

GEOPOLITICAL AND ETHNIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE UPPER ADRIATIC BETWEEN CONFLICTS AND INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the process of geopolitical and demarcational transformations of the Upper Adriatic in the light of the relations between political and ethnic boundaries. Major or minor overlapping of social and cultural boundaries in the dealt with area triggered off some extensive demographic movements or changes in migration processes and courses as well as changes in the ethnic structure of the Upper Adriatic which were particularly intense in the first half of this century and led to a decline of ethnic components in traditionally mixed coastal towns, such as Trieste, Koper, Pula and Rijeka. The article is concluded with the author's expectation that the gradual suppression of the dominant role of political borders in the area of the Upper Adriatic will lead to a renewed evaluation of its traditional multicultural structure.

Key words: national borders, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the political transformations after the first and the second world war and to the conflicts arising from the solution of the so-called question of Trieste, the region of the Upper Adriatic has become an example of geopolitical handbooks and a real laboratory of contemporary geographic-political transformations. As such many professionals have been dealing with it tracing new political borders (See fig. 1), and studying the effects of the changes of the border on the borderland and its inhabitants. In the process of setting boundaries in this region, that reached its apotheosis in the first half of this century, and finished actually in 1991 with the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, also the evolution of the geographic-political attitude can be seen. An attitude that at the beginning had followed Ratzel's geopolitical principles, according to which the flexibility of defining borders shows directly the change in the power ratio between the countries, and later on it has taken into account to a greater extent modern integrative ideas about looking for harmony and elimination of international conflicts. Herewith I will try to trace an overview of the development of this so characteristic "contact" region with a special regard to the links between the

geopolitical and ethnic transformations in the Upper Adriatic.

THE PROCESS OF SETTING BORDERS IN THE UPPER ADRIATIC

The "modern" border in this region, this means the political border between territorially organized political units, originated at the beginning of the 16th century during the international treaty in Worms between the Republic of Venice and the Hapsburg Empire. Interestingly enough this border had undergone only a few changes until the first world war, and actually still represents the basis of the majority of the contemporary border between Italy and Slovenia. Its upper part, that according to the orographic principle coincides with the Alps, can be therefore set among the oldest and most stable boundaries in Europe. On the contrary, its southern, Adriatic, part, has undergone a different destiny characterized by instability. Here the historical border between Austria and Venice coincided again with a natural principle, this time a hydrographic one, following mainly the flows of Idrijca and Ansa on the west, so that the coast together with Grado and Monfalcone to the mouth of Timavo was ruled by the Republic of

Venice, as was the coast of Istra to the south of Muggia. Until the middle of the 18th century both countries had agreed that, as a means of rationalization and more precise definition of the territory, only the setting out of boundary markers on this territory was needed. At the time of Napoleon the new French rule used the same "natural" principles for drawing up borders. The border between the two political units under French rule, namely the Reign of Italy and the Illirian Province, followed the flow of Soča/Isonzo from its source to its mouth, and the watershed of Rateče, that became for the first time the marker of the national border. In spite of its "naturalness" the new border caused much discontent among the population living on both sides of the Soča river. After Napoleon's defeat Austria gained the entire northern Italy and the previous border with the Republic of Venice became an internal border and remained such until 1866, when the border between the previous Austrian Lombard-Venetian Reign and the District of Gorizia and Gradisca became an international border, namely between the new independent Reign of Italy and the Austrian Empire. This caused many disadvantages to the whole Friuli; the railway connection between Trieste and Venice, and between Udine and Tarvisio, in fact, slowed down. On the other hand, right at that moment, in spite of their "frontier" position both Gorizia and even more Trieste began to develop more intensively. The first one maintained even after the first world war its role of a regional centre, since the borders of the new region of Gorizia in Italy coincided mainly with the borders of the previous region of Gorizia in Austria. On the other hand Trieste, in spite of an increase in industrialisation, lost its role of the main port, which caused a slowdown in the demographic and urban growth that had characterized this town so far (Valussi, 1972).

After the second world war the upper part of the border between Italy and Yugoslavia was set again on the old historical border, based prevalently on the orographic principle. In order to trace the lower part of the contemporary border between Italy and Slovenia, a totally new criterion of "ethnic balance" was used, according to which a border should coincide as much as possible with the ethnic border, and at the same time would leave to both countries the same number of members of minority groups. This rose the problem of dividing traditionally rather persistent regions such as Gorizia and Istra together with Trieste (Klemenčič and Bufon, 1991). What regards Gorizia the new political border coincided rather consequently with the ethnic border between the Romance (Italian and Friulian) and Slovenian populations, in the sense that the ethnically mixed town of Gorizia and the transport connections the town needed with Trieste and Udine remained in Italy. In the case of Istra and Trieste the already mentioned principle of "ethnic balance" was used, since in this region the ethnic border between the Romance and Slavic (Croatian

and Slovenian) population is not straight nor proportional to the territory. The difficulty of drawing up boundaries in this territory is clear if we consider the fact that for the most problematic part of it, Trieste, a temporary solution was found while waiting for a more suitable agreement between the international powers and the local expectations. This was the so called Free Territory of Trieste divided into two zones. The zone including Trieste was ruled by the Anglo-Americans, whereas the zone including Istra was under the Yugoslav rule. This situation found finally a solution in 1954, when with a slight modification of the border, advantageous for Yugoslavia, the northern part of the Free Territory of Trieste, the one including Trieste itself, was left to Italy, while the southern part was left to Yugoslavia. The validity of this border was accepted, even though with smaller modifications, at the Treaty of Osimo in 1978. A new problem arose with the independence of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, when the so far republic boundary became an international border. At this point a more precise and more rational definition of the border on the ground was needed as it was on the sea, namely in the gulf of Piran; a problem not yet solved (Blake, 1993; Gosar and Klemenčič, 1994). It can be said that also this new border runs along the ethnic border between Croatian and Slovenian population, on which the border between the two republics was based in the period 1945-1954.

