

Migrations and deportations of Slovenians, Germans and Italians during the Second World War and after the War¹

The three big ideologies (fascism, nazism and communism) resulted in huge migrations from the Slovenian territory. The first big wave of migrations actually happened in the twenties when a lot of people moved from the territory, which fell to Italy after World War I (Venezia – Giulia).

Slovenian national community in Italy, which before the war amounted to about 300 000 people lost until the mid-thirties most of its anyway weak economic foundation, which was mainly concentrated in co-operatives, loan societies and savings banks. The economic crisis and the fascist pressure caused mass migrations of all strata of the society, beginning with the intelligence and the clerical staff. The result was a strongly changed social structure: the Slovenians practically completely lost their middle class. Most of the economic and political migrants – around 70 000 – moved to Yugoslavia, 30 000 to South America and several thousands to other European countries.² The unknown number of people, mostly clerks, teachers and policemen moved to Venezia Giulia from inlands in the time of fascist Italian rule between 1922 - 1943. In spite of the strong migrations, the countryside predominantly remained Slovenian, whereas the Italians dominated bigger cities.

During World War II, all the three occupational forces (the German, the Italian and the Hungarian) condemned Slovenians to ethnocide. However, their methods and the required time in which the plan was to be carried out differed. Most drastic deportations were carried out by the German occupants. The German leadership assigned the responsibility for the solution of the “Slovenian question” to various offices under the leadership of Heinrich Himmler, the state secretary for reinforcement of germanness. The Germans planned to deport between 220 000 and 260 000 Slovenians.³ First they brought them to collecting camps from where they were shipped to Germany, Croatia and Serbia. The deportation was to be carried out in several waves: the first to come were the nationally feeling Slovenes who were followed by those who moved to Slovenian territory after 1914, and finally by those whose estates and property were needed for the German colonisation (about 80 000 German immigrants were planned to be settled in this area). This plan was intended to be carried out in five months. Apart from the reasons stated above, the deportations began to be carried out as punitive actions against the relatives and the supporters of the partisans.⁴

Due to the problems of transportation, the uprising of the population and because Croatia and Serbia were unable to accept as many deportees as planned, only 80 000 Slovenians were deported (about 17 000 of them fled to Italian occupation territory). 12 000 Germans from Slovenia (Gotschee Deutsch) were settled, mostly to the borderland with the Independent State of Croatia, along the rivers Sava and Sotla in agreement with the Italian occupational authorities.

¹ Repe, Božo. Migrations and deportations of Slovenes, Germans and Italians during the Second World War and after the War : predavanje na mednarodnem kolokviju Zwangsmigrationen in Europa 1938-1950, Prag, 25.-28. September 2002. Praga, 2002.

² Jože Pirjevec, Milica Kacin-Wohinz: Zgodovina primorskih Slovencev (The history of the Slovenians living on the Coast), Nova revija, Ljubljana 2002.

³ Tone Ferenc: Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Entnationalisierungspolitik in Slowenien 1941 – 1945, Obzorja, Maribor 1980.

⁴ Tone Ferenc: Okupacijski sistemi na Slovenskem 1941 – 1945 (Occupational systems in Slovenia 1941 – 1945), Modrijan, Ljubljana 1997.

The (Kočevje) Gotschee Germans had lived in coexistence with their Slovene neighbours for more than 600 years. As the of World War II approached, they became increasingly captured by the nazi movement; half-military units were formed and most of the German population joined the Kulturbund.⁵ Between April 10 and April 14 they seized power over the (Kočevje) Gotschee area and started to chase and arrest the Slovenes (the sama happened in the mayor sities in Styria where Germans also lived). They were extremely disappointed that the (Kočevje) Gotschee area fell under Italian occupation, which led to increased tensions between the Italian authorities and the Germans. Since 1939 there had been hints about their being moved to some other area, yet the decision came in haste only in April 1941. Due to various problems, they were moved as late as in winter of 1941-1942.

Most of the (Kočevje) Gotschee Germans (more than 12 000) decided for the project. They were settled on the farms of the deported Slovenians. Apart from them, some Germans living in Ljubljana and other Slovene areas (a little over 1000) were moved too. Mostly they went to Gorenjska and Koroška (Kärnten) but also to the »old« Reich and to Eastern Europe. The choice of their future residence was based on their racial assessment.

