

## PARTISAN WARFARE IN THE BILINGUAL REGION OF CARINTHIA

Thomas M. Barker

### Sources and Introduction

The story of the Carinthian Slovene Partisans, which the writer treated only cursorily in an earlier publication,<sup>1</sup> surely deserves the closer attention of scholars. There are two reasons for this: first, armed resistance to Nazi tyranny has taken on great symbolical importance for Carinthia's national minority; second, fresh materials are available.<sup>2</sup>

Two monographic studies deserve special mention, those by Rausch and Strle. The former provides the best evenemental account but curiously conveys the impression that Carinthia's guerrilla struggle was an alien, Yugoslav importation. Strle, however useful, is also politically predisposed and fails to examine various still sensitive issues.<sup>3</sup> Within a second category of materials memoirs stand out, and two are especially important: Prušnik-Gašper's *Gamsi na plazu* and the recollections of Helena Kuchar. While his memory is highly selective, Prušnik-Gašper is an indispensable source not only for the facts, but also for understanding the social roots, nationalist orientation, political ideology, and genuinely indigenous character of Carinthia's "little war." Kuchar's recollections are equally helpful.<sup>4</sup>

As far as documentary sources are concerned, it is still too early (because of the 50-year time lapse rule) to probe the surviving records in the *Landesarchiv* in Klagenfurt/Celovec. Great Britain is however another matter: rich evidence is available in London's Public Record Office. Fortunately, also, Sir Peter Wilkinson, the now-retired British Army officer and ex-Special Operations Executive [SOE] functionary who sent supplies to the Carinthian Slovenes at a time when this probably ensured the survival of opposition to the Nazis, is active in historical research, and has provided researchers with new information.<sup>5</sup>

It should be made clear at the outset that if Rausch, perhaps unintentionally, overemphasizes the Yugoslav Slovene role, the relationships between the heartland and the marginal regions were determinative, and that Nazi power in Carinthia would not have been imperilled without the appearance in Slovenia proper of both the multiparty, ultimately Communist-dominated Liberation Front or *Osvobodilna fronta* [henceforward, OF] and the Slovene National Liberation Army [henceforward, SNLA]. Unlike the Yugoslav National Liberation Army [YNLA] which arose to fight the Axis forces further South and with which it soon became associated, the SNLA never evolved into a genuine regular host, capable of engaging in prolonged frontal action; in spite of its name, it remained a guerrilla body until VE-Day.<sup>6</sup>

### Background: Geographical, Historical, Social and Military Factors.

The Carinthia with which we are dealing cannot be restricted to the borders of 1919-1941: it must be thought of as including the Meža valley and Jezersko/Seeberg, plus—on practical grounds—the adjoining salient of the Logar and upper Savinja valleys in Lower Styria. To seek to differentiate among lands so unitary in terms of topography, history, and social and ethnic structure, is misleading. Conversely, while Upper Carniola also belonged to the *Reichsgau Kärnten*, what happened in the northwestern Sava valley should probably be treated within the parameters of a study about the whole of Slovenia. This seems

appropriate although Upper Carniola provided the geographical platform for mounting opposition to the Nazis in the zone along the northern side of the old border.<sup>7</sup>

In starting with the German conquest of Serbian-led Yugoslavia we must not overlook earlier indications, however exiguous, of a negative Carinthian Slovene reaction to Hitler, namely the decision of a few youths—especially from Sele/Zell—to vote with their feet against the Anschluss, cross the Karavanke/Karawanken boundary, and thus escape service in the Wehrmacht. In late 1941, under completely changed circumstances, some of them joined the Carniolan partisans. Others—perhaps a majority—returned to their homeland; lurking in the woods, they became known as the “Green Cadres” and managed to hold out until the opportunity arose to link up with guerrilla groups being organized under Yugoslav Slovene sponsorship.<sup>8</sup>

Admittedly, the initial Carinthian Slovene response to the Nazi takeover was dissimulation. Although the minority’s scant existing rights were gradually abrogated, it sought to make the best of things, even after the fall of Yugoslavia and the imposition of yet harsher measures. The turning-point came on 14-15 April 1942, when 178 Slovene families were torn from their homes and deported to work camps in the “Old” Reich—a complex set of circumstances that is closely tied to the expulsion of some 50,000 Slovenes from Upper Carniola and Slovene Styria, which cannot be adumbrated here. This so-called *Aussiedlung/izselitev*—another 100 families were later uprooted individually, some for assisting the partisans—can be said to have had a dual effect. On the one hand the action deprived the incipient partisan movement of what would have been invaluable logistical and human resources. On the other, the indignation aroused among the somewhat placid clerically-oriented Slovenes created a psychological climate propitious to the incitement of political and military resistance.

Let us now describe the social matrix of the ensuing partisan warfare. While the immensely influential theories of Mao Tse Tung were not yet well-known in the West, the intellectually sophisticated Slovene Communist leadership understood the cardinal principle that guerrillas should be like fish swimming in the sea. A successful national liberation struggle requires strong political commitment deriving from an ideological indoctrination that exploits a sense of social injustice. Thus we may well ask: who were the Carinthian Slovenes in question? Prušnik-Gašper’s and Jelka’s memoirs highlight the basically rural-proletarian provenance of the tough, indigenous core of the partisan movement and the OF. They were hard-scrabble, often self-taught mountain peasants, impoverished cottagers, lumberjacks, herdsmen, and workers in the few regional industrial enterprises. Many, probably most, were victims of the economic dislocations of the First Austrian Republic and the Great Depression, though standards of life had improved slightly as a result of heavy capital investment after the Anschluss. Prušnik-Gašper’s choice of words, the ancient cry “Za staro pravdo,” is an echo of centuries of peasant protest against seignorial abuses. The spite that he felt for the Clerical-Fascist, later Nazi-allied Counts of Thurn-Valsassina-Como-Vercelli seems to have been exceeded only by his hatred for the comital gamekeepers, with whom the partisans later settled scores.

Of course, such intense hostility was not merely a manifestation of outrage over gross material inequality and deprivation. Hill-country Slovenes who had experienced little or no upward mobility and were untouched by the process of embourgeoisement somehow linked their grinding poverty, in a dynamic sociopsychological process, with their maternal speech and cultural heritage, with their folklore, song, and dance. Consciousness of membership in an underclass and fierce resentment over the denigration of their ethnic character<sup>9</sup> coalesced and created the preconditions, in the face of Nazi excesses and clever

Communist agitprop, for resorting to a violent solution to their dilemma—with salvation to be attained by the unification of all Slovenes into one state as part of a new federative Yugoslavia.

What about the other, numerically much superior side, i.e., the bulk of Carinthians who continued either to support the Nazi order or at least not to lift a finger against it, even after the initial period of prosperity had passed and the strains of war were all too evident? The inordinate strength of German nationalism and of National Socialism in Carinthia is an historiographically accepted fact. One cannot of course say that no German-speaking Carinthians detested Nazism: morally earnest Catholics, idealistic Socialists, and Communists on occasion aided the partisans and paid a blood toll to the Gestapo. The scholarly consensus however has been that resistance from these quarters, as with Hitler's Austrian opponents in general, was basically weak and ineffectual.

