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## COLLABORATION BETWEEN SLOVENES FROM THE PRIMORSKA REGION, THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE AND THE INTER-SERVICES LIAISON DEPARTMENT AFTER THE OCCUPATION OF YUGOSLAVIA (6 APRIL 1941)

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### ABSTRACT

*The contribution presents the main activities by Slovenes from the Primorska region, who during World War II collaborated with British secret and intelligence services, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD).*

*The author initially describes British secret and intelligence services during the war and the archive sources, with a special emphasis on the role of SOE and ISLD in Yugoslavia. There follows a description of the Slovenes from the Primorska region (Dr. Ivan Marija Čok and Prof. Ivan Rudolf), who began to collaborate with the British before the war in their fight against Fascism and Nazism. In the end, the contribution presents their wartime collaboration with the SOE and the ISLD to re-establish contacts, to gather relevant information about the occupied Yugoslavia, and to prepare as well as to implement some special operations-missions by British secret and intelligence services.*

**Key words:** SOE, ISLD, military missions, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, Second World War, Ivan Rudolf, Ivan Marija Čok, TIGR

## LA COLLABORAZIONE DEGLI SLOVENI DEL LITORALE CON LA SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE E L'INTER-SERVICES LIAISON DEPARTMENT DOPO L'OCCUPAZIONE DELLA JUGOSLAVIA (6 APRILE 1941)

### SINTESI

*Nell'articolo viene presentata l'attività di alcuni sloveni del Litorale che durante la seconda guerra mondiale collaboravano con in servizi segreti e d'informazione britannici, la Special Operations Executive (SOE) e l'Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD).*

*Nell'introduzione l'autore riferisce dei servizi segreti e d'informazione britannici durante la guerra e del materiale d'archivio, come pure del ruolo della SOE e dell'ISLD nella Jugoslavia. Segue la descrizione di quegli sloveni del Litorale (il dr. Ivan Marija Čok e il prof. Ivan Rudolf), che incominciarono ancora prima dello scoppio del conflitto bellico la loro collaborazione illegale con i britannici nella lotta contro il fascismo ed il nazismo. In seguito viene presentata la collaborazione con la SOE e l'ISLD durante la guerra, nel tentativo di individuare dei contatti e delle informazioni con la Jugoslavia occupata, come pure nei preparativi e nella realizzazione di alcune operazioni-missioni speciali dei servizi segreti e d'informazione britannici.*

**Parole chiave:** SOE, ISLD, missioni militari, Slovenia, Jugoslavia, seconda guerra mondiale, Ivan Rudolf, Ivan Marija Čok, TIGR

## INTRODUCTION

Slovene historiography has hitherto devoted most of its attention to the period of the Second World War. In spite of the fact that there are numerous studies of this tragic period available, we are still not acquainted with some aspects, one of them being the cooperation of Slovenes with British intelligence. Although this cooperation was mentioned frequently, it has not yet been, in my opinion, examined thoroughly. For example, one of the key issues is how to evaluate this cooperation: was it an activity merely to the advantage of a foreign country or was it perhaps a contribution to the joint victory of the Allies over the Axis Powers and therefore also for the benefit of the Slovenes?

The reason that there was no exhaustive research in this direction until some years ago was the decades-long inaccessibility of the British intelligence archives; it is understandable that the treatment of secret services has always been a ticklish matter, however, it should be mentioned that for some time now many documents have been made available at the Public Record Office (PRO) in London. Moreover, modest knowledge of this issue can be attributed also to the negative or at least distrustful attitude of the Partisan leadership – with the Communist Party (CP) at the head – towards all those who cooperated with or had whatever contacts with British intelligence. Immediately after the War, when the CP assumed power in Slovenia as well as in Yugoslavia and gained complete control over the country, a general public campaign against the West and all those who had had contacts with western secret services started in the ever increasing range of the cold war. Those who were labelled secret agents or spies of the West automatically represented a danger to the "people's government" and therefore to the Slovene nation.

Recently – especially after Slovenia gained its independence in 1991 – Slovenes have witnessed important steps in the direction of a more relaxed and balanced treatment of the Second World War period and consequently also the issue of the cooperation with British intelligence. Some important archival sources have become more readily accessible, and since 1993, the records of the renowned British Special Operations Executive (SOE) have been made available at the PRO.

Among the Slovenes who collaborated with British Intelligence there were also some from Primorska.<sup>1</sup> They

and their association with the British intelligence in their joint struggle against the Axis Powers after the occupation of Yugoslavia will be the subject of this article, as their activity contributed significantly to the joint resistance against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy on the territory of Yugoslavia. Some socio-political workers from Primorska of that time – Dr. Ivan Marija Čok (1886-1948), Prof. Ivan Rudolf (1898-1962) and others – as well as some young men from Primorska who were mobilized forcibly by the Italian Army, captured by the British<sup>2</sup> and trained for special missions, collaborated effectively with British intelligence. This collaboration was manifested mainly in the preparation and execution of some special missions, which British intelligence sent to the occupied Yugoslavia.

Through these missions, the Allies gathered important information on Slovenia and Yugoslavia in general as well as on armament, power and the array of armed forces in this strategic region. After the establishment of connections and communications, special missions were followed by observers and military missions that organized transfer of material and strategic aid and, last but not least, they represented a moral recognition of the Partisan movement. Altogether, this meant a considerable contribution to the struggle against the common enemy.

I had earlier researched the resistance movement of Slovenes in Primorska during my post-graduate studies at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana (Bajc, 2001), where I received my Master's Degree in September 2001 and was awarded the title of Master of Arts in History. Therefore I visited the PRO, examined the archives in Ljubljana, and I had at my disposal the personal records of Ivan Rudolf, an important man from Primorska who collaborated with British intelligence. I made use of English and Slovene historiographical output, and also of the materials of Yugoslav provenience.

In order to understand the issue properly, it is necessary to know in detail the historiography of Primorska in the preceding period, i.e. before the Second World War and particularly from 1918 on when, after the end of the First World War, the region came under Italy. The leading authority on this period with reference to Primorska, Dr. Milica Kacin Wohinz, prepared a survey of Yugoslav historiography a good 15 years ago (Kacin Wohinz, 1986). For my part, I compiled a form of supplement to this survey, i.e. a survey of Slovene, Italian and Croatian historiography (between the years 1985 and 2000) on

1 Primorska is not a uniform geographic macro region, however, it has many things in common as regards its history. In this article, we shall talk about the Trieste region, the Gorica region and Istria.

2 During the successful counterattack of the British against the Italian Army in Cyrenaica in Africa, which started in December 1940 and lasted for some months, many Italian soldiers were captured, approximately 113,000. Among them there were many Slovenes and Croats from Primorska who were mobilized forcibly by the Italian Army. In October and November 1942 at El Alamein and in May and April 1943 in Tunisia, the British took more prisoners of war and also among them there were many Slovenes and Croats.

the Julia Region<sup>3</sup> during the period between the two Wars (Bajc, 2000a). In addition, I published a monograph about a notable Slovene from Primorska, Dr. Ivan Marija Čok who collaborated closely with Rudolf and British intelligence. In this monograph I used the abovementioned archive material (Bajc, 2000b). In my diploma work (Bajc, 1997, 218-259), with which I graduated at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Trieste in autumn 1997 and in my paper on the attitude of Slovenia towards the political opposition in Trieste during the early post-war period (Bajc, 1999) I studied the post-war communist authorities' distrust of some Slovenes from the Trieste Province, which can be attributed partly also to their collaboration with British intelligence.

### ARCHIVE MATERIAL OF BRITISH INTELLIGENCE

As mentioned before, since 1993, the SOE archive materials, carrying the record class HS, have been made available to researchers and new materials are released continually as can be evidenced through the Internet (<http://www.pro.gov.uk/releases>). Unfortunately, the material is incomplete because it was partly destroyed during the bombardments at the end of the War. It is believed that 85% of documents were ruined. For this reason, the internal history of the SOE is important. It was written by order of the British War Cabinet by a wartime member of the UK Air Ministry, otherwise a university professor, William James Millar Mackenzie. It seems that he used some material that was destroyed later or preserved unsorted and, in addition, he had numerous interviews with important protagonists of the SOE who were still alive at that time. In spite of the assurances given to Mackenzie that the public would never come to know the contents of his extensive work (four large files), this exceptionally interesting text has been available at the PRO (CAB 102/649-652) since 1997 and it was published in book form three years later (Mackenzie, 2000). In the now accessible original as well as in its published form, it is noted in places that some data are still confidential as usually happens in the SOE documents, which are not complete, because in some the names are erased and also whole paragraphs are missing.

The HS 5 series, which embraces the functioning of SOE in the Balkans, is of special interest to us. The files 5/868-969 deal with Yugoslavia. Some documents are stored in files which cover the Balkans more in general, namely 5/145-172, as well as in the HS 3 series, which contains the SOE documents on Africa and the Middle East (ME), and the HS 6 series which deals with the SOE operations in Western Europe. Although the documen-

tation is incomplete and – with regard to Yugoslavia – most materials refer to the British relations with Draža Mihajlović and the Chetnik movement and to the dilemmas over whom to support and to whom the aid should be sent – to Mihajlović or to Tito's Partisan movement – there is enough interesting documentation also on the subject of this article. Due to the lack of materials, the series HS 7 is also important. It contains internal reconstructions of the SOE operations, written at that time by British officials in the form of partially finished reconstructions or in the form of War Diaries. Most information is held in files 7/1, 7/3, 7/4, 7/200, 7/201, 7/211-234, 7/266-273. Some data on the organisation of SOE can be found also in documents of the Admiralty (PRO ADM).

In the meantime, many researchers of the Second World War have already studied the archives of the British War Office (PRO WO) and the Foreign Office (PRO FO). A considerable part of this very rich material has been available since the seventies and it has been possible to find some documents on the SOE organisation among these materials, as is evident particularly from the quotations in publications of one of the best Slovene experts on the Allies' archives from the Second World War, Dr. Dušan Biber, and mention can be made also of the late historian Dr. Jovan Marjanović.

