BIOGRAPHY OF CESARE PREZ, SPELEOLOGIST EXPLORER OF TRIESTE BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Riccardo Corazzi[1] Rino Semeraro[2]

ABSTRACT

Cesare Prez was probably the most famous speleologist from Trieste in the period between the two world wars. His explorations took place on the Karst (Classical Karst), the Upper Karst (Bainsizza and Tarnova / Trnovsko-Banjšca Planota) and Istria. At the age of 19, at the outbreak of the First World War, he served in the army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the end of the war he worked as a warehouse chief and after that he was employed in the Municipality of Trieste. He enrolled with his brothers Augusto and Federico (1920) into the "Sezione Grotte" of the "Associazione XXX Ottobre" society. In 1924 Cesare Prez was head of the "Sezione Grotte", bringing it at the top of the world for cave exploration. Until the early thirties of '900, he explored several important caves, such as the Abisso Bertarelli (Upper Istria), the Abisso di Montenero (Idria), the Abisso di Semi (Upper Istria), the Foiba Colinassi (Istria), the Abisso Federico Prez (Upper Istria), the Abisso of Monte Tussar (Ciceria, Upper Istria). In 1925 he was one of the protagonists of the rescue of the cavers from the "Commissione Grotte" of the "Società Alpina delle Giulie", lost into the Abisso Bertarelli (Ciceria, Upper Istria), for which he was awarded with the "Carnegie Foundation" badge of honor at the Trieste Town Hall. He also wrote important articles about the main caves explored by the Associazione XXX Ottobre, such as the Abisso di Montenero, the Abisso Federico Prez, the Foiba Colinassi, the Abisso di Semi and the Abisso of Monte Tussar, published mainly on "Le Grotte d'Italia", a scientific magazine edited by the "Istituto Italiano di Speleologia". In those articles are illustrated both technical aspects of the explorations and the morphology of the caves.
Along the Second World War time, he was not called to arms because of his elderly age and therefore he stayed in Trieste. After the armistice of 8 September 1943, with the establishment of the "Adriatisches Küstenland", he worked as gardener and translator at the headquarters of the Wehrmacht and then he had to work for the "Speleological Office" of the S.S in Trieste. At the end of the war, after of Tito's troops occupation, he lead the team (led by police inspector De Giorgi) to recover the human remains in the "foibe" (shaft caves). He lived his last few years in distress, due to some serious family and economic issues. He died at the age of 74. As mentioned above, Cesare Prez was not only a great caver but also one of the most important speleologists of the period between the two world wars. This is attested by his papers, where he points out geological, geomorphological and hydrological data, as well as accurate cave descriptions. After his death, the Gruppo Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre named after him an important abyss of Mt Canin and also the CAI (Italian Alpine Club)'s School of Caving in Trieste in order to honor his memory.

Keywords: Italian speleologist Cesare Prez, Speleology of Trieste between the World War I and World War II, Venezia Giulia, Italy

RIASSUNTO

Cesare Prez fu probabilmente il più famoso speleologo di Trieste nel periodo tra le due guerre mondiali. Le sue esplorazioni si svolsero nel Carso (Carso Classico), l'Alto Carso (Bainsizza e Tarnova / Trnovsko-Banjšca Planota) e in Istria. All'età di 19 anni, allo scoppio della Prima Guerra Mondiale, servì nell'esercito dell'Impero austro-ungarico. Alla fine della guerra lavorò come capo magazziniere e successivamente fu impiegato nel Comune di Trieste. Nel 1920 si iscrisse, insieme ai fratelli Augusto e Federico, alla "Sezione Grotte" dell'"Associazione XXX Ottobre". Nel 1924 Cesare Prez fu a capo della "Sezione Grotte", portandola ai vertici mondiali dell'esplorazione speleologica. Fino ai primi anni Trenta del '900, esplorò

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diverse importanti grotte come l'Abisso Bertarelli (Alto Istria), l'Abisso di Montenero (Idria), l'Abisso di Semi (Alto Istria), la Foiba Colinassi (Istria), l'Abisso Federico Prez (Alto Istria) e l'Abisso di Monte Tussar (Ciceria, Alto Istria).
Nel 1925 fu uno dei protagonisti del salvataggio degli speleologi della "Commissione Grotte" della "Società Alpina delle Giulie" dispersi nell'Abisso Bertarelli (Ciceria, Alto Istria), per il quale venne insignito del distintivo d'onore della "Carnegie Foundation" presso il Municipio di Trieste. Scrisse anche importanti articoli sulle principali grotte esplorate dall'Associazione XXX Ottobre, come l'Abisso di Montenero, l'Abisso Federico Prez, la Foiba Colinassi, l'Abisso di Semi e l'Abisso di Monte Tussar, pubblicati principalmente su "Le Grotte d'Italia", una rivista scientifica edita dall'"Istituto Italiano di Speleologia". In questi articoli venivano illustrati sia gli aspetti tecnici delle esplorazioni che la morfologia delle grotte.
Durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, a causa dell'età avanzata, non fu richiamato alle armi e rimase a Trieste. Dopo l'armistizio dell'8 settembre 1943 e con l'istituzione dell' "Adriatisches Küstenland", lavorò come giardiniere e traduttore presso il quartier generale della Wehrmacht e poi fu impiegato nell'Ufficio Speleologico delle SS a Trieste. Alla fine della guerra, dopo l'occupazione delle truppe di Tito, guidò la squadra (condotta dall'ispettore di polizia De Giorgi) per il recupero dei resti umani nelle "foibe" (cavità carsiche). Visse i suoi ultimi anni in difficoltà, a causa di gravi problemi familiari ed economici, e morì all'età di 74 anni.
Come già accennato, Cesare Prez non fu solo un grande esploratore ma anche uno dei più importanti speleologi del periodo tra le due guerre mondiali. Questo è attestato dai suoi scritti, nei quali riportava dati geologici, geomorfologici e idrologici, oltre a descrizioni accurate delle grotte. Dopo la sua morte, il Gruppo Grotte dell'Associazione XXX Ottobre ha dedicato in suo onore un importante abisso del Monte Canin e anche la Scuola Nazionale di Speleologia del CAI (Club Alpino Italiano) di Trieste.