These circumstances explain the more or less successful Nazi counterinsurgency effort. Himmler's repressive apparatus was firmly rooted in Carinthian soil. Its strength derived from the the fervor of native Nazis and at the very least from the acquiescence of other German or Slovene-speaking Carinthians whose higher social status and unwillingness to join Yugoslavia made them deaf to the OF's political siren song. The mélange of armed detachments which they supported failed to reestablish absolute control over remote rural bailiwicks but did maintain both the tactical initiative and complete strategic supremacy until early May of 1945.

Although the composition of the forces at the disposal of Gauleiter and *Reichsstatthalter* Friedrich Rainer and of *Höhere SS und Polizei Führer* Erwin Rösener cannot be described in detail here, at least passing mention should be made of the gendarmerie, other kinds of policemen, the Gestapo, the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), border guards, plant watchmen, teenage labor battalions [*Reichsarbeitsdienst*], superannuated militiamen, Territorial Riflemen, Replacement Army units and, above all, SS Police Regiment No. 13.<sup>10</sup> The total of men involved probably averaged the equivalent of a low-grade German field division, say some 10,000 soldiers.

While the tactics of counterinsurgency will be treated below, we should here note an equally significant factor: the Nazis' static defense system. This was a complex web of strongpoints consisting of concrete bunkers, pill-boxes, sandbagged buildings, barbed-wire enclosures, and minefields. Additional protection was afforded by optical and auditory warning devices. It thus proved possible, if not to split up and hermetically seal off individual partisan groups, at least to greatly obstruct their movement. This scheme proved particularly effective along the banks of the Drau, serving to protect not only the huge hydroelectric works already in operation or still under construction but also to limit the partisan movement's extension into the center of the Klagenfurt basin.

### The Years 1942 - 1943

We may now consider the OF activity and guerrilla warfare that led to the piecemeal employment of these paramilitary and military resources. In late 1941 the Upper Carniolan Cankar Battalion had sent a few patrols into Carinthia, but the situation remained stable for about a year. The first of what were to be hundreds of shootouts and firefights occurred only on 25 August 1942, when the First ("Kranjčev") Battalion of the so-called "Second Styrian Group of *odredi*" was passing through Carinthia from Upper Carniola in order to rendezvous with its fellow units. Ambushed by a small SS party—apparently a hunt-and-kill commando of cadets from Klagenfurt—near the village of Robež/Robesch beneath the Little Obir, the partisans quickly rippedosted and slew an indeterminate but small number of

the foe, reportedly Dutch volunteers, at a cost of several Slovene dead. Though there was no choice but to continue the march toward safer, elevated terrain, news of the diminutive victory spread like wildfire, raising the dashed hopes of the many Carinthian Slovenes who were in a state of shock over the recent deportations.

Whereas the Robesch engagement was the first between organized formations north of the pre-1941 border, it did not represent the beginning of Yugoslav Slovene-directed opposition to Nazi persecution per se since it had been preceded by a modest amount of somewhat disjointed OF political mobilization.

This fact allows us to point to a circumstance that bore heavily upon the future course of events. All the Slovenes' anti-Nazi activity fell naturally into two, at best only tenuously linked if occasionally overlapping, geographic zones within Southeastern Carinthia: the mountainous Karawanken range, and its piedmont. One—to use Prušnik-Gašper's endearing expression—was the “Wild West,” *divji zapad*, the 7-to-15-kilometer-wide strip of territory north of the border with Upper Carniola as far east as the Bela/Vellach river; the other was a belt at least 35 km deep stretching from the edge of the Podjuna/Jauntal well into the Meža valley and the northwestern salient of Slovene Styria. As far as the former area is concerned, the Carniolans and their Carinthian comrades had plans already in early 1942 to create a fully-fledged *odred* or “detachment,” a peculiarly Yugoslav unit of as many as 700 men. It was described by Wilkinson in his top secret report of 27 April 1944 as having, if by no means an inactive, at least a geographically more or less static role in contrast to the numerically only slightly stronger “shock brigades.” The time was however not yet ripe for so ambitious a project in this part of Carinthia, for the political groundwork was not yet laid. This task fell to the native-born Matija Verdnik-Tomaž, who slipped into the Rož/Rosental at the beginning of 1943 accompanied by a handful of Upper Carniolans.

Building upon the indignation over the *izselitev* and the encouraging example of the Robesch skirmish, Verdnik-Tomaž (who had grown up in Slovenia) set up a network of some 20 local OF committees. Contacts with German-Austrian Communists in the lower Zila/Gail valley came to naught after the Gestapo uncovered and smashed their cells. The first military action, after the recruitment of a dozen or so local Slovenes, was a spectacular assault upon Bistrica v Rožu/Feistritz im Rosental on 17-18 May 1943. After destroying the Jungfer generator factory's electrical plant and enlisting a group of Soviet slave-workers and POW's, the Carniolans withdrew. The local platoon, pushed hard by the now thoroughly alarmed Nazis, suffered heavy losses and retreated to Carniola where it was wiped out. Rainer appealed for reinforcements from elsewhere in the Reich but had to content himself with trying to stop furloughed Carinthian Slovene soldiers from deserting the Wehrmacht and joining the partisans.

The setback suffered by the Slovenes in the *divji zapad* was but temporary. The situation improved later in the year as a result of good fortune in Slovenia's heartland, namely, Italy's surrender and the SNLA's capture of most of the weapons and equipment of six Italian divisions. The nucleus of a Carinthian *odred* was thus established in the liberated zone of Cerkno (Primorje) on 16 October 1943. The plan of the Slovene HQ, encouraged by several British Army officers already there—the quixotic, soon-to-be-sacked Canadian-born Major William Jones and a mysterious character known as Major Neville Zarewski who represented Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean's maverick military mission to Yugoslavia—was to attack the communications hub of Carinthia. This might help relieve the pressure being exerted by the Germans and collaborationists who had quickly filled the vacuum created by Italy's collapse. The practical results in early 1944 were however meager. The unit's chief success was to spirit two political organizers across the Drau into the Gure/

Sattnitz hills above the Vrbsko jezero/Wörthersee. Regional political unity was also achieved and, if only tenuously, contact made with the eastern zone.

The story of the gradual birth of the *vzhodnokoroški odred* is linked with the names of two former partisans of the Upper Carniolan Kokra detachment: the woodcutter Ivan Županc-Johan from the Carinthian village of Ebirsko/Ebriach, and the Carniolan intellectual Stane Mrhar. Another protagonist was Prušnik-Gašper, a native of the hamlet of Lobnik/Lobnig to the East of Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel. From July 1942 the first two organized approximately 200 people as a clandestine political base. Guerilla activity per se resulted from the appearance in late November of yet another well-educated, highly-skilled party operative, Pavle Žaucer-Matjaž. Sent to his native Meža valley as an OF secretary, and joined by a few partisans from the Savinja Valley *odred*, he crossed the old frontier and recruited Prušnik-Gašper. The latter, a self-converted, quondam Austrian Communist activist, the son of expellees, was in imminent danger of arrest by the Gestapo, which was then engaged in a broad crackdown of the nascent opposition. The destruction of the German outpost in Solčava, the new unit's first achievement, afforded excellent publicity as far north as the Jauntal.

