

HISTORICAL CONSTANTS IN POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE ALPE-ADRIA AREA

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Ever since the French Revolution the ghost of nationalism has haunted the fields of Europe. It was in the year of revolutions, 1848, that its political virulence first made itself felt in the Habsburg Empire, marking the beginning of a development which finally ended in the dissolution of the Habsburg State. What the Czech historian and politician Palacký predicted already about the middle of the nineteenth century finally became a reality: the monarchy on the Danube proved incapable of fulfilling its task as the central state in Europe, which was to assist the many smaller nationalities in their social, political and economic emancipation from German and Hungarian claims to power. As a result the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy disintegrated into a group of national states, which became the helpless victims of the imperialistic policies of the neighbouring great powers. Moreover, none of the national states were national in the true sense of the word; they were, rather, states composed of several nationalities with many ethnic minorities in their midst, exposed to the more or less fierce policies of assimilation of the ruling nations.

The very painful experience of excessive nationalism and the emergence of separate political blocks after World War II, with all the attendant consequences, have led to an overall dissatisfaction with the boundaries of national states in general and the hermetic Iron Curtain in particular. To this was added the growing insight of leading persons: that the problems of modern society are no longer solvable on a purely national level. Problems of economy, ecology, recreation, peace-insurance, and the like demand international approaches and solutions. Therefore it is not very surprising that, especially in Vienna (the city that was once the metropolis of Central Europe) but also in many neighbouring provinces of Austria, institutions and publications—mostly on an intellectual level, but not always a serious one—have started to stress the possibilities of cooperation, and to point out common features within the regions of the so-called *Donaupraum* (i.e., the regions along the Danube of *Mitteleuropa*, Central Europe). Vienna and Budapest, for example, have reached such a high level of cooperation that a jointly-organized World Exhibition is planned for 1995.

But the most hopeful attempt to date to overcome national borders and political and ideological differences in Central Europe did not start in any of its centers. It started in territories which had once been united under Habsburg rule and which, because of the new frontiers of the national states, had been pushed to the periphery. The mutual problems of the now peripheral regions resulted in the first attempts at cooperation, in the 1960s, between the Austrian province of Carinthia, the Italian province of Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the Socialist Republic of Slovenia in Yugoslavia. The movement was soon joined by the Austrian province of Styria. The extent to which the population of these regions are ready to perform acts of solidarity, in spite of all the borders that separate them, was best demonstrated by the spontaneous assistance rendered after the catastrophic earthquake in Friuli in 1976. This catastrophe undoubtedly helped considerably to promote the idea of cooperation in the eastern regions of the Alps; and the founding meeting of the Alpe-Adria Working Community took place just two years later, in 1978. The organization, which was originally founded to coordinate cooperation in questions of mutual interest between regions with similar backgrounds and traditions, has over the course of time expanded, and now covers a vast territory—a development which is unlikely to facilitate actual work.

Success in the long run will undoubtedly depend on the level of cooperation that can be achieved by the regions in the core: Carinthia, Styria, Slovenia, and Friulia-Venezia Giulia. They will have to act as pioneers, for it is self-evident that the aims of such a heterogeneous union of territories will have to be restricted to a) urgent mutual problems, and b) attempts to explore the possibilities of overcoming inter-group differences. The extent to which they have succeeded in doing just this is the topic of other papers in this series. The fact alone that, after an era of nationalistic deviations and tendencies towards political separation in the recent past, a construct such as the "Alpe-Adria Working Community" has come into existence demonstrates the strong intentions of these adjacent territories to make a new start in the direction of cooperation.

It is my task as a historian and geographer to unearth the historical and territorial roots which have in the past acted as political, social and economical integrating factors, and which have thus prepared the ground for cooperation today.¹

Indeed, during the course of history several territorial configurations have existed, and have resulted in a common tradition—at least in the sense of belonging together—in the core-regions: Carinthia, Styria, Slovenia, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The reasons for this are to be found in the specific geopolitical situation of the area, in the economic situation, and in the special transport-geography of the region.