INTRODUCTION

Cesare Prez was probably the greatest speleologist and explorer from Trieste in the period between the two world wars. For many years, even during the first decades of the second post-war period, he was admired in Trieste by the entire speleological community. It is a fact handed down by oral tradition and his papers, that he was a man full of skills, courage and knowledge.
His field of action was the vast territory of Venezia Giulia, annexed to Italy at the end of the First World War, rich in important karst areas.
"Venezia Giulia" is an historical-geographical entity whose name was conceived by the Gorizian linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli in 1863, to counterpose it to the Austria-given name "Litorale", which included the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Pola and Fiume after the establishment of the new state order between the two world wars (1923-1947). It bordered to the east with the Kingdom of Serbians, Croatians and Slovenians, recognized in 1919 with the Paris Peace Conference, followed in 1929 by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, while in the far north Venezia-Giulia it confined with Austria. In this vast and almost unexplored territory, the speleology of Trieste arose after the annexation of these new lands, and experienced a period of extraordinary and an increasing interest for caving. The popular mass used to look at speleology just as a sport and recreational activity, so much so that many associations flourished, but thanks to the support that the military authorities gave only to Commissione Grotte of Società Alpina delle Giulie and to Associazione XXX Ottobre, since they were the only two officially recognized associations, speleologists managed to reach the most remote locations with military trucks and to start the discovery and the topographical survey of the caves.
Cesare Prez explored mainly the Karst (Classical Karst), the Upper Karst (Plateau of Trnovo and Banjšice / Trnovsko-Banjšca Planota) and Istria (in italian Ternova and Bainsizza).

HIS LIFE

Cesare Prez was born in Trieste on 9 August 1895, the second born out of six male children. His father was Luigi Prez born in 1868 and his mother, Lucia Furlani in Prez, was born in 1870. The family lived in Trieste in Androna S. Eufemia n. 7.

Fig. 1 - A rare image in which all three Prez brothers are present: Cesare is in the center with a black tie and white shirt, standing behind him with a security belt and a white shirt Augusto, the last one leaning against the rock with a dark cap Federico (on his left a very young Emilio Comici). Abisso dei Serpenti / Kačna jama, 1922. Photo: Cosmini donation.

At the outbreak of the First World War Cesare Prez, who was 19 years old, served in the army of the Austro- Hungarian Empire. After the war, Cesare Prez, together with his brothers Federico and Augusto, begun to assiduously attend the "Riccardo Pitteri Municipal Recreational Center" in S. Marco street (Trieste), where their interest in speleology probably arose. In 1920 the Prez brothers (Fig. 1) joined a new Trieste sports association founded on 24 November 1918, called "Associazione XXX Ottobre", where Cesare will be the greatest exponent for caving.

In the mid-twenties Cesare Prez quit his job after returning from the First World War (warehouse worker at Scalo Legnami – stopover at the commercial seaport of Trieste) and begun working as chief warehouse manager at the "Cosulich" grocery store, a job that he kept for the next 9 years. In 1933 he was hired as an employee in the Municipality of Trieste, assigned to the exhibition hall of the Natural History Museum and then to the Marine Aquarium. He continued to live with his parents until 1938, the year in which, on 16 October, he married in the church of S. Giacomo Elisabetta Primeri, born in Trieste on 5 November 1904. The spouses continued to live separately in their houses until 22 August 1939, when they finally moved in together in the Primeri family home, in Scorcola n. 125 (Trieste).

The year 1940 brought serious difficulties in his family's life. On 28 February Cesare Prez was forced to resign from his job for not reporting two colleagues, both immediately fired, that he was aware of trading scrap iron. He lost his job when he was about to finally become a father, at the age of 45. On 22 May 1940 his first son, Aldo, was born in Trieste, but died only two days after his birth. In the same year Prez and his family lost their economic livelihood and their newborn son. The next month, on 10 June, Italy enters the war. It is perhaps in this moment that his wife Elisabetta begun to experience mental problems that will worsen in the following years. Cesare Prez was not called to arms since he was over the age to be enlisted and so stayed in Trieste. On 21 November 1941, he moved permanently with his wife to their new rented house in Trieste in via Romagna 137. At this point it is likely that Cesare Prez dedicated himself to caving in a lesser tone with various teams due to war time.