Armed initially with hunting weapons and a few military Mannlichers, which had been hidden in the hills since the Clerical Fascist repression of the Socialist party militia in early 1934, the little band was lodged in cosy, artfully-concealed, log-and-earthen bunkers high up on the Peca/Petzen mountain by early February 1943. The so-called "Carinthian Company" was thereupon ordered to advance to Eisenkappel, kill Germans, and assassinate informers, in reaction to the Gestapo dragnet which had proved very effective. Some 180 persons had been arrested, of whom 13—the "Victims of Zell"—had been decapitated in Vienna in mid-April. The company's actions were limited to snatching still desperately-needed firearms and making political hay. The guerrillas did not however gun down a number of persons who were considered anti-Slovene: whether such targets were associated with the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*) is not always clear. By March the contingent had to pull back to the high alpine meadows of the Olševa, just inside Slovene Styria, in the face of a drive by a purported 1300 police and SS.

Reorganized on the Styrian Pohorje as a battalion commanded by a decorated Wehrmacht veteran—the charismatic and still much-revered Austro-Carinthian Slovene Franc Pasterk-Lenart—the eastern zone partisans next, on 3 April, fell upon the town of Mežica. Although the partisans were able to execute four local Nazis after a drumhead trial, and seize a rich stock of weapons, the Germans quickly recovered their wits and struck back. Pasterk-Lenart was mortally wounded. The inadvisability of operations in such open terrain could not have been clearer. In any case, backed by new recruits from the Meža valley and Upper Carniola, the battalion continued to dart about the old border zone, engaging in many lesser firefights and assassinating yet other picayune Nazis, and often Slovenophone personal-political foes (*nemčuri*) as well.

The incursions continued until mid-1943. Special attention was paid to blocking the Nazi war machine's timber supply. Patrols sent out by the *Reichsstatthalter*'s security organs failed to snare the agile partisans. Political agitation was carried out simultaneously. Prušnik-Gašper and Županc, backed by experienced Communists from Carniola, railed against the German factory-owners and big landlords. Local OF cells were formed. On 12-13 May a major activist meeting, the "Pine Forest Conference," was held on the Bela peč above the Bistra valley in Yugoslav Carinthia. The expropriations of the coming postwar millenium were among the themes treated; "ethnic traitors" (*izdajalci slovenskega naroda*) were singled out in this context. Indeed, the ensuing months, and the chaotic

weeks at the end of the war, would be characterized by the systematic liquidation of such individuals.

Gradually a 320-man battalion—made up of draft-exempt dissidents like Prušnik-Gašper, prospective Wehrmacht inductees, Nazi deserters, fellow Slavic POW's, and slave laborers—was assembled. Many remained unarmed. Then, due to Italy's capitulation, most were sent to Lower Carniola. This move was repeated on several occasions, which suggests that the Slovene high command, which momentarily had more weapons than men, considered Carinthia a kind of sideshow, at least for the nonce. It proved necessary to painfully restore the strength of the tiny party which remained. A new battalion slowly emerged, under the command of the SNLA's Fourth (Styrian) Operational Zone, and guerrilla warfare resumed. Despite increasingly stringent Nazi countermeasures, late 1943 witnessed many more shootouts. In November the enemy hit back but to little avail.

At the end of 1943 the Carinthian Battalion was again forced to yield some of its warriors. The 90 men remaining, concentrated on the Meža valley, did however keep up a modicum of activity. Then, on 20 January, the high command urged the Fourth Operational Zone to devote maximum attention to its Carinthian components. Sharply criticized, it replied that it had no spare company to dispatch but would order an advance on Austro-Carinthian territory.

This exchange of messages raises the interesting question of the origins of the decision to carry guerrilla warfare into the heart of the Klagenfurt basin and of Wilkinson's involvement. Both sides, Slovene and British, advocated the scheme simultaneously although it had surely occurred to the Slovenes much earlier. A tacit deal was struck. From the vantage of the Slovene general staff, the strategic value was presumably to relieve pressure upon Carniola, where Rösener, three SS police regiments, Leo Rupnik's<sup>11</sup> quiescent régime and the *domobranci* were holding their own.<sup>12</sup> Moreover the Carinthian Slovene partisans might well enconce themselves firmly as a springboard for a later territorial *coup de main* with help from the motherland although their role for the moment was only ancillary. Above all, desperately-needed supplies would be air-dropped. Conversely, the SOE had a goal that was all its own: the fond hope that the guerrillas might be used to establish a link with putative Austrian resistance factions and enable the British to stir up trouble as far north as Czechoslovakia and even Poland. These conflicting objectives—not to mention British insistence upon respect for the prewar frontier line, at least until a peace conference had been held—were to envenom relations between the partisans and the British, i.e., the world power upon which they were to become increasingly reliant logistically for the rest of the war.

Be this as it may, the mounting significance of Carinthia was reflected in the upgrading of the eastern sector partisans into an *odred* on 5 February 1944. By late March, however, the detachment comprised only 173 men, whose tasks remained the classical *Kleinkrieg* ones: attacks upon remoted enemy posts and exposed columns; patrolling; recruitment; and the severance of rail lines. The Meža valley remained the chief focus of activity just as it was the source of most of the recruits. Foraging raids were necessarily the main pastime although they too were a contribution to the Allied cause since it cost the Germans time and effort to ward them off. In any event the Eastern Carinthian *odred* succeeded in pressing slowly toward the Drau, both militarily and politically.

Meanwhile the guerrillas fighting at the other end of Southeastern Carinthia had come under the command of the SNLA's geographically contiguous Ninth Corps. Now known as the *zahodno-* or *zapadnokoroški odred*, they labored under the disadvantage of the inadequate depth of their zone and the extreme height of the Karawanken. The detachment

somehow survived the Nazis' counterblow in March 1944; but, with the arrival from Russia of the Thirteenth SS Police Regiment, it was largely driven back to the south and east and sought refuge among the peaks between the Ljubelj/Loibl and the Jezersko/Seeberg passes and then (in late April and May) beyond the Vellach. Before this occurred, however, the *odred* had booked one important success: 15 men under Anton Mivšek crossed the Drau and began operations on the wooded Sattnitz hills. The Nazi leaders were greatly perturbed. In spite of Himmler's dispatch of the SS police they foresaw the need for much stronger action. At the same time the Slovene commanders, for their part, were hoping for a more effective employment of their Carinthia resources and therefore created the unified *Štab koroške grupe odredov* on 24 April. The Carinthian partisans were however still not deemed strong enough or important enough to be put on an equal footing with Styria as an "operational zone."

Despite the inauspicious prelude—the battering suffered by the Western *odred*—it is generally agreed that the summer of 1944 represented the high water mark of the partisan war in Carinthia. There appear to have been two reasons: the arrival of the highly experienced counterinsurgency SS Police, whose presence meant an intensification of combat; and the on-the-spot involvement of Wilkinson's own lieutenants. Thereafter the level of fighting declined as a result of yet another decision to reduce the number of guerrillas in Carinthia for use elsewhere.

