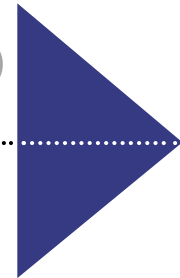


1918
1956



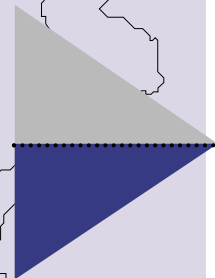
Eastern border tragedies

Fascism Foibe Exodus

EXHIBITION REALISED BY FONDAZIONE MEMORIA DELLA DEPORTAZIONE

MEMBER OF INSMLI (ISTITUTO NAZIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE IN ITALIA)

Con il patrocinio della Presidenza del Consiglio Regionale della Lombardia



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Il lungo esodo di Raul Pupo (Rizzoli)

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CARTOGRAPHY BY ISABELLA CAVASINO



1918
1922

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

With the end of the First World War and the subsequent disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, Venezia Giulia and Zadar were handed over to Italy. The city of Rijeka was also annexed in 1924. The Kingdom of Italy thus extended over areas inhabited both by people of Italian origin, mainly in the coastal areas, and by Slovenes and Croats, mainly in the inland villages.

Mentre in alcune plaghe d'Italia i Fasci di Combattimento sono appena una promessa o un cominciamento o una vigorosa affermazione di minoranza qualitativa che non teme la maggioranza quantitativa, nella Venezia Giulia i Fasci sono l'elemento preponderante e dominante della situazione politica locale. -
- - - - - Può darsi che i fascisti della Venezia Giulia diano l'avvio ad un grande movimento di rinnovazione nazionale e costituiscano le avanguardie generose e combattive dell'Italia che noi sogniamo e prepariamo. -
Mussolini
156 "Il Popolo d'Italia", del 24 Settembre 1920

■ A flyer of a fascist from 1920



In this mixture of ethnicities and the complex interweaving of local historical events, a particularly virulent and aggressive fascist nationalism found nourishment. Already at the beginning of 1919, strong groups of squadristi were formed who - as we read in a document of the time - 'taught all the Fascists of Italy the most effective method of fighting against the Antination and inaugurated the glorious Black Shirt as their official uniform'.



■ The Duce visits Trieste in September 1939. Below, Mussolini at Postumia in 1938



TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

After the victory comes fascism

Border between Kingdom of Italy and monarchy Habsburg until 1918



After Treaty of Rapallo from 1920 to 1941



2



■ The 'Narodni Dom', the cultural centre of the Slovenes in Trieste. It was set on fire on 13 July 1920. The photo below, taken from newspapers of the time, shows the building in flames.



■ Disturbances caused by fascist squads in Trieste in the early 1920s.

The effects of fascist violence did not take long to be felt.

Not only anti-fascists were targeted, as was the case in the rest of Italy in those years, but the fascist squads were especially aggressive against the Slovenian and Croatian ethnic population. The squads, led by Francesco Giunta, set fire to the Balkan Hotel in Trieste on 13 July 1920, the site of the 'Narodni Dom', the most important and modern

cultural centre of Slovene organisations in the city.

This very serious episode will be described by Mussolini as 'the providential Balkan fire'.

After this authoritative endorsement, fascist violence spread with the aim of completely Italianising the non-Italian ethnic populations that had inhabited these lands since time immemorial.



1922
1940

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

Fascist policy in the years following its seizure of power was based on a perverse combination of anti-Slavism and anti-socialism. "Faced with an inferior and barbaric race such as the Slavs, it is not the policy of sugar but of the stick that must be followed," reads one of the proclamations issued by Fascism in those years.



The primary school in Doberdò.

TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

Also prohibited *mass in Slovenian*



The Prefecture of Gorizia issues instructions for the anagraphic modification of surnames in Italian.

Ethnic Slovenes and Croats are referred to as 'allogenes' (a neutral term from a scientific point of view, but at the time charged with a strong sense of foreignness, contempt and inferiority) were subjected to an unprecedented series of harassments: cultural circles that had survived the ravages of the

squads were closed down, the population was forced to Italianise their surnames, the same happened to the Slavic names of the villages, and above all the Italian language was imposed in all public places (school children suffered most, as they were forced to study in a language they did not know).

