

*Matevž Šlabnik, Maja Vehar**

Idrija and Žiri as Border Towns 1941–1945**

Introduction

For almost three decades Idrija and Žiri were divided by a state border. Specific historical circumstances at the end of World War I resulted in the introduction of a new border in the Slovene ethnic territory, between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, or Yugoslavia. With the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo in April 1922, Idrija, which was occupied by the Italian troops back in November 1918, officially ended up on the Italian side of the state border, and Žiri on the Yugoslav one.¹ The delimitation line between these two states was outlined by concrete boundary stones. In the area at hand, the border ran between sector boundary stones 37 and 46. The former is located in Jazne and the latter to the north of the road from Kalce to Hrušica. A first-category border crossing stood between them on the road from Idrija to Žiri.² The so-called Rapallo Border has been subject to extensive research, both general and local, as well as part of tourist services in many places. However, the border between the Italian- and German-occupied area between Idrija and Žiri, which was introduced in 1941 and ran partly along the old Rapallo border, is yet to be explored in-depth, and thus remains, for the most part, unknown. Consequently, the occupation border is the main research focus of this paper. The research

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** This paper was produced in the scope of the national research project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungari-an ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population (J6-8248), which is financed by the Slovenian Research Agency. Additionally, it contributes to the national research programme Slovene History (P6-0235), which is financed by the Slovenian Research Agency as well.

1 Zorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 24.

2 Ibid., 28–29.

associated with it was conducted in the scope of the project *Make this Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian!* Methodologically speaking, this paper is based on an overview of the existing bibliography, as well as archival materials, maps, photographs but also on on-site research that comprised the identification of possible remnants and eyewitness testimonies of people who experienced the occupation border themselves or who preserved the memory of it by recounting the experiences of the older generation. Making use of the obtained data, the paper will use visual materials to present the war-time events in both towns and the occupation border itself, namely its establishment, course, and impact on the population, as well as its fall.

Idrija – In a Firm Italian Grip

Particularly after the establishment of Fascist authority in Italy in the early 1920s, the Slovene population was subject to severe denationalization pressure, which manifested itself with the introduction of Italian commissioners as heads of the municipality, the removal of Slovene-language primary and secondary schools, a ban on Slovene societies, the Italianization of the public space and conscription into the Italian army.³

Idrija became an important centre for different military, police and civil offices in the interwar period. From 1934 onwards, when a border defence unit was established (It. Guardia alla Frontiera or GAF), the border area was divided into sectors. Alongside the GAF, in peacetime the sectors consisted also of the Financial Guard, the Fascist border militia and the *Carabinieri*; during the war, other units were used to consolidate sectors as well. These units were regarded as the first defence that would facilitate additional mobilization.⁴ In the final pre-war division of the GAF sectors, the Sector Command in Idrija was already under the authority of the XI Army Corps in Udine. The Idrija Sector was numbered XXII and included subsectors in Cerčno, Idrija and Črni Vrh.⁵

The command of a company with the so-called *tenenze*, i.e. subordinate units consisting of five or six brigades each, operated in Cerčno, Idrija, and Godovič in the scope of the VI Triestine Royal Legion of the Financial Guard.⁶ Members of the Financial Guard controlled the border in peacetime, monitoring smuggling, espionage and terrorism. During the war they operated as part of the defence forces.⁷ Being part of the Blackshirts, the Fascist border militia was in charge of border area. It was

3 Kavčič, *Pet stoletij rudnika*, 23; Mohorič, *Rudnik živega srebra*, 338.

4 Bizjak, *Italijanski obrambni načrti*, 310–311.

5 Žorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 111.

6 *Ibid.*, 65–66.

7 Bizjak, *Italijanski obrambni načrti*, 335.

primarily tasked with fighting the guerrillas and controlling illegal border crossings.⁸ A company command operated in Idrija in the scope of the Tolmin cohort.⁹ Additionally, the command of the *Carabinieri* squad and the command of the *questura* of public security with a special political squad operated in Idrija as well.¹⁰ On top of that, an office of the border police operated in Idrija, and a mobile section of Public Security No. 1 was established in March 1942 in Idrija, which was responsible for the persecution of politically unreliable persons.

The presence of the Italian Army in Idrija was symbolized most distinctly by numerous military structures that emerged in the town and its immediate surroundings from the 1930s onwards. Having been opened on 5 April 1933, the barracks on the hill beneath Kobalove Planine was the largest construction project of the Italian Army.¹¹ In accordance with the Italian military doctrine on the eastern border, where the protection of communication routes towards Italy was of vital importance, groups of fortified defence positions were also set up along important routes in the proximity of Idrija. A group of three fortifications, featuring an anti-tank wall and roadblocks, was situated near to the city centre in the gorge of the stream Nikova. Its task was to close the road to Vojsko.¹² Another group of fortifications located in the town's immediate proximity was situated in Podroteja, along the road from Godovič to Idrija, above the confluence of the rivers Zala and Idrijca. The passage to the Idrijca Valley was protected by the main fortification above the road. Opposite this, on the other bank of the Zala, stood a small fortification with a steel machine gun cupola, while a third fortification was built on the other bank of the Idrijca, above the mercury mine's Rake canal.¹³ The primary reason for the existence of Italian military fortifications along the Rapallo border ceased to exist with the beginning of World War II in Slovenia in 1941. However, the fortifications remained partly manned by armed soldiers and their importance grew once again with the development of the resistance movement.¹⁴

