srijem and had a total area of 102,725 square kilometers. It had a population of 6,640,000 people, of which 30% consisted of Serbs, while Muslims made up around 11% (the leadership of the NDH proclaimed the Muslims to be Croats, and many Muslim leaders agreed to that designation). The Italians made use of this large non-Croat population in their relations vis-à-vis the NDH. They further exploited a number of damaging internal policies adopted by the NDH's leaders. The Italian Fascists received the opportunity to achieve their maximum program on the Croatian Adriatic coast. Already during preparations for the April war, we find Italian territorial pretensions toward this area set forth in their propaganda materials. They believed these areas to be "their" (Italian) historical, hereditary and inalienable territory. The new occupation of the entire Dalmatian coast, all of its islands and its interior to its "natural borders" on the Velebit and Dinaric Mountains would allow Italy to establish its "strategic borders" and thus, according to their thoughts, forever solve the Adriatic Question. Italian business circles, as seen in an analysis earmarked for Mussolini by Dr. Dino Gardini, supported these claims. They proposed the division of the Italian zone of influence and economic domination into two parts or zones.⁶ The first zone would be contiguous with an area known as the "Zone of Absolute Italian Interests." This zone would include the bauxite and other mines in the coastal region allowing Italy to become an exporter of the ores extracted from there. Italy's claim to these territories would be based on Italy's hereditary rights as successor to the Venetian Republic. The second zone would border the first zone and extend to Germany. Italy planned to flood the NDH economy with Italian products to eliminate all other competitive influences. This would allow Italy to be supplied with raw materials from the NDH's mines and other sources and thus realize Italy's political and economic influence in the country. During the War, Italian leaders never swerved from these goals.

Even during the April war one can see that the Italians found a contender in this area in the Third Reich. This became apparent during talks in Vienna on 21 and 22 April 1941 between Ciano and Ribbentrop concerning the delimitation between Germany and Italy. After these discussions, on 24

Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941-1945*, (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber i Školska knjiga, 1978); Rafael Brčić, "Prilog razmatranju okupacionih sistema u BiH 1941 godine, Prilozi 5 (Sarajevo: 1969), pp. 217-259; Jere Jareb, *Pola stoljeća hrvatske politike* (Buenos Aires: Knjižnica Hrvatske revije 1960; second edition: Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest /hereinafter HIP/, 1995); Jere Jareb, "Hrvatski narod u drugom svjetskom ratu 1941-1945," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* (hereinafter, ČSP), 27 (Zagreb: 1995), Nr. 3; Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Naklada Pavičić, 1994.); Jure Krišto, *Sukob simbola. Politika, vjere i ideologije u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Globus, 2001); and *Talijanska uprava na hrvatskom prostoru i egzodus Hrvata (1918.-1993.)*, Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa (Zagreb: HIP and Društvo "Egzodus istarskih Hrvata," 2001.). We can best assess Italy's policies toward Croatian areas during the Second World War by examining the views of the leadership of the Kingdom of Italy to the NDH.

⁶ Arhiv oružanih snaga Srbije i Crne Gore, Beograd (Archives of Armed Forces of the Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade, hereinafter, AOS SCG), Talijanska arhiva, box 387, fasc. 8, doc. no. 4-1.

April Hitler demarcated the areas between German and Italian occupational forces along the Samobor-Glina-Dvor-Jajce-Fojinica-Višegrad line. The German occupational zone took up the territory north of the line, while the Italian occupational zone took the area to the south. The Germans refused Italian demands to include all of Dalmatia and its wider hinterland within Italy, advising the Italians to engage in direct negotiations with the NDH. The Germans received Italian assurances that they would have access to the bauxite mines for German industry should they come under Italian rule.

Talks with the NDH in Ljubljana (25 April) and in Tržič (7 May) concluded with the execution of a number of agreements in Rome on 18 May 1941 signed by Mussolini and Pavelić. The first agreement established the border between the NDH and Italy. Pursuant to it, Italy annexed the most developed portion of the Croatian coastline, including Sušak, Šibenik and Split, as well as the Boka kotarska. As a result, another 5,381 square kilometers of Croatian territory came within Italy. Around 380,000 people lived in this territory, consisting of 280,000 Croats, 90,000 Serbs, 5,000 Italians and 5,000 others. This area became known as the First Zone.

The economic loss that this represented to Croatia can be seen in the following facts. 124 corporate entities with 150 factories (52 in Split and its area, 27 in Šibenik and 22 in Sušak) with around 9,000 employees had been based in the First Zone. The NDH lost 15 large olive oil processing plants, and retained 12; it lost 10 large fish processing plants, and retained 8 smaller ones; it lost the only large factory for processing bauxite (i.e., the aluminum factory at Lozovac near Šibenik with over 3,500 employees); it lost 9 shipyards, and retained one (in Kraljevica); it lost one paper factory in Sušak (which manufactured fine types of paper as well as cigarette paper) and retained one in Zagreb. It also lost the major factories in the cement industry. The NDH retained only the ports of Metković and Gruž, as well as the sub-Velebit portion of the Croatian Littoral and the coastline from Omiš to Dubrovnik.⁷ Italy thus became master of the Adriatic.

At the same time, a second agreement committed the NDH not to build any military installations in an area stretching approximately 80 kilometers from the annexed areas and the coast, nor to maintain a navy, other than smaller forces for police and financial reasons.⁸ This 80-kilometer belt became known as the Second Zone. Italy sought to play a dominant role in this Zone and to later include it within its political system. The remaining area of the NDH from the Second Zone to the demarcation line with the German zone of influence became known as the Third Zone.

A third agreement concerned political relations between the NDH and Italy. It provided for Italy's guarantee of the political independence of the

⁷ Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archives, Zagreb, hereinafter, HDA), Fond NDH – "S," box 520, doc. inv. no. 1,283. Veleobrt na novo prisjedinjenim primorskim krajevima Hrvatske.

⁸ Both agreements contain cartographic annexes.

Croatian Kingdom, with the stipulation that Italy would not enter into any international commitments which would be contrary to such a guarantee. As noted, these agreements styled the NDH as a "Kingdom" and the Italian Duke of Spoleto from the Savoy Dynasty had been tapped to be its king.

Pavelić received strong assurances that Italian forces would withdraw from the NDH's territory, which in fact they never did. The Italians would rely on these very military forces to attempt to modify the new border to their advantage. They would further encourage Serbian politicians to initiate a campaign calling for additional annexations by Italy.

Although Mussolini's 20 May 1941 order transformed Italian forces from an occupational to a garrisoned force on NDH territory, they continued to act like occupiers. By July 1941, Italy had 65,000 troops stationed in the annexed areas and 78,300 troops on NDH territory.⁹ Because each of the three Italian Zones had varying legal positions and other specific characteristics, the Italians organized their rule in each differently, but with the overriding desire to tie them together into one central administrative Italian district. In the First Zone, one found direct Italian sovereignty. In the Second Zone, also known as the "Adriatic Coastal Belt," Italian military forces held power. In the Third Zone Italian military forces had operative power, with all remaining power being held by the NDH.

After the outbreak of revolts in NDH territory in July and August 1941, the Italians used the inability of NDH military forces to choke the uprising to carry out the reoccupation of the Second Zone at the beginning of September and of the Third Zone in October 1941, in each case using significant military force.¹⁰ The Italians forced the NDH to withdraw all Ustasha forces and dissolve all Ustasha organizations in the Second Zone while remaining Croatian regular army (*Domobran*) and other military forces came under Italian command. The Italians also took over civilian administration in the Second Zone. The NDH government had the right to be consulted with respect to certain matters related to its territory occupied by Italian troops. For this purpose they attached to the command of the Second

⁹ Zdravko Dizdar, "Brojtitbeni pokazatelji odnosa vojničkih postrojbi na teritoriju Nezavisne Države Hrvatske 1941-1945," *ČSP* 28 (1996), Nr. 1-2: 161-197.

¹⁰ According to intelligence report of the Command of the Ground Forces of the NDH dated 11 July 1941, "relations with the Italian Army are not really in the best of shape because the Italians are interfering with our military and civilian authorities in frontier areas." It mentions Goražde and Čajniča where the Italians took over control and further states that they moved 60 to 70 million dinars from the annexed areas of Slovenia to the NDH which their military forces use for payroll purposes. It continues by noting that in garrisoned areas of the NDH the "Italians are assisting the rebels in order to increase discontent among the populace there and to have influence during the drawing of the final frontiers." It also notes that "in Split and Kotor all refugees are under their protection – Jews from our state." AOS SRJ, Arhiva NDH, box 85, doc. no. 12/6-2 to 11. Of interest is the statement of General Blaizia, the deputy commander of the Second Italian Army, given to liaison officer Reš on 20 August 1941 in Karlovac: "Because you Croats had been unable to provide order, our Duce found it necessary to take necessary measures to put order and peace in place." HDA, Arhiva MUP-a RH, no. III-14/563.

