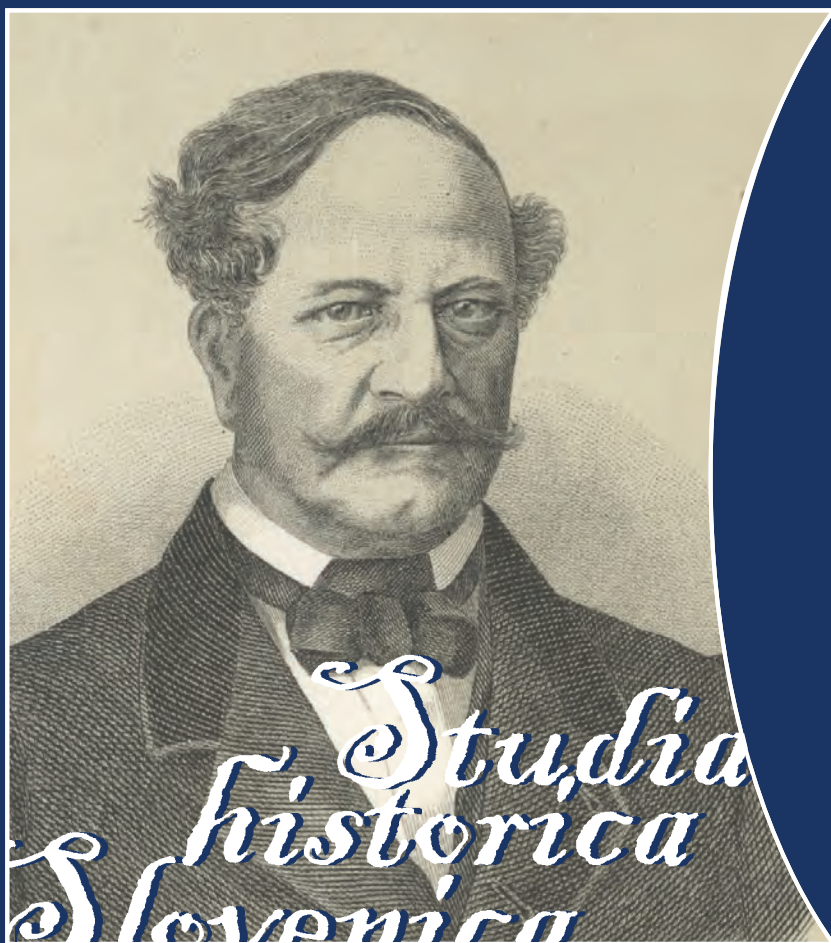


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## ***UNRRA<sup>1</sup> Trieste Port Office (1945–1947)***

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### *Abstract:*

The Trieste (Port) Office of the Yugoslav mission of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) began operation on 23 June 1945. Its leadership and staff had to adapt to the turbulent political and economic currents, which were present in Venezia Giulia at the time under the authority of the Allied Military Government, and navigate between the territorial interests of Yugoslavia and Italy. Goods were regularly leaking to the black market, but with the joint forces of all the parties, the Office succeeded in containing this outflow of goods. In the end, its share in the supply of aid to Yugoslavia was truly enormous, as it had coordinated the transport of over one third of all the aid to Yugoslavia. The Office successfully concluded its operation in May 1947.

### *Key words:*

UNRRA, Yugoslav mission, Trieste, humanitarian aid, Port of Trieste, Venezia Giulia, Zone A, Zone B

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Maribor, 13 (2013), No. 1, pp. 163–184, 52 notes, 3 pictures, 4 tables  
Language: Original in English (Abstract in English and Slovene, Summary in Slovene)

## **Review of the Situation in the Port of Trieste and in Yugoslavia in General**

The biggest port in the Adriatic, Trieste, was the target of ten allied bombings during World War II. The post-war image of the port was hence drastically altered; its operating capacity was likewise greatly reduced. If before the war it could unload 10 thousand tons of goods per day, during a 9-hour workday, this quantity was reduced in half after the conflicts ended. The storage capacity was reduced by approximately one third from the pre-war 38,156 m<sup>2</sup> to 27,871 m<sup>2</sup>, which was a severe blow, considering that on top of it all railway transport to the port was reduced by as much as 70% or from approximately 1000 wagons per day to merely 300.<sup>3</sup> This image was actually quite similar to the prevailing one in Yugoslavia. In the mountainous regions of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and parts of Macedonia hunger spread in the autumn of 1944, as the entire transport system, on which the supply from the northeast of the country depended, was ruined. Also destroyed were 57% of railway connections through the Danube Valley, which connected Yugoslavia with the neighbouring countries, as well as three-quarters of bridges – all the bridges on the Danube and most of the ones on the Sava River – and many tunnels. Burnt or otherwise devastated were approximately half of the wagons; only 200 lorries remained throughout the country. However, these lorries were not versatily useful, since road connections were also badly damaged, worn or entirely destroyed. Water transport was not spared either, since immediately after its liberation Yugoslavia was able to use only one third of its pre-war cargo capacity; only two Adriatic ports could be used provisionally – Split and the virtually intact

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1943 the British Foreign Office suggested the establishment of a special bureau, a sort of allied agency, which would be able to provide practical solutions regarding all issues related to refugees and aid after the end of the war. The proposal was approved and immediate establishment was recommended, since the advocates of the idea feared that the establishment of an efficient agency would soon wane. On 9 November 1943 representatives of 44 nations signed an agreement on the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – UNRRA at the White House in Washington, USA. This agreement began the speedy, albeit somewhat late preparation of signatory countries for solving the problems caused by the liberation of occupied territories during World War II. The organisation had many aims of operation, as the signatories undertook to assist the liberated countries in providing aid in the form of food, clothing and shelter, in preventing the spreading of infectious diseases, in the re-establishment of pre-war health conditions, and in the preparations for returning prisoners and exiles to their homes and for the re-launching of the much needed agricultural and industrial sectors. More in: George Woodbridge, *UNRRA. The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*. Vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 4 and The Agreement for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 9 November 1943. In: George Woodbridge, *UNRRA. The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*. Vol. 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 23.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Archives and Management Section (ARMS), S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 1.

