

# MEMORANDUM

*of the*

## **“COMMITTEE OF THE YUGOSLAVS FROM ITALY”**

**about the Yugoslavs, that is Slovenes  
and Croats, under Italy, and their  
aspirations and claims.**

*Presented by*

**DR. IVAN M. ČOK**  
acting as President.

# MEMORANDUM

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The main and the largest part of the Balkan Peninsula belongs to the Southern Slavs, namely Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Bulgarians. *These Southern Slavs constitute a solid and unbroken ethnographic complex of 24 millions of people stretching between the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Pannonian Plain, and the Julian Alps.* They are a strong and healthy Slav race, predominantly peasants having essentially the same ethnical characteristics. Experience has shown and scientists have established the fact that between the various parts of these Southern Slavs there are no great and sharp differences, as they are found between different racial groups, since these parts merge into each other gradually and almost imperceptibly. Therefore, one can easily assert that this complex of 24 millions of people presents *a strong natural unity* for which nature itself has created all prerequisites.

The Slavs settled in the Balkans in the 4th, 5th and 6th century A.D. taking the place of degenerated and more or less extinct peoples and races, while other remnants of racial groups were soon assimilated completely by the Slavs, so that at present the latter have to be regarded as the only genuine and autochthon inhabitants of these regions. During their settling the Slavs penetrated much farther to the North and North West than they are spread now. The most western tribe, the Slovenes, broke through across the present Carinthia far to the West, into Tyrol, and deep into the North across the present Austrian provinces so that *they stood in direct and uninterrupted contact with the branch of the Northern Slavs*, that is the Moravians, the Czechs and the Slovaks. Among other historic evidences the most convincing is the fact that in the course of the 9th century A.D. Southern and Northern Slavs had a common king, the king Samo, whose kingdom included all of the then Moravian and Slovenian provinces, from Istria and Trieste in the South to the Pannonian Plain in the East.

*The German invasion* in the course of the ten subsequent centuries and their steady penetration towards the East (*Drang nach Osten*) succeeded not only in separating the Northern Slavs from the Southern Slavs, but also in stripping the Slovenes of a large portion of their racial territory, particularly in North Carinthia



and North Styria. In the course of time it squeezed the Slovenes to their present boundaries. Thus, *in the space of 1,000 years the Slovenes lost over two thirds of their native soil* and with this also enormous national wealth. They lost even more on their population which in the major portion of the original habitat was germanized by force.

*Through centuries the Slovenes have suffered as a racial group from the part of the Italians also*, though not to such a large extent. The names of various places in the eastern part of the North Italian Plain prove that the ethnographic boundaries of the Slovene racial territory used to reach much further to the West than they do at present. It was particularly the strong neighboring Venetian Republic that used its political and economic influence and its military might in order to strengthen as much as possible the Italian influence in the provinces of Istria, Trieste, Rijeka (Fiume) and Dalmatia, and this to the detriment of the autochthon Slovenian and Croatian element.

*The present ethnographic boundaries between the Slovenes*, who are the most western branch of the Southern Slavs, *and their neighbors to the West, the Italians*, run along the following line:

This ethnographic frontier runs, in the main, North and South. It starts at the summit of Mt. Spik (Monte Acuto) on the Italo-German (Austrian) frontier, passes over the summits of Kanin and Veliki Karman (Monte Ciampon) as far as Tarcet (Tarcento) and continues through Nem (Nimis), Ahten and Fojda to the River Nadiza (Natisone) north of Cedad (Cividale); then it continues along the left (orographic) bank of the Nadiza River as far as Kormin (Cormons) and reaches the Soca (Isonzo) River south of Gorica (Gorizia); then follows the River Soca skirting the Karst plateau of Doberdob and ends on the Adriatic Coast at Trzic (Monfalcone).

