

## UNCERTAIN STATES: REPATRIATION AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE NORTHEASTERN ADRIATIC, 1918–1921

Maura E. HAMETZ

Old Dominion University, Department of History, BAL 8000 Norfolk, Virginia, USA 23529  
e-mail: mhametz@odu.edu

### ABSTRACT

*From 1918 to 1921, officials of the Italian government operating in the new Adriatic territories inherited from the Habsburg monarchy struggled to meet the needs of local populations in an atmosphere of economic dislocation, political unrest, and increasing ethnic violence. This article examines the evolution of Italian policies and practices relating to border crossings, repatriation, and citizenship in the dynamic period from Armistice to official annexation. Using archival records held in Trieste and Rome, it explores officials' treatment of inhabitants of the new borderlands, migrants, and refugees in the transformation of Habsburg lands of the multi-ethnic empire to Italian provinces in the nationalist state in the context of treaties of the Paris Peace and subsequent agreements articulating political arrangements that affected the populations of Trieste, Fiume, Istria, and Dalmatia.*

*Keywords: repatriation, citizenship, Adriatic, Trieste, World War I, borderlands*

### STATI INCERTI: RIMPATRII E CITTADINANZA NELL'ADRIATICO NORD-ORIENTALE, 1918–1921

### SINTESI

*Dal 1918 al 1921 gli uffici del governo italiano che operavano nei nuovi territori adriatici acquisiti dalla monarchia asburgica si sforzarono di andare incontro ai bisogni della popolazione locale in un'atmosfera di dislocazioni economiche, incertezza politica e di crescente violenza etnica. L'articolo esamina l'evoluzione delle politiche e delle pratiche italiane relative agli attraversamenti di frontiera, ai rimpatrii ed alle forme di cittadinanza nel periodo che va dall'armistizio all'annessione ufficiale dei territori in esame. Sulla base di materiale dagli archivi di Trieste e di Roma, lo scritto esplora il trattamento degli abitanti delle nuove zone di frontiera, degli emigranti e dei rifugiati nel corso della trasformazione delle zone asburgiche dell'impero multi-etnico in province di uno stato nazionalista come quello italiano. L'analisi si svolge nel contesto dei trattati di*

*pace di Parigi e dei successivi accordi che articularono specifiche disposizioni politiche che colpirono le popolazioni di Trieste, Fiume, Istria e Dalmazia.*

*Parole chiave: rimpatrii, cittadinanza, Adriatico, Trieste, prima Guerra mondiale, zone di confine*

On 17 July 1921, Caterina Klemencich crossed into Italy from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (hereafter KSCS) at the new border station at Lanischie (Lanišće)<sup>1</sup> in northeastern Istria. Just after she crossed the border, the Italian police approached her. What followed became a matter of dispute. In October, Italian authorities in Zara (Zadar) forwarded a complaint to officials in Trieste, the capital city of the new Italian territory of Venezia Giulia, in which Klemencich alleged that she, a pregnant woman, had been ill-treated. She admitted to carrying contraband tobacco across the border, but protested the treatment she had received at the hands of the police, claiming that they had accosted her, thrown her to the ground, and treated her roughly in the process of arresting her and escorting her to the police barracks for interrogation. She named Neze Pirik as a witness to corroborate her story.

Police and civilian authorities in Trieste investigating her complaint concluded in their report that Klemencich's claims were false, and they noted that, if anything, Italian agents had acted with 'an excess of goodwill'. Klemencich had insulted the police, resisted their requests, and refused to accompany them to the barracks. In the face of her combative stance, they had acted with restraint – sequestered the 500 grams of tobacco she was smuggling, issued a verbal admonishment, and then released Klemencich in the custody of unknown persons. They should have arrested the woman, 'a foreign subject', and detained her until they collected security or bond adequate to insure payment of the fines she had incurred. The report further noted that in light of the discovery of the breach of proper procedure by the financial police precipitated by the filing of the complaint, the commander in Trieste had been forced to punish his subordinate in Lanischie, a man by the name of Di Stasio, for being overly lenient.

The report from Trieste also contained an affidavit from Neze Pirik, Klemencich's witness. An Italian subject from the village of Otalez (Otalež), Pirik testified that, on the July day in question, she had met Klemencich on a return trip to Italy after visiting her mother across the border. She affirmed that Klemencich was visibly pregnant and carried contraband tobacco. As Pirik described the encounter with the police, 'two border guards, in a kindly manner', invited the women to follow them to the police station. Klemencich 'refused, throwing herself to the ground, gesticulating wildly, and uttering incomprehensible Slovenian phrases'. Pirik reported, the border agents 'had not lost patience'. They

1 In keeping with the article's emphasis on the Italian perspective and reliance on Italian documents and for clarity's sake, place names and people's names appear in their Italian or Italianized versions. Slovene or Croatian names follow in parentheses the first time the name is used.

escorted the women ‘to the barracks in an appropriate manner’, and even promised Klemencich that they would give her back the tobacco she was carrying.<sup>2</sup>

The incident offers a glimpse of the interplay of social values, cultural norms, and gendered expectations in government interactions with citizens of diverse backgrounds in the wake of World War I. Public servants in the Adriatic provinces worked in an environment marked by contentious international negotiation, ethnic antagonism, and political conflict. Like officials throughout the lands of the former monarchy, they sought to navigate new legal frameworks, state requirements and border regulations in territories that for centuries had been internal cultural frontiers not borderlands separating independent states (Judson, 2013, 123). Borders hastily drawn at the cessation of hostilities in November 1918 reflected the circumstances of war, the realities of the Armistice and military occupation, and the effects of high-minded international principles of nation self-determination. They were not practical plans for territorial distribution and population resettlement. Successor states’ attempts to claim or reject populations on ethnic bases pitted them against one another.

