Localizing the International: Yugoslavia and the Trieste Controversy, 1945-1954

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

by

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March 2020

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Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my advisor, Professor Georg Michels, for providing steady guidance and patience through the many different forms of this project. I also want to thank Professor Kiril Tomoff for sitting on my committee and providing helpful guidance in the early stages of this thesis. Finally, I wish to thank Professor James Robertson for sitting on my committee and providing essential resources and editing advice.
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**Introduction**

The state of scholarship traditionally looked at the Trieste controversy as an early indicator of Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union. Consequently, this approach often views the role of local actors and perspectives as subordinate to the desires of larger powers in the unfolding East-West struggle. This thesis seeks to focus on one of the local actors, Yugoslavia, in order to address two central questions: How did Yugoslavia respond to the Trieste crisis? What did this response represent in the larger context of the Cold War from the Yugoslav perspective? This paper reveals that the Yugoslav response changed significantly over time, but Yugoslav policy maintained at its core a concern for reclaiming national territory, protecting the Slovene population of the area, and rejecting foreign interference in the affairs of smaller states. Much of Yugoslavia’s key arguments centered around what it viewed as a long history of aggressive Italian imperialism against the South Slav peoples and accusations that Italy was courting Western support on illegitimate grounds. As the controversy over Trieste unfolded and Yugoslavia found itself isolated in the wake of the Tito-Stalin split, however, foreign interference became increasingly pivotal in Yugoslavia’s argument, foregrounding the continual denial of self-determination for South Slavic people. Eventually, the Trieste controversy transformed from an acute Italo-Yugoslav foreign policy issue into a justification for Yugoslavia rejecting the Cold War bloc system. In the Yugoslav view, this system threatened the independence of small states and was a hindrance to the development of peaceful coexistence based on respect for sovereignty and self-determination.
Methodology

In order to understand why Yugoslavia focused on national self-determination to foreground Italian imperialism and reject foreign involvement in the Trieste crisis, it is first necessary to examine its development and how it came to be understood following the Second World War. Doing so will provide a basis for analyzing the Yugoslav government’s central arguments in the Trieste controversy. Weitz demonstrated the progression of self-determination from an individualist concept in the seventeenth century to a collective principle during the twentieth century. He traced this decisive shift in meaning to the rise of socialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In particular, he focused on the Austro-Marxist understanding of cultural autonomy and decentralizing the role of the state so that national self-determination became the “program of the working class of all nations” in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹ He showed that this was radicalized by Lenin and Stalin into a definition based on a community of peoples connected by common language, territory, economic life, and culture. To the Soviet leaders, the nation-state represented a step on the road to communism.² On the other end of the spectrum was the Wilsonian definition of self-determination as free white men agreeing to form a democratic political order.³ Due to its wide appeal to colonized people, the major powers drew away from the concept of self-determination following World War I. That, however, did not stop national self-determination from becoming a

² Weitz, 480-484.
³ Weitz, 485.
hegemonic idea, subsequently narrowing understanding of who belonged in a nation and therefore had access to rights.4

Although Weitz presented a clear progression in the practical understanding of self-determination, Johnson demonstrated that in the international legal sphere it remained in constant contention. Following the First World War, self-determination came to mean a collective right of people typically defined in terms of a national group to choose sovereign authority over its territory. Freedom of choice and its association with self-government became paramount as conquest was determined to be incompatible with self-determination. During the Second World War, self-determination became a central principle of the Allied cause in Europe. In the Atlantic Charter, the signers reaffirmed freedom of choice as essential to self-determination and expressed concern for restoring the national life, sovereignty, and self-government of countries occupied by the Nazis.5 While the Western allies focused on states, the Soviets focused on the need for communists to aid oppressed national groups in liberation struggles.6 Despite the major powers focus on self-determination, it remained more an abstract principle than anything else until 1952 when extended discussion surrounding the concept began in the United Nations.

The majority of members suggested self-determination meant that people were able to determine their own international status. The colonial and anti-colonial powers,

4 Weitz, 465.


6 Johnson, 53.
however, were divided on whether self-determination could be defined as a right. Colonial powers referred to the principle of self-determination as it was defined in the Atlantic Charter, which was mainly concerned with recognizing and respecting the sovereignty of other states. Anti-colonial powers, spearheaded by the Soviet Union, supported explicitly defining self-determination as a right based in the people of a territory. In between the two poles of the debate, Yugoslavia proposed that self-determination as a right extended to individuals, but ultimately thought individuals would express the right based on nationality. Yugoslavia’s stance in the United Nations demonstrated how its understanding of self-determination blended together colonial and anti-colonial ideas.

As Robertson demonstrated, the Yugoslavs initially drew their understanding of self-determination from Soviet experiences. Much like the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav communists had to contend with organizing a multi-ethnic state. This resulted in a policy of self-determination for major national groups and territorial autonomy for national minorities, following the principle of supporting the liberation of oppressed national groups. Following the Tito-Stalin split, however, the Yugoslavs could no longer rely solely on this understanding. As they sought integration into international institutions, they faced a system “rooted in the norms and practices of liberal internationalism.” Postwar liberal internationalism drew from classical liberal ideas that were “adapted to

7 Johnson, 53.


9 Robertson, 5.
accommodate an emerging global sovereignty regime rooted in the nation-state.”¹⁰ These ideas emerged from Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the Atlantic Charter, which sought to integrate a system of free trade with respect for national self-determination and sovereign nation states.¹¹ Even as Yugoslavia became increasingly integrated into this system, they invoked liberal norms to criticize Western imperialism. The Yugoslav government maintained that the West was supporting imperialism even though it violated the principle of respect for sovereign nation states and the freedom of choice necessary to exercise self-determination. They did so several times during the Trieste controversy, accusingly Italy of violating Yugoslavia’s national sovereignty and the basic rights of the Slovene population.¹²

Thus, self-determination was a powerful rallying force imbued with different ideological meanings. Yugoslav officials understood this and utilized it not only to defend their national interest in Trieste, but also as a means to reject foreign interference from larger powers in Yugoslavia’s affairs as the crisis escalated. This paper will argue that the Yugoslav government emphasized that the freedom of choice essential to self-determination was denied to the Slovene population of Trieste by the Italian government. They did so by highlighting the persecution of the Slovene population by the Italian government during World War II as an attempt to destroy the Slovene national character and assert the Italian national character of the region post-war. As the Yugoslavs turned

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¹⁰ Robertson, 5.
¹¹ Robertson, 5.
¹² Robertson, 7.
their attention to foreign interference on behalf of Italy, officials focused on self-determination as defined in the Atlantic Charter. They charged the Western Allies with violating the minority rights of the Slovene population and Yugoslav sovereignty by supporting Italy despite its role in the Axis powers and argued the Atlantic Charter was being used to uphold imperialism.

On the other side of the spectrum, in their dealings with the Soviets during the Trieste crisis, the Yugoslav government turned its attention to the idea of communism being used to aid oppressed national groups in liberation struggles. Yugoslav officials argued Trieste served as an example of how the Soviet government sought to involve itself in Yugoslav affairs, ultimately connecting this experience to other instances of Soviet interference and asserting Yugoslavia’s commitment to sovereignty over allegiance to Moscow. As attention shifted to demonstrating how larger powers violated the right to sovereignty and self-determination of smaller states, Italian imperialism became part of a larger argument. Cold War bloc dynamics came to the fore as the Yugoslav government came to understand the East-West dichotomy as essentially false. From the Yugoslav point of view, bloc dynamics encouraged aggressive foreign policy in violation of the principles of self-determination and stymied the development of a peaceful world order.

Although this paper’s focus is on the Yugoslav perspective, it occasionally touches upon the roles of the United States and Soviet Union in the conflict. This is necessary because the Trieste region was subdivided, with Anglo-American control in Zone A and Yugoslav administration in Zone B. Therefore, the United States was
involved in the local context and was increasingly viewed by the Yugoslavs as representing Italian interests. At times, such as the March Declaration in 1948, the American government also initiated Soviet involvement as a proxy for Yugoslavia. This contributed to the straining of the Yugoslav-Soviet relationship over foreign policy matters, and ultimately transformed the Trieste controversy into an early marker of Yugoslavia’s rejection of Cold War ideological divides.

Many of the primary sources used by Western scholarship focus on the United States and Soviet Union. In these sources, however, it is possible to locate references and translations of speeches and other sources by Yugoslav officials which are not readily available in Serbo-Croatian. In terms of this paper, the primary restriction to accessing Serbo-Croatian sources is the distance of the archives of the former Yugoslav republics. More generally, in her work Kullaa pointed out that studying Yugoslav foreign policy has been “hindered by the location of the Yugoslav archives in Belgrade, which has experienced political instability since 1989.”13 In addition, one of the primary places to locate Serbo-Croatian sources in the United States, the Hoover Institute, was closed for renovations until early February.14 Given these limitations, this paper finds it necessary to rely on English sources and translations to build an argument. Among the sources used in this paper is the digitized *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers* series. This series includes memoranda, notes, and communications exchanged by

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American officials, their allies, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia. While its often necessary to read between the lines to distinguish between Yugoslav intentions and American perception, these documents are important for examining how Yugoslavia was responding to American involvement on the ground and incorporating it into their understanding of Italian involvement. To effectively read between the lines, this paper considers speeches and remarks attributed to Yugoslav officials in connection with secondary sources analyzing the varying sides of the conflict in order to assess the validity and goals of each work.

Soviet records of conversations and documents of correspondence with Yugoslavia prior to 1948 are also considered. The records are mainly of meetings between Tito and Stalin in which Trieste was discussed. These documents serve as an indicator on how Yugoslavia was responding to Soviet involvement and Trieste’s role in the breakdown of Yugoslav-Soviet relations in 1948. They provide a window into the private dealings of the two socialist states in the tumultuous post-war geopolitical situation. In particular, they highlight the tension between the Soviet government’s attempt to balance its relationship with the West and Yugoslavia’s demand that the Soviet Union support its claim to Trieste. Articles from The New York Times pertaining to the negotiations over Trieste as they evolved are also included. These articles bring attention to Yugoslavia’s foreign policy goals in Trieste and how it sought to fulfill them.