*Thus the race of the Southern Slavs lives as a compact unbroken body between the above line along the River Soca in the West and the Black Sea in the East.* During the *foreign invasion*, in the course of centuries, the foreigners brought into the country, together with their rule, their own officials, their soldiers, their aristocrats. The number of these was *particularly large in the towns* where, gradually, they took over trade and business. This explains the phenomenon that purely Slav regions had such a large portion, not seldom even the majority, of a non-Slav population in their own towns. While under foreign rule, the towns in Serbia, Bosnia and Bulgaria were in the hands of the Turks, in the countries of the Pannonian Plain in Hungarian hands, in the North in German hands and in the West, that is on the west coast of the Adriatic, in Italian hands. In those times the enslaving of foreign peoples on the part of the then stronger races, as Germans, Italians, Turks, had mainly the aim of en-

slaving them economically and socially. Yet the denationalization was always an accompanying phenomenon with enduring results. *After the French Revolution* the various racial groups began to recover their national consciousness and their economic and political independence. *A process of cleansing* developed in those towns. Assimilation through language by the ruling element came to a stop. Quite naturally people from the country began to flow into towns thus increasing the number of their consciously Slav population. Industrial expansion and urbanization contributed to the speeding of this process. *This was completed with the political liberation of these regions*, as in the case of Serbia and Bulgaria, where all the towns were returned to the native Serbian and Bulgarian population. The process of reclaiming the towns by the native population in the other Yugoslav countries, those that were subject to Austria-Hungary, like Croatia, Slovenia, Dalmatia and Bosnia, made also rapid progress already during the foreign rule, and after the liberation and the union with the others of their racial brethren in 1918, it was concluded naturally, without any resort to force.

Only in those provinces that remained under Italian rule, that is Istria, Trieste, Gorica, Rijeka, Zadar, and in those under Germany (in Carinthia), *this natural progress* was not continued and it *was stopped by Fascist and Nazi violence*. On the contrary, everything was done there to make worse the position of the population by forced Italianization and Germanization, and by further economic and political enslavement.

After the downfall of Austria-Hungary, all Yugoslavs, that is all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, who until then belonged to that monarchy, proclaimed their independence and their union with their brothers of Serbia and Montenegro, into a united Yugoslavia. *At the Peace Conference in Paris*, where new frontiers were to be determined, *Yugoslavia claimed for its western boundaries the ethnographic frontier between the Slavs and the Latins* which was just described above. The leading argument on which the Yugoslav Delegation was basing this claim was the *unanimous determination of the people of this region as well as the economic interdependence between this province and the contiguous Yugoslav hinterland and the necessity of an outlet to the Adriatic Sea by the latter*. Self-determination was one of the leading principles for which the Entente, as opposed to the principles professed by the Central Powers, was conducting the first World War.

*Italy opposed* this justified claim and *demande*d that according to the *London Pact* of April 26th, 1915, which was signed by France, Great Britain and Russia, all territories on the East Adriatic Coast be ceded to her, as the Entente had promised to do so by the said Pact.

In this way a conflict arose between the claim of Yugoslavia on one side, based



on the most modern principle of self-determination of the peoples, and of economic necessity to which principles almost all of the present European States, not excluding Italy in the least, owe their existence, and the claim of Italy, on the other side, based on a secret treaty which ignored completely the will of the peoples concerned. Moreover, the *London Pact was the prototype of an obsolete diplomatic instrument of feudalistic and imperialistic character* (since it does not care for an subjugated people) and this pact under the stress of a difficult military situation, was actually extorted from the Entente by Italy which was negotiating with both fighting parties at the same time for the highest bidder. This fact was confirmed by documents that were published on the matter, including those from Italian sources. The benefits, however, which the London Pact was securing for Italy, were so great that that country betrayed readily her former Allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary, with whom she had had a treaty of alliance for almost four decades, and so Italy shifted to the camp of the Entente. *Woodrow Wilson*, as the representative of the U.S.A. *did not acknowledge this pact at all* at the Peace Conference, while one of the signatories of the pact, *Russia, was not present* at the Peace Conference; as to *Clemenceau*, he declared publicly that *he never would have signed it* and that he was heeding it only because it bore the signature of France. The first delegate of Great Britain, *Lloyd George*, in his letter of June 11th, 1919, which he addressed to the Italian Prime Minister and First Delegate of Italy, *Orlando*, wrote this: “ . . . *it was a bargain and not a settlement between the peoples concerned.*” Therefore, one can easily affirm that the *London Pact of April 26th, 1915, was an immoral treaty*. Nevertheless, Italy insisted stubbornly upon it.

Yugoslavia fought for its right for two full years, but finally she had to give in and on November 12th, 1920, she had to sign the peace treaty of Rapallo which determined the present frontier between the two countries, corresponding in the main lines to the frontier fixed in the London pact.