Soon after the beginning of World War II resistance was also organized on the Italian side of the old Rapallo border. Initially, activists of the National Liberation Army smuggled weapons across the heavily guarded border between the German and Italian territory, from Rovte to the Idrija region. Due to numerous military outposts and strict control of the population in the border areas any political activity was

8 Ibid., 338–339.

9 Žorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 67–68.

10 Pavšič, *Ob stari meji*, 49; Žorž, *Varovanje rapalske meje*, 60.

11 Pavšič, *Ob stari meji*, 48.

12 Miha Ferjančič, Okoli Idrije so bile tri postojanke. <https://youtu.be/FjECdYCplEI>.

13 Jankovič-Potočnik, Rupnikova linija, 180; Juvančič, Mussolinijev utrdbeni pas, 171.

14 Borak, *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1*, 575.

Idrija in a Ring of Wire

As early as 17 September 1943 a numerically strong German reconnaissance team left Rovte for Idrija via Dole, but it was repulsed by partisans from Idrija's western side on the road across Kovačev Rovt. The Germans made a second attempt the following day, when members of the 71st Infantry Division originally wanted to penetrate Idrija from Godovič through the Zala gorge with five armoured vehicle.

However, following a failed breakthrough, they reached the suburbs of Idrija via Kovačev Rovt. Faced with obstacles and partisan fire, the column turned around, whereupon it was ambushed near Godovič, suffering three fatal casualties. On 22 September the German troops launched an attack in two columns via Veharše and Dole in the direction of Idrija and from Godovič to Črni Vrh.¹⁸ The latter failed and set Godovič ablaze, and despite having disabled the partisans' light cannons on the next day, they did not advance towards Črni Vrh. Instead, Črni Vrh was occupied by the other German column, which managed a faster penetration via Idrija. Before that it set fire many houses in Dole, Gore and on Medvedje Brdo. Armed with light weapons, units of the Idrija Detachment could not defend their positions successfully in the face of many German tanks and armoured vehicles. They thus began to retreat slowly, and on the morning of 23 September Idrija was under German military occupation.¹⁹

In line with the German policy in the newly occupied area of the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, which gave specific concessions to Slovenes in an attempt to diminish their resistance, Idrija saw the introduction of a municipal administration that was ran by the locals, not Italians. In a meeting held in early December 1943, the retired mine official Filip Vidic was made mayor. Following Vidic's death in June 1944, Karel Treven became mayor, a man who had previously been deposed by Italians in 1924, and was the last Slovene mayor before the Italians took control. However, the municipality was still subjugated to the Italian prefecture in Gorizia.²⁰

With the occupation of Idrija, the Germans hoped to be able to exploit the mercury mine, as this material was badly needed by their war industry. The city served as the occupier's base for numerous campaigns towards Gorenjska and the liberated territory in the area of Cerklno and Trnovski Gozd, the safe haven of partisan military units, field hospitals and print shops.

In Idrija, the German troops billeted in locals' houses, and did not use Italian military buildings.²¹

18 The first group consisted of the bulk of the 1st Battalion of the 901st Grenadier Tank Regiment and the second one of the 2nd Company of the 1st Battalion of the 901st Grenadier Tank Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 138th Gebirgsjäger Training Regiment.