As we have seen the maritime zone of the Upper Adriatic offers an interesting example of interdependence between the political and ethnic border. Both of them can be even parallel or perpendicular to each other and they trace what we can call the ethno-political "cross" of Istra (Bufon, 1993a). Its vertical axe came into being between the 13th and the 15th century, when the Republic of Venice increased its power in Istra. In the second half of the 13th century it ruled the whole western and southern coast of the peninsula of Istra, while a major part of northern Istra became Venetian in the 15th century, when the Republic of Venice obtained the land of the patriarchs of Aquileia in Muggia, Buje, and Buzet. This vertical, traditionally political axe of the "cross" of Istra is everything but a straight line, its shape is that of an inverted S. The historical ethnic border on the Italian, or better Romance population, is straighter, it includes the contemporary Slovenian coast from Koper to Dragonja, where it heads inland to Motovun, and then through Višnjan it runs back to the coast to Poreč, Rovinj and Pula on the western coast of Istra, while on the eastern coast it includes the hinterlands of Labin, Opatija, Rijeka, and the Islands of Kvarner. As a consequence of the venetian "colonizing", or mercantile populating policy this ethnically Italian area is characterized by various ethnic islands not bonded to each other, made up by sea-towns and their immediate hinterlands, on the contrary it has a more cohesive shape

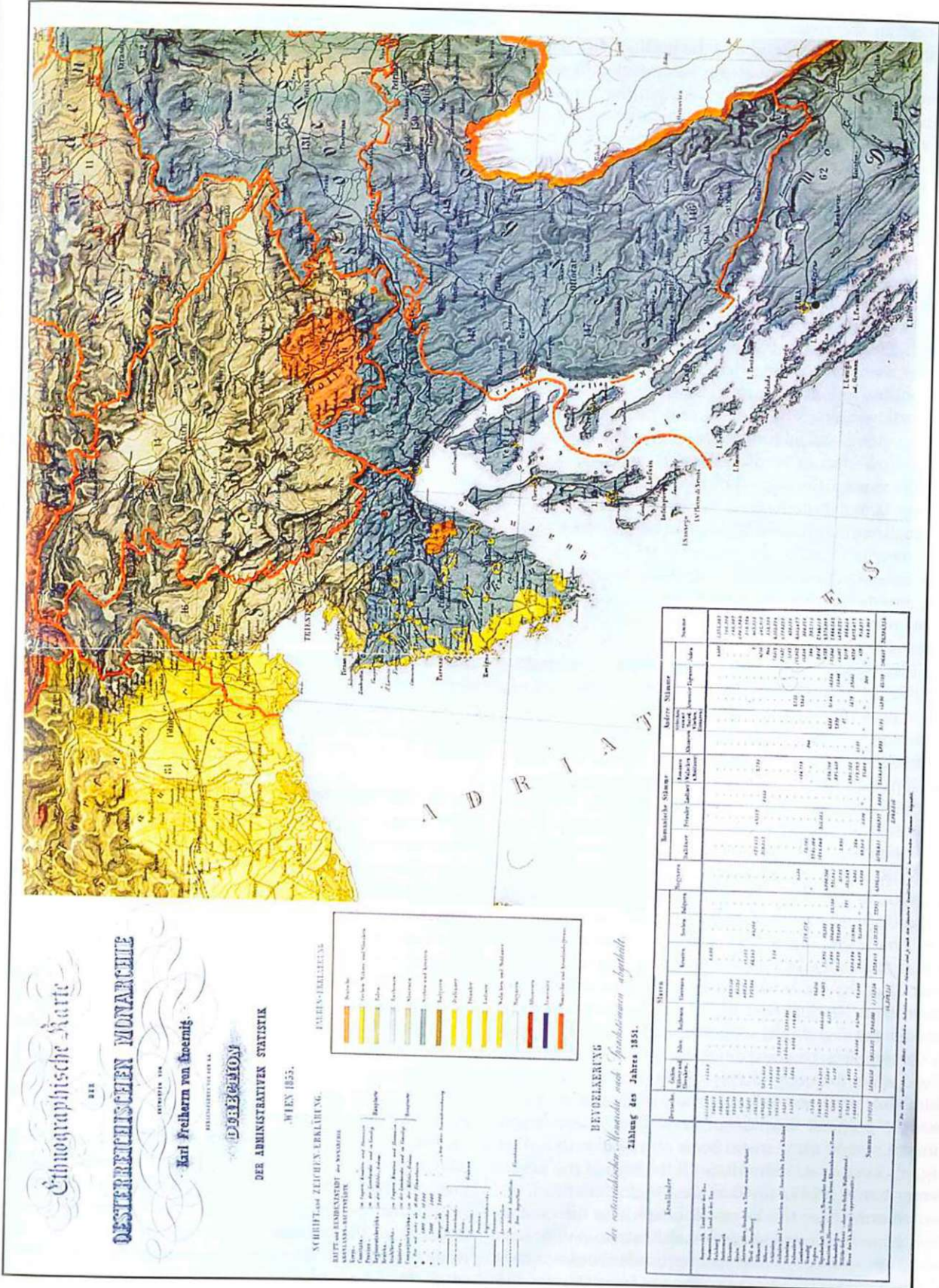


Fig. 1: Czoernig's ethnic map of the Upper Adriatic (Vienna, 1855).
Sl. 1: Czoernigova etnična karta zgornjega Jadrana (Dunaj, 1855).

only between the rivers of Dragonja and Mirna. Generally speaking it can be said that the traditionally Italian ethnic area in Istra comprises a greater part of western Istra, and that the ethnic border between the Romance and Slavic ethnic groups in this area runs along the nearly straight line between Koper and Pula.