Italian Army a general administrative representative, Dr. Andrija Karčić, who would later be replaced by Dr. David Sinčić. For military matters, the NDH accredited General Mihail Lukić to play a similar role.

Italian Policies toward Annexed Croatian Areas 1941-1943¹¹

After the entry into the agreements in Rome, the Italian government organized its administration in annexed Croatian territories in keeping with the structure then found in Italy though with certain specific differences. On 7 June 1941 a decree of the King expanded the administrative-territorial Province of Rijeka-Kupa. The Province took up, along with Rijeka, the counties of Kastav and Čabar as well as a part of Delnice County, together with Sušak, Bakar (with Bakarac) and the Kvarner Islands (including Cres and Lošinj which Italy had obtained in 1920 through the Treaty of Rapallo). Temistocle Testa remained its Prefect.

Mussolini's 20 May 1941 decree united the remaining annexed territory with the Province of Zadar into the Governate of Dalmatia with its capital at Zadar. The Governate consisted of three Provinces: Zadar, Split and Kotor. A prefecture existed in each Province as well as general civilian administrative organs and the *Questurae* as the police force. Military matters fell under the province of Italian military commanders.

Mussolini named Dr. Guisepppe Bastianini as the Governor of Dalmatia. Bastianini remained at this post until February 1943 when Francesco Giunta replaced him. Dr. Paolo Zarbino became the Prefect of Split Province, Verzio Orazi became Prefect of the Zadar Province, and Franco Seasselati became Prefect of the Kotor Province. They remained subordinate to the administration in Zadar headed by the Governor.

The goal of annexation consisted not only in simply joining Croatian territories to Italy but also to Italianize the native Croat and Serb population as soon as possible. A number of regulations and decrees signed by the Governor as well as the Prefects, especially in the second half of 1941, supported this goal.

The Italian administration initially showed flexibility (until autumn 1941) by granting certain concessions to the inhabitants as a sign of conciliation, but these concessions hid the true goals of Italian rulers. Concessions represented a means to more effectively achieve the Fascists' denationaliza-

¹¹ Concerning Italian policies in the annexed territories, there are a number of works on which I rely and I note the following: Dragovan Šepić, "Talijanska okupaciona politika u Dalmaciji (1941-1943)," *Putevi revolucije* (Zagreb: 1963), Nr. 1-2: 215-241; Vojimir Kljaković, "Talijanska politika odnarođnjavanja u Dalmaciji 1941-1943 godine," *Zbornik 4* (Split: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Dalmacije, /hereinafter IHRPD/, 1978), pp. 529-538; Neva Žurić-Scotti, "Talijanska okupacija Biokovsko-neretvanskog i otočkog područja 1941-1943," *Biokovo u NOB-u i socijalističkoj revoluciji 1941-1945*. (Split: IHRPD, 1983), pp. 270-282; Vjekoslav Vrančić, *Urota protiv Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Nakladna knjižara Velebit, 1943.); Hrvoje Mezulić, *Fašizam krstitelj i palikuća* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Hrvatske, 1946); and Eugen Dido Kvaternik, *Sjećanja i zapazanja 1925-1945*. (Zagreb, "Starčević", 1995).

The Government of Dalmatia (*Governo della Dalmazia*) provided only an illusion that the annexed territories supposedly enjoyed some sort of special status. This can best be seen by the Royal Decree of 18 May 1941 concerning the administration of these areas. The Decree made them an integral part of Italy with the Dalmatian Governor directly subordinate to Mussolini. He had the responsibility to carry out the orders of the central Italian government, achieve a unified administrative policy and gradually bring Dalmatia within the parameters of the Italian constitution. He carried out his duties through the orders of and in consultation with Mussolini.

In his speech in Rome on 10 June 1941, Mussolini emphasized that Italy could consider the "Dalmatian question to be finally solved." He declared the Croat and Serb population there to be "foreigners" and "enemies" as a result of whom they would have to move from that area, and he announced a population exchange and a policy of emigration. The next day, he ordered that Italians descended from Dalmatia in the Rijeka Province be sent to the Dalmatian Provinces so that they could "strengthen the Italianity [of Dalmatia] to the maximum extent possible."

Numerous forms of pressure toward native Croat and Serb inhabitants followed, along with agile propaganda and violence so as to remove everything that would stand in the way of "re-Italianization." Italian became the official administrative language while in some places the Fascist Black Shirts also prohibited the use of Croatian in public areas. In order to assist in this task, only the Italian press could be circulated. A dual language newspaper had been established in Split (*San Marco*), replaced in December 1941 by the dailies *Il Popolo di Spalato* in Split and *Giornale di Dalmazia* in Zadar. These newspapers became important pillars in the promotion of Italianism and Fascism.

The Italianization of place names followed in the annexed territories. All names of areas, places, settlements, streets, squares and signposts on roads received new Italian names. Personal names and surnames in new identity cards used Italian etymology while the systematic transformation of Croatian personal and surnames into Italian ones began to take place.

Bastianini's decree of 19 July 1941 dissolved all associations, institutions and parties not organized within the Fascist Party. Those dissolved included numerous Croatian educational and sports societies and national reading rooms which refused to continue their work as Italian organizations.

The Italians paid special attention to existing Croatian schools on the annexed territories. They required the schools to be Italianized within a two-year period and the schools became the focus of the Italianization of the youth. The termination of native teachers began immediately while numerous teachers brought to the area took over the running of the curriculum in all elementary and high schools. A special Office for Schools in the Annexed Areas had been established in Rome within the Ministry of Education in order to carry out this work. At the end of 1941 it issued special instructions for the introduction of Italian in Dalmatia and those areas annexed in

the Rijeka-Kupa Province. The government provided scholarships to selected native students to attend higher schools and colleges in Italy. However the expected results in education did not materialize. The educational policies caused general disgust and gave rise to resistance among students and their parents, as well the remaining teachers. Fascist assimilationist activities toward Croatian clerics and the education of their charges similarly failed as the Italians attempted to make use of religion and the Church in an effort to promote their goals.

Subsequently, the Italians turned to state officials in the administration and public works with the goal to terminate the employment of as many locals as possible and to replace them with cadres from Italy. The Italians used various means to achieve this, such as a requiring complete fluency in Italian (checked through a special test), oaths for faithfulness, and entry into Fascist organizations. According to a 10 March 1942 report from Bastianini to the government, by that time half the officials had been removed and the process continued until Italy's capitulation. At the same time, the Italians introduced a procedure to oversee the activities of business organizations and other private matters.

In order to alleviate the extremely poor (in Italian eyes) ethnic situation in the annexed territories, the Italian occupational administration sought to settle as many Italians there as possible. Based on a proposal made to Mussolini by the well-known Istrian Fascist Italo Sauro, a special Office for the Adriatic Territories, headquartered in Rome, worked on coordinating the work of state institutions to remove obstacles to carrying out this task.¹² It had as its main goal the "elimination of Slavdom in the Adriatic territories." Concurrently, many foreign Italians came to this area who received assurances that they would obtain jobs, homes and land. They included native Italians who had chosen to go to Italy following the First World War. Many of them received privileges and became the most insolent standard-bearers of Italianization in the annexed territories. In addition to establishing Fascist Party branches (*fascio di combattimento*), the Italians formed various Fascist organizations (such as *GIL* - a student organization, *Dopolavoro* - a Fascist workers' organization, etc.). Citizenship laws also served to change the ethnic composition by giving the Prefects the right to refuse citizenship to all Croats and Serbs there as being "worthless individuals."

Various regulations and policies further placed all economic activities at the disposal of Italian authorities to be used to achieve the Italianization of these areas.

In addition to systematic Italianization, Italy's Fascist rulers also encouraged and supported Dalmatian autonomism and sparked old animosities

¹² *Saopštenja* br. 34-53 o zločinima okupatora i njihovih pomagača /hereinafter *Saopštenja*/. (Beograd: Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača Jugoslavije /hereinafter Državna komisija/, 1945), pp. 564-576.

between Croat and Serb inhabitants by portraying themselves as defenders of the Serb population.

They openly persecuted all opponents of their occupational rule. All of this caused extreme distress among the Croat inhabitants which soon thereafter grew into armed resistance and a long war under the leadership of the Communists. Their resistance expanded to all Croatian areas along the coast and the interior. The area of the First and Second Italian Zones would thus become the largest center of antifascist struggle in the NDH and former Yugoslavia.