19 Petelin, *Vojkova brigada*, 37–44; Marjan Beričič, Čigav si pa ti. <https://youtu.be/BNPds5c-2c>, 01:15–03:10.

20 Primožič, *Delovanje občine Idrija*, 98, 101.

21 Franci Pelhan, Idrija v žici in minah. <https://youtu.be/8qNRk1057gg>, 04:00–04:45.

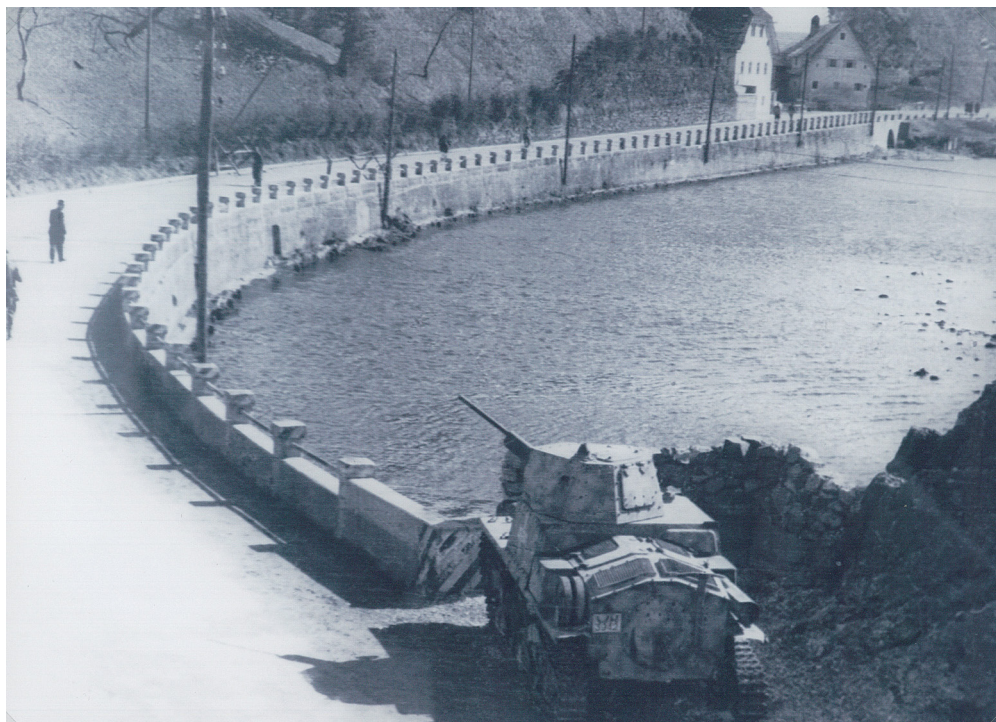


Fig. 2: A tank guarding a roadblock near Debela Skala on the main road from Idrija to Godovič.

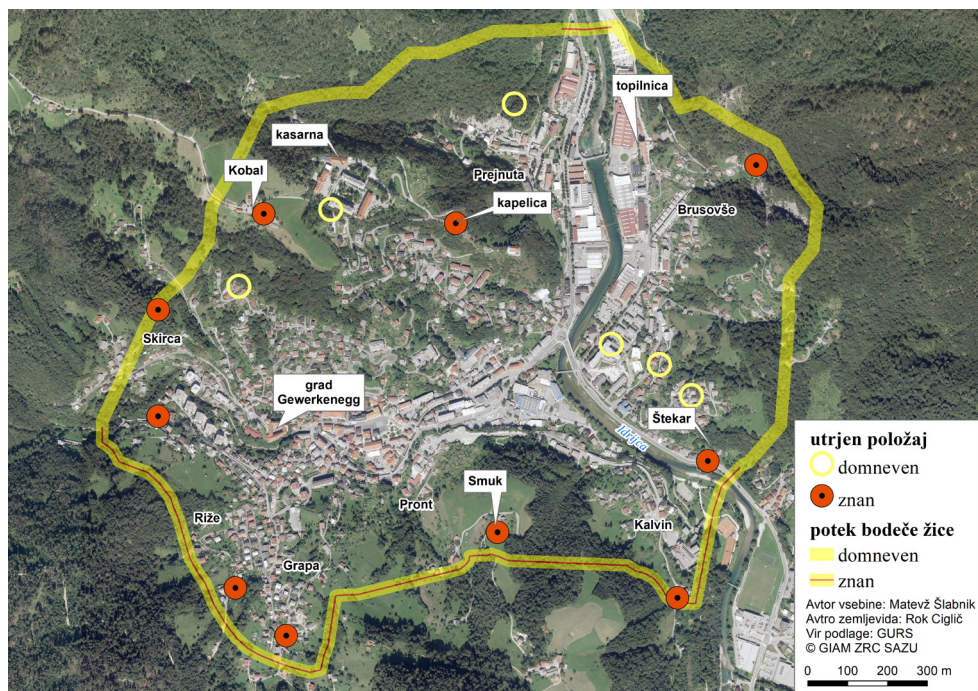
An important element of German-occupied Idrija has been overlooked by historiography thus far. In order to have better control of the city, the Germans surrounded it with an approximately 6-kilometre long ring of barbed wire and placed mines in certain parts.²² This ring of barbed wire was additionally fortified with approximately 15 entrenched bunkers – referred to as *šticpunkti* by the locals – which enabled around 200 German guards to have permanent control of the city and road communications.²³ The population could leave this ring of wire with a pass issued by the German Command of the city.²⁴ The exact date when Idrija was surrounded by wire could not be established from the examined documents, but it was probably done shortly after the German occupation, as from 1943 onwards the city was surrounded by partisan-controlled liberated territories on three sides.²⁵

22 Pavel Pivk, *Šticpunkti*, <https://youtu.be/bmL5IVvSo7g>; Franci Pelhan, *Idrija v žici in minah*. <https://youtu.be/8qNRk1057gg>.

23 These guards were part of the 2nd Battalion of the 10th Police Regiment, which was stationed in Idrija until its retreat in the Spring of 1945. SI ZAL IDR 0133, Zbirka gradiva NOB, Idrija, II/SS-Pol.10/I C.

24 Balantič, *Ranjena kotlina*, 110.

25 Petelin, *Vojkova brigada*, 200–201.



Figs. 3a and 3b: This simulation of the German fortifications and the course of wire obstacles around Idrija during the German occupation was produced on the basis of a sketch made by the Intelligence Service of the 9th Corps (left) and oral sources.