In questo negozio si parla soltanto in LINGUA ITALIANA

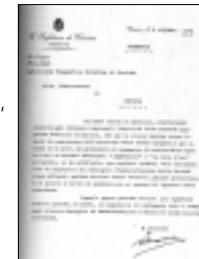
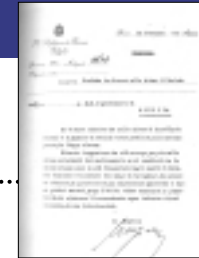


Prefectural circulars dissolving local associations and creating fascist ones.

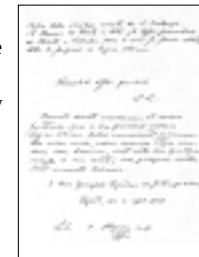


It goes so far as to ban the use of language even in church, during religious services.

The clergy tried to resist, but to no avail. In 1928, Bishop Fogar, addressing the clergy and the faithful, commented on the decisions of the Italian government that also affected the Church: "What can we priests do when we are so often opposed by those who say they believe in Jesus Christ? Where impiety begins to triumph, persecution will not be long in coming."



The correspondence of the local clergy in defence of the Slovene language in religious ceremonies religious ceremonies.





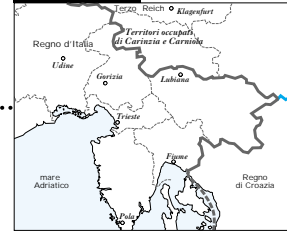
1941

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

The aggression against Yugoslavia

Border between
Kingdom of Italy,
Kingdom of
Croatia and
Third Reich



On 6 April 1941, fifty-six German, Italian, Hungarian and Bulgarian divisions attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from all sides. The country's weak resistance was immediately overwhelmed. The state collapsed, the army was disbanded and Yugoslavia was dismembered.



Families of internees at the Gonars concentration camp (Udine)



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In those years Fascism organised 'adunate'. Here is one in Trieste.

Northern Slovenia is assigned to Nazi Germany, southern Slovenia is annexed to Italy under the name 'Ljubljana Province'.

At the expense of Croatia, Italy enlarged the provinces of Rijeka and Zadar by annexing the central part of Dalmatia. Croatia was formally proclaimed an independent state. The leader of the Ustasas, Ante Pavelic, a criminal of Nazi-fascist ideology,

was installed in the government, while Aimon of Savoy was proclaimed king under the name of Tomislav II. The occupation of Yugoslavia by Germany and its allies was ruthless. Thousands of people were killed and hundreds of villages were set on fire. Resistance to the occupation developed as early as the summer of 1941, starting in Montenegro and soon spreading to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.



A photo sequence captures a fascist massacre. Partisans in the area are kicked. Then they salute with clenched fists: a volley extinguishes the last screams. On the right, another massacre.

In the 'Province of Ljubljana', annexed to Italy, an extraordinary court was set up as early as September 1941, which made the mere possession of propaganda material or participation in meetings 'of a subversive nature' punishable by death.

In October '41, the first death sentences were carried out.

In the 29 months of Italian occupation, in the province of Ljubljana alone, about 5,000 civilians were shot and another 7,000 people, mostly elderly people, women and children, found death in Italian concentration camps. Sadly known are those of Gonars (Udine) and Rab in Croatia.





1943

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

The de facto annexation to the Third Reich of the eastern frontier areas removed from Italian sovereignty was the Nazis' first reaction to the disbandment of the Italian army after the fall of Fascism on 25 July and the armistice of 8 September 1943.



■ The cover of an 'anti-partisan manual' distributed to German troops.

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TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

The German Occupation

The loss of control over the territories within the borders of the Italian state and those under military occupation, as a result of the political and military collapse of the Fascist regime, gave the Wehrmacht the opportunity to quickly occupy the area of Venezia Giulia, the province of Ljubljana and the Dalmatian territory.

From September 1943 to April 1945, the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Udine, Pula, Rijeka and Ljubljana were united in the special operational zone called Adriatic Coast, which was incorporated into the administrative structures of Nazi Germany. A similar fate befell the area comprising the provinces of Trento, Bolzano and Belluno.



■ The photo shows the installation in the Trieste courthouse of the notorious SS police leader Odilo Lotario Globocnik, born in Trieste, linked to Himmler and former organiser of massacres in Poland. Next to the Nazi swastika is the halberd emblem of the city of Trieste. In the photo above right, Globocnik is seen reviewing the troops.