More or less during the same period, this means between the 12th and the 15th century, also the horizontal axe of this interesting cross of Istra, namely the ethnic border between the Slovenian and the Croatian population, was shaped. Nevertheless this axe had not had until recently any political function. The Slovenian dense population in the area stopped at that time by the river of Dragonja and along the line north to Buzet and Rupa and it has not changed essentially any more. This is rather uncommon, since, as we have already seen, this ethnic border has never been politically sustained. At this regard one thing should be stressed, neither the vertical Romance-Slavic ethnic border nor the horizontal Croatian-Slovenian one have never represented a true "linguistic" border between the populations of Istra. All the three languages, in fact, and their dialects have flown one into the other and this has occurred not only in the towns but also on the countryside creating in the areas where the three ethnic groups have been living together, a particular dialect of Istra, that contains terms of the three different languages (See Fig. 2).

After the Republic of Venice collapsed in 1797 whole Istra was ruled by the Austrians, who annexed it to the Region of Kranjska. The previous political border in this region remained an administrative border, since western and southern Istra had a temporary provincial government in Koper. Also during the brief French rule (1805-1813) the former venetian Istra was an independent province with its headquarters in Trieste, whereas the rest of the peninsula was part of the Croatian Province with its headquarters in Karlovac. So the old border between Austria and Venice lost its role only after the annexation of Istra to Austria, when the whole peninsula became one administrative unit with its headquarters in Pazin. Istra became a region and the seat of its regional administration was in Poreč, and the captaincy was in Rovinj. Istra, however, remained an independent province, with its headquarters in Pula, also when ruled by Italy after the first world war. The use of ethnic principles in defining borders after the second world war showed again the contradiction of the traditional "cross" of Istra. In this sense Italy was very active in trying to revive the political function of its vertical axe. A slight influence of this axe can be seen also in the so called Morgan's Line, that, from 1945 till the end of the peace conferences in 1947, divided the Anglo-American occupation zone from the Yugoslav one within the controversial zone between the historical Austrian-Italian border and after the first world war set border between Italy and Yugoslavia. The Morgan's Line ran from Osposo to the

hills of Muggia and reached the sea at Debeli Rtič, dividing the frontier zone in two parts (A and B); the northern A zone included also the enclave of Pula. Its position, however, influenced also the French compromise border proposal, which suggested the creation of an intermediate, politically hybrid zone, namely the Free Territory of Trieste. The southern border of this area coincided with the Morgan's Line. With the end of the Free Territory of Trieste in 1954 also the political function of the vertical axe of the "cross" of Istra finished. Nearly the whole peninsula, in fact, was annexed to Yugoslavia, within this state the ethnic border between Croats and Slovenians acquired for the first time the status of an administrative border between republics, moreover, in 1991 it became also an international border. After a long period of vertical definition of borders in Istra, a new era started; that of horizontal definition of borders. This, however, sets a major part of the peninsula under the rule of one government, that of the newly constituted Croatian state.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEWLY SET BORDERS ON THE ETHNIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF THE UPPER ADRIATIC

All this border modifications that mainly took place in this century after a long period of geopolitical stability, have of course deeply influenced the ethnic structure of the Upper Adriatic. After the first world war, in fact, the Italian increasingly Fascist-like policy of assimilation caused that the traditionally ethnically mixed towns along the coast had to follow the new pattern of "ethnically pure" towns, in the sense of Italian ethnicity, and therewith become "città italianissime". This in particular was the case of Trieste, where after the census in 1910 30% of the population in the commune was Slovenian, whereas only ten years later this figure seemed to decrease at 8%. According to the analysis of Čermelj after the first world war about 100 thousand Slovenians left their homes in the ethnically mixed towns of the occupied territories (Čermelj, 1965). The political emigrants moved prevalently to Yugoslavia, whereas the economic ones moved both to South and North America. The political emigration of Slovenian population from Trieste had continued also after world war two, especially after the Yugoslav administration had to leave the town, whereas the economic emigration increased after the end of the Free Territory of Trieste and the annexation of Trieste to Italy.

The first two decades after the second world war were very dynamic and important for Trieste, in fact, even though the number of its inhabitants remained nearly the same (about 250 thousand inhabitants), the structure of the population changed deeply. In this period, according to the dominant estimations, about 50 to 60 thousand people immigrated from the areas that be-

came part of Yugoslavia, whereas on the other hand about 30 to 40 thousand people, among them many were Slovenians, left the town for economic reasons and moved prevalently to Australia. Also among the immigrants the ethnic structure was different: mostly they were Italians from Istra and Rijeka, but there were from the same areas also many Croats and Slovenes from different part of Slovenia, whose ideas were pro-western and who disagreed with the communist regime in the country. Generally speaking the change of the political boundaries and the annexation of the town to Italy influenced also the immigration flow towards Trieste and therewith also the territorial origins of the inhabitants of the town itself. From the comparison of the situation in 1910 and 1991 an increase of the people born in the town (from 49% to 62%) can be seen, this means a slowdown in the immigration dynamic, and indirectly also in the attractiveness of the town among the inhabitants of the inland. On the other hand, we can see also a different spatial orientation. Thus the percentage of people that immigrated to Trieste from Italy increased remarkably (from 11% to 17%) as it did the number of immigrants from Istra (from 8% to 14%), on the contrary the number of immigrants from western Slovenia decreased (from 12% to only 1%), as it did the number of the immigrants from the rest of Yugoslavia (from 10% to less than 1%), and from Austria too (from 5% to 0%). The only figure that remained nearly unchanged is that of the immigrants from Rijeka and Dalmatia (2%) and from other countries (3 to 4%).