In the years of the Second World War Cesare Prez was employed at the "Geiringer villa", on "Scorcola" hill (district of Trieste), as gardener and custodian. After the armistice of 8 September 1943 (Armistice of Cassibile between Italy and the Allies), with the immediate German occupation and the establishment of the Adriatisches Küstenland in Trieste, the Geiringer villa became the command seat of the Wehrmacht. Cesare Prez remained in service as a gardener-translator, since he had full mastery of the German language, both spoken and written. In the war period (1944-45), Cesare Prez was co-opted as expert to the Speleological Office of the S.S. command of Trieste, together with other expert speleologists. The task of the office was to ensure supplies of drinkable water for the city of Trieste, under the commands of the german geologist

col. Scharlau.
At the end of the war and at the withdrawal from the city of Trieste of the partisan troops allied to Tito, from 1944 to 1945 Cesare Prez was employed as coordinator of the first expeditions for the recovery of corpses from foibe (shaft caves) under the responsibility of the inspector of the Civil Police of the Allied Military Government Umberto De Giorgi. There is no certain information about which caves he recovered and when. At the end of the Second World War, when the so called "iron curtain" was established and Yugoslavia taken the major part of cave-rich territories, such as the classical Karst, the entire Upper Karst and Istria, Cesare Prez's speleological activity can be considered over.
When he was fifty years old, on 29 October 1945 Cesare Prez moved, for the last time, with his wife, in via Sara Davis n. 95, in the district of "Roiano". The difficulties of the population of Trieste in the post-war period are well known and certainly it was strenuous especially for an old aged man like him. For a decade, since year 1946, there is no account of speleological activity made by him. To make a living, Cesare Prez had temporary and occasional odd jobs. The speleological section of the Associazione XXX Ottobre was re-launched only in the years 1952-1954, but there is no more trace of Cesare Prez' activity, not even in the following years. It is certain though that since 1960 Cesare Prez no longer participated in speleological excursions and frequented only the headquarters on very rare occasions. In his very last years, he suffered an even harsher economic situation, taking his last supports from a modest pension and little help from the remaining friends. In 1965 his wife was hospitalized for two months at the Provincial Psychiatric Hospital of Trieste and then she returned to his husband for a short period of time before being hospitalized again on 16 October 1969, until she went to live with her sister Emilia (thanks to a decree of revocation dated 22 January 1973) until her death on 18 June1977. The last document written by Prez is dated on 29 July 1968. In this document he asked to the command of the military district of Trieste to release him the unlimited military leave.
Cesare Prez died on 31 August 1969 at 74 years old, forgotten by speleologists. For ten years he was buried in the small cemetery of "Barcola", at the entrance of the city of Trieste. At the end of the prescribed burial period, his bone remains were buried in an indistinctly common ossuary of the Cemetery of S. Anna, in Trieste.

Fig. 2 - An image that dates back to the beginning of the activity of the Gruppo Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre. Cintlova Jama, 1725 VG, 5 September 1920. Mario Rossi, Luciano Fragiacomo, Cesare Prez and Ubaldo Brumatti can be recognized from the left. Photo: Cosmini donation.

THE EXPLORATIONS

The Prez brothers, whom in 1920 joined the "Sezione Grotte" of the Associazione XXX Ottobre, assiduously took part in speleological activity (Fig. 2). On 13 August 1922, his brother Federico was exploring S. Canziano caves / Škocjanske jame in order to find a high walk (in order to step over a siphon in Marchesetti's hall) and fell from a height of 90m finding immediate death (OND – Associazione XXX Ottobre, 1937). After long hours of recovery, the body was carried out on shoulders by Ce-

sare, Claudio Podgronik and some villagers. The team of the Prez brothers were split forever: since Federico's death, Augusto refused to descend a cave ever again. Only Cesare will keep caving (Corazzi, 1998). It took almost a century for Slovenian speleologists to discover a high gallery in the "Martel Cavern", which proved Prez brothers to be right (Semeraro, 2019).

In 1924 Mario Rossi gave the guide of the "Sezione Grotte" of the Associazione XXX Ottobre to Cesare Prez, who in a short time brought exploration activity to the highest levels for quality and results (Fig. 3). The years from 1924 to 1930 were greatly intensive for the "Sezione Grotte" (which in 1926 changed its name to "Comitato Grotte"). Cesare Prez's commitment was crucial and a formidable team was formed around him, which included Emilio Comici, Giulio Benedetti, Severino Culot, Umberto Tarabocchia, Giacomo Dimini and Oscar De Grassi (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3 - The exploration team of Gruppo Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre on the "Carso della Ciceria" / Čičarija (Gelovizza, 25 February 1924). You can recognize from the left Dimini, Comici, engineer De Grassi, a local guide, seated in the center Cesare Prez. Photo: Cosmini donation.