Also included in analysis are speeches by Yugoslav officials, most prominently by Edvard Kardelj and Ales Bebler. Kardelj was involved in the July 1941 Partisan uprising in Slovenia and later served as Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia from 1948-1953.
Even before his formal tenure as foreign minister, he was heavily involved in asserting Yugoslavia’s claim to Trieste and wrote works that embodied Yugoslavia’s foreign policy goals throughout the crisis.\textsuperscript{15} Ales Bebler served as the head of the Foreign Ministry’s Second Division and gave several speeches to international audiences regarding Yugoslavia’s foreign policy in connection to Trieste.\textsuperscript{16} Though some are filtered through secondary sources and translated into English, these speeches are important to include as the most readily available sources of the Yugoslav perspective. The speeches most utilized in analysis are from international conferences concerning post-war peace settlements. Some speeches, however, were addressed to Yugoslav audiences and were used to build solidarity between the Yugoslav peoples and the Slavic population of Venezia Giulia. Among these sources is Kardelj’s 1953 work \textit{Trieste and Yugoslav-Italian Relations}, which encompasses many arguments the Yugoslavs developed during the Trieste crisis and demonstrates the evolution of Trieste into a touchstone of Yugoslav foreign relations.

While Yugoslav arguments regarding Trieste changed over time, there were three main themes around which these arguments revolved: regaining national territory, protecting the Slovene population of the region, and rejecting foreign interference in its affairs. Accordingly, this paper is organized into three main sections of analysis. The first section is mainly concerned with establishing the historical background of the conflict and analyzing Yugoslavia’s post-war presence in the area in connection to ideas of

\textsuperscript{15} Kullaa, 36.

\textsuperscript{16} Kullaa, 87.
reclaiming national territory. The second section focuses on Yugoslav officials framing of the conflict as an Italo-Yugoslav matter by invoking Italian imperialism in connection with the persecution of the Slovenian population of Venezia Giulia. The final section examines how the Yugoslav government came to connect Italian imperialism with foreign interference, subsequently widening the scope of the Trieste crisis from the Yugoslav perspective. The paper concludes with the 1954 de facto settlement that gave Italy direct control of Zone A and Trieste, briefly examining how Yugoslav interests were incorporated into the agreement. Each section examines how the idea of self-determination undergirded the Yugoslav argument throughout the Trieste crisis in different forms.

**Historiography**

Western scholarship often focused on the involvement of the United States and Soviet Union in Trieste. In this narrative, Yugoslavia often occupied the place of a minor power working with and against the dominant powers depending on which offered Yugoslavia more monetary or material resources. Robert G. Rabel posited American involvement in Trieste “was intimately related to wartime intervention in Europe and the subsequent unfolding of the Cold War.”¹⁷ He framed American involvement as driven by fear of Soviet encroachment into Western Europe. As a result, he approached Yugoslav involvement through American perceptions of Yugoslavia as a pawn to the Soviet Union. Though Rabel sometimes challenged this view, the perception of Yugoslavia as a

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secondary player largely obscured the active role Yugoslavia maintained throughout the conflict. On the other hand, Richard S. Dinardo challenged Rabel’s view of America as the power most interested in Trieste. Dinardo instead argued that the United States became entangled in the region through Britain’s interest in Trieste as a means to enforce imperial spheres of influence. In Dinardo’s view, the American government’s main motivation for involvement was adherence to the neo-Wilsonian, multilateral world order envisioned at Yalta. He focused on Soviet cooperation in restraining Yugoslav ambitions in Trieste and traced the idea of Yugoslav subordination to British influence on American sources. Dinardo’s approach assigned a more active role to Yugoslavia, but his ultimate focus was analyzing how Rabel did not “sufficiently distinguish Truman’s cooperative approach to the USSR from the proto-Cold War anxieties of the State Department”, mistook “the prime objective of both to enforce Yalta’s multilateralism for containment” and confused “matters by assuming containment was at bottom a conventional spheres of influence policy.”

While Rabel and Dinardo focus on the region primarily from the perspectives of larger foreign policy goals, Glenda Sluga examined the Anglo-American allies’ involvement in the administration of the region following World War II. Sluga argued that the Anglo-Americans favored Italian claims based on the majority Italian population of Trieste because of anti-communist sentiment. In turn, anti-communist sentiment lead to the Anglo-Americans enforcing the identification of Yugoslav Partisans with Slavs,

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and Slavs with a perceived communist threat from the East. Ultimately, this view devolved into policies enforcing ethnic division, erasing Italian support for Trieste’s incorporation into Yugoslavia, and support of anti-Slovenian actions.\textsuperscript{19} In addition, Sluga called attention the persecution of the Slovenian population by the Italian government during World War II and contextualized the complications of enforcing ethnic identity in a historically multiethnic region. These complications provided a basis for Yugoslavia’s argument that it was protecting the rights of the Slovene minority.

Contrary to Sluga’s analysis, Marina Cattaruzza argued that Yugoslavia maintained the upper hand in negotiations over the region due to its ability to leverage force and the establishment of a repressive regime in Zone B. Where Sluga argued for an enthusiastic response to the Yugoslav presence across ethnic lines, Cattaruzza saw a sharper divide in support based on nationality. She maintained that the majority of the Italian population favored incorporation of the region into Italy, while the Slovenian population advocated for integration into Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{20} She also argued that it was Yugoslavia that had favorable international support, not Italy. She concluded, however, that Yugoslavia’s international support waned following the Tito-Stalin split and Italy regaining economic power in 1953.\textsuperscript{21} Due to these developments, Yugoslavia lost its leverage in the region and thus agreed to cede control to Italy.


\textsuperscript{21} Cattaruzza, 225-242.
Sluga and Cattaruzza centered Yugoslavia involvement to a greater extent than previous scholarship on Trieste, but their analysis of foreign policy remains secondary. Kullaa encompassed Trieste in a larger argument about the development of Yugoslavia’s foreign policy. She showed that Yugoslavia took independent foreign policy action before the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, but her primary focus is dating non-alignment to 1961. After the split left Yugoslavia isolated, the government turned to avoiding violent conflict with the Soviet Union and developing a foreign policy that would increase Yugoslavia’s international partnerships.\(^\text{22}\) In this larger framework, Kullaa argued that Yugoslavia’s actions in Trieste were ideologically driven. According to Kullaa, Yugoslavia’s anti-West, anti-imperial rhetoric was used to demonstrate that “Tito, unlike Stalin, remained loyal to the international Communist movement” and that Yugoslavia refused to abandon “its territorial claims in order to aid Soviet goals of non-conflictual relations with the West.”\(^\text{23}\) In Kullaa’s assessment, the independence of the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry from party leadership following the Tito-Stalin split and the appointment of Koca Popovic as Foreign Minister in 1953 were essential to end the Trieste dispute.\(^\text{24}\) This was because Popovic was most focused on building trade relationships with alternative partners and moving Yugoslavia away from ideological disputes with the Soviet Union.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{22}\) Kullaa, 2.

\(^{23}\) Kullaa, 34.

\(^{24}\) Kullaa, 93.

\(^{25}\) Kullaa, 87.
Like Kullaa, Niebuhr’s discussion of Trieste is connected to a broader analysis of Yugoslav foreign policy. Niebuhr argued that the state and communist party “effectively used foreign policy alongside a revisionist Marxist ideology as critically important tools to construct and maintain legitimacy.”

As part of this construction, Tito adopted a strongman persona that pushed Yugoslavia to rely on brinkmanship and power politics in its foreign policy. In his view, one area where Tito pursued brinksmanship was Trieste. According to Niebuhr, Tito antagonized the United States during the crisis because of his belief in Soviet backing and his own strength. Thus, in his consideration foreign involvement was the most important element of the Trieste crisis despite Yugoslavia’s attempts to influence a solution. Even though Niebuhr viewed Tito’s independent foreign policy moves prior to 1948 as largely unsuccessful, he maintained they were still important in helping to reconsider how actions taken by smaller states influenced the trajectory of the Cold War. Ultimately, Niebuhr concluded that Yugoslavia’s foreign policy and ideological reforms were defined by “pragmatism imbued with a Yugoslav ideology directed at both East and West as a third answer to the bipolar Cold War.”

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27 Niebuhr, 14.

28 Niebuhr, 33.

29 Niebuhr, 33.

30 Niebuhr, 23.
environment.”\textsuperscript{31} The result was a Yugoslav foreign policy which emphasized peaceful coexistence and respect for sovereign nations.\textsuperscript{32}

This paper intends to contribute to the development of scholarship in two ways. First, focusing on the Trieste crisis expands on analysis of the place of Trieste in Yugoslavia’s foreign policy. I argue that the Yugoslav government recognized the importance of ideology in fashioning the controversy, but ultimately came to view ideology as secondary to concern over the interference of foreign powers. Using Sluga’s examination of Anglo-American administration for context, I examine how the Yugoslav government pushed back against interpreting the conflict as a matter of Trieste belonging in the East or West. In the Yugoslav view, ideological and political divisions obscured the history of persecution the Slovenian population faced under Italian rule. Focusing on these divisions also enforced the identification of Slovenians with communism, making further discrimination against them possible. Therefore, the Yugoslav government’s goal in foregrounding this history of persecution over ideological divisions was to show that the true threat to the region was Italian imperialism. As the conflict escalated with foreign involvement, the Yugoslav government argued that the focus on ideological divisions that made Italian imperialism possible encouraged other states to pursue expansionism around the world. Therefore, the Yugoslav government called for a shift away from focusing on ideology in favor of non-interference by larger powers in the affairs of other states to combat the threat of expansionism.

