
The Primary School in Postwar Koper/Capodistria
as a Social Laboratory
Osnovna šola v povojnem Kopru/Capodistrii kot socialni laboratorij

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Abstract:

In the border region of northern Istria, the decade after World War II was a time of political, social and demographic changes that accompanied the introduction of the socialist system. The demarcation process between Italy and Yugoslavia led to an almost complete replacement and ethnic transformation of the urban population. A striking example of this transition is the development of primary education, which is analysed here in terms of social and architectural history. With the help of statistics and school records, we observe the impacts of emigration and immigration on the size and structure of the school population, as well as on the process of establishing the Slovenian school in the city of Koper/Capodistria. Through architectural and symbolic discourses on school infrastructure, we also question the heritage significance of school buildings and institutions for contemporary local society.

Keywords: Istria, post WWII period, population transfers, primary school, architecture, school buildings, heritage

Izvleček:

V obmejni pokrajini severni Istri je bilo desetletje po drugi svetovni vojni čas političnih, socialnih in demografskih sprememb, ki so spremljale uvedbo socialističnega sistema. Razmejitev med Italijo in Jugoslavijo je povzročila skoraj popolno zamenjavo in etnično preobrazbo mestnega prebivalstva. Izrazit primer tega prehoda je razvoj osnovnega šolstva, ki ga v prispevku analizirava z vidika družbene in arhitekturne zgodovine. S pomočjo statistik in šolskih evidenc opazujeva vplive izseljevanja in priseljevanja na obseg ter strukturo šolske populacije in na proces ustanavljanja slovenske šole v mestu Koper. Skozi arhitekturne in simbolne diskurze o šolski arhitekturi preizprašujeva tudi dediščinski pomen šolskih zgradb in institucij za sodobno lokalno družbo.

Ključne besede: Istra, čas po drugi svetovni vojni, premiki prebivalstva, osnovna šola, arhitektura, šolske zgradbe, dediščina

Introduction

In 2005 and 2008 two seemingly minor buildings were demolished in Koper/Capodistria,¹ a seaside town in northern Istria, Slovenia. The buildings were the Janko Premrl Vojko primary school and another primary school named after Pinko Tomažič. The site of the former is currently an empty void in the heart of the old town. Meanwhile the latter building, located on the outskirts of the town, has been replaced by a modern, box-shaped building that now accommodates the pupils and teachers of the two demolished schools. The two old buildings, built after the end of World War II in the years that represented a turning point in the history of the town and Istria as a whole, were demolished without any analysis of their heritage values. The demolitions did not provoke much public debate at the time. However, aversion to and regret about these irreversible interventions has come to light in recent years on social networks. The unresponsiveness of society at the time of the demolitions raises many questions about the significance of this architectural heritage for the local community, and its perception of the post-war history of the town and region. These questions represent the starting point of the present paper.

In his seminal classic work Louis Althusser (2018) singled out education as the first of the state's ideological apparatuses. The same role has been attributed to urbanism and architecture by several authors (e.g. Rotar 1980), following Henri Lefebvre's (1992) trialectic of production of



Figure 1: Demolition of the Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School, 14 May 2008 (source: Personal Archive of Miloš Beltram)

space in particular. Observing the development of schools – both as institutions and as architecture – can thus give us insight into the socio-historical dynamics of the region in question. The challenge is even greater in a region with a history of ethnic and ideological conflict like Istria. From the point of view of Slovenian national identity, establishing an education system after World War II represented the basis for empowering the Slovenian population. However, from an external perspective the construction of the Slovenian-centralist school system may be perceived as one of Althusser's ideological state apparatuses through which the new Slovenian authorities established their political, national, ideological and cultural sovereignty on the territory acquired after World War II.

The primary school named after Janko Premrl Vojko, which operated in the centre of Koper between 1951 and 2006, was the embodiment of the turbulent socio-political, demographic and ethnic changes in Istria following World War II. The school's history, activities and social pulse are discussed here as a case-study with the help of archival material from the Koper Regional Archive and existing studies. We focus on the early post-war years, the period of the temporary buffer-state between Italy and Slovenia, the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) (1947–1954), and especially on the period immediately

¹ Since the end of World War II the city has two official names, Koper in Slovenian, and Capodistria in Italian, as the area is officially bilingual. The denomination Capodistria, written also in different forms in earlier periods (Capo d'Istria, Caput Histriae etc), derives from the Middle Ages and was the official name of the city throughout its history, especially during the rule of the Venetian Republic (1279–1797), and during the short French and later Austrian rule in the 19th century. The Slovene denomination, Koper, was also present in the later centuries, yet officially in use only during the Austrian rule and later after WWII. Currently, the city officially has both names, however, due to space limitations we only use the Slovene one here, with all due respect for the city's bilingual identity.

after its abolition (1954–1962). In terms of education, this second period was marked by the school reform, but from the political-administrative point of view it was the time when the border dispute and the division of the FTT between Italy and Yugoslavia (1954) gave way to the full integration of Zone B of the FTT into the Slovenian republic and the state of Yugoslavia. The geopolitical restructuring was accompanied by profound demographic, ethnic and social changes, linked to strategic plans for the economic renewal and development of the area as the Slovenian coastal region. The two main factors of economic restructuring, which went hand in hand with demographic and social restructuring, were industrialisation (especially with the TOMOS motorcycle factory, 1954–1959) and the establishment and accelerated development of the Port of Koper (1957–1961).

Recent historical and especially anthropological-ethnological research has highlighted the core issue of the population changes after WWII in northern Istria, especially in the coastal, urbanised zone, and described them as ‘Slovenisation’ and/or ‘Yugoslavisation’ (Hrobat Virloget 2021; Čebren Lipovec 2019a; Kalc 2019). The present analysis² aims to test this finding by looking at the development of post-war education and school infrastructure. We want to highlight how the school positioned itself and what role it played in this dynamic series of historical events, what it can tell us about them, and how the ruptures and transitions were reflected in its mission and its work, on a symbolic level, and in people’s perceptions.

We look at these issues from two perspectives. Firstly through the prism of the institutional and social history of schools and education as the foundations of a new social, political

and national paradigm, and secondly from the perspective of architectural history, i.e. by analysing the social and spatial positioning of school buildings as representational and social spaces.

The Education System and ‘The Revival of the Slovene School in Istria’

During the decade following World War II, the northern Adriatic border region between Socialist Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) and Italy was marked by several years of negotiations on a new border between the two countries. A provisional solution was the multicultural state of the Free Territory of Trieste, or FTT (1947–1954). This was divided into Zone A in the west, including the city of Trieste and its rural surroundings and administered by the Anglo-American Allied Administration, and Zone B in the east, between Koper (now Slovenia) and Novi Grad (now Croatia), administered by the military administration of the Yugoslav Army. In the years after World War II, the main tasks of the people’s authorities in northern Istria (i.e. in the territory of Zone B of the FTT) were reviving the economy and renewing cultural life and the education system. The former involved satisfying the basic needs of the population and restructuring the economic region, which was cut off from its historic centre of gravity - the city of Trieste - by the abolition of the FTT and the delimitation in 1954. As regards education, it was a question of restoring Slovene schools after a 20-year violent fascist ban on the Slovene language and thus providing mother-tongue education to all the inhabitants. The aim was also to repair the cultural and national damage that the assimilation and the fascist Italianisation policies had inflicted on the Slovenian population of this ethnically mixed area.