Until the early 1930's, the "Sezione Grotte" explores surveyed dozens of caves in the Karst, Upper Karst and Istria areas, as well as several of the deepest abysses of that time in Venezia Giulia and Italy, such as the Abisso Bertarelli (1924 Upper Istria), the Abisso di Montenero in 1926 (Idria), the Abisso di Semi in 1927 (Upper Istria), the Foiba Colinassi in 1927 (Istria), the Abisso Federico Prez in 1928 (Upper Istria), the Abisso of Monte Tussar in 1930 (Upper Istria). Among the abysses, it is of great relevance the Abisso of Montenero, initially named after colonel Gariboldi, who anyway refused the honor. This abyss is located between the Selva di Tarnova and the Selva di Pirro, according to the geographical denominations of the time. The explorations began in April 1926 and in September they reached a pond at –480 meters of declared depth after a non-stop exploration of 30 hour. The depth of that point was then stated to be –336 meters by the explorations of Yugoslavian speleologist in 1997, but later, with a dive, the depth was discovered to be of 64 meters more. It is acknowledged that almost all the caves explored in that period were

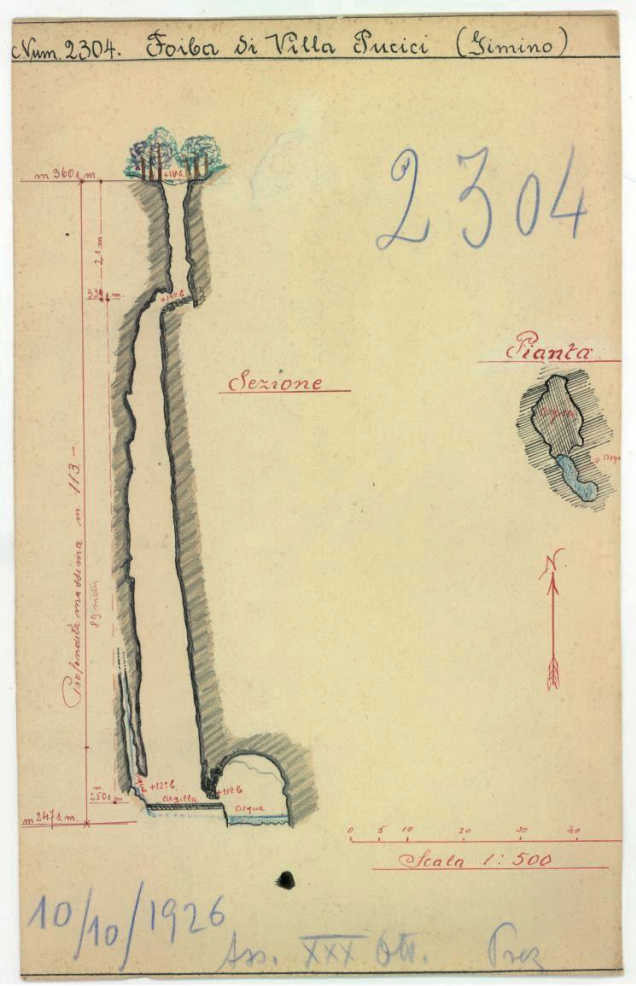


Fig. 4 - Original watercolor survey of the cave "Foiba di Villa Pucici" (2304 VG) (Istria, locality Gimino), 10 October 1926, surveyed and drawn by Cesare Prez. Photo: Historic cave cadastre of the Commissione Grotte "E. Boegan".

overestimated, not only because of the spasmodic search for the record but also because of the poor accuracy of the topographic surveys. This is an issue concerning not only cavers from Trieste, but also the ones from Verona that explored the Spluga della Preta, which was declared to be the world deepest cave. In Trieste, in the time between the two world wars, a popular and non-qualitative caving prevailed, giving birth to many caving groups (Guidi, 1982, 1989).
Cesare Prez and Sezione Grotte of Associazione XXX Ottobre played a crucial role in the chronicle of the facts that led to the exploration of the Bertarelli Abyss in Montainous Istria near Raspo village (Battelini, 1926; Bertarelli & Boegan, 1926; Medeot, 1974). The cave, locally called "Žankana Jama" and initially known by cavers as "Grotta della Marna", was discovered and summarily explored in its entrance hall only on 16 April 1922 by the "Commissione Grotte" of the Società Alpina delle Giulie. Then, the discoverers lost interest on that cave because they engaged in other cave explorations. Two years after the discovery, the Sezione Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre explored it again. Cesare Prez with Umberto Tarabocchia reached a depth of –307m finding out that the cave continues. Thereupon the "Commissione Grotte" of the Società Alpina delle Giulie decided to resume the explorations, inviting some cavers of the Associazione XXX Ottobre as well, who however disdainfully refused. The exploration reached a depth of –380m, and they noticed that the cave still continues. The Società Alpina delle Giulie hired the ground around the cave in order to ban other explorations, believing in the possibility to touch a new world-depth record. Thus, a deep fracture between the two Trieste speleological associations was created. On 24 August 1925, the "super-expedition" of the "Commissione Grotte" of the Società Alpina delle Giulie reached the bottom of the "Grotta della Marna" at –450m deep, as read on the aneroid altimeter. The cave was later named after Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli, the president of the Italian Touring Club who joined the venture and who was also one of the greatest supporters of Julian caving. As above, after the Second World War, the spot reached in 1925 were reduced to a depth of –306m. During the speleologists' stay in the cave, a cloudburst hit the area and a stream begun to fall into the abyss. Two villagers who worked for the explorers with Eugenio Boegan at the "maneuvering place" above a large shaft inside the abyss, after being swamped by water, died falling down the abyss. The bodies were found during the speleologists' ascent. Once the alarm was given, a rescue team formed by Associazione XXX Ottobre came on site. At first, Emilio Comici attempted to go down the large shaft to reach the unfortunates, but he had to give up because of the water causing him asphyxiation. Cesare Prez and Severino Culot tried again, managing to descend at the bottom and to continue, finding the speleologists of the Società Alpina delle Giulie, who had survived the two flood water waves unscathed. Then Cesare Prez and Mariano Apollonio went down again to try to recover the two dead bodies, but Cesare Prez, now exhausted by fatigue, had to desist.
In 1926, the Municipality of Trieste gave the medal for the value of the "Carnegie Foundation" to Severino Culot and Cesare Prez for their heroism shown in Raspo rescue, ignoring Emilio Comici who will report in his diaries a "very strong displeasure", so strong that it can be assumed that also for this reason, in 1929, he abandoned caving to devote himself to rock climbing, becoming one of the "legends" of mountaineering of all time.
The year 1931 represented a serious crisis for the "Sezione Grotte" of the Associazione XXX Ottobre. This was caused by the mandatory groupings in the "Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (OND)" and by the removal of all supports (trucks and military supplies) from "Sezione Grotte", by order of the fascist deputy of Trieste, Lino Vitale Domeneghini. In 1930 Domeneghini attempted to coagulate the most capable cavers of Trieste (excluding those of the Società Alpina delle Giulie which was part of the CONI – Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano) to create a single large group under the command of the National Fascist Party. Some of the best cavers of the period were in the Associazione XXX Ottobre, but Cesare Prez denied his men: moreover he suggested to Bruno Cosmini not to provide the unpublished topographic surveys of the caves which were requested by OND. In agreement with Cesare Prez, he delivered them to Eugenio Boegan so that he could publish them in 1938 on his volume "Il Timavo" (Boegan, 1938). Since 1931 the