The final months of World War II were devastating for Idrija. On 18 February 1945 the allies launched its first air raid on the city and caused severe damage to the mercury mine's structures. Up to April, this air raid was followed by nine additional air raids. The city centre was severely damaged, as was the mine.²⁸ The night of 28 April 1945 saw the end of the German presence in Idrija. The German troops and members of the Home Guard gathered on the road to Godovič to reach Vipava Valley, where they would join other retreating columns.²⁹

28 Mohorič, *Rudnik živega srebra*, 342.

29 Ibid.

Žiri during World War II

The tensions were felt in Žiri even before the war, for instance, during the construction of the Rupnik Line³⁰ and when Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact.³¹ The war became reality on 6 April 1941, with the German attack of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, when the army closed all important roads.³² Public offices were discontinued in Žiri on the following day and the civilian population was ordered to withdraw to the surroundings of Ljubljana.³³ Soon afterwards the Yugoslav Army blew up bridges and Žiri lost the majority of its connections with the neighbouring towns. On that same day the Italian Army fired cannons on Žirovski Vrh, although this was not of much consequence as the Yugoslav Army had already retreated.³⁴

The vacant town was occupied by the Italians on 11 April 1941 without a fight, and they set up their headquarters in the school premises. Contrary to the subsequent German occupation, the Italian occupation was milder (teachers were allowed to work, the priest stayed in town) and, consequently, disdain for the Italian Army can be identified in the locals' accounts, referring to the troops, for instance, as holiday-makers, the chicken army, etc.³⁵ The inhabitants of Žiri had a different experience with the German occupation, even though initially some of them were in favour of it.³⁶ Approximately 30 German gendarmes and finance officers arrived in Žiri on 27 April 1941; much like Italians before them, they found accommodation in important public buildings.³⁷ Administratively speaking, after the German occupation Žiri was part of the Kranj district and Ivan Seljak, who helmed the municipality in the years before World War II, kept his position as mayor. A strict occupation regime was put into force, German flags had to be displayed,³⁸ Slovene inscriptions replaced with German ones,³⁹ people's names and place names were subject to Germanization,⁴⁰ and a population census was conducted, as were deportations.⁴¹ German became the instrument

30 Additionally, in: Marković, *Vplivi krepitve fašistične*, 349–366; Košmelj - Beravs, *Spomini na utrjevanje*, 217–230; Stanonik, *Promet na Žirovskem*, 74; Naglič, *Dediščina rapalske meje*.

31 Pečnik, *Vedno sem rad zidal*, 121.

32 *Ibid.*, 122.

33 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 11.

34 *Ibid.*, 11.

35 Pečnik, *Vedno sem rad zidal*, 125–126.

36 The Žiri Parish Archives, Pečnik, *The Žiri parish chronicle 1900–1941*, 189.

37 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

38 An interview with Tone Rupnik, December 2018, the recording is kept by Maja Vehar.

39 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

40 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 41, a. e. B-I-1-1, *Verordnungs- und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in den besetzten Gebieten Kärntens und Krains*.

41 Čeplak, *Narodnoosvobodilna borba na Žirovskem*, 55; Mrovlje, *Selitev se je*, 76–77.

of instruction in schools⁴² and adults had to attend German language courses.⁴³ This linguistic pressure was noticeable in settlements that became part of the Province of Ljubljana after the occupation. At Jureč, for instance, an Italian-Slovene school was organized for children from the Italian part of Brekovice in 1942.⁴⁴

The German occupation impacted the economy as well – produce or products had to be handed over⁴⁵ – and the population's everyday lives: vehicles were confiscated, traffic connections disrupted, there was no freedom of residence, a strict border regime was introduced, as were blackouts, a curfew was imposed, there was no priest, etc.⁴⁶ The realm of culture was affected as well – books and theatrical equipment were destroyed,⁴⁷ and cinematographic equipment was confiscated for the purpose of the German propaganda.⁴⁸ This propaganda was also spread by means of German periodicals and organizations that replaced the discontinued and dispossessed Slovene societies.⁴⁹



Fig. 4: A stamp used in Žiri during the German occupation.

42 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0405, Osnovna šola Žiri, šk. 1, a. e. 5-11, Kronika Osnovne šole Žiri.

43 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 44, a. e. C-VI-25, poster Wer deutsch spricht, bekennt sich zum mächtigsten Volk Europas!

44 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 3, a. e. B-Brekovice.

45 Additionally, on the subject: Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi 3*.

46 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 3, a. e. B-Brekovice.

47 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

48 Jan, *Od osvoboditve*, 19.

49 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 13; an interview with Tone Rupnik, December 2018, the recording of the interview is kept by Maja Vehar.