At this point we should note the tactics employed, at least initially, by the SS.<sup>13</sup> Their speciality was the hunt-and-kill mission or, to use the Slovene term, *hajka*, a technique that partly resembled the guerrilla style of fighting itself. Disposing of usually excellent intelligence the SS soldiers would plunge into the woods and converge from three or four directions on a partisan unit, hoping for surprise; normally they would remain there several days, occupying tactically critical positions, beating the bushes and scouring outlying buildings. Local partisan supporters were shot out of hand or deported and their property burned or wrecked. The partisans preferred to melt away and reportedly counterattacked only when Wilkinson's man, Alfgar Hesketh-Prichard was in charge.<sup>14</sup>

### The SOE in Action

The Britons' arrival on the Carinthian scene was ill-starred. In addition to the 7-man SOE contingent, there was a party from a competing British subversive agency, the Inter-Services Liaison Department [ISLD], a brainchild of MI6. The ISLD men did not behave with the necessary degree of tact or adequately observe partisan security rules (*konspiracija*). The group's radio operator, a German-Austrian with the pseudonym "Sergeant Black," fell into the hands of the SS during its sweep of the Solčava area. "Black," who was probably tortured, betrayed the Britons and Slovenes, who barely managed to escape with their lives. Sir Charles Villiers of the SOE had the ISLD leader, a Captain Smith, dismissed and tactfully assumed responsibility himself.<sup>15</sup> He and Hesketh-Prichard were then grudgingly permitted to leave the upper Savinja valley and enter the Austro-Carinthian combat zone.<sup>16</sup>

As far as the Slovenes were concerned, the task of the two SOE officers—Hesketh-Prichard, son of a renowned World War One sniper, was a pilot, a demolitions expert and a brilliant radio communications specialist—was to coordinate the airdrops; twenty sorties were effected south of the Karawanken crest during July and August. This resulted in a rapid build-up of partisan strength: 200-plus men and women in the west and more than 700 in the east. Although the two Britons were dissatisfied with what they regarded as the partisans' relative passivity, there was in fact one dramatic action: a full-scale assault upon Črna in the Meža valley August 18-24. Hesketh-Prichard, a crack marksman and a charis-

matic leader as Wilkinson remembers him, played an important role in an engagement that may have involved as many as 700 SS policemen. Črna may be considered one of only two fully-fledged battles fought by the Carinthian Slovene partisans: perhaps 100 Nazis were killed, apparently many by Hesketh-Prichard. To be sure, the guerrillas also found it prudent to withdraw to the hills again.

Despite the success at Črna, the conflict of objectives between the two uneasy confederates was already beginning to be felt. Wilkinson wished to employ British-trained, German-Austrian agents in order to promote his aim of resistance, sabotage and rebellion; he thus sought, at the partisans' own suggestion, to contact the Carinthian wing of the shadowy *Österreichische Freiheitsfront* [ÖFF], in reality a Soviet Communist-manipulated group of Austrian leftists. Since early May Hesketh-Prichard and Villiers had been importuning their Slovene associates to let the former cross the Drau and execute his assignment. The two Britons knew that Mivšek's little band had meanwhile met with striking success in the Sattnitz hills and that the Klagenfurt basin had been penetrated three more times from south of the river. Because of their own political aims, the partisans could not sanction the SOE plan and procrastinated, arguing that they could not guarantee "Major Cahusac's" safety.

Before leaving Carinthia in September, Villiers concluded that the initial, agent-oriented scheme was flawed. Austro-German POW's were useless anyway. London should pin its hopes on Hesketh-Prichard simply crossing the Drau. A nucleus for an "Austrian" resistance effort might be formed by military action on the Saualpe/Svinja planina. A fringe benefit was that German rail links (e.g., Klagenfurt-Bruck) could be threatened. However, the fact of the matter was that British attempts to stimulate independent "Austrian" opposition to Naziism were anathema to the Slovenes. Their policy was to extract maximum logistical support in return for minimum cooperation with Wilkinson's goals. As things turned out, they did not do so badly: by the end of the war they were to receive a total of 38 airdrops.

In any event, by autumn the Southern Department of the Foreign Office, alerted by its Bari (Italy) representatives to Tito's open proclamation on September 12, 1944 of annexationist goals, was beginning to question the wisdom of the SOE project. One bureaucrat, G.H. Harrison, argued that while "from the military point of view there are obvious advantages in the proposed operation and I know that the SOE are keen on it, the real question is whether, if we encourage the Slovene units (without our assistance they can do nothing) to push on into pre-1938 Austria, we shall find out later on that they will use their control of the territory to present us with a *fait-accompli* after the cessation of hostilities." General "Luka" (Frank Leskošek, the Slovene "war minister") somehow divined London's opposition and assured the local Britons that the partisans would not agitate for frontier revision or otherwise prejudice an Austrian uprising by raising controversial issues. Tito's speech was only by way of guidance, and all matters including frontier issues would be reserved for a peace conference. By October 10, when this message—the insincerity of which time would demonstrate—reached London, Hesketh-Prichard was on his way in the company of Prušnik-Gašper and another (the sixth) small troop of guerrillas.

Meanwhile, other things had been happening south of the Drau. Although the crack of gunfire occasionally resounded in the *divji zapad*, the activity of the much weakened partisan forces was of scant consequence. Farther to the east, around Mount Obir, the fighting, while occasionally quite sharp, hardly enabled them to gain the upper hand. The distant Fourth Operational Zone HQ, which exercised only the loosest control, once more stressed the need to attack enemy communications and demanded more intelligence data;



this may have reflected a greater concern for what was occurring **south** of the Karawanken.

The Nazis, for their part, were dissatisfied with the recent slight alleviation of security conditions. They therefore introduced certain administrative improvements and altered their tactics somewhat. On 8 August the later-executed war criminal Lieutenant Colonel Hans Fleckner, commander of the SS Police troops, took charge of all counterinsurgency operations in Carinthia. Fortified posts were further buttressed. Plans were made to use them as bases for ambushing partisans who tried to slip in between, especially along the Seeberg highway, the relatively successful idea being to isolate the two *odredi*. Although German forces would still penetrate into remote areas, there was now a greater reliance upon larger units and the strongpoints.

As this was occurring, the number of partisans east of Eisenkappel was mushrooming. The 229 combatants of June grew to the aforementioned 700 plus. Most of the fighting—the action at Črna is indicative—was in the Meža valley rather than in Austrian Carinthia, and there was an evident reluctance to engage in costly frontal attacks. The higher SNLA staffs repeatedly demanded greater aggressiveness, and strikes against German communications were carried out more frequently. Nevertheless, the overall results were not impressive.

### **The Grim Winter of 1944-1945**

In September there was a decisive turn of events: the previously mentioned shift in Slovene military policy. Tantamount to a definitive downgrading of Carinthia, it also signalled the beginning of what proved to be the worst year of the war for the remaining partisans. For some time, their superiors had been bothered by what were called “brigade tendencies”. The local guerrillas apparently hoped that they would turn into a prestigious “shock” unit, and would cease to play a diffuse, static role with co-emphasis upon political work. Another factor seems to have been that Carinthia had been sucked dry of recruits. Hence, on 20 September, the Carinthian Group of *odredi* was abolished and broken into three parts. The bulk of the troops were sent south, about 250 kept south of the Drau as the cadre for a new, three-battalion *odred*, and another battalion of seventy choice warriors, Hesketh-Prichard’s and Prušnik-Gašper’s contingent, was ordered to traverse the river and link up with the scattered, 100-odd men already on the other side.

Once again, events south of the Drau may be surveyed first. The net result was that the reduction in strength led to a great decline in martial activity, most clashes still occurring in the Meža valley. The major German offensive of 27 November-6 January in the “liberated zone” of Solčava merits special attention. A joint campaign by the Thirteenth and Nineteenth SS Police Regiments along with unusually adverse weather conditions, including the heaviest snowfall in many years, occasioned a grave partisan setback. In both sectors of Austrian Carinthia these months were marked mainly by underground political activity and the mere struggle to survive. Another feature was particularly repellant Nazi atrocities.