Coastal Adriatic from 1943 to 1945



■ Gauleiter Friedrich Rainer, a Nazi who hated Italy, with Trieste prefect Bruno Coceani. According to his ethnic-racial assessments, Friuli and Venezia Giulia were largely alien to the Italian nation.



The Adriatisches Küstenland will survive for more than twenty months. The Republic of Salò was born as a collaborative administrative structure desired by the Germans. These regional mutilations further discredited it. Italy was brutally deprived of the sovereignty of a

territory in which it had wasted the nationalist ambition of a great expansion in the Balkans and total control of the Adriatic. Gauleiter Rainer, entrusted by Hitler with the administrative and managerial solutions, imposed extremely harsh conditions on the population with the ultimate aim of breaking all resistance and definitively annexing these territories to the Great Reich. The violence and massacres perpetrated in the Adriatic coastal region, with the complicity of the "black gangs" of Salò, further aggravated the national tensions in the Julian area, which in the post-war period would experience a new season of mass violence, this time at the expense of the Italians.





1943
1945

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

The Resistance began in Istria in the years following the fascist seizure of power. In 1929, the Special Court, set up for the occasion in Pula, convicted five Croatian anti-fascists: one was sentenced to death and the others to thirty years imprisonment. The following year the Special Court convened in Trieste and sentenced to death 4 Slovenes accused of conspiracy against Italy. With the Nazi occupation of Venezia Giulia (Adriatisches Küstenland) between 1943 and 1945, the Germans tried to win the sympathy of the local population by recovering Habsburg myths. But the face of Nazism looked quite different.



in April 1944, 72 anti-fascists were shot after an attack in which 7 Wehrmacht soldiers lost their lives; again in Trieste, in via Ghega, 51 hostages were hanged after an attack in which 5 German soldiers lost their lives



■ In the large spaces where rice was once stored before transport to Austria-Hungary, the narrow cells were created, the antechamber of the crematorium.

In the summer-autumn of 1941 the Resistance against the Italian-German occupation began in Yugoslavia.

Following the annexation of Slovenia to Italy, the fascist state found itself with guerrilla warfare at home. An extraordinary tribunal was established and the death penalty was introduced not only for those who had been caught armed, but also for those who had possessed propaganda material or participated in meetings or gatherings judged to be of a subversive nature. This is also why the Resistance began in Venezia Giulia well in advance of the rest of Italy.



■ Slovenians deported by the Nazis after a roundup.

In fact, already in the first months of 1943 the partisan guerrilla war, which was increasingly widespread in Yugoslavia, crossed the old border and began to touch the city of Trieste itself. On 8 September, the Yugoslav Liberation Movement was already present in the region and was able to present itself as a counter-power to the regime established by the Nazi-fascist forces.

TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

The Resistance and the Risiera

At the same time, the organization of the Resistance on the Italian side developed. In Udine, between February and April 1945, 52 partisans were shot. These massacres were carried out by the Nazis with the active collaboration of the fascists of Salò. The harshness of the conflict between Italian partisans and Yugoslavian expansionist aims led to one of the most tragic episodes of the Resistance: in February 1945 in the mountain

pastures of Porzus, in eastern Friuli, a group of Garibaldi fanatics massacred, taking him by surprise, the entire command of the Osoppo Brigade, composed mainly of partisans who recognized themselves in the "Justice and Freedom" movement, unjustly accused of treason. There were also strong contrasts between the Trieste CNL which tended to underline its Italian character and the Slovenian resistance which fought for the annexation of Venezia Giulia to Yugoslavia.



■ The Germans shot a group of women in Celje. We are in 1942.

The Polizeihäftlager (police detention camp), in the Risiera di San Sabba, intended for political and Jewish prisoners, is the only concentration camp in the entire area of Western Europe equipped with a crematorium. It is the place from which a real campaign of deportation, violence and killing is carried out against the civilian population, suspected of supporting the Liberation Movement.

The Risiera was first and foremost

an institution dedicated to the capture and deportation of Jews and all opponents, both Italian and Slavic. Here the techniques of mass killing, typical of the SS logic, were applied: killing, gassing, shooting, strangulation; the sending of deportees to extermination camps in Germany. Around 20,000 people were deported to the Risiera, of which, according to approximate calculations, as many as 5,000 lost their lives. Today the Risiera building is a national monument.