Establishing and elevating Slovene education to an adequate organisational level faced two objective problems: a shortage of teaching staff and school premises. Many schools were housed in makeshift buildings, some teachers were recruited from the interior of Slovenia and local candidates underwent training to be-

2. The paper is the result of two scientific research projects and one programme, financed by the Slovene Research Agency (ARIS): the project ‘The potential of ethnographic methods in conservation of built heritage in contested places: the case of northern Istria’ (Z6-3226) and the project ‘Migration and social transformation in comparative perspective: the case of Western Slovenia after WWII’ (J5-2571) as well as of the research programme ‘National and Cultural Identity of the Slovene Emigration in the Context of Migration Studies’ (Program P5-0070).

come teachers (Perovšek 1995, 45). While waiting for teaching staff to arrive, some schools were merged and others temporarily closed (Peterle Grahonja 2004, 93). Most of the school buildings in the Istrian countryside were damaged or even destroyed during the war. Some served as military barracks for the occupying forces during the war, and after the war the Yugoslav army was stationed in some of them. The school buildings were renovated thanks to the voluntary work of local people and the help of state loans, but this took time so school classes were held in makeshift buildings. Another problem was the inadequate design of the buildings. Although they had been built recently by the fascist regime, they were just simple one-classroom buildings designed to meet the needs of the peasant population, which received only the most basic education. One teacher in a single classroom taught children from several years and of different ages, often in morning and afternoon shifts, demanding much organisation and work, but this was generally typical of education in the post-war years (Petelin 2020, 168). The results of repairs to existing schools and the construction of new school buildings and improvements in equipment were not visible until after 1948 (Peterle Grahonja 2004, 92–95).

The Italian language schools were restored wherever an Italian population was present. They enjoyed administrative and curricular autonomy, but the people's authorities sought to adapt the curricula to the new times and the ideological goals of popular democracy. There were eleven Italian primary schools and seven secondary schools. The latter included grammar schools in Koper, Piran and Izola, a private church grammar school (*seminario*) in Koper, and in 1950 an Italian teachers' college was founded in Koper (Peterle Grahonja 2004, 98). However, the mass emigration of ethnic Italians to Trieste, especially after 1947, meant that the number of pupils attending Italian school shrank. The decline in numbers was also caused by the 1952 decree (Sluga and Jelen Madruša 2006, 9) which stipulated that children whose surname appeared Slav-

ic (i.e. they were of allegedly Slavic parents), were obliged to attend a Slovene school, even if they did not feel Slovene and regardless of their parents' wishes (Beltram 1997, 207; Hrobat Virlogget 2021, 96–97). Children with Italian or ethnically mixed parents could enrol in either Italian or Slovene schools³. In the so-called 'exodus' – the mass emigration of those who opted for Italy when the FTT's Zone B was taken over by Yugoslavia in 1954 – many Italian teachers also left (Peterle Grahonja 2004, 92). They were initially replaced by Slovene teachers who had completed the Italian teacher training college and Italian students. Later, Italian teachers from the Croat part of Istria took up these positions (Beltram 1997, 207; Perovšek 1995).

During this period, and especially in the 1950s, the school system also had to cope with the social dynamics associated with the restructuring of the region, specifically with the immigration of new populations, a phenomenon that accompanied or followed the mass departure of the so-called optants. While the number of Italian schoolchildren shrank sharply with the peak of the 'exodus' in the mid-1950s, the demographic pressure on the Slovene school structures in Koper, Izola and Piran and their new residential areas grew rapidly. For example, in 1956 there were 42 primary schools in the municipality of Koper, 38 of them were Slovene with 2,237 pupils, and four were Italian with 122 pupils. Despite progress, the school structure was still poor, with half (47.7%) the Slovene schools being single-form-entry, just under 30% two-form entry, 15.7% three-form entry, and only four schools (10%) had a larger number of classes. In addition, many children did not meet the eight-year compulsory schooling requirement because most rural schools taught only the first four years, while further years were taught in schools that were far away. The secondary schools included the Slovene grammar school (430 pupils), the Italian grammar school (70), the teacher training college (70) and the secondary school for eco-

3 PAK, 936_2, OŠ Janko Premrl Vojko Koper 1946–2006, Šolska kronika 1952–53.

nomics (119), all in Koper (Svoljšak 1956, 281–286). The problem of compulsory primary education was solved in 1958 by a school reform that abolished the four-year primary and post-primary schools and introduced a single eight-year primary school (Peterle Grahonja 2004, 104).

Difficulties in Planning School Needs

Immigration and population growth following the departure of the optants for Italy dictated the further development of school infrastructure. Meanwhile, planning in the second half of the 1950s was difficult and risky. The dynamics, size and above all the age and social structure of the population (which form the basis for educational planning) depended on the progress of major economic projects, the construction of the railway, the extension of the harbour, land reclamation, and the growth of industry, tourism and other branches of the economy (Svoljšak 1956, 287). Another problem was the high population turnover. In the years 1954–57, the coastal towns of Koper, Izola and Piran showed the greatest migratory pull in Slovenia, receiving as much as 30% of the republic's migration to urban areas (Vogelnik 1959). However, immigration was quite fluid, with people coming and going in large numbers.

This was mainly due to a shortage of housing. In the spring of 1956, there were 1,409 applications for housing in Koper, which were only partially met by the authorities. New blocks of flats were still being built, and the houses left behind by the optants were only partially usable due to uncontrolled management and the poor state they were in. The old housing stock generally consisted of far from comfortable accommodation, so it was difficult to retain newcomers from central Slovenia, especially professional staff, even though their accommodation was treated as a priority. The housing crisis, the constant turnover of experts and the shortage of professional workers prevented more vigorous

economic development and the opening of new businesses⁴.

In 1956 the projection of school needs was therefore hypothetical. The drafters of the municipal development plan foresaw a strong influx of industrial workers and other personnel from Slovenia and the other republics, but the question of the nature of immigration (permanent or temporary) and the family structure of immigrants was raised. Migratory movements within the coastal region were also more difficult to predict. Although there was a clear tendency to move from the inland, rural areas towards the coastal zone (Svoljšak 1956, 287–289), the development conditions of the different regions varied. For example, rural areas that were more favourable for intensive agriculture with good transport connections were soon revitalised by immigration despite the loss of population due to the 'exodus' (Titl 1961, 22–24). However, the remoter parts of the municipality stagnated demographically due to the emigration to Italy, out-migration towards the coastal towns, and declining birth rates, and in many places experienced depopulation. Between 1953 and 1961, individual local communities in these areas lost more than half their population. In the coastal towns, the population grew rapidly in number and demographic vitality (Piry 1983, 21–22; Titl 1961, 34). Towards the end of the 1950s, immigration stabilised and there was a growing need for school structures in areas of old and new urbanisation, as existing school facilities could no longer cope with the demographic pressure (Jurman and Medveš 1974).

Koper Primary School – Its Pupils and Teachers

Let us now turn to the specific case of the Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School in Koper, which opened in the autumn of 1945. It was the first Slovene state school in the town because during the Austrian era (when compulsory primary education was established) the Italian nation-

⁴ PAK, 712_1, 2 Minutes of the Municipality of Koper assembly 1955–1957, 9th regular session of the Koper assembly, 3. April 1956.



Figure 2: School children of the elementary school in Koper, 1954-1956 (source: Personal Archive of Rudi Pavlič)

al-liberal municipal administrations prevented the opening of Slovene schools in order to preserve the traditional Romance identity of the coastal towns against the 'Slavisation' that was intensifying with immigration from the Slavic hinterland. In the school year 1911-12, the Ciril Methodius Society (a Slovenian cultural and educational institution), opened a private Slovene primary school in Koper, but in 1919 it was closed by the Italian occupation authorities. From then on Slovene children could only attend the Italian school (Pahor 1970, 249-260).