\textsuperscript{31} Niebuhr, 17.

\textsuperscript{32} Niebuhr, 86.
The second way that this paper intends to contribute to scholarship is by providing a case study for how a small state navigated the development of the Cold War through its foreign policy. The Yugoslav government accomplished this by using different conceptions of self-determination to its advantage. Doing so allowed Yugoslavia to counter foreign interference using those powers own conceptions of self-determination in its arguments. In the case of Anglo-American interference, the Yugoslav government focused on ideas about national sovereignty articulated in the Atlantic Charter. To counter Soviet involvement, on the other hand, Yugoslavia focused on guaranteeing the rights of oppressed national groups. In these efforts, the Yugoslav government also articulated its own understanding of a federation of nations. They argued that the Yugoslav government would respect the national cultural autonomy of the Italian and Slovenian populations of the Trieste region as part of the multiethnic Yugoslav state. In the larger context, this allowed Yugoslavia to frame its foreign policy against Cold War divisions and develop an image as an anti-imperial power committed to respecting national sovereignty as the means to establish peaceful coexistence between nations.

The Trieste Conundrum: A Contested Historical Legacy

Tensions between Italians and South Slavs over Venezia Giulia extended back to 1848, when Italian, Croatian, and Slovene nationalists each claimed the area from the Hapsburgs.\textsuperscript{33} The absorption of Bosnia-Herzegovina into Austria-Hungary in 1878

\textsuperscript{33} Dinardo, 366.
sparked debates about the balance of power in the empire and Austrian imperialism.\(^\text{34}\) On the part of the Italians, the appointment of an anti-Italian military official in 1906 and the proposition of the 1912 “trialistic” model granting more autonomy to Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire prompted an intensification of Italian nationalism.\(^\text{35}\) When Italy entered World War I on the side of the Entente powers in 1915, the Treaty of London promised it South Tyrol, Trieste, Gorizia, Gradisca, and parts of Istria.\(^\text{36}\) Territories on the Adriatic coast not promised to Italy would be transferred to Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro.\(^\text{37}\) As rumors circulated that the Entente was near making territorial concessions to Italy, a Yugoslav Committee was formed in London to unify South Slavs under Serbian leadership. The Committee held a meeting in Trieste, in which the Slovene and Croatian representatives took part in authorizing a committee for the independence of Yugoslav lands and in opposition to concessions to Italy. The lands claimed by the committee included Gorizia, Gradisca, Trieste, and Istria.\(^\text{38}\)

\(^{34}\) Cattaruzza, 42.

\(^{35}\) Cattaruzza, 44.

\(^{36}\) Cattaruzza, 60.

\(^{37}\) Cattaruzza, 65.

\(^{38}\) Cattaruzza, 57.
The Bolshevik government published the Treaty of London negotiations in 1917, prompting an outcry from Serbia. Following Italy’s defeat in October 1917 at Caporetto, Russia exiting the war, and a temporarily significant increase in the strength of the Central Powers, Italian and Yugoslav representatives met to negotiate the division of the territory they had both claimed, but these talks amounted to nothing concrete.\(^3^9\) In post-war peace negotiations, the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes again protested the Treaty of London and demanded Dalmatia, Istria, Trieste, and Gorizia.\(^4^0\) In the case of Trieste, the Yugoslavs argued that there was a large Slovene population in the city’s hinterland. According to Yugoslav understanding, a city belonged to its hinterland and therefore the territory was nationally Yugoslavian.\(^4^1\) Although under pressure from Yugoslavia and other Entente powers, the Italian government argued that the Treaty of London remained in force.\(^4^2\)

With the 1918 Austro-Italian armistice, Italy occupied Venezia Giulia and maintained control despite Yugoslav protests and resistance from Slovene and Croatian populations in some areas.\(^4^3\) The stipulations of the Treaty of London were revisited in 1920 with the Treaty of Rapallo. The treaty established the Italo-Yugoslav border at Mount Nevoso and succeeded in renegotiating the division of contested territory. As a result of

\(^{3^9}\) Cattaruzza, 70.

\(^{4^0}\) Cattaruzza, 86-7.


\(^{4^2}\) Cattaruzza, 84.

\(^{4^3}\) Cattaruzza, 91.
the treaty, around “three hundred and fifty thousand Slovenes and one hundred thousand Croatians” were “incorporated into the Italian state.”44 Slovenes in Yugoslavia protested this incorporation, as it resulted in nearly a fourth of their population being absorbed into Italy.45

As fascism began to spread through Italy in the interwar years, the Slovene and Croatian populations across the country faced violence and legal repression in an attempt to suppress expressions of their national character and incorporate them into the state. In 1923, a law on press restricted Slovene and Croatian publications and by 1925 policies against Slovenes and Croatians became widely enforced.46 One notable early law in 1925 prohibited the teaching of Slovenian and Croatian in schools, combined with the organization of Italian language course in even the most remote Slovene villages of the area.47 In 1927, Slavic cultural associations were abolished, and a law required Slovene surnames be changed to Italian. Adding to that, in 1928 a law against “amoral” names was applied to prevent the baptism of children with Slavic names.48 Repressive measures against the Slavic population in Venezia Giulia escalated into forms of forced migration and violence during World War II. In 1940, authorities in Trieste rounded up three hundred Slovenes and sent most of them to internment camps or internal confinement throughout

44 Cattaruzza, 113.
45 Cattaruzza, 113.
46 Cattaruzza, 127.
47 Cattaruzza, 130.
48 Cattaruzza, 131.
Italy. Seventy-two of the three hundred detained, which included some Italian collaborationist, were charged with “irredentist clandestine activity.” In 1941, five thousand Slovenes, were incorporated into “special battalions” and sent away from Venezia Giulia. By 1942, Venezia Giulia became a center of Yugoslav Partisan activity.

Despite extensive Yugoslav Partisan activity in Venezia Giulia, Yugoslavia’s control of the area was not guaranteed as the war neared its end in 1945. Although they were wartime allies, the Anglo-Americans and Yugoslav Partisans were racing to Trieste in hopes of being the first force to occupy the city. Writing to President Truman on April 27, 1945, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill asserted that the “great thing is to be there before Tito’s guerillas […] The actual status of Trieste can be determined at leisure.”

Similar to Churchill, Tito’s motivation to reach Trieste before the Anglo-Americans was driven by the notion that occupation would almost certainly guarantee Yugoslavia possession of the region in future peace negotiations. This notion stemmed from the peace negotiations following the first world war, when Italy was able to take control of territories not promised to it in the Treaty of London because of its role in occupying them. Given this example and the presence of a Slovene and Croatian population, Tito expected to have a strong basis to support Yugoslavia’s bid for the region.

49 Cattaruzza, 170.
50 Cattaruzza, 169.
51 Cattaruzza, 171.
53 Niebuhr, 27.
Despite Churchill’s urgings, and to the Yugoslavs satisfaction, the Partisans arrived the day before Anzac forces and took control of Trieste. When they arrived the following day, the Anzac forces occupied the suburbs while Yugoslav forces remained in control of the city for forty days.\footnote{Cattaruzza, 216.}

While the Yugoslavs and Anglo-Americans shared a sense of urgency to be the first force to occupy Trieste, their motivations for occupation were different. The Anglo-Americans immediate concern was securing lines of communication through Trieste to Austria, which they maintained made occupation of the city essential.\footnote{“The Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, March 2, 1945”, U.S. Department of State, \textit{FRUS: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, Volume IV: Europe} (Washington, 1968), Document 1038.} Tito contested these claims, arguing that “if the object of Allied occupation was to protect lines of communication between Trieste and Austria he did not consider Allied occupation of whole Istrian peninsula necessary and offered use of communication facilities through Ljubljana.”\footnote{“Mr. Alexander C. Kirk, Political Advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, to the Secretary of State, February 24, 1945”, \textit{FRUS: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, Volume IV: Europe} (Washington, 1968), Document 1036.} In Tito’s view, establishing lines of communication was a pretext to deprive Yugoslavia of territory that “from a national point of view […] has been unjustly awarded to Italy after World War I.”\footnote{Cattaruzza, 218.} To the Yugoslavs, Italy’s claim to the region was based on an unjust treaty, military occupation, and persecution of the Slavic population. Yugoslavia’s motivation in occupying Trieste and refusing to cooperate with the Anglo-
Americans originated from grievances following the first world war, but the Yugoslavs sought to connect them to a longer national history in the region.

In order to do so, Edvard Kardelj instructed the Director of the Liberation Front’s ‘Scientific Institute’ to prepare a paper to convince international opinion of Yugoslav claims based on “the principles of nationality.” They focused on a construction of history that emphasized the longevity of the Slovene and Croatian presence in the region. Yugoslavia claimed that “‘for 13 centuries the Slovenians and Croatians’” of the region “‘toiled as slaves for foreign masters and shed sweat and blood upon their native soil.’” This language served to bring attention to not only how long Slavs inhabited the region, but also the hundreds of years they were subjected to foreign domination and denied their own nation. Yugoslav officials then brought this link into the present by focusing on the persecution of the Slovenian population under fascist Italy. For the last twenty-five years, Slovenians were subject to measures of terror including “concentration camps and murder.” In the Yugoslav view, Italian persecution was meant to destroy the Slovenian nation in the region and was used as a guarantee that Italy could shore up support for its ethnic claims to the territory following the war.

Despite the centuries of terror the Slovene population endured, the Yugoslavs argued that “there are on the side of our Allies men who deny our right to these areas.”

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59 Niebuhr, 28.