	1910	1991
Trieste	49	62
Istra	8	14
Western Slovenia	12	1
Italy	11	17
Rijeka and Dalmatia	2	2
Former Yugoslavia	10	1
Austria	5	0
Other countries	3	4

Tab. 1: The change in the structure of the population of Trieste considering the birthplace, in 1910 and 1991 (in %).

Source: Author's analysis of statistical data.

Also the census figures regarding the ethnic structure of Istra show the importance of the political transformations on the ethnic and demographic situation of the area. According to the Austrian census in 1910 there were on the whole peninsula, except for Trieste and Rijeka, about 250 thousand inhabitants, 52% of them were Italians, 39% Croats, and 9% Slovenians, whereas according to the Italian census in 1921 there

were 265 thousand inhabitants and 66% of them were Italians, 24% Croats, and 9% Slovenians. Thus it seems that in a mere ten-year period the number of Italians increased for 50 thousand units, whereas the number of Croats decreased for 30 thousand units. It is clear that the cause of such a huge modification in this ethnic structure cannot be sought for only in the emigration flow of the native population and in the immigration of Italian colonisers and state employees. According to Schiffrier the figures of the real ethnic structure were rather distorted. His figures for the 1939, in fact, are the following: about 150 thousand Italians, 97 thousand Croats, 44 thousand Slovenians, and at least 28 thousand ethnically mixed inhabitants, and nearly 10 thousand inhabitants of other origins (Schiffrier, 1946). What is immediately clear from this analysis, besides the exaggerated number of Slovenians, is the difficulty of ethnic identification among the population. This can be seen in the big number of ethnically neutral inhabitants and in the author's opinion that the people living in north-west Istra between Dragonja and Limski Kanal speak a Croatian-Italian dialect, that cannot be said to be part of any of the two languages. Something similar was noticed by Rutar at the end of the last century (Rutar, 1896). All these difficulties of ethnic identification can be seen also in the post war census in 1948, that turned somehow upside down the statistics of 1921. Even though in this period the emigration of Italians from Istra began, this phenomenon was rather limited in the very first post-war years and therefore does not justify the figure that only 80 thousand Italians remained in Istra. Obviously many of them, who were included among the Italians twenty years before, changed more or less "voluntarily" their mind. The real "exodus" of the Italian population began after 1947 and lasted for a decade; until 1961 the number of Italians in Istra had decreased to 20 thousand units, this means that about 100 thousand native Italians, or one third of the whole population, had joined the emigration flow. This gap has been only partly filled with new immigrants from the rest of Yugoslavia. On the other side of the border the majority of the emigrants from Istra was settled in the area between Trieste and Monfalcone, the area which has been historically densely inhabited by the Slovenians. Thus a trend towards a "normalization" on both sides of the border is evident, which means that the political and ethnic border should coincide: the north-west coast of Trieste mainly inhabited by Slovenians should have become also from the ethnic point of view Italian, whereas the western coast of Istra inhabited by Italians should have become "Yugoslav".

The influence of "external" factors on ethnic identification and self-identification is also evident in the later movements of the Italian population in Istra. According to the statistics their number, in fact, had decreased until 1981 to only 13 thousand, on the contrary, in 1991,

when there was a big political and economic crisis in Yugoslavia, the number of Italians increased again to 21 thousand (Juri, 1991; Repolusk, 1990). Usually the biggest changes in ethnic structure occurred in the traditionally ethnically mixed urban centres, to which Italians, Slovenians, Croatians, and people of other origins had immigrated during the Austrian domain (Inštitut za narodnostna vprasanja, 1995). In this area a remarkable decrease in the German population, and in other more distant populations can be noticed, as it can be seen a decrease in the native population, depending on the nationality. Thus in Trieste a decrease in the Slovenian population can be seen and at the same time the Italian population, which has been traditionally the majority, has increased. In Koper, Pula, and Rijeka the formerly dominant Italians have withdrawn, and have been partly substituted by the local Slovenian or Croatian population, and by immigrants from the less developed regions and republics of former Yugoslavia (Društvena istraživanja, 1993; Gosar, 1993). For instance more than 30% of all the immigrants that have moved to Koper were from these areas.

		Italians	Slovenians	Croatians and other Yugoslav peoples	Germans and other peoples
Trieste	1910	64,7	24,8	1,0	9,5
Trst	1991*	84,0	10,0	3,0	3,0
Koper	1910	78,2	18,5	1,3	1,9
Capodistria	1991	2,2	82,4	15,4	-
Pula	1910	52,0	4,9	23,2	19,9
Pola	1991	8,1	1,9	88,0	2,0
Rijeka	1910	48,6	4,7	26,7	19,9
Fiume	1991	1,8	1,6	95,7	0,9

Tab. 2: The changes in the ethnic structure of some towns in the Upper Adriatic between 1910 and 1991 (in %).

*Estimation

Source: Bufon, 1992; Perselli, 1993.

The census figures, however, show prevalently trends in ethnic identification and the influences of the political situation, and they can be hardly useful in assessing the "real" dimension of the ethnic structure, considering that the ethnic minority groups often behave like "submerged" linguistic communities and the degree of their "visibility" depends primarily on the degree of social integration, that is to say on the protection measures. From more accurate surveys is evident that in Slovenian Istra only 73% of the Italian speaking population identify themselves as Italians, and in Croatia this figure is even smaller (Bogliun Debeljuh, 1989 and 1994; Milani Kruljac, 1990). This difference between the

objective and subjective ethnic identification occurs even to a greater extent among the Slovenians in Trieste, whose degree of formal protection is rather inferior; here only 40% of the people who can speak Slovenian or can understand it identify themselves explicitly as Slovenians (Bufon, 1991 and 1992).