### **The Fiasco of the Saualpe**

What took place on the heights north of Velikovec/Völkermarkt remains a delicate subject. Survivors have been hesitant or unwilling to talk. However, the main outlines are clear. Hesketh-Prichard and Prušnik-Gašper belonged to the pint-sized battalión led militarily by Jože Ulčar (“Mirko”), a less than satisfactory commander. The Drau crossing, made with inflatable, British-supplied dinghies, went smoothly, and the group ultimately,

on 10 November managed to rendezvous with three of the dispersed units already across the river.

Although in the last analysis the ground was poorly chosen due to a much lower proportion of Slovene-speakers, there was, especially at the outset, some indigenous support, even from a few destitute Germanophone peasants. The partisans tried hard to avoid being nationalistically assertive, stressing rather the existence of social injustices in their logistically crucial dealing with civilians. However, the great majority of the inhabitants were indifferent or hostile, and there was no chance at all of provoking an “Austrian” uprising. The line of communications was stretched to the breaking point. Intrepid though they were, couriers could hardly get past the closely guarded barrier of the Drau.

At this juncture the picture becomes clouded. What is certain is that the battalion could not remain concentrated and survive. There may have been dissension between Hesketh-Prichard and the others. On 3 December Wilkinson received a final signal—the code was unbreakable at the time—and this is the presumed date of “Major Cahusac’s” death. The SOE officer’s last message was that “this is no place for a gentleman”, a good-natured allusion to the lack of civilized amenities. British investigators concluded shortly after the war that, almost certainly, Hesketh-Prichard had been murdered by his Slovene comrades, and it is fair to assume that the order to liquidate him—which somehow got through to the Saualpe—emanated from a higher political quarter. The judgment of those who knew the SOE agent well was that Britain had lost one of her best and brightest. As for the guerrillas, only a minute hard core withstood the rigors of the cruel winter.<sup>17</sup>

### The Spring of 1945

To understand the outcome of the guerrilla war in Carinthia in April-May 1945 and the end of hostilities in south-eastern Europe, events in the Slovene heartland from the autumn of 1944 must be reviewed. Fortunately for the historian, the intellectual capacities of the different Allied liaison officers posted to Yugoslavia were very high, and most of their perceptive secret reports—which had a powerful impact in London and Washington—have survived. Only two of these will be referred to here.

Let us begin with Lt.-Col. Peter M.N. Moore, Royal Engineers, who was sent in by Maclean to replace the erratic Jones. Moore’s most interesting despatch, dated 10 February 1945 and received in London by the influential Sir Orme Sargent of the Foreign Office on 27 March, may be summarized as follows. The Slovene partisans, after fighting well in the summer of 1944, were relatively inactive and unsuccessful in the little they undertook thereafter. Their obvious intention now was to husband their strength and wait for the collapse of the German army group in Yugoslavia, in order to seize Ljubljana, Primorje and Carinthia. Allied support for them was therefore no longer militarily justifiable. It was recognized that this view was especially unpalatable to the British Mediterranean commander, Field-Marshal Harold Alexander; but Maclean himself had “no hesitation in accepting [his subordinate’s] evaluation of the situation.” One passage in Moore’s report, which makes the circumstances of Hesketh-Prichard’s death more understandable, may be cited:

“The Slovene partisans cannot dispense with British and American help, but are most uncomfortable at being under an obligation to us. The very real gratitude felt by the villager and the rank and file . . . is a source of great embarrassment. [Indeed] Britain is regarded with intense dislike and suspicion by the partisan authorities, who fear we may oppose their territorial claims and force them to moderate their internal policy.”<sup>18</sup>

Another SOE man, by then a diplomat in the Belgrade embassy, was Sir William Deakin. His 28 April 1945 memorandum well characterizes conditions in Carinthia and the stance being taken by the British government. Noting the decline of partisan military operations north of the Karawanken, Deakin pointed to the propagandistic revival of Slovene claims to the region. Recalling their defeat in 1919-20, the Slovene leaders were promoting an Austrian government that would sanction their position and be militarily too weak to obstruct any frontier revision. Two kinds of political activity were being pursued with this in mind: the formation on Carniolan soil of a Slovene-Communist controlled ÖFF, and the creation of "Austrian" battalions within the SNLA, made up of locally-recruited leftists and a few Wehrmacht deserters. In light of central Yugoslav governmental support for Slovene pretensions and of Tito's demand for his own occupation zone in Carinthia, Deakin observed that whereas Carinthia was allotted to the Western Allies, they might well find "Slovenes and Slovene-controlled forces already in possession." This was of course the *fait accompli* which the Foreign Office had foreseen in the fall of 1944 but which, by spring 1945, had become much more difficult, if not impossible, to realize. Deakin's chief conclusion with respect to Carinthia was that:

"There is no satisfactory evidence that an articulate majority in favour of Slovenia exists in the disputed area . . . The Slovene-speaking population . . . has, on the whole, remained passive in the face of recruiting and propaganda efforts of the Slovene partisans. There is no reason to believe that the situation whereby nearly 10,000 Slovene-speaking Carinthians voted for Austria in 1920 has materially altered."<sup>19</sup>

While high British officials were hardening their stance toward Tito's Yugoslavia,<sup>20</sup> the Slovene partisans were once again bestirring themselves everywhere; we must therefore revert to reporting military events in sequence. Perhaps the most striking feature of the end of the war on the Balkan front was the skilfully-conducted, staged withdrawal of the 40,000-strong German Army Group Southeast, now amalgamated with Army Group E. Commanded by Austrian-born Alexander Löhr,<sup>21</sup> and staffed mainly by yet other officers of Austrian origin, this force had pulled back to Croatia with the YNLA and its new Bulgarian allies in hot pursuit. Moreover, Soviet divisions were close by in Hungary and in the Eastern foothills of the Alps. Löhr had also, rather haphazardly, mingled his men with the 200,000 Ustashi and other troops under Ante Pavelić. The sole recourse for this vast traffic jam of Axis soldiery, which had so much blood on its hands, was to put itself beyond the pre-war frontiers and thus escape the almost certain indiscriminate retribution that would result from captivity by the Communist Yugoslavs.

### The Dénouement

Tito's strategy was apparently to use the Slovene partisans, bolstered by whatever YNLA contingents could be pushed ahead of the main body, as the wings of a huge pair of pincers that would enclose Carinthia. The special task of the Fourteenth Shock Division, to which the Carinthian partisans were attached, was to plug the gap between the pincers' prongs. This scheme had however two fatal flaws. The seizure of Primorje and the strategically crucial Trieste was an equally important Yugoslav objective, and required a major diversion of resources. Moreover, the relative numerical weakness—a maximum of perhaps 40,000 men—and the manifold equipment deficiencies of the SNLA meant that it had no real chance of executing its dual mission of halting the retreating enemy and of seizing control of Carinthia before the arrival of the advance elements of the British Eighth

Army, the 55,000-plus troops of Sir Charles Keightley's Fifth Corps, spearheaded by the Sixth Armoured Division.