60 Niebuhr, 28.
Recognizing resistance to its claims, they pushed to tie Yugoslavia’s military presence in the region to the protection of the Slovene population against further Italian persecution. As a primary liaison between the Yugoslav government and the Anglo-Americans, Kardelj argued that “Yugoslav troops ostensibly stood to protect their fellow countrymen from harassment by the domineering Italians.”62 With this statement, Kardelj reconciled Yugoslavia’s military occupation with the language of self-determination that would typically oppose it. As discussed earlier, during World War I occupation came to be as detrimental to the freedom of choice necessary to national self-determination. From the Yugoslav perspective, however, the peace negotiations following the war in which the Treaty of London was upheld demonstrated that the principle was not always equally applied. Yugoslavia’s occupation, therefore, was meant to reverse this injustice by guaranteeing the safety of a persecuted Yugoslav national group so it could freely exercise the right to self-determination denied to it by the Italian government.

In order to strengthen the image that the Slovene population in Venezia Giulia belonged to the Yugoslav national group, officials turned to the peoples of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav army and the Yugoslav people more generally were encouraged to view themselves as protectors of the liberated territory. “The new Yugoslav Army […] will remain the unshakable defender of the achievements of the superhuman struggle. People of Yugoslavia! Our liberated brothers in Istria, in the Slovenian Littoral […] fix their eyes

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62 Niebuhr, 28.
upon you in full confidence that you will know how to preserve the freedom they have 
won.”63 Identifying the struggle to maintain freedom as the collective responsibility of the 
Yugoslav peoples was meant to promote a sense of solidarity with the Slovene population 
and encourage direct investment in what was taking place in Venezia Giulia. Yugoslav 
acceptance of the people of Venezia Giulia as rightfully belonging to the nation also served 
to address Stalin’s cautioning of Yugoslavia in using occupation as the primary tool to 
determine Trieste’s status.64

Claiming that Slovenes in Venezia Giulia were not historically able to exercise their 
right to self-determination and were reduced to a national minority through means of terror 
required officials to appeal to a wider Yugoslav audience. It was generally agreed national 
minorities were entitled to the same political rights as other citizens of a state, but did not 
have the right to create a state for themselves.65 Based on these guidelines, Yugoslav 
officials were correct in arguing that the rights of Slovenians were violated by fascist Italy, 
but did not necessarily have a case that Slovenians in Venezia Giulia were entitled to 
become a nation of their own. The argument maintained that Slovenians had the right to 
national self-determination by enfolding them into an already recognized nation-state. This 
also made it possible for Yugoslav officials to legitimate their argument that Trieste and


65 Johnson, 57.
other portions of Venezia Giulia belonged to Yugoslavia because it served as a link between Yugoslav and Slovene identity.

This strategy also demonstrates how Yugoslavia balanced the realities on the ground in Trieste with its rhetoric around self-determination. The Anglo-Americans and Yugoslavs were equally suspicious of each other’s intentions, but they did manage to reach an agreement regarding lines of communication. The accord allowed the Allied Military Government to establish its administration “wherever it was necessary to maintain control over road and railroad communications with Austria”, including Trieste. In exchange, Tito stipulated that Yugoslav civil administration be allowed to continue to operate in “those territories even in the case of occupation by the Allies.”\(^{66}\) The Yugoslav government’s clause meant that a number of Yugoslav bodies remained influential in Allied Military Government territory. Among these bodies were the Liberation Committee, the Italian-Slovenian Antifascist Committee, the militia for the people’s defense, and the people’s tribunal.\(^{67}\) The presence of these organizations caused concern and prompted calls for increased American intelligence personnel in Trieste and other Allied Military Government controlled territories.\(^{68}\)

Such concerns found justification in the actions of some of the groups allowed to operate in Anglo-American territory. The Italo-Slovenian Anti-Fascist Union drew up

\(^{66}\) Cattaruzza, 218.

\(^{67}\) Cattaruzza, 218.

petitions in Italian and Slovenian in support of the incorporation of parts of Venezia Giulia into Yugoslavia. The Italian version of the petition called for an autonomous Trieste and union with Yugoslavia. The Slovenian version demanded the union of Istria, Fiume, Trieste, Gorizia, the Slovenian Littoral, the Veneto, and the Julian regions within Yugoslavia.

Lending further support for the territory’s incorporation was Tito’s reputation as “the soul of democratic protagonism” and Allied difficulties in establishing their control over Zone A. By September 1945, “19 out of the 37 communes composing Zone A, including four communes with a population of over 90 percent Italian-speakers, were refusing Allied government appointed administrators.”70 To explain their lack of support in Zone A, the Senior Civil Affairs Officer alleged that all peoples in opposition in the communes were “either extremely Communist or completely over-awed by the Communist elements.”71 While support for Trieste’s incorporation into Yugoslavia did mainly come from the working class, peasant, or petit-bourgeois members, the Anglo-American assessment also obscured the multiethnic character of the region.72

The Yugoslav government anticipated the Allies reduction of the multiethnic character of the region and portrayal of communism as an encroaching force. In an October 1, 1944 letter to the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party, Kardelj focused on the connection between territorial sovereignty and the region’s cultural significance. He argued that the Italians cast the region as the political dividing line between the East and

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69 “Mr. Alexander C. Kirk, Political Advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, to the Secretary of State, September 8, 1945”, U.S. Department of State, FRUS: Diplomatic Papers, Volume IV: Europe (Washington, 1968), Document 1115. The Italian version of the petition called for an autonomous Trieste and union with Yugoslavia. The Slovenian version demanded the union of Istria, Fiume, Trieste, Gorizia, the Slovenian Littoral, the Veneto, and the Julian regions within Yugoslavia.

70 Sluga, “Trieste: Ethnicity and the Cold War, 1945-54”, 291.

71 Ibid, 291.

72 Cattaruzza, 221.
the West to win the support of the West for its claim.\textsuperscript{73} The Yugoslav government countered this demarcation of the border region by casting it in terms of a cultural and ideological issue.\textsuperscript{74} This approach focused more on Italo-Slovene coexistence in the region “on the basis they were distinct but equal identities.”\textsuperscript{75} According to this logic, Italo-Slovene coexistence did not imply the formation of new identity for the peoples of the region, but “suggested a bridge between discrete cultural identities and implied their common future in a Communist Yugoslavia that was a federation of nations.”\textsuperscript{76}

This argument demonstrated the Yugoslav idea of self-determination drawn from Soviet theories and experiences. The federal organization of the Soviet Union was informed by the principle of self-determination as a means to assist the liberation of oppressed groups and the presence of various national groups across the state. According to this principle, national groups in the Soviet Union were “granted varying degrees of territorial autonomy especially with regard to cultural affairs.”\textsuperscript{77} This transformed into a Yugoslav understanding of a federation of nations in a common state. Incorporation of the territory into Yugoslavia liberated the Slovene and Croatian population from the persecution they endured under fascist Italy and reunited them with the Yugoslav nation, fulfilling the mandate to aid oppressed national groups. By focusing on coexistence and

\textsuperscript{73} Sluga, \textit{The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth Century Europe}, 69.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 111.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 68.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 68.

\textsuperscript{77} Robertson, 13-4.
respect for separate identities, the Yugoslavs proposed a policy based on protecting the rights of self-determination for national groups in a common state. Appealing to self-determination in this way complicated the division between East and West by foregrounding the region’s salient ethnic and culture borders and offering a solution on a prominent principle to the Allied cause.

Yugoslavia’s bid to maintain its military presence in Anglo-American territory failed on June 9, 1945 when the Belgrade accords “forced the Yugoslav liberation army to retreat beyond the Morgan line.”78

The Morgan line represented the border between Zone A in the west controlled by the Anglo-Americans and Zone B in the east controlled by the Yugoslavs. In addition, the people’s militia for popular defense and the people’s tribunal were disbanded. The retreat of the armed forces made it difficult for Yugoslavia to sustain arguments connecting its military presence with self-determination. The disbanding of Yugoslav-supported organizations in Zone A also deprived Yugoslavia of important outlets of gaining support among the population in Allied territory and made existing support less visible. Despite this setback, Yugoslav officials remained determined to incorporate Trieste and its surrounding territory into Yugoslavia.

78 Cattaruzza, 221.
At a May 27, 1946 meeting to discuss Yugoslavia’s economy and foreign relations, “Stalin asked Tito whether, in the instance of Trieste being granted the status of a free city, this would involve just the city itself or the city suburbs.” Tito maintained that only Trieste “was negotiable, whereas the adjacent territories should certainly become part of Yugoslavia.” Trieste was negotiable because of its majority Italian population. In contrast, the suburbs were where the majority of the Slovenian and Croatian population resided so they were marked as unquestionably Yugoslav territory. Although Tito admitted Trieste was negotiable if it removed the Anglo-American presence from the city, he also asserted that “he could not accept leaving the city in Italian hands in perpetuity. Tito’s idea was to assign a joint Italo-Yugoslav administration to Trieste, even if Italy was granted a dominant role.” This idea would ensure that continued negotiation over the region remained primarily focused on the local actors. In addition, the removal of Anglo-American interference lessened the strength of Italy’s claim and left Yugoslavia in a position to more easily express its interests in. Lastly, shared power would give the Yugoslavs a headquarters for resisting Italian encroachment into the Balkans.