most experienced cavers of the Associazione XXX Ottobre moved to the Società Alpina delle Giulie (Cosmini, Busettini, Fabris, Trevisan). The only experienced explorers who remained at the Associazione XXX Ottobre were Tarabocchia and Prez. In 1932 Cesare Prez, who had stubbornly continued the explorations with Associazione XXX Ottobre was now abandoned by whole exploration team and so continued his speleological activity with occasional companions until 1935.

Contrary to what some previous articles affirmed, namely that Cesare Prez since the early 1930s had joined the Commissione Grotte of the Società Alpina delle Giulie, this does not result from the documentary research carried out in the archives of the aforementioned company. In fact, there is no trace of explorations carried out by Cesare Prez together with the cavers of the Società Alpina delle Giulie. Indeed only in the summer of 1935 Cesare Prez participated in the explorations of the Società Alpina delle Giulie, exclusively in Istria, and in 1936 he became a member of the Commissione Grotte (Fig. 5), introduced by Eugenio Boegan. In the years 1936-37, Cesare Prez devoted himself to speleological excursions in the Karst, in the Ciceria / Ćićarija, on the Monte Nevoso / Snežnik. He took also part in the exploration of the Abisso dei Serpenti / Kačna jama, where it detects a new gallery (never found again). Cesare Prez was at that time 41 years old, for the time he was already considered an old man. From the summer of 1937, there is no more record of any speleological activity held by him.