CONCLUSION

The contemporary image of the Upper Adriatic from a political-geographic point of view is thus completely different from the past one. Ethnic-political transformations in this area have erased to many extents the formerly persistent ethnic borders, and even though cultural spaces have lost many of their traditional bearers they still influence the shape of the specific territorial identity, which can be seen in the people who have moved into these places from somewhere else. Moreover, the emigration of native peoples has widened the space of original regional identity and has been influencing the forms of spatial bonds within a wider regional context (Klemenčič, 1993). In this way especially the bonds between Trieste and Istra have become stronger, since in Trieste and its neighbourhood lives the majority of the Istrian native Italians, who are still very bonded to their land of origin. As a consequence of this, Trieste is becoming, in spite of the two borders that separate it from the rest of Istra, the new "Caput Istriae", and it is likely that this function will become even stronger in the future, since Istra is devoid of a specific regional centre. Considering that contemporary processes of integration follow the principle of "unity in diversity", it is likely that Trieste can assume again its regional function in this area, on condition that at the same time its multicultural tradition is revived (Minghi, 1994).

It is a common rule for all "new" borderlands that after the elimination of political and ideological hindrances, they are the most receptive to new forms of integration between the two neighbouring countries (Bufon, 1994 and 1996). This search for a wider co-operation derives from the process of overcoming the conflicts caused by the division of traditionally homogeneous administrative, social, economic and cultural spaces, and it is becoming quite evident also in the case of the "three-border" area of Trieste and Istra (Sanguin, 1996; Zupancic and Repolusk, 1995). "Old" borders - and the northern part of the current Italo-Slovene border is a good example of this - are based, in fact, on the "old" concepts of defining borders, that coincide with the so called natural, usually orographic, boundaries, whereas the "new" borders often penetrate in urban and densely populated areas, where the communication among the inhabitants used to be intense (Bufon, 1993b; Klemenčič and Bufon, 1994). Upper Adriatic remains therefore a very interesting area subject to continuous

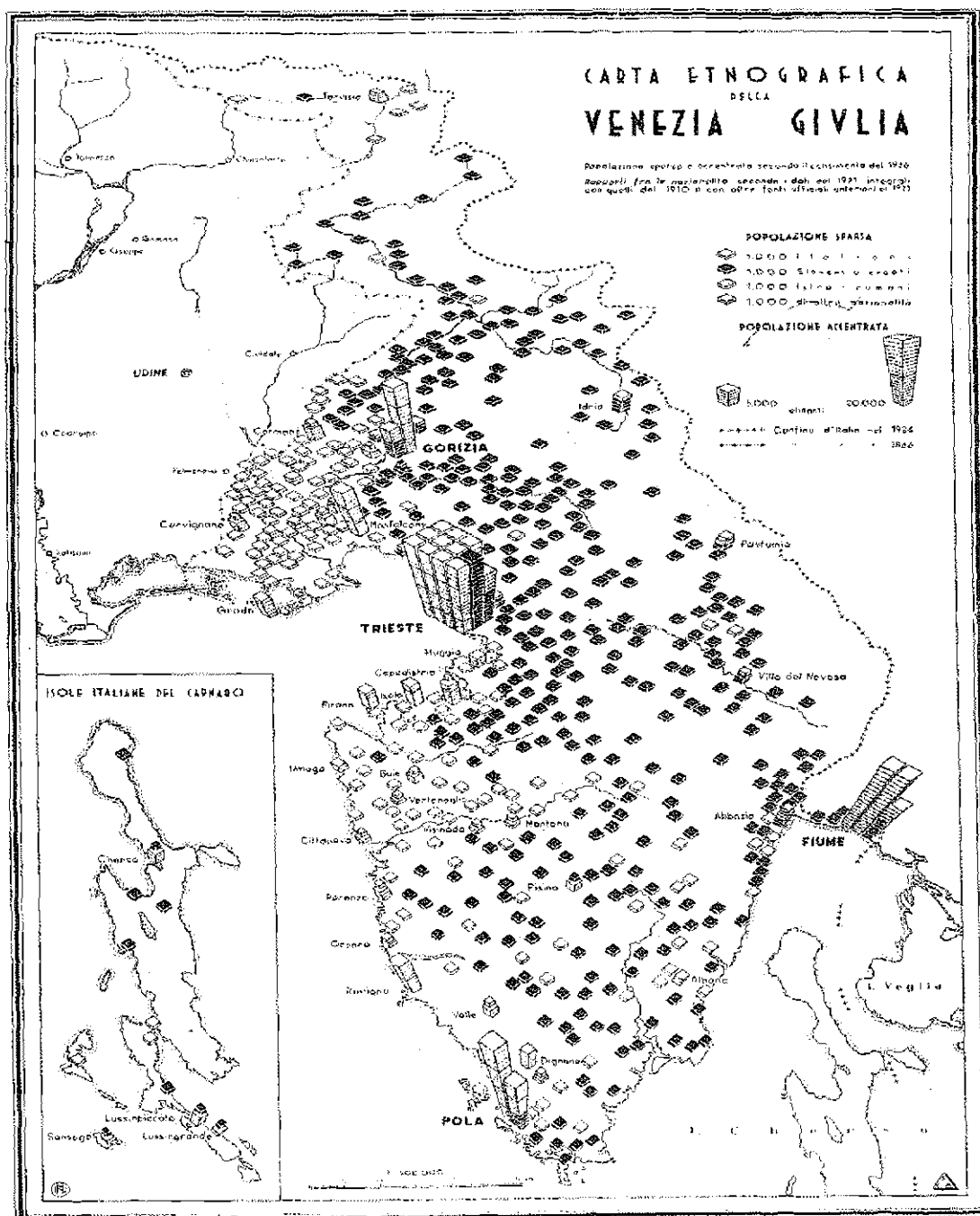


Fig. 3: Schiffrer's ethnic map of the Upper Adriatic (1946)(Cartes).
 Sl. 3: Schiffrerjeva etnična karta zgornjega Jadrana (1946).

geopolitical transformations. Since this area is now divided into three states it is becoming a new and special kind of European borderland or "Euro-region", which will surely become a studying subject for many scholars of its social and spatial problems. Moreover this area should be considered by the interested countries in the

sense that it should remain an area of international and multiethnic integration and co-operation also in the future. Its history proves, in fact, that it is typical for Upper Adriatic that it is much more difficult to divide it than to bond it together.