The Klemencich border drama illustrates local officials’ frustration in efforts to classify individuals according to ethnic preferences or to sort them into ethno-nationalist states in an environment where more immediate concerns to restore the peacetime rhythms of politics, the economy, and cultural life drew their attention. While international negotiators and Italian politicians ‘imagined’ the new nation state,<sup>3</sup> Italian and KSCS bureaucrats acted in concert in local communities to administer new borders, establish viable legal networks, and promote stability along the new border. They faced the daunting task of trying to control migration, transmigration, and settlement in their efforts to police and protect populations stranded, or ‘caught in between’ (Ther, 2013) in new borderlands, governed by contradictory, ambiguous, and labyrinthine regulations.

The territorial conflicts, interstate rivalries, and ethnic engineering policies that evolved with the enforcement of the peace settlements have attracted considerable scholarly attention. In historical memory, the violence and uncertainties of this period are understood within the context of nation-states’ desires to legitimate claims to contested territories. The effects of the border delineation have been studied from the perspectives of international politics and economics as well as symbolic national significance. The effect of forcing individuals to make ethno-nationalist choices in formerly multi-ethnic areas has received less attention. The Peace transformed Pirik and Klemencich, like others across Europe, from local travelers to international migrants, traversing borders that never before existed and confronting legal systems that never before affected their lives. In the volatile atmosphere of south-central Adriatic Europe, heavy with the currents of ethnic suspicion, competition and mistrust, military occupation authorities and then, after July 1919, civilian bureaucrats in Venezia Giulia worked with officials in Rome to render judgments based on legal precedents, traditional practices and adaptation to new and evolving legal frameworks. Decisions made in Rome and Trieste demonstrated Italy’s

2 ACS-PCM, Ufficio centrale per le nuove provincie, 143.

3 ‘Imagined’ here derives from Benedict Anderson’s conception of ‘imagined communities’ (1983).

strategies adopted for Adriatic peoples and lands attached to the Italian state, but the contours of Italian struggles reflect more broadly on bureaucrats' efforts throughout the successor states to uphold juridical standards for statehood and sovereign territory, to define cultural expectations for nationhood, and to contain ethno-nationalist unrest in an era dominated by calls for the construction of exclusivist national communities.

## CROSSING THE BORDER

In the Klemencich case, the financial police's purported leniency stemmed from the desire to balance border security and regulation of interstate trade with needs to maintain order and calm in the interests of the local populations. Police stationed at the border regularly faced suspected smugglers or those trying to cross the border illegally. In a 1920 report, the Italian chargé d'affaires in Belgrade outlined the gravity of the situation, charging that the 'shortcomings of Italian border surveillance' were 'so well-known in Ljubljana' that many who had been denied Italian papers flouted the regulations, crossing the border into Italy with little difficulty especially 'on the frequent foggy days in the region'.<sup>4</sup>

Administrative tangles and confusion over jurisdiction further complicated problems associated with transmigration and repatriation. The American consul that had served as Italy's official representative in Trieste during the war remained the international conduit for requests to new civilian authorities, and after the war sought authorization to issue visas for those wishing to come into Venezia Giulia. Officials in Trieste forwarded the American request to the Central Office for the New Provinces in Rome. Rome responded that such a directive would have to be considered by the Foreign Ministry as the power to grant permission lay with officials dealing with international affairs not with civilian authorities responsible for administering the lands newly assigned to Italy.<sup>5</sup>

## REPATRIATION

Foreign Consuls (like the Americans) generally sought only to grant travel permissions and temporary visas not to assist those intending to return on a permanent basis. Repatriation, the most expedient means to secure legal return to Venezia Giulia, was up to the Italian government. Repatriation assumes return to one's *patria* or fatherland or a country for which one feels *patriotism*. After the war, migrant traffic flowed into and out of the new provinces assigned to Italy. Former Habsburg officials including railway officials, post and telegraph workers, and tax, finance, and customs agents stationed in the Adriatic provinces and their families found repatriation to Austria relatively easy as Italian and KSCS officials worked together to facilitate transport to Austria.<sup>6</sup> From 1919 to 1921, forty-three transports of railway workers and their families departed from the former Habsburg Littoral, most headed to Vienna or Graz (Purini, 2010, 47). Some 20.000

4 ACS-PCM, Ufficio centrale per le nuove provincie, 142.

5 ACS-PCM, Ufficio centrale per le nuove provincie, 141.

6 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

people, most attached to the naval port and facilities, quit Pola for Austria (Purini, 2010, 43). But those who had been in the territories assigned to Italy for decades, who had married in the Adriatic provinces, and raised children there were not always eager to relocate nor did they necessarily profess to German ethnic sentiments or feel an attachment to the new Austrian state. The experience of writer Claudio Magris's uncle attests to the fluidity of identity and migration in the Adriatic territories. An Austrian requisitions officer during the war, he remained to work with the Italian military and then civilian governments. Evidently his choice to stay in Trieste was pragmatic rather than nationalist because, on the Fascist takeover, he left for Vienna (Magris, 1989, 199).