After the liberation in 1945, the reopening of Slovene schools in Koper and other coastal towns, where the Italian cultural milieu was predominant, was therefore not a simple matter. Although part of the population was of Slovene or Slavic origin, most families intended to continue sending their children to Italian schools. Some simply did not want the hassle of changing their children's school, others were dissuaded by practical or logistical reasons and others were indifferent about their nationality. The Slovene school was able to come alive thanks to teachers who visited parents and convinced them of the need to 'teach children a language they had forgotten or never learned'. The presence of the Slovene schools in Koper, Izola and Piran was also important ahead of the visit by the demarcation commission. It made the Slovene presence visible in the towns – an argument in favour of

Yugoslav territorial claims (Peterle Grahonja 2004, 96).

The school was housed in the renovated building of the former Italian *Scuola Marinara* in a street with the bilingual denomination *Viale XX Settembre / Ulica 20. septembra* (today's Cankarjeva ulica), which had housed the teacher training school before World War I. In 1951, the school moved to a new building, which was built in the old town centre in an area called Belveder, where there had previously been a prison. In the first year it had three classes with about 70 pupils from Koper and the immediate surroundings, mostly children of suburban small farmers, agricultural laborers and officials. According to the school records, the beginnings were difficult because the pupils' knowledge of the Slovene language was poor. This was due to the shortage of and frequent replacement of teaching staff, but also social reasons, a lack of discipline and other reasons, which the writer of the records attributed to the parents' reservations regarding school, and to the impact of Italianisation and Italian education⁶.

These difficulties continued to plague the school for several years, but it is true that the school was establishing and strengthening itself not only as an educational institution, but also as a fundamental social institution, embedded in the social dynamics and quite turbulent political developments in the region. These historical processes are reflected in the enrolment sta-

5 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1945/46.

6 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1948/49; Šolska kronika 1949/50.

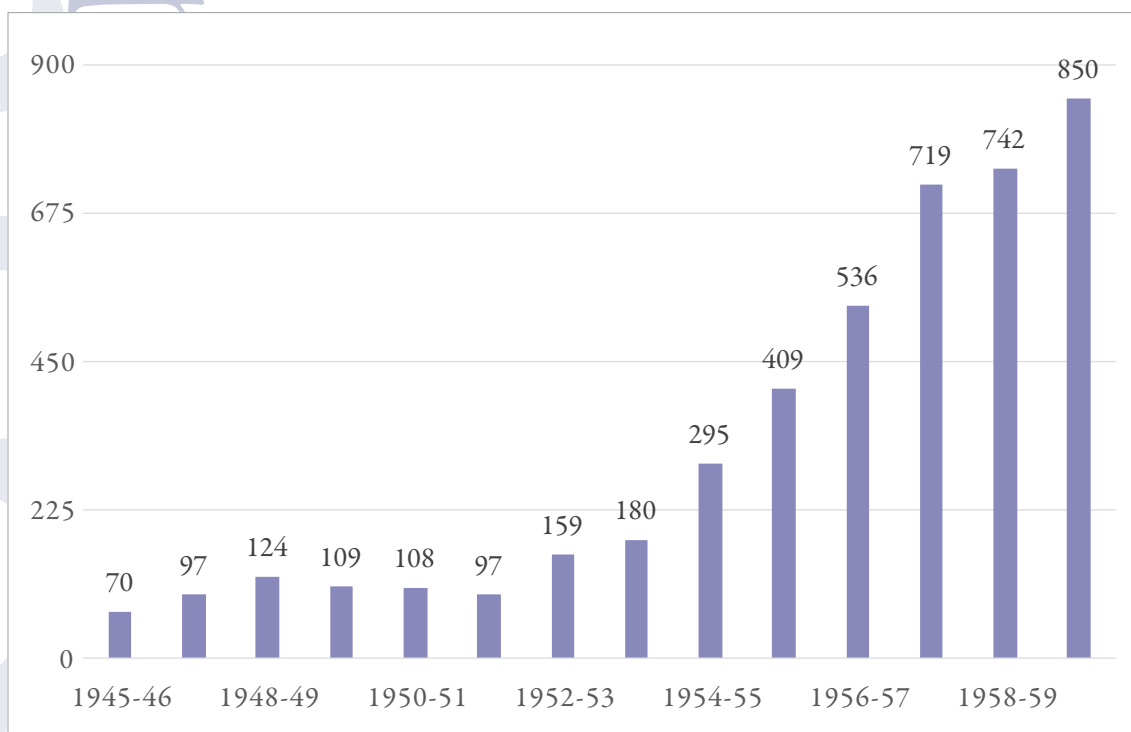


Table 1: Growth in the number of pupils at the Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School in Koper between the school years 1945-46 and 1959-60.*

*PAK, 963_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolske kronike.

tistics, which were directly influenced by various factors.

The school consolidation process lasted until the early 1950s, when the number of pupils no longer changed significantly. The fluctuations were influenced by the annual change of generations, as well as by pupils coming over from the Italian school. The school year 1953-54 marked a new, landmark phase of development, as the number of pupils more than quadrupled by the end of the decade. The number of departments multiplied accordingly, from seven in the school year 1952-53 to 21 five years later, with a teaching staff of 24.

The rapid growth outlined here coincides with the resolution of the so-called Trieste issue and the migratory dynamics triggered by the division of the FTT between Yugoslavia and Italy. Emigration from Zone B to Zone A of the FTT and immigration to Zone B from Slovenia and elsewhere had been taking place through-

out the previous years. From 1953 and especially from 1955 onwards, the final, most intense phase of the 'exodus' began. It lasted until February 1957 – the deadline by which residents who had opted for Italian citizenship and emigration to Italy (in accordance with the London Memorandum) had to depart. At the same time immigration increased sharply and by the end of the decade it had overcome the demographic deficit caused by the 'exodus'. Increased birth rates also began to have an impact on population growth (Kalc 2019, 149-153). The migration process and the effect of the population replacement was not only reflected in schools on an annual basis, but also in an increase in the number of pupils in the course of the school year. From the beginning to the end of the 1955/56 school year, the number of pupils at the Janko Premrl Vojko school increased from 330 to 409, and the same trend continued. In the following years, school enrolment reflects a continuous immigration of fami-

lies, accompanied by increasingly stable economic development and the urbanisation of the area. Within a few years, the construction of another school in the town was deemed necessary⁷ (Sluga and Jelen Madruša 2006, 10).

The new settlers in the city of Koper came mainly from Slovenia, but many also came from the Croat part of Istria, especially from around Buje which had also belonged to Zone B of the FTT before 1954. The social and national composition of Koper and the coastal region as a whole underwent a radical change in a very short period of time. The proportion of the population that had been born in the urban coastal towns fell from 85% in 1948 to 33% in 1956. Meanwhile, the Italian population shrunk to 10%. Its age structure rose sharply, while the immigrant population was dominated by younger, demographically active generations. Slovenian Istria and especially its urbanised coastal zone, which had been predominantly Italian, thus acquired a Slovenian and partly Yugoslav character (Kalc 2019, 155–156).

The school increasingly became a social laboratory for this new urban reality, which consisted of people of different origins and also social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In the socialist social order, the school as a basic educational institution was one of the key elements in the renewal of social values and relations to form a people's democracy. The programme of the League of Communists of Slovenia emphasised how schools were connected with socio-economic reality and were bound to express the cultural needs of the pupils and to conform them to the needs of society⁸. The special task of schools in northern Istria, which became part of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, was to help integrate the region into the Slovenian national and cultural space. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to transform the cultural environment and establish the Slovene language. As can be seen from the school records, the school invested a

lot of effort in language education and inculcating new ideas during the post-war years because it had to deal with a very complex cultural and linguistic reality. The pupils' insufficient knowledge of Slovene had a negative impact on their learning progress. There were problems with immigrant children of other Yugoslav nationalities, as well as with children from the Slovene part of Istria. As regards the latter, the difficulties were attributed to the mother tongue having been neglected and a lack of Slovene national consciousness due to the persistent assimilation processes and fascist education, which meant Italian was frequently used in everyday communication at home and in general⁹. There was also an attachment to the Slovene Istrian dialect, which was full of words borrowed from Italian or Croatian. Towards the end of the 1950s, school records mention the positive effects of schools on language skills and learning abilities. Children learnt Slovene faster, their reading culture improved and they became more involved in school and extracurricular activities. Visits to theatre performances, educational excursions, participation in events and celebrations, additional courses in Slovene and local history and geography all paid off. Special credit for mastery of the Slovene language was given to the 'hard-working pupils from Yugoslavia' who spoke beautiful Slovene and became role models for the locals¹⁰.