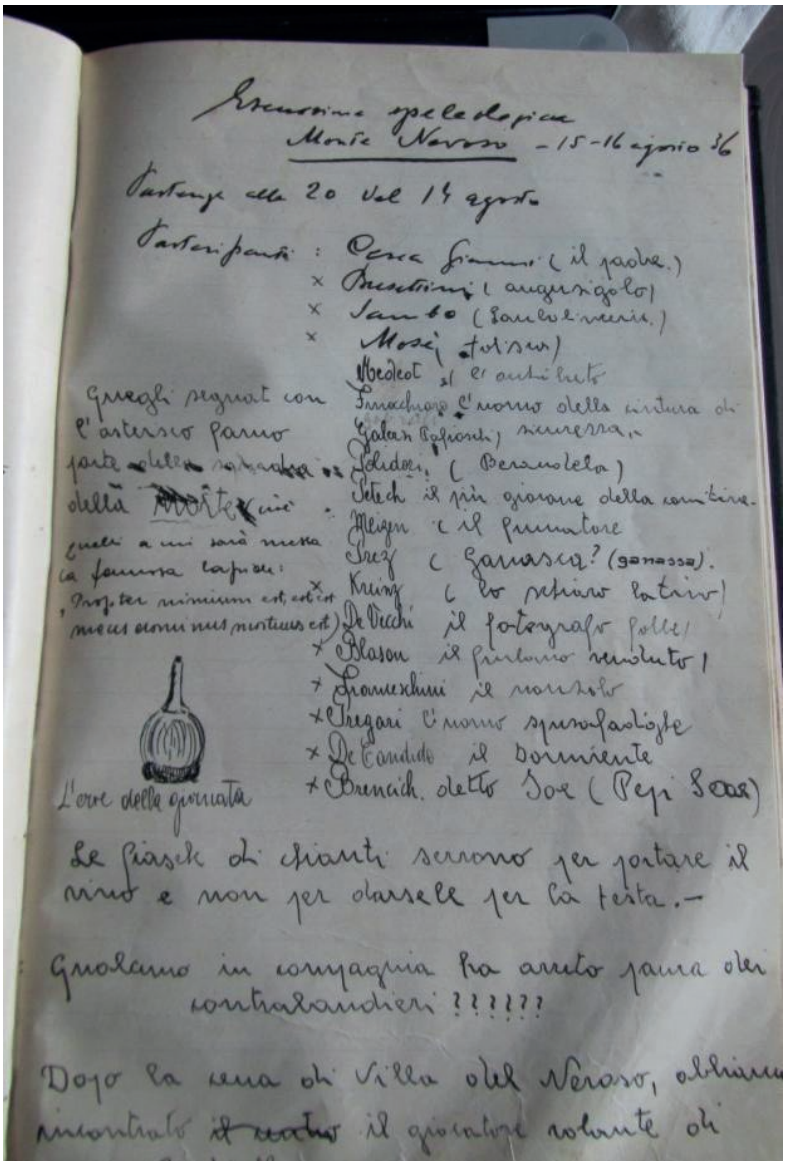
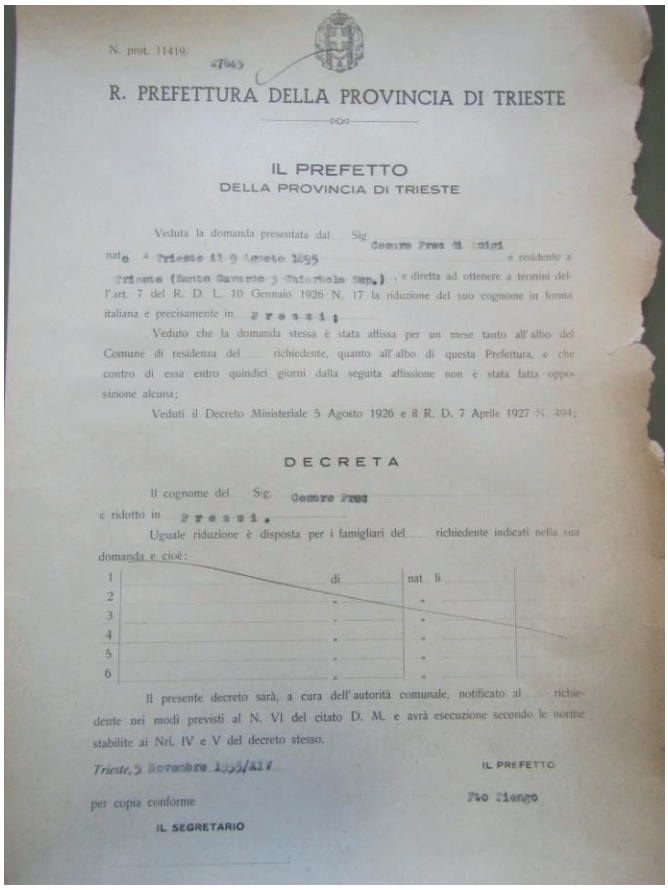


Fig. 5 - Report of 15-16 August 1936 taken from the book of activities of the Commissione Grotte of Società Alpina delle Giulie of Trieste, which shows the start of the activity with this caving group by Prez. Among the various names we recognize those of Cesca, De Vecchi, Medeot, Finocchiaro, Polidori. Photo: courtesy Archive of the Commissione Grotte "E. Boegan".

Along 1938, Cesare Prez was no longer part of the activities of the Commissione Grotte of the Società Alpina delle Giulie, he didn't renew his membership in the association, nor he returned to the Associazione XXX Ottobre, where a small group of cavers had just been reconstituted (consisting of Lionello Durissini, Dario Favretto and the Tominz brothers). Cesare Prez gave to this new team advices and suggestions about the areas in which they could undertake speleological research, but he never joined their activities. In 1940, in the magazine "Le Grotte d'Italia" of Istituto Italiano di Speleologia (Anon, 1941) there is an unsigned note stating that "...in the summer of 1940 the speleologist Cesare Prezzi of Associazione XXX Ottobre of Trieste, had explored many caves and sinkholes of central and eastern Istria", followed by a list of very deep and technically difficult caves (Abisso I del Colle Schirlenico –316 m, Abisso di Val Sabizza Grande –211 m).



N. prot. 11419/ 27645

R. PREFETTURA DELLA PROVINCIA DI TRIESTE

IL PREFETTO
DELLA PROVINCIA DI TRIESTE

Veduta la domanda presentata dal Sig. Cesare Prez di Luigi nato a Trieste il 9 Agosto 1895 e residente a Trieste (Santo Gavardo 3 Chiarbola Sup.), e diretta ad ottenere a termini dell'art. 7 del R. D. L. 10 Gennaio 1926 N. 17 la riduzione del suo cognome in forma italiana e precisamente in Prezzi;

Veduto che la domanda stessa è stata affissa per un mese tanto all'albo del Comune di residenza del richiedente, quanto all'albo di questa Prefettura, e che contro di essa entro quindici giorni dalla seguita affissione non è stata fatta opposizione alcuna;

Veduti il Decreto Ministeriale 5 Agosto 1926 e il R. D. 7 Aprile 1927 N. 494;

DECRETA

Il cognome del Sig. Cesare Prez è ridotto in Prezzi.