In this way *Italy*, by availing itself of an immoral pact and by depending on its superiority as a victorious power as against a new, not yet consolidated and a smaller State, *succeeded in plucking a region of about 10,000 square kilometers out from a compact Yugoslav territory spreading from the Black Sea to the River Soca, thus separating 700,000 Yugoslavs, that is 500,000 Slovenes and 200,000 Croats, from their brothers with whom they have been sharing their fate for a thousand years in spite of foreign rules. Almost one third of the small Slovenian racial group was thus subjected to Italian slavery.* The treatment that Italy has been dealing out to its subjects of Slav origin during the last 20 years, is known well enough so that it does not need any special comment. The history of this treatment is the history of the *CALVARY OF OUR PEOPLE UNDER ITALY*; it can be summed up as follows: The Yugoslavs were deprived of all their former political rights; all organizations



and institutions of national, cultural, educational, social, cooperative or economic character were robbed and destroyed; the use of the native tongue was prohibited in the schools, church, in the Courts, in the administration, in one word everywhere. Denationalization is carried out through schools, church, army and various institutions that were created especially for this purpose. The regime of violence against the individuals has been brought to perfection. *The whole structure of a cultured and progressive nation on the territory that was subjected to Italy*, a structure that was almost exemplary in view of the prevailing conditions, all this *was entirely demolished*.

Before the Fascists came to power, the methods that were used to achieve this goal, were: arson, murder, plundering, castor oil, etc. After the Fascists took over the power, the same and even more efficient results were achieved, this time by decisions of the Rome Government, that is by legitimated violence.

The most logical outcome of all this was *a reaction from the part of the people*. This reaction was given expression primarily by those who emigrated to Yugoslavia. Through their organizations they were demanding publicly that an end be made to this situation by returning to Yugoslavia the province under Italy that was inhabited by Slovenes and Croats, since this was the wish of this very people. However, there were also persons, particularly among the youth, who, after having realized that nothing was helping and that the entire world was ignoring their legitimate claims, their fruitless struggle for the most primitive rights, did not refrain from resorting to *illegal means and methods in order to draw the attention of the world to these injustices*. They made use of such means, the more so as they were able to see every day how the Fascist regime itself was using violence as basis for its action, for its political fights and even for its ideology. This led to the big political trials of 1929 (Gortan) of 1930 (Bazovica) and, in December 1941 at Trieste, in which latter trial 9 persons were sentenced to death—five of them actually executed—while all the others were sentenced from 3 to 30 years in prison. This latest monster-trial was staged by Italy in the time between the 1st and the 15th of December, 1941, at Trieste, before the Special Fascist Tribunal of Rome, against 71 Slovenes and against the organization which I, the undersigned, had the honor to lead. *This trial expressed the fight of our people against Fascist violence*. The numerous terroristic acts which were brought up during the trial were nothing but *acts of sabotage accomplished during this war, with a view to weaken the Italian military might and thus to help the cause of the United Nations in this struggle*. Unfortunately, the Fascist authorities not being able to seize the real authors of these acts, persecuted and sentenced innocent people.

Actually Italy intended to frighten by this trial all the Yugoslavs who are its slaves and to suppress their unanimous will for liberation and their union with mother



Yugoslavia. The persons who were sentenced are mostly prominent representatives of that people. Not only they were no criminals, but on the contrary they were the pick of Slovenes and Croats under Italy, they were respectable men with high ethical qualities, and their fatherland may be proud of them. Their names will serve to future generations as an example of true love of country and of unbounded devotion to their ideals.

Since this trial pointed to the cooperation between the Slovenes and Croats of Italy with Allies and especially with Great Britain, the official commentator of the Fascist Government, Rino Alessi, characterized the trial with these words: "*This trial shows that the great game between Italy and her Mediterranean and African enemy—England of Churchill imperialism—must be played to a finish since England has never wanted to acknowledge our position in the Mediterranean . . .*"

Unfortunately, the Yugoslavs of Italy were persecuted by other pro-fascist regimes too, because of their patriotic activities. All the organizations of Yugoslav emigrants from Italy, which were active on Yugoslav soil, were dissolved and the undersigned, for being the President of the federation of all these associations and the leader of the anti-fascist struggle was put in jail for a month and thereafter interned in the country, in Serbia, for 8 months, from where he succeeded to flee abroad.

