



## TRIESTINE“VOLUNTEERS” IN ITALIAN ARMED FORCES FROM 1954 TO 2005

In October 1954, under the Memorandum of Understanding of London, the Italian Government received the administration of Trieste, longed for Trieste, the very symbol of the bloody adventure which had led to the reunification of the Fatherland after the wars of the *Risorgimento*.

On the other side, the Treaty of Peace imposed to Italy as a defeated Country did not allow the Republic of Italy to extend its sovereignty over the city and the whole province that, by then, had become Zone A of the Free Territory of Trieste, established as an independent State under the aegis of the United Nations.

The Italian Government had to do nothing more than taking care of the temporary administration, the same way as the USA and Great Britain had done under a mandate of the UNO from 1947 to 1954 establishing an Allied Military Government (AMG). A solely civil administration, as the Treaty of Peace forbid the presence of armed forces in the FTT.

But things went very differently. As soon as the Allied Troops left Trieste, the State of Italy annexed by military force the whole Zone A of the FTT, in open violation of the Treaty of Peace. And, with this territory, its citizens who were deprived of their rightful citizenship of the FTT to be forced to have that of the occupying State.

This was a real conspiracy against the international legal system, tolerated in the name of global, geopolitical balances. It was the core of the Cold War and the border of the “iron curtain” crossed Trieste and its little, independent State with an important and strategic international port. That shall never fall in the hands of the communist block.

The victims of this conspiracy of silence were the citizens of Trieste, as they suddenly lost all of their rights, being treated like a mere commodity. So, the exodus began. Between 1954 and 1961, over 30.000 Triestines emigrated, most of them to Australia, to run from the return of the Italian occupation and from the abuses and persecutions that it would cause.

The ones who remained had to undergo the completment of forced Italianization. The second, after the first 25 years of the Fascist era. And, among the parts of this operation, there was the illegal imposition of military service to the male citizens of Trieste.

This is how, from 1954 to 2005, thousands of citizens of Trieste were enlisted in the Armed Forces of Italy, undergoing, in violation of the Treaty of Peace, to forced recruitment.

How did Italy force Triestines to serve military service in the Armed Forces of the occupying State? Simply, by having them signing a blank paper, only to then stamp “volunteer” on that. There was no choice. Whoever refused was taken by the Carabinieri and ended up in military prisons for failing to report for military service.

The Triestine “volunteers” drafted with this system were also regarded to as foreigners (as they actually were), called “slavs” in a derogatory way and kept under control due to being considered unreliable.

Nobody has ever spoken about this thorny truth. A global silence to cover up a crime against humanity. While the victims are still there, longing for a denied justice. For the dignity of human beings that has been denied to them. They are the victims of a State that has never wanted nor had to deal with its embarrassing history made of forced removals of the truth.