81 Agarossi and Zaslavsky, 152.
An Imperial Tradition: Conquest Over Freedom of Choice

Along with defending self-determination, one of the primary motivations for Yugoslavia in incorporating Trieste was “striking a painful blow to Italian imperialism and Italy’s territorial claims to the Balkans.”\(^{82}\) As postwar peace talks began, the Yugoslav government came prepared to defend its claims to the region along these lines. Leading the Yugoslav delegation at the Conference of Twenty One Nations in 1946, Kardelj responded to the Italian representative Alcide de Gasperi by cataloguing “the successive acts of aggression by Italy since the beginning of the century.”\(^{83}\) In addition, he refuted Italian attempts to reduce its role in the war by identifying Italy “as a partner and competent part of the Axis.”\(^{84}\) Kardelj’s added another dimension to earlier arguments about the national principle by exclusively focusing on Italian imperialism as a threat to Yugoslav sovereignty. He warned the delegates in attendance that “to make concessions at the moment would encourage Italian imperialism.”\(^{85}\) The Yugoslav government was expressing its doubts that the post-war Italian government had abandoned its Italian irredentist ambitions, with Kardelj telling the delegates explicitly,

It was too early to speak of the “new Italy”; even the composition of the Italian delegation was evidence of this. There was no word which could be taken as a serious promise that Italy was turning over a new leaf. It was no mere coincidence that Sr. de Gasperi was repeating the tactics pursued by Italian leaders after the 1914-1918 war and was making similar strategic claims. In his ethnic arguments he was adopting the arguments of

\(^{82}\) Agarossi and Zaslavsky, 149.


\(^{84}\) Ibid, 512.

\(^{85}\) Ibid, 512.
Mussolini. The conference was exposed to the danger of making concessions not to the Italian people but to Italian imperialism. The suffering peoples of Yugoslavia had the right to ask their allies for protection against a new aggression.86

Kardelj’s speech was meant to remind the audience that although Italy was attempting to reduce its culpability, it had been on the side of the Axis and was continuing a long-standing trend of aggression against the Yugoslav peoples. It also brought attention to the main principles of the Atlantic Charter, which were focused on freeing lands occupied by the Nazis. As part of the Axis, Italy contributed to Nazi occupation and, according to Kardelj, it would therefore be wrong to reward Italy with territory it had taken by force. To support claims that Italy remained more interested in aggression than reconciliation, Kardelj referenced the Treaty of London and Italian occupation of territory following the First World War. To the Yugoslavs, the Treaty of London represented an act of aggression not only because it resulted in demographic lose but also because it privileged occupation over freedom of choice. Kardelj further connected the Italian delegation’s claim to the actions of Mussolini. This reinforced Italy’s role in the Axis and brought attention to Italian persecution of the Slovenian population. He contended this denationalized the area and made it possible for Italy to argue for the region based on claims of ethnic majority. Furthermore, Kardelj argued that the Italian delegation was not protecting its peoples or regaining national territory. Instead, their main interest was maintaining an imperial foothold in the Balkans. This

86 Ibid, 512.
would not only threaten the already persecuted Slovenian population, but also the Yugoslav peoples and Yugoslavia’s sovereignty by encouraging Italian imperialism.

Kardelj was not the only Yugoslav official to espouse the threat of Italian imperialism. Yugoslavia’s Deputy Foreign Minister and United Nations representative, Ales Bebler, connected the Trieste crisis to Italy’s history of interference in Yugoslavia’s affairs. In a speech given to the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs in June 1953, Bebler contended,

Relations between nations can be spoiled if the principles of equality, good neighborliness, and non-interference in the internal affairs of others are forgotten. Such is the story of our relations with our immediate neighbor, Italy. I refer to the problem of Trieste [...] As the Italians were considered to be one of the victors of the First World War, they succeeded at the Versailles Conference in obtaining not only Trieste but a large portion of what is Yugoslavia, a portion which is now inhabited by about half a million Yugoslavs [...] Today the question is not just of Trieste. We are concerned with the tendency which means Italian expansion towards the borders of Yugoslavia. This is the essence of our problem with Italy. As long as there is such a tendency in Italy, the Trieste problem will not be solved.87

In the beginning of the speech, Bebler implicitly laid out what Yugoslavia believed were the cornerstones of successful foreign policy and accused Italy of a long history of dismissing these principles. Like Kardelj, Bebler returned to the results of the First World War and made it explicit that Yugoslavia’s right to its national territory was violated as a result of Italy’s more powerful position at the peace negotiations. Bebler reinforced Yugoslavia’s connection to the territory by categorizing the peoples there as Yugoslavs instead of as Slovenians or Croatians. He then cited a numerical figure to

support the point that a significant portion of the Yugoslav nation was under foreign occupation and denied their right to self-determination because of Italy’s imperial ambitions. Finally, Bebler widened the threat of Italian expansionism against Yugoslavia beyond Trieste to convey that Yugoslavia’s resistance in negotiations concerned combating Italy’s historic encroachment into Yugoslav territory and against its peoples. Bebler’s framing made it clear that Trieste represented where the Yugoslavs intended to halt Italy’s imperial ambitions and Yugoslavia would not retreat until this goal was recognized.

At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, the Allies tasked the Council of Foreign Ministers with preparing the peace treaties. One of the duties of the Council was to draw a border between Italy and Yugoslavia that was “as fair as possible on a national point of view” by ensuring that the respective national minorities outside of each state’s border be more or less equal in size.\footnote{Cattaruzza, 225.} As part of this effort, the Council formed an International Boundary Commission and sent representatives to survey the territory. A year later, the Council had collected 350 pro-Italian resolutions and 3,650 resolutions in favor of Yugoslavia.\footnote{Cattaruzza, 225.} Based on these results and the submission of boundary lines by the Council’s major powers, a compromise “reproduced the Soviet line almost exactly” and determined that a Free Territory would be established under the authority of the United Nations.\footnote{Cattaruzza, 226.} The Yugoslav delegate protested the compromise, arguing the territory “was
an indivisible whole” and the “part that would be in the Free Territory was dependent on
the surrounding territory.”91 In exchange for accepting the Yugoslav line, the Yugoslav
government was prepared “to renounce her demand [that] the Governor of the Free
Territory be Yugoslav and the demand that [Yugoslavia’s] political representative in the
Government of Trieste should have the right to veto.”92

On the surface, this compromise required Yugoslavia relinquish a significant
amount of the power it wanted in the Free Territory. The Yugoslav delegate’s argument
and reason for compromise, however, returned to the Yugoslav idea of a city belonging to
its hinterland. Accepting the borders of the compromise would leave the Slavic
population of the hinterland isolated from Yugoslavia. The division would also benefit
the Italians in possible future negotiations. It would do so by further reducing the
presence of Slovenians and Croatians in the region and subsequently strengthen Italian
arguments that Trieste and the surrounding territory was primarily Italian. Therefore, the
compromise served to protect the larger argument that Trieste and the surrounding area
was nationally Yugoslav. Additionally, Yugoslavia submitted a new draft for Article 16
of the Italian peace treaty. One stipulation of this draft was that the “Governor would be
appointed by the Security Council after consultation with the two countries.”93 With this
stipulation, Yugoslavia was asserting that it expected to have power in the Free Territory
and was not going to be pushed out of the region. Yugoslavia’s draft also stipulated that it

(London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, October 21-November 10, 1946), 679.


“would have a free zone within the port and would assume the obligation of representing the City in its foreign relations.”94 The free zone ensured that Yugoslavia would maintain its economic link to the city and could serve as a means for Yugoslavia to maintain a visible presence in Zone A after Yugoslav organizations were disbanded in 1945.

By far Yugoslavia’s largest demand in its bid to maintain power in Trieste, however, was that it be awarded the task of representing the city in its foreign relations. This demand placed great weight on Yugoslavia’s presence in the region, even among foreign powers. Being granted this role would also negate the other compromises Yugoslavia was willing to make to guarantee the Free Zone not be divided unfavorably for the Yugoslavs. This also served the purpose of tempering Italian influence in the region by giving Yugoslavia a stage where it could advocate directly for the connection between Yugoslavia and the Slovenian population of Trieste and against Italian expectations of Western support for its ethnic claim. It also had the potential of laying the groundwork to lessen, if not completely remove, Anglo-American influence from the region by allowing it to argue to other powers that the matter primarily concerned Italy and Yugoslavia. Ultimately, this demand was an explicit rejection of foreign powers being given the greatest amount of control in Trieste and a bid to increase the visibility of Yugoslavia’s role in the region.

The negotiations resulted in the signing of the Paris Peace Treaties on February 10, 1947 and the subsequent establishment of the Free Territory of Trieste under the

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control of the United Nations. Worried that Yugoslavia’s active presence during the peace negotiations would lead to violence in Zone A, the United States initially hesitated to partition the territory. By March 1948, however, the situation had changed and the United States, Britain, and France openly declared their support for transferring the Free Territory to Italy. In an attempt to bypass Yugoslavia, the three powers addressed the declaration to the Soviet Union and Italy. It asked them “to join the western powers in amending the peace treaty so that the Free Territory would return to Italian sovereignty.” The Soviet Union was addressed as a proxy to Yugoslavia; demonstrating that despite Yugoslavia’s active presence in the region and arguments of a national right to the territory, the Western Allies still considered Italy to have a more solid claim to the region. In conjunction with the March Declaration, the United States addressed a separate memorandum to Italy. The Soviet-Italian declaration justified specifically transferring Trieste to Italy because of the city’s majority Italian population. The amended version, however, characterized the entire Free Territory as “ethnically and historically Italian territory.”

95 Cattaruzza, 226.


98 Novak, 9.
Although the March Declaration made the United States position clear and added legitimacy to Italian claims, the Yugoslav government did not back down from continuing to negotiate. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, Ales Bebler, met with State Department officials in Washington and asked “that the U.S. Government approach the Italian Government, urging the later to accept a compromise solution.” He argued [...] that “so long as the Italian Government believes that they have the support of the U.S. Government on the proposal made by the three Western powers on March 28, 1948, they will not budge from claiming the return of the entire Free Territory to Italy.”

Bebler made it clear that foreign interference was negatively impacting local attempts to negotiate. As long as Italy had foreign backing, it would continue to block any attempts at compromise the Yugoslavs suggested. This was frustrating for the Yugoslavs, as they once again saw their national territory being given to a country that repeatedly acted against Yugoslavia and its population. It also made Yugoslav attempts to ensure that the crisis remained primarily local and focused on combating Italian claims based on Italy’s imperial past difficult.