GEOPOLITIČNE IN ETNIČNE TRANSFORMACIJE V ZGORNJEM JADRANU MED KONFLIKTI IN INTEGRACIJSKIMI PERSPEKTIVAMI

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POVZETEK

Območje zgornjega Jadrana se je spričo političnih transformacij po prvi in drugi svetovni vojni ter konfliktov, ki so nastali okoli geopolitičnega razreševanja tako imenovanega tržaškega vprašanja, uveljavilo kot solski primer in hkrati pravcati laboratorij sodobnih politično-geografskih transformacij in kot tako zaposlovalo številne strokovnjake za trasiranje novih političnih meja ter proučevalce učinkov spreminjanja mejne črte na obmejni prostor in njegovo prebivalstvo. V razmejitvenem procesu tega območja, ki je doživel vrhunec v prvi polovici tega stoletja, zaključil pa se je z osamosvojitvijo Slovenije in Hrvaške leta 1991, je na ta način mogoče razbrati tudi razvoj politično-geografskega pristopa, ki se je sprva oklepal Ratzelovih geopolitičnih načel, po katerih elastičnost v političnem razmejevanju neposredno izraža spremembe v razmerju moči med državami, nato pa vse bolj osvajal sodobna integrativna načela v iskanju harmonije in pri odstranjevanju mednarodnih konfliktov. Pričujoči prispevek želi podati nek pregled razvoja tega tako značilnega "kontaktnega" prostora s posebnim ozirom na povezave med geopolitičnimi in etničnimi transformacijami v zgornjem Jadranu.

Na razvoj sedanje slovensko-italijanske meje sta vplivali predvsem historična meja med Italijo in Beneško republiko oziroma kraljevino Italijo, ki je ostala skorajda nespremenjena od začetka 16. stoletja do prve svetovne vojne, ter po njej nastala nova meja med kraljevinama Italijo in Jugoslavijo. Pri tem je pomembno, da nova meja ni globlje posegla v administrativno in gravitacijsko strukturo ozemlja med historično in novo mejo, saj je slednje v bistvu ohranilo skorajda isto upravno razdelitev, kakršna je tu obstajala za časa Avstrije.

Po drugi svetovni vojni se je zgornji odsek meje med Italijo in Jugoslavijo spet povrnil na staro zgodovinsko mejo, ki se v glavnem naslanja na orografski princip, medtem ko je bil za spodnji del sedanje slovensko-italijanske meje prevzet povsem nov kriterij "etničnega ravnovesja", po katerem naj bi meja čim bolj sledila etnični meji, hkrati pa prepuščala obema državam približno isto število pripadnikov manjšin. S tem se je pojavilo vprašanje delitve tradicionalno dokaj persistentnih deželnih enot, kakršni sta Goriška in Istra s Trstom. V prvem primeru je nova politična meja še najbolj dosledno sledila etnični meji med romanskim (furlanskim in italijanskim) ter slovenskim prebivalstvom, s tem da so etnično mešano mesto Gorica ter za njene povezave s Trstom in Vidmom potrebne prometnice ostale v Italiji, v drugem primeru pa je bil uporabljen že omenjeni princip etničnega ravnovesja, saj na tem območju etnična meja med romanskim in slovanskim (slovenskim in hrvaškim) prebivalstvom poteka veliko manj premočrtno in teritorialno enakomerno.

Še posebno maritimno območje zgornjega Jadrana nudi zanimiv primer soodvisnosti med etnično in politično mejo. Obe namreč lahko potekata bodisi pravokotno kot vzporedno druga z drugo in oblikujeta to, kar bi lahko imenovali istrski etno-politični "križ". Navpični krak tega križa tvorita historična meja med Beneško republiko in Avstrijo ter etnična meja med romanskim in slovanskim prebivalstvom, vodoravni krak pa etnična meja med slovenskim in hrvaškim prebivalstvom, ki je šele po drugi svetovni vojni prevzela vlogo administrativne meje med slovensko in hrvaško republiko ter naposled z letom 1991 tudi politične meje med novima državama. Po dolgotrajnem obdobju vertikalne razmejitve se je s tem za Istro začelo povsem novo obdobje uveljavljanja horizontalne meje, ki pa resnici na ljubo vendarle pušča večji del polotoka le eni strani, in sicer novi hrvaški državi.