Therefore we, the Yugoslavs from Italy, are able to point out with pride to the fact that *for the last 20 years we have been modest but resolute forerunners of the present gigantic world struggle of justice and freedom against injustice and violence.* Today, at the very doors of Trieste, Gorica and Rijeka, our people as guerillas go on with this fight with unbending energy. This fight requires superhuman efforts and enormous sacrifices, but the people are firmly determined not to give in until freedom is achieved. Slavery under barbarous Fascism and its inhuman methods have meant such a humiliation and such a shame to our people that we have firmly decided *to die to the last rather than to continue to live under such a slavery.*

Our problem is the key to the Adriatic question. *This Adriatic question is a problem of the future European and consequently World Peace.* In the memorandum directed on December 9, 1919, by the Governments of France, U.S.A. and Great Britain to the Italian Peace Delegation in Paris, Italy was warned not to annex Yugoslav territories because "thus will be created within Italian boundaries a compact irredentistic mass, quite analogous to that which entitled the 'Italia Irredenta' to claim the union with Italy." This warning has had no effect. A quarter of a century later the accumulated injustices have aroused the feelings of the Yugoslavs under Italy to such a pitch that a solution in the right direction must be made by wise statesmanship desiring to avoid a catastrophe of ominous consequences.

The authorized representative of these 700,000 Yugoslavs under Italy, who succeeded in escaping to the territory of the United Nations, is the undersigned, who is the President of the "COMMITTEE OF THE YUGOSLAVS FROM ITALY" and of the "NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SLOVENES AND CROATS OF THE JULIAN MARCH". I was sent abroad by these organizations to represent here the interests, the protests, aspirations and claims of the Slovenes and Croats from Italy.

The power which I was given was signed by the most distinguished and most outstanding organizations of the Yugoslavs under Italy. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, as the representative members of the Committee of the Yugoslavs from Italy, which expresses the ideals, aspirations and aims of the Yugoslavs of the Julian March, hereby certify that Dr. Ivan M. Cok, former President of the Slovenian Political party 'Edinost' ('Unity') for the Province of Trieste, and of the Federation of Yugoslav Emigrants of Italy in Yugoslavia, is President of the said Committee. The said Dr. Ivan M. Cok is the unconditional representative thereof, and he, in virtue of the instructions already given to him, is empowered to negotiate, act and in every way represent the said Committee.

Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Trieste, February 8th, 1941."

*In the name of the 700,000 Yugoslavs under Italy and as their legitimate representative, stressing the principle of self-determination of peoples, which principle was consecrated once again by the Atlantic Charter, paragraph 3, stressing the necessity of economic union of all Slovene provinces and their outlet to the sea, stressing our unanimous determination, our fight for two decades, our sacrifices, and particularly our contribution to the struggle of the Allies in the present war,*

I HEREBY DECLARE

*that our irrevocable claim is:*

THAT THE INJUSTICE WHICH WAS DONE TO US AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR, WHEN WE WERE IMMOLATED TO THE IMPERIALISTIC ASPIRATIONS OF ITALY, BE REPAIRED, AND AS SOON AS THE FASCIST REGIME WILL BE OVERTHROWN AT THE END OF THE PRESENT WAR, THAT OUR FREEDOM TO WHICH WE ARE FULLY ENTITLED BE RESTORED TO US. IN FREEDOM WE WANT TO DISPOSE OF OUR FATE AND OF OUR FUTURE AND TO ACT IN SUCH A WAY AS OUR SACRED FEELINGS, OUR HEARTS, OUR BRAINS AND OUR TRUE INTERESTS ARE DIRECTING US TO DO. BY ALL MEANS WE WANT AND DESIRE TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH



THE OTHER OF OUR YUGOSLAV BROTHERS, WITH WHOM WE WANT TO SHARE ALL GOOD AND EVIL, SINCE WE ARE ALL ONE AND THE SAME. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DO WE WANT OR DESIRE TO LIVE IN THE SAME NATIONAL UNITY WITH ITALY AND WITH THE ITALIANS WITH WHOM WE HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON. ITALY AND THE ITALIANS CAN BE ONLY OUR NEIGHBORS BUT NEVER OUR MASTERS. THEREFORE THE NEW FRONTIER MUST BE DRAWN IN SUCH A WAY THAT NOT A SINGLE YUGOSLAV WHO LIVES IN HIS COMPACT RACIAL TERRITORY SHOULD REMAIN SUBJECTED TO SLAVERY UNDER THE ITALIANS.