Unfortunately, materials of other secret services that operated parallel with the SOE – namely, the so-called conventional Intelligence Service (Military Intelligence 6-MI6 or Secret -also Special- Intelligence Service-SIS, in documents it appears also as C, which was the pseudonym of its Head), which were at least as important – is not accessible, except for some useful fragments found in the HS 5 and HS 7 series (and in PRO WO, FO), though it should be mentioned and underlined again that not all accessible documents are complete.

Because of the lack of the abovementioned material, the legacy of Prof. Ivan Rudolf is of special significance for the subject of this article, since his collaboration with the MI6 was even stronger than with the SOE. The private archive of Ivan Rudolf (PAIR) was kindly lent to me by his relatives at the beginning of 1997 and I arranged it myself. The PAIR comprises about 500 documents that for a large part refer to the Second World War period; a great part of the material is the correspondence between the Yugoslav Committee in Italy and some members of Yugoslav government-in-exile, between several British representatives and Slovene politicians in emigration. Most communication passed between the principal members of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy (Rudolf, Čok, M. Rybář).

3 The Giulia Region used to be an Austro-Hungarian territory, which Italy occupied at the end of the First World War. It comprised the provinces of Trieste, Goriško-Gradiščansko with a part of Notranjska and Carinthia, and Istria with the islands of Cres and Lošinj. Italy named this region Venezia Giulia. Slovenes continued to use the name of Julijska Benečija (Giulian Venetia). Later the name of the Giulia Region prevailed (ES/4, 352).

In Slovene Archives (AS), the majority of information relevant to the subject of this article is in the former archive of the Ministry of the Interior, which is now recorded by the entry AS 1931 (Vodnik AS, 1999, Vol. 1, 57, 71), containing some scattered data in documentation, held mainly by the intelligence and security-informative service of Tito's Yugoslavia – the National Defence Department (Organizacija za zaščito naroda-OZNA)/State Security Authority (Uprava državne varnosti-UDV).<sup>4</sup> The material consisted mainly of different post-war reconstructions, reports and personal dossiers.

The biggest difficulties arose mainly due to pioneer work on the archive material. First, I had to arrange the PAIR logically and chronologically. The SOE material is also rather unsorted, as there is no register of its documents except some skeleton official handbooks (SOE Operations in the Balkans, 1998). In fact, an exhaustive analytical and chronological study of the subject has not been done yet, as pointed out with regard to the Allies and Soviet missions about ten years ago by Dr. Dušan Biber (1991, 77), who had until then published the most thorough survey of military missions and intelligence services in Yugoslavia during the War.

The closest to our subject are some journalistic articles published a good decade ago, in particular the work of Jože Vidic (1989) and the articles coming out regularly since then. A series of articles on parachutists from Primorska, which has been accurately prepared by Ivo Jevnikar, a journalist from Trieste, since 1995 and published in *Mladika* (MLA) review under the title *Iz arhivov in predalov (From the Archives and Drawers)*, is very interesting and irreplaceable because of some data it has brought out. The series contains several private testimonies of the protagonists still alive, as well as some so far unknown documents from the AS. In addition, Jevnikar had a series of programmes on the RAI Trieste radio station entitled *Z Bazovico v srcu (With Bazovica in Heart)*, June-July 1999) in which he interviewed almost all protagonists who had had contacts or had known Čok, Rudolf and the others. There are also some short publications on Rudolf's life. By far the most important is the publication written by his son Saša (Rudolf, 1996) because it revealed the existence of his father's legacy, which aroused the exceptional interest of the author of this article.

## BRITISH INTELLIGENCE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR<sup>5</sup>

Although the British government bodies and their power of decision-making with regard to foreign policy issues depended primarily upon Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the highest representatives of the FO and WO, the secret and intelligence services also carried great weight in those decisions. During the Second World War, the SOE was with time assuming a more and more important role among these services, while it remained a classical intelligence service, the MI6, in a privileged position. Before proceeding with this paper, I shall first introduce the British intelligence services and their role during the Second World War.

More than a year before the start of the War, after Germany annexed Austria by the Anschluss on 12 March 1938, two British agencies for special operations were assigned the task of contacting resistance groups in Europe and soon after also the underground movement of Slovenes in Yugoslavia and Primorska. The first agency was called Section D and it belonged to the MI6. Section D examined every possibility of an attack on the potential enemy without the use of armed forces. The other agency, consisting of a small number of people, was a section of the General Staff (Research) – GS(R) – of the British War Office which was renamed and developed into the Military Intelligence Research Branch, known as MI(R). Its mission was to examine new techniques of irregular warfare. Mention should also be made here of a special organisation, which was set up immediately after the Anschluss and called simply after the name of the building in which it was based – Electra House (EH). It dealt with secret, i.e. "clean and dirty" propaganda and it was accountable to the FO.

After the outbreak of war in early September 1939 and the subsequent lightning breakthrough by Germany, which already threatened the British Isles, the British special services reorganized on 19 July 1940. Churchill himself took the initiative to establish a new organisation – the SOE – which was called the Special Operations 2 (SO2) until 4 September 1941 (although the abbreviation SO2 can be found in documents also after that date, we shall use in this paper, for the sake of simplicity, only the acronym SOE for the whole period). SO2 or SOE integrated the sections D and MI(R), and its mission was to stir up and then coordinate a revolt in the occupied countries. It belonged to the Ministry of

4 On 15 August 1941, the Partisan organisation in Slovenia – the Osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda-OF (Liberation Front) – established a special service – the Varnostnoobveščevalna služba-VOS (Security and intelligence service). On 13 May 1944, Tito merged secret and intelligence services in various regions of Yugoslavia into the OZNA. In Slovenia it was set up on 26 June 1944. In April 1946 it was substituted by UDV, better known as UDBA.

5 There is considerable literature on British intelligence in the Second World War with reference to Yugoslavia. Here are some works which, as a rule, cite also other literature: Barker, 1978; De Santis, 2001; Dorril, 2000; Foot, 1999; Mackenzie, 2000; Hinsley, 1994; Stafford, 1980; Stafford, 1997; Stafford, 2000; West, 1988a; West, 1988b.

Economic Warfare (MEW). In the meantime, the EH propaganda section was renamed Special Operations 1 (SO1), which later became the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), accountable to FO. Lastly, the Special Operations 3 (SO3), which would have taken control over planning, was soon abolished.

During the War, the SOE organisation operated in utmost secrecy, as hardly anyone knew of its existence before 1943 and it became publicly known only a few years after the War, so that even Winston Churchill did not mention it in his famous history of the Second World War (London 1948-1953). The organisation was constantly in the process of adaptation to war changes and its structure was rather complicated. There were approximately 10,000 male members and 3,200 women, and at least one third operated in the field. SOE operated or endeavoured to operate all over the world, wherever it could hurt the Axis Powers. When speaking about the SOE and its forerunners, we should point to the complicated events involving the organisation. Especially in the beginning, the power relations between the British secret services were trying. The SOE, as the most recent secret service, was made a target of many critical comments by "older colleagues" or similar organisations, as for example the SO1 or PWE. In the beginning, the SOE had many problems, including distrust, envy and scepticism on the part of their "colleagues", as well as strained relations with the FO. The SOE was cancelled after the War, on 15 January 1946 and a part of its members passed over to other British secret, intelligence and security services.

The SOE cooperated closely with a similar American organisation – the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, a forerunner of the post-war Central Intelligence Agency – CIA). As to their operations in the Balkans and the ME, there was almost more antagonism than cooperation between the two organisations, because the British were afraid that the Americans wanted to take over the influence in this very sensitive area.

Often, the SOE had to cooperate also with other secret and intelligence services although it was not keen on that. Besides the SOE there were other British intelligence or secret services in operation with a long-lasting tradition, which they have preserved to the present. There was the Military Intelligence 5-Security Service (MI5) whose primary mission was to ensure the internal security of the Great Britain and its territorial waters, i.e. a typical counterintelligence service. Their control included also different kinds of censure, and Churchill was receiving messages directly from the MI5 (PRO KV

4/83). This service had an important role in preparing or concealing special and military operations, and when the allied invasion began with the disembarkation in Normandy ("Overlord" operation, 6 June 1944), the MI5 switched from the defensive to the offensive (PRO KV 4/87, 26/6/44). I have not studied in detail the relations between Slovenes from Primorska and the MI5, however, further research into the wartime connections between Slovenes and the others with the British will certainly have to take into consideration also the operation of MI5. Research in this direction has become easier, as the MI5 archives have gradually turned out to be more accessible, though the extent of material released is still not known. At present, there is the official history of this service available in London (PRO KV 4/1-3), which has been published almost entirely (The Security Service, 1999).

However, it will be difficult to reconstruct in detail the operations of the most elite British secret service MI6, which, in comparison with the MI5, was explicitly offensive. Despite the rather liberal policy of the British authorities, the MI6 documentation is still inaccessible and there is every indication that it will remain like this for some time. The MI6 is at least as important to the theme of this paper as the SOE. First, this is due to the fact that the forerunners of the SOE and its members derived mainly from the MI6 and second, because the Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD) operated in parallel with the SOE and it was actually a cover for the MI6 operations during the War, operating in a similar way to the SOE. Thus, the ISLD and the SOE cooperated frequently, but there was some distrust between them and bad relations were not uncommon.

This article will reveal that some Slovenes from Primorska collaborated either with the SOE or the ISLD, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two organisations as well as the collaboration with one or the other. As a matter of fact, even the collaborators were not always quite clear who their superiors were accountable to – the SOE or the MI6, or even the MI5 and PWE.