While repatriation on the basis of ethno-cultural allegiance was consonant with broader international principles of national self-determination and calls to create national states, officials' decisions on the ground level could not be based on ethnic and nationalist considerations without regard to other factors. Scholars have explored questions related to transmigration in the Adriatic in the nineteenth-century Habsburg context (for example, D'Alessio, 2003; Monzali, 2004) and in the post-World War II and contemporary periods (for example, Ballinger, 2002; Marchis, 2005; Bahovec, Domej, 2006; Basso, 2010). But, these issues have been relatively overlooked for the World War I period. The historical amnesia may be related, at least in part, to the rise of the Fascist state and to the perpetration of the 'myth of ethnic homogeneity', which as Tony Kushner defined it in the English context, 'stresses the absence of past immigration and diversity' (Kushner, 2006, 21). In interwar Italy, Fascist ultra-nationalism absorbed immigrants into visions of assimilating *romanità* at the heart of Italian culture. In the Adriatic provinces during the first years after Italian takeover, authorities struggled to deal systematically and uniformly with those arriving in the territory. They singled out those who challenged the state, but assumed others would assimilate.

The Italian Foreign Ministry worked with the newly established Central Office for the New Provinces to control migrant traffic, but jurisdictions for the administration of border issues were far from clear. The Klemencich case, which dealt with only two members of the autochthonous population, involved two sovereign states including Italy and the KSCS; four Italian national entities including the Office of the New Provinces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the border guards, and the financial police; two territorial administrations at Trieste and Zara; and officials supporting the investigations in several localities including Valle Lanischie, Otalez, and others.

In the first months after the Armistice, among those who sought entry into Venezia Giulia were many natives or long-time residents who had fled their homes, been displaced by occupying troops, or interned by 'enemy' forces. Trieste experienced significant depopulation during the war with the population falling from approximately 250.000 on the eve of the war to an estimated 155.000 in 1916. By November 1919, the population had climbed back to 225.000 (Cecotti, 2001, 157) straining the city's resources and housing stocks severely diminished by the war. For Pola, estimates are that Habsburg officials evacuated 50.000 people or nearly half of the inhabitants over the course of 1914 and 1915 (De Menech, Santin, 2001, 216). Those who had fled to west across the war zone and into the Italian state had a relatively easy time returning to Venezia Giulia and the

Adriatic lands that had passed into Italian control (Purini, 2010, 36). While this relative ease of return has been attributed to the new authorities' ethno-nationalist prejudices and some cite the influx of 40.000 new immigrants from Italy into Venezia Giulia by 1921 as evidence of Italian prejudice, the migration reflected the realities of the new territorial arrangements. Some 25.000 of the returnees from Italy had been resident in the Adriatic provinces prior to the war and to return they no longer needed to cross an international border (Purini, 2010, 55).

Crossing the border into new Italian territory was more considerably more difficult than moving within the state's borders. Authorities in Venezia Giulia faced not only the difficulties associated with civilian transmigration, but with military transit as well. An American Red Cross representative described the situation in Trieste after the Armistice in dealing with Italian soldiers who had been Habsburg prisoners of war as 'one of the gravest Italy had to face' (Bakewell, 1920, 189). Estimates suggest that in November 1918 as many as 160.000 Italian soldiers transited through Trieste. In many cases, they were detained in hastily constructed camps in the port area to await transport to their homes (Purini, 2010, 35; Puissa, 2001, 185).

Italian authorities were leery of allowing captured Habsburg soldiers to return to the provinces assigned to Italy. Military and civilian authorities in Trieste drew distinctions between those born in the territories and those who had been resident in the territories but hailed originally from other parts of the Habsburg empire. This policy of differentiation on the basis of birthplace opened officials to criticism and set a standard for differentiating rights and privileges as well (Purini, 2010, 38–39). In the decades prior to the war, many Habsburg subjects born in the rural and interior lands of the Adriatic littoral had migrated to such coastal cities as Trieste. After the war, they faced considerable obstacles in returning to their homes now in Italy, separated from the lands of their birth by new international borders. Italian authorities' decision to distinguish those born from those legally resident took on an ethno-nationalist cast as it appeared designed to exclude Slovenes' and Croats' return.