In the Italian occupational territory similar plans as in German were made in spring 1942: planned were mass deportations of the Slovenians and Italian colonisation of the emptied Slovene territories.⁶ However, Italy surrendered before the above plans could be implemented. Yet, the Italians succeeded to deport about 25 000 thousands Slovenes into Italian concentration camps.⁷ . The preserved documents let us believe that in case of their victory, the Italians would have introduced the same denationalising regime as was carried out in the Slovenian coastal area and Istria during both World Wars.⁸

The Hungarian occupiers deported those Slovenes who moved to Prekmurje (the river Mura region), which was allotted to Yugoslavia after World War I, until World War II. About 600 of them (mostly immigrants from Primorska, the territory awarded to Italy after

⁵ Biber Dušan: Kočevski Nemci med obema vojnama (Gotschee Germans between both World Wars), Zgodovinski časopis (Historical Review) 17, Ljubljana 1963; the same: Nemci in nacizem v Jugoslaviji (Germans and Nazism in Yugoslavia) 1933 – 1941, Ljubljana 1966; Janez Cvirn: Nemci na Slovenskem (Germans in Slovenia) 1848-1941 (published in: Dušan Nečak (editor) : "Nemci" na Slovenskem 1941 – 1955 (The »Germans« on Slovenian Territory 1941 – 1955), Znanstveni inštitut filozofske fakultete (Scientific Institute of the Faculty of Arts), Ljubljana 2002 (second edition)

⁶ On 31.July 1942 in Gorica (Gorizia) Benito Mussolini had meeting with military official from Slovenian occupational zone. He ordered the change of Italian policy from "soft" to "hard". He confirmed mass deportation of Slovenian population (Protokol from the meeting with Mussolini in Gorizia, 31.7. 1942, published in Tone Ferenc: Occupational systems in Slovenia 1941- 1945). An huge military offensive from July till September 1942 followed, during which few hundred civilians were killed and few tenth villages were burned (Narodnoosvobodilna vojna na Slovenskem 1941 – 1945, (National – liberation War in Slovenia) Ljubljana 1978.

⁷ Slovenci skozi čas (Slovenians through time), Ljubljana, 1999.

⁸ In report of High Commissioner for Provinzia di Lubiana (Ljubljanska pokrajina – Ljubljana county) from 24 August 1942 (published in Tone Ferenc: Occupational systems in Slovenia 1941- 1945) following measures were planned:

-the hardest possibly line toward Slovenians;

-the problem of Slovenian population could be solved with mass destruction; with deporation; or - as third possibility - with elimination of "opposite elements" and on a long term with assimilation of the rest of population;

- mass internment must me realized according to given plans, it must be decided were to deport Slovenian population and from where to take Italian population for the replacement (the most appropriate - by suggestion of High Commissioner - supposed to be population from the Central and North part of Italy). If there all Slovenian population will be deported, deportations should be started in the zone across the old border (by the opinion of Commissioner that should be done after war because of difficulties during the war).

World War I) were deported to the concentration camp Szavar in the spring of 1942.⁹ After the German occupation of Hungary and Prekmurje, most of the Prekmurje Jews (452 persons) were imprisoned in concentration camps. 328 of them were then killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau¹⁰ in April 1944.

Due to political and national reasons, between 15 000 and 20 000 Slovenes fled their country and moved to overseas countries towards the end of World War II and shortly after it.

After the annexation of Primorska (the coastal region of Slovenia) to Yugoslavia, the inhabitants of this territory were given the right to choose either the Yugoslav or the Italian citizenship. The inhabitants of the Yugoslav territory with permanent residence right until June 10, 1940 and their children lost the Italian and gained Yugoslav citizenship. However, they were offered the possibility to opt for Italian citizenship. The offer stood for one year after the implementation of the Peace Treaty.¹¹ If they decided to opt, they had to move to Italy. From Slovenian territory annexed to Yugoslavia by Paris Peace Treaty opted 21 323 Italians, all inhabited between both world wars (so called "recignoli") because in this part was almost no Italians living before first World War (by census from 1910 only 222 Italians lived in this territory). So in the first emigration wave after Peace Treaty majority of autochthon Italian population was from Croatia.

In Slovenia autochthon Italian population lived in that day Koper County (Zone B of Free Territory of Trieste which by London agreement belonged to Yugoslavia).¹² Their problem was solved with Memorandum of understanding between the Governments of Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yugoslavia, regarding the Free Territory of Trieste (signed in London on 5 October 1954) and later the Osimo agreements (signed by Yugoslavia and Italy on 10 November 1975 in Osimo near Ancona) and at the end with the Agreement between Yugoslavia and Italy concerning the final settlement of all mutual obligations arising from article 4 of the Osimo treaty (signed February 1983).

From Slovenian territory under the condition of Paris Peace Treaty and Memorandum of understanding left 27 810 (we do not have data, how many Slovenians were among them).¹³ There is no exact number of refugees from Croatia, but estimations for the whole Yugoslavia are between 200 000 and 300 000.¹⁴

Yugoslav and Slovene authorities respected the right for the choice of citizenship and emigration, people were not forced into decisions. The reasons for emigration were mostly of political and economic nature. Italy, however, encouraged immigration from

⁹ Gregor Kaplan, *Vrste in oblike nasilja madžarskega okupatorja (Violent measures of Hungarian occupier)* Ljubljana 2002.

¹⁰ Darja Kerec, *Judje v Murski Soboti v letih 1943-1954 (The Jews in Murska Sobota between the Years 1943 and 1954)*, Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje (Review for History and Ethnography), No. 4., year 71, Maribor 2000.

¹¹ *Pariška mirovna pogodba (Paris Peace Treaty), Peace Treaty with Italy, integral text*, Ministrstvo za zunanje zadeve (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Slovenia), Ljubljana 1997.