Bebler was not the only Yugoslav official to approach the United States government regarding the March Declaration. Yugoslav Ambassador Popovic acknowledged the United States “could be helpful in creating the right atmosphere” for Italo-Yugoslav negotiations but cautioned it was important,

That American representatives not give support to extremist Italian pretensions by reviving the March 20 tripartite declaration. He said it was necessary to understand that Yugoslavia had suffered greatly from the Italian Fascist occupation and that it would be of the greatest difficulty for Yugoslavia to surrender any territory with which it had come out of the war. Finally he stated that up to the present negotiations with the Italians

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99 Rabel, 128.
have been quite impossible because the Italians had insisted upon their approach to any negotiations on the tripartite declaration of March 20.\textsuperscript{100}

Popovic maintained the United States would be most helpful in finding a solution if it removed its endorsement of the March Declaration and left the local powers on more equal footing. Popovic also raised Italy’s connection to the Axis during World War II to remind the United States that supporting Italy would be a slight to their ally and a victory to their enemy. Due to the harm Yugoslavia suffered at the hands of Italy, Popovic thought it understandably difficult for Yugoslavia to renounce the national territory it fought for and again subject Yugoslav peoples to Italian aggression. Popovic, however, did present three possible solutions on the behalf of the Yugoslav government. The first solution kept the existing boundary between the zones as the Italo-Yugoslav frontier and assigned Italy Zone A and Yugoslavia Zone B. The second solution established autonomous regions in both zones which fell under the sovereignty of Yugoslavia and Italy respectively, stipulating that both countries would work together to decide the degree of autonomy in those areas. The third solution assigned Zone A to Italy and Zone B to Yugoslavia, but made “minor rectifications” based on the principle of ethnicity. The Yugoslav government envisioned Capodistria being given to Italy, while the villages between Capodistria and Trieste and those between Trieste and Monfalcone would be given to Yugoslavia based on their Slovenian majority.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{100} “Yugoslav-U.S. Positions on Trieste Question, August 28, 1951”, Department of State, 2.

\textsuperscript{101} “Yugoslav-U.S. Position on the Trieste Question”, 1.
All the solutions guaranteed that Yugoslavia would keep control of Zone B and were reasonably favorable to Yugoslavia. The first solution kept the border established by the Council in 1946, which had settled along the Soviet line more favorable to Yugoslavia. The second solution focused on autonomous regions, which would allow Yugoslavia to maintain its connection with the Slovenian population of the region and allow it to advocate for its autonomy based on its understanding of self-determination in multiethnic states. The third solution would allow Yugoslavia to incorporate majority Slovenian regions directly into Yugoslavia, while avoiding some of the complications that would result in also having to incorporate a sizable Italian minority. These options were also a signal that Yugoslavia was prepared to negotiate an equitable solution, in contrast to Italy’s reluctance.

When Italo-Yugoslav negotiations began in November 1952, however, there was little success in reaching a solution. Yugoslavia summarily rejected Italy’s proposal for the Free Territory’s partition “according to a continuous ethnic line because such a solution favored Italy.”

The Yugoslav government even rebuffed the American official sent to persuade it and the negotiations ultimately broke down in March. Faced with the March Declaration and unsuccessful negotiations, Yugoslavia focused on combating attempts to divide the territory based on ethnic lines by focusing on how Western involvement was encouraging continued persecution of the Slovenian population. As early as 1945, the Yugoslav government implied the Allied Military Government was

102 Rabel, 138.
103 Rabel, 138.
“imposing Fascist administrators and administration on the area.” Fueling these accusations was the view that the Allied Military Government was reinstating fascist laws, purged of anti-Semitic clauses, in Allied territories, which the Allies vigorously denied.

After the March Declaration, Yugoslav officials made their accusations of the Allied Military Government supporting fascism even more explicit. In a speech, Bebler argued that Slovenians in Zone A,

Do not have their rights in the territory which is under the Allied administration, although this administration should be at least neutral if it does not want to correct the injustice done to the Slovenes by Mussolini’s regime, which expelled about 100,000 Slovenes from Trieste by means of political and economic pressure and settled in their places Italians from Calabria and other regions [...] Now, when the Italians have already denationalized our territory to such an extent and strengthened and expanded their positions in Trieste in the economic, ethnical, and cultural fields, they suggest that the peace should be implemented, that the Security Council should appoint a governor who would rule in Trieste. They consider that Trieste is now already Italianized to such an extent that Italy would be quite sure of it.

Bebler accused the Allies of overlooking the persecution of the Slovenian population and maintaining the balance of power which resulted from it by their indifference in even attempting to correct it. Bebler also invoked foreign involvement by implying that Italy intended to use the heavy presence of Western powers to influence the

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105 Sluga, “Trieste: Ethnicity and the Cold War, 1945-54”, 291.

106 Foreign Broadcast Information Service, “Bebler Demands Justice for Slovenes, August 31, 1953” (Skopje, Macedonian Regional Service).
appointment of a governor favorable to Italy’s interests. Such actions were a contradiction to the Allies rejection of imperialism and the commitment they made in the Atlantic Charter to free occupied territories from fascist rule. The situation was also a violation of the Atlantic Charter’s “desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned” and the respect of “all people to choose the form of government under which they will live.”\footnote{Weitz, 34.} Granting the territory to Italy would not reflect the actual desires of the people in the region, but ensure conquest over freedom of choice by continuing to favor the state which had first acquired the territory through treaty and occupation.

Tito expanded on Bebler’s accusations, contending that the Western powers helped to establish Italy’s economic control over the region to the determent of the Slovenian population,

The Western Allies have put at the disposal of the economic building of Trieste sums amounting to billions. A special section of Marshall aid was set up to benefit Zone A, which has spent over 23 billion lire, but not for Slovenes. For whom? Slovenes received almost nothing of all this aid, and it is no wonder because there are only Italians on those commissions.\footnote{Foreign Broadcast Information Service, “Tito Discusses Elections, Trieste, November 15, 1953” (Belgrade, Yugoslav Home Service).}

Tito asserted the United States failing to enforce oversight on Marshal Aid resulted in further economic disenfranchisement of the Slovenian population. It also ensured that Italians were able to develop Trieste so that it was economically favorable to Italian interests over Yugoslav ones. In the same speech, Tito alleged Slovenian
applications for citizenship in Zone A “were rejected, although in 1932 they served the Italian army in Italy and fought as Italian soldiers from 1940 up until the end of the war.” Tito’s accusation highlighted the intentional exclusion of Slovenians from the Italian nation. They were denied the rights of citizenship despite their participation in defending Italy during the war. This denial signaled that Slovenians were not entitled to rights as members of the Italian nation; and carried with it the threat that they could be removed from the territory without any guarantee of protection either from the Italian state or the Allies. Such accusations also sharply contrasted with the Yugoslav perception of a federation of nations in which each had equal access to rights of citizenship. Thus, Tito was not only highlighting how the Allies contributed to the financial deprivation of the Slovenian population but also accusing the Allies of participating in denying them the ability to be members of the Italian nation.

Given these actions, the Yugoslav government did not think it was possible to find a solution without major changes to Italy’s attitude toward the Slovenian population. Kardelj, however, was skeptical that Italy would achieve this change if given control of Zone A and was therefore convinced,

More than ever, that the most appropriate solution in this phase would be to internationalize the city of Trieste and transfer Zone B and the remainder of Zone A to Yugoslavia, because that area in its large majority is ethnically Yugoslav and not necessary to the normal life of the city of Trieste; it would, indeed, complicate its internal relations and international position. In Trieste itself, and everywhere in the world, this proposal has met with approval. If those in the West were to think more of the interests

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109 “Tito Discusses Elections, Trieste, November 15, 1953”.

110 Weitz, 465.
of Trieste and less of Italian expansionist claims, there would be no difficulty in finding the solution on this basis.\textsuperscript{111}

Kardelj’s position echoes Tito’s earlier stance that the city was negotiable, but the area surrounding it was not. By maintaining that those areas were not necessary to Trieste, Kardelj implied that the area shared more of a connection to Yugoslavia than Italy. Furthermore, by this point the Yugoslavs understood that Trieste’s Italian majority made its ethnic argument difficult to maintain and were willing to internationalize it before they saw it be given to Italy. As the Yugoslav government saw it, internationalizing the city would deny Italy power in the Balkans and provide a buffer against Italian expansion into Yugoslavia. Claims that this was the favored solution of Trieste’s population also returned to the petitions Italo-Yugoslav organizations made in 1945, whose Italian version advocated for an autonomous Trieste and union to Yugoslavia. Although Yugoslavia’s claims for broad domestic and international support for this plan were exaggerated, they served the purpose of highlighting the Western powers’ capitulation to Italian imperialism over the wishes of the peoples living in the territories.

\textbf{Greater than Ideological Differences: Expansionism as the Main Threat to Peace}

As the Yugoslavs came to terms with Western involvement as firmly on the side of Italy, they also called into question the involvement of the Soviet Union in the conflict. Already in 1945, the Yugoslavs were beginning to doubt Soviet support for their claim to

\textsuperscript{111} Kardelj, 55.
Trieste despite the Soviet Union’s public actions. This doubt stemmed from a number of factors, one of the most important being Stalin’s support for the Anglo-American Allies assertion that control over Trieste should be determined during the postwar peace settlement. A speech given by Tito in Ljubljana gives credence to the suspicion of shaky Soviet support and Yugoslav frustration,

> It is said that this war is a just war and we have considered it as such. However, we seek also a just end; we demand that everyone shall be master in his own house; we do not want to pay for others; we do not want to be used as a bribe in international bargaining; we do not want to get involved in any policy of spheres of influence.