In addition to those native or previously resident in the region, officials in Venezia Giulia contended with refugees or internees who flooded urban centers looking for work, individuals who traveled in the stream of those displaced throughout Europe in the 'era of refugees' following the war (Skran, 1995, 31–33). The population influx overwhelmed occupation authorities, and in February 1919, the military occupation government adopted stringent measures to stem the flow of refugees and returnees, particularly to Trieste and other population centers. Authorities not only denied entry to persons suspected of insurgent political tendencies, but also restricted return of those who were impoverished. While they expressed sympathy, they were unwilling to open the flood gates to those in strained circumstances or to those whose presence they deemed 'unnecessary' or not 'useful to the collectivity'.<sup>7</sup>

Those with financial means or who were well-connected faced fewer obstacles to return (Hametz, 2005, 114–117), and even foreign citizens with business interests in Trieste

7 AST-CGCVG, Affari Militari, – Ufficio Servizi Militari, 1919–1922, 41; AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

were welcomed back. Charalampos Ratopulo, a Greek citizen, returned to Trieste because officials judged him to ‘pose no political danger’. His business importing dried fruits and grapes furnished ‘little opportunity for smuggling’.<sup>8</sup> Being in the dried fruits business did not facilitate Ottoman citizen Virgilio Macerata’s return from Switzerland to Trieste. Born and raised in Trieste, Macerata had joined many wealthy families of Trieste seeking war-time refuge in Switzerland. He was married into a prominent Italian family and was related to the Italian Consul at Vienna. Macerata faced difficulties when Swiss agents linked him to Greek intermediaries who were purportedly smugglers working with shopkeepers.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, Macerata relied on his personal connections to secure his return to Trieste. Piero Purini suggests that well-to-do foreign merchants permitted to return to Trieste rapidly Italianized (voluntarily) after the war (Purini, 2010, 49), but in Macerata’s case the process of Italianization had begun at least a decade before. His Ottoman citizenship did not reflect his loyalties, and his associations with those in high echelons of the Italian government predated the war and perhaps stretched back to his birth in 1903. His father had obtained his Ottoman passport to enable him to evade Habsburg military service.<sup>10</sup>

For some, ethno-nationalist allegiances seemed an afterthought. Despite the prominent Economo family’s links to the former government, Italian authorities allowed Count Alessandro Economo to return to Trieste from Samobor near Zagreb in March 1919. The reporting official took a pragmatic approach to Economo’s petition. He noted that the Economos had ‘attached themselves to the Italian government’. He determined that Alessandro Economo was ‘politically innocuous’, and ‘above all eccentric’ and, he suggested, the Count ‘never occupies himself’ with politics.<sup>11</sup>

Evidence of anti-Italian or pro-Austrian sentiments directed against the government led to the rejection of petitions for return. But ethnic sympathies, understood as characteristic of autochthonous Slovene and Croat populations, did not seem to weigh in official judgments, despite evidence of rising popular sentiment against the ‘Slavic’ threat.<sup>12</sup> Francesco Bittner’s petition for repatriation was denied on the grounds that while he was in Trieste before the war he had demonstrated ‘hostility toward Italy’.<sup>13</sup> Francesco Lukovic’s request for repatriation to Pisino (Pazin), a predominantly Croatian town in central Istria, was denied because he was deemed ‘an avid Pan-Germanist (notwithstanding his Slavic nationality)’. Both ‘the Italian and Slavic populations’ of the town despised him as a ‘shady character’ who, after the Habsburg defeat, abandoned his post and made off with funds intended for the poor.<sup>14</sup> Officials in Capodistria (Koper) denied Raimondo di Fer-

8 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

9 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.

10 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35. According to the report, this strategy to avoid military service was common among second generation migrants from the Ottoman empire to Habsburg Trieste. As non-Muslims, they did not meet Ottoman military service requirements, and as Ottomans they were not called upon to serve the Habsburgs.

11 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.

12 The July 1920 attack on Narodni Dom, the Slovene National Home in Trieste is perhaps the best known incidence of violence in the period.

13 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.

14 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.



ro, formerly a Habsburg official in Portorose (Portorož), permission to repatriate on the grounds that he was hostile to Italians and as a Habsburg official had used every means at his disposal to harass Italians in the area.<sup>15</sup> Police in Trieste reported that Giovanni de Schram, a captain in the Habsburg army and prior to that an employee of Lloyd shipping lines, had ‘always demonstrated hostile sentiments toward Italy’. Authorities rejected his repatriation request despite his protestations that his mother was of a ‘pure Venetian’ family. In keeping with male-centered customs and traditions as well as the legal definitions for citizenship and statehood, they took note of his father’s Viennese ties and his anti-Italian sentiments.<sup>16</sup>

This decision in Schram’s case was characteristic of gendered repatriation decisions, which kept with gendered societal practice and juridical assumptions shared across the Adriatic and throughout Europe. Men bore responsibility for families, held legal power, and determined statehood and citizenship. Nella Blitznakoff-Veneziani, Bulgarian by birth, cited pro-Italian sentiments and her eldest child’s aid to families of Italian refugees to prove her loyalty to Italy. Officials paid little heed to her sentiments, repatriating her simply to ‘rejoin her husband’.<sup>17</sup> Engineer Francesco Sandri reunited his family in Trieste despite his wife Ella’s well-known pro-German sentiments. Officials dismissed her feelings as ‘not surprising’ given her German background and inconsequential in light of the family’s ‘proper conduct’ and Francesco’s Italian sentiments.<sup>18</sup>