The Political Situation and Education

In order to understand the school's role and work in the turbulent 1940s and 1950s, it is also necessary to take into account the political situation. The opening of Slovene schools in Koper and other coastal towns meant the redressing of fascist attempts to assimilate and destroy the Slovene identity. At the same time, it meant eliminating the historical ideological-national dichotomy between the Italian town and the Slovene countryside. Under Austria-Hungary, the Italian local authorities had used this di-

7 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1957/1958.

8 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1958/59.

9 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1945/46.

10 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1950/51.

chotomy to prevent the Slovene population from moving to the towns and exercising their national rights there. The Slovene or Yugoslav people's power, which emerged from the National Liberation Struggle (NOB), overcame this by implementing the socialist principle of national equality and the policy of fraternity among nations. It considered this territory to be Yugoslav and introduced the political-administrative structures and systems of the socialist order from Yugoslavia into Zone B of the FTT. In the geopolitical configuration of the Littoral, when the peace treaty assigned Gorizia to Italy in 1947 and Trieste to Zone A of the FTT, the towns of Koper, Izola and Piran were conceived as the new centres of the Slovene territory. In the border dispute, the authorities pursued a principled policy in favour of the annexation of Zone B to Yugoslavia, and sought to create the conditions and gain the consensus of the population for this, not on the basis of nationality but on the principle of socialist belonging. However, this stumbled upon many obstacles, both national and ideological. Political opposition came not only from the Italian bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes, which manifested nationalist and irredentist tendencies, but also from workers who were in favour of the Free Territory of Trieste. Since 1948, this idea had been intertwined with the Cominform positions and the pro-FTT propaganda of the 'Cominformists'¹¹ (Rogoznica 2011, 301–302; Čebren Lipovec 2019a, 205). This kind of anti-Yugoslavism was supported mainly by Italian communists, and was still alive in certain areas of Zone B in 1953. At the same time, there was strong political pressure from the *esuli* (Istrian émigrés) organisations and Italian political circles from Zone A and from Italy, which spread rumours of persecution and dangers for Italians under the Yugoslav regime. For all these reasons, the consolidation of socialist positions in Zone B and the integration of Italians into the pro-Yugoslav socio-political structures, as well as putting the principles of socialist democracy into

practice (beginning with bilingualism) did not proceed as planned and without conflict. The authorities also experienced disagreements and tensions between local political cadres and those from Slovenia, who accused the former of a lack of political integrity in the struggle to eliminate anti-Yugoslav political factors.

One of the aims of establishing Slovene schools during the FTT years was therefore to repair the damage suffered by the Slovenes under and before fascism due to social and national discrimination. At the same time, it was part of the political struggle for Zone B to belong to Yugoslavia through the implementation of the socialist social order and the socialist concept for regulating national relations. On the socialist basis of equality, the authorities recognised the national rights of the Italian population while enforcing the principle that 'a Slovene child belongs in a Slovene school' and implemented it on the basis of 'objective' criteria for determining national belonging (surname, language, origin). This was their way of exerting political pressure, and in many cases it paid off and contributed to the process of integrating the local Istrian population into the Slovene nation. However, they also encountered resistance and accusations from Italian representatives for imposing Slovene education and disrespecting people's personal identity. Getting children to enrol in Slovene schools continued after the territory was annexed to Yugoslavia and the exodus of Italian-speaking population, along with efforts to consolidate the region's Slovene character. Complaints were made in political circles that even the Slovene communists often spoke Italian among themselves¹². However, due to the mass immigration and the influence of the prevailing Slovene social and cultural environment, implementing the principle of a national school policy became easier.

The Architecture of School Buildings

How did the architecture and specifically the new primary school of Janko Premrl Vojko at

¹¹ PAK, 450, Okrajni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije Koper (1945–1965).

¹² AS, 1589 III, Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije, 4, 249, Zapisnik seje s tovariši iz Okrajnega komiteja Koper, 24. July 1953.

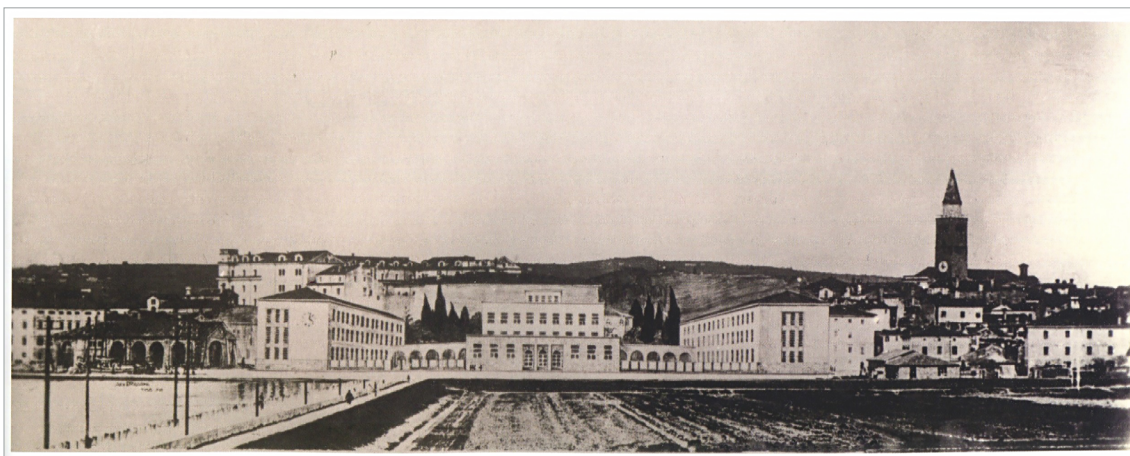


Figure 3: Photomontage of the panorama of the southern edge of the old town of Koper/Capodistria with the planned monumental school dedicated to Anna Depangher Sauro, 1939–1940 (source: Personal Archive of Mario Fonda)

Belveder fit into the political, ideological and social dynamics? The story of this first post-war school in the centre of Koper has a lengthy prelude connected with a modern, unfinished school building from the fascist era, and a follow-up that mirrors the town's demographic and urban development after Zone B was annexed to Yugoslavia.

The Fascist Primary School Scuola Anna Depangher Sauro

In the interwar period, the fascist authorities built several rural schools in the Istrian countryside. These were typical one-room schoolhouses aimed at providing the most basic education for the peasant population. The aesthetics of these buildings followed the official style of the time, the so-called *Stile Littorio*. By reinterpreting elements from Roman antiquity, it served as a tool for legitimising the alleged continuity of the Roman – and consequently presumably Italian – civilisational and territorial domination. A monumental but unfinished primary school complex was built in the same spirit and style – but much more ambitiously – on the waterfront of Koper/Capodistria (today Pristaniška ulica) in 1940. It was dedicated to Anna Depangher Sauro, the mother of the local irredentist hero Nazario Sauro.

The new school was designed in 1938, at the height of fascism, with an exceptional representational significance. It served as the dominant feature of the monumental scenery on the promenade leading to the equally monumental memorial to Nazario Sauro from 1935. In order for construction to begin, much of the anonymous fabric of the town's Brazzol district was demolished (Cherini 1990, 265–266), following the example of Mussolini paving the way for fascist modernity in Rome. The plan for the new school complex consisted of a central dominant part and two wings (one for girls and one for boys). Due to disputes over symbolic aesthetics, in which the Minister of National Education Giuseppe Bottai intervened,¹³ and the outbreak of war, construction came to a standstill and the building, with its extraordinary symbolic charge, remained unfinished.