¹² London agreement is international agreement by which the military administration was brought to an end in Zone A and Zone B of Free Trieste Territory. It was signed by the representatives of Italy, Yugoslavia, Great Britain and USA on 5 October 1954 in London. Yugoslavia and Italy confirmed the existing demarcation, the Italian civil administration was extended throughout zone A, and the Yugoslav throughout Zone B. Guarantees were given for the unhindered return of persons who had formerly held domicile rights on the territories under Yugoslav or Italian administration, Special statute guaranteed for both sides the national rights of minorities.

¹³ In the report of mixed Slovene – Italian Historical and Cultural Commission which deals with Slovene – Italian relations between 1880 and 1956 (Nova revija 2001), page 159 it is stated: "In the post war period, the Istrian territory which came under Slovene sovereignty, witnessed the departure of over 27 000 persons, more less the whole Italian population.

¹⁴ This is the number established by mixed Slovene - Italian Historical and Cultural Commission and quoted in above mentioned report. See also: Marina Cattaruzza: *Der "Istrische Exodus": Fragen der Interpretation*, in Detlef Brandes, Edita Ivaničkova und Jiri pešek (Hg.) *Erzwungene Trennung*, Klartext verlag Essen, 1999.

Yugoslavia and persuaded its citizens to move to Italy. The migration was presented as mass flight. Later Italy regretted this attitude, because it assessed a stronger national minority in Slovenia would have been of more use to it.¹⁵ In spite of everything, Italian minority was preserved; it was awarded legal protection and it counts today about 4000 members.

Due to voluntary or forced immigration, the German minority virtually disappeared after the war. Most of the about 24 000 Germans, the so-called Volksdeutscher, (15 000 Kočevje -Gottschee Germans and 9000 of other Germans) fled. According to the then allied policy and the principle of the collective responsibility, about 9000 were forcefully deported by the authorities. It was a measure, which resulted from the attitude of the Germans and the German minority towards Slovenians during the war.¹⁶ In 1948, 1824 people declared themselves as Germans and 582 as Austrians, which in total amounts to 2406 people. In 1991, both nationality groups together only amounted to 745 people.¹⁷ In the post war years, the German speaking people did not enjoy the status of a national minority.

Due to various reasons (the war and the big ideologies), about 170 000 persons emigrated more or less forcefully from the Slovenian territory from the mid-thirties to the beginning of the fifties of the 20th century; among them there were Slovenes, Germans and Italians. The consequence of this process led to major economic, social and cultural changes.

SUMMARY

The three big ideologies (fascism, nazism and communism) and Second World War resulted in huge migrations from the Slovenian territory. The first big wave of migrations actually happened in the twenties when a lot of people moved from the territory, which fell to Italy after World War I (Venezia – Giulia). During World War II, all the three occupational forces (the German, the Italian and the Hungarian) condemned Slovenians to ethnocide. However, their methods and the required time in which the plan was to be carried out differed. Most drastic deportations were from the early beginning carried out by the German occupants. In the Italian occupational territory similar measures in larger scale (mass deportations of the Slovenians) started only in 1942. The Hungarian occupiers deported those Slovenes who moved to Prekmurje (the river Mura region), which was allotted to Yugoslavia after World War I, until World War II. They also deported the Jews, who were mostly murdered in nazi concentration camps.

Due to political and national reasons, between 15 000 and 20 000 Slovenes fled their country and moved to overseas countries towards the end of World War II and shortly after it. Some 27 000 Italians and 24 000 Germans also left Slovenian territory. In general, due to various reasons (the war and the big ideologies), about 170 000 persons emigrated more or less forcefully from the Slovenian territory from the mid-thirties to the beginning of the fifties of the 20th century; among them there were Slovenes, Germans and Italians. The consequence of this process led to major economic, social and cultural changes.

¹⁵ Zbornik Primorske – 50 let (The Anthology of Primorska – 50 Years) , Primorske novice, Koper 1997.

¹⁶ Tone Ferenc: "Nemci" na Slovenskem med drugo svetovno vojno ("The »Germans« on Slovenian Territory during WW II), Božo Repe: "Nemci" na Slovenskem po drugi svetovni vojni ("Germans" (The »Germans« on Slovenian Territory after WW II), Dušan Nečak: "Nemci na Slovenskem 1945 – 1955 v luči nemških in avstrijskih dokumentov (The »Germans« on Slovenian Territory through German and Austrian documents), all in The »Germans« on Slovenian Territory 1941 – 1955). About broader Yugoslav context of this problem look: Božo Repe: AVNOJ: Historische Tatsache und aktuelle politische Frage, Ost-West Informationen nr. 2, Oktober 2002, Alternativ – sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee Graz.

¹⁷ Mitja Ferenc: "Nemci" na Slovenskem v popisih prebivalstva po drugi svetovni vojni ("Germans" on Slovenian Territory in post war censuses in: Dušan Nečak : »Nemci« na Slovenskem 1941-1955 (The »Germans« on Slovenian Territory 1941 – 1955).