Women’s requests that could be construed as within the bounds of traditional expectations for the care and comfort of their families often found favor with authorities. Officials routinely acceded to requests from women who sought to bring widowed mothers to live near them. For example, Giovanna Amalia Cerne received permission to bring her mother Giovanna Gombach Urabitz from Marburg in Austrian Styria.<sup>19</sup> Authorities also evinced particular sympathy for women separated from their husbands by the circumstances of war. Triestine officials asked Rome for a subsidy to pay the passage for an indigent Triestine woman stranded in Cairo whose husband had been interned in Malta and repatriated by the British. Officials in Rome paid for third class passage to Trieste, and while they noted that such acts should be taken ‘with the utmost caution’, they saw them as ‘indispensable’ in cases where a woman sought to rejoin her husband.<sup>20</sup> Reuniting families separated by war was a delicate and complex process, particularly when travel required crossing international borders. In July 1920, the Civil Commissioner in Pola (Pula) still sought the repatriation of seven children (born between 1906 and 1913) whose Croatian families were legal residents in towns that became part of Italian Venezia Giulia.<sup>21</sup> The reason for the delay in their repatriation was not given, but as the documents make clear, local authorities supported the childrens’ return to their families.

15 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.

16 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.

17 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 35.

18 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

19 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

20 ACS-PCM, Ufficio centrale per le nuove provincie, 142.

21 ACS-PCM, Ufficio centrale per le nuove provincie, 142.



In addition to gendered expectations, conservative religious traditions and family values came into play in repatriation decisions, particularly those relating to return to small towns. Giuseppina Sincic Caravaggio obtained a travel permit to visit her former home near Pirano (Piran) only after officials realized that she did not intend to reside there. An ‘acknowledged adulteress’, Sincic had borne a baby girl while her husband was at war. Authorities feared her return would ‘cause a disgusting scene between her and her husband’ that ‘would certainly have negative repercussions’ in such a small town.<sup>22</sup> In another case, Margherita Puchar (or Suchar, documents identify her as both) was refused repatriation ‘for the time being’. Authorities suspected her of harboring ‘Croatian sentiments’, but denied her petition on the grounds of immoral behavior in an illicit relationship with Luigi Pinetti, a poorly regarded Italian. Officials speculated that she might act as a spy.<sup>23</sup>

While transgression of religious and ethical values associated with Catholicism weighed against individuals seeking to enter Italy, authorities did not work with the Church as an institution or offer specific support to members of the clergy. Rather, the Italian authorities had a rather antagonistic relationship to the Church. When the Italians captured the northern Adriatic, they interned several local priests caught in the web of ethno-religious politics spun in the Adriatic before the war. Charges that priests were Austrophile and had sought to ‘slavicize’ Italians stretched back decades (Visintin, 2000, 123–132). At the end of 1919, the Vatican’s chief diplomat Cardinal Pietro Gasparri wrote Italy’s Head of Religious Affairs Carlo Monti asking that priests still interned be released and returned to their parishes. Italian authorities complied in releasing them but did not facilitate their return to their parishes. One released to Trieste was expressly prohibited from returning to Gimino (Žminj), his former parish. Another returned to Trieste under a cloud of suspicion linked to his alleged anti-Italianism and refusal to give communion to two students attending Italian school.<sup>24</sup>

## CITIZENSHIP

While military and civilian authorities in Trieste allowed many to repatriate and resume residence in the territories assigned to Italy, they could not grant full rights of citizenship. Determinations for citizenship relied on regulations based in the Paris Peace Treaties and subsequent international agreements. In the wake of the war, complicated treaty arrangements, population dislocation and intense ethno-political nationalism fostered the growth of political bureaucracies. Increased reliance on official papers to prove legal status led to the imposition of a ‘new passport regime’ throughout Europe and around the world. Italy had been at the forefront of prewar international documentation legislation with passage of a passport law in 1901. The measure ‘certified’ Italian emigrants before their departure in the hopes that US immigration authorities would be less inclined to turn Italians back after they landed in the United States (Torpey, 2000, 127). World War I transformed the

22 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

23 AST-CGCVG, Atti di gabinetto, 36.

24 ACS-PCM, Ufficio centrale per le nuove provincie, 143.

Italian passport from a document designed to facilitate travel to one used to regulate individuals' comings and goings at a time when Italy was particularly concerned with emigration of those eligible for military service (Torpey, 2000, 103–105).

Italy had also responded to the mass migration in the decades prior to World War I with measures passed in 1908 that redesigned citizenship laws to accommodate those who had emigrated and given up their citizenship but wished to return (Foerster, 1919, 486–487). From the mid-nineteenth century, notions of citizenship had been transforming throughout Europe, increasingly being redefined in ethnic terms.<sup>25</sup> The Habsburg government clung to territorial, political notions of citizenship, and after 1867, identified citizens as either Austrian or Hungarian, divided between the Cisleithan or Transleithan parts of the monarchy (see Phelps, 2008, 15). But, by the 1880s, citizenship in Europe was generally associated not only with ethnicity, but with culture and race as well (Fahrmeir, 2007, 89–121). After the war, the Italian state, like other successor states, sought to use citizenship as a means to engineer, control, and police its population.

In his January 1918 'Fourteen Points' speech, Woodrow Wilson called for 'readjustment of the frontiers of Italy [...] along clearly recognizable lines of nationality' and promised 'the peoples of Austria-Hungary [...] the freest opportunity to autonomous development' (Wilson, 1918). This idealistic agenda for peace offered little practical guidance for constructing state boundaries in the Adriatic provinces or for sorting populations displaced by war and buffeted by political change as the Italian state and the KSCS emerged to take control of the lands of the former Habsburg Adriatic littoral.