After the end of World War II, especially after the Free Territory of Trieste was established, the school building became relevant again. The new authorities – the Military Administration of the Yugoslav Army – intended to complete the school, but again the plan was not realised as they decided to build a new school at a new location – on the site of the demolished prison at

¹³ SABAP FVG, fondo Istra Quarnero Dalmazia, b. 4, fasc. 172, Nuova Scuola Capodistria, prot. n. 141, 20 February 1940.

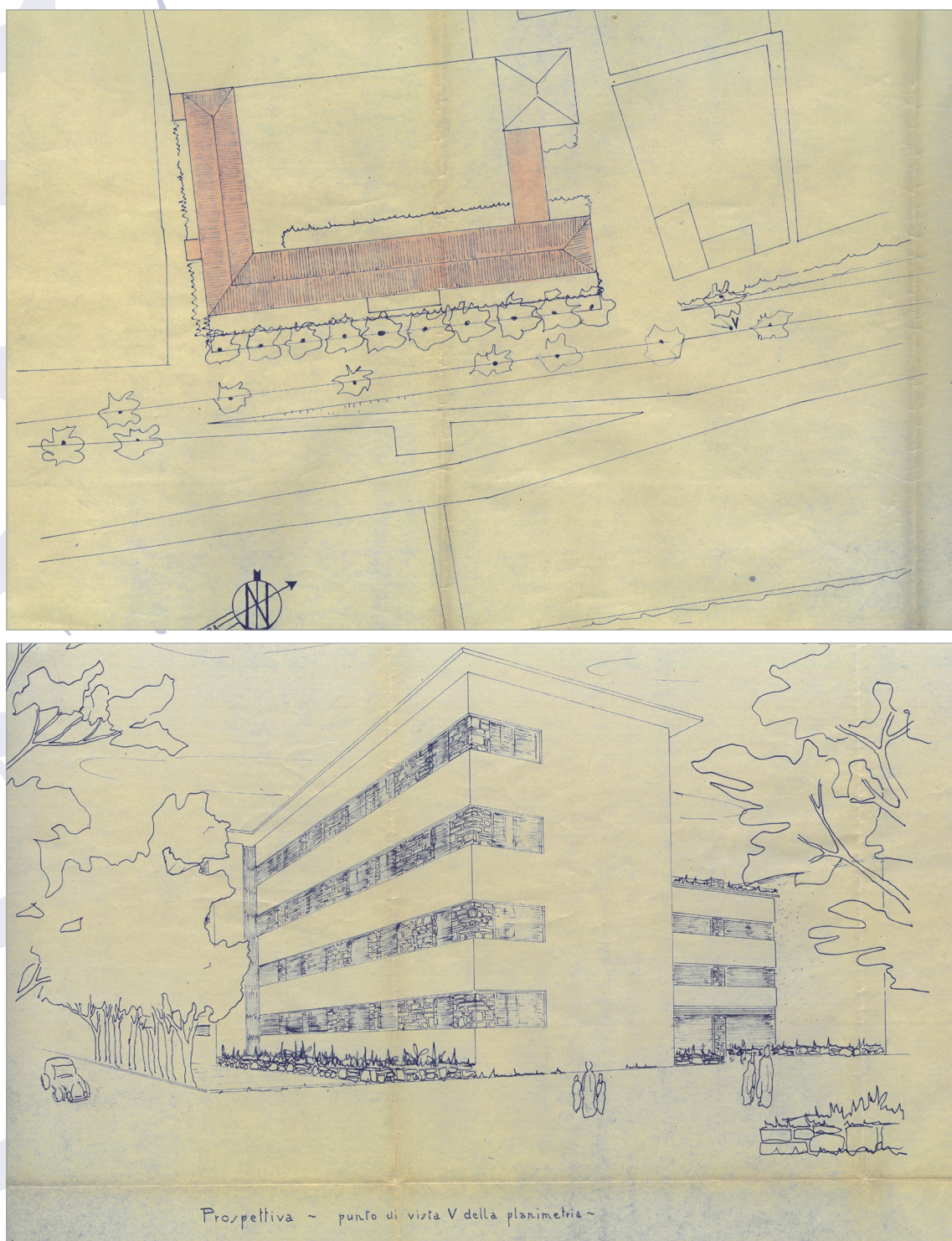


Figure 4: The original plan for the new Slovene-Italian primary school in Koper, architect Ervino Velušček, 1948 (source: PAK, 24 OLO Projekti, 312.9)

Belveder. Between 1949 and 1951, the unfinished fascist school was converted into the Triglav hotel and Omnia department store. The plans for the adaptation were drawn up by one of Slovenia's leading post-war architects, Edo Mihevc (Čebtron Lipovec 2012, 216–217; Čebtron Lipovec 2020, 259–261).

The Primary School in Koper: From Osnovna šola – Scuola cittadina to Osnovna šola Janko Premrl Vojko

The decision to build a new school was made for practical and ideological reasons. The practical reasons included the outdatedness and inadequate furnishings of the building used for the Slovene school, as evidenced by the school records. The main Italian school was located in a wing of the former convent of the Poor Clares, while the Slovene school did not have its own premises. As already mentioned, it was originally housed together with the grammar school in the renovated building of the former fascist naval school. The primary school was located on the upper floors on the north side of the building, and from 1948 onwards it was housed in three dark classrooms on the ground floor. The first makeshift benches, which satisfied neither the requirements nor the hygiene regulations, were provided by the Military Administration, and it was not until the school year 1947/48 that the Education Department provided new benches and cupboards. The primary school pupils had a separate entrance from the grammar school pupils, but they came together in the courtyard during breaks.

In 1948, the unknown local architect Matossi was still planning to complete the pre-war fascist school building, but the authorities decided to demolish the former monumental prison on the old town's highest point, the Belveder, and build a new school on that site. The demolition of the old building and the construction of the new one, which began in 1949,¹⁴ was the first and most visible urban intervention in the town



Figure 5: Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School, built on the site of the former penitentiary (photo: Neža Čebtron Lipovec, 2007)

centre. The plan for the new school was drawn up by Ervino Velušček (Kregar 1952, 36; Čebtron Lipovec 2018), an architect who originated from Trieste and who was completely unknown at the time but who emigrated to Italy in 1950 and created a prominent architectural oeuvre. The original plan for the school building envisaged a monumental complex with three three-storey wings to be built on the floor plan of the former prison. One wing was intended for the Slovene classes, another for Italian classes, and the third was for the administration (Kregar 1952, 36; Čebtron Lipovec 2018).

In the end, only one simple single-storey wing was built and handed over for use on 3 March 1951 (La nostra lotta 1951, 2). The new school building, which had only 16 classrooms and not the larger number that had been planned, also deviated from the conceptual plan in terms of design, as it lost its original character with the reduction in size and a different roof. It is said that the original plan was abandoned due to a lack of funds (Kregar 1952, 36).

From a socio-historical point of view, the political-ideological function of this school building was crucial as it was built to house Slovene and Italian pupils under the same roof. In public discourse it was presented as a Slovene-Italian primary school or *scuola cittadina*, which symbolised the so-called *fratellanza* – the brotherhood of Slovenes and Italians in Istria. It there-

14 PAK, 23, Istrski okrožni ljudski odbor, 9, 11. November 1950.

fore embodied the fundamental declared ideal of the FTT Zone B, as advocated by the Slavic-Italian anti-fascist union – the *Unione antifascista italo-slava* (SIAU/UAIS) (La nostra lotta 1951, 2). The newspaper *Istrski tednik* reported on the opening as follows:

‘On the foundations of the infamous old prison, which many of us know from the time of fascist violence and terror, the first wing of the new school has been built, a magnificent building that will now welcome our young generation. From now on, they will be educated to become new socialist people in the spirit of brotherhood and unity between Slovenes and Italians’ (*Istrski tednik* 1951, 3).