Uguale riduzione è disposta per i famigliari del richiedente indicati nella sua domanda e cioè:

1	di	nat li
2	"	"
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4	"	"
5	"	"
6	"	"

Il presente decreto sarà, a cura dell'autorità comunale, notificato al richiedente nei modi previsti al N. VI del citato D. M. e avrà esecuzione secondo le norme stabilite ai Nri. IV e V del decreto stesso.

Trieste, 5 Novembre 1935/XIV

IL PREFETTO
Pto Piengo

per copia conforme
IL SEGRETARIO

Fig. 6 - Decree of the Prefect of the province of Trieste of 5 November 1935, in which the surname of "Prez" is changed to "Prezzi". Photo: courtesy of the State Archives, Trieste.

But it is not known how and with whom: furthermore, in this article for the first time the surname Prez was changed to Prezzi in accordance with the fascist laws (fig 6).

The speleological section of the Associazione XXX Ottobre was re-launched only from 1952-1954, but there is no trace of Cesare Prez. He suddenly reappears in 1957, descending to the bottom of the new discovered "Abisso dei Cristalli" (cadastre number VG 3960, –205m), on the Karst of Trieste. In April 1958 the Speleological Congress of Trieste (Congresso Speleologico Triestino) was held in Trieste for the newly established Speleological Federation of Trieste, which has no connection with the one established many years later, and Cesare Prez too took part in it. It is a good time for Cesare Prez, who now returned to caving thanks to his family affections (Fig. 7). In fact, he joined the expedition of the Gruppo Grotte of Associazione XXX Ottobre to the Spluga della Preta (Lessini Mountains 1959), but it will be his last exploration (Fig. 8). The young cavers asked Cesare Prez to take on the role of president of the Gruppo Grotte and he accepted, but the President of the Associazione XXX Ottobre,

Fig. 7 - Prez together with the Gruppo Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre on the days (April 1959) of the 1st Trieste speleological conference organized by the newly founded Trieste Speleological Federation. Cesare Prez is fourth from the right with the black jacket (Ermanno "Ciacia" Furlani on his right). Photo: Janesich donation.

Fig. 8 - The last speleological activity of Cesare Prez, Spluga della Preta (Lessini Mountains, Veneto), expedition in August 1959. In the photo, on the edge of the cave waiting to go down the access shaft, together with Ermanno "Ciacia" Furlani, historical companion of explorations of the early years and cousin of Prez. Photo: Tomè donation.

Duilio Durissini, forbade and he imposed the leadership, for a few years, by Dario Favretto. Since 1960 his traces are lost, however he no longer took part in the speleological outings and frequented the headquarters of Associazione XXX Ottobre on very rare occasions.

RESEARCH AND PAPERS

The speleological researches carried out by Cesare Prez are typical of the period between the two world wars, they aimed at the discovery and at basic documentation of the caves.
Nowadays speleological research aims instead to be as scientific as possible, but at that time it focused on the record, the documentation and the discovery, and so was Cesare's. The procedure consisted in topographic surveys and rare photographs. The tools used for the surveys were the compass, the measuring tape and the inclinometer. The process was considered approximate, so technically it was just a topographical sketch. In particular, the depths were always overestimated, especially in deep, cold and long caves. The position of the these caves was set on topographic maps, but not always they were placed on the right spot; however, if so, there was a hasty triangulation, when possible, with the tops of hills or with long distance church bells. The speleologists capable to carry out topographical surveys were rather few and they were almost exclusively from Società Alpina delle Giulie or Associazione XXX Ottobre. Other than being an excellent explorer, Cesare Prez was an assiduous cave surveyor. Furthermore his surveys always show good accuracy. The book "Duemila grotte", by Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli and Eugenio Boegan, was certainly very important in 1926 (Bertarelli & Boegan, 1926) to Trieste's cavers since an entire chapter is dedicated to the topographic survey method for speleology and cave representation. This chapter was written by Antonio Beran / Berani, expert topographer and lieutenant of the Austro-Hungarian Empire on the Karst front. But Cesare Prez didn't survey all the caves explored by Associazione XXX Ottobre in that time: for example the "Abisso di Montenero" was surveyed by Oscar De Grassi, Emilio Comici and Umberto Tarabocchia (Fig. 9). For this reason it is hypothesized that in that speleological expedition Cesare Prez dedicated himself mainly to exploration.
Cesare Prez published several articles about the most important caves explored at that time (Prez, 1926, 1927, 1928a, 1928b, 1932, 1933), mainly on the scientific magazine "Le Grotte d'Italia" of the Istituto Italiano di Speleologia of Postumia (Postojna) in Venezia Giulia (later Yugoslavia, now Slovenia), directed by Eugenio Boegan.