Terror, Crimes and Concentration Camps in Areas Annexed by Italy

Repressive means became the major method used by Italian occupational authorities to break the resistance of the people and force their integration into Italy. Numerous Fascist *squadristi* roamed the annexed territories. Together with regular armed forces in this area they undertook every possible means to end all resistance but without success.¹³ Immediately after the occupation, the Military Court for the Second Army established its headquarters in Sušak. Mussolini's 22 July 1941 decree opened a section of that Court in Šibenik with jurisdiction over all occupied and annexed Croatian areas outside of the Rijeka Province. Pursuant to a 13 August 1941 order of Bastianini, the Šibenik Court received all the powers of the former Yugoslav Court for the Defense of the State. The authorities also decreed numerous crimes to be punishable by death.

During August 1941 the Italians handed down the first death sentences for sabotage. But these actions did not suffice after the outbreak of armed resistance in the annexed territories.

Mussolini reacted by a 3 October 1941 order which decreed the death penalty for anyone who "on the territories annexed to the Kingdom of Italy . . . commits an act with the intent to limit the unity, independence and integrity of the State" or "propagates or leads an armed rebellion against State authorities." On 11 October Bastianini established the Extraordinary Court for Dalmatia (*Tribunale Straordinario della Dalmazia*) for use against political criminals, members of Partisan forces, Communist Party members and all others who opposed the status quo. Within a month, this Court condemned 35 people to death and dozens more to long prison sentences. Mussolini's decree of 24 October 1941 established a Special Court for Dalmatia (*Tribunale Speciale della Dalmazia*) which took over the Extraordinary Court's functions and had wide jurisdiction.¹⁴ The Court worked quickly, informally and

¹³ The main Italian documents concerning repressive measures in the annexed areas of Dalmatia which are spoken of later in this article have been published in *Narodnooslobodilačka borba u Dalmaciji 1941-1945* /hereinafter, *NOB u Dalmaciji*, *Zbornik dokumenata*, vol. 1 (1941) through vol. 8 (September-October 1943) (Split: IHRPD, 1981-1985).

¹⁴ *Saopštenja*, br. 34-53, *op. cit.*, pp. 577-585. This source contains numerous examples of the judgments of these Italian courts, including those involving mass executions of hostages

arbitrarily. Its judges consisted of officers of the regular army and the Fascist militia, who in their sole discretion determined the existence of punishable acts and passed judgment. This Court adopted the principal of collective responsibility so that individuals received punishment for acts committed by others with which they had no connection.

The proceedings conducted by this Court became known as “Roman Justice” (*guistizia romana*). The Court pronounced thousands of judgments, several hundred of which involved the death sentence, while almost all the rest received various terms of prison and forced labor.

According to statistics of the Yugoslav State Commission of Crimes of the Occupier and Their Assistants, a total of 5,000 people became subject to proceedings in these Italian courts and the courts condemned 500 of them to death. The remainder ended up being interned in various camps in Italy where some of them lost their lives while many more were taken from there after Italy’s capitulation into German camps where many died.

A report of the NDH Consulate in Rijeka sent to the NDH’s Foreign Affairs Ministry on 20 December 1941 wrote that 800 people, including 60 women and 40 children, passed through Rijeka from Dalmatia in chains in four transports from 15 November to 20 November 1941 on their way to camps in Italy’s interior. The report further commented: “It is distressing to see our people with folded, cuffed hands, tied together with chains, going into the unknown, laboring while carrying their luggage, their faces distorted with pain caused by their shackles.” The report further claimed that “the Italians do not intend to stop with their arrest and deportation of large numbers of people,” since on 24 November the Split *Carabinieri* Command received from Milan 3,000 shackles. The Consulate reported that “recently forces of the Fascist Militia have been especially prominent in carrying out persecution against our people in annexed territories. They surround villages, search through homes, take food, clothes, valuables [and] cattle, they fire from their guns on barrels filled with wine and kill innocent people without any reason or prior proceedings...”¹⁵

Starting in June 1941, the Italians organized their first assembly point or Camp on the small islet of Osljak near Zadar. Prisoners there along with those interned in Zadar and Šibenik were transported to camps throughout Italy. Groups of internees remained in the Camp’s so-call lazzaret, housing an army garrison and the Camp administration, until Italy’s capitulation. From the summer of 1942 the Italians transferred prisoners from this Camp in groups to surrounding concentration camps, especially the one on Molat Island.

Because the new steps taken to Italianize the annexed territories did not bring results to the Italians’ liking, the authorities adopted other means

(such as one requiring the execution of three hostages for every telegraph pole destroyed), as can also be found in *Saopštenja*, br. 1, from which the cited facts are taken. See also Jure Krišto, *Sukob simbola*, pp. 346-359.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

of persecution. A report from December 1941 by the Prefect of Split, Dr. P. Zerbinò, announced the new measures. Noting that all the activities of Italian rulers had only led to “the antipathy of this people toward Italy, and especially toward Fascism,” he suggested that they had to put a stop to this “in the first place with force,” and later “while holding the borders, to remove the people, to remove them completely.”¹⁶ Thus in the first months of 1942, in addition to sending people to camps, a new and massive expulsion of inhabitants from “the Dalmatian territory” to the NDH took place. According to Prefect Zerbinò’s report to the Dalmatian Government of 15 May 1942, from 1 November 1941 to the writing of the report, 1,796 persons from the Split Province alone had been interned in Italy, while 1,273 people had been forced across the border into the NDH. According to NDH statistics, the total number of Croats from that area recorded as being exiled and who reached the NDH and registered with authorities reached 17,000.¹⁷

At the same time, in order to give the Second Army a certain “national badge” and to take away its symbolism as an occupational army, its name changed on 9 May 1942 into the “Supreme Command of Military Forces of Slovenia and Dalmatia.” At this time the first doubts of ultimate success in the battle against the Partisans and the liquidation of armed rebellion began to appear among Italian military and civilian authorities. As a result, the Italians sought to uproot Partisan forces and their supporters in the annexed territories. They planned to establish a *cordon sanitaire* surrounding the Italian border in the NDH using powerful military units (including Chetnik forces) to prevent the Partisans from crossing into annexed areas. They believed this to be a precondition to “maintaining Italians in Dalmatia.”¹⁸ From mid-1942, the Italian Army undertook a series of larger operations throughout Dalmatia in order to destroy the Partisans and to create a protective belt across the frontier. The Italians attempted to establish special “Anti-Communist Volunteer” units (the so-called “non-Chetnik groups”) among the inhabitants of the annexed territories under the direct command of an Italian officer, but they achieved no noticeable success in this endeavor.

Simultaneously, Italian civil authorities increased their overall pressure on the people of the annexed areas, especially through enacting measures against the so-called *ribela* - the insurgents and their families. Based on Bastianini’s 7 June 1942 order, the Italians created special lists of persons from annexed areas in Dalmatia who had left their place of habitation and their townships “in order to join the rebels.”¹⁹ The Italians con-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Vjekoslav Vrančić, *Urota protiv Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Nakladna knjižara Velebit, 1943.). Some of these exiles immediately joined the Partisans and thus had not been included in the numbers registered by NDH authorities.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Saopštenja*, br. 34-53, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-481. This work contains both the text and a facsimile of the order.

sidered these families to be hostages and prohibited them from leaving their place of residence under threat of execution. In places where sabotage, diversions and military attacks had occurred, the provision of necessities and victuals for the local populace ended. All those "who give assistance and help or who in any other manner support the actions of the rebels" would be executed.²⁰ Executions immediately followed and the Italians arrested numerous people (often all the inhabitants in a number of villages) on the basis of these decrees. An enactment provided that five hostages would be executed for every civilian who had been a victim of an assassination, while twenty would be executed for every Italy officer or official of the civilian administration in Dalmatia killed. In order to have the necessary number of hostages, the authorities made numerous arrests. According to a report of *Carabinieri* Colonel Butia, from July to September 1942 in the annexed territory of Dalmatia the *Carabinieri* alone arrested 2,073 people, composed of 436 men, 943 women and 694 children.²¹

In order to be able to have all of these new internees under control in one place, a 27 June 1942 order of Bastianini, consented to by the Italian Ministry of Interior Affairs, established the Molat Concentration Camp on the same-named island near Zadar in Jaz Cove.²² Several rows of barbed wire encircled the Camp over a one kilometer radius. At first, the internees stayed in small tents. Later authorities raised eight to nine wooden barracks holding 150 people each, in which the inmates slept on earthen floors. The camp could at most hold 1,200 internees. But, the number of inmates always remained significantly higher. Engineer Leonardo Fonatba became the administrator of the Camp. His assistant, Karlo Szomer, replaced him on 7 January 1943. One hundred fifty *Carabinieri* and five hundred Italian soldiers guarded the Camp day and night. The Camp's prisoners included whole families and often the inhabitants of entire villages. Through the end of 1942, 2,067 persons had been interned in the Molat Camp from the areas of Šibenik, Skradin and Biograd alone. On 29 June 1942 the Camp held 223 internees (76 men, 103 women and 44 children); on 20 July the Camp already numbered 1,320 inmates (359 men, 566 women and 395 children); on 15 August the number reached 2,337 (866 men, 1,021 women and 450 children (of whom 250 boys and 200 girls));²³ by 11 January 1943 the num-

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslavenskih naroda* (hereinafter, *Zbornik NOR-a*), tom 5, vol. 9, Borbe u Hrvatskoj 1942. god. (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut Jugoslovenske narodne armije, 1955), pp. 477-480.