1943
1945

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

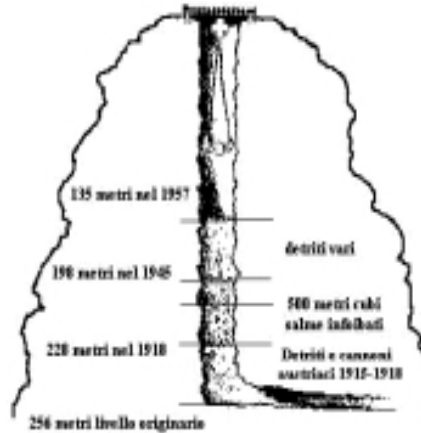
When we speak of "foibe", we refer to the mass violence against military personnel and civilians, mostly Italians, in various areas of Venezia Giulia. The first wave of violence occurred after September 8, 1943 in Istria against Italian citizens. In May 1945, with the occupation of Venezia Giulia by the Yugoslav army, the violence resumed with greater vigor. Thousands of civilians and soldiers were victims. Among them were anti-fascist figures who opposed the handing over of these lands to Yugoslavia.



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TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

The horror of the foibe



At least 5,000 people disappeared in the massacres known as 'foibe', named after the chasms typical of karstic terrain into which the corpses were often thrown, although not all of them met their deaths in this way. Among the best known foibe are the one in Vines, near Labin, in Istria, and the mine shaft in Basovizza - a national monument - near Trieste. More numerous were those who died in Yugoslav prisons and concentration camps. However, the symbolic image of the massacres has remained that of disappearing into an abyss in the Karst

A horrendous alternation of layers in a foiba. In the post-war period, a pitiful recovery is carried out: even a child's sandal emerges.



Zona A and Zone B from June '45 to September '47



After 8 September 1943, the interior of Istria became a temporary no-man's land, as the Germans had immediately occupied only the centres of Trieste, Pula and Rijeka. Taking advantage of this situation, Slovenian and Croatian anti-fascists linked to the Yugoslav liberation movement occupied key positions without resistance, began to collect weapons

abandoned by the Italian troops and proclaimed the annexation of this territory to Yugoslavia. Arrests were immediately made of state officials, mayors, municipal secretaries, carabinieri, guards, tax collectors, postmen, with the obvious intention of removing the entire Italian administration, hated for its past treachery and also simply because it represented a deeply opposed nationalism. In the countryside, too, Italian landowners were seen as 'enemies', as opposed to Croatian settlers and sharecroppers, because of a closed class antagonism. The same was true of merchants, teachers, pharmacists, veterinarians, surgeons, midwives, all those who represented the dominant Italian class in the communities.



The use of the Istrian foibe for executions was dramatic. The echoes of September 1943 were echoed in the propaganda of the Nazis and the Fascists of the Italian Social Republic, in order to increase the mistrust and fears of the Giulians of the Italian feelings towards a partisan movement hegemonised by the Yugoslav Communists.



1943
1945

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

In May 1945, Yugoslav troops, partisans of the 9th Army Corps and regular units of the 4th Army, occupied the entire territory of Venezia Giulia and, like a victorious army, proceeded to intern all captured military and police personnel and citizens considered hostile to the annexation of the territory to Yugoslavia. The treatment of the prisoners was extremely harsh. Many died of starvation or were liquidated in concentration camps, such as the notorious Borovnica camp. Many perished during transfer marches, which became death marches. Hundreds were summarily executed, without any determination of actual personal responsibility for criminal acts.

Objective: the 'enemies of the people'



Among those killed were also the perpetrators of violence, the perpetrators of reprisals and torture, spies, Slovenes and Croats, torturers of the notorious Special Security Police Inspectorate for Venezia Giulia. The criterion for arrests and executions was based on a hypothetical collective responsibility, and those swept up in the repression were more likely to be middle managers than the top brass of the political or military structures of the Nazi occupation. This logic also included the deportation of the financial guards, who had not participated in anti-partisan actions, and of many members of the Trieste municipal guard,

who had been dependent on the German commands but had not been involved in repressive activities. Even some members of the Trieste National Liberation Committee were considered to be on a par with German soldiers and the Social Republic.



The Yugoslav army did not spare the political structures and military forces of the Italian National Liberation Committee, only because they did not want to accept subordination to the Yugoslav liberation movement and were determined to seek, through armed insurrection, an independent anti-fascist

legitimacy in the eyes of the population and the Anglo-Americans. The main aim of the massacres was therefore to eliminate the "enemies of the people", i.e. anyone who opposed the annexation of Venezia Giulia and Istria to Yugoslavia and the establishment of a communist regime.