The school initially housed a Slovene 5-year primary school and an Italian 5-year primary school. However, in the school year 1956/57 the Italian primary school moved out of the building to another site in the historic centre¹⁵. From then onwards, the school was intended only for Slovene-speaking pupils.

Due to intensive economic development – thanks to the TOMOS factory and the port – the first years after the annexation (1954) were a time of intensive workforce inflow, and consequently of children and schoolchildren. As a result of the large population influx, and in view of the forthcoming school reform, the school was enlarged in the year 1957/1958 and given a second floor¹⁶ with an additional eight classrooms, but these were used by the teacher training college¹⁷. The plans for the extension were drawn up by Miloš Hohnjec, an unknown but very prolific architect of the architectural bureau *Projektivni biro* in Koper in the first years following the annexation (Čebtron Lipovec 2018, 227). In addition to the second floor extension, the architect proposed a new, lower, simple pavilion with offices for teachers and workshops, but despite the growing space constraints, the plan remained on paper. School records report of planned ex-

tensions to the administrative building and the integration of the school into the growing new modern neighbourhood in the immediate vicinity, as well as a planned park at the front, but these plans were never realised.

In 1954 and then in 1957, development plans were drawn up for Koper by the architect Nikolaj Bežek (Čebtron Lipovec 2019b, 249–253; 2020, 262–265). They outlined the development of new urbanisation on the southern bank of the former salt pans in Semedela, and in the long term also in Bonifika – the reclaimed marshy area of the former salt pans. These development guidelines also led to decisions concerning the location of new school buildings. As the new school at Belveder was short of space, a decision was made in 1957 to found a new school and build a completely new building¹⁸. However, the school was not built until later. In the school year 1959/60, the school at Belveder had 24 units, one of which was temporarily housed in the building of the Italian primary school in order to avoid the third shift of classes¹⁹. Finally, in 1962, the new school in Koper acquired premises in a new building at Bonifika.

The Primary School's Symbolism and Heritage Significance

The prison, which was demolished in 1948, primarily symbolised the place where Slovene freedom fighters were oppressed (Beltram 2008, 8). Already in 1930, members of the Slovene secret organisation *Borba* were imprisoned and tortured there; they were the first to protest violently against fascism and the attempts to annihilate Slovene and Croat identity in the region. Constructing the school on the site of the prison, therefore, carried a multilayered symbolic meaning. In the first place, there was the counterpoint between the prison's negative and repressive function of negating an individual's freedom, and the positive and philanthropic function of the school – an educational institution that pro-

15 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1955/1956.

16 PAK, 24.2, OLO Projekti, 336, 4.

17 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1957/58.

18 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1957/58.

19 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika 1959/60.



Figure 6: The commemorative plaque erected in 1959 on the side façade of the primary school. Alongside it there is a plaque with an Italian translation of the text that was added later (photo: Neža Čebtron Lipovec, 2007)

vides young generations with knowledge as a tool for achieving freedom. There is also a symbolic contrast in ethnic terms: the prison was an allegory of national struggles and attempts at ethnic domination. In Austrian times Italian irredentists were imprisoned here, during the Italian rule Slavs and antifascists were the prisoners. As a contrast to these dynamics, the post-WWII authorities wanted to celebrate inter-ethnic fraternity – *fratellanza* – with a joint Slovene-Italian school as a model of a just relationship between Slovenes and Italians in Istria. The school therefore symbolised respectful coexistence, and its origins and first years of operation can be considered a monument to the utopia that the FTT tried to implement. Yet the utopia dissolved rapidly with the emigration of the Italians, which peaked in 1955–56. Then the declining Italian classes were moved out of the building and the school was enlarged to accommodate the rapidly growing population of newly arrived Slovenes and Croats. In the school year 1959/60, the school was renamed after the Slovene partisan hero Janko Premrl Vojko.²⁰ In 1959, a commemorative plaque was placed on the school's side façade in memory of the prison, the suffering of the freedom fighters who were imprisoned

20 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojko, Šolska kronika 1959/60.



Figure 7: The commemorative plaque erected in 1985 on the side façade of the primary school marking 40 years since the re-establishment of Slovene education in Istria (photo: Neža Čebtron Lipovec, 2007)

there under fascism, and the founding of Yugoslavia's communist party. Meanwhile, the ideal of fraternity between Slovenes and Italians was no longer present. In 1985, a commemorative plaque was added to commemorate the re-establishment of Slovenian education in Istria.

In this process we see not only the dissolution of utopia, but in fact its opposite: from the annexation to Yugoslavia onwards, schools reflected the expansion of Slovene identity and a change in the region's ethnic structure and appearance. However, they not only reflected the 'exodus' of the pre-war population, but also the process of 'Yugoslavisation', as the development of the port in particular brought many people from other Yugoslav republics to Koper.

Pinko Tomažič Primary School

This 'ethnic metamorphosis' (Purini 2010) and the socio-economic development of Koper and the whole region into a flourishing Slovene, Yugoslav and socialist landscape was also symbolised by the establishment of the second primary school in Koper in 1958. The first post-war school was then renamed Primary School I (one year later renamed after Janko Premrl Vojko) while the new one was called Primary School II. Both schools initially shared the older, first post-war building. Primary School II moved into a new

building at Bonifika in 1962,²¹ and was renamed after the national hero of the partisan movement, Pinko Tomažič. Although the area of drained salt pans had started to be reclaimed already under the Kingdom of Italy in the 1920s and 1930s (Čebon Lipovec 2020, 249–251), it did not actually undergo urbanisation until after it was annexed to Yugoslavia. The plan to develop Bonifika with modern neighbourhoods making up the ‘New Koper’ was prepared by the leading architect and urban planner in the region at the time, Edo Mihevc, as part of the Urban Plan for Koper in 1961. The latter was part of the larger Regional Plan for the Slovenian Coast (the area of the northern Istrian coast within the Socialist Republic of Slovenia) which was drawn up between 1959 and 1963. Mihevc developed a distinctive architectural idiom of ‘progressive’ and ‘Mediterranean architecture’ (Čebon Lipovec 2018, 245–265) for the newly annexed region, consisting of modern architecture with elements inspired by local, vernacular Mediterranean architecture, especially from the countryside. Through this locally influenced yet modern architectural style, he wanted to lay the foundations for modern development in the newly annexed region, based on the qualities of historical and geographical features. The new, modern villa-blocks were contemporary in their floor plans and furnishings, while their exteriors bore vivid earthy colours, accented with tile roofs, vertical windows, wooden shutters, stone details, pergolas and lush greenery. The architect wrote that this was intended to preserve the ‘visual continuity of the landscape’ (Mihevc 1963, 42). This way, he wanted to create at least an external appearance that sought continuity with the region’s tradition. In this gesture we can recognise both a desire to respect this region, but also a desire to conceal the obvious cut in the region’s development and history caused by the drastic socio-political revolution and the change of population. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean character was mainly achieved in residential and tourist architecture,

while for public buildings – including school buildings – he drew more directly on contemporary modernist trends.