Vse te razmejitvene spremembe, do katerih je prišlo zlasti v tem stoletju po dolgotrajnem obdobju geopolitične stabilnosti, so seveda močno vplivale na etnično strukturo zgornjejadranskega prostora. Tako je po prvi svetovni vojni italijanska vse bolj izrazito fašistoidna asimilacijska politika povzročila, da so se tradicionalno etnično mešana mesta ob slovensko-italijanski etnični meji morala podrediti novemu vzorcu "etnično čistih", se pravi povsem italijanskih okolij in prevzeti s tem naziv "citta' italianissime". To je veljalo še posebej za Trst, kjer po popisu iz leta 1910 izhaja, da predstavljajo Slovenci 30% vsega prebivalstva v občini, medtem ko naj bi le deset let kasneje delež v občini živečih Slovencev upadel na samo 8%. Tudi po ocenah za čas po drugi svetovni vojni izhaja, da slovensko prebivalstvo po kriteriju avtoidentifikacije ne presega 10% skupnega tržaškega prebivalstva, kar naj bi kazalo na to, da se je asimilacijski politiki stalnega prebivalstva pridružilo tudi izseljevanje v Trstu živečih Slovencev. Po Čermeljevi oceni naj bi se tako s celotnega po prvi svetovni vojni zasedenega ozemlja izselilo okrog 100 tisoč Slovencev, večinoma ravno iz večjih etnično mešanih mest; politična emigracija je bila usmerjena predvsem v Jugoslavijo, ekonomska pa v severno in južno Ameriko. Politično izseljevanje predvsem slovenskega prebivalstva se je iz Trsta nadaljevalo tudi po drugi svetovni vojni, zlasti potem, ko se je bila iz mesta prisiljena umakniti

Jugoslovanska oblast, medtem ko se je ekonomska emigracija še posebno okrepila po odpravi Svobodnega tržaškega ozemlja in priključitvi mesta k Italiji.

Prvi dve povojni desetletji sta bili za Trst še posebno dinamični in pomembni, saj se je kljub temu, da se število prebivalcev v mestu skorajda ni spremenilo (obsegalo je okrog 250 tisoč oseb), povsem ali v dobršni meri spremenila struktura njegovega prebivalstva. V tem času se je v Trst po prevladujočih ocenah naselilo zaradi ekonomskih in političnih motivov med 50 in 60 tisoč oseb z območij, ki so prešla k Jugoslaviji, hkrati pa je mesto, predvsem zaradi ekonomskih motivov, zapustilo okrog 30 do 40 tisoč oseb, med temi nadpovprečno veliko Slovencev, ki so povečini emigrirali v Avstralijo. Tudi med priseljenimi je bila etnična struktura različna: prevladovali so Italijani iz Istre in Reke, precej pa je bilo tudi Hrvatov z istega območja ter prozahodno in katoliško usmerjenih Slovencev, ki so nasprotovali novemu komunističnemu režimu v državi.

V splošnem je sprememba političnih meja in priključitev mesta Italiji vplivala tudi na priseljitvene smeri v Trst in s tem na teritorialno izvornost tržaškega prebivalstva. Primerjava stanj v letih 1910 in 1990 izdaja po eni strani povečan delež oseb, ki so se v mestu rodile (z 49% na 62%), kar izraža zmanjšano selitveno dinamiko in posredno torej privlačnost, ki jo ima Trst v širšem regionalnem okolju, po drugi strani pa drugačno prostorsko orientacijo. Tako se je značilno povečal delež oseb, ki so se v Trst priselile iz Italije (z 11% na 17%) ter iz Istre (z 8% na 14%), zmanjšal pa delež priseljencev iz zahodne Slovenije (z 12% na samo 1%), s preostalimi območji nekdanje Jugoslavije (z 10% na manj kot 1%) in iz Avstrije (s 5% na 0%). Bolj ali manj nespremenjen je ostal edinole delež priseljencev z Reke in iz Dalmacije (2%) ter drugih držav (3 do 4%).

Tudi v Istri nam popisni podatki po narodnosti izdajajo, kako velik vpliv so imele politične transformacije na etnično in demografsko sestavo območja. Po avstrijskem popisu iz leta 1910 je tedaj živelo na celotnem polotoku brez Trsta in Reke okrog 250 tisoč oseb, od tega 52% Italijanov, 39% Hrvatov in 9% Slovencev, medtem ko naj bi po italijanskem popisu iz leta 1921 na skupno manj kot 265 tisoč oseb delež Italijanov znašal 66%, Hrvatov 24% in Slovencev 9%. V absolutnem pogledu naj bi torej v pičlih desetih letih število Italijanov poraslo za skorajda 50 tisoč enot, število Hrvatov pa zmanjšalo za več kot 30 tisoč enot. Očitno tako obsežnih premikov tukajšnje etnične sestave v tako kratkem času ne moremo pripisati le izselitvenim tokovom avtohtonega prebivalstva in priseljevanju italijanskih kolonov ali državnih uslužbencev. Po Schiffrerjevem mnenju je šlo za precejšnja izkrivljanja dejanske etnične strukture, ki jo je sam za leto 1939 ocenil takole: okoli 150 tisoč Italijanov, 97 tisoč Hrvatov, 44 tisoč Slovencev ter vsaj 28 tisoč etnično mešanih prebivalcev ob skoraj 10 tisoč osebah drugih narodnosti. Kar lahko tudi iz te analize takoj razberemo, je poleg pretirane ocene za slovensko etnično skupino predvsem izredno težavno etnično opredeljevanje istrskega prebivalstva, ki se izraža v zelo velikem številu etnično neopredeljenih ter v avtorjevi trditvi, da govore prebivalci severozahodnega dela Istre med Dragonjo in Limskim kanalom hrvaško-italijansko narečje, ki ga ni mogoče pripisati ne eni ne drugi jezikovni skupini. Podobna opažanja je pred njim za Istro podal tudi Rutar ob koncu prejšnjega stoletja. Vse te težave etnične identifikacije je mogoče razbrati tudi v povojnem popisu iz leta 1948, ki je nekako obrnil na glavo podobo iz leta 1921. Ne glede na to, da se je v tem času že začelo izseljevanje italijanskega prebivalstva z istrskega polotoka, pa je ostal ta fenomen v prvih povojnih letih vendarle še omejen in ne opravičuje podatka, da je število istrskih Italijanov upadlo na samo 80 tisoč oseb. Očitno je velik del tistih, ki so jih pred dvajsetimi leti vključili v italijansko etnično skupino, bolj ali manj "prostovoljno" prestopil v nasprotni labor. Resnični "eksodus" italijanskega prebivalstva se je začel po letu 1947 in trajal dobro desetletje: do leta 1961 je število Italijanov v celotni jugoslovanski Istri padel na 20 tisoč oseb, kar pomeni, da je znašal odliv tega avtohtonega prebivalstva iz same Istre približno 100 tisoč oseb, kar je pomenilo več kot tretjino vsega prebivalstva in katere so le deloma nadomestili priseljenci z drugih območij Jugoslavije. Na drugi strani so večji del teh izseljencev na italijanski strani namestili v pasu med Trstom in Tržičem, se pravi v območje, ki ga je dotlej kompaktno naseljevalo slovensko prebivalstvo. Očitna je torej tendenca po določeni "normalizaciji" na obeh straneh meje oziroma prilagajanju etnične karte tega območja politični: s Slovenci pretežno poseljena obala severozahodno od Trsta naj bi postala tudi v etničnem pogledu italijanska, z italijansko govorečim prebivalstvom naseljena zahodna istrska obala pa vse bolj "jugoslovanska".