### SOE, ISLD AND YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the Second World War, the situation in Yugoslavia was quite complex. There is a lot of literature on this issue.<sup>6</sup> In the continuation, a rough account will be given on how the Axis Powers – when a large part of Europe was already under the boot of Nazism –

6 Some surveys, e.g. Pirjevec, 1995; Plenča, 1962; Strugar, 1980. On the conflict between Tito and Chetniks and the involvement of the Allies, e.g. Biber, 1981; Marjanovič, 1979; Roberts, 1973; Tomasevich, 1979. On the royal government in emigration, e.g. Šepić, 1983. On the assumption of power by the Communist Party, e.g. Vodušek Starič, 1992. So far, the most extensive and explanatory surveys on Slovenia in particular are: Mikuž, 1960-1973; NOV na Slovenskem, 1976; ZS, 734-887. A survey from the anti-communist point of view, Kos, 1984-1991. The newest and most balanced wartime history – even though it deals mainly with the intellectuals – is: Godeša, 1995.

attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, conquered and divided it. At the invasion, the royal government fled to the Near East and from there to London. There they were trying to persuade the Allies that a monarchy should be established again after the War. In the meantime, there was a big dispute between the different sides in the occupied Yugoslavia: (a) on the one side, the Chetniks started their resistance movement against the occupier; they were led by Dragoljub-Draža Mihajlović, who was a follower of the Yugoslav royal government policy and his tactic was to wait for the right moment to unleash a general and mass resistance; (b) on the other side, there was the Partisan movement under the leadership of Josip Broz-Tito who – with the Communist Party at the head – organized and led an extensive resistance movement in the light of revolutionary transformation of Yugoslavia immediately after the German attack on the Soviet Union (22 June 1941); (c) various forms of collaborationism developed in different parts of Yugoslavia; (d) many could not afford to take the middle course or stay neutral. In November 1941, a dispute between Chetniks and Partisans started and it soon became a mutual clash of arms, which lasted until the end of the War. While Partisans continued their resistance and revolutionary movement, the Chetniks began to cooperate (from the point of view of some researchers more, and for the others less) with the occupiers and various collaborationists in order to first destroy the Partisan movement. In the first war years, the British and Americans supported Mihailović, but from mid-1943 they started to help Tito, abandoned the Chetniks completely and accepted Tito as the only leader of the Yugoslav resistance. The Partisan movement in Slovenia operated in the framework of the Slovene National Liberation Front (OF), which was established on 26 April 1941 and consisted of the opponents to the Yugoslav royal government and the pre-war political system, i.e., the Communist Party, Christian Socialists, the left wing of liberally oriented Sokol organisation and several smaller groups. In Slovenia, the Communist party had a leading role as well. The Chetnik movement did not succeed in developing widely among Slovenes, while the organisation of anti-partisan military formations was quite successful. They directly collaborated with the occupiers in the (naïve) hope that at the end of the War (because of their anti-communism) the Western Allies would occupy Yugoslavia and restore the pre-war conditions.

The SOE organisation did not succeed in uniting all potential resistance powers in Yugoslavia, nor even in preventing continuation of the conflict between Chet-

niks and Partisans, but it did play an important role in deciding which side the Allies should support. For example as the well-known economist, Dr. Aleksander Bajt, has written in his extensive book on the Second World War in Yugoslavia, even the SOE had different viewpoints and obviously conflicting interests with regard to the events in Yugoslavia; in general, the head office in London supported the Chetnik commander Draža Mihailović, while a very important section in Cairo was pro-Soviet, which was an important factor, leading the British to decide eventually to support Tito's Partisans (Bajt, 1999, 537-564).<sup>7</sup> Recently, various interpretations and even speculations have come out with regard to this issue, namely, that the infiltration of the agents of Soviet secret service Narodnyi Kommissariat Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti (NKGB) decisively influenced the decision of the Allies to withdraw support to Mihailović and give it to Tito. However things were, for example one of the best British authorities on the history of secret services, Christopher Andrew, has revealed the actual involvement of Soviet secret services in the operations of SOE and other secret, intelligence and security services of the UK. Several important officials of the SOE Balkans section had known for some time about their membership in the pre-war British Communist Party and that they had been Soviet secret agents (Andrew, Gordievskij, 2000, 242, 281, 283, 284, 316, 749, 750; Andrew, Mitrokhin, 1999, 117-120, 167; Andrew, 1999, 18-23; Stafford, 1997, 297, 298; Dorril, 2000, 333, 334). In spite of their mutual distrust, certain cooperation between British and Soviet secret agents and intelligence services respectively existed at the beginning of the War, specifically from the end of 1940 and it was present also in the territory of Yugoslavia (SOE Operations in the Balkans, 1998, 2, 4; SOE Operations in Eastern Europe, 1998, 3, 5, 10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 22, 27-29, 32, 34; Andrew, Gordievskij, 2000, 273, 282, 299, 311-325, 343-347). However, a known fact should be mentioned here: that the British learnt through the intercepted German messages by means of the ULTRA<sup>8</sup> decoding system that Tito's Partisan forces caused more damage and trouble to the Axis Forces than Mihailović's Chetniks, who in some regions collaborated with the occupiers. Such information was confirmed by some missions in the field. Active resistance was a priority for the SOE and for the Allies' military strategy in general, and for this reason the decision to support the Partisans – despite great political scepticism due to the communist monopoly – was unavoidable.

7 With this extensive book (1,345 pages), which represents a mixture of memories, the use of considerable literature, published sources and some British documents, Bajt wished to revise many things, in particular to rehabilitate the Chetnik movement and expose the absurdity of the Partisan struggle. Some historians have contradicted him, e.g. Pleterski, 1999; Pleterski, 2001; Repe; 2000, 104, 105.

8 ULTRA was the most safeguarded secret in Great Britain during the Second World War. This was a special system of decoding which enabled the British to intercept the messages of German secret encoding system called Enigma. The system was invented by an eccentric mathematician Alan Turing, who took part in creating the first English computer in 1954 (De Santis, 2001, 34-35).

The occupation by the Axis Forces put SOE and MI6 activities in Yugoslavia under enormous strain. It seems that SOE failed to keep the pre-war posts with which it could communicate, while MI6 managed to preserve some connections through secret radio transmitters. There is every indication that two of them transmitted from Slovenia, that is from the outskirts of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. SOE was therefore interested in re-establishing its connections with the occupied Yugoslavia, and the same holds also for MI6 as it probably wanted to get new or verify previous information through the ISLD.

The final objective was to establish official military representations of the countries of the antifascist coalition in the form of the so-called Allies military missions. However, it was necessary first to come into contact with occupied Yugoslavia, to understand the situation in the field, establish connections with resistance groups and to set up radio communication with the headquarters. This was the task of the first intelligence missions, which were more of a "reconnaissance" nature. They were followed by observers and finally by the British Liaison Officers (BLO) who were actually military missions.

Frequently, the structure of special and military missions was mixed: there were some people from SOE and some from ISLD, who were in general distrustful of resistance movements in Yugoslavia. So they, for example, kept secret codes for communication to themselves or only reluctantly gave them over to the Partisans. The first intentions of ISLD were mainly of a political nature and directly linked to the long-term objectives of the FO and Churchill himself, while SOE was responsible to MEW, and their objectives – at least in principle – were tied to military (usually short-term) interests. However, this does not mean that there were no political views expressed in SOE messages, as is evident from the directives to SOE missions (ref., PRO HS 5/877, 10/12/42; HS 5/896; HS 5/894 directives to the "Henna" Mission).

During the first years of the War, the centre of SOE and ISLD operations was in the ME. When, before the occupation of Yugoslavia, the situation became very tense, the British had to interrupt all communication via the Mediterranean and it became clear that in future the bulk of communications would pass through the base in Cairo (Mackenzie, 2000, 16). This put them to considerable trouble, but they persisted, as there was obviously no other choice, and later it turned out that the choice had lasting consequences. Namely, when in October 1941, the highest circles of the British Army decided eventually to support the resistance movement in Yugoslavia (they first intended to support the Chetniks) in

spite of their scepticism regarding the efficiency of resistance, it became evident that support could be offered only from the ME. In the beginning of December 1941, there were some concrete proposals to move the centre of operations from London to the ME. Thus Cairo became the actual centre of data collection, training of agents for missions and giving directives for the Balkans sections of SOE as well as for ISLD. After the capitulation of Italy the headquarters were moved to Bari in the south of Italy, but even thereafter and until the end of the War Cairo remained an important point, although there were serious polemics between the leading circles in this centre (PRO HS 7/211, 15; HS 7/223, 2222; HS 5/912, 16/10/41; Foot, 1999, 332-334; SOE Operations in Africa and the Middle East, 1998, 11, 17-20).

It was a difficult and very delicate matter for the British how to send the first special missions to Yugoslavia, as the sending of subsequent missions would depend on that. SOE and ISLD had a lot of difficulties, including technical deficiencies owing to internal division, lack of suitable collaborators to be sent with the missions to the occupied territory of Yugoslavia. Some Slovenes from Primorska played an important role as they had successfully collaborated with British secret services already some years before the War.

Collaboration of SOE with the Yugoslav government in exile and the Yugoslav Army was difficult as disputes began between them. There were many intrigues and conflicts and there was much disunity in the government (e.g. PRO WO 193/629, 12/3/42; FO 371/33475 R 201/201/92; R 272/201/92; R 713/201/92; PRO FO 536/4, 3034/38/42; FO 536/6, 3611; HS 5/904, March 1942; 2/2/42; HS 5/929, 12/10/42; HS 5/939, 30/8/41).

#### SLOVENES FROM PRIMORSKA BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In order to understand correctly the collaboration of some Slovenes from Primorska with SOE and ISLD, we need a brief background to the history of Primorska, especially in the period between the two Wars. Many things have been written and said about the subject,<sup>9</sup> but the main characteristic was the conflict between the nations who lived there – Slovenes and Croats on the one hand and Italians on the other – as to who would dominate in the territory and where the boundary line would be drawn. When, after the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire – which until then comprised almost the entire Slovene ethnic territory – fell apart, the barriers, which until that moment had prevented Slovenes from deciding their fate inside their own national boundary, collapsed in reality. While Slovenes had their

9 See Kacin Wohinz, 1972; Kacin Wohinz 1986; Kacin Wohinz, 1977; Kacin Wohinz, 1990; Kacin Wohinz, Pirjevec, 2000, 21-81; Bajc, 2000a; Darovec, 1998, 93-96; Slovene-Italian Relations, 2001, 127-138; ES/4,184-189; ES/9, 345-349; ES/11, 263-271; ZS, 614-619, 625-628, 705-726.

first real chance to unite as much of their national body as possible in a single state community (as an independent Slovenia or in association with other South Slavs), for the opposite Italian side, the circumstances indicated a unique opportunity for their expansion to the East with the aim of concluding the process of "national unification".