Dubrovnik. Also damaged or destroyed were farms and agricultural machinery; throughout most of Yugoslavia there was a 50% decline in working livestock and fat stock; only 10% of the livestock remained west of the Drina River and south of the Sava River.<sup>4</sup> Not to be ignored is the fact that prior to the war the non-peasant population in Yugoslavia amounted to 23% and generated about half of the gross domestic product. This population worked in the processing industry, in the mining and steel industry or in numerous smaller companies and manufactures, such as sawmills, which were now out of operation due to lack of coal and drive belts. Most of the branches were either completely or partially ruined. Likewise ruined were six or seven large power plants,<sup>5</sup> which is why in the first months after the war and even all the way up to the active electrification of the country in the first five-year plan we cannot even talk about electricity. The entire material loss, multiplied by casualties (according to the latest data from the Institute of Contemporary History there were around 100 thousand inter-war and post-war casualties in Slovenia and slightly over 1,000,000 in Yugoslavia),<sup>6</sup> led Yugoslavia to a situation in which there was no hope of preserving the population in the areas suffering from shortage nor the possibility of attaining its pre-war economic state without help from abroad.<sup>7</sup>

When rebuilding its country, Yugoslavia turned to UNRRA for help. In its European missions UNRRA wished to offer help primarily as an agency that would provide the education of the population, social security schemes and the establishment of social services. Because the Yugoslav government insisted that it would take care of such activities on its own or at least to a greater extent, UNRRA's leading role became that of supply, which should have been a function of secondary importance, one carried out only in times of extreme urgency. The Yugoslav UNRRA mission quickly branched out its network in Yugoslavia by gradually rebuilding the infrastructure. The UNRRA head office was located in Belgrade, where the regional office for Serbia was also in operation. Other regional offices were located in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje and Cetinje; simultaneously, an additional office was located in Split for the supply of Dalmatia and Lika. UNRRA set up port offices first in Dubrovnik, Split and Šibenik, and later on, after liberating the territory, also in Trieste, Rijeka and

<sup>4</sup> D. W. [Duane Wilson A/N], "Success of a Mission: U.N.R.R.A. in Yugoslavia", in: *The World Today*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946), 377 (hereinafter: Wilson, "Success of a Mission: U.N.R.R.A. in Yugoslavia").

<sup>5</sup> George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 138 (hereinafter: Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Vol. 2).

<sup>6</sup> Casualties among the population in the area of the Republic of Slovenia during World War II and immediately afterwards. Methodology and account of the counting of casualties. More at: <http://www.sistory.si/zrtve/historiat>; Institute of Contemporary History (accessed: December 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Vol. 2, 138–139.

Thessaloniki (which in part also supplied Macedonia). Offices for the procurement of goods for Yugoslavia operated in Rome, Livorno and Paris.<sup>8</sup> Yet even after UNRRA and Yugoslav officials had reached an agreement regarding their roles, the implementation of these tasks was still demanding. Quite some time had passed before UNRRA officials were able to determine the actual needs of Yugoslavia, since Yugoslav authorities were either incapable of finding out what the situation was like or were unwilling to show just how vulnerable Yugoslavia actually was. In the end, UNRRA, together with the government, unveiled a plan which divided the country into three zones:<sup>9</sup>

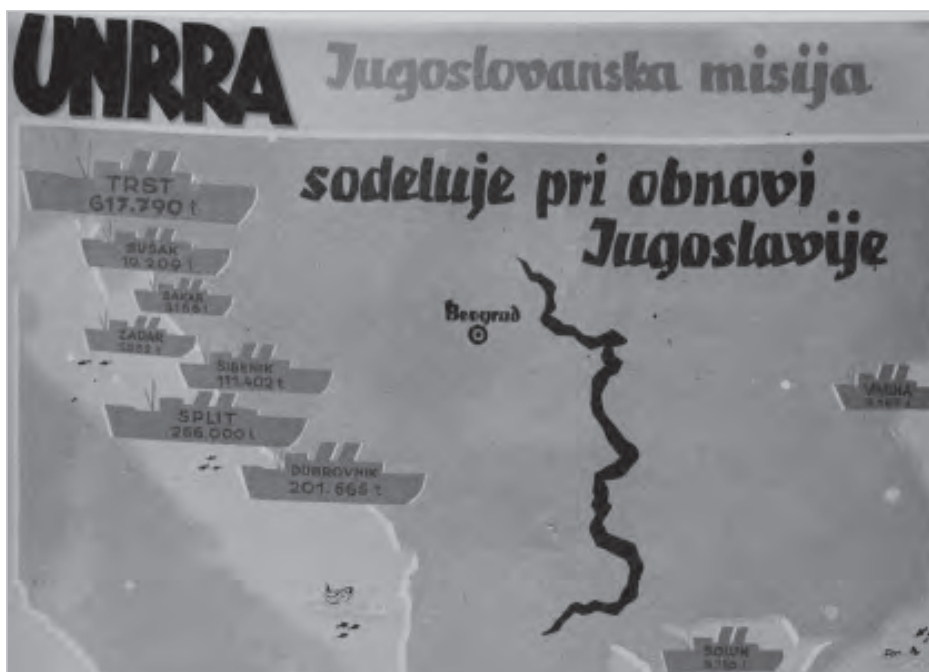
- Zone 1: the hunger zone encompassed Dalmatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, with the exception of its northern area, parts of Croatia, above all Lika and Kordun, and a part of Istria. There were 3 million people in that zone, which only had a two-month supply of cereals or less, which meant that nearly all of their food supply would have to be obtained from UNRRA.
- Zone 2: the shortage zone encompassed the rest of Croatia and all of Slovenia, where shortage was estimated at around 50% and UNRRA aid was needed to make up for the deficit.
- Zone 3: the self-sufficient zone or the zone of surpluses encompassed Serbia and Vojvodina, where the import of food was not needed for maintaining an acceptable standard, despite the poor harvest of 1945. Moreover, this region was capable of producing a sufficient surplus of food to sustain Belgrade and regions with minor shortages, such as Macedonia and Sandžak and a region of north Bosnia.

