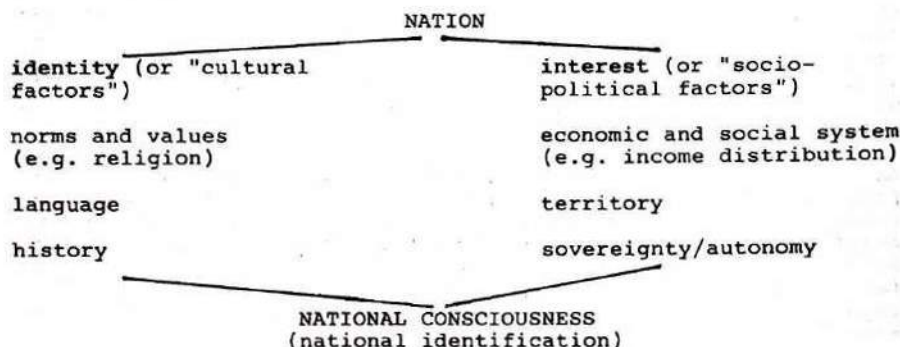


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IDENTITY AND INTEREST: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SLOVENES OF SOUTHERN CARINTHIA*

A number of authors have tried to define the concepts of nation, nationality, and also ethnic group by listing up to half a dozen criteria.¹ With this "lexical" method (so called by me because it is especially favored by lexicographers), the factor "national consciousness"/national self-identification is one factor among various others such as language, culture, history, territory, etc., although it has been observed: "The subjective factor of consciousness is the ultimate factor which eventually decides the issue of national identity."² But this method has not proved very fruitful. It cannot capture the real interdependence of the various dimensions forming a nation. A nation must always be considered a union of different classes (or strata) on the basis of common interests which lead to and reinforce a common (national) identity.



Identity and interest are the basic dimensions we have to analyze if we want to investigate a national identity. But are they actually independent factors? Could it not be possible to deduce one of them from the other: either interest from identity³ or identity from interest?⁴ The idea seems alluring because this would simplify the analysis very much. Moreover, it would provide us with a very simple and, one must admit, pacifying explanation of so many processes of ethnic and national assimilation we can find in all corners of the world. Indeed, several authors have tried to prove identity to be one aspect of the overall class situation. Michael Hechter has stated: "National development is a process which may be said to occur when the separate cultural identities of regions begin to lose social significance."⁵ He continues: "Cultural division of labour contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identification in the two

* Original: English

groups. Actors came to categorize themselves and others according to the range of roles each may be expected to play.... To the extent that social stratification in the periphery is based on observable cultural differences, there exists the probability that the disadvantaged group will, in time, reactively assert their own culture as equal, or superior, to that of the relatively advantaged core."⁶

Southern Carinthia would be a good example to prove or refute this hypothesis. There is a net cultural division of labour, as it is generally recognized, which I can show on the basis of recent census data, if one recognizes the mother tongue of persons belonging to the same group as the fundamental cultural trait. Unfortunately, things are not quite as simple as they appear to be. In Southern Carinthia it does not make any sense to use the term "mother tongue," if we analyze the division of labour along linguistic borderlines statistically. For the Slovene minority the census has the character of a plebiscite: They must "profess" themselves as Slovenes (or as German-speaking). So the language criteria can no longer be seen as a cultural factor - it is the conclusion of a political act of faith. Methodically we cannot survey the culturally distinctive function attributed to language (as mother-tongue) on the basis of census data; we can only consider the colloquial language a culturally important mark upon which a political decision has been made. But nevertheless we could draw far-reaching conclusions if we succeeded to gain statistical correlations between indices of socio-economic change (such as e.g. diminution of the agricultural sector) and the acceleration or the slowing down of the process of assimilation. Obviously, all cultural changes have political consequences and their parts are conditioned by political structures and events.

We are told that the Slovene minority of Carinthia assimilates and becomes "German" in a quite spontaneous and natural way. They have been farmers for many centuries. At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution the German-speaking population started to modernize their economy and society, while the Slovenes remained backward and stayed ancient farmers. This process is responsible for the accelerated diminution of the Slovene national (or ethnic?) minority - that is what we are told!