On the basis of the Treaty of Rapallo signed between Italy and Yugoslavia on 12 November 1920, a complete implementation of the London Pact of 1915 (in which the Entente powers promised the entire territory of the Julia Region to Italy in order to persuade it to declare war on Austria-Hungary) was partially obstructed. However, this was a poor consolation to the Slovenes, on the contrary, Italy actually occupied more Slovene territories to the East than determined by the Pact. The new western border tore one fourth of Slovenes away from the main national body; together with Venetian Slovenes, who had been in the Italian Kingdom since 1866, 360,000 Slovenes and about 160,000 Croats remained under Italy (e.g. Kacin Wohinz, 2000, 177).

The Italian occupation had introduced (already before the period of Fascism, which came to power in October 1922) a policy of denationalisation, which intensified with the purpose of completely destroying the presence of Slovene and Croatian nationality. The Slovenes resisted the denationalisation process in different ways, depending also on their political and ideological orientations. Therefore, completely different methods of operation emerged – from legal resistance (where that was possible at all) to rebellion by any means, which also envisaged an underground movement.

The underground movement of Slovenes (and Croats) in the Julia Region started very early. In fact, a spontaneous resistance developed among the people immediately after the Italian occupation in autumn 1918. Soon, an organized underground movement started, supported by the Yugoslav side; first with the backing of the *Pisarna za zasedeno ozemlje* (Office of the Occupied Territory), followed by *Jugoslovanska Matica* and *Narodna odbrana* (National Defense); the Slovene clergy<sup>10</sup> and *Orjuna* (Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists) in particular was also very active. These were the first beginnings of later illegal resistance by a national-revolutionary organisation, known under the acronym TIGR (Trieste, Istria, Gorica, Rijeka), which in autumn 1927 became a joint or-

ganisation for the whole Giulia Region. Through its terrorist actions, TIGR wanted to inform the world about the conduct of Italy. They were collecting arms and explosives to organize guerrilla warfare, gathering military and political information for Yugoslavia, taking care of the transfer of illegal antifascist newspapers as well as Slovene books which they needed for secret courses in the Slovene language. The Yugoslav government supported the movement financially and morally, but on demand from Italy they acted also against the organisation. Activities, similar to those of TIGR – at any rate more of an intelligence and in particular irredentist and propaganda nature – were started by other movements in Primorska and in the interior of Slovenia, especially by the *Zveza jugoslovanskih emigrantov iz Julijske krajine* (Union of Yugoslav Exiles from the Giulia Region) from 1931 to 1940, headed by their president I. M. Čok. The operations of all these organisations were closely interrelated and intertwined continually.

As in the late thirties, the general situation in Europe was becoming more strained every day because of German open and unpunished expansion and because Yugoslavia was getting dangerously close to the Axis Forces, the Union of Yugoslav Exiles from the Giulia Region preventively established connections, through the Yugoslav counterintelligence service UJKA, with the British and French secret services and promised them their collaboration and support from TIGR. In exchange they expected an assurance of favourable demarcation in the Giulia Region after an (eventual) war. The Western Allies readily accepted the proposition of collaboration, but their promises given to the Slovenes from Primorska were only in principle. The prime liaison persons between the British and TIGR were Čok and Rudolf, and Albert Rejec, the founder and ideological leader of TIGR, worked closely with them.

Collaboration developed mainly in three directions:

In collaboration with the intelligence network created by TIGR, Čok and his collaborators were sending the British and the French much important information, which was not restricted to the Italian territory but, with the help of Slovenes from Carinthia, covered also Austria and South Germany.

Antifascist propaganda material was printed in Yugoslavia and distributed in Italy, Austria and South Germany.

10 As early as in 1920, the Slovene clergy restored their priesthood organisation – the *Zbor svečnikov Sv. Pavla* (Council of Priests of St. Paul; established first in 1899), which was coordinating and uniting the work of Slovene and Croatian priests in Italy in religious, national, cultural and other fields. The main mission of the Council of Priests of St. Paul was to preserve and strengthen the Slovene language, which proved to be a far-sighted decision as regards the broader Slovene national community which the Italians wanted to Italianise by force; when, at the end of the twenties, the Italian Fascist regime totally banned any Slovene legal activities, the activity of the Council of Priests of St. Paul continued in secrecy in churches and parishes. The Secret Christian Social Organisation operated parallel to it and it had a widespread network of trusted agents, as they were present almost in every village in Primorska. All the time, its activities and also other underground organisations in Primorska were sustained by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Pelikan, 2002).



For the British, the most important assignment of the Slovene collaborators was their engagement in sabotages on strategic targets in Italy and Austria as well as on the Danube-Balkan line, which was connecting an extremely important German economic area.

Slovenes from Primorska obtained a considerable amount of explosives and other material as well as propaganda materials to successfully carry out some significant actions against German railway communications in Slovene Carinthia and Austria even before Yugoslavia entered the War. We have already learnt these facts from a detailed survey by the historian Tone Ferenc (1977) and other publications. However, it is interesting that the FO confirmed them in their records during the war, especially when they were considering Dr. Čok, but they did not mention the details of those activities (PRO FO 371/33446 R 2682/35/92; FO 371/37629 R 230/230/92; R 1717/230/92; FO 371/37638A R 5325/2191/92; FO 371/67409 R 3557/108/92; FO 536/6, 3144C/5/43; 3144C/7/43; 3144C/8/43). These facts are evident also from Rudolf's legacy (ref. PAIR/4, 23/10/41; PAIR/4, beginning of January 1944) and other documents (e.g. PRO HS 7/4; HS 5/875, 20/11/41; HS 5/919, 13/8/42; compare with Biber, 1999, 146).

A year before the occupation of Yugoslavia, Germany and Italy instantly and decisively reacted to the sabotages, and German intelligence services tracked down some persons behind the actions. The Germans informed the Yugoslav government about the affair and they had to yield to the German demands to suppress and arrest the responsible. Therefore, Čok was arrested in Ljubljana on 7 July 1940 and was immediately locked up in Belgrade prison, but many others absconded. For example, Rudolf fled to Serbia. At the same time, minister Dragiša Cvetković had to abolish the UJKA intelligence service. But instead of sentencing them, or even handing them over to the Germans, they interned Čok in Arandjelovac and Mataruška Banja in Serbia. Likewise, the Italian secret fascist police OVRA (Opera vigilanza repressione antifascista) soon tracked down the TIGR organisation, and in March 1940 they started a series of arrests of important people and learnt many a thing in the hearings. Consequently, the notorious Trieste Trial took place from 1 to 14 December 1941, and experts believe that it meant a definite end to the TIGR organisation.

The arrests represented a destructive blow to the underground movement of Slovenes in Primorska, and then liberal progressive circles from central Slovenia came to the front. The British secret services, in fact, collaborated well not only with the Slovenes from Primorska; progressive circles of liberal orientation in Slovenia were organizing clandestine channels for refugees, intelligence networks, sabotages, diversions, secret radio stations and depots for arms in collaboration with

the French and especially with the British secret services as well. At the beginning of the Second World War, the atmosphere in Slovenia was quite in favour of the British. In general, British diplomats believed in the late thirties that Slovenes of different orientations (conservative and liberal) were on their side (Vodušek Starič, 2001a; Vodušek Starič, 2001b).

#### JUGOSLOVANSKI ODBOR IZ ITALIJE (YUGOSLAV COMMITTEE IN ITALY)

After the arrests and the occupation of Yugoslavia, those TIGR leaders who avoided arrest for the most part joined the Partisans, but some still collaborated with the British secret services. This was the case with Čok and Rudolf who continued their work outside Yugoslavia. They had fled from Yugoslavia into emigration before the occupation, with special tasks, which were consistent with the British secret services and the Jugoslovanski odbor iz Italije (Yugoslav Committee in Italy).

The Committee is not well enough known, and for this reason it is necessary to say a few words about it. In the literature, it was discussed mainly in a negative tone, as if, headed by Čok and Rudolf, it was too pro-monarchy and pro-Mihailović, and that its activities were in general harmful because they wanted to use the Yugoslav Army, which was supposed to be formed in exile, to restore the pre-war Yugoslavia and to praise the Partisans only for the sake of opportunism, etc. (e.g. Klun, 1976, 12, 640, 900; Klun, 1978, 86, 121-124; Klun, 1986, 79-81; Vilhar, Klun, 1967, 56, 153, 158, 159, 180, 182, 188, 189; Vilhar, Klun, 1970, 118-144, 160; Vilhar, Klun, 1973, 93, 94, 96, 245-253).

In fact, the Committee came into existence in Belgrade at the beginning of 1940 on the initiative of representatives of political organisations of Slovenes and Croats from Italy who agreed with the Union of Yugoslav Exiles from the Giulia Region to establish a parallel committee which would, in case the war entangled Yugoslavia, represent the interests of Slovenes and Croats from Primorska and Istria in exile. The Committee consisted of 24 members, of which half was active in the Giulia Region and the other half was in exile in Yugoslavia. They agreed that in case one group were prevented from operating, the other would be fully entitled to carry on with operations. Because of the above-mentioned arrests, the Committee lost the majority of its members in the Giulia Region, however, the remainder took the initiative and, on 8 February 1941, they elected Čok president with a mandate to lead a political campaign for unification of the Giulia Region with Yugoslavia. Namely, the Committee intended to assume the function of the Yugoslav Committee, which operated similarly during the First World War in exile with the purpose of joining Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in a united state. On the eve of occupation, the Yugoslav

Committee in Italy set itself the goal of carrying out the programme to the end and uniting Slovenes and Croats from the Giulia region with Yugoslavia (Kalc, 1996, 46, 47; Bajc, 2000b, 98-111; Rejec, 1998).

At that time, shortly before the occupation of Yugoslavia, a joint organisation of exiles in Belgrade set the Yugoslav Committee the task of bringing together volunteers in exile in order to establish a Primorska legion. This was agreed with the British, who promised to finance the legion but on condition that it would operate under their control (PAIR/4, 15/4/41; 18/4/41; 20/4/41; 22/5/41; beginning of January 1944; PAIR/Čok/1, 1/2/43). In addition, the members of the Committee agreed to cooperate conspiratorially in special assignments with the British to select candidates for SOE and ISLD. The Committee members, however, did not report this to the Yugoslav government and its military circles but to the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, Milan Gavrilović, who was himself in very close contact with SOE (PAIR/4, 15/4/41). According to reconstructions by OZNA/UDBA, general Bogoljub Ilić probably knew about these activities in addition to Rudolf and Čok (AS 1931/AOS, 328).