²² *Saopštenja*, br. 34-53, *op. cit.*, pp. 551-563. For more concerning this and other Italian camps, see Narcisa Lengel-Krizman, "Koncentracioni logori talijanskog okupatora u Dalmaciji i Hrvatskom primorju (1941-1943)," *Povijesni prilozi* 2 (Zagreb, 1983.), pp. 247-283. This has been the most comprehensive work on this topic and most of the following short descriptions are almost entirely taken from this work.

²³ *NOB u Dalmaciji*, vol. 3 (Split: IHRPD, 1982.), *op. cit.*, pp. 410-412, and vol. 4 (Split: IHRPD, 1983.), *op. cit.*, p. 510, and pp. 600-602. One can also find in this source the text and a copy of Mussolini's "Rules Concerning Punishments for Internees in Concentration Camps Established in the Annexed Territories" dated 19 November 1942.

ber rose by 2,985 new inmates. The Italians transferred many of the prisoners to other camps in Italy so that thereafter 1,627 (552 of them women) remained in Molat. But, new inmates continued to arrive. Thus, on 14 June 1943 a group of 250 arrived from Lozovac. Even after Mussolini's fall and the creation of the Badoglio government (25 July 1943), a new group of about 40 inmates arrived in the Camp.

The order of Zadar Prefect General Gaspero Barbieria of 19 May 1943 declared all men from 21 to 50 years of age interned in the camp related to persons who had fled to the Partisans to be hostages to be used in retaliation for acts of sabotage and killings undertaken by Partisans in his Province. The Prefect personally made all execution decisions. Retaliation against the hostages in the Molat camp followed. On 22 May Barbieri ordered the execution of 66 inmates in retaliation for the destruction of telegraph poles near Šibenik, i.e., three inmates for each destroyed pole. General Robottia's intervention succeeded in lowering the number to 40 hostages.

The Italians executed the hostages outside the camp, usually in Zadar, at police stations or places on the mainland, sometimes in places where the acts which gave rise to the cause of the executions occurred. Every arrival of the police boat to get hostages caused panic among the inmates.

More than 10,000 people passed through the Molat Concentration Camp. It became known as a "camp of death" and a "grave of the living." Because of overcrowding, horrendous hygienic and food conditions, sickness and terrible treatment, 422 inmates died from 30 June to 25 November 1942, while 532 inmates died during the first half of 1943. The number of deaths during other periods of the Camp's existence remains unknown. Women and children made up most of the dead.²⁴

The Italians shut down the Molat Concentration Camp in September 1943 after Italy's capitulation. A "shock group" composed of the Camp's inmates, organized and led by Communists and Partisan sympathizers, disarmed the Italian garrison. Partisan boats successfully took a portion of the inmates to the mainland, part of which immediately joined the Partisans, mostly in the newly formed "Molat Fleet of Armed Ships."

Because of overcrowding in the Molat Camp, from autumn 1942 and the beginning of 1943 arrestees had been temporarily placed in improvised collection points. One such area existed for several months and became known as the Concentration Camp Hagar-Vodica. Documents show that 1,800 people passed through the Camp. The Italians transported some to the Molat Camp, with most going to camps in Italy. Similar camps at the same time existed for short periods on the island of Murter, near Šibenik, through which around 1,200 inmates passed, and on the island of Olib, north of Molat, through which approximately 1,500 prisoners passed. The Italians transported smaller numbers of internees from these camps to Molat, while most went directly to various camps in Italy.

²⁴ N. Lengel-Krizman, "Koncentracioni logori talijanskog okupatora", pp. 255.

Along with the Molat Camp, the Italians moved to establish one additional larger transit camp in the area in order to partially solve the problem of ever larger numbers of prisoners and of their housing. This matter especially came to the fore in connection with the orders of General Umberto Spigo, commander of the XVIII Italian Corps, which called for the removal of the entire male population over the age of 15 from a number of settlements along the coast where Italian forces had been placed in connection with *ras-trellamente* (cleansing) operations in the Dalmatian Zagora, the Šibenik littoral and neighboring islands. These operations began on 21 March 1943 when the Eugenio di Savoia Division starting from Šibenik and the Bergamo Division starting from Trogir, headed toward Drniš, later joined by the First Rapid Cavalry Division in Šibenik.

As a result, on 25 March 1943 the Italians established the Zlarin Concentration Camp (*Campo di Concentramento Rasrellati di Zlarino*). The Camp had been placed on the rocky, barren and waterless Martin Peninsula, in an area measuring 80 meters by 80 meters, surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Within it, a smaller fenced area isolated hostages. The Italians placed 18 to 20 inmates in military barracks. Lieutenant Cino di Rosa, commander of the 173rd Section of the Eugenio di Savoia Carabinieri Division, administered the Camp. Lieutenant Umberto Ransay from the Bergamo Division succeeded him. One hundred twenty Italian soldiers and about 20 *Carabinieri* secured the Camp. By 30 April 1943, the Camp housed 1,645 inmates, while another 104 had already been shipped to camps in Italy, 149 sent home and 5 sent to the hospital in Šibenik. As new groups arrived in the Camp, the Italians sent others to camps in Italy and to the Camp on Rab, while permitting only a smaller number of exhausted and sick inmates to go home. Along with difficult housing conditions, the Camp's hygienic situation remained very poor and the inmates continuously suffered from hunger and thirst. The Camp guards harassed and beat practically all the inmates, especially the hostages. The Italians executed seven of the Camp's prisoners. Dysentery appeared in the Camp beginning in May 1943, as did other diseases, from which 9 inmates died in the Camp and a further 17 in Šibenik's hospital. The Italians dissolved the Camp on 15 June 1943 and transported its 1,200 prisoners by ship to Rijeka and from there to camps in Italy. After Italy's capitulation, the Germans took a portion of Zlarin's former inmates to their own work camps, from which only a dozen returned alive.

In March 1943 the Italians also established a Concentration Camp on Ugljan, an island near Zadar, for purposes "of interning politically suspicious elements from Dalmatia."²⁵ Though Ugljan had been planned as one of the larger of the Italian camps, Italy's fall in September 1943 ended further construction of the half-completed Camp.

Italian civilian and military authorities also opened camps and imprisoned and deported the population in parts of southern Croatia and the

²⁵ *NOB u Dalmaciji*, vol. 5. (Split: IHRPD, 1982.), *op. cit.*, p. 588.

Boka kotorska which had been annexed by Italy. On 30 March 1942 in the Province of Kotor, the Headquarters of the VI Italian Army Corp ordered the establishment of the Camps of Prevlaka and Mamula. The first came under the control of the Messina Division and the second under the Emilia Division. The Italians placed the Prevlaka Camp in military barracks and its inmates consisted mostly of Partisan sympathizers and hostages, i.e., families and relatives of Partisans. The Camp initially contained two parts. The first part housed inmates from the Boka area and the second housed inmates from the NDH. The Italian Camp administrators applied a much more strict regime to the latter, banning inmates from receiving packages from their homes. As a result, over 200 died of hunger. Several thousand internees passed through the Camp who the Italians transported to other camps after having held them there for a time.²⁶

How the Italians acted outside the Camps can be clearly seen by the example of Primošten, though hundreds of similar examples on the annexed territories can be cited. The Partisans had attacked a column of Italian sailors near the town on 13 November 1942. Fourteen sailors died in the battle. In keeping with the instructions of General M. Roatta and Governor G. Bastianini, the Italian Army took repressive actions against the civilian population of Primošten three days later. The Italians surrounded the town and opened heavy artillery fire on it from land and sea. The Italians also bombed the town from the air with three planes. The bombing destroyed or heavily damaged numerous houses, while injuring many of the townspeople who attempted to find secure shelter. Afterwards, the infantry turned on the undefended town. There they separated the men, put them in line and shot them or slaughtered them with bayonets. The infantry lined up the women and children and terrified them by pointing machine guns and rifles at them and threatening to execute them. A second group of soldiers went from house to house, sacking them and thereafter putting them to the torch. They left some hand held bombs behind after leaving the village which later killed a number of children. This action resulted in the deaths of 80 people, the arrest and deportation to the Concentration Camp in Vodice of 166 people and the destruction of or damage to 300 homes, as reported by the Commissar of the Šibenik County in his 25 November 1942 report to the Prefect of Zadar.²⁷

The very next day, 17 November 1942, the Bishop of Šibenik, Dr. Fra Jeronim Mileta, sent a protest to Governor Bastianini against this cruel act against peaceful and unarmed people. He forwarded a copy of his protest to Rome and to the State Secretary of the Holy See, Cardinal Luigi Maglione in order that he could advise the Pope. He did this again as a result of

²⁶ The Camps at Mamula (which had approximately 1,000 inmates) and at Bar, as well as the transport of inmates from those areas to camps in Albania and Italy, is further discussed in Ankica Pečarić – Josip Pečarić, “Položaj Hrvata u Boki kotorskoj za vrijeme talijanske okupacije 1941.-1943.,” *Talijanska uprava na hrvatskom prostoru*, pp. 373.-396.