The supply of material was hindered by logistics problems, causing great difficulty for UNRRA when delivering the goods to Yugoslav ports. If it actually managed to deliver the goods, it was practically impossible to send them to the interior of the country. The only working ports from April to June 1945 were Split and Dubrovnik, which only allowed the transit of small quantities of goods. The equipment of ports was damaged, workforce was too small due to poor diet or it was not effective enough. The railway connection with the interior, which was not very good even before the war, was completely destroyed. Thus the ports only accepted about 25 thousand tons of supplies per month, which was decisively too little for their actual needs, which ranged from 100 thousand to 150 thousand tons per month. UNRRA and the Yugoslav government had to loosen

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 143.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, "Success of a Mission: U.N.R.R.A. in Yugoslavia", 378.



Part of a propaganda poster on the first anniversary of the Yugoslav mission on 15 April 1946. The photograph shows the ports through which UNRRA supplied the goods (ARMS, S-1021-0025-01, Monographs – country and area missions and offices – Yugoslavia 3 – UNRRA Yugoslav Mission Historical Monograph Volume III – *Office of Public Information*)

this "port cork". They established a transport directorate, which coordinated the available road and railway transport; simultaneously, they introduced work in three shifts at both ports.<sup>10</sup> Crucial to the increase in the flow of aid to Yugoslavia was the opening of the Port of Trieste, for which the Yugoslav government strove the most. An advantage of the Port of Trieste, in comparison with the already open ports in Split and Dubrovnik, and with the other ports being opened on the Adriatic coast,<sup>11</sup> was the working railway connection all the way to Belgrade.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, 377.

<sup>11</sup> The first ship arrived in Šibenik in June and in Zadar in July 1945. More in: Branko Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji" (UNRRA Aid to Yugoslavia), in: *Istorija XX veka*, Zbornik II. (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1961), 190 (hereinafter: Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji").

<sup>12</sup> Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Vol. 2, 147; and "International Mutual Aid: The Task of U.N.R.R.A.", in: *The World Today*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946), 43.

## Port of Trieste, Port Administration and Its Jurisdictions

With the liberation of Trieste on 1 May 1945 the opportunity arose for using the northernmost port of the Adriatic to supply UNRRA missions in Central and Eastern Europe. Namely, Split and Dubrovnik were not merely supplying Yugoslav missions, but in part other Eastern European missions as well. Despite the destroyed infrastructure, the Port of Trieste still had a sufficient number of moorings and storage facilities, and, in comparison with other ports, a better railway connection.

Immediately after the liberation the port was managed by the Central Warehouse Authority or Magazzini Generali, which had been founded by the local Chamber of Commerce as early as in 1880. It operated as an independent company.<sup>13</sup> The Authority carried out every order by its owners, but was able to make independent decisions in its everyday financial transactions and in the operation of the port institutions.<sup>14</sup> On 19 September 1945 the Allied Military Government issued an act in Trieste with which the Central Warehouse Authority was transferred to the supervision of the allied Port Supervisory Committee. The Authority mainly saw to the loading or unloading of cargo and its acceptance at the port or to its shipping and storage. Other tasks are clearly stated in a decree by the Allied Military Government, which imposed the following on the Central Warehouse Authority:<sup>15</sup>

- maintenance of port and floating cranes and of other lifts located at port facilities;
- supervision of the operation of all working facilities, quays, piers and open areas at the port. The said supervision also applies to the shipping, loading and storing of goods.
- maintenance of the railway infrastructure in the area of the port, including full or empty railway wagons;
- managing the lease of the open areas of the port or of its facilities to third parties;
- maintenance of all factories, facilities, railway tracks and electromechanical and hydraulic workshops;
- provision of fresh water and electricity to ships and port facilities, also by using two power stations likewise managed by the Central Warehouse Authority.

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<sup>13</sup> Tullia Catalan, Segio Zilli, *Č.O.I.S. Čezmejna opazovalnica delovanja pristaniških con Trsta, Tržiča in Koper* (Cross-Border Observation Post of the Operation of the Port Zones of Trieste, Monfalcone and Koper) (Trieste: La Mongolfiera LIBRI, 2008), 97–98. Accessible at: <http://www2.units.it/otis/il%20libro/Libro.pdf> (Accessed: August 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Maura Elise Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918–1954* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), 48.

<sup>15</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 3.

## UNRRA Trieste Office

The first UNRRA aid to Trieste arrived in the last week of May 1945. As written down by an unknown author in his journal entry, the city was in dire need of food. The first shipment contained 120 tons of aid. The Yugoslav mission and government wanted aid for Yugoslavia to be delivered to Trieste as well. The writer of the journal justified the efforts of Yugoslav authorities by what he had seen upon his visits to Rijeka and Pula. According to him, hunger had spread throughout both towns after the war.<sup>16</sup> On 23 June 1945 Berry K. White arrived in Trieste, the port representative of the UNRRA Yugoslav mission. His first assignment was to establish the UNRRA Trieste Port Section. On 7 July 1945 the Port Section admitted its first ship, Liberty – SS. Jesse Billingsley<sup>17</sup> – containing UNRRA goods, headed for Yugoslavia.<sup>18</sup> Coordination was of key importance, which is why the Section worked with transporters, with the military and civil port authority and with the Allied Military Government of Venezia Giulia; first contacts were also established with the allied-Yugoslav Joint Economic Committee, which had been founded by the Duino Agreement.<sup>19</sup> The Committee's representative set up an office in the house on Riva Nazario Sauro 8 near the port; it was in charge of accepting and shipping UNRRA goods to the Yugoslav mission.<sup>20</sup> However, not all of the details had been arranged and hence UNRRA representatives prepared meetings between the Yugoslav government and the Trieste Military Government, with which they secured a sufficient number of wagons, which in turn accelerated the delivery of goods to Yugoslavia. The outcome of the talks was successful, considering that upon its establishment it was the Section's duty to accept 16 thousand tons of UNRRA goods per month, yet at the end of December 1945 as many as 86 thousand tons of goods were arri-

<sup>16</sup> "S. S. Trieste Diary", in: *The World Today*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1945), 182.