As the pressure of the Axis Forces on Yugoslavia was becoming ever stronger, it became clear that the country was also doomed to be drawn into the war, and Čok and Rudolf had to escape from Yugoslavia. On 5 March 1941, they broke away from their confinement in Serbia and three days later they arrived in Istanbul, where they remained until the first half of April. From there they went to Ankara and, on 1 May 1941, to Jerusalem where they met the Yugoslav government. In June or more probably in July they arrived in Cairo in Egypt (PAIR/4, 5/4/41; 15/4/41; 25/5/41; PAIR/8, 21/5/44; PAIR/Čok/1, 15/3/41). In their flight, they were assisted by British secret services. Their contemporaries – mostly political opponents – knew about this help, but they were not quite clear when Čok and Rudolf had left (ref. AS 1660/6/1/4, 5/4/1941; AS 1931/Furlan 9391, 9546; AS 1931/Furlan/XVII/3; AS 1931, AOS, 324; Arnež, 1997, 8; Snoj, 1998, 22/4/98; PAIR/Čok/1, 23/4/44). Before his departure, Čok informed the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the then president of Yugoslav government about the intentions of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy (PAIR/4, 18/4/41), and Rudolf explained to the leaders of the British Army that the purpose of his flight had been to continue his work in cooperation with ISLD (PAIR/4, beginning of January 1944).

During the War, Čok as president and Rudolf as secretary, in accordance with the objectives of the Committee, continued to convince the Allies of the need for unifying the Giulia Region with Yugoslavia after the War by extensive propaganda campaigns (radio speeches, the Committee's bulletin *Bazovica*, Čok's brochures, etc.). Most active in these activities was Čok who was in London and in the USA most of the time, where he was

meeting foreign diplomats and journalists and writing to chief representatives of the Allies, and the like. At that time, Rudolf was operating from the ME. In agreement with the Yugoslav government in exile and with the British Army, he was organizing gatherings of volunteers of Slovene nationality from the ranks of Italian prisoners of war (for the most part, these were Slovenes from Primorska, mobilized forcibly by Italy) to join the Yugoslav Army in exile. Most volunteers joined the King's guard battalion and some, as we shall see later, were especially trained by SOE and ISLD to take part in military missions to Yugoslavia.

By forming a military group, a sort of Primorska legion, the Yugoslav Committee strived to create a suitably prepared and motivated military unit, which could be used at the right moment and sent to Primorska to maintain the borders by force until international recognition. Such a plan is, however, not explicitly stated in the bulk of examined documentation, but the overall course of operation indicates that such a plan should have existed: i.e., Rudolf's task was to collect and train military units, and Čok would seek support of all anti-Hitler allies through political and propaganda means, which could be decisive at the right moment for the recognition of a new border.

At the beginning, the Yugoslav Committee in Italy was in favour of Mihailović and his Chetniks but gradually the Committee was getting nearer to the Partisan movement. In spite of this, Partisan leadership continued with their mistrust of Čok and Rudolf. At the end of 1943, the Committee experienced a crisis, since the majority of volunteers revolted because they did not want to serve the Yugoslav monarchy, and they crossed over to the Prekomorske brigade (Overseas Brigades) that went to fight in the occupied Yugoslavia on Tito's side.

#### SLOVENES FROM PRIMORSKA AND A SEARCH FOR CONNECTIONS WITH THE OCCUPIED YUGOSLAVIA

After the occupation of Yugoslavia, the SOE and ISLD organisations would have appreciated any information coming from the occupied territories, as well as on the part of Čok and Rudolf who arrived at the ME where, as mentioned above, there was the centre of British operations.

When, on 8 March 1941, Čok and Rudolf arrived in Istanbul, they immediately entered into contact with British officials (it is not clear whether they were members of MI6 or SOE). Rudolf gave them some interesting materials (PAIR/8, 21/5/44). We do not know, however, what kind of material that was, but it is worth mentioning in this connection that Rudolf had organized a breaking into the Italian Consulate in Ljubljana from where the members of TIGR took extensive documentation and handed it over to the Allies' intelligence serv-

ices (Rudolf, 1996, 54). Unfortunately, we do not have detailed information on this action.<sup>11</sup>

A letter received by Rudolf on 21 March 1941 from Albert Rejec which, among other things, contained also some information on the movements of German and Italian troops along the Yugoslav border, was of interest to the British secret services, too (PAIR/Čok/1, 15/3/41). Further messages of that kind would have been very welcome, but Rudolf's legacy indicates that communications with the occupied homeland were really poor. Evidently, even the members of Yugoslav Committee in Italy, who remained in Yugoslavia, did not have much opportunity to communicate with Čok and Rudolf, as they complained frequently in their mutual correspondence that they had had difficulties in establishing contacts with their homeland and with Rejec in particular. As regards Rejec, we know that he received a secret radio transmitter from the British before the occupation of Yugoslavia but he was not able to use it (Rejec, 1995, 36, 37). In spite of the fact that Rudolf and Čok did not succeed in communicating directly with their people who remained in Yugoslavia, they were very important to the British secret services for acquiring information and connections with the occupied territory.

Consequently, on 3 August 1941, the managing director of SOE in Cairo, Tom Masterson, received a message from an important collaborator, Hugh Seton-Watson saying that, in his long conversation with Čok, he obtained precious information and names that would help to establish communication with Yugoslavia. Čok also thought that Slovene radio transmissions had been very useful to a related organisation – SO1. Watson pointed out that Yugoslav government circles recommended transferring Čok to London and finally, he believed that Čok should have been given an utmost urgent priority as he was *"extremely useful both for SO1 and SO"* (PRO HS 5/874, 3/8/41; HS 7/219, 1314). The British intended to ask Čok whether he could get in touch with the organisation in Yugoslavia: *"Dr. Čok will probably have some bright ideas for getting into touch with his men..."* (PRO HS 5/965, 27/9/41).

Čok remained in the ME for a short time. He intended to continue his task of gaining political support for unification of the Giulia Region with Yugoslavia in London and he went there in July 1941. Before his departure, he had reached an agreement with colonel William Bailey that Rudolf would remain in Cairo at the disposal of SOE (PRO HS 5/875, 20/11/41), though Čok wished later that Rudolf had caught up with him in London (PRO HS 7/222, 1921; HS 5/875, 7/11/41; 15/11/41).

When SOE wanted to establish contacts with Slovenia, they first sent a special mission called "Henna" (No-

vember 1941 and January 1942), lead by a Slovene, Stanislav Rapotec. Numerous British documents reveal in what way Čok and Rudolf participated in this mission, Rudolf in particular, in planning of the mission (PRO HS 5/874, 23/10/41; 3/11/41; HS 5/875, 7/11/41; 15b/11/41; 20/11/41; 22/11/41; HS 5/905, 18/6/42; HS 7/219, 1375; HS 7/221, 1820; HS 7/222, 1921, 1958, 1990, 1991, 2116, 2117, 2062; compare Biber, 1991, 117.). This is evident also from their correspondence (PAIR/7, 3/9/41; PAIR/Čok/1, 20/10/41; 16/11/41; late autumn 1941; 4/4/42; PAIR/Čok/4, 30/8/41; 14/11/41; 17/3/42). One of the main objectives of the "Henna" mission (and some other missions planned by the end of summer 1942) was to restore the operation of Čok's organisation, i.e. the TIGR organisation or, as found in some documents, the *"Bertie and Blondie's organisation"* (organisation of Albert Rejec and Danilo Zelen, the leaders of TIGR, author's comment), which was, as mentioned above, in connection with the British intelligence before the War (PRO HS 5/894, 18/10/41; HS 5/896, 14/7/42; HS 5/877, 5/8/42; HS 5/919, 20/5/42; 13/8/42; HS 5/939, 15/7/42; HS 7/266, 103; Biber, 1979, 142). The plans to resume connections and the operations of TIGR failed because the majority of its members had already joined the Partisans, some, like Rejec, were out of reach during the War and Zelen fell in the first battle between Slovenes and the Italian occupier on 13 May 1941.

In Cairo, in October 1941, Rudolf despite everything received some news from Yugoslavia through Istanbul where a certain Fischer (there are few data on his identity) was in constant contact with Belgrade (PAIR/Čok/1, 14/10/41). Unfortunately, Fischer had to leave Istanbul soon. For this reason, Rudolf asked Čok to intercede with the finance minister to give him an assignment in Istanbul. The matter seemed urgent as there was a danger that Fischer might be sent to the USA where he would be useless, while in Istanbul there was no Slovene left since the other possible collaborator, Milan Prosen, had to go to Ankara. But in the Turkish capital, a certain "Fisherman" was active, who was not Slovene but who could, as Rudolf thought, do *"our jobs"* well (PAIR/Čok/1, 20/10/41). We can imagine what was meant by *"our jobs"* – connections with collaborators in occupied Yugoslavia. It is not clear, however, how these connections were realized.

At the beginning of December 1941 a message arrived in Cairo from Istanbul and it was handed also to Rudolf. The message talked about the political situation in the homeland, there was a mention of Chetnik and communist (Partisan, author's comment) resistance and that there was a split between them, but Slovenia was not mentioned. The message was not signed (PAIR/Čok/2, 1/12/41).

11 In reply to my question as to where that interesting information came from, S. Rudolf explained that he had been told about it by the late Rado Bordon (1915-1992).

Almost simultaneously with the preparation for the "Henna" mission, an "affair" happened in connection with Dr. Vinko Vrhunec. In November 1941, the leader of Slovene Liberals, Dr. Albert Kramer, sent him to Switzerland to establish a radio connection with London. Vrhunec left for Switzerland to get in contact with the Yugoslav government in exile in London on behalf of liberal circles. Supposedly, he had some information that, in the opinion of SOE, was very important to them. However, he had to return to Slovenia, where he was arrested and put in prison by the Italians. In London, therefore, only some initial messages about German denationalisation policy, shooting of hostages and the memorandum on Slovene national borders were received from Switzerland (e.g. AS 1931/AOS, 55, 294, 295; Vodušek Starič, 2001a, 73). The SOE documents prove, that Čok strongly expected the SOE to get into touch with Vrhunec. At the beginning of December 1941, Čok sent a coded message to Vrhunec and informed him that he would be contacted by someone and approached with the password "NICOLA". SOE sent a telegram to Bern in Switzerland with a message that a well-known Vinko Vrhunec had arrived from Slovenia and that in Bern exactly the password "NICOLA" should be used through the Yugoslav embassy. The next month, the SOE officials for the Balkans stated in their documents that Vrhunec was a friend of Čok's. Čok vouched for Vrhunec, claiming that he was very interested in getting in touch with him and, if it had been possible to get a certain meaningful memorandum, he would have sent him to London. In addition, Čok told a member of SOE, E.P.F. Boughey, that he had had every chance to get in touch with Vrhunec and that he would not have needed any assistance from the SOE organisation (PRO HS 5/875, 10a/12/41; 10b/12/41; 11/1/42).