The provisions of the treaties of Saint Germain and Trianon established basic criteria for Austrian and Hungarian citizens to acquire Italian citizenship.<sup>26</sup> The peace treaties provided three paths to citizenship – automatic, by election, or by option. For the majority in Italy's new Adriatic provinces, citizenship came automatically by virtue of birth and official residence. The Treaty of Saint Germain allowed Italian officials to intervene in individual cases of particular concern, but for most population rolls provided by the localities served as the bases for automatic extension of citizenship.<sup>27</sup> Those born or resident in parts of the Habsburg Adriatic Littoral assigned to the KSCS who wished to be Italian citizens were permitted to *elect* Italian citizenship in a relatively simple declaratory process. The third path, the *option* outlined in both Saint Germain and Trianon, allowed those of Italian 'race and language' born in the monarchy but outside the borderland provinces to choose citizenship in Italy. Exercising this *option* required formal renunciation of foreign ties, an oath of loyalty, the ability to meet linguistic, residency, and/or property requirements, and, in some cases, the payment of a tax. In December 1920, the Italian government published legal guidelines to clarify the provisions contained in the treaties (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1921, no. 14, law no. 1890), but even

25 Joppke offers a useful historiography and typology of conceptions of citizenship (Joppke, 2010, 1–33).

26 Hungary and Italy did not share a border, but the presence of ethnic Italians in the Free State of Fiume (Rijeka), the former Hungarian port, and Gabriele D'Annunzio's seizure of the internationalized territory from September 1919 to November 1920 involved the powers directly in border and citizenship issues.

27 Reliance on the Habsburg records was not foolproof. In many rural areas, the clergy, known for their nationalist politics, maintained the population rolls, giving rise to claims of unfair or inaccurate reporting.

then, thousands fell through the administrative cracks or were caught in the interstices of international agreements.

The international legal world operated on notions of upholding the rights of citizens living in nation states. In the interwar period, citizens were understood to be men, over the age of 21, generally property owning and/or employed, literate, and who served in the military. The treaties' three-pronged approach, despite its specificity and complexity, failed to take into account the positions of many including women, minors, immigrants, those of illegitimate birth, children of immigrants, and some whose situation simply reflected the circumstances of life in the multi-ethnic empire.

Rules governing the acquisition of citizenship in the Adriatic were complicated, and even before the war, Hungarian and Austrian citizenship codes differed (Marin, 2013, 86). After the war, citizenship provisions were often misinterpreted by officials or misunderstood by individuals. Francesco Borcich, born in Trieste in 1903 had not reached the age of majority when the treaties came into effect, and so was bound to take his father's citizenship. Born in Perušić in Croatia but a long-time resident of Trieste, his father did not seek Italian citizenship, and became a KSCS citizen. Not realizing that by his father's action he too was a KSCS citizen, Borcich reported for Italian military service in 1923 with his peers in Trieste. He served honorably in the Italian forces for two years, nursing the mistaken assumption that this provided a road to Italian citizenship. But, the treaty provisions allowed for citizenship only for those who had served on Italy's behalf in World War I. This complication became a matter of international import and concern when KSCS authorities, having listed fathers and their dependent sons on citizenship rolls began to label young men who failed to present themselves for the KSCS draft as deserters.<sup>28</sup>

Valid citizenship papers were required to obtain pensions, secure property, or to travel to restore prewar lives. Yet, enforcement of the complex and tangled provisions was difficult. By 1922, Italian officials in Trieste reported that they had dealt with approximately 1000 cases relating to Austrian refusals to provide pensions to those who had elected Italian citizenship, and noted that the Italian government had become responsible for paying them.<sup>29</sup> Nor could the new states party to the treaties always agree on the interpretation of citizenship provisions. Women's political and social disadvantages under the law evident in wartime (see Belzer, 2010, 125–134) extended into the peace. For example, Italy and the KSCS differed in their interpretations of widows' status with respect to Article 82 of Saint Germain. According to Italian authorities, only women who were widowed after the treaty was concluded gained the citizenship status that their husbands were entitled to under the treaties. Those who were widowed before the treaty came into effect maintained the citizenship they held on the husband's death. Further questions arose with respect to women who were widowed between the Armistice and the conclusion of the treaties. The KSCS considered all widows as independent under the treaties.<sup>30</sup>

28 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3454. Eventually many in Borcich's situation were granted amnesty and became naturalized Italian citizens under the provisions of the 1912 laws.

29 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3454.