The location of the speech in Ljubljana is the first clue that Tito was more than likely directing his comments to the ongoing Trieste dispute. The first line called attention to the Slovenian population in Venezia Giulia and Italian-occupied Slovenia had been subject to a brutally repressive regime. Invoking a just war with an unjust end alluded to the peace settlement following World War I, which increased Italian imperial ambitions and the subjugation of the Slovenian peoples. In World War II, Yugoslavia sought to avoid that end and restore its lost national territory. The larger powers, however, sought to interfere in Yugoslavia’s affairs and again subject the Slovenian population to persecution for their own ends. Tito was condemning both the Anglo-

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Americans and Soviets for trying to circumvent Yugoslavia’s authority in the region for an agreement which best suited their goals instead of ensuring the wishes of the people in the region were met.

Signs of tension between the Yugoslav and Soviet governments over Trieste became more apparent in 1946. In July 1946, Tito sent a telegram to Stalin that reproached “the Soviet representative in Paris for displaying insufficient regard for Yugoslav interests and inclining toward a compromise in the form of a ‘Free Territory of Trieste’ and the drawing of the Yugoslav-Italian border on the line proposed by France.”115 As Soviet-Yugoslav relations began to break down in 1948, the Yugoslav party leadership gradually grew more critical of Soviet involvement in its government and foreign affairs. They rejected the presence of Soviet intelligence agents in Yugoslavia as a breach of Yugoslavia’s sovereignty and contended that “no matter how much each of us loves the land of Socialism, the USSR, he can, in no case, love his own country less.”116 While maintaining that Yugoslavia took the Soviet system as an example, it was “developing Socialism in [Yugoslavia] in somewhat different forms. In the present period under the specific conditions which exist in our country, in consideration of the international conditions which were created after the war of liberation.”117 The Yugoslavs made it clear they prioritized the development of their


country over their relationship with the Soviet Union. It was important to realize
Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union did not develop in the same conditions, which made it
necessary to deviate from the Soviet model. The Yugoslavs kept the circumstances that
made the deviation necessary obscure, but the Soviet reply identified Yugoslavia’s
rejection of the Soviet system as based in foreign policy,

> From the general attitude of the Yugoslav government, which is also the
> cause of the inability of the Yugoslav leaders to see the difference between
> the foreign policy of the USSR and the foreign policy of the Anglo-
> Americans; they therefore put the foreign policy of the USSR on par with
> the foreign policy of the English and Americans and feel that they should
> follow the same policy towards the Soviet Union as towards the
> imperialistic states, Great Britain and the United States.\textsuperscript{118}

To support this assertion, the letter cited Tito’s 1945 speech in Ljubljana against
spheres of influence and accused Tito of directing the speech “against the imperialist
states but also against the USSR.”\textsuperscript{119} The Soviet government was also accusing the
Yugoslavs of ignoring Soviet involvement on its behalf at international conferences
concerning Trieste. Instead, the Soviets contended Yugoslavia chose to advocate for a
separate road based on its own narrow national self-interests. In its brief reply to the
letter, the Yugoslav party did not address the Soviet accusations over Trieste directly. It
instead repeated earlier claims Soviet accusations were the result of inaccurate
information and unjust.\textsuperscript{120} The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform followed in

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, 20.
\textsuperscript{118} “Letter from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the Central
Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, May 4, 1948” from \textit{The Soviet-Yugoslav Controversy,
1948-58: A Documentary Record}, 23.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 28.
June 1948, culminating in press campaigns and economic blockades from the Eastern satellites against Yugoslavia. Faced with isolation from both blocs as a result of the Trieste controversy, the Yugoslav government turned to demonstrating how the Soviet Union aided Western imperialism in the Balkans and formulating expansionism as the main threat to peace.

Following the split, Kardelj “made it clear to Yugoslav CP Congress that Tito would not change his foreign policy but would continue to support Soviet anti-imperialist policy.” 121 Although claiming that it intended to stay the course in terms of its foreign policy, the Yugoslavs also took the opportunity to build a case for a history of Soviet hostility towards Yugoslavia prior to the split. A Yugoslav note addressed to the Soviet Union published in The New York Times on October 2, 1949 accused the Soviets of “setting out slanders on alleged hostile policy of the Yugoslav Government toward the Soviet Government.” 122 The Yugoslavs alleged the Soviet Union was organizing “the hostile activity of a group of countries against Yugoslavia.” 123 According to the Yugoslavs, these actions were a direct violation of the foreign policy principles the Soviet Union laid out during World War II.


123 Ibid.
To support this point, the note cited Stalin’s address on November 6, 1941 in which he expressed the Soviet Union aim to help Nazi-occupied peoples “in their liberation struggle against the Hitlerite tyranny and then to let them freely organize the life in their countries as they wish so there can be no interference in internal affairs of other peoples.”124 The note further emphasized this point by referring to what the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Vyacheslav Molotov, said during the singing of a Yugoslav-Soviet treaty. Molotov apparently told the Yugoslav government the treaty “was being signed ‘so that our peoples – each along its own path – might go forward along the lines of national independence and real freedom.’”125 This note served as justification for Yugoslavia developing its own path to socialism and a condemnation of Soviet interference in its affairs. According to this note, the Yugoslavs did not act contrary to the Soviet Union’s foreign policy principles, but actually upheld them where the Soviets did not. To demonstrate their commitment to these foreign policy principles, the Yugoslav government turned to the Trieste dispute.

Yugoslav officials made their dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union for its role in the Trieste dispute much more targeted in later instances. Bebler opened his speech on Yugoslavia’s foreign policy outlook by focusing on the Soviet response to the Italian peace treaties. He accused the Soviets of publicly supporting Yugoslavia while also pushing Yugoslavia to “give up an important part” of what Yugoslavia considered to be

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
its national territory. This statement made clear the contradiction between Soviet ideals and Soviet policies from the perspective of the Yugoslav government. The Yugoslavs alleged that the Soviet Union played the part of an anti-imperial power committed to intervening on behalf of oppressed groups. In private, however, it sought to interfere in Yugoslav affairs and encourage it to renounce its claim to a long-denied national territory for the Soviet Union’s own gain. More broadly, this statement served to discredit the Soviet claim to be an anti-imperial power and lend further legitimacy to Yugoslav claims of a long policy of resistance to foreign interference.

Delivering a speech on behalf of Tito, Kidric emphasized that the Yugoslav government did not think the Italian people were responsible for the Trieste crisis. Instead, he accused “evil reactionary forces inside and outside the Vatican”, fascists, and cominformists of collaborating to wage a struggle against Yugoslavia. Kidric warned the crowd,

About certain forces which are trying to destroy the achievements of [Yugoslavia’s] struggle. On one side, they are attacking [Yugoslavia] by all methods from an economic blockade to open military pressure. These attackers are those we thought were champions and pioneers of Socialist ideas. On the other side, Kidric emphasized there are people in the West who think they can use Cominformist pressure […] for their imperialistic purposes. Among these are the imperialistic circles in Italy, who think the time has come when they can again harm Yugoslavia.

The Soviet Union’s isolation of Yugoslavia as a result of the Tito-Stalin rift left Yugoslavia vulnerable to forces that thought the situation could be used as leverage to

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127 Foreign Broadcast Information Service, “Tito Warns Italians to be Reasonable, June 29, 1952” (Belgrade, Yugoslav Home Service), 1.
fulfill Italian imperial ambitions against Yugoslavia. In this way, the Soviet Union betrayed its principle to help persecuted national groups and took an active part in constructing a situation which made it difficult for Yugoslavia to hold out against imperial pressure. The linkage made between how Eastern actions sanctioned Western hostility against Yugoslavia also made the point that both blocs were more inclined to harm Yugoslavia than help it unless Yugoslavia capitulated to their demands. In Yugoslavia’s view, therefore, while both blocs appeared to be ideologically opposed, they worked together to undermine Yugoslavia’s ability to exercise its sovereignty and protect its national interests.

Yugoslav officials also pointed to how the larger powers worked together in international organizations to deny Yugoslavia’s claim to Trieste. Bebler brought attention to the imbalance of power against Yugoslavia in the case of the United Nations Security Council appointing a governor to Trieste,

The governor would depend on the Security Council, that is, mainly all the Great Powers which imposed the peace treaty. Three of them also signed the tripartite declaration, while one is the Soviet Union, which […] is following the same line as those which signed the tripartite declaration in its daily policy.128

The balance of power on the Security Council proved to Yugoslavia the involvement of foreign powers in Trieste could only work against Yugoslavia’s legitimate right to the territory. Four of the five large powers that served as permanent members of the Security Council had already demonstrated that they supported Italy’s claim to the region and therefore the organization could not be trusted to appoint a neutral

128 Bebler Demands Justice for Slovenes, August 31, 1953”.
figure as governor. This remark also recalled how the Western powers attempted to bypass Yugoslavia’s authority in the region by using the Soviet Union as a proxy in the March Declaration. Though it had not officially endorsed the March Declaration, Soviet actions demonstrated that the odds were heavily stacked against Yugoslavia in Trieste.

Kardelj alleged that recent aggression against Yugoslavia was “an old problem” if examined using “the traditional policy of the Western countries and Russia towards the struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia for their liberation and unification and specifically towards the efforts made by the South Slav peoples to liberate the Adriatic coast from the power of Italian imperialism.” Kardelj was still more critical of the Western powers in Trieste in his ultimate assessment, but criticized “the attitude of the Soviet Union – likewise modeled in the spirit of the old traditions, of the Old Tzarist Russia – was dictated exclusively by the general interests of Soviet foreign policy.”