In June 1942, SOE reported from Cairo that Rudolf had received a message, that Vrhunec had been arrested on his return from Switzerland and even that he had been shot. SOE had no doubt that Čok had been the one who informed Rudolf but it seemed that Vrhunec was still alive – for the Italians had arrested him and put him in prison. The cagueness about Vinko Vrhunec stirred a bit the British and the SOE in particular, as they were not getting information in time, and for that they blamed partly also Čok and Rudolf. In a few months, it eventually turned out and it was proved that Rudolf was an SOE collaborator, that Čok was in contact with them and that the accusations had been unfounded (PRO HS 5/913, 15a/6/42; 15b/6/41; 17/6/42; 19/6/42; 21/6/42; 11/8/42; 28/8/42). The Vrhunec affair had bearing also on the SOE intention to finally start the operations in Slovenia, where they had not succeeded till then. Also, the contacts with Rudolf and Čok served that purpose, i.e. to obtain relevant information on Slovenia with a view to resuming activities, which they wanted to achieve also with the abovementioned "Henna" mission

(PRO HS 5/913, 28/8/42; Biber, 1991, 117).

In March 1942, it became evident indirectly that Rudolf had known more about the backstage of establishing connection with the homeland (PAIR/Čok/4, 17/3/42), and the next year he even managed to get in touch with the homeland regularly (PAIR/Čok/4, 6/7/43). In fact, there is not proof that Rudolf had such a connection, but most certainly he had an insight into reports coming from Yugoslavia and Slovenia respectively, as on the night of 17 and 18 March 1943, the ISLD organisation managed to send their first double mission called "Equinox" to Primorska (three parachutists came to the Slovene Chetniks and three parachutists to the Slovene Partisans). We should mention here, of course, that those members of the mission who came to the Partisans proposed, during their hearing by the Partisan security service VOS, that the Partisans should have given them directives and messages to be transmitted by radio to Rudolf in Cairo (Škerl, 1978, 343; MLA/1995/10, 236).

Let us also quote what Rudolf communicated to Drago Marušič about Albert Rejec in May 1941: "*Berti* (Albert Rejec, author's comment) *se je javil pred poldrugim letom po neki misteriozni poti ne da bi navedel, kje biva in kaj dela. Prosil je za pomoč, ki mu je pa nismo mogli nuditi, ker nismo vedeli kam naj jo pošljemo.*" ["Berti sent a word a year and a half ago through a mysterious channel and he never mentioned where he stayed and what he had been undertaking. He asked for help which we could not provide because we did not know where to send it to"] (PAIR/Čok/1, 21/5/44).

From the abovementioned situations, it becomes clear that Rudolf and Čok's communication with the occupied Yugoslavia was quite trying. In general, the news from Yugoslavia was contradictory and misleading, as was the case, for example, with information the British received from their first missions (e.g. Bill Hudson's "Bullseye" mission in September 1941, "Henna" mission, etc.). They were aware at the SOE that their information, in particular on Slovenia and Croatia, was deficient, so they were looking for their information anywhere. They considered important and welcome the information obtained at hearings of Slovene prisoners of war who arrived in the Near East. Several Yugoslav prisoners of war were heard by Rudolf who not only knew the language but also the places from where those men came. He learnt many things from them, but the information could not be checked, and for this reason, the Partisan movement and its activities in Slovenia were attributed frequently to Slovene Chetniks (PRO HS 5/919, 9a/12/42; 9b/12/42; 11/12/42). Rudolf helped the British as an interpreter and a teacher of Slovene language to some British officers. In fact, he was called at least once a day to report at SOE, the Yugoslav Army headquarters and sometimes also at the Yugoslav Embassy in Cairo. Rudolf complained, because he had to cover all his travel expenses. The Embassy was always

evading this matter, claiming that London should have taken care of financial covering. Rudolf asked Čok many times to intervene in London with regard to such and other financial matters related to propaganda (e.g. PAIR/Čok/1, 16/11/41). In October 1942, the SOE wrote very favourably about Rudolf, among other things, that he had managed to remain politically neutral in spite of numerous intrigues in the Yugoslav government and Army. They knew also about his cooperation with James Miller who was in charge of the MI6 and ISLD services there (PRO HS 7/267, 317, 318; HS 7/230, 3517). Rudolf himself informed Čok that he had established close contacts with British Captain M (Miller, author's comment), who had given him his connection with London at his disposal, so he believed that their correspondence would be easier. However, until then, Rudolf had received only two letters from Čok, while Rudolf sent many letters but he was not certain whether Čok had received them all (PAIR/Čok/1, 28/2/42).

In 1942 and 1943, SOE wanted to enhance their operations in Slovenia and for that reason they tried to coordinate MI6 activities. In view of their (more or less successful) attempts, they intended to maintain close relations with Rudolf and send a message to a safe address in Ljubljana through MI6, directing them to gather a group to be trained and sent to Istanbul and then back to Slovenia. This was never realized, as there was no consensus as to whether Čok should participate in that operation (Biber, 1983, 502). In May 1942, SOE asked Rudolf how to infiltrate their informants into Slovenia. Rudolf had already selected two Slovene candidates from SOE (Stanislav Simčič and Alojz Černigoj), but the mission was never sent because they did not have an adequate airplane to drop both candidates (PRO HS 5/919, 20/5/42; HS 5/905, 22a/5/42; 22b/5/42; 25/5/42; 28/5/42; 1/6/42; 16/6/42; PAIR/Čok/1, 4/4/42; 7/4/42; Biber, 1999, 150, 151). In May 1942, Rudolf informed Čok that a new group had been prepared to be sent on mission and that there had been some initiatives, without the knowledge of the Yugoslav government in exile, to finally send a mission to Slovenia (PAIR/Čok/1, 23/5/42).

Let us also mention here that SOE hoped to re-establish their connections with Carinthia (and Styria), where already before the occupation of Yugoslavia, as earlier mentioned, an organized group of Slovenes (TIGR and similar organisations) managed to carry out some important sabotage actions. After the occupation of Yugoslavia it appeared for some time that Rudolf could provide the required candidates, but in April 1942 it became clear that he had not managed to get any suitable candidates among the Slovenes in Cairo. For that reason, he tried to find them among the soldiers of the Yugoslav battalion where Slovenes were in the majority. SOE in London did send a certain number of Austrians for training as radio operators and saboteurs,

but soon they gave up their plan for an indefinite period because they doubted in its success. However, SOE still considered the Slovene organisation, headed by Rudolf, as indispensable with regard to the infiltration of trained agents to Austria (PRO HS 7/233, 4069-4071). When in the end of November 1942, Bailey was planning his visit to Mihailović, he met with Rudolf who was very keen on a plan to send three or four Slovenes from Primorska to Mihailović's headquarters, from where they would proceed to Slovenia, providing that Mihailović had reliable and regular channels with Slovenia. It seems that the plan failed completely (Biber, 1983, 503).

The attempts of SOE and ISLD to send their missions to Slovenia dragged on until spring 1943, when the ISLD organisation managed to send their first mission to Slovenia. The most suitable people for the first "reconnoitring" missions to Slovenia were Slovene men selected by Rudolf. Both ISLD and SOE expected his assistance in the selection of suitable parachutists for the first mission to Slovenia. Let us examine, how the selection of volunteers was carried out.

#### SELECTION OF SLOVENE VOLUNTEERS FOR SOE AND ISLD

As already said, Rudolf was organizing the selection of volunteers, and also did the selection himself, from prisoner-of-war camps for the Yugoslav Army on behalf of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy. He was successful, although the expectations were a bit higher. From amongst those volunteers for the Yugoslav Army, SOE and ISLD selected most of the Slovene members of their missions.

While the first attempts at volunteer recruiting for the liberation of Yugoslavia by Yugoslavs in USA and Canada failed, the members of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy had good results in the ME and in Africa in particular (Palestine, Alexandria, Genejfa, Suez, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia). A close collaborator of Rudolf's and a member of the Committee, Dr. Miran Rybář, went even to India but he did not get many volunteers there. We do not have an exact number of the volunteers gathered, but if we compare the data in archives examined, we can estimate that there were from 4,000 to 4,500 volunteers of Slovene and Croatian nationality recruited for the Yugoslav Army.

SOE and ISLD provided great help in collecting volunteers (e.g. PAIR/8, 21/5/44; AS 1931/AOS, 182, 183; PRO HS 5/904, March 1942) while the members of the Yugoslav government were causing troubles. The relations between the Yugoslav Army, the Government and the Yugoslav Committee in Italy were always tense and never completely transparent.

Obviously, the collaboration of Rudolf, Čok and the others with the British secret services did not suit everybody. Thus, it is evident from some post-war recon-

structions prepared by OZNA/UDBA that Rudolf and Rybář were in constant contact with a representative of SOE, John Bennet, and a representative of ISLD, James Miller. The head of the Yugoslav intelligence service, major Milovan Glogorijević, even protested about that to Bennet and Miller – as though Rudolf and Milan Rybář had not been authorized – but nothing changed (AS 1931/Furlan, 7495). In spite of that, according to Rudolf's observations, the representatives of SOE in Cairo were becoming more reserved by the end of October 1941, especially Masterson and Bennet, who were not supposed to do anything without prior consultation with the representatives of the Yugoslav government. That hindered the activities, which the Committee wished to accelerate as much as possible (PAIR/Čok/1, 20/10/41).