<sup>17</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji", Note 111, 193.

<sup>19</sup> The Duino Agreement was signed on 10 June 1945 by the Supreme Allied Commander and the Commander-in-Chief of the Yugoslav People's Army. The Duino Agreement is known primarily for defining the Morgan demarcation line between Zone A and Zone B of Venezia Giulia. At the same time, the Agreement foresaw normal economic cooperation between both zones and mechanisms to eliminate any potential disruptions. The Joint Economic Committee that the Agreement founded was given the primary task of ensuring normal business operations in both zones of Venezia Giulia. This was of particular importance in concluding business transactions, delivering goods, enforcing contracts and the like. More in: Alfred Connor Bowman, *Zones of Strain: A Memoir of the Early Cold War* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1982), 58, and Jože Prinčič, "Primorsko gospodarstvo v času vojaških zasedbenih con" (The Economy of Primorska during the Military Occupation Zones), *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, No. 1 (2008): 157 (hereinafter: Prinčič, "Primorsko gospodarstvo v času vojaških zasedbenih con").

<sup>20</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 4.

ving at the port per month.<sup>21</sup> The Allied Military Government provided all the needed protection on the route from the port to the Morgan Line. The UNRRA Trieste Section operated this way until 15 March 1946, when it set up its own office. The latter enabled a more direct cooperation between the Yugoslav mission and its representative in Trieste on the one hand, and the port and railway authority on the other. This eliminated redundant bureaucratic procedures, which brought about an increased flow of goods and reduced the time needed for the goods to reach their final destinations.

A manager, secretary and interpreter were employed at the UNRRA Trieste Office. In time it began receiving more and more equipment and vehicles, which were provided by American and British military institutions until 1 August 1946; these institutions also saw to the maintenance of said equipment. The military also provided assistance in setting up communication links, which greatly facilitated its operation. After 1 August all assistance from military institutions ceased, which caused problems for the Office. In addition to having to find other outsourcers for mechanical and other works, it also had to find its own premises and pay a high price for them. The British army indulged the Office by relinquishing dwellings for the UNRRA transit staff, but not for its permanent one.<sup>22</sup> The Trieste Office operated as a key point in the transit of UNRRA staff, as it was located at the intersection between Belgrade and London, Paris, Cairo and the United States of America.<sup>23</sup>

The political situation in Trieste and its hinterland also affected the operation of the Office. The conflict regarding the broader Trieste territory brought about the establishment of occupation zones with a special administrative and economic structure. The border continued to isolate the coastal area of the Slovenian Littoral from Yugoslavia, while the Morgan Line divided Venezia Giulia into Zones A and B. Obtaining passes for the passing of UNRRA staff through several borders was difficult, as was the obtaining of permits for the passing of Yugoslav guards of trains headed for Yugoslavia. The process of hiring local staff was also rendered difficult. As regards Italian staff, UNRRA documents report that it considered Yugoslavia a hostile country, which should not have been entitled to UNRRA aid. For this reason, goods intended for Yugoslavia were looted more often than those intended for other missions. Hence UNRRA frequently carried out tighter control over such staff.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Božidar Božanović, head of the representative office of the Bureau of Special

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<sup>21</sup> Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Vol. 2, 147.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 5–6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

Supplies, supposedly stated that the Trieste port workers invested a great deal of effort to ensure that the aid for Yugoslavia arrived as soon as possible and that they voluntarily agreed to a 16-hour workday.<sup>25</sup> The security requirements of the Allied Military Government were strict. Thus the Office had to give a pledge to the Government for each arrival of a Yugoslav citizen who worked for UNRRA. On the other hand, the manager of the Office had to explain to the representative of the Yugoslav government in Trieste that neither he nor his employees can take part in the political life within Venezia Giulia. The supervision of UNRRA was universal. Among other things, the allied army confirmed to UNRRA officials that the Office's telephone line was constantly bugged and that all incoming and outgoing telegrams were thoroughly checked.<sup>26</sup> Despite all the tension in the post-war period in Trieste, the Trieste Office operated more or less smoothly.

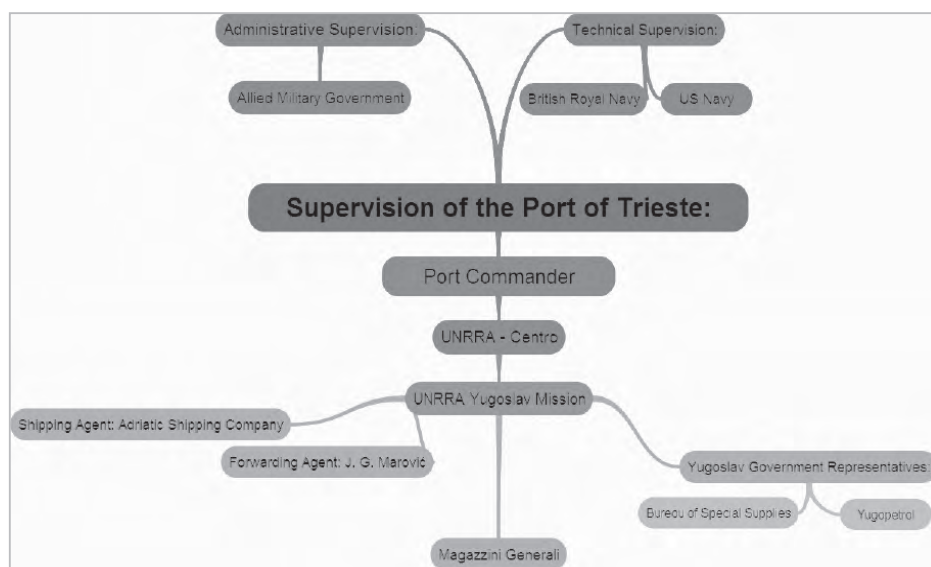
### **Trieste Office in the UNRRA Administrative Scheme**