Bogo Grafenauer, the leading national historian of the Slovenes, once characterized the core-region of the Alpe-Adria Working Community, which includes the complete territory of Slovene settlement, as situated "at the crossroads of history."² The Eastern Alps do undoubtedly form an orographical barrier between areas with strong communicative tendencies: between the Pannonian Plain and the Northern Alpine Piedmont, and the Adriatic and Northern Italy; between the regions north of the Alps, and the Balkans. But the Eastern Alps are easily crossed, both in northeast-southwest and in northwest-southeast directions. Above all the South-Eastern Alps are a really ideal economical supplementary region for the Mediterranean and for the ports on the Adriatic. Their abundance of wood, iron-ore, and water-power helped to create a well-developed metal and iron industry in the mountains, the products of which were exported from Adriatic ports. The pastures of the Alps promoted animal husbandry and hence the export of livestock and animal products. Wine, olive oil, sea salt, citrus fruits and luxury goods came north from the Mediterranean in exchange. Transport and trade along these routes were mostly in the hands of peasants acting as carters. Lively local crafts and trades and an extensive exchange of goods led not only to a strong concentration of population; it also established a system of communication between different language groups, and a feeling of mutual dependence among the different regions. The impact of the economic factors on the social structure, and through this on the mentality of the population, can be traced in nearly all the regions of the Alpe-Adria Working Community. The numerous possibilities of finding an extra income in the iron industry, in trade, or in transport led to an extensive splintering-up of farmland, and to the setting-up of numerous smallholdings and cottages. Workingman-peasants—or, rather, small-scale peasants with various kinds of extra income—became the dominant type of life-style of the whole region. When, in the second half of the nineteenth century, rural small-scale industry became unprofitable and transport became more and more a monopoly of the railway companies, impoverishment of the whole region and mass emigration—above all to America—were the result.

Geographical, economic and social factors have during the course of history helped to foster political integration in the Alpe-Adria core regions, under certain constellations of internal and foreign policy. The Celtic-Illyrian kingdom of Noricum became a Roman

province of the same name, later divided into two provinces: Noricum Ripense and Noricum Mediterraneum. But it was the period of the later Middle Ages that proved essential for the development of a common tradition.³ By the end of the sixth century the Alpine Slavs settled most of the Eastern Alps, and there established the dukedom of Carantania.⁴ Right through the late Middle Ages the custom of inaugurating the duke on the Carinthian *Zollfeld* was common practice and so preserved among the estates of the territory a sense of a separate tradition traced back to its origins in the tribal dukedom of Carantania.⁵ This tradition was important for very much more than merely the national history of the Slovenes.⁶

The first Carantanian-Bavarian political union was established in the first half of the eighth century. The two neighbors agreed to assist each other against claims of supremacy from the Avars and the Franks. For the Carantanians this defense contract turned out to be fatal: once the Bavarians had come to help, they decided to stay for good. The introduction of the Frankish feudal system was then the final step in integrating the areas of the Eastern Alps into the Western European model of social development. The trend was reinforced by the process of Christianization, which from the middle of the eighth century was organized from Salzburg.⁷

A similar situation of mutual defense arose at the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries, when the Hungarians took possession of the Pannonian Plain. The Carantanian and Bavarian dukedoms remained united in order to fend off the Hungarian attacks. After the battle on the Lechfeld in 955, the present constellation of territories began to evolve. Carinthia served as an operational base in the process of reconquering the regions to the East and South, and in establishing the so-called *Marches* around the separate basins. By the second half of the tenth century an administrative unity had emerged, which covered most of the area of the present Alpe-Adria Working Community. To the dukedom of Carinthia were added the Carantanian March, the Drau- or Pettau-March, and the March on the Savinja to the Southeast; the Carniolan and Istrian Marches in the South; and the Friuli and Verona Marches to the South-West.⁸ The personal union with Bavaria maintained this link for a time. From the eleventh century the Marches slowly developed into independent territories in their own right. These territories were at that time protected by a wide belt of densely-wooded forest which formed the border with Hungary and Croatia. The Bohemian king Přemysl Ottokar II, whose influence between 1270 and 1276 extended right to the Adriatic, later tried to re-establish all these regions as a centrally administered territory.

In the centuries before 1500 the central part of the Alpe-Adria territory came under Habsburg control. In 1382 the city of Trst/Trieste voluntarily joined Habsburg rule. At the same time, the Republic of Venice started to extend its control over the Dalmatian coast and *terra firma*. When, in 1411, the Habsburg territories were first divided, a constellation of territories under the supremacy of a common sovereign emerged: this later became known as Inner Austria, and included Carinthia, Styria, Carniola, the Coastland with Inner Istria and the Friulian region of Pordenone. The estates of the different territories usually coordinated their policies at the general diet, the *General- or Ausschlußlandtag*.