For this reason, Rudolf relied more on the assistance of ISLD with which he collaborated more intensively anyway. For example, Rudolf proposed to the Yugoslav command that they should decorate four British officers who had already and could have also further helped in the military and political way in the recruitment of volunteers. Those were the chief commander of prisoner-of-war camps, colonel R. Venables, a member of ISLD and the head Office, captain J.B. Millar, a commander of prisoner-of-war camp No. 308, lieutenant G. Salapata and a member of ISLD and the Head Office, lieutenant D. L. Clarke (PAIR/4, 28/12/42). It is evident that ISLD often offered help to Rudolf and the Committee, and it is interesting in this connection that in the Christmas season Rudolf received a letter of thanks, though signed illegibly, from a Britisher because he had presented certain officers with some Chianti red wine. The letter praised Rudolf and his other fellow countryman for always being good collaborators (PAIR/Čok/1, 22/12/42). Probably, ISLD helped Rudolf and Rybář also financially as it seems that the Yugoslav government in exile was of little assistance in that matter.

From among the collected volunteers, SOE and ISLD then selected some especially for their missions. They were supplemented by those selected in London by representatives of the strongest pre-war Slovene party, the Slovenska ljudska stranka (Slovene People's Party), which was in political opposition to Rudolf and Čok in particular, because he was a liberal. It should be pointed out that the politicians of the Slovene People's Party in general had a negative attitude towards some liberals, especially Čok, because they reproached him with stubbornness, collaboration with the British secret services and freemasonry.

As early as on 19 August 1941, there was a special school established in Haifa, Palestine, more precisely, in a monastery on the Mount Carmel, for the needs of SOE. The school was called Special Training Centre 102. According to English sources, Section B1, i.e. the SOE for Yugoslavia, managed to send candidates for Slovenia

and Serbia only in March 1943 (PRO HS 7/219, 1387; HS 7/220, 1475, 1476; HS 5/874, 22/9/41; HS 5/908, 30/3/43; compare AS 1931/AOS, 331). However, according to the memory of Slovene members of SOE, they were sent there already at the end of 1941 (MLA/1995/5-6, 113; MLA/1998/4, 99). Most likely the Centre was officially managed by ISLD until March 1943, and SOE only took part in it.

In December 1941, SOE started to collect volunteers for the Yugoslav King's Battalion in Agama by Alexandria where the volunteers that the Yugoslav Committee in Italy had helped collect were stationed. They advised them to go to Yugoslavia and join the guerrillas there. The invitation was first meant for Yugoslav officers, but their response was weak as only two of them volunteered. Later, almost all non-commissioned officers responded to the call: 33 soldiers and non-commissioned officers reported from various units but because they were too many, only some of them were selected. Amongst the Slovenes, seven entered in SOE training: Ivo Božič, Alojz Černigoj, Valter Gorjanc, Stanko Simčič, Cvetko Šuligoj, Marjan Fegec in Anton Zupan (MLA/1995/5-6, 112; MLA/1997/7, 136; MLA/2000/5, 119). All but Zupan were from Primorska.

In April 1942, ISLD formed its first group of Slovenes in Cairo. The following ten were then sent on a mission: Josip Dolenc-Pepi, Miroslav Križmančič, Radoslav Semolič, Nikolaj Sever-Jug, Vencelj Ferjančič-Adam, Anton Božnar-Blaž, Bojan (Bogomir) Koler-Rejc later called Čtomir, Alojz Sivec, Leopold Širca and Ivan Paron (MLA/1997/2-3, 56, 57). Except Božnar, they were also all from Primorska. We could add also Rado Teslič (MLA/1995/1, 9; AS 1931/AOS, 332), but we do not know yet whether the ISLD used him on a mission.

In January 1943, the ISLD formed the second group of Slovenes in Cairo. Three of them were sent on a mission. They were: Franc Vidrih Mali later called Lozej, Miloš Adamič and Alojz Knez (MLA/1997/2-3, 57). The first two were from Primorska, while Knez was from Carinthia and before the War he had collaborated with TIGR.

At the end of March 1943, the SOE in Cairo was satisfied with the training of recruits for missions to Yugoslavia (PRO HS 5/919, 31/3/43).

In September 1943, ISLD moved to Bari where its official name was changed to N. 11(U) Section and there they formed the third group of Slovenes. Seven were then sent on missions. They were: Ciril Kobal-Bevk alias Yane, Andrej Škerjanc-Likon, Milan Golob-Čok, Ivan Volarič-Potočnik, Milan Boštjančič-Benko alias Mirko Debeljak, Ivan Mikuž-Vremec and Zvonko alias Zvonimir Jelen-Anton (MLA/1997/2-3, 57). All but Jelen were from Primorska.

By the beginning of 1944, the Yugoslav Committee in Italy had 14 people at the disposal of ISLD (PAIR/4, beginning of January 1944) and the British sent most of

them on missions. It seems that from then on the Committee stopped recruiting new volunteers for British special missions.

According to the information available, at least 21 selected and trained Slovene volunteers took part in special operations in the framework of ISLD and at least seven in the framework of SOE. Besides them there were also some other Slovenes but we do not know with certainty where they were recruited and trained – most probably in Canada and England. Therefore, the total number of Slovenes who were members of British missions was approximately 35. The majority was selected with the assistance of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy.

As mentioned earlier, SOE and ISLD had problems in the beginning due to the lack of suitable candidates for special operations. The shortage was partly caused also by their quality. Namely, SOE and ISLD needed only such collaborators who would know the languages of the places where they were sent on a mission: they had to be familiar with political and economic circumstances in the occupied territory, they had to be generally well-trained and prepared to take risks, they had to be courageous, ingenious, motivated, intelligent and broadly educated. It was desirable that the candidates were unmarried, or at least that their wives and children were not in the territories controlled by the Axis Powers (e.g. PRO HS 6/888, 29/11/41; 3/12/41; HS 7/224, 2401, 2402; HS 5/877, 23/11/42; HS 5/907, 23/12/42; AS 1931/ AOS, 328, 329; Stafford, 2000, 177; Vidic, 1989, 43-45).

A majority of Slovene volunteers who were selected for special operations and underwent the required courses demonstrated great abilities. Thus, in February 1943, Rudolf suggested to the commander of Yugoslav Army in the ME that he promote some of those who had passed the courses. By their names we know that they were ISLD members: Josip Dolenc, Radoslav Semolič, Miroslav Križmančič, Venceslav Ferjančič, Alojz Sivec, Alojz Širca (PAIR/4, 1/2/43). Other Slovenes in ISLD and those who worked for SOE also proved themselves. Descriptions of their characters (who worked for SOE) and main qualities are preserved in short personal dossiers and other reports, which the leaders of special operations prepared when planning the missions because they wanted to make sure that they were sending off really suitable and trained parachutists. For example, in these dossiers we can read such characteristics as that a candidate was a skilled radio operator (for the wireless telegraphy) and trained in parachuting or that he was well-trained for sabotage and in addition we can also find some appreciative remarks with regard to their

abilities to use weapons, drive large motor vehicles, knowledge of topography and the like. Slovenes were especially interesting because they knew the languages and places to where they were intended to be sent; not insignificant were also the remarks on their physical preparedness as well as on their intelligence, general adaptability, etc. The fact that SOE and ISLD were sending the trained candidates mainly on the missions to Primorska, which they knew best, is also significant (ref. PRO HS 5/917; HS 5/919, 9/12/42; HS 5/920, 2/7/43; MLA/2000/5, 118, 119).

The popularity that Rudolf enjoyed among Slovene volunteers was another important factor. In published memoirs and evidence (MLA) of Slovene volunteers to ISLD and SOE, we can notice a very respectful attitude towards him. They showed esteem for him also publicly (e.g. Rudolf, 1996, 64-67; Cenčič, 1997, 267-269; MLA/2002, 16). They had every confidence in him also because of his efforts in editing a newspaper with the significant title of *Bazovica*.<sup>12</sup> The paper, which was published in Cairo as a bulletin of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy from 30 September 1941 to 19 November 1944 in 135 issues, was at last a chance for many volunteers to be able to read in the Slovene language after Fascism had banned the use of Slovene language in Primorska. The evidence indicates that frequently Slovene soldiers reached for volumes of a review entitled *Štorska knjižica*. It was edited by Rudolf as well, between 1942 and 1945, when a total of 23 issues were published.

In addition, Rudolf always strived to improve the living conditions of volunteers. At the end of 1942 he intervened with the Yugoslav colonel Miodrag Rakić and succeeded in ensuring that they were given more food and some cigarettes, and the Yugoslav Red Cross supplied them with underwear, soap, marmalade, honey, etc. In his talks with the commander of Yugoslav troops in the ME he ensured that the volunteers were given some pay and better food. In a new assembly camp at El Tahag, he agreed with the commander there, among other things, that a priest, Jozafat Ambrožič, would say mass every Sunday. Such a status of volunteers that ensured better conditions terminated on 30 November 1942 (PAIR/4, 8/12/42; PAIR/Čok/1, 1/2/43) when the Yugoslav Army became increasingly opposed to Rudolf.

The relations were strained even more the following year. Thus, on 27 August 1943, general Peter Živković banned any further collection of volunteers without any prior consultation with the Committee. Rudolf informed the British Army Headquarters about that and severed

12 Bazovica lies to the north-east of Trieste. In September 1930, four Slovenes were shot there. They were members of the Trieste branch of the TIGR secret organisation, which was called Borba. They were sentenced by fascist Special Court for Defence of the State (Tribunale speciale per la difesa dello Stato) for their terrorist activities. For Slovenes, Bazovica has been since a deeply felt symbol of struggle for their rights.

relations with the Yugoslav command. Moreover, Rudolf reported to one of the leaders of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy who remained in Yugoslavia, Dr. Drago Marušič, that the Yugoslav command, in addition their prohibitions, were providing the British with false statements. Rudolf claimed that the British had not believed this because he had received many letters of thanks from various British commands. The examined archives, however, did not contain these letters, but it holds true that Rudolf went to collect volunteers again in Algeria and Tunisia and that time with the explicit purpose of including them in British special operations. It is most probable that the British supported him in spite of the criticisms from the representative of the Yugoslav Army (PAIR/4, beginning of January 1944; PAIR/8, 21/5/44, AS 1931/Furlan, 7341).