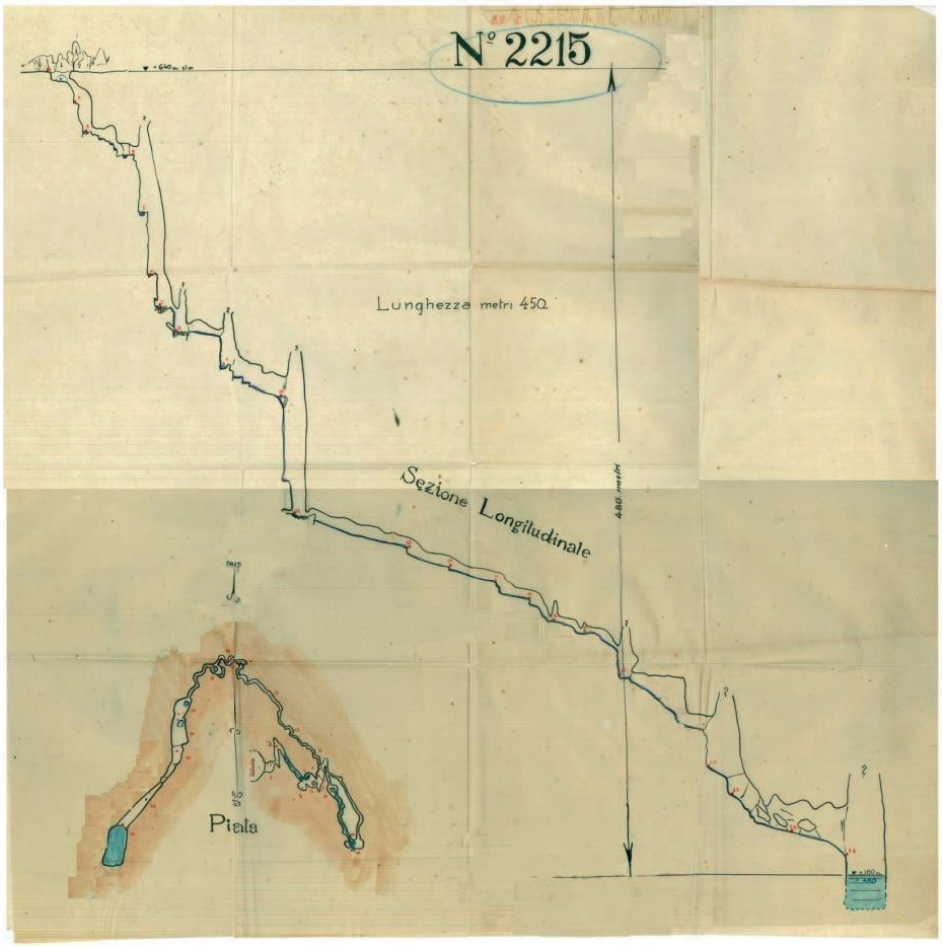

Fig. 9 - Original drawing of the Abisso di Montenero of Idria delivered by Prez to Eugenio Boegan for the cave cadastre of Venezia Giulia. For a short period (1928) it was the deepest cave in the world. Photo: Historic cave cadastre of the Commissione Grotte "E. Boegan".

For the historical time, these are relevant articles for italian caving. In these articles Cesare Prez not only briefly illustrates the technical problems of the carried out explorations, but also provides geological, geomorphological and hydrological data of these caves, as well as a detailed a description. Cesare Prez confronts hydrogeological hypotheses and the pathways of groundwater towards karst springs. In order to notice this it is sufficient to read the article on "Foiba Colinassi" in Istria (Prez, 1932). Cesare Prez shows that he is not only just a caver but also a speleologist among the most prepared and valid of that period in Italy. The speleological culture of Cesare Prez appears well formed, especially when, knowing his own limits, he suggests to the Italian Institute of Speleology to start some specialized geological research in order to obtain more detailed knowledges.

CONCLUSIONS

Cesare Prez is therefore one of the most important Italian speleologists of the period between the First and Second World War. He was the chief of the Sezione Grotte (later "Comitato") of the Associazione XXX Ottobre of Trieste, one of the most important speleological associations in Europe between the 1920s and 1930s.
He was not only one of the explorers with greater technical preparation and superior physical capability, but he also was very culturally prepared, as proven by the contents of his articles.
At his death in 1969, the Gruppo Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre was exploring an abyss on the Mt Canin massif located between "Col delle Erbe" and "Foran del Muss" (in the "chamois valley") and this was named after Cesare Prez. This important abyss was recently re-explored by the Hungarian cavers and connected to other abysses (system Prez-Boegan-ET5). In 1990

the Gruppo Grotte of the Associazione XXX Ottobre set up its own CAI School of Speleology in Trieste and named it after Cesare Prez.

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Documents

Archivio Anagrafe e Stato Civile del Comune di Trieste

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Archivio storico del Comune di Trieste

Archivio storico diocesano di Trieste

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Servizi cimiteriali ACEGAS, Trieste

Oral testimonials

News on the life of Cesare Prez was also collected from the oral testimonies of:
Cosmini Bruno [1997], explorer companion 1928-1930
Favretto Dario [1997], explorer companion 1938 -1942
Prez Giulio [2016], grandson of Cesare Prez, son of Augusto Prez
Tomè Marcello [2019], caver at XXX Ottobre Association, witness for period 1955-1969