At the close of the Middle Ages two events played an important part in the development of a closely knit unity among the Inner-Austrian territories: a) the Turkish conquest of the Balkans in the final decades of the fifteenth century, and b) the second division of the Habsburg 'homelands' in 1564. Carniola had already been plundered and pillaged by Ottoman troops in 1469, and in 1472 they penetrated to Carinthia and Friuli. The devastating attacks by the Turks became more frequent in the following years, and horror and

panic spread among the population. The estates soon realized that no province could on its own achieve effective protection against the swiftly moving bands of Turks, and that a general system of defence had to be established. The Inner Austrian provinces did in fact carry most of the financial burden when it came to financing the so-called Croatian *Militärgrenze* (Military border) north of the river Sava. Although de jure legislation of this area lay in the hands of the emperor in his function as king of Hungary, the de facto coordination took place inside Inner Austria. The common defence against the Turks considerably strengthened the feeling of mutual interdependence in the region. Still today the Turkish wars are an enduring topic in traditional folk literature, and are also reflected in the landscape: wherever travelers go in Inner Austria today, they are greeted by the so-called *Wehrkirchen* (battlement churches), usually looking down from the tops of hills, with their disproportionately large, bulky towers which served as refuges in time of attack.

It was certainly not a mere coincidence that the second division of the Habsburg lands followed the first division geographically. Under Archduke Karl II, Inner Austria consisted of the provinces of Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Inner Istria, Rijeka, Trieste, Gorizia-Gradisca and Habsburg-Friuli. It had become a virtually independent state, with only loose ties connecting it to the rest of the Habsburg territories.⁹ Graz, as the residence of the duke, was furnished with offices for a central administration, with court and governmental offices. Several historians maintain that, had the Inner-Austrian line not moved back to Vienna in 1619, after it inherited the other Habsburg territories, Inner Austria would probably have developed into a lasting, separate territorial state.¹⁰ The last traces of this territorial independence lingered on right into the eighteenth century, when with the *Hofkriegsrat* in Graz the last of the independent administrative institutions of Inner Austria came under Viennese control.

A uniting factor among the estates was their common opposition to the sovereign, which reached its climax in the conflicts between the Catholic sovereign and the Protestant estates in the second half of the sixteenth century. The victory of Catholicism marked also a victory for absolutism in the Inner-Austrian provinces. The Jesuit University in Graz had played a crucial role in this context. The decades of Protestantism nevertheless had one lasting effect: on the initiative of the Protestant estates religious texts, and in particular the Bible, were translated into the language of the local populations. In this way the second half of the sixteenth century saw the birth of the Slovene literary language.

Once the Turks had ceased to be a real danger, with the decline of the estates and with the stronger integration of Inner Austria into the Habsburg state, the particular interests of the individual territories again began to outweigh what they had in common. The following centuries did nevertheless quite often see constellations in the administration, in the legal system, the army and the church, recalling Inner-Austrian territorial union. Between 1763 and 1791 the provinces of Carinthia, Carniola and Styria were united in the so-called Inner Austrian Gubernium. Taking up Napoleon's idea, the Illyrian Provinces were in 1815, after the Congress of Vienna, rearranged as the Illyrian Kingdom, which united the provinces of Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia-Gradisca, Istria and Croatia. The idea was again taken up by Archduke Johann, who had since 1811 resided in Graz. He founded the so-called *Joannäum*, a central institution for culture and learning for all of Inner Austria. The archives of the Joannäum should comprise the material base for a future history of the Inner-Austrian territories.¹¹ In 1837 the archduke founded the so-called *Innerösterreichische Gewerbeverein*, an organization for the furtherance of local trades and industries, and in 1843 the Historical Society for Inner Austria was established.

The efforts of Archduke Johann were one last attempt to invoke the Inner Austrian

traditions against the rising nationalism in this multi-ethnic region. The year of revolutions, 1848, meant not only the beginning of a stronger centralization in administration, it also reinforced the centrifugal tendencies of the national movements. It was only now, during the transformational crisis from a feudal society into a modern class society, that large sections of the population were confronted with the ideas of national consciousness for the first time. German-speakers were slowly transformed into politically aware Germans, Italian-speakers into Italians, and Slovene-speakers into Slovenes.

Integrating features were no longer emphasized; the clearly separating features formed the core of the emerging national ideologies, ideologies which served to secure social control for some and to provide means of emancipation for others. The Germans of Inner Austria started to seek their future within a large German national state. The Italians (since 1815 Lombardy and Veneto had been under Austrian rule) were hoping for a united Italy. Slovenes and Croats were actually trying to preserve the monarchy, but hoped to see it converted into a federal state along national lines, one which could guarantee their emancipation from the German, Hungarian and Italian ruling classes. They were convinced that only a great state in the heart of Europe was capable of providing this opportunity. The conflicting national positions, which in their core were actually conflicting social positions, proved irreconcilable. This finally resulted in the political dismemberment of the Alpe-Adria region after World War I.