First: there can be no doubt that social and economic changes have an impact on the attitude, individual as well as national, of persons trying to be better off than they could do in the past. But this does not answer the question: Why should a German-speaking Carinthian do better than a Slovene?

Second: If it is true that the process of assimilation depends exclusively or largely on social developments and especially on changes in traditional sectors as it is considered to be predominantly in the primary sector (i.e. agriculture), there must be a straight correlation in the technical sense between the rates of changes in both areas.

Changes in (x) the rate of agricultural population to (y) changes in the rate of the Slovene population living in Carinthia:

1951-1961	r	r ²
54 communities in Southern Carinthia	0.27	0.07
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec (19 communities)	0.22	0.05
1961-1971		
52 communities in Southern Carinthia	-0.02	0.00
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec (17 communities)	0.01	0.00
1971-1981		
36 communities in Southern Carinthia	0.18	0.03
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec	0.52	0.27

(From 1951 to 1971 the so-called "Windischen" are included in the Slovene population; the figures for 1971-1981 include only those who have chosen the entry "Slowenisch" in the census, not including the "Windischen." The reason for this different calculation has been partly the diminishing number of Windischen and partly difficulties in selecting the data, the areas of the communities having been completely altered by the fusion of so many communities in this period.

Changes in the rate of population living in the secondary sector (Manufacturing, Construction, Energy) vs. the above changes:

1971-1981	r	r ²
36 communities in Southern Carinthia	0.23	0.05
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec (12 communities)	0.41	0.17

Changes in (x) the rate of population living in the tertiary sector (Services, Public Administration, Education, Banking, Communications) vs. the above changes (y):

1971-1981	r	r ²
36 communities of Southern Carinthia	0.09	0.01
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec (12 communities)	0.00	0.00

Multiple correlation: Changes in two sectors (X) (Primary and Secondary, primary and tertiary) to (y) changes in the rate of the Slovene population:

1971-1981	R _{S.-A-I}	R _{S.-A+D}
36 communities of Southern Carinthia	0.29	0.21
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec (12 communities)	0.58	0.55

We will verbalize this: from 1951 to 1961 there was a weak dependence in the assimilation on changes in the agricultural area. From 1961 to 1971 the dependence disappeared completely; it reappeared to a low degree from 1971 to 1981, but this time the correlation in the district of Völkermarkt/Velikovec was strengthened.

It must be noted that for the last 10 years we have not taken into account the total of all people who speak Slovene, but only those who have said they speak "Slovene," not including the "Windischen."

What does this imply? There is only a slight connection between the process of assimilation and socio-economic changes, if it exists at all! There is no such phenomenon as a spontaneous and "natural" assimilation on a large scale. If there is a problem or a crisis of modernization, this must be a problem not of the Slovene minority but of the German-speaking majority who does not want to tolerate a real and equitable participation of a socially active and culturally vivid minority marked by the use of another language.

Do not misunderstand me! Of course there is a problem of change within the minority. Of course the process of assimilation cannot be isolated from the structural changes in the economic system. The results from the Völkermarkt/Velikovec district show, for instance, that the political choice of Slovene as the colloquial language must follow two routes. The nationally conscious young and better educated people chose Slovene, but their increase in number is not sufficient to counterbalance the decrease in the number of farmers who "confess" to be Slovenes in this still largely agricultural district. On the other hand, there seems to be no preference of the blue collar workers either for the Slovene or for the German language. In the other districts with Slovene population the behaviour must be quite deviant because there seem to result correlations with other values and sometimes with other directions.

I would like to end with some remarks on the so-called "Windischen." The word was invented after the 1920 plebiscite as a political term serving to divide the minority into "good guys" and "bad guys" - the "Windischen" being the good ones, because they hold themselves to be "Germans" although they speak Slovene - it has become a storage for getting ripe for the definitive assimilation. Again we can prove this and the further development numerically for the district of Völkermarkt/Velikovec.