It was in the context of school buildings that a major breakthrough was made in Slovenia at the time, as an echo of the development and modernisation of the teaching process (the need for a less rigid learning space, the limitation of the number of pupils, new teaching methods, etc.) (Petelin 2020, 172–173). Changes in the field of architecture began to take effect with the introduction of a new form of education after a new Law on Primary Education was adopted in 1959. It was based on the principles of the Communist League of Yugoslavia and established a balance between education and upbringing (Sluga and Jelen Madruša 2006, 10). All school buildings were built according to the same modernist principles: the basic unit was the classroom, which was to provide the pupil with sufficient space, and the floor plan of the classroom should be close to square, adequately lit and have large windows; the new floor plans should be more varied and allow for a more appropriate school design; the schools should not have more than a single storey and have dynamic, asymmetrical compositions; construction should be possible using a concrete structure, but at the same time it should be organically adapted to regional specificities; finally, schools should stand in parks, in the middle of greenery, in contact with nature. All these principles can be found in several proposed variants for the new school at Bonifika. At least four variants were made²², proposing a subdivided construction around a central pavilion (variant A); an even more subdivided, clustered design of pavilions (variant B); and a simpler, rectangular pavilion design with a wide atrium (variant C). These three variants, which directly mirror the principles of the ‘new school’, were presented only in plan form. A fourth variant was developed, representing the realised building: an elongated, single-storey pavilion building on columns, with three connecting tracts and two spacious, external staircases.

21 PAK, 936_2, Osnovna šola Janka Premrla Vojka, Šolska kronika, 1962/63.

22 PAK, 24.2, OLO Projekti, 377, 5.



Figure 8: Pinko Tomažič Primary School in the 1980s.
(source: Personal Archive of Zdenko Bombek)

All the designs provided for lush greenery. The pavilion design provided a solution for building on the unstable ground of the former salt pans. The building was in fact the first to be built in the poor load-bearing area (Kresal 2016, 96–97). The school was mainly attended by pupils from the suburban estates. All the plans that were drawn up testify to the commitment of the already established Slovenian authorities who shifted the focus from not just solving the spatial problem and asserting Slovenian identity, but also to expressing a special concern for the most modern trends in school architecture and also in education. In 2000, professional critics described the Pinko Tomažič Primary School as ‘the only example of a pavilion-like transparent building in the Bonifika area between the old centre of Koper and Smedela, and it could become the standard form of construction in this area’. (Ravnikar et al. 2000) They proposed it should be protected as a cultural heritage site. However, structural problems meant the building was demolished in 2005, despite its architectural qualities.

The Pinko Tomažič Primary School was the embodiment of the grand plan to expand post-war Koper beyond the former salt pans, i.e. the reclaimed Bonifika, towards the neighbouring hills. The town’s expansion and the construction of new residential estates, which became necessary with the economic development that followed the construction of the TOMOS fac-

tory and the Port of Koper, led to the construction of several schools in the following decades. The new estates were built in concentric circles from the old town centre southwards. In the centre of Smedela, the new modernist, terraced neighbourhood, a new school was built in 1972 and named after the national hero Dušan Bordon (Čebroň Lipovec 2018, 228–229). Only seven years later, in 1979, a school named after Anton Ukmar, another national hero, was built on Markovec, a hilly suburban area, west of Smedela. The latter complex is characterised by a distinctly organic approach in its subdivided wings and its location on a ridge overlooking Koper Bay. The colour scheme of white walls, blue roofs and red details is reminiscent of the Yugoslav and Slovenian flags, although there is no document that explicitly mentions such symbolism being intentional. The school was intended for children from the newly built blocks of flats between Smedela and Žusterna, which were built due to the intensive population growth, mainly of workers from other Yugoslav republics, after the intensive expansion of the Port of Koper and the extremely rapid economic development in the late 1960s and 1970s. The new and modern school, located on one of the most beautiful vantage points overlooking the Gulf of Trieste, reflected the peak of ‘Yugoslav’ Koper’s economic development.

Concluding Discussion

A dual – historical and architectural-historical – analysis of schools in post-war Koper illustrates the dramatic changes that took place in the north Istrian region after the war, and also before it. The motives and mechanisms behind the establishment of Slovene education clearly reflect a desire to redress the injustices of fascism and earlier historical periods. This is manifested above all in the primary concern for the Slovene language, for the ‘restoration’ of Slovene identity in children who had supposedly ‘forgotten’ their mother tongue or renounced it under pressure from the forces that wanted to assimilate and erase the Slovene character of this ethnically

mixed area. At the same time, these approaches clearly reveal the processes of establishing Slovenian dominance in the urban space of the acquired territory, through the construction of a socialist social order within the Yugoslav state. However, an architectural-historical analysis of the construction and aesthetics of schools, especially the first post-war primary school in the town centre, reveals a partially different interpretation: in the public media discourse, especially during border-negotiation period of the Free Territory of Trieste (1947–1954), the school was a symbol of the coexistence of Slovenes and Italians, united under the common ideal of a socialist future and of fraternity – *fratellanza* – between two equal peoples. It was this *fratellanza* that the new school in the town centre was supposed to foster, as it was originally conceived as a school for pupils of both languages. Despite the monumental plan for a two-nation school, only the Slovene wing was built, and shortly after the incorporation of Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste to Yugoslavia, the Italian classes were relocated. The first school then acquired a different population and – under the influence of rapid economic development and mass immigration – became a school for immigrants from different Slovenian regions and other Yugoslav republics.

So, what is the heritage value of the Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School? It was a monument to the short and utopian period of the FTT and its fate, as well as a material bearer of the collective memory of Koper's new, post-war population. At the same time it undoubtedly testified to a historic process that could be called a post-fascist reaction to the suppression of Slovene identity. However, due to the newly acquired post-war position of power, the Slovenian population became numerically and culturally dominant, also as a result of the national or republican context and the establishment of the nation state.

At the same time, educational institutions were a monument to the new socialist reality where education was implemented in a new value system. This was based on the equal-

ity of social classes, self-management, the secular state and the integration of the Yugoslav peoples, while upholding the values of the National Liberation Struggle (*Narodnoosvobodilna borba, NOB*) – the struggle for freedom, peace and anti-fascism. The buildings of the Janko Premrl Vojko and Pinko Tomažič primary schools were therefore the primary carriers of these historical and social values, while their heritage significance is also based on specific architectural and technical achievements, such as adaptation to local specificities, modernist solutions, etc.

It is an eloquent fact that both the town's first post-war school and the second school in Bonifika were demolished in a short period of time at the beginning of the 3rd millennium. The official, technical justification for the demolition on the grounds of poor construction quality is undermined by the fact that the irreversible intervention was carried out without any professional evaluation of the significance of the destroyed buildings. The demolition is a typical example of symbolic erasure and negation (*negation symbolique*, Veschambre 2008) of the monuments of a bygone era and past ideologies – in this case socialism. Equally eloquent is the fact that the demolition of the schools was not accompanied by a professional debate on their heritage significance, in which elements of so-called 'extruded history' can be identified. This concept, as defined by Pamela Ballinger (2012, 380), concerns attitudes towards history that address 'uncomfortable' topics – particularly in the post-war period. These are usually stories of defeat, which enter the public consciousness at inappropriate moments and are difficult to fit into public narratives and into scientific conceptual frameworks; such problematic and disputed narrative is the issue of the 'exodus' (Hrobat Virlogot 2021). However, the demolished schools do mark the local collective memory, as proven by the jubilee monograph on the school which was published when the school was closed down and demolished (Poklar and Jelen Madruša 2006). It was prepared by former teachers and pupils. The school's exceptional importance for the lo-