The Carinthian Slovene partisans were meanwhile trying to contribute their moiety. Emerging from the hills, they experienced tremendous exhilaration but were too weak to play much of a military role. The decimated Northern Battalion, revived by a few Soviet irregulars who had slipped in from the Styrian hills but numbering no more than 20 local Slovenes, could move more freely after some of the SS policemen were sent to the front in eastern Austria. The battalion skirmished with a contingent of Ukrainian Waffen-SS but, at least before the armistice, could not move southward in the face of the mob of retreating Germans and quislings. South of the Drau the people of Zell, where there was lively OF activity, shooed out some 100 remaining SS police. However a Replacement Army artillery unit positioned itself along the Loibl highway, which was essential to the retreat of German and collaborationist forces from Slovenia. SS armor from Army Group Southeast secured the crucial highway bridge at Hollenburg/Humberk.

The Nazi security organs did not relax their stronghold until virtually the last day of the war. Particular note should be taken of the massacre of eleven members of the Sadovnik family (who lived on the farm "Pri Peršmanu"), evidently because of their association with local partisans, near Eisenkappel on April 25.<sup>22</sup>

The last days of the war in Carinthia, a broad subject, exceeds the limits of this essay. The Carinthian Slovene partisans and their Yugoslav confreres were however involved in the major crisis that developed in this general region in May 1945, and the subject may be treated, if only in passing.

The advance parties of the Sixth Armoured Division, debouching from the Kanalska dolina/Val Canale/Kanaltal, won the race to reach Klagenfurt on the morning of 8 May, the day before the armistice went into effect;<sup>23</sup> they beat the Upper Carniolan Kokra *odred* by only three hours. An "Austrian" provincial Government, formed against Rainer's will by the cooperative efforts of the Nazi "surrender faction" and more presentable non-Nazi politicians who had sloughed off their wartime cocoons, was there to greet them.<sup>24</sup> Wilkinson, who immediately began to look for Hesketh-Prichard, could not help but observe their hypocrisy: backed by a quickly-rebaptized "Austrian" police force, they were seeking to establish themselves alongside the British military government and a would-be Yugoslav administration.

What happened over the next tumultuous eleven days—the Yugoslavs withdrew on 20 May—is vividly recorded in a series of radio signals sent by the principal figures. Among the most important were Britain's Central Mediterranean minister-resident, Harold Macmillan, MP, and Field-Marshal Alexander. On 11 May Macmillan reported that Tito was requesting the major powers to let him share in the occupation of Austria, but that he had received a favorable reply only from Moscow. Macmillan noted wryly that Tito was hardly a disinterested party; the Foreign Office replied that agreement would not be forthcoming.

On 12 May Alexander asked Tito to withdraw his forces from Carinthia, since an Allied military government had been set up. He promised to "administer the area impartially and without prejudice to any claim you may wish to make." London was informed on 13 May that the partisans were pulling back. It soon became apparent, however, that nothing more than a reshuffle of forces was involved; this was probably related to the battle of Borovlje/Ferlach on 10-12 May (see below) and to the continuing action against the Ustashi in Slovene Styria. The first of many accounts of partisan looting in Klagenfurt were also passed on.<sup>25</sup>

The British embassy in Belgrade notified London on 14 May that Tito was now arguing that things had changed since the 1943 Moscow Declaration. Yugoslavia had suffered immeasurably and “it would therefore be unjust to deny the Yugoslav army the right to pursue the enemy over the pre-war frontier and to occupy the territory liberated from him.” Yugoslav troops were dealing with Ustashi and *domobranici* who had not capitulated. However, Tito would agree to place his men under Alexander’s command. The same day Macmillan, who had made a quick flying visit to Klagenfurt, confirmed that Keightley’s soldiers were installed there but could not stop that Yugoslavs’ “minor reign of terror.” Keightley could hold out until he was strong enough to mop up the whole area but, worried about his vulnerable line of communication back to Italy, he could not meanwhile prevent “high-handed actions.” The task, in any case, was immense: Carinthia was inundated with as many as 500,000 enemy troops and civilian refugees. The crisis was now at its zenith.

On 15 May Macmillan signalled that the Yugoslavs were installed in Völkermarkt, the HQ of the Fourteenth Shock Division which counted some 6000 men alongside the 100-man, British-equipped motorized detachment of the YNLA’s Fourth Army.<sup>26</sup> The closest regular formation was the Third Army, but that was momentarily tied down capturing the third of Löhr’s army and the bulk of the Ustashi still in Yugoslavia.

The next two days brought more ominous news for the British. The post-armistice encounters in Slovene Styria and the Meža valley now over, 2000 first-rate Yugoslav troops had entered the (pre-1938) border town of Labot/Lavamünd, and two divisions of the Fourth Army were being readied to reinforce them. There was however no real change in the local situation. The partisans made a confused impression. As for Alexander, he remained worried by the guerrillas’ harsh behavior, by the exposed line of communications, and by the weak disposition of the Fifth Corps. Keightley’s units, dispersed over a wide area, were also responsible for herding the crowd of surrendered enemy personnel into huge holding pens and providing rations.

The only recourse was to call in the Americans. Eisenhower began to draft plans for dispatching five divisions from the Third Army in the Enns valley as a show of force.<sup>27</sup> The tension had now reached breaking point. Alexander reported on 18 May that:

“The behaviour of the Yugoslavs is making a very unfavorable impression upon the Allied troops. The men feel that by being unable to prevent actions which offend their traditional sense of justice they are condoning such behavior. As a result feeling against the Yugoslavs is getting stronger daily.”<sup>28</sup>

As already noted, Wilkinson was a witness of what was happening. In a letter to Sir Colin Gubbins, head of the SOE and a good friend of his, he expressed indignation. Deportations by the Yugoslavs—which the British were sometimes able to prevent—were horrific. Sixty people had been abducted from Pliberk/Bleiburg, others from Völkermarkt and from Feistritz im Rosenthal; and the victims had been decent folk, not Nazis. On the other hand, the surrendered foe was being treated relatively humanely; and while looting was the order of the day, there had been no bloodbaths.<sup>29</sup>

On 19 May Macmillan told the Foreign Office that, with the final surrender of the quislings inside Yugoslavia, five of Tito’s divisions were already north of the frontier or ready to cross it. Orders were sent to the Supreme Allied Command Mediterranean to eject the Yugoslavs, but the instructions proved unnecessary. Evidently lacking support from the USSR and surely unable to bite the hand that was still feeding him, Tito informed the British Embassy that his forces would return to Yugoslavia. He had also been promised the return of the quislings by Alexander at Keightley’s suggestion, although the reasons were strictly military.

The disillusionment of the Carinthian Slovene partisans and their Yugoslav compatriots could hardly have been greater after so much travail and sacrifice. Taking at least their military spoils with them, the Yugoslavs and certain of the local partisans departed “z grenkobo v srcu.”

### **The Tragedy of Borovlje/Ferlach.**

An epilogue must be appended, for it will help us understand the wrath and sorrow of the Slovene irregulars and those Carinthian Slovenes who, like Prušnik-Gašer, stayed behind. The post-armistice encounter at Ferlach (just north of the Loibl Pass) on 10-12 May, although a mere skirmish against the backdrop of World War Two, was the only major action on Austro-Carinthian soil. The Carinthian guerrillas, the Mirko Bračić Brigade of the Fourteenth Division, one Austro-German battalion (native leftists, not the troops mentioned by Deakin) and part of the motorized detachment (referred to above) were bloodied by a far superior force, the *Kampfgruppe* “Werner von Seeler.” This consisted of elements of the infamous Prinz Eugen Waffen SS Division, three SS police regiments, a horde of *domobranci* and oddments from other collaborationist formations, all of whom—with their civilian followers—were desperate to get out of Yugoslavia. The partisan dead amounted to well over 200 men.