The Trieste Office mostly operated independently as a port section of the Yugoslav mission. Nevertheless, its daily operations depended on the inflow of information coming from the UNRRA head office in Washington, the head office of the UNRRA Yugoslav mission in Belgrade, and from the UNRRA European Regional Office (ERO). Based on this information it could predict which shipments to expect and what type of goods they contained, and take potential special instructions into account. Although the Office primarily served to transport aid to Yugoslavia, it also saw to the transit of goods for the needs of the UNRRA Hungarian, Ukrainian and Belorussian missions. The goods intended for the last two missions were stored in Trieste until the arrival of a ship that transported them to the Ukrainian city of Odessa. The Austrian and Czechoslovakian missions also had offices in Trieste and cooperated well with the Trieste Office of the Yugoslav mission. Good communication between all three offices was primarily enabled by the fact that they were all located in the same building. In order to further facilitate communication, UNRRA Centro was established in the summer of 1946; it was a clearing centre, in charge of coordinating the port activities of all three missions and of eliminating various problems. However, it was considered that the centre was established too late, as the majority of the goods had already been received or shipped off.<sup>27</sup> Despite this, UNRRA Centro

<sup>25</sup> Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji", Note 111, 193.

<sup>26</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.



Presentation of the administrative scheme that supervised UNRRA goods (ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, Appendix III)

assumed the place of the highest ranking UNRRA body in Trieste. It answered only to the UNRRA European Regional Office.

The Office also shipped goods to the embassies of Great Britain and the United States of America, to the Catholic Welfare Organisation, to the United Yugoslav Relief Fund of America and to the Red Cross. On their behalf the Office examined the goods, prepared transit reports, shipped off the goods and communicated with forwarding agents, warehouses and other relevant institutions.<sup>28</sup>

### Transport of Goods

Even before the arrival of the first ship, the UNRRA shipping agent for accepting goods at the Port of Trieste, the Adriatic Shipping Company, had connected with the Allied Military Government, which was superior to the Central Warehouse Authority. It consensually concluded procedures with the Military Government regarding the choice of anchorage, the use of cranes, repairs of equipment damaged during the war and the use of warehouses. The forwar-

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 6.

ding agent set up efficient procedures, which ensured extremely fast unloading and shipping of goods. In Trieste Yugoslavia had representatives of the Bureau of Special Supplies, which answered to the Ministry of Trade. The latter chose the company G.J. Marović & Co. as its forwarding service. The forwarding agent Marović assumed responsibility for UNRRA goods as soon as they touched port soil.<sup>29</sup>

The Trieste Office was informed of the arrival of a ship to the port with a message from London, Washington or Belgrade. Based on the information on the type of goods, the forwarding company decided which anchorage to send the ship to and how to unload it. Not all anchorages were equipped with cranes, which performed the unloading procedure three times faster than the use of derricks alone. UNRRA agents supervised and recorded the entire unloading procedure both on the ship and on the pier. All of these agents, the so-called supercargo men, were retired captains of merchant ships and were familiar with such procedures. Afterwards the forwarding warehousemen of both companies calculated the quantity of the unloaded goods. These were then either loaded onto wagons and shipped off to Yugoslavia or stored. This procedure was carried out by the staff employed by the Central Warehouse Authority. The storing or immediate shipping of goods depended mainly on the amount of traffic at the port. If the traffic was very dense, the goods were stored; if there was less traffic, the goods were loaded off the ship directly onto the wagons by the side of the ship. When loading was finished, the wagon was closed with a lock, which was numbered especially for this purpose and sealed. In many places these steel locks replaced the previous wire bolts on the wagons, which could be easily removed.<sup>30</sup> After inspecting the wagons and locks, the doors were sealed too. The only exception was wagons carrying cereals and livestock, which had to be aired constantly.<sup>31</sup>

The shipping of goods from the port was authorised by the Allied Military Government, which also decided which shipment was given priority.<sup>32</sup> The wagons were sent from the port to the Campo Marzio station, which operated as a marshalling yard. There all the wagons of UNRRA missions were arranged into large compositions and sent to the main railway station, where they were additionally arranged into compositions based on the missions they were headed for. On average, 10 compositions left for Yugoslavia from the main station in Trieste per day.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Sadly, there is no data as to how many wagons comprised an individual composition. (Ibidem, 8).

Cereals arrived at the port in sacks and in bulk. The cereals in sacks could be unloaded quickly, while the bulk cargo was unloaded using special vacuums, which sent the cereals directly to the goods wagons, or with large excavators, which loaded the cereals into a special machine with two special tubes that filled sacks with the cereals, which were then loaded onto the wagons.<sup>34</sup> Special preparations were required for handling livestock. According to the rules, the ships that transported livestock were permitted a one-week stop for unloading, yet it was often that these very ships arrived late. For this reason certain anchorages were left vacant, with wagons standing by, so that the unloading of the livestock could be started immediately after the ship arrived. The transit of livestock also created the problem of removing the dung. Quite a few letters were written regarding this problem after the first ships arrived, as it was not clear whether the removal of dung was the responsibility of the Office or of the ship's owner, since the rule book was unclear on the matter. In the end the Office assumed this responsibility. It had to remove from 200 to 250 tons of dung from ships on average, which usually transported some 750 horses. The dung could have been used to fertilise agricultural lands, yet the lack of goods wagons prevented it. Waiting for wagons would have caused a delay in the ship's departure, which would have cost UNRRA 2000 USD per day. Hence the dung was collected on a nearby ship, which carried it to the open sea and tossed it in. The entire process of removing the dung took 36 hours. The livestock had to be unloaded as quickly as possible, not only because of the high costs in the event of a delay, but due to the general poor condition of the livestock. The livestock stood throughout the transport on a ship or train and therefore had to be taken to a pasture as quickly as possible, especially the horses, which first stood on a pasture on Yugoslav soil at the village of Prestranek near Postojna. They remained there for around 20 days in order to recover their strength before travelling again.<sup>35</sup>

The most difficult process was unloading machinery such as tractors and bulldozers, since derricks were often incapable of lifting the machinery. Hence water cranes had to be used, but the army had been given priority use of these. After the unloading was finished, the entire machinery had to be examined, since damage occurred on occasion. Thus e.g. it happened that they forgot to drain the water from the tractor radiators. The water froze at the low winter temperatures, causing the radiators to burst. Otherwise the level of the difficulty of unloading mostly depended on the weight of the machinery. The unloading of 23-ton American locomotives caused the greatest difficulties and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

required water cranes. 9-ton mining locomotives could be unloaded using derricks, whereas 65 British Liberation locomotives, each weighing 76.5 tons, were transported with special ships that were equipped with 12-ton lifting cross-pieces that enabled their unloading. The locomotives were then moved to the area for repairing locomotives, from where they were dragged to Yugoslavia. 60-ton fishing boats were also transported by ship. UNRRA was especially proud of the successful transport of such ships from Seattle on the Pacific coast of the USA. During their loading, the local newspapers warned that the slightest poor weather would cause the Liberty cargo ships to dip, fill up with water and sink. However, the fishing boats that stood on the deck of these cargo ships were fastened with wire ropes and chains, allowing them to undergo transoceanic voyages undamaged. Upon arrival, a 200-ton crane moved them directly into the water and a tugboat pulled them into the Yugoslav sea. Other smaller machinery usually arrived in crates and also left the port in them. The crates that were either too high or too wide for railway tunnels were moved onto special lorry trailers and transported by road.

The policy of the port and of all the UNRRA missions operating in Trieste was to dispatch all shipments from the port to their final destination as quickly as possible. Thus around 60% of all goods headed for Yugoslavia were loaded directly onto wagons; when that was not possible – especially due to a high flow of goods at the port, for which they were unable to provide a sufficient number of wagons – the goods were usually sent to warehouses, thus enabling a quick departure of ships from the port. The lack of wagons could usually be solved quickly; misunderstandings occurred only rarely and particularly between Yugoslav and Italian railways, usually caused by their different rules regarding transport management. Thus it once happened that Italian railways refused to send any more wagons to the port, because they accused Yugoslav railways of expropriating eight shunt engines and demanded that they return them. On another occasion Yugoslav railways accused the Italian ones of needlessly detaining the transport of new cars due to political tension. However, such misunderstandings usually did not last too long.<sup>36</sup>

The shipments of petroleum, oil and lubricants that started arriving after August 1945 were given special status. All the shipments were transported and stored for UNRRA by the British Army, with which the UNRRA European Regional Office had concluded an agreement. Thus the British Army undertook to satisfy all the Yugoslav needs for petroleum. For this purpose it used the military facilities in Trieste and in the Trieste districts of Aquila and San Sabba. At San Sabba UNRRA took on the costs of purchasing fire protection equip-

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, 11.



Two boys sewing a torn sack of cereals, damaged during unloading, Port of Trieste. Probably 1946 (ARMS, UNRRA/323, *Yugoslavia album*)

ment and other equipment needed to implement the Yugoslav programme. It assumed responsibility for these shipments only after the army loaded the goods onto wagons or tankers.<sup>37</sup>

However, shipments of UNRRA goods did not come to Yugoslavia only by railway. Over a span of a few months 12,533 motor vehicles came through Trieste, which included lorries, tractors, trailers and tankers. These vehicles transported various types of goods, spare parts, tools, lubricants etc. The start-

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 10.

ing point for the majority of convoys, which contained from 40 to 70 vehicles, was the port town of Livorno. They were driven through Italy by allied, mostly Anglo-American soldiers or by German prisoners of war, who worked under the supervision of the allied soldiers. Later on these convoys were organised by civilian UNRRA staff. The first convoy arrived in Trieste in August 1945. Later on they became more and more frequent, until in November 1945 they became an everyday phenomenon on the streets of Trieste. They continued to arrive every day for the following two months, after which the frequency of these convoys began to decline, until in July 1946 it stopped at four or five convoys per month. The last larger road transport arrived on 4 August 1946 and delivered 44 new Fiat vehicles. On 14 November 1946 the last convoy arrived.

Upon its arrival, the convoy was welcomed by two UNRRA officers, who mediated between the commander of the convoy and the Yugoslav representatives. The convoy continued on its path from Trieste past Monfalcone and Opicina to the Morgan demarcation line near Sežana. All formalities were arranged at the border crossing. Between the British and American sentry posts the convoy was handed over to the representative of the UNRRA Yugoslav mission. The representative inspected all the vehicles as to their type, make, serial number etc. Afterwards he also inspected the goods, consulting a list he had received for each individual convoy. After the inspection the representative handed all the vehicles over to the new commander of the convoy, the representative of the Yugoslav army, and the goods to the agents of the Bureau of Special Supplies. The latter reinspected all of the goods and issued an acknowledgement of receipt of the goods to the UNRRA representative. All receipts were kept at the head office of the UNRRA Yugoslav mission in Belgrade.<sup>38</sup>

### **Outflow of Goods to the Black Market**

The economic and political situation enabled Trieste to become a basis for illegal trade, which provided foreign exchange assets and material assets to the nearby population and to Ljubljana and Belgrade.<sup>39</sup> Generally speaking, much of the illegal trade in Trieste took place with the knowledge or even support of the Yugoslav government. The national government of Slovenia, with the help of the Economic Commission of the Provincial National Liberation Committee, founded a number of companies in 1945 with fictitious owners and capital that was shown as capital of the Slovene national community. On paper,

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> Prinčič, "Primorsko gospodarstvo v času vojaških zasedbenih con": 149.

these companies were engaged in ore, livestock, wood, paper, construction, transportation and other activities. They were managed by the Import-Export Cooperative, which was abolished due to the "influence of foreign individuals and agents". These companies were taken over by the Ministry of Export and Import of the People's Republic of Slovenia; some 10 other companies were active in Trieste at the same time, under the management of the State Security Administration (UDBA). With these companies Yugoslavia and Slovenia ensured themselves vast foreign exchange reserves. Other players used similar tactics, such as district authorities and border companies.<sup>40</sup> The black market of UNRRA goods was less profitable, but by no means negligible. In Trieste UNRRA recorded a greater outflow of goods to the black market than in Yugoslav ports. The documents explain the higher number of thefts with the greater quantity of goods that moved through there. The protection of the goods headed for Yugoslavia was the responsibility of the Yugoslav mission, which was primarily concerned about the outflow of goods in Zone A of Venezia Giulia. In April 1946 the Yugoslav government assessed that the thefts of goods were increasing and that something needed to be done about it. Its report recorded that on 9 April 1946 57 sacks of sugar had been stolen from a wagon at the Campo Marzio station. The perpetrator was caught and handed over to the Allied Military Government. The 13th corps of the allied armed forces in Venezia Giulia was also informed of the increase in thefts. The Yugoslav government asked the Allied Military Government to allow the Yugoslav army to accompany all the transports of wagons from the port to Zone B of Venezia Giulia. A steamy debate followed between UNRRA, the army and the Military Government, since the latter two were not in favour of Yugoslav armed militia entering Zone A. The Yugoslav government and the UNRRA Yugoslav mission advocated that the thefts which had been on the rise since January 1946 had to be contained and that one could frequently see employees of the port selling UNRRA canned meat on the streets. Between 19 and 22 May the military police carried out two actions and successfully apprehended organisations of thieves; nevertheless between 19 and 25 May UNRRA wagons in Udine and Mestre were looted, in addition to those in Trieste. Furthermore, the Yugoslav mission protested the fact that the police of Venezia Giulia had not returned the stolen goods it had confiscated from the thieves to the Trieste Office. A few of the employees at UNRRA facilities in the district of San Sabba were convicted of causing the outflow of UNRRA goods. These employees worked at the railway and deliberately rerouted some of the wagons to the railway station in San Sabba. Thus 329 sacks of sugar were stolen on 14 June 1946. For this period – from 9 April to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 158.

14 June – the Ministry of Trade of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) issued a report stating that after checking the lists of goods and the goods that had actually arrived it had established that thefts were still on the rise. As many as 23 wagons were to have been looted, which contained:

Table 1: Outflow of Goods to the Black Market from 9 April to 14 June 1946

Goods	Number of Units
Sugar	425 sacks
Mail – letters	18 sacks
Mail – parcels	37 parcels
Milk <sup>40</sup>	40 crates
Leather	2 parcels
Footwear	18 crates
Bacon	2 crates
Coffee	68 sacks
Fabric	1 bale
Jam	29 crates

According to data from the Yugoslav government almost 250 tons of goods were stolen in total by 15 July 1946.<sup>42</sup> Despite these events the Allied Military Government did not allow the armed Yugoslav militia to enter Zone A. However, on 8 June 1946 it did allow an increased number of unarmed Yugoslav guards to monitor the movements of railway wagons from the port. On 12 June the head office of the Yugoslav mission replied that it cannot place individual guards on trains, for it believed that their lives could be in danger if thieves were to attack. Hence the mission suggested that the allied government provide its armed military sentries, yet that was not possible due to lack of military staff. At the end of June 1946 the Allied Military Government allowed members of the Yugoslav militia to re-enter Zone A and accompany the wagons from the Campo Marzio station into Zone B. However, despite all the efforts from the Yugoslav government and UNRRA – UNRRA's Director-General, Fiorello

<sup>41</sup> Most likely powdered milk.

<sup>42</sup> Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji", 194.

La Guardia, even intervened with the commander of the allied forces in Italy – they remained unarmed;<sup>43</sup> moreover, the militia was not allowed to accompany convoys through the key point of transport – the city centre.<sup>44</sup>

In August 1946 the increased security measures contributed to a decline in looting. The key measure was the increased number of security guards at the port and the escort by the Venezia Giulia police from the port to the marshalling yard, where security was taken over by the unarmed Yugoslav militia. Upon taking over the wagons, the security guards of both sides performed an inspection to determine whether looting had occurred, thus verifying the efficiency of the new security system. New searchlights at the key spots in the marshalling yard illuminated these spots all night long and presented an additional factor of supervision. The allied army distributed patrols, which protected the transport routes along which UNRRA goods were travelling. All of the stolen goods which UNRRA had successfully retrieved were protected by a security officer, appointed by UNRRA Centro. The goods were returned to the port and loaded onto the wagons headed for the country of their original destination.<sup>45</sup>

As regards the outflow of UNRRA goods to the black market, an investigation by the head of the Trieste Office, Berry K. White, deserves mention. As mentioned above, the Yugoslav mission had sent him to Trieste on 23 June 1945; he was relieved of his function on 9 September 1946. That same year the head of the Yugoslav mission issued an order to launch an investigation into the operations of the former head of the Office. Among other things he was charged with bribing representatives of the companies that collaborated with the Office, with trafficking in foreign currencies, with illegal expropriation of supplies owned by the mission or the Yugoslav government, and with trafficking in goods such as e.g. tyres, sugar, maize etc.<sup>46</sup> The investigation did not uncover any actual evidence of major offences – particularly concerning trafficking and bribery –, but it did convict him of a few minor offences. At the conclusion of the investigation the Committee suggested that White be dishonourably discharged from UNRRA service, and asked those in charge to show leniency when determining the level of dishonourableness.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 11–13. As regards the issue of armed guards from the Yugoslav militia, UNRRA documents clearly state that the militia in Zone A was never armed. However, the newspaper *Politika* reported on 7 August 1946 that the pressure from La Guardia and the comprehensive documentation had forced the Allied Military Government to grant armed protection from the Yugoslav militia.

<sup>44</sup> Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji", 194.

<sup>45</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, 11–13.

<sup>46</sup> ARMS, S-1414-0000-0179, JS/Chief/30, a/ *Committee of Inquiry on Berry White*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 6–7.

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## Conclusion

In light of the political situation, the operation of UNRRA in Trieste did not encounter any greater difficulties, especially when considering all the tension that occurred between the Italian and Yugoslav sides. Situated in the city were the Yugoslav military mission and the representative office of the Bureau of Special Supplies, for which the Italians often made perfectly clear that they did not belong there. This discord reached its climax on the night of 30 April to 1 May 1946, when the head of the representative office of the Bureau of Special Supplies, Janko Ravnikar, was killed in an attack, and his deputy, Milan Kmet, and colleague, Jure Bećarević, injured.<sup>48</sup> Therefore the operation of the Office could in fact be evaluated as successful merely because it never stopped operating. An even greater achievement was the fact that it operated very successfully and without any major conflicts. In Trieste the Office closed its doors in May 1947, only one month before the Yugoslav mission was shut down on 20 June.

Despite the initial problems, the progress in setting up ports and transport connections was incredibly fast. By mid-July the capacity of accepting goods at the Split and Dubrovnik ports increased to 100 thousand tons. By July 1945 the "port cork" was eliminated with the opening of the Trieste, Šibenik and Zadar ports. At that time the monthly traffic of the ports increased to 100 thousand tons, and in December of that year to as many as 200 thousand tons per month.<sup>49</sup> UNRRA's intervention helped thousands of Yugoslavs to get through these difficult times more easily. By providing food, clothing, medicine and by building hospitals it helped the population to improve their living conditions; by providing technology and agricultural machinery it contributed significantly to the much needed launch of Yugoslav economy. Over a span of two years UNRRA delivered more than 3 million tons of goods to Yugoslavia:<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Petranović, "Pomoć UNRE Jugoslaviji", 194.

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, "Success of a Mission: U.N.R.R.A. in Yugoslavia", 377.

<sup>50</sup> Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Vol. 2, 169.

Table 2: The amount of goods delivered by UNRRA to Yugoslavia valued in US Dollars and in metric tons

<u>Form of Aid</u>	<u>Value in USD (\$)</u>	<u>Weight in tons</u>
<b>Food</b>	135,029,700	1,392,354
<b>Clothing, textile and footwear</b>	81,785,200	103,311
<b>Health care and army medical corps</b>	19,911,600	24,154
<b>Agrarian rehabilitation</b>	36,044,300	272,418
<b>Industrial rehabilitation</b>	108,147,200	1,181,575
<b>Acceptance of military supplies</b>	34,724,000	150,991
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>415,642,000<sup>50</sup></b>	<b>3,124,803</b>

Of which the following quantity of goods passed through the Trieste Office of the Yugoslav mission:<sup>52</sup>

Table 3: The amount of UNRRA goods that passed through the Port of Trieste

<u>Form of Aid</u>	<u>Weight in tons</u>
Different types of ship cargo – Port of Trieste	969,461.5
Different types of ship cargo – Port of Venice	9686
Petrol	76,439
Paraffin	53,501
Diesel	26,235
Aviation fuel – Avgas	713.5
Other supplies connected with petroleum	4360
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,140,396</b>

<sup>51</sup> Bearing in mind the increase in dollar value, today this sum would amount to \$5.3 billion. More at <http://www.measuringworth.com> (Accessed: December 2012)

<sup>52</sup> ARMS, S-1021-0025-07, Monographs, Yugoslavia Vol. VI, Department of Supply, *Trieste Port Section*, Appendix VII.

In addition to goods, a higher number of means of transportation also arrived through the port:<sup>53</sup>

Table 4: Number of vehicles that passed through the Port of Trieste

Means of transportation	Number
Cars	965
Lorries	7763
Trailers	3444
Tractors	32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,204</b>

With aid from UNRRA Yugoslavia avoided an utter humanitarian catastrophe. Moreover, it laid the foundations for a stable economy for the post-war reconstruction. Ports and railways were sufficiently restored, agriculture came to life, factories were re-opened, production was on the rise, new technologies were introduced, and with the inflow of aid from UNRRA the prices of goods were dropping. Thus by successfully leading the biggest European mission, UNRRA enabled Yugoslavia to become economically independent and get back on its feet.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem.

**Kornelija Ajlec**

**UNRRINA TRŽAŠKA PRISTANIŠKA PISARNA (1945–1947)**

POVZETEK

Organizacija Združenih narodov za pomoč in obnovo – UNRRA je prispela na jugoslovansko ozemlje neposredno po koncu druge svetovne vojne. Po prihodu se je morala soočiti s številnimi ovirami, ki so ji onemogočale nemoteno posredovanje materialne pomoči. Tako se je morala UNRRA aktivno vključiti v povojno obnovo s tem, da je pomagala pri vzpostavljanju transportnih poti. Pomoč je prihajala počasi, sprva preko le dveh jugoslovanskih pristanišč Split in Dubrovnik. Kmalu pa je prišla pobuda, da bi za dobavo pomoči zavezniki dali Unrri na voljo pristanišče v Trstu, ki je lahko čeprav poškodovano začelo z obratovanjem za unrrine namene v manj kot dveh mesecih po osvoboditvi mesta. Prav tako pa je bila ključna njegova železniška povezava z Ljubljano in Beogradom. Unrrina Jugoslovanska misija je v Trstu ustanovila pristaniško pisarno, ki je koordinirala dobavo pomoči ter posredovala pri odnosih med Zavezniško vojaško upravo v Julijski krajini. Delovala je učinkovito, saj je uspešno dobavila več sto tisoč ton zalog in drugih dobrin, ki so postale temelj povojne obnove Jugoslavije.

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*Ključne besede:* UNRRA, Jugoslovanska misija, Trst, humanitarna pomoč, Tržaško pristanišče, Julijska krajina, Cona A, Cona B

*Izvilleček:* Tržaška (pristaniška) pisarna Jugoslovanske misije Organizacije Združenih narodov za pomoč in obnovo (UNRRA) je začela delovati 23. junija 1945. Njeno vodstvo in osebje se je moralo prilagajati nemirnim političnim in gospodarskim tokovom, ki so takrat vladali v Julijski krajini pod oblastjo Zavezniške vojaške uprave, ter krmariti med teritorialnimi interesi Jugoslavije in Italije. Dobrine so redno uhajale na črni trg, vendar je s skupnimi močmi vseh strani ta odtok blaga pisarni uspelo zamejiti. Končen delež pri dobavi pomoči v Jugoslavijo pa je bil resnično ogromen, saj je koordinirala transport več kot tretjine celotne pomoči Jugoslaviji. Pisarna je svoje delovanje uspešno zaključila maja 1947.

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# **S** *tudia* **H** *istorica* **S** *lovenica*

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