²⁷ *Saopštenja*, br. 34-53, *op. cit.*, pp. 460-465.

other incidents, intervening on behalf of hostages. Zagreb Archbishop Dr. Aloysius Stepinac also protested the conduct of Italian military units to R. Casertana, the Italian Minister in Zagreb, as a result of this and many similar occurrences. Stepinac advised Cardinal Maglione and the Pope of his protests and American radio carried reports concerning Stepinac's actions.²⁸ NDH authorities also protested, but without any effect. The planned complete removal of native inhabitants from Croatian annexed territories and their replacement with immigrant Italians from Italy continued to be carried through.

It must be noted that Italian authorities in the area of the First Zone undertook measures to confine Jews and thereafter to place them in camps.²⁹ Until the beginning of the war on 6 April 1941 around 450 Jews lived in the annexed areas of Dalmatia, 415 of them in Split. Because the Italian regime treated Jews significantly better than the regimes in the NDH and other surrounding areas of former Yugoslavia, Jews from there fled to the First Zone. Over 3,000 Jewish refugees, mostly from the NDH, arrived in Split. The Jews of Split provided them with food and lodging, allowing some of them to emigrate further to Italy or the United States. Other than smaller groups of Jews in Čapljina and Makarska, where they had been temporarily housed, and a group of about 200 in Kotor, all the remaining Jews had been placed in the area of Split. There, through the efforts of Split's Jewish religious community, Italian authorities granted them the right to temporary residency, significant monetary assistance and ration cards for food supplies.

But even here Jews suffered from certain anti-Jewish acts and regulations. For example, the (probably staged) destruction of a plaque on 12 June 1941, which commemorated the entry of the Italian Army into Split, had been blamed on Jews. As a result the Synagogue, Jewish shops and dozens of apartments were demolished.

Italian authorities permitted around 1,100 Jewish refugees from Split to enter into so-called "liberal confinement" in Italy. At the same time, the Italians confined 496 Jewish refugees in Korčula and Vela Luka on Korčula Island and 252 on Mljet Island. There they lived in private lodgings, had unrestricted movement, and paid a residency tax. After Italy's capitulation,

²⁸ HDA, Fond Hrvatsko križarsko bratstvo, box 1, Biskupski ordinarijat Šibenik, no. 2769, 17 XI 1942, J. Bastiniani to Dr. J. Mileta. This memorandum is further discussed by Jure Krišto, "Postupci Talijana prema Hrvatima od 1941 do 1943 prema crkvenim vrelima," in: *Talijanska uprava na Hrvatskom prostoru*, pp. 623-635.; *Actes et documentes du Saint Siege relative a la seconde guerre*, vol. 9; *La Saint Seige et les victims da la guerre, janvier 1943-decembre 1943*. (Vatican: 1975), doc. no. 73 (p. 164), 189 (pp. 297-298), and 193 (p. 305). These sources contain a number of reports concerning actions taken by Italian authorities toward interned Croat, Serb and Jewish civilians from Croatian territories. Such actions included prison sentences and executions. These sources further include requests made to the Holy See for intervention in these matters with the Italian government which the Vatican undertook to fulfill.

²⁹ See more concerning this in Jaša Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941-1945. žrtve genocida i učesnici NOR-a*, (Belgrade: Jewish historical museum, 1980), Teritorije pod italijanskom okupacijom – aneksijom, pp. 134-151.

a portion of the Jews from Split and Korčula joined the Partisans, a portion succeeded in escaping to Italy, and the Germans arrested the remainder and shipped them to their concentration camps where they practically all perished.

Turning back to Italian relations with Croatian inhabitants, a similar situation existed in the area of the Rijeka Province as in Dalmatia. There, Italian authorities had introduced a series of measures against the civilian population beginning in May 1941. Along with looting and changing the names of counties, places and cities, the Italians quickly introduced a number of repressive measures against local Croats so as to turn the population in this annexed area into an Italian one. The Italians introduced individual and later mass repressions, employing the most diverse means and methods. The Italians expelled all who had moved into the area. Arrests and imprisonment of anti-fascists and Communists as well as critics of the regime followed. Repressive measures increased after the outbreak of the uprising, including executions of individuals and groups by Italian military, police and civilian authorities. The deprivation of freedom and deportation to prisons and concentration camps ensued. The Italians brought many of those arrested to Rijeka and other Italian administrative centers in the Province, from where they sent them to camps throughout Italy because of overcrowding which arose as early as autumn 1941.

With the first larger actions of *restrellamenta*, that is, the cleansing of the terrain of Partisans (beginning with an attack on Tuhobić Mountain in the beginning of November 1941), the need for the establishment of concentration camps in the immediate vicinity and on the territory of the Rijeka Province became pressing because of the many civilian inhabitants seized in these actions. The authorities established the Concentration Camp in Lovran (*Campo di concentramento di Laurana*) on 26 November 1941 (after discussions on the matter in the Royal *Questura* in Rijeka) for the "internment of suspicious families from areas which had been annexed to the Rijeka Province, and whose members had fled to the woods to work with the guerrillas." The Italians at first placed the Camp in the Park Hotel (with around 500 beds), which they guarded with 20 soldiers with officers, as well as 12 *Carabinieri*. The first group arrived in the Camp on 5 December 1941 from the area of Kastav and Sušak Counties. By the beginning of May 1942 it had around 900 prisoners and its lodging capacity had been filled. As a result, the Camp expanded into the courtyard and the neighboring Hydrotherapy Building. At the same time, the authorities transported internees from there to camps in Italy. We will set forth a number of examples showing how the Italians obtained new inmates for the Lovran Camp.

Prefect Testa initiated, planned and organized a retaliatory attack with army and *Carabinieri* forces on the village of Jelenje on 30 May 1942 because

³⁰ For more concerning this Camp, see Mihael Sobolevski, "Talijanski koncentracijski logor u Lovranu 1941-1943," *Liburnijske teme*, vol. 6 (Opatija: 1987.), pp. 115-121. The same work contains statistics concerning this Camp which are cited in this article.

certain villagers had joined the Partisans. The Italians executed 20 people “chosen by lots” and jailed 58 families whose members had joined the Partisans in the Lovran Camp.³⁰ The authorities confiscated all their property and leveled their houses to the ground.

Under Testa’s command, on 12 July 1942 the Italian Royal Army, *Carabinieri* and Fascist Black Shirts for similar reasons attacked the village of Podhum, which had around 1,550 inhabitants. They executed 108 men on the spot and burned and destroyed all of its 370 homes and 124 farm buildings. They transported 185 of the village’s families consisting of 889 people (208 men, 269 women and 412 children) to the Lovran Camp.

The Lovran Concentration Camp continued to exist through 1 March 1943 when the Italians dissolved it. Until then, around 3,000 imprisoned persons passed through the Camp, mostly from the Province of Rijeka, with smaller numbers from Dalmatia as well as Ljubljana and area.³¹

Because the number of prisoners and internees became larger every day, the Italians determined to establish several new camps in the Province of Rijeka. One of the transit camps included a Camp in Rijeka; 3,500 internees passed through it, mostly women and children. The Italians sent the inmates to other camps in Italy after they had been kept in Rijeka for a period of time. Available information concerning the administration and work of this Camp remains sparse.³²

Another Camp in Bakar existed from March 1942 to July 1943. The Italians used it as a collection point and imprisoned people there from the Gorski kotar and Croatian Littoral after Italian cleansing operations. In these operations, the Italians systematically destroyed villages and isolated hamlets “which are not occupied militarily [by Italian forces - Z.D.] and do not have the conditions to eventually become military strongholds.” All the people there had to be “immediately removed and taken to specific concentration camps in other areas.”³³ At the same time, the state requisitioned all livestock in these settlements. The scope of these operations can be best seen by the report of the Italian commissar of Čabar County sent to Prefect Testa on 3 September 1942. It claimed that from 31 March to 1 September 1942 the population of the County decreased from 12,263 to 5,545 “primarily because of the internment and dispersal undertaken by the military authorities.” It added that the decrease in population would continue.³⁴ Statistics of the Croatian State Commission for Determining Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Allies confirm this. According to them, Italian authorities interned 4,500 people from that County. Many of them

³¹ H. Mezulić, *Fašizam krstitelj i palikuća*, pp. 41-44. Both settlements are found in the township (općina) Jelenje in Sušak County.