Given the non-intervention of the British certain Carinthian Slovenes still speak, as it were, of a “perfidious Albion.” However, considering the Fifth Corps’ overall situation and the binding nature of the armistice, armed intervention (as distinct from mediation) was surely impossible. The medley of brutalized Germans and their Slavic puppets therefore managed to surrender to Keightley’s host on the north bank of the Drau, having used the bridge which had been secured earlier by other SS men (and which, for reasons that are not clear, the partisans had failed to blow up). Ironically, the quislings’ final exertions proved to be in vain: like Löhr’s Cossacks—who were bundled off into the hands of the Soviets in Styria, together with similar contingents that had been employed against the Italian partisans—and like many Yugoslav subjects serving in German units, they were repatriated by trickery or force over the next several weeks and immolated *en masse* by the SNLA, probably more for military reasons (the danger of war with the West over Trieste) than for political reasons or for vengeance.

It is impossible to delve into this still extremely controversial and emotional topic here. All that can be said is that the evidence advanced to support the thesis of a “conspiracy” by Macmillan and Keightley is not persuasive. The apparent pragmatic considerations that underlay the transfer of the prisoners may well have arisen against the backdrop of an earlier recommendation by Deakin and Allied intelligence officers who had weighed both the political and the logistical implications of granting asylum to the collaborationists who had been captured by Anglo-American troops on Yugoslav soil. Macmillan’s and Keightley’s actions should probably be seen in the context of a confused military emergency and a necessarily hard-hearted *Realpolitik*. In any event the upshot was that guiltless individuals were doomed alongside genuine war criminals.

### **Conclusions**

What may we infer from the chain of events described here? First, it seems that the guerrilla war in Carinthia reflects what is known about the reciprocal relationship between capitalist economic development, social class formation, and their concomitant of a dynamic social psychology in ethnically mixed areas. In the extreme circumstances of

totalitarian rule persecution of the undeclass leads to outright resistance by persons who might otherwise resign themselves to a fate of gradual assimilation. Admittedly, it is unlikely that armed opposition would have exceeded the level of the "Green Cadres" had there been no political, ideological and military organization from the Slovene heartland, and—perhaps more importantly—logistical support from the SOE. The contrast with the quiescent Croats of the Burgenland comes readily to mind. Clearly the thickly wooded, mountainous nature of the terrain was also an indispensable prerequisite.

This leads us to ponder the strictly military facets of the story. The fighting undoubtedly fits the classical pattern of guerrilla warfare with its ghastly spiral of stealthy assaults, counteroffensives, reprisals and atrocities. Nazi counterinsurgency, which presupposed the active collaboration of at least some portion of Carinthia Slovenophone population, proved highly effective even if the partisans could not be eradicated. While there was wide support from nationally conscious Slovenes (including those who listened to the voice of the Catholic clergy), the dissidents represented only a fraction, and perhaps a small one, within Carinthia's linguistic minority. The hatred of the *nemčuri* is surely indicative of this.

We may likewise ask whether the guerrilla struggle in Carinthia represented a meaningful contribution to the Allied cause, especially since subsequent Yugoslav territorial claims were partly based on this kind of assertion. As indicated above, the equivalent of one German army division was prevented from fighting elsewhere. Downed British and American aviators were rescued. Substantial material injury was inflicted, too, although it appears that on balance the partisans did not impede a significant expansion of the local economy.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the heaviest damage was in the Meža valley and in contiguous parts of Upper Carniola.

Another issue which will almost certainly never be properly resolved is that of the body count. It is highly improbable that 3855 enemy were slain, as various Slovene spokesmen have long asserted. Even if this figure is halved, it would have to encompass actions in the Meža valley and the assassination of civilians to be acceptable. On the other hand, the suggested total of 1080 partisan dead sounds right, especially if one includes couriers (many of whom fell victims to avalanches), OF members, Carniolans, Styrian Slovenes, and locally recruited foreigners (slave laborers and POW's).

In sum we may say that, above all, the Carinthian Slovene partisans suffered horrendously and exhibited impressive fortitude in the face of Nazi repression. This remains true in spite of their involvement in "dirty" combat of the Balkan variety which caused a few to commit acts that were not only repugnant but counterproductive. The fighting in Carinthia was not just a manifestation of *Kleinkrieg* but reflected several other kinds of organized violence too. As in the Slovene heartland, the struggle was a civil war that embraced other Carinthians, both German-speakers and bilinguals. It was no less a revolutionary upheaval insofar as the Marxist leaders, who were obdurately opposed to the existing social order, were bent on seizing power, a goal that may well have loomed larger in their minds than that of uniting all Slovenes into one state. Finally, the conflict was part and parcel of the world-wide conflagration, by virtue of the close involvement of conservative Britain and of the clash of power-political interests in Southeast Europe. Among other things, it was a mirror of the essential—probably subliminal—nature of British strategy in World War Two: the desire, after the insane carnage of World War One, to reduce its own casualties by using indigenous surrogates and by nibbling away at the edges of enemy territory.

## EDITORS' NOTE

With respect to place-names outside Slovenia in actually bilingual (Slovene/other language) regions in officially monolingual countries, the standard practice of *Slovene Studies* is followed here; it is as follows: the first time any geographical location—town, mountain, river, &c.—is mentioned, the name is given in Slovene first and then in the official standard language of the country; thereafter, the name is given only in the latter. Place-names now within Slovenia are given in Slovene only.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