Changes in the rate of Slovenes (including "Windischen") (y) to percentage of "Slovenes" (without "Windischen") of the total Slovene population (including "Windischen"):

1951-1961	r	r ²
54 communities in Southern Carinthia	-0.27	0.07
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec (19 communities)	-0.79	0.48

1961-1971

52 communities in Southern Carinthia	-0.26	0.07
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec		
(17 communities)	0.16	0.03

1971-1981

36 communities in Southern Carinthia	0.03	0.00
District of Völkermarkt/Velikovec	0.13	0.02

We can observe the value diminish and finally disappear. The German nationalists who invented the term do not need this concept anymore. Nowadays they do not need good Slovenes, they want no Slovenes. The people who declared themselves "Windisch" in the 1981 census were those who had not succeeded in their assimilation. If we look at them from the structural viewpoint, they prove to be marginalized in a sharply marked manner. The real problem connected with the concept of the "Windischen" today - those whose origin is Slovene but who declare themselves to speak German only - therefore is not one of the 2,300 individuals in the census under the entry "Windisch" but one of 30,000 or 40,000 persons, as we can show by demographic surveys. But we cannot grasp them exactly in statistical terms, because they deny understanding Slovene. But the problem remains and is important both for themselves and for the Slovene minority as a group: Janizaries are always zealous to convince us of their new faith by attacking the old one.

Notes

1. See: Jaroslav Krecici and Vitezslav Velimsky, 1981, *Ethnic and Political Nations in Europe*, Croom-Helm, London; Philip L. White, 1985, "What is a Nationality?" in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationality*, Vol. XII, pp. 1-23; Charles R. Foster, (ed.), 1980, *Nations Without a State: Ethnic Minorities in Western Europe*, Praeger Publishers, New York. Examples for encyclopaedias: MEYERS *Grosses Universallexikon* in 15 Bänden, 1982, Bibliographisches Institut, Mannheim, Band 9, pp. 626-27; *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano*, 1958, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Roma, Vol. III, p. 268; *Grand Larousse encyclopédique*, 1963, Larousse, Paris, Tome 7e, p.676.

2. Kreici and Velimsky, p. 45

3. Henning Eichberg, *Nationale Identität. Entfremdung und nationale Frage in der Industriegesellschaft*, 1978, Langen-Müller, München.

4. See: Josef Strasser, *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, 1982, Junius, Wien, reprint; Tom Nairin, Eric Hobsbawm, Régis Debray, Michael Löwy, 1978, *Nationalismus und Marxismus. Anstoss zu einer notwendigen Debatte*, Rotbuch, Berlin; Orlando Patterson, "Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study," in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, (eds.), 1976, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 305-349: "Ethnic

loyalties reflect, and are maintained by, the underlying socioeconomic interest of group members" (p. 305); Sheila Allan, Christopher Smith, "Race and Ethnicity in Class Formation: A Comparison of Asian and West Indian Workers," in Frank Parkin, (ed.), 1974, *The Social Analysis of Class Structure*, Tavistock, pp. 39-53.

5. Michael Hechter, 1975, *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, University of California Press, Berkley, p.5; Robert J. Hind, 1984, "The Internal Colonial Concept," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, pp.543-568.

6. Hechter, 1975, pp. 9-10; Renaud Dulong, 1978, *Les régions, l'Etat et la société locale*, PUF, Paris.

7. Martin Wutte, *Kärntens Freiheitskampf, 1943*, Kärntner Forschungen I. Band I., Böhlau, Weimar; Ralf Unkart, Gerold Glantschnig, Alfred Ogris, 1984, *Zur Lage der Slowenen in Kärnten. Die Slowenische Volksgruppe und di Wahlkreiseinteilung 1979 - eine Dokumentation*, Verlag des Kärntner Landesarchives, Klagenfurt pp. 41-44.

8. Thomas M. Barker (with the collaboration of Andreas Moritsch), 1984, *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia, East European Monographs*, Columbia University Press, New York.