³² N. Lengel-Krizman, “Konzentracioni logori talijanskog okupatora,” pp. 250-251 and Hrvoje Mezulić, *Fašizam krstitelj i palikuća*, pp. 47-52.

³³ H. Mezulić, *Fašizam krstitelj i palikuća*, pp. 52-53.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-52.



In October 1941, Italian authorities removed and damaged the statue of Medieval Croatian Bishop Grgur of Nin. An artwork of the famous Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović

went through the Bakar Camp. 3,145 people from the area of that County and part of Delnice County were interned in that Camp from 30 July to 2 August 1942. The Camp on average held around 2,000 prisoners. A portion of the inmates continued to be sent on in groups to other camps, especially the newly established camp on Rab. The Italians housed the internees in a number of filthy, vermin-infested wooden barracks. The inmates slept on beds with little straw and without enough blankets and received poor food. Italian physicians running health services in the Camp sent only the sickest to Rijeka's hospital. The Italians removed the last 800 inmates on 2 July 1943 to Rijeka, where after being kept for a while at the Diaz Barracks, they sent them to other camps. As a practical matter, this ended the work of the Bakar Camp.³⁵

Large "cleansing" operations by Italians in the entire Ljubljana Province and in the frontier regions of the Rijeka Province in the middle of 1942 led to a large number of internees who could not be placed in overcrowded camps and jails and required the opening of new camps. As a result, on 27 July 1942 the Italians established the Rab Concentration Camp for Civil and Military Internees (*Campo di concentramento per internati civili di querra Arbe*) as the largest Italian camp on Croatian territory as measured both by the number of internees and the number of victims.

The Italians established the Camp on Kapor Field (as a result of which it also became known as the Kapor Camp) between Kapor Bay and St. Euphemia, around 5 to 6 kilometers from Rab town. All shrubs were initial-

³⁵ N. Lengel-Krizman, "Konzentracioni logori talijanskog okupatora," pp. 250-251.

ly cleared, while approximately a dozen families were moved from Kampor and Italian officers placed in their homes. Afterwards, the Kampor-Rab road was widened. The men's portion of the Camp was located on the northern side of the road and the women's and children's section of the Camp was placed on the southern end. Barbed wire surrounded the entire Camp. Within the wire, small tents had been placed, replaced in December 1942 by walled buildings made from sun dried bricks and by wooden barracks for the internees. 2,200 Italian soldiers and *Carabinieri* guarded the Camp. They were located in Rab town and in guard houses around the Camp used reflectors used to illuminate the Camp at night.

Colonel Vincenzo Cuiuli served as Camp commander. The first group of 432 Slovene men arrived in the Camp on 28 and 31 July 1942. 5,599 persons, of whom 3,496 Slovenes (2,302 men, 597 women and 597 children) with the remainder being mostly Croats from the Gorski kotar (1,663 persons), the Bakar Camp (296 persons) and camps in Italy (144 people), arrived in the camp during 2 August to 9 August alone. Among these inmates, women and children composed around 80% of the total number. By the end of September 1942 the Camp had 13,000 to 15,000 internees, two-thirds of them Slovenes. Children made up more than 2,000 of the inmates (1,463 of them Slovenes). The number of internees began to gradually drop because of the high mortality rate among the inmates, because some inmates had been sent to camps in Italy and because smaller groups of inmates had been freed. Around 3,000 remained in the Camp in January 1943, with another 2,000 in the hotel-“hospitals” in Rab town. In April 1943 the inmates totaled 2,500.

Most of the internees remained naked and shoeless and lived under very difficult lodging, sanitary, work, nourishment and health conditions. The lack of food made hunger the biggest problem. Evidence of this can be seen by the name given to the main square in the Camp, “Hunger Square.” All of this, along with winter weather, caused exhaustion and the outbreak of various illnesses. Changing Rab's hotels into improvised hospitals did not help because medicine had been as scarce as food. Children suffered the most and requests of humanitarian organizations from Croatia and Slovenia to free them came to naught since Italian authorities would not permit it. Because of all of this the mortality rate in the Camp became very high, evidenced by the 4,641 persons who died there, as estimated by the Commission for the Determination of Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Allies. As a result, this Camp can be compared with Nazi concentration camps. The first to die had been buried in the monastery's cemetery in Kampor. Later the Camp's administrators opened a new cemetery, located a 20 minute walk southwest of the Camp and surrounded by a 1½ meter wall. Documents record the names of 1,061 persons buried there, even though every grave held two and even three dead inmates while only one name appeared on each of the crosses marking them. Thirty-four inmates are known to have died in Rijeka's hospital.

The Italians founded the Jewish Camp on 28 May 1943 across the way from the Slovene and Croat Camp. A wire fence separated the two Camps

as did a constant camp guard in order to prevent communication between them. However, inmates quickly established ties between the two Camps. In the Jewish Camp, groups of Jews gradually arrived from the dissolved Jewish camps in Dubrovnik, Hvar, Brač and Kraljevica. From 19 June to 21 July 1943 (when the last transport arrived), 2,353 people (1,064 men, 982 women and 307 children) arrived in Rab. A total of 3,577 Jews are known by name to have been interned in the Rab Camp. They had much more difficult living conditions in this Camp than they had had in the prior camps, but better conditions than the inmates in the Slovene and Croat Camp next to them. Eleven Jews died prior to the liberation of the Camp.

From the very start of the existence of the Camp, organized political work supporting the Partisans existed in both Camps along with ties with similar organizations on Rab Island. The people of Rab saved at least one thousand inmates from certain death. Upon hearing of the capitulation of Italy on 8 September 1943, the inmates, totaling 4,390 from both Camps charged and disarmed the guards, who offered no resistance, and so they liberated themselves. The next day the armed inmates organized the Rab Partisan Brigade with four Slovene and one Jewish battalion, totaling 1,600 soldiers and they proclaimed a "people's government" in the Camp. In agreement with the local National Liberation Committee of Rab, they disarmed remaining 2,200 Italian soldiers and *Carabinieri* on the island as well as the Italian garrison in Osor on Cres Island. Three hundred twelve Jews then on Rab entered the National Liberation Army (*Narodna oslobodilačka vojska* - NOV) of Croatia (of whom 244 joined the Jewish Rab Battalion). In accordance with the orders of the Supreme Command of the NOV and the Partisan Units of Croatia, the Rab Brigade had been transferred to the mainland by 19 September 1943. There the Brigade had been reorganized into the 16th Slovenian Brigade and sent to Slovenia, while the Jewish Partisan Battalion remained in Croatia. A group of 211 Jewish inmates on their own went to Italy after the liberation of the Camp.

Because of the penetration of German forces in the general region toward the end of October 1943, the remaining Jews on Rab had to be quickly evacuated. Because the NOV of Croatia did not have larger ships, the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobodjenja Hrvatske* - ZAVNOH), the supreme pro-Partisan executive and legislative authority in Croatia, requested that the Allies in southern Italy use their ships to carry the Jews to mainland areas under Partisan control or to Italy. But, because the Allies remained deaf to this request (and they also did not send requested food assistance), the Supreme Command of the NOV of Croatia, with the help of pro-Partisan civilian authorities in the area, used small boats (known as *trabakulina*) to bring 2,839 Jews to the mainland. 648 of them joined Partisan forces and more than 350 joined various pro-Partisan organizations in Croatia. ZAVNOH undertook to take care of their lodging, feeding and security. This represented one of the largest actions to save Jews and their active inclusion in the anti-fascist movement during the Second World War in Europe.



Italian collaboration with Serbian Chetniks. Members of the Fascist Militia (MVSN - Milizia volontaria per la sicurezza nazionale) and the Chetniks in the vicinity of Knin in 1942

Unfortunately, around 200 former Jewish inmates voluntarily remained on Rab. The Germans seized them on 22 March 1944 and afterwards sent them to Auschwitz where the Germans liquidated practically all of them.