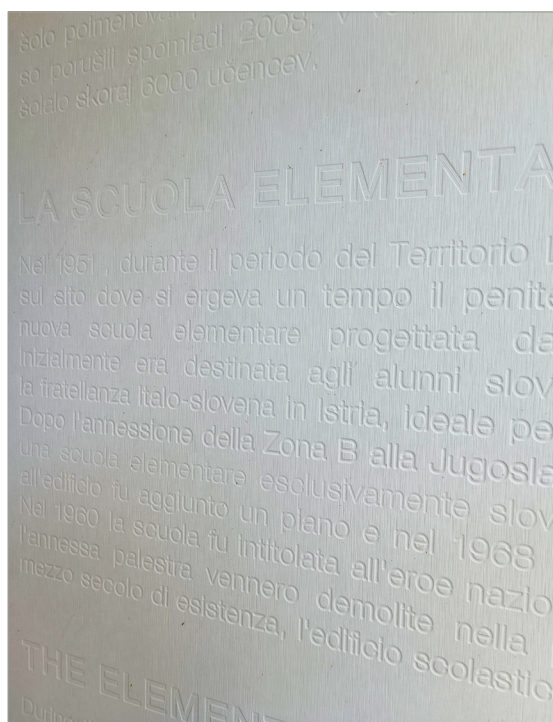


Figure 9: The 'invisibly commemorated' history of the post-war primary school on white slabs with white letters at the northern entrance to the new underground car park on the site of the old school (photo: Neža Čebren Lipovec, 2023)

cal population is also evidenced by the existence of the social media Facebook groups and their exceptional activity. The Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School has almost 2,000 followers and was founded only a few months after the building was demolished (November 2008),

while Pinko Tomažič Primary School often appears in posts on various Facebook groups about Koper's history, for example *Koper, kot je bil nekoč* / *Capodistria com'era una volta* (Koper as it used to be). The comments under the posts display a wide range of different reactions – from pure nostalgia and a sense of belonging, to ignorance about the presence of Italians. The variety of comments, emotions and attitudes expressed testify to the extraordinary heritage of these two schools, while the lack of knowledge about the history behind the buildings and the institution can again be considered 'extruded' history. For 15 years, the site of the Janko Premrl Vojko school lay empty, awaiting the construction of an underground car park and a new public park on top of it. Since 2022, the existence of the first post-war school building has been commemorated in the new 'Museum Square' above the car park. Each of the three entrances to the car park has a large white slab with a short introductory text and an axonometric projection of the building. This 'site of memory' is presently (autumn 2023) visible but invisible: the white letters carved into the white slab are completely illegible. The memory of the school and its dissonant heritage significance is 'invisibly commemorated'.

However, in the absence of any interest from the academic and political spheres in evaluating the significance of the post-war schools in the northern Istrian urban space, a special, coincidental and symbolic moment is taking place right now (autumn 2023). After 67 years, the Slovenian and Italian primary schools in Koper have been reunited, albeit temporarily, in the same building – the new building of the Koper Primary School, while the old building of the Italian school is undergoing renovation.

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- AS: Arhiv Republike Slovenije.
 SABAP FGV: Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio del Friuli Venezia Giulia
 PAK: Pokrajinski arhiv Koper / Archivio Regionale di Capodistria.

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Summary

The article analyses the role of establishing education and constructing primary schools after World War II in Koper, along the north Istrian coast. This is the re-

gion that was the subject of major international negotiations on the demarcation between Italy and Yugoslavia. The central topic is observed from two interconnected perspectives and methodologies: on the one hand through the social history of the development of education, and on the other through an architectural-historical lens that considers the aesthetics and meaning of school buildings. The central case study is the first primary school building, which was built in the historical centre of Koper after the World War II (in 1951), and later renamed the Janko Premrl Vojko Primary School. The institution's development is observed with the help of detailed data from school chronicles, which testify to the revival of Slovenian education in the city and region. This was abolished during the fascist violence, but after World War II it became the focal point of the national and political empowerment of the Slovenian population. We also note that in the process of empowering the Slovenian part of the population, the institution of the school contributed to exerting pressure on the Italian-speaking population, which was gradually emigrating from the region. After the annexation of Istria to Yugoslavia in 1954, another process took place within the framework of the development of education, mainly in the city centre, but also in the city surroundings – the Yugoslavisation of the urban coastal area. This was the result of intensive immigration of new residents from the entire republic and federation due to the intensive industrial development (TOMOS factory, port). The architectural-historical analysis of the first post-war elementary school also sheds light on the symbolism of the building at the time of its construction, during the temporary buffer state of the Free Territory of Trieste, when the building, erected on the ruins of a prison, symbolized the still-living ideal of brotherhood (*fratellanza*) between Slovenians and Italians in Istria, but vanished with the abolition of the buffer-state in 1954. We also discuss Koper's second post-war school, dedicated to Pinko Tomažič and built in 1961 on the outskirts of the city centre on the dried salt pans, or Bonifika, which marked the period of exceptional population and economic growth after the annexation to Yugoslavia. We conclude by reflecting on the heritage significance of both schools as architecture and as institution in general: the first post-war school was initially a monument to utopia, and then became a monument to the city's post-

war Yugoslav identity, while the second primary school is primarily of exceptional importance as modernist architecture. These findings are crucial in light of the fact that both schools were demolished 15 and 18 years ago, respectively.

Povzetek

Članek obravnava vlogo vzpostavljanja šolstva in gradnje šol po drugi svetovni vojni v Kopru, ob severnoistrski obali, torej pokrajini, ki je bila predmet velikih mednarodnih pogajanj o razmejitvi med Italijo in Jugoslavijo. Osrednjo temo opazujemo z dveh povezanih zornih kotov in metodologij: na eni strani skozi perspektivo socialne zgodovine razvoja šolstva, na drugi skozi arhitekturnozgodovinsko analizo estetike in pomena šolskih zgradb. Osrednja študija primera je prva stavba osnovne šole, ki je bila po 2. svetovni vojni zgrajena v historičnem jedru Kopra, kasneje pa preimenovana v OŠ Janka Premrla Vojka. Razvoj ustanove opazujemo skozi natančne podatke iz šolskih kronik, ki pričajo o oživljanju slovenskega šolstva v mestu in regiji, ki je bilo v času fašističnega nasilja ukinjeno, po drugi svetovni vojni pa je postalo osrednja točka nacionalnega in političnega opolnomočenja slovenskega prebivalstva. Ugotovimo pa tudi, da je v procesu opolnomočenja slovenskega dela prebivalstva prav institucija šole prispevala k pritiskom na italijansko govoreče prebivalstvo, ki se je postopoma, hote ali nehot, odseljevalo. Po priključitvi Istre Jugoslaviji leta 1954 se je v okviru razvoja šolstva, predvsem v mestnem jedru, a tudi v mestni okolici, odvil drugi proces – »jugoslavizacije« urbanega obmorskega prostora. Ta je bil posledica intenzivnega priseljevanja novih prebivalcev iz celotne republike in federacije zaradi intenzivnega ekonomskega razvoja industrije (tovarna TOMOS, pristanišče). Arhitekturnozgodovinska analiza prve poveljne osnovne šole, zgrajene leta 1951, pa osvetli še pomen stavbe ob njeni izgradnji, v času začasne tamponske države Svobodno tržaško ozemlje, ko je zgradba, postavljena na ruševinah zapora, simbolizirala takrat še živ ideal bratstva (it. *fratellanza*) med Slovenci in Italijani v Istri, ki pa je z ukinitvijo STO izumrl. Obravnavamo tudi drugo poveljno šolo, posvečeno Pinku Tomaziču, zgrajeno leta 1961 na obrobju mestnega jedra, na osušenih solinah ali Bonifiki, ki je zaznamovala prav čas izjemne rasti prebivalstva in gospodarstva po priključitvi Jugoslaviji. Sklenemo z razmislekom o dediščinskem

pomenu obeh objektov ter šol kot ustanove nasploh in ugotovimo, da je predvsem prva poveljna šola (OŠ Janka Premrla Vojka) bila sprva spomenik utopiji, nato pa poveljni jugoslovanski identiteti mesta, medtem ko je druga osnovna šola predvsem izjemnega pomena kot modernistična arhitektura. Ti ugotovitvi sta ključni v luči dejstva, da sta obe šoli bili porušeni 15 oz. 18 let nazaj.