As a consequence of the occupier's denationalization measures in the area of Žiri, a portion of the population joined the National Liberation Movement.⁵⁰ Pressured by this movement, Germans fortified the old and new presbytery and Sokolski Dom. The windows on the ground floor were walled up, sandbags were placed around the buildings and walls were loopholed.⁵¹ Following attacks on German cars, the population was ordered to "cut down bushes along the road to a width of 50 metres."⁵² Household census forms were also used to control the population.⁵³ The decisive battles took place in October 1943, when the Operative Staff for Western Slovenia decided to attack German posts located in the proximity of the German-Italian border. These included three posts in Žiri, which were also included in the first stage of operations of units of the XXXI Division.⁵⁴ On 20 October 1943 units of the Vojko Brigade penetrated as far as Fužine. With partisans taking over the authority, the Germans lost the connections to some areas and, consequently, decided to retreat from Žiri.⁵⁵ Even though additional forces arrived from Škofja Loka,⁵⁶ they managed to retreat towards Trebija on 23 October 1943 only after eight hostages had been captured.⁵⁷ They took 20 carloads of footwear (more than 1,000 pairs of shoes) and materials with them.⁵⁸

Following the Germans' retreat, Žiri became part of the liberated territory. On 24 October 1943 the National Liberation Committee for the area of the administrative municipality of Žiri was established, the first committee of its kind in Gorenjska.⁵⁹ In February 1944 the new authorities gave the order to burn down all public premises,⁶⁰ where the bulk of cultural, educational and administrative activities took place. This represented a clear obstacle to Slovene schooling, which was restored in the scope of partisan schools in the spring of 1944.⁶¹ In addition, conflicts became a constant in the everyday lives of inhabitants, who felt pressure coming from all the belligerent players.⁶² Moreover, the town also suffered due to an Allied air raid.⁶³ In total, 333 inhabitants perished during the war, some of whom lost their lives due to the occupation border or the fortification of the town.⁶⁴

50 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 124.

51 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 22.

52 *Ibid.*, 24.

53 *Ibid.*, 22.

54 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 126. Additionally, in: Petelin, *Enaintrideseta divizija*.

55 *Ibid.*, 126.

56 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis II*, 38.

57 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 128.

58 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis II*, 38.

59 Jan, *Osvoboditev Žirov*, 128.

60 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis III*, 15.

61 Jereb Filipič, Irena et al., *Ti si mene naučila brati*, 44.

62 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, šk. 1, a. e. A-VII-33, Poziv.

63 Mlakar, *Tabor v Žireb*, 60.

64 Zajec, *Vse žrtve druge*, 9–30; the Žiri Parish Archives, The register book of deaths of the Žiri parish 1941–2007.

Idrija in Žiri – Towns along the Occupation Border

Due to the occupation Idrija and Žiri became situated at a tripoint. More specifically, after Yugoslavia's capitulation, the implementation of Hitler's directive concerning the partition of the occupied territory and an agreement signed by Germany and Italy in July 1942,⁶⁵ the territories of the Kingdom of Italy, the Italian-occupied Province of Ljubljana and German-occupied area met in the proximity of both towns. As far as sector boundary stone no. 40, which stood near Spodnji Vrsnik, the new border ran along the old Rapallo border, branching off eastwards to the north of Šentjošt nad Horjulom, past Polhov Gradec as far as Šentvid pri Ljubljani.⁶⁶

On site, the border was outlined by German and Italian officers in late April 1941⁶⁷ and in the spring of 1942 the Germans began to install the fortification infrastructure. A wire mesh was stretched between 2-metre-high stakes, and where this was not possible three lines of stakes were driven into the ground and barbed wire was stretched between them. Three strands of barbed wire were laid on the ground, measuring 2 to 3 metres in width, and different types of mines and hand grenades were laid along a 10-metre corridor.⁶⁸ The border was still outlined by the Rapallo boundary stones. We did not find new boundary stones in the area in question on the branch that forked in the direction of Ljubljana.

The border corridor on the German side was cleared,⁶⁹ deforesting an area measuring between 50 and 100 metres in width, and several residential and auxiliary buildings were demolished. The locals and labourers who were brought in for this purpose had to clear the forest and remove the buildings.⁷⁰ An example of the demolition was provided by Marija Jesenko:

“My grandparents and parents restored and remodelled all buildings that year, but they had to demolish them a year later, on 11 May 1943, because our homestead ended up standing in the border corridor. The order was issued by the Germans. My parents were left with two choices: they could demolish the premises themselves and keep the construction material and their modest property or have them demolished by the Germans. Having disagreed with the order, my father and grandfather were tied to an apple tree in our garden. They had to make a choice within five minutes, standing in front of the German soldiers' loaded

65 Ferenc, *Okupacijski sistemi I*, 72.

66 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, t. e. 44, p. e., B IVb-1, Vogels Karte des Deutschen Reichs und der Alpenländer.

67 Govekar, *Kronistični zapis I*, 12.

68 Treven, *Grenki spomini*, 40.

69 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, š. 77, a. e. IIC-14, Stenski časopis.