Almost all of the Croat inmates on Rab entered Partisan units on the Island or on the mainland as well as pro-Partisan organizations.³⁶

The Effects of Italian Policies Toward Croatian Territories

During the attack on Croatian territories in April 1941, the Yugoslav Royal Army surrendered without any resistance (other than weak resistance in Dubrovnik and Knin) with a large amount of arms, weapons and military hardware. The Italians took all of these supplies while placing some of the soldiers and their commanders (mostly Serbs) born in the First, Second and Third Zones in prisoner of war camps in Italy where most remained until Italy's capitulation. This act alone prevented these men from working (without even going into the difficult living conditions in the camps) and thus inflicted a tremendous economic cost.³⁷

³⁶ For further materials concerning these matters see: Ivo Kovačić, *Koncentracioni logor Kampor na Rabu 1942-1943*. (Rijeka: "Adamić", 1998); Narcisa Lengel-Krizman, "Koncentracioni logori talijanskog okupatora," pp. 258-265, and 279-282; *Rab živa priča "kulture in civilizacije" talijanskoga okupatorja*. (Maribor: 1953); M. Konjhodžić, *Krvavim tragovima talijanskih fašista*. (Zagreb: 1945); F. Potočnik, "Kako su se oslobodili internirci, Otpor u žicama, I (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1969), and in the same book F. Šušterčić, "Rab," Jaša Romano, "Jevreji u logoru na Rabu i njihovo uključivanje u NOR," no. 2 (Belgrade: Jevrejski istorijski muzej, 1973.).

³⁷ N. Živković, *Ratna šteta koju je Italija učinila Jugoslavij*, pp. 21-23 and 29-35.

The Italians also received all of the ships (with a handful of exceptions) of the Yugoslav Royal Navy. In the garrisons, military installations, warehouses and depots on these territories, the Italian Army came across a significant cache of materiel (arms, tools, mines, munitions, transport vehicles and livestock) which the Italian Army seized, taking part, using part and destroying the rest (along with some of the buildings). As a result, looking only at the territory of the present Republic of Croatia, the damage committed by the Italian Army in approximately 13 garrisons found in the First, Second and Third Zones has been estimated at approximately 40 billion dinars.³⁸

Especially significant damages resulted from the destruction and exploitation of economic resources in these areas. These areas had bauxite, manganese, phosphate, coal, iron and other mines (the Germans shared in part of the production of the bauxite mines in agreement with the Italians). The Italians used the ores while damaging a significant portion of the equipment and the mines. The same occurred with industrial plant, especially cement and aluminum factories, quarries and shipyards, as well as in the areas of agriculture, livestock, vineyards, fruit orchards, forests, transportation, shipping and banking.³⁹

Damages from the exploitation of the labor force followed, both in these areas and in Italy itself. The workers, war prisoners and internees used to perform labor probably totaled approximately 50,000. Some workers went to work in Italy on the basis of an agreement between Italy and the NDH. The Italians engaged many (a large portion of which consisted of forced labor) in all economic branches in the annexed and occupied Croatian territories held by the Italians, and in return gave little if any compensation.

Even greater damage resulted from the expulsion, arrest, internment and deportation of thousands of people, most of them innocent civilians (without regard to age or gender). They spent months or years languishing in prisons and camps where many lost their lives. Along with this came mass exhaustion from hunger and mistreatment and executions throughout the annexed and occupied zones, along with systematic looting of moveable and destruction of immovable property.

According to statistics collected through 1946 by the Commission for War Damages on the Territory of the People's Republic of Croatia (without Istria), Italian authorities with their collaborators seized 9,783 people, captured 2,058 people, interned 16,870 people, confined 1,327 people and expelled 3,527 people. They took 955 people into forced labor and forcibly mobilized 615 individuals, giving a total of 33,141 persons, to which must be added 4,269 persons whose "dignity and honor" the Italians sullied. These numbers only include the victims who had survived and had until then filed reports.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-145. This source further includes information concerning the amount of monetary damages caused by the Italians for certain of these industrial branches.

The Committee further found that the Italian occupier and their collaborators on the territory of the Republic of Croatia killed 9,657 anti-fascist soldiers and 30,795 civilians, or a total of 40,442 persons, of whom 9,439 consisted of women. But these statistics do not distinguish between those killed inside and those killed outside jails and camps.

At that time, the total damages committed by the Italians had been calculated at 26,655,639,943 pre-war Yugoslav dinars (at the time the exchange rate was 228.83 dinars per 100 lira).⁴⁰

Most of these victims came from Dalmatia. According to a list of the former United Alliance of Soldiers of the National Liberation War (*Savez udruženja boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata*) of Croatia from 1986, 18,824 Partisans and 10,019 civilians died (of whom 2,166 consisted of women and 1,400 consisted of children). According to statistics of the Provincial Commission for the Confirmation of Crimes of the Occupiers and Their Collaborators for Istria collected in 1946, 5,802 civilians in Istria had been documented as having lost their lives. Italian fascists killed 889 by themselves and 1,314 together with the Germans. More than 5,000 Partisans from Istria died in battle. At the same time, 14,867 Istrians had been imprisoned, 21,509 Istrians had been taken into camps or forced labor, and 5,955 homes and other buildings had been torched or destroyed mostly by Italian civilian and military authorities. If we add this to economic losses, the total damages suffered by Istria during the Second World War came to US \$1,134,350,608.⁴¹

⁴⁰ HDA, Zemaljska komisija za ratnu štetu Hrvatske 1945-1947, boxes 95-98; Zemaljska komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihova pomagača Hrvatske (ZKRZ) 1945-1946, box 30, 645-648. This source includes individual lists of victims of the War which had been collected by the Commission until 1946. The Commission collected statements in the territory of the People's Republic of Croatia. At that time, it had compiled a list of 109,222 victims, of whom the Italians had killed 8,011 and 1,247 had been killed by both Germans and Italians. A list from 1950 claims that the number of people killed in Croatia totaled 156,158 (109,784 civilians and 46,374 Partisans), a list from 1964 has 194,749 victims and a list from 1988 198,759 victims, but it does not break the victims down into categories of victims or set forth who had been responsible for their deaths. According to unpublished portions of the 1964 list, 17,100 civilians died at the hands of the Italians, while the remainder had been killed by Italians and Germans, Chetniks and military forces of the NDH. This is why the analysis of all the victims from the Republic of Croatia continues. One should also add that for political reasons these lists did not include those members of the Ustasha movement killed by Italians and did not include those killed among the civilian and military authorities of the NDH and their relatives. Further, the numbers discussed in this article do not include those Croats killed by Italians in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Montenegro. The Yugoslavian International Reparation Commission in Paris in 1947 requested \$9.85 billion in war damages from Italy.

⁴¹ HDA, ZKRZ, GUZ, no, 5.514/1946, box 124, and Nikola Živković, "Ljudske i materijalne žrtve Istre u Drugom svjetskom ratu," *Pazinski memorijal*, vol. 12 (Pazin: Katedra Čakavskog sabora, 1983), pp. 287-291. The above cited work contains 39 other works from a scholarly conference entitled "Istria and the Remaining Annexed Areas in 1943," held in Pazin in commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the events surrounding Italy's capitulation. It must be stated that the Germans sent all Italians who refused to join them to camps and assigned the rest to their military units. The Germans formed special Fascist and *carabinieri* units composed of



Italians (Person in the left is a member of the Fascist Militia - Note the Distinctive MVSN Cap-Badge) posing over the dead bodies of their victims near Vodice (Central Dalmatia), 1943.

The number of victims from Istria, the Gorski kotar and the Croatian Littoral, according to a 1988 list, totaled 13,695 Partisans killed and 9,314 civilian deaths (1,856 of them women and 689 children), most of whom had been killed by the Italians and their collaborators. The material damages also had been great.

The basis for all of these statistics proved difficult to come by and they have been gradually revised through the years. One can see this by the following facts concerning the Gorski kotar and Dalmatia, the location of many Italian “cleansing” actions. According to the initial statistics of the District National Liberation Committee (NOO) for the Gorski kotar compiled in August 1944, the occupiers had destroyed and torched 3,131 houses and 3,810 other buildings, destroyed and seized 4,697 heads of cattle, 745 horses, 2,486 pigs, 5,071 heads of small livestock, and torched 12 churches and 9 sawmills. According to the initial statistics of the Provincial NOO for Dalmatia compiled in August 1944, the “enemy” in Dalmatia had executed 4,948 and interned 2,144 people, destroyed 8,227 houses, 3,245 other buildings, 58 public buildings and 82 industrial companies and seized 1,761 horses, 3,036 head of large and 51,575 head of small livestock, 1,569 pigs and 20,891 head of poultry. According to newer statistics from about twen-

those Italians from Zadar and Istria who joined them. The Germans used these forces in actions against the Partisans and their National Liberation Movement as they had good knowledge of local conditions. These units are blamed for killing many of victims which are included in the reports of the Commission.

ty days later, the NOO confirmed that more than 8,000 had been killed, not including those who died or had been executed in prisons and camps through which 80,000 people from Dalmatia had passed (or 12% of the entire population), and the number of looted and destroyed houses reached over 20,000, along with the destruction of 89,585 grape vines, 3,775 fruit trees and 6,508,823 square meters of forests.⁴²

The confirmation of the names and numbers of victims and their classification based on those who committed these crimes continues to this day. One of the priorities of future researchers must be the thorough examination of the crimes committed by Italian Fascists during the Second World War on the territory of the Republic of Croatia, their scholarly presentation and the publication of their results, with a list of all those killed. These problems must be examined in a scholarly manner without damaging relations between the Republics of Croatia and Italy. This needs to be done soon since certain circles in Italy continue to promote expansionist policies toward Croatian Istria, Rijeka and Dalmatia, claiming borders similar to those of the Second Zone in the NDH.⁴³ Such policies represent a continuation of those pursued by the Italians in Croatian territories during the Second World War of which we have just spoken.