■ Literally layers of corpses emerge from the chasm, which after recovery are pitifully lined up at the edges of the chasm. The difficult task of recognising the corpses is carried out by searching for clues among the objects, clothing and any sign useful for their identification.





1946
1956

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

At the end of the war, Yugoslavia claimed a substantial territorial extension from Italy, including the city of Trieste. Pending the resolution of this dispute, the Julian area was divided into two parts: Zone A, including Trieste, under Anglo-American military rule, and Zone B, under Yugoslav military authority. Only in 1954 did Zone A finally pass to Italy, while Zone B remained in Yugoslavia. By 1956, the conventional date for the end of the exodus, 90% of the Italian community in Rijeka and Istria had been forced to leave.



■ June 1945. The people of Trieste celebrate the departure of the Yugoslav army.

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TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

The exodus of the 250.000

The years 1946-1956 saw the tragic exodus of Italians from their lands. Almost all Italians who lived in the territories that came under the final control of Yugoslavia were forced to leave the countries in which they had lived for many generations. An entire national community, estimated at 250,000 people, dispersed throughout the world. Only a part of the exiles found hospitality in Italy, while the others were forced to emigrate mainly to the Americas, Australia or New Zealand.

They left behind a devastated land: villages, especially coastal ones, reduced to ghost towns, the countryside was also severely depopulated, local society was completely disjointed with the disappearance of entire social classes (landowners and craftsmen), and links with areas traditionally united by a dense network of ties, such as Trieste and Istria, were broken. The first city to empty out was Zadar, abandoned by a large part of the population following the Anglo-American bombing in 1944, which brought severe destruction to the Dalmatian city.



■ On the quay of Pula's maritime station, under the snow, "Toscana" steam keeps the boilers under pressure. It leaves with thousands of exiles on board: it is 1946



■ The population of Italian origin is leaving by all means the houses they had inhabited for centuries. In view of the border with Italy, the queue thickens with vehicles from all over the Adriatic coast.



Soon after the end of the war, Rijeka, which had been permanently occupied by the Yugoslavs since the spring of 1945, began to empty out. Tito's government initiated a very harsh policy against the Italians, consisting of

expropriations aimed at the economic position of the small and middle classes, of arrests and killings aimed at eliminating any embryo of political dissent. The mass expulsions intensified after 1946, with the signing of the peace treaty, which sanctioned the handover of Istria and Dalmatia to Yugoslavia. The situation in Pula was similar to that in Rijeka after the departure of the Anglo-American troops. The same was true for the Italians living in other areas of Istria, whose exodus diminished over time.



1946
1956

Fascism
Foibe
Exodus

The resentment and hatred accumulated by Slovenes and Croats for the criminal fascist oppression only partly explains the harshness of the Yugoslavs' behavior towards the Italian population, which was identified en bloc as the historical enemy of Slovenian and Croatian nationalism.



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TRAGEDIES OF THE EASTERN BORDER

The bitter reception

Life was initially extremely difficult for the tens of thousands of refugees who found shelter in Italy. The Italian government was completely unprepared to receive such a large number of refugees, and the development of a proper reception policy was unfortunately seriously delayed. Moreover, in 1948 Stalin's condemnation of Tito had changed Yugoslavia's position on the international stage, with the result that the tone of condemnation of the Belgrade government was reduced to zero, also with regard to the conditions of the 250,000

refugees. The relief camps set up in various parts of Italy (Bergamo, Tuscany, Sardinia and southern Italy) were deprived of everything. One refugee described life in one of these camps: 'This notorious camp was located in a valley on the Arno river and we had to make do with a military blanket and a sack of straw in barracks used by prisoners of war. Food was rationed and the locals treated us worse than thugs'.

■ A refugee camp in Trieste in 1948.



Free Territory of Trieste from 1947 to 1954



■ The demonstration for the handover to Italy. Right, the Anglo-American parade in Trieste on 20 May 1950.



Equally harsh were the living conditions, at least in the early days, of those forced to emigrate to distant countries. The fate of the 250,000 Italians who were forced to leave the territories controlled by the Yugoslav government is a tragedy that is too often ignored, caused by the war and the explosion of a nationalism that, even in recent times, has caused destruction, suffering and death among the populations that have had the misfortune to be affected by it.