1. See Thomas M. Barker, *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia* (New York: East European Monographs and Columbia UP, 1984), which also gives other, older references. The present article is a much revised version of a paper presented to the Society for Slovene Studies at the Boston meeting of the AAASS in October 1987; it summarizes the author's *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive* (Boulder CO/New York NY: Columbia U P, scheduled for publication in autumn 1989).
2. Apart from the more important sources listed below, an arbitrary choice among a host of available references would include the following: Milovan Djilas, *Wartime: With Tito and the Partisans* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977) which is good for the nationalist character of Slovene Communism and for the political and psychological background to the commission of atrocities by all parties; M.R.D. Foot, *SOE: The Special Operations Executive, 1940-1946* (Frederick MD: University Publications of America, 1986); Patrick Howarth, *Undercover* (London: Routledge, 1980), the memoirs of a subordinate of Wilkinson's, with much about his friend and associate, Alfgar C.G. Hesketh-Prichard; Robert Knight, "Harold Macmillan and the Cossacks: Was There a Klagenfurt Conspiracy?" *Intelligence and National Security* 1 (1986) 234-54; Radomir Luža, *The Resistance in Austria, 1938-1945* (Minneapolis MN: U Minnesota P, 1984), which is outstandingly objective and balanced; *Narodnoosvobodilna vojna na Slovenskem, 1941-1945* (Ljubljana: Vojasški zgodovinski Inštitut Jugoslovanske ljudske armade in Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja v Ljubljani, 1976), the highly-detailed, "official" Slovene version; Valentin Polanšek's candid novel, based on actual events and permeated with a deep sense of humanity, *Bratovska jesen* (2 vols., Klagenfurt-Borovlje/Ferlach: Drava, 1981-82; *Pregnanstvo in upor/Vertreibung und Widerstand* (Klagenfurt: Zveza slovenskih izseljencev, 1982); Ingomar Pust, *Titostern über Kärnten, 1942-1945: Totgeschwiegene Tragödien* (Klagenfurt: Kärntner Abwehrkämpferbund, 1984), a tendentious crypto-Nazi account, but useful for partisans' political killings and other factual details; David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance: A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, with Documents* (London: Macmillan, 1980), which is helpful but rather misleading with respect to the "Clowder Mission" (cf. note 5); and August Walz, *Kärnten 1945: vom NS Regime zur Besatzungsherrschaft im Alpen-Adria Raum* (Klagenfurt: Universitätsverlag Carinthia, 1985), a massive tome reflecting what may be called the "official" German Carinthian viewpoint; valuable if used with care.
3. Helmut Rausch, *Der Partisanenkampf in Kärnten im zweiten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, 1979 [= Militärgeschichtliche Schriftenreihe, Heft 39/40]); Franci Strle, *Veliki finale na Koroškem*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Ljubljana: samozaložba, 1977).
4. Karel Prušnik-Gaspar, *Gamsen auf der Lavine: der Kärntner Partisanenkampf* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 1980) = *Gamsi na plazu*, 3rd ed. (Ljubljana: Borec, 1981); Helena Kuhar, *Jelka* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1988) = *Jelka, aus dem Leben einer Kärntner Partisanin* [original version tape-recorded and edited by Thomas Busch and Brigitte Windhab] (Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel: Longo-mai Kooperative, 1984). "Jelka" was the Helena Kuhar's *nom de guerre*; her experiences serve to remind us of the integral role of women, whether as warriors, activists, couriers, or victuallers; many Carinthian Slovene males had been conscripted by the Nazis and were thus away from home.
5. Wilkinson was a lieutenant-colonel in the crack Royal Fusiliers; together with Hesketh-Prichard (whom the guerrillas knew only as "Major Cahusac") he flew to see Tito in Hercegovina and managed to obtain permission to visit partisan units in the Slovene-speaking lands (December 1943 to March 1944). Thereafter he ran his own "private army" from Southern Italy and England as one facet of the SOE's pan-European subversion program, known under the code-name "Clowder Mission."



6. SNLA unit designations fell within the JNLA order of battle.
7. I.e., the narrow latitudinal strip of Slovenophone Carinthia extending from Podklošter/Arnoldstein—in an ethnic sense, from Šmohor/Hermagor—to the north-south line from the Drava/Drau via Borovlje/Ferlach to the Ljubelj/Loibl pass; on occasion, even as far as the line formed by the highway from Žitara vas/Sittersdorf through Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel to the Jezersko/Seeberg pass.
8. In this connection one should also mention the abortive, British-instigated sabotage network of 1940 called *TIGR* (“Trst, Istra, Gorica, Rijeka”).
9. Embodied in the ethnic slur “Tschusch’n.”
10. This was one of 30 such formations that were a central feature of Berlin’s control over rearward areas in wartime Europe.
11. Rupnik first served as mayor of Ljubljana and then assisted Rössener in combatting the partisans.
12. It should be stressed that the task of Hitler’s minions in Carniola was crucial for the rearward communications of German Army Group Southeast and Army Group E (Greece), not to mention the Nazi forces in central and northern Italy.
13. Or, “zeleni,” as they were called by their adversaries because of the grass-green color of their uniforms.
14. This was, at any rate, the impression of Villiers (“Major Buxton”), another close associate of Wilkinson’s who had parachuted into the Ninth-Corps area in mid-May 1944 and soon joined the ŠKGO.
15. Although, in Wilkinson’s words, “they weren’t our chaps.”
16. Like Wilkinson and so many other top SOE personnel, Villiers and Hesketh-Prichard were highly literate, sophisticated scions of Britain’s private-school based, Oxbridge ruling class.
17. It was not until late March that the tattered remnants of the “Northern Battalion” emerged from their inaccessible lairs in order to make their military presence felt, and this presence was weak.
18. *PRO Foreign Office* 371/48811, R5717/6/92.
19. *PRO Foreign Office* 371/48826, R8182/24/92.
20. Churchill ordered the cutting off of all deliveries of supplies to the SNLA “on the best pretext there can be found” on 18 April (*PRO Foreign Office* 371/48813, R5717/6/92).
21. Löhr was a general in the Luftwaffe and was executed as a war criminal in Yugoslavia in 1947.
22. The writer has spoken with an emotionally disturbed survivor who, a child at the time, was bayoneted and left for dead. The site of this atrocity, at Pod Peco/Koprein-Petzen, is now a partisan museum and shrine to the memory of the minority of Slovene-speaking Carinthians who had the will and the opportunity to resist Hitler’s “New Order.”
23. Wilkinson, in a Ford station wagon, was a few minutes ahead of them and was either the first or the second Briton in town.
24. Contrary to what is fondly believed by German Carinthians (cf. Barker, *Social Revolutionaries*, Chapter 5, *passim*), this governmental group had nothing at all to do with the accelerated advent of the Britons.
25. On May 13, also, Churchill requested and received Truman’s support.
26. Meanwhile, Carinthian partisans from the Sattnitz contingent were proudly standing watch over the Ducal Chair (*knežji kamen*), the ancient symbol of nationhood on the Gosposvetsko polje/Zollfeld.
27. The plan had the name “Operation Coldstream.” The Fifth Corps’ own strike plan was labeled “Beehive.”
28. *PRO Foreign Office* 371/48817, R8770/6/92.
29. Several lesser instances of bloody reprisal did occur, unbeknown to the British. In fact, the majority of deportees were NSDAP members; moreover, the situation was incomparably worse in the Meža valley, where some 700 people were slaughtered.
30. Note that the partisans had no effect at all upon the progress of the gigantic Drau power project.

**POVZETEK****PARTIZANSKI BOJI NA DVOJEZIČNEM PODROČJU KOROŠKE**

*Prvi del članka govori o virih in poudarja pomen bogatega novega dokumentarnega gradiva v britanskem Public Record Office-u. Za tem avtor na kratko prikaže proletarski socialni značaj in psiholingvistično dinamiko koroškega partizanskega gibanja. Prav tam se tudi dotika sorazmerne uspešnosti nacističnega kontrauporniškega gibanja in partizanskih terenskih težav. Kar se slovenskih partizanov tiče, je njihovno vrhovno poveljstvo vse do samega konca vojne smatralo Koroško za manjvažno zadevo. V kolikor so bile njihove akcije uspešne, so zavisle od materialne pomoči britanske supertajne Special Operations službe, ki je zaman upala, da ji bo pronacistična Koroška lahko služila kot odskočna deska za razpihovanje prevratnega gibanja v avstrijskih deželah in morda celo na Češkem, Slovaškem in na Poljskem. Toda nesoglasje med britanskimi cilji za ohranitev statusa quo in radikalno sociopolitičnimi aneksijskimi cilji uporniškega gibanja, ki so ga vodili komunisti, je bilo nespravljivo in je napovedovalo konflikt v neposrednem povojnem obdobju. Avtor tudi omenja neuspeh jugoslovanskega vojaškega navala ob koncu vojne in dejstvo, da je do edinega večjega spopada med partizani in njihovimi nasprotniki prišlo po premirju, ter da se je ta končal s porazom prvih. Borba, ki je predstavljala le skromen prispevek zavezniškemu vojnemu naporu, je že kazala na tri vrste oboroženega konflikta: državljanskega, revolucijskega in mednarodnega.*