70 An interview with Katarina Eržen, December 2018, the recording is kept in the project's archive.

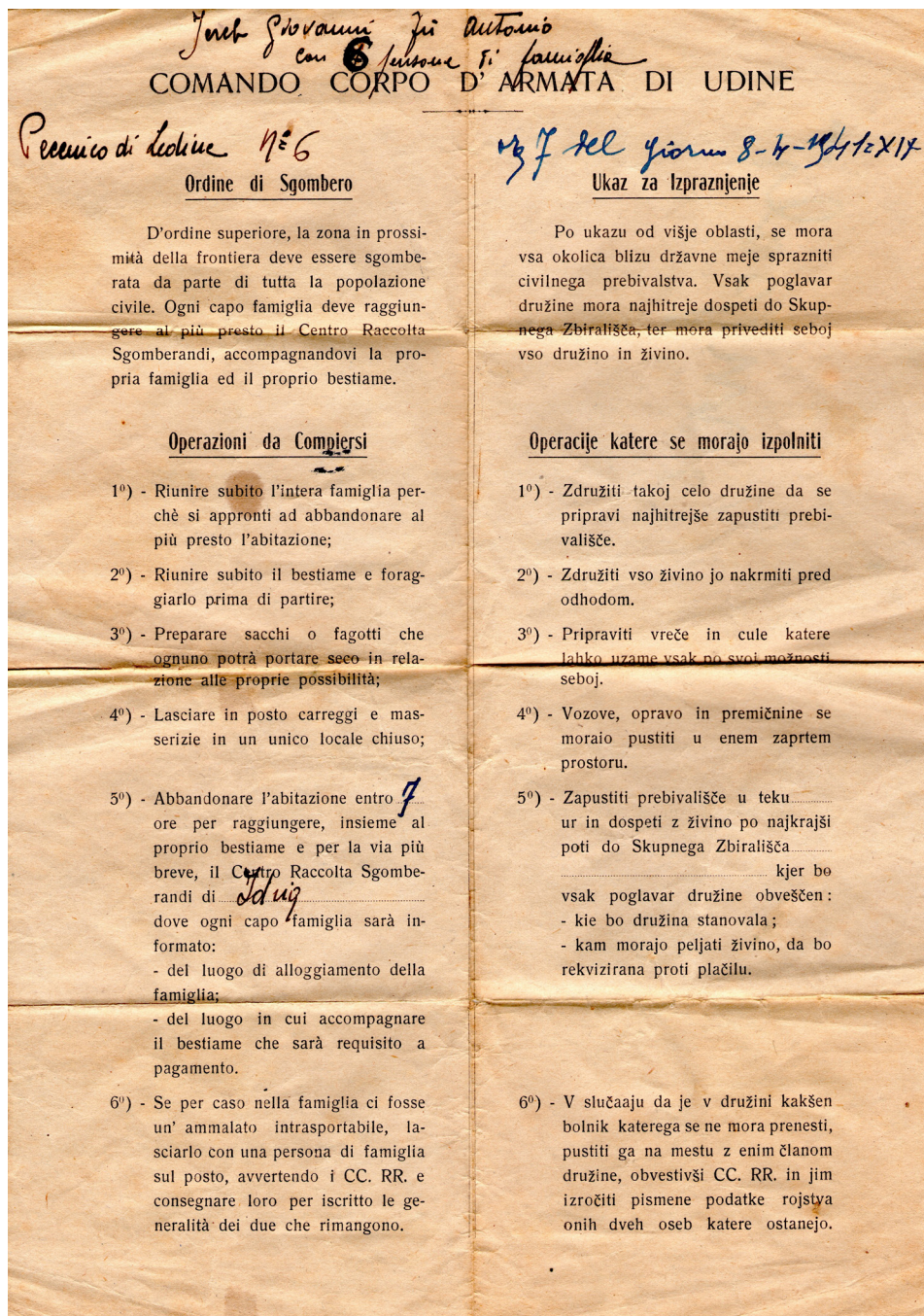


Fig. 6: Shortly before Italy's attack on Yugoslavia, the Italian authorities issued an order that the population of border villages must leave their homes within hours. The photograph shows an order to leave home to Janez Jereb from Pečnik near Ledine on 8 April 1941.