The recruitment of volunteers continued for some more months, but the disagreement between the Yugoslav Committee in Italy and the Yugoslav Army was getting ever more serious. At the end of 1943, it led to a crisis amongst the volunteers themselves, who then mostly joined the Overseas Brigades. At that time, the Yugoslav Committee in Italy was in a critical situation. Čok and Rudolf in particular were criticised by both sides – the Chetnik-oriented Yugoslav government and the Partisan propaganda. In addition, the support of British secret services ran out considerably.

### SLOVENES IN SOE AND ISLD MISSIONS<sup>13</sup>

It remains to give a short review of SOE and ISLD missions in Slovenia. Not all SOE and ISLD missions and official military missions are mentioned in this paper, but only those in which Slovenes participated. In the beginning, the role of Slovene members in the missions was mainly of a "reconnoitring" nature, as it was important to the British to form the first connections in the field and for which Slovene parachutists were suitable. They were useful also in the very delicate job of transmitting and receiving messages through radio, and others were active as saboteurs and they passed their knowledge on Partisans. Because they knew languages, they were frequently used as interpreters.

After several attempts by the SOE organisation to send a mission also to Slovenia in 1942 and 1943 (in that period SOE managed to send missions to other parts of Yugoslavia) they were overtaken by ISLD, who on the night of 17 and 18 March 1943 dropped on Slovenia their first mission "Equinox". The mission consisted of two groups of three men. The members of the first group who went to the Slovene Chetniks were Anton Božnar, Vencelj Ferjančič and Bojan Koler. In the second group, which joined the Partisans, there were Miroslav

Križmančič, Radoslav Semolič and Nikolaj Sever. With the help of this mission, on the night of 20 and 21 June 1943, the first Allies aid consignment managed to reach Slovene territory, that is the Partisans in Primorska.

On the night of 17 and 18 July 1943, the SOE finally managed to send their first mission to Slovenia, that is, to Primorska. This was a mission named "Livingstone I", consisting of Stanko Simčič and Ivo Božič. They were accompanied by two members of ISLD, Zdravko Lenščak, who was the chief of the whole mission, and Alojz Sivec.

On 17 August 1943, three SOE parachutists – Valter Gorjanc, Alojz Černigoj and Cvetko Šuligoj – landed in the surroundings of Nanos mountain, on the Javornik plateau near Col in Primorska. The mission was called "Tennyson". ISLD sent along two Slovenes, Leopold Širca and Franc Vidrih. Later on, the mission became a part of the "Livingstone II" mission and at the end of September 1943, the whole operation was named "Crayon".

On 18 September 1943, the ISLD sent a new mission to Slovenia, consisting of two men – Miloš Adamič and Alojz Knez – who landed above Čepovan in Primorska. The mission can be traced in SOE documents under the name "Livingstone", and it is very difficult to distinguish it from other SOE missions with the same name. A possible explanation could be that by then there was considerable cooperation between ISLD and SOE.

SOE planned to send another five missions to Slovenia in October 1943 but only one was actually carried out, on 2 October, when captain Davies and Marjan Fegec, in the framework of the "Flotsam I" mission, landed near the Hrib village in Notranjska.

In late February 1944, ISLD sent a radio operator Ciril Kobal by ship from Bari via Vis and Dugi otok, where he became a radio operator at the headquarters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maritime Littoral Sector.

On 10 May 1944, the ISLD parachuted their mission "Bordeaux" to the IX Corps at Dol pri Čepovanu in Primorska. The group consisted of Major Nigel Watson who remained the chief of the mission until November 1944, and Josip Dolenc, who became an interpreter with the IX Corps. Another radio operator, Sergeant Marlow joined them later. On 9 June 1944, Ivan Mikuž reached the IX Corps and he became a radio operator of the Allies mission there.

On the night of 9 and 10 June 1944, Major Woods and Corporal Collins arrived at Čepovan in Primorska, accompanied by two Slovenes from Primorska who were sent by the ISLD. They were an instructor Zvonko Jelen and a radio operator Ivan Mikuž.

At the end of June 1944, the ISLD sent radio operators Milan Golob and Ivan Volarič from Bari by ship via

13 Besides the stated, most data can be obtained in: PRO HS 5/908; HS 5/910; HS 5/911; AS 1931/AVM; Biber 1983; Biber, 1991; MLA; Vidic, 1989.



Vis and Dugi otok to Istria. Milan Boštjančič was sent by submarine and he got ashore in Istria where he joined the headquarters of the Istrian Partisan Detachment. Some days before July 1944, the ISLD sent another Slovene radio operator, Andrej Škerjanc-Likon, from Bari to the units of the 4<sup>th</sup> Yugoslav Army in Dalmatia. Those were the last British missions including Slovene members. Later, the British were sending only their own people, but some Slovene parachutists, who were in the field earlier, continued to collaborate with them for some time.

### CONCLUSIONS

Slovenes from Primorska had been collaborating with British secret services already before the attack by the Axis Powers on Yugoslavia and they continued their work after the occupation. Most active were the leading members of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy (its principal mission was the unification of the entire Primorska with Yugoslavia, as after the First World War the whole of Primorska was under Italy, which treated Slovenes there really badly) who operated in exile during the War – Dr. Ivan Marija Čok, Prof. Ivan Rudolf, Dr. Miran Rybář and some young men from Primorska, who were mobilised forcibly into the Italian Army and later captured by the British and trained for special SOE and ISLD missions.

The collaboration of these Slovenes from Primorska with the SOE and ISLD was very important because these two British secret services for special operations had considerable problems at the beginning of the occupation of Yugoslavia in restoring the operations of secret and intelligence service posts there and with despatching their special missions, through which they were supposed to stimulate and coordinate the resistance movement.

Before the occupation of Yugoslavia, Čok and Rudolf had agreed with the British secret services, within the scope of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy, to collaborate

with them during the War and so the British had helped them, preventively, to go into exile on 5 March 1942, and to flee to the Middle East. Their collaboration entailed mainly the establishment of connections with, and gathering of information from the occupied Yugoslavia, as well as the collection of suitable Slovene men from prisoner-of-war camps to be trained and sent on special missions to the occupied territory.

In Africa, the collection of volunteers and their training and motivating (the role of the *Bazovica* newspaper is significant here) was performed mainly by Rudolf, while Rybář was collecting them also in India. In that period, Čok was in charge of the political side of the operations of the Yugoslav Committee in Italy, particularly in London and the USA, where he intervened frequently in order to improve the conditions of recruiting volunteers in prisoner-of-war camps.

Of all selected and trained volunteers, at least 22 were assigned for special operations within the ISLD and at least seven within the SOE. There were some other Slovenes beside them but we do not know with certainty where they came from and where they were trained – most probably in Canada or England. Therefore, the total number of Slovenes who took part in British missions is approximately 35, and most of them were selected by the Yugoslav Committee in Italy. From spring 1943 on, the British were sending them to Yugoslavia, mainly to the Slovene territory and for the most part to Primorska. In the beginning, their role was of a more "reconnoitring" nature, as it was very important to the British to establish first connections in the field, for which the Slovene parachutists were most suitable. They were also very useful in the very delicate activity of transmitting and receiving messages through radio transmitters, some of them acted as saboteurs and they passed their knowledge over to the Partisans. Because of their knowledge of languages they were often employed as interpreters. The Allies came to know better the real situation in the occupied territories also through Slovene members of their missions.

## SODELOVANJE SLOVENCEV PRIMORSKE S SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE IN INTER-SERVICES LIAISON DEPARTMENT PO ZASEDBI JUGOSLAVIJE (6. APRIL 1941)

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## POVZETEK

*Nekateri primorski Slovenci so z britanskimi obveščevalnimi in tajnimi službami, s Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD), sodelovali že pred napadom sil osi na Jugoslavijo, in sicer v boju proti nacistični Nemčiji in proti fašistični Italiji, in so to nadaljevali tudi po okupaciji. Zlasti aktivni so bili vodilni člani Jugoslovanskega odbora iz Italije. Ta odbor je imel prvenstveno nalogo delovati za priključitev celotne Primorske k Jugoslaviji, ki je bila po prvi svetovni vojni v celoti pod Italijo. Med vojno so v emigraciji delovali dr. Ivan Marija Čok, prof. Ivan Rudolf in dr. Miran Rybář ter nekateri mladi primorski fantje, ki so bili prisilno mobilizirani v italijansko vojsko in so jih Britanci ujeli.*

*Čok in Rudolf sta bila v okviru Jugoslovanskega odbora iz Italije pred zasedbo Jugoslavije domenjena z britanskimi obveščevalnimi in tajnimi službami, da bosta med vojno sodelovala, zato sta tudi z njihovo pomočjo dne 5. marca 1941 preventivno zbežala in se zatekla na Bližnji vzhod. To sodelovanje se je nato med vojno kazalo pri iskanju zvez in informacij z zasedeno Jugoslavijo ter pri zbiranju primernih Slovencev po ujetništvih, ki so jih SOE in ISLD izurili in poslali s posebnimi misijami v Jugoslavijo.*

*Zbiranje prostovoljcev kot tudi njihovo urjenje in spodbujanje je večinoma po Afriki opravljal Rudolf, Rybář pa jih je zbiral tudi po Indiji. Čok je medtem skrbel za politično plat delovanja Jugoslovanskega odbora iz Italije, zlasti v Londonu in ZDA, kjer je večkrat posredoval za izboljšanje razmer iskanja po taboriščih.*

*Od vseh izbranih in izvežbanih prostovoljcev jih je vsaj 22 odšlo v posebne operacije v sklopu ISLD in vsaj 7 v sklopu SOE. Poleg teh so bili še nekateri drugi Slovenci, za katere pa še ni povsem jasno, kje so jih dobili in izurili, najverjetneje v Kanadi ali Angliji. Skupno število Slovencev, ki so bili člani britanskih misij, je bilo približno 35 in večino izmed njih je zbral Jugoslovanski odbor iz Italije. Britanci so jih od spomladi 1943 dalje poslali v Jugoslavijo, predvsem na slovensko ozemlje, še največ ravno na Primorsko.*

**Ključne besede:** SOE, ISLD, vojaške misije, Slovenija, Jugoslavija, druga svetovna vojna, Ivan Rudolf, Ivan Marija Čok, TIGR

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