In order to better understand these policies it is necessary to note here the questions concerning the relationship between Italy and the NDH discussed at a 11 August 1943 meeting between Luigi Petrucci, the Italian ambassador and authorized minister in the NDH, and General Mario Robotti, the commander of the Second Italian Army and administrator of all annexed and occupied Croatian territories. Their talk focused on Italian relations with the Chetniks, Italian repression and acts of revenge against the population in these territories and possible solutions at the end of the War. With respect to the Chetniks, the discussion centered on the need for their gradual disarmament so as to prevent them from fleeing to the Partisans, the need to stop provisioning them with arms and the need of the Italians to shift to voluntary recruitment for mixed battalions of Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims in agreement with Croatian authorities (such as had been done with German SS Divisions).

Concerning reprisals, they discussed that they should only be carried out against those houses from which Italian soldiers had been fired upon and in retaliation for direct and indirect cooperation between the population and the Partisans. They also spoke about how NDH authorities had determined that they would (in cooperation with the Germans and perhaps encouraged by them) enter Dalmatia if Italy left the War as they feared that the Italians would otherwise hand Dalmatia and the Littoral over to the Chetniks or the

⁴² *Bilten Telegrafске agencije Hrvatske*, no. 2 and 3, 16 and 20 August 1944, pp. 8 and 3, respectively, and no. 2, 6 September 1944, p. 5.

⁴³ Ive Mihovilović, *Italijanska ekspanzionistička politika prema Istri, Rijeci i Dalmaciji (1945-1953)* (Belgrade: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1954), and Duško Večerina, *Talijanski iredentizam*, (Zagreb: By The Author, 2001).

Partisans. As a result, they believed that they needed to maintain good relations with the Croats and thus avoid massive repressions because otherwise “all the Croats will be against us, to the extent that we do not satisfy them by at least giving them some concessions (I allude (Robotti) to Dalmatia).”

Petrucci thought that one of the three following solutions would occur at the end of the War on these territories:

the establishment of a Greater Yugoslavia as the English promised King Peter. From this we cannot expect anything good - it would be 100% anti-Italian and would have in mind its expansion to Udine;

the establishment of a Greater Serbia which would take up Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, possibly to Split. This situation would be somewhat better for us;

the establishment of a Greater Croatia which would be the least harmful to us. Of course the establishment of such a new organism would have to be based on other foundations than that of today's Croatia and it could not be achieved without us suffering significant losses.”

Of interest are the comments of the Intelligence Division of the Italian General Command for Ground Forces, which received a copy of a transcript of these discussions. Along with the claim that Petrucci “is not familiar with the confused problems of Serbs-Croats-Slovenes-Muslims and Chetniks,” it states the following:

A Greater Croatia, sympathetic or friendly toward Italy, is impossible. The Croats have been historically and remain our enemies. The reason: the Adriatic Sea.

Our interests in this Sea are completely in conflict and we cannot survive with a Greater Croatia and, even worse, if we were to re-establish old Austria.

Further, Croatia has never been able to live without relying on someone, so that this means that to the extent it is larger and since it will not rely on Italy it will be that much more dangerous for us.

As a result, it would be desirable that if such a Croatia is established that it be small in accordance with its natural limitations.

The establishment of Serbia can be of use to us if such a Serbia is limited to its natural borders; a Greater Serbia would stretch to the Adriatic Sea, and there our interests would come into conflict, as is the case with a Greater Croatia.

However, the greatest threat is the formation of a Greater Yugoslavia (in accordance with the thoughts and plans of London). With it the Adriatic question would be not only more dangerous, but it would give birth to the problem of Irredentism in relation to Dalmatia, Istria, Albania, the Guilian region, etc.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *NOB u Dalmaciji*, vol. 7 (July-August 1943) (Split, IHRPD, 1984.), *op. cit.*, pp. 752-754.

One should not doubt how many such thoughts existed and how many remain still present especially in certain Irredentist circles in Italy.

It needs to be emphasized in conclusion that those responsible for those numerous Italian crimes committed in Croatian territories during the Second World War, which we have in part described in this article, have never answered for their actions, other than a handful of individuals whom the Partisans had arrested or captured and condemned.⁴⁵

Translated by John Peter Kraljic

Die Politik Italiens gegenüber kroatischen Gebieten und deren Folgen im Zweiten Weltkrieg

Zusammenfassung

Die Politik Italiens im Zweiten Weltkrieg ist eine Fortsetzung der Politik, die von Faschisten seit der Machtübernahme im Jahre 1922 geführt worden ist und deren Bestreben es war, den jugoslawischen Staat zu Fall zu bringen, Dalmatien zu annektieren und einen kroatischen Staat unter italienischem Protektorat zu bilden. Zur Verwirklichung dieser Ziele arbeitete Italien bereits vor dem Krieg auf internationaler Ebene an der diplomatischen Umkreisung Jugoslawiens (es verbündete sich vornehmlich mit Bulgarien und Ungarn), und unterstützte separatistische Bewegungen innerhalb Jugoslawiens, allen voran die Ustaschabewegung.

Nach der Errichtung der Diktatur von König Alexander wurden Militärlager der Ustascha in Italien gegründet und, mit dem gleichen Bestreben, der Aufstand in Lika im Jahre 1932 unterstützt.

Die oben genannten Tendenzen italienischer Politik verwirklichen sich im sog. Aprilkrieg von 1941. Aufgrund des Römischen Vertrags mit dem Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien (kroatisch: Nezavisna država Hrvatska, NDH), annektierte Italien Teile des Berglandes Gorski Kotar und des Kroatischen Küstenlandes, als auch größere Gebiete Dalmatiens mit den Städten Šibenik, Trogir, Split und Boka Kotorska und die Mehrheit dalmatischer Inseln (d.h. I. italienische Zone), während der Unabhängige Staat Kroatien italienisches Königtum, regiert von einem Mitglied des italienischen Königshauses (Herzog von Spoleta), werden sollte. Die demilitarisierten Küstengebiete des NDH wurden zur II. italienischen Zone erklärt, und das Gebiet bis zur deutsch-italienischen Demarkationslinie (Samobor-Glina-Dvor-Jajce-Fojnica-Višegrad) zur III. italienischen Zone (insgesamt rund 48.000 km² mit 2.400.000 Bewohnern). Den Aufstand von Juli und August 1941. nutzte

⁴⁵ The British and Americans prevented such trials for political reasons, as they feared that the Communists would come to power in Italy in 1945. As a result, none of the over 3,000 Italians suspected of having committed war crimes in the area of Yugoslavia (mostly in Croatia) during World War II were ever extradited to Yugoslav Communist authorities. See more concerning this in Fiamma Nirenstein, "Genocidio all'italiana", *Epoca* (Milan), no. 1945, 17 January 1988.

Italien zur Wiederbesetzung der II. und III. italienischen Zone, wobei es sich mit Tschetniks verbündete, die in diesen Gebieten des Unabhängigen Staates Kroatien die «Säuberung» der nichtserbischen Bevölkerung vollbringen sollten.

Unmittelbar nach der Besetzung dieser Gebiete haben die Italiener, nebst umfangreicher Säuberungsaktionen an der Zivilbevölkerung (Internation), mit der systematischen und äußerst rücksichtslosen wirtschaftlichen Ausbeutung begonnen. All das hatte menschliche Verluste zur Folge, die sich laut Angaben der Landeskommision für die Ermittlung von Verbrechen der Okkupanten und deren Helfershelfern auf 9.647 gefallene antifaschistische Kämpfer und 30.795 Zivilopfer (sic 9.439 Frauen), 9.783 Verhaftete, 2.058 gefangene Kämpfer, 16.870 internierte Personen usw. beliefen.