(A map is hereto annexed which will help toward a better understanding of this Memorandum.)

New York, November 12th, 1942.

Dr. IVAN M. ČOK

President of the "COMMITTEE OF THE YUGOSLAVS FROM ITALY"





ADRIATIC  
SEA

AUSTRIA

YUGOSLAVIA

PROV. UDINE  
UDINE  
ITALY

PROV. GORIZIA

PROV. TRIESTE

PROV. PODGRAD

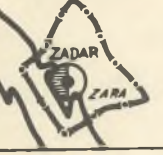
CARNARO  
(PROV. DI FIUME)

PROV. ISTRIA  
(PROV. DI POLA)

JULIJSKA KRAJINA  
VENEZIA GIULIA

- State frontiers
- Provincial frontiers
- Jugoslavs
- Italians
- Germans

DALMACIJA



PELAGRUZ  
PELAGOSA

SUSAC  
CAZZA

LASTOVO  
LAGOSTA

RIJEKA  
FIUME  
VOLOSKO  
OPATIJA  
ABBZIA  
PAZIN  
PISINO  
LABIN  
ALBONA  
KRNICA  
CARNILLA  
D'ALBA  
PULA  
POLA  
VODNIJAN  
D'ENAYO  
ROVINJ  
ROVIGNO  
POREČ  
PARENZO  
NOVI GRAD  
CITTANOVA  
D'ISTRIA  
UMAG  
UMAGO  
PIRAN  
PIRANO  
KOPER  
CAPODISTRIA  
BUJE  
BUJE D'ISTRIA  
BUZET  
PINGUENTE  
ILIR BISTRICA  
VILLA DEL NEVOSSO  
SENOŽEČE  
SENOSECCHIA  
POSTOINA  
POSTUMIA  
AJDOVŠČINA  
AJDUSSINA  
VIPAVA  
VIPACCO  
KOMEN  
COMENO  
SEŽANA  
SESANA  
KANAL  
CANALE  
TOLMIN  
TOLMINO  
BOVEC  
PLEZZO  
KOBARID  
CAPORETTO  
REZIIA  
RESIA  
GEMONA  
BENEŠKA SLOVENIJA  
SLAVIA ITALIANA  
ŠT. PETER SLOV.  
S. PIETRO  
CIVIDALE  
CEDAD  
CORMONS  
KRMIN  
GRADISCA  
MONFALCONE  
TRZIC  
CERVIGNANO  
TRIGLAV  
1864  
BLEDO  
RADOVLJICA  
KRANJ  
ŠKOFJA LOKA  
LJUBLJANA  
LOGATEC  
RAKEK  
CERKNICA  
KRAK  
GRES  
CHERSO  
MALI LOŠINJ  
LUSSIN PICCOLO



"JUGOSLOVANSKI ODBOR IZ ITALIJE"  
468 Riverside Drive, New York, C.

December, 29, 1942.

Dragi gospod Adamič,

bil sem par dni odsoten, v Latrobe in Pittsburgu, kjer sem tamošnjim Slovencem držal predavanja, zato prihajam šele sedaj do tega, da Vam lahko pošljem svoj memorandum, ki sem ga poslal v originalu predsedniku Rooseveltu, Cordell Hullu, in raznim drugim vplivnim osebam, med drugim tudi zastopnikom britanske in sovjetsko-ruske vlade. Kakor sem Vam že ustmeno povedal, sam napisal tudi drugo obširnejšo spomenico o vprašanju Trsta, in to iz raznih vidikov, pred vsem pa iz ekonomskega vidika. Rad bi tudi to spomenico poslal na iste adrese, na katere sem (ali bom) poslal predležečo spomenico. Moram pa počakati, ker nimam sredstev in ne vem, kdaj in kje jih dobim. Pisal sem g. Cankarju kot predsedniku Slov. Nar. Sveta.

Med tem sem dobil od Vas poslano mi številke "Yugoslavia" in pa brošuro "Inside Jugoslavia", ki je vrlo dobra, in ki se razven par detaljev - sklada z informacijami, s katerimi jaz razpolagam.

Upam, da se v kratkem zopet vidimo. Posebno drago bi bilo meni in moji družini, ako bi se enkrat z Vašo gospo, ko boste slučajno v Njujorku, oglasili pri nas.

Prav lepe pozdrave Vaši gospej in Vam  
Vaš

L. Jan k. Coy