Kardelj’s framing of past foreign relations called into question truly how much international dynamics changed towards Yugoslavia and its peoples as a result of the Cold War. According to Kardelj, the ideological division of East-West did not hold true in Yugoslavia’s case. Instead, each power remained committed to old policies focused on denying Yugoslavs the right to come together as a national group and free themselves from the imperialism thrust upon them for decades by Italy. Despite their recent ideological divide, Kardelj’s statement alleged the Soviet Union and Western powers

129 Kardelj, 6.

130 Kardelj, 6.
would always remain united in their denial of self-determination for the Yugoslav peoples.

This experience ultimately showed the Yugoslavs that ideology was not the determining factor in conflicts. In fact, the controversy convinced Bebler that the first step in establishing a stable peace was “to embrace the thesis that we should not try to create uniformity in the world.” Instead, Bebler defined the true threat to establishing peace was an expansionist spirit. He pointed to Italy to prove the point by stating,

Officially, Italy claims only Trieste and Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste; but the press – not only the opposition press attacking the government, but the press of the leading party, the Christian Democratic party of Signor de Gasperi – again dwells on Dalmatia and even Albania. It speaks of the Yugoslavs as barbarians, who should be driven away from Dalmatia, from the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

Although the Italians claimed they only wanted a certain territory, foreign involvement in their favor lead domestic elements to press for as much territory as possible. This expansionist spirit was shared across the political spectrum, highlighting how dangerous and powerful those claims could become. Once granted Trieste, the Yugoslavs were afraid that a popular expansionist spirit would prevail in Italy and it would attempt to make claims to Dalmatia despite the small population of Italians in the area. This fear, in turn, brought attention to the fact that the Italian expansionist spirit was not driven by reclaiming national territory, but as a desire to gain as much territory as possible and establish power in the Balkans. Furthermore, the inclusion of expansionist

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132 Ibid, 93.
spirit towards Albania provided an example that Yugoslavia had been right to try and restrain Italian imperial ambitions in Trieste before they could extend further into the Balkans and threaten more people. Lastly, the characterization of Yugoslavs as barbarians points to the Italian view of them as outside of the nation and something to drive out or remove, much like the Slovenian population was viewed by the fascist government during World War II.

Having laid out the spirit of Italian expansionism, Bebler turned to connecting it to the expansionist threat of the Soviet Union. According to Bebler, Italian expansionism was dangerous precisely “because the entire world is faced with the problem of how to preserve peace in the face of the expansionism of one of the greatest powers of our time, and the relations of the world outside the reach of this power should be as amicable as possible.”\textsuperscript{133} According to the Yugoslav government, condoning Italian expansionism in the Balkans created a rift in foreign relations at a time when ensuring peace was most crucial. In addition, overlooking Italian expansionism encouraged the Soviet Union to pursue its own expansionist goals against Yugoslavia. Faced with the threat of expansionism on both sides, the Yugoslav government focused on how the situation was the result of foreign involvement in its affairs. Returning to Western involvement in the Trieste question, Kardelj questioned American involvement in Europe more broadly,

When Mr. Dulles says that “…the basic question in that part of Europe is not Trieste but the defense of Southern Europe, Turkey, and Italy” we are fully entitled to ask the following question: If this is so, why then did the Western Governments – by the unilateral concession made to Italian demands at the expense of Yugoslav interests – permit the question of Trieste, which should have remained, in the very interest of its speediest

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, 93.
solution, only a question of Yugoslav-Italian relations, to become transformed into an acute question of relations between Yugoslavia and the Western powers, a question which has undermined those very defense efforts about which Mr. Dulles speaks.\footnote{Kardelj, 43.}

Kardelj challenged the United States principle for involvement being ensuring the security region against the threat of communist expansion. In his view, the Trieste crisis itself was important enough that three of the principal powers thought it necessary to interfere on behalf of Italy. If they had not done so, the crisis could have remained an Italo-Yugoslav conflict and resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. While claiming to aid local negotiations, Kardelj accused the Western powers had only served to block productive Italo-Yugoslav talks by convincing the Italians of their unequivocal support. This support, in turn, resulted in Italy once again expressing its imperial ambitions in the Balkans. Western involvement prior to and following the split guaranteed that the question would remain unresolved and open Europe to the greater threat of Soviet encroachment, which the Americans claimed to diligently work against. This not only complicated the Trieste crisis, but put Yugoslavia directly in the crosshairs of two aggressive powers intent on upholding imperialist principles.

Instead of perceiving its position as a disadvantage, however, the Yugoslavs sought to make it a cornerstone of their larger foreign policy. The Yugoslav government pointed to the necessity of respecting national sovereignty in order to ensure a lasting peace. In his speech about the threat of expansionism, Bebler called for discarding “the idea that any nation, however right it may later prove to have been at a certain moment, is
entitled to impose its ideology or its political institutions on any other country.” The idea that foreign involvement could be justified for a larger cause was a hindrance to peace and a violation of a state’s sovereignty. Abandoning this notion would reduce the threat of expansionism and promote mutual respect instead of aggressive actions. For Yugoslavia, discarding this idea meant that it had to “remain absolutely sovereign and free” of the alliances that could entangle it into one of the blocs.

In Yugoslavia’s view, those alliances only served to promote further hostility and increase the threat of expansionism by focusing too much on the ideological perspective. This, however, did not mean that Yugoslavia intended to remain neutral. For the Yugoslav government, neutrality implied that Yugoslavia would remain passive in the face of hostility from either bloc. Instead, the Yugoslavs sought a means to define their stance in a more active manner. Thus, they centered the idea driving their foreign policy “as resistance to aggression and opposition to foreign interference […] We shall never back any aggression. We shall never participate in any aggressive war. We will defend ourselves against aggression.” Yugoslavia’s anti-expansionist stance and commitment to standing against aggression meant that its geographical position was also important to check imperialism from either bloc in Europe. This did not mean that Yugoslavia would be successful in doing so, but Yugoslavia thought that its position could serve as “a good example to other countries.” According to Yugoslavia, it was necessary to recognize

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137 Ibid, 55.
the common threat of expansionism and allow smaller states to play a role in balancing powers. This would help other states avoid having to face what happened to Yugoslavia in the Trieste crisis and provide a foundation for lasting peace.

**Conclusion: De Facto Settlement and Yugoslav Principles**

The death of Stalin in 1953 prompted yet another reevaluation of the Trieste crisis. The United States was growing weary of its involvement in the region and feared that Stalin’s death would result in a Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement. These concerns lead the American government to seek a swift end to the crisis and reduce its presence in the region. To that end, representatives of the American, British, and Yugoslav governments met in London in February 1954 to reach a settlement regarding Trieste. The London memorandum phased out the military administration of the Free Territory and established a civilian administration in its place. Per the agreement, Anglo-American forces were to leave Zone A and Italian administration would take over. Yugoslav civil administration would be established in Zone B, and the southern border increased by 200 meters. The memorandum also included a statute for the protection of minority rights. It was the responsibility of the American and British representatives to “transmit to the Italian Government a set of guiding principles, prepared by the Yugoslav representative […] which should, subject to consideration of any Italian suggestions, serve as the basis

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138 Ibid, 55.


for preparation of a Statute.”\textsuperscript{141} Included in this list of guiding principles were guarantees of,

\begin{quote}
Human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination; political and civic rights without discrimination; prohibition from fostering national and racial hatred; equal accessibility to all ports and functions in State and public service; recognition of the equality of language in official use; rights to unhindered cultural development and preservation of ethnic character; unhindered economic development; new political and territorial subdivisions not to be created without due account of ethnic composition of the area concerned.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

This agreement was de facto in nature, as de jure settlement would require the consent of the Soviet Union per the stipulations of the Italian peace treaty.\textsuperscript{143} Regardless of the nature of the agreement, the memorandum encompassed many of Yugoslavia’s guiding principles throughout the Trieste crisis. The statutes’ overall focus is on ensuring the rights of the Slovenian population in the region by guaranteeing them the rights they had been denied by the Italian government and Anglo-American administration. Ensuring political and civil rights would guarantee that Slovenians were considered citizens of the state and accorded all the protections afforded to its members. This also served the purpose of holding the Italian government accountable if they attempted to renew their persecution of Slovenians. Prohibiting financial disenfranchisement returned to accusations that Allied aid was used to stimulate Italian economic development to the determinate of the Slovenians.


\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{143} Reston, 1.
Ensuring Slovenians had access to ports and unhindered economic development reaffirmed their role in the development of the region and acknowledged their right to pursue their economic interests free of interference. There is also a focus on ensuring equality between ethnic groups in political and cultural spaces. The demand that languages be considered equal in official use denied the primacy of the Italian language, combating earlier policies that tried to erase Slovenian from public and private life. Unhindered cultural development and preservation of ethnic character was also a means to ensure that Slovenians retained cultural autonomy and were able to express their right to self-determination in the Italian state. The consideration of an area’s ethnic composition in future divisions ensured that the Slovenian population would not be divided by the will of other groups. While the Yugoslav government essentially gave up its bid for Trieste, the memorandum demonstrates how Yugoslavia made a meaningful impact in protecting the Slovenian population.

The Trieste crisis and its resolution forced the Yugoslav government to come to terms with many geopolitical realities following World War II. Although the Partisans beat the Anglo-American forces to Trieste, the Yugoslavs were not able to maintain their hold on the region based on their occupation of the city alone. Given this, they turned to their military presence as essential to guaranteeing the freedom of the Slovenian population but were summarily rebuffed by the larger powers. The steady increase of foreign interference drove Yugoslavia to reevaluate its approach to Trieste and its relationship to Italy based on what the Allies promised during World War II. What the Yugoslavs found in this was a historic denial of the right of self-determination to
Yugoslav peoples and an international system that ensured Italian imperialism continued to be rewarded. Therefore, Italian expansionism became one example of a wider trend of international hostility to small states attempting to exercise their right to self-determination. In Yugoslavia’s view, this system ensured that aggressive powers won over those advocating for plurality and respect for sovereignty. Faced with these power dynamics, Yugoslavia used Trieste as an example of how Yugoslavia advocated for the self-determination and sovereignty of smaller states in its foreign policy.
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