30 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3457. Discussion of the varying interpretations appears in

Even in cases where women considered themselves Italian and spoke Italian exclusively, acquisition of Italian citizenship could be tricky. Confusion worked to the advantage of Teresa Pertot, born in Lokve in September 1887 who became a citizen automatically. The official reading the population rolls assumed that her birthplace listed as Lokve was Crocera Loqua in Tarnova della Selva (Trnovo), a part of Gorizia assigned to Italy. In fact, she was born in Lokve in Senovo, a part of Styria assigned to the KSCS. She should have had to elect citizenship in Italy but received it automatically.<sup>31</sup> Giuseppina Maria Ritschl waited until 1925 to have her Italian citizenship affirmed. Born in Trieste in 1868, she married Gustavo Ritschl in November 1890 and separated legally from him in April 1891. Ritschl gave up his Austrian citizenship for Hungarian in 1903 and moved to Budapest. Under the Austrian law of 1863, separated women retained rights in the area in which they held them when the separation occurred. According to Italian law, separated women continued to follow their husband's citizenship.<sup>32</sup> Augusta Simpli Hinteregger was born in Gorizia in 1862. She married Thomas Hinteregger, a native of Gassen (Austria) assigned to a Habsburg post in Capodistria (Koper) where they both lived. In 1906, they separated. The woman born in Italian territory and living in territory transferred to Italy became an Austrian under Italian law and an Italian under Austrian law.<sup>33</sup>

Formulas in the treaties that determined citizenship based on place of birth, residence, and origin could not account for all individuals' cases, especially in the Adriatic provinces where on-going territorial conflicts meant that borders continued to shift well into the interwar period. For example, the Treaty of Rapallo of November 1920 affirmed Fiume's status as an international city but awarded Zara, several Dalmatian islands, and additional territories on the Adriatic coast to Italy, redrawing borderlines and forcing revaluations of citizenship eligibility.

Born on the island of Veglia (Krk), Maria Antonia Francovich moved to Trieste in 1885 and settled in the city permanently, marrying Guglielmo Illeberger. Illeberger died a Habsburg subject. Francovich Illeberger had been resident in Trieste for decades, spoke and knew only Italian, and had 'Italian sentiments'. Given her birthplace, she should have been able to apply for Italian citizenship. But, the political circumstances of Veglia made her citizenship application difficult. From 1918 to 1920, Italy claimed Veglia, which should have allowed her to elect Italian citizenship. In 1920, the Treaty of Rapallo assigned the island to the KSCS, after which Francovich would have had to opt for Italian citizenship. In the confusion, she failed to file any citizenship paperwork, and thus emerged stateless.<sup>34</sup>

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documents relating to the case of Antonia Mocnik. Article 82 reads, '[...]the status of a married woman will be governed by that of her husband, and the status of children under 18 years of age by that of their parents'.

31 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3457.

32 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3457.

33 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3455.

34 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3454. She then applied for naturalization under the Italian citizenship law of 1912, but was refused because she had left Veglia too many years earlier and could not get the required certification of estrangement from authorities there. Eventually she was granted special dispensation and welcomed as a naturalized Italian citizen in 1924.

The volatile political situation presented particular difficulties for those born or resident in Fiume. The Treaty of Saint Germain allowed for election of Italian citizenship in the Adriatic provinces, but as the Prefect in Trieste pointed out to the Italian Foreign Ministry, the Treaty of Trianon did not. Article 53 of Trianon enjoined Hungary to recognize the validity of future agreements that would determine the fate of the city and its inhabitants. Trianon's nationality clauses on birth (Article 61), residence (Article 63), and racial/linguistic preference (Article 64) allowed some former subjects of Hungary to opt for Italian citizenship, but did not specifically include Fiumians, as they did not constitute an ethnic or racial group in the monarchy. Technically, to exercise the option, those with rights in Fiume first had to qualify for and then renounce, depending on their particular circumstances, Fiumian or Hungarian citizenship to opt for Italian citizenship.<sup>35</sup>

The postwar treaties provided individuals a one-year grace period to sort out their citizenship status. At the grace period's expiry in July 1921, thousands of citizenship cases remained unresolved in the former Habsburg Adriatic provinces. In 1922, the Italian Ministry of the Interior established a Citizenship Commission to filter through files relating to the 'remnant' populations of the Habsburg monarchy. By 1926, the Commission had considered almost 10,000 cases. It rendered its decisions in the shadow of the rise of Fascism and with attention to the provisions of various agreements including the Paris and Rapallo Treaties, bi-lateral agreements between the KSCS and Italy including the Santa Margherita Accords of 1923 affecting those in Istria (Istra) and Dalmatia (Dalmacija), and the Rome Accords of 1924 pertaining to Fiume.<sup>36</sup> In the Adriatic borderlands assigned to Italy, the 'sorting' of Austrian and Hungarian citizens and their political transformation into Italians took nearly a decade, during which ideas of political citizenship based on territoriality gave way to national citizenship linked to ethnic, cultural, political, and sentimental ties.

## CONCLUSION

This analysis of the fallout of World War I in a small corner of the former Habsburg empire, the Adriatic provinces on the Italian side of the new border, points to broader aspects of international exchange, local accommodation, administrative leadership, and population adaptation that affected borderlands throughout the former monarchy and Europe. While international negotiators squabbled over the terms of the peace, local authorities faced myriad problems related to the resettlement of those affected by wartime disruptions and redistribution of populations and communities living in territories assigned to the successor states. In the years immediately following the war, local authorities sought pragmatic solutions to thorny problems related to the enforcement of new national regulations.

35 AST-PT, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 3455. See, for example, the case of Pasqua Cecconi. Italy recognized Fiumians' right to elect Italian citizenship in 1924 after the city was annexed and incorporated into Italy.