Only after experiencing a number of decades of nationalistic policy with all its attendant atrocities, and after recognizing the economic disadvantages of their position on the fringes of the national states, did the populations of these regions again remember the vital interests they have in common. International cooperation has nowadays become not only desirable but essential and indispensable, by virtue of a series of problems that emphasize the necessity for environmental protection: the dying forests, the pollution of rivers and lakes—this in one of Europe's central recreational areas, which is at the same time one of the main thoroughfares of continental traffic.

In conclusion I wish to offer a realistic evaluation of the current efforts at cooperation by the Alpe-Adria Working Community from a historical viewpoint. As far back as we can look in history, there were in this region repeated close political unions, with different territorial configurations. The communality of political interests arose from a dynastic or administrative necessity, which in turn was linked to economic and military requirements, and which affected social and cultural rapprochements within the region. The strongest connections were established whenever the external threat was greatest. Doubtless, the common historical features of the Alpe-Adria population evoked a consciousness of belonging together, a similar outlook, until the time when these peoples were again separated by nationalisms.

Today once again there is a threat, namely that of the natural foundation for human life, and this threat is restoring the sense of mutual dependency. Moreover, the supraregional communication requirements of modern society make national frontiers superfluous. The Alpe-Adria Working Community is only one of the efforts in Europe to create the prerequisites for the solution of the greatest problems of our time. Therefore it would not only be a mistake, but counterproductive, if scholars were to preach about the common features from the past in their traditional fashion, in order to argue for a 'Central European', 'supraregional', 'interethnic', or any other form of group identity. Indeed, in the past it was historians themselves who contributed the most to the construction of nationalistic demarcational and standardizing ideologies. What must be impressed upon the population are the common problems that have to be overcome. The force of circumstances permits

nothing other than cooperation; and cooperation is only possible between human beings who relate to each other mutually, in a democratic way: not only viewing one another as completely equal in terms of rights and values, but also respecting one another, and prepared to meet one another half way. Naturally, the consciousness of a common tradition can be useful in this endeavor. How much those of us who live in the Alpe-Adria region are still dominated by the ghosts of nationalism, and how we are hindered in achieving mutual respect and a willingness to compromise, is evident in the tumultuous nationality conflicts in Southern Carinthia and Southern Tyrol. Here, political adventurers are still able to exploit nationalistic emotions.

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NOTES

1. As a preliminary remark I should say that it is not my intention to resort to any kind of ideology in the manner of nationalist historiography or geography.
2. Bogo Grafenauer, *Zgodovina slovenskega naroda I* (Ljubljana: Kmečka knjiga, 1964) 35.
3. Viktor Thiel, "Zur Geschichte des Begriffes Innerösterreich," *Carinthia* 103 (1913) 130.
4. Milko Kos, *Zgodovina Slovencev od naselitve do petnajstega stoletja* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1955) 77-81.
5. Bogo Grafenauer, *Ustoličevanje koroških vojvod in država karantanskih Slovencev* (Ljubljana: SAZU, 1952).
6. Wilhelm Neumann, "Wirklichkeit und Idee des 'windischen' Erzherzogtums Kärnten," *Südost-deutsches Archiv* 3 (1961) 141-66.
7. See Herwig Wolfram, ed., *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum. Das Weißbuch der Salzburger Kirche über die erfolgreiche Mission in Karantanien und Pannonien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1979).
8. Z. Čepič, F. Gestrin, B. Grafenauer, et al., eds, *Zgodovina Slovencev* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1979) 157.
9. Thiel, "Zur Geschichte," 157.
10. Viktor Thiel, "Der Begriff Innerösterreich und seine geschichtlichen Auswirkungen," *Jahrbücher der österreichischen Leo-Gesellschaft*, 1931: 114.
11. Thiel, "Der Begriff," 119ff.

POVZETEK

ZGODOVINSKE KONSTANTE V POLITIČNI, SOCIALNI IN GOSPODARSKI SODELAVI NA ALPSKO-JADRANSKEM OZEMLJU

Na ožjem alpsko-jadranskem ozemlju je v preteklosti večkrat prihajalo do tesnejšega sodelovanja, tako gospodarskega kot političnega. Dejstvo je, da se jugovzhodne alpske in severne jadranske pokrajine tega območja gospodarsko idealno dopolnjujejