



[Back to Article](#)
 [Click to Print](#)


Monday, May. 14, 1945

ITALY: Trouble Spot

Trieste was liberated last week. But the heady thrill of liberation was quickly followed by an international hangover —conflicting Yugoslav and Italian claims to the city, which is predominantly Italian but situated in a Slav area.

Into Trieste, as the Germans retreated, crowded Marshal Tito's Yugoslav partisans, Italian Communist partisans, Italian non-Communist partisans and (to the surprise of most people who had all but forgotten them) General Draja Mihailovich's Chetniks. Yugoslavs and Italians at once asserted squatters' rights.

Before the partisans could come to blows, the British Eighth Army's crack New Zealand division dashed in and occupied Trieste's strategic waterfront. So long as they remained there, Italians felt, Trieste was not lost to Italy—though the Yugoslavs held almost all the rest of Venezia Giulia, including Fiume. Later, U.S. troops also moved into Trieste.

Deep Satisfaction. Never since the Allied occupation had the British been so popular with Italians. The Cabinet of aging Premier Ivanoe Bonomi issued a declaration of "deep satisfaction" that the New Zealanders were in Trieste, added a "special salute to the incontestably Italian city." From Marshal Tito's headquarters came a low answering growl: "Trieste and Gorizia . . . were, after bloody struggles, liberated by Yugoslav Army forces. . . . Certain Allied forces have, without our permission, entered [these] towns, which might have undesirable consequences unless the matter is promptly settled by mutual agreement." Cried the Yugoslav Communist paper, *Naprijed*, "Istria and Trieste are ours and they will remain ours."

Trieste almost caused an Italian Cabinet crisis. The issue, embarrassing for practically everybody, is especially embarrassing for the Italian Communist Party, which has long walked on eggs in discreetly supporting Yugoslav claims to Trieste. When Foreign Minister Alcide de Gasperi declared: "The Allied troops have our full applause," Vice Premier Palmiro Togliatti (Italy's No. 1 Communist) attacked him: De Gasperi was acting too independently. Cried De Gasperi: "Foreign affairs are my business!" For hours the two ministers wrangled behind locked doors. At last Togliatti emerged to tell waiting correspondents: "Trieste is an Italian city, we all agree. Whether it remain Italian does not depend on us or on me."

Ready to Compromise. At week's end both sides were reported to be ready to compromise by making Trieste an international port. But Marshal Tito proposed that the international port should be under Yugoslav sovereignty.

Copyright © 2009 Time Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

Liberal Count Carlo Sforza proposed that it should be under Italian sovereignty. Britain, with its New Zealanders quietly occupying Trieste harbor, said nothing. But London could scarcely fail to be aware that with a pro-Russian government newly established in Vienna (TIME, May 7) and a pro-Russian government in Belgrade, Trieste under Yugoslav sovereignty would be equivalent to a Russian port on the Adriatic Sea.

 Click to Print

Find this article at:

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,792110,00.html>