36 AST-PT, Affari generali, Ufficio Cittadinanza (1920–1936), 330.

The story of the Klemencich incident encapsulates the problems of the borderland and the clash between Italian requirements and local practice. Klemencich's complaint was filed in Zara, part of Italy for less than a year, and the territory which Klemencich thought held jurisdiction. It was forwarded to Trieste, assigned to Italy in the Treaty of Saint Germain. Triestine authorities identified Klemencich as a 'foreign subject', implying that she was a KSCS citizen. The Italian police were punished for treating her as one of many local women who crossed the border and not as an 'outsider'.

Klemencich's case points to the absurdity of trying to sort members of the local population according to their ethnicity, an absurdity that local authorities seemed to recognize despite nationalist pressures in the post-World War I years. The Triestine authorities' report implies that Klemencich was an ethnic Slovene, and her family name *Klemenčič* is associated with Slovenia, but Croats predominated in Zara where she filed the complaint. Her given name, at least the name recorded by the officials was Caterina, Italian in derivation. Klemencich had been in the company of Nezes Pirik, likely an ethnic Slovene as her village Otalez was in the Slovenian littoral and her name was Slovenian, but she was Italian citizen. She evidently spoke or understood Slovenian, but her primary language remained unclear. Pirik's name was not Italianized. What role Pirik's desire to remain a loyal citizen of Italy might have played in her statement to the Italian investigators remains a conjecture. She had not supported Klemencich's account but had not recounted the specifics of the slurs on the police either, calling the mutterings incomprehensible. Any assumption on Klemencich's part that the women were bound by a common ethnic association or experience had been misplaced. The police were certainly assured that the women had not acted in concert.

In the immediate postwar years, Italian authorities overwhelmed by the effects of the economic and refugee crises focused their attention on political stability and economic recovery rather than on ethnic and nationalist agendas. Assumptions regarding morality, social status, and allegiance informed by local traditions, gender, religion, and other influences guided them in decisions regarding repatriation and the recommendations for citizenship. Certainly ethnic and nationalist prejudices and antagonisms affected their judgment, but they did not manifest in concerted efforts or policies intended to disadvantage or persecute particular ethnic groups within the Italian state. The violence that erupted after the war was a symptom of instability and insecurity. It took on an ethnic cast and blossomed into ethnic violence and persecution when disappointed Italian nationalists and irredentists supported by Rome exploited local insecurities and paved the way for the rise of Fascism.



## NEGOTOVE DRŽAVE: REPATRIACIJA IN DRŽAVLJANSTVO NA SEVEROVZHODNEM JADRANU, 1918–1921

Maura E. HAMETZ

Univerza Old Dominion, Oddelek za zgodovino, BAL 8000 Norfolk, Virginia, USA 23529

e-mail: mhametz@odu.edu

### POVZETEK

*Članek raziskuje vpliv politike na jadransko prebivalstvo po prvi svetovni vojni, s poudarkom na italijanski vladni politiki in odnosu do prehodov meje, repatriacije in državljanstva v novih jadranskih provincah. Osredotoča se na dinamično obdobje od premirja novembra 1918 do uradne proslave priključitve k Italiji marca leta 1921.*

*Tržaški in rimski viri opisujejo dogodke civilnega prebivalstva v obdobju vojaške okupacije in civilne vlade, na podlagi katerih članek raziskuje odnos italijanskih uradnih oseb do prebivalcev novih obmejnih območij (migrantov in beguncev) v transformaciji od habsburških dežel multietničnega imperija do italijanskih provinc v nacionalistični državi. Raziskuje nestrinjanja glede nejasnosti in kontradikcij v Pariškem, Saint Germainskem in Trianonskem sporazumu. Osredotoča se na anomalije, ki so vplivale na prebivalce Trsta, Reke, Istre in Dalmacije. Sledi učinkom še vedno trajajočih mejnih sporov na Jadranu, reviziji in zjasnitvam glede odločb, ki se tičejo lokalnih zadev v Rapalski pogodbi iz leta 1920 v kontekstu izzivov iz ozadja, ki so povezani z ekonomskimi izpadi, političnimi nemiri in povečanjem etničnega nasilja.*

*Članek nakazuje, da so se lokalne oblasti med obdobjem od konca prve svetovne vojne do fašističnega prevzema leta 1922 v napetem etničnem ozračju, vzponu nacionalnega partikularizma, v okviru zatona imperijev in nastanku nacionalnih držav, bolj osredotočale na restavracijo ekonomske in politične stabilnosti kot na uradno promocijo nacionalističnih teženj, ki so iskale pragmatične rešitve kot odgovor poveljnim zahtevam. Vsakdanja vprašanja, povezana z migrantskimi, begunskimi in sanacijskimi krizami ter delavskimi nemiri, so se reševala v skladu s tradicionalnim socialnim redom, ki temelji na kulturnih, verskih, ekonomskih in spolnih pojmih, kakršne so upoštevali že birokrati nekdanjega habsburškega imperija. Spodletel jim je učinkovit odgovor na nacionalistične izzive in etnične ter kulturne predsodke, ki so se z novo srditostjo pojavili in širili zaradi nezadovoljstva, dezorganizacije in zmedenosti prebivalstva po prvi svetovni vojni, kar je spodbujalo lokalno podporo fašizmu na novih italijanskih obmejnih teritorijih.*

*Ključne besede: repatriacija, državljanstvo, Jadran, Trst, prva svetovna vojna, mejna območja*

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