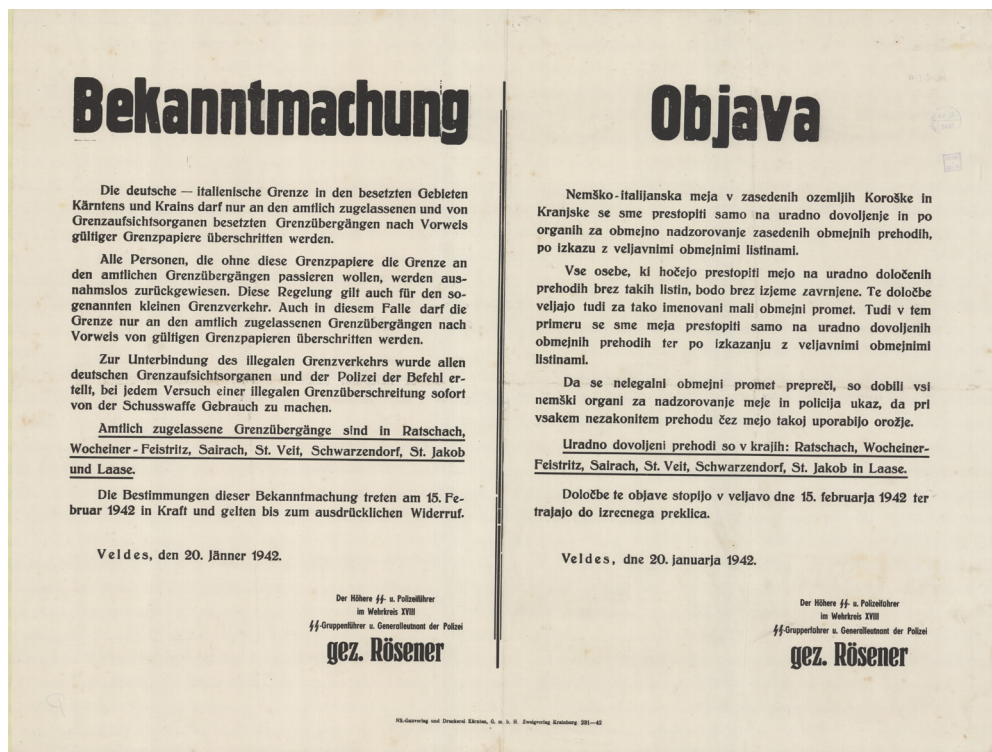


Fig. 7: The provision stipulating that the border may be crossed only with an official permit and valid border documents entered into force on 15 February 1942. An official border crossing was also in Žiri (Sairach).

Police and tax control were exercised on the branch of the Rapallo border that delineated the Province of Ljubljana and Kingdom of Italy. The regime on the German-Italian occupation border was stricter. Germans patrolled the border on a regular basis, doing rounds with dogs twice during the daytime and once during the night.⁷² Watchtowers were used in certain places to guard the occupation borders, the one that was the nearest to Idrija and Žiri stood near Lučine, on the Kovček hill above Suhi Dol. Owing to the introduction of the strict border regime by the Germans, the border was not easy to cross, but Žiri was one of the locations where this could be done. To cross the border, people had to obtain a permit,⁷³ which was not an easy undertaking. In their wish to preserve their incomes, contacts and carry out religious observances⁷⁴ – which was not

72 Stanonik, Nemško-italijanska meja, 99.

73 SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, šk. 79, a. e. OK-C-15, Objava.

74 There was no priest in Žiri; consequently, children were taken across the border to get baptized, and adults got married across the border. An interview with Rajko Vehar, Žiri, August 2015, the recording is kept in the project's archive; an interview with Štefka Dolenc, Brekovice, August 2015, the recording is kept in the project's archive.

possible on the German side of the border – people resorted to illegal crossings, which were extremely dangerous due to the fortifications.⁷⁵



Fig. 8: The Rapallo sectoral boundary stone no. 40, which was a tripoint boundary stone during the occupation, signifying the border between of the Kingdom of Italy, the Province of Ljubljana, and the German-occupied area.

75 An interview with Mirko Jereb, Podlanišče, December 2018, the recording is kept in the project's archive.

The border was dangerous for children as well. Janez Žakelj recounted the following:

“Children played picking bombs on the Rapallo border. [...] On one occasion we brought them home, hid them in a pile of matchwood that my mother had readied for the stove. I hurried after her and used a rake to remove it from the stove. When my father came and saw me, he slapped my face.”⁷⁶

However, a child in the homestead Štel on Breznica was not as lucky. He found a hand grenade and kept it as a toy. He was aware that the adults would take it from him and hid it in his bed. The bomb then went off when he was playing with it, and the boy died.⁷⁷