Vpliv "zunanjih" faktorjev pri etničnem opredeljevanju in samoopredeljevanju je lepo razviden tudi iz kasnejšega gibanja italijanskega prebivalstva v Istri, saj se je glede na popisne podatke njihovo število do leta 1981 zmanjšalo na samo 13 tisoč oseb, leta 1991, ob porastu politične in ekonomske krize v Jugoslaviji, pa se ponovno povečalo na 21 tisoč oseb. Na splošno so največje spremembe v etnični strukturi doživela tradicionalno etnično mešana urbana središča, v katera so se za časa Avstrije priseljevali tako Italijani, Slovenci in Hrvati kot osebe drugih narodnosti. V teh okoljih je opaziti ne le znaten upad Nemcev in prebivalcev drugih, bolj oddaljenih narodov, temveč tudi samega avtohtonega prebivalstva, odvisno od državne pripadnosti. Tako je v Trstu zaznaven upad Slovencev ob nadaljnjem porastu sicer tradicionalno večinskega italijanskega prebivalstva, v Koprju, Pulju in na Reki pa množičen umik nekdanj dominantnih Italijanov, katere je delno nadomestilo lokalno slovensko oziroma hrvaško prebivalstvo, v dobršni meri pa tudi priseljeno prebivalstvo iz manj razvitih območij nekdanje Jugoslavije. S teh območij je na

primer v Koper dospelo kar 31% vseh v mesto priseljenih prebivalcev.

Današnja podoba zgornjega Jadrana je iz politično-geografskega zornega kota torej bistveno drugačna kot je bila v preteklosti. Etnično-politične transformacije tega območja so v marsikaterem pogledu zabrisale nekdanje persistentne etnične meje, čeprav kulturni prostori, ki so izgubili dober del svojih tradicionalnih nosilcev, kljub vsemu ohranjajo precejšen vpliv na oblikovanje specifične teritorialne identitete, kar se zrcali celo pri osebah, ki so se v te prostore naselili od drugod. Poleg tega se je z emigracijo avtohtonega prebivalstva izvorna regionalna identiteta prostorsko močno razširila in vpliva na oblike prostorske povezanosti širšega regionalnega okolja. Še posebno so se na ta način okrepile vezi med Trstom in Istro, saj je v Trstu in njegovi okolici koncentrirana večina italijansko opredeljenega prebivalstva Istre, ki ostaja še vedno tesno navezano na lastno izvorno ozemlje. V tej luči postaja Trst, kljub dvojni meji, ki ga ločuje od svojega istrskega zaledja, v nekem smislu novi "Caput Istriae" in bo to svojo vlogo v prihodnosti predvidoma še okrepil, saj istrsko območje ne razpolaga z izrazitejšim regionalnim središčem. Ker pa potekajo sodobni integrativni procesi po načelu "povezanosti v različnosti", pomeni, da bo Trst lahko ponovno uveljavil svojo regionalno funkcijo le v kombinaciji s sočasnim ovrednotenjem svoje tradicionalne večkulture podobe.

Kot pri vseh "novih" obmejnih območjih, je tudi za tržaško-istrski prostor veljavno pravilo, da so po odpravi političnih ali ideoloških zadržkov, prav ta najbolj dovzetna za prekomejno integracijo, saj izvira ta potreba po večjem sodelovanju ravno v preraščanju konfliktov, ki jih je povzročila delitev tradicionalno homogenih upravnih, družbenih, ekonomskih in kulturnih prostorov. "Stare" meje, kakor dokazuje tudi zgornjejadransko območje, namreč temeljijo na "starih" razmejitvenih konceptih, ki so sledili tako imenovanim naravnim, povečini orografskim črtam, medtem ko so se "nove" meje velikokrat zarezale v urbanizirana in gosteje poseljena območja, v katerih je prebivalstvo med seboj intenzivno komuniciralo. Zgornji jadranski prostor ostaja tako izredno zanimivo območje v nenehni geopolitični transformaciji. Ker si to območje delijo sedaj tri samostojne države, se obenem vse bolj uveljavlja kot nov in poseben tip evropskega obmejnega območja, ki bo nedvomno še zaposloval številne raziskovalce njegovih družbenih in prostorskih problemov, zasluži pa si tudi ustrezno pozornost pri vseh zainteresiranih državah, zato da bo ostalo ali postalo v hodoče še izrazitejše območje mednarodne in medetnične integracije in sodelovanja, saj nam je njegova zgodovina pokazala, da je značilnost zgornjega Jadrana ravno v tem, da ga je veliko težje deliti kot pa povezovati.

Ključne besede: državne meje, Italija, Slovenija, Hrvaška

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