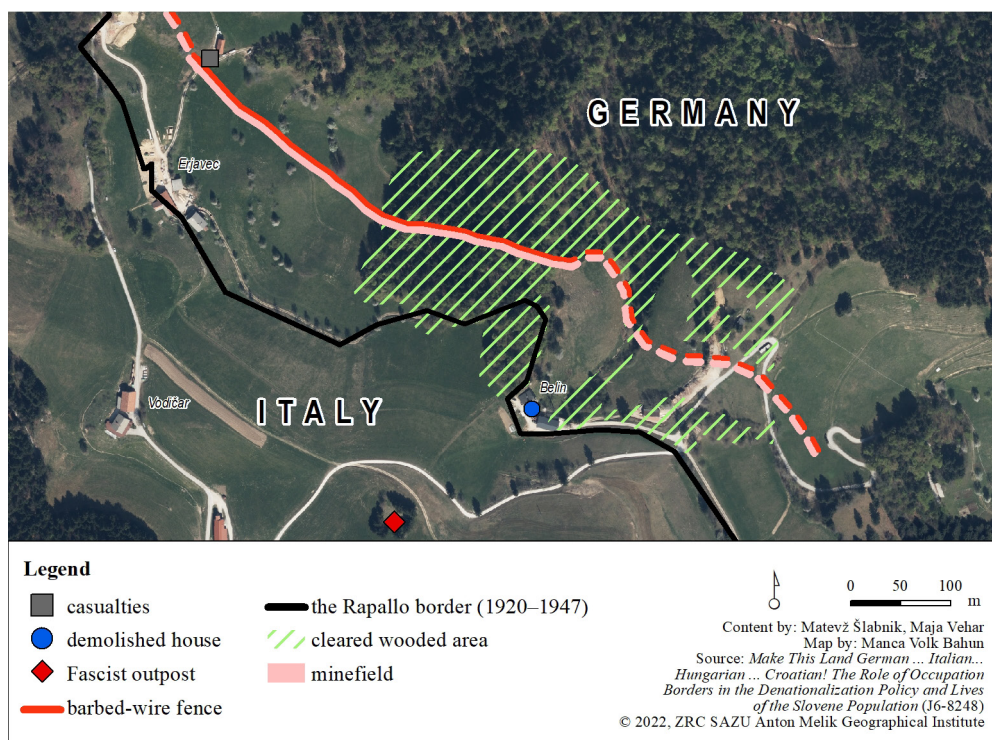


Fig. 9: Attracted by Italian wine, the German border policemen attended unofficial gatherings with the Italians on the other side of the border, in the Fascist barracks on Mrzli Vrh (above Vodičar), during the occupation. Following one of these meetings, the Italians escorted the Germans across the border and a mine was activated nearby. The map shows the location where a German and an Italian soldier died due to the explosion.

76 Jereb Filipič et al., *Ti si mene naučila brati*, 63.

77 Čadež, *Breza, brezna, Breznica*, 121.

Conclusion

The border discussed in this text remained dangerous even after Italy's capitulation, the German occupation of Idrija and their retreat from Žiri in the autumn of 1943. The German Army removed some of the mines, wire mesh and roadblocks, and such infrastructure was also partly removed also by the Partisan Army, and – to some extent – by the local population.⁷⁸ However; the bulk of physical obstacles were left behind. The process of thorough removal did not begin before the end of World War II, and took years to complete. The Yugoslav Army is said to have removed some of the obstacles, and landowners helped them identify minefields.⁷⁹ The former Rapallo border remained in place until the integration of Zone B of the Julian March to Yugoslavia. Consequently, the inhabitants of Žiri had to apply for a permit to cross the former Rapallo border up to 1947.⁸⁰ For Žiri and Idrija, an almost three-decade-long period of living on the border thus came to an end. Even though this fortified and dangerous border disappeared after a few years, as did the knowledge of it, its consequences were seen for much longer. The bulk of settlements that were in the past part of the Municipality of Žiri remained outside. Unlike the occupation border, the memory of the Rapallo border remains part of the historical memory. Nevertheless, the experiences of the generation that is referred to as children of the border remind us that such boundaries (either physical or mental) will not solve problems that mankind is faced with.

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- Fig. 6, Dušan Lapajne's archive.
- Fig. 7, SI ZAL ŠKL, 0268, Zbirka NOB, t. e. 79, p. e., OKC15, Objava.
- Fig. 8, Idrija City Museum (Fototeka Mestnega muzeja Idrija). Photographed by: Darko Viler.

Fig. 9, The Archive of the project Make This Land German ... Italian ... Hungarian ... Croatian! The Role of Occupation Borders in the Denationalization Policy and Lives of the Slovene Population, map produced by Manca Volk Bahun, information on it by Maja Vehar and Matevž Šlabnik.

Summary

Matevž Šlabnik, Maja Vehar

Idrija and Žiri as Border Towns 1941–1945

For almost three decades, Idrija and Žiri were separated by a state border. They became border towns at the end of World War I, when the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of SHS ran across the territory in question. During World War II, the German-Italian occupation border ran there. In both towns the occupiers carried out nationalist measures, while the Germans installed barbed wire around Idrija. Additionally, the occupation rendered Žiri and Idrija places near the tripoint of the Kingdom of Italy, the Italian-occupied Province of Ljubljana, and the German-occupied territory. The new border followed the old Rapallo border up to the sector milestone no. 40 near Spodnji Vrsnik, where a new branch continued eastwards, to the north of Šentjošt nad Horjulom, past Polhov Gradec as far as Šentvid pri Ljubljani. The border was defined in April 1941, and in the spring of 1942 the Germans began setting up the border infrastructure and clearing the border corridor (cleared forests, demolished buildings). Such a fortified border could only be crossed with an official permit and documents, and only at the Žiri border crossing. Police and tax control were also carried out at the branch of the Rapallo border that separated the Province of Ljubljana and the Kingdom of Italy. The occupation border was difficult to cross, and the locals had to resort to illegal border crossings. The border remained dangerous even after the Italian occupation, the German occupation of Idrija, and the liberation of Žiri in the autumn of 1943, because most of the border infrastructure remained on site. The process of the complete removal lasted several years after the war, while the former Rapallo border continued to exist until Zone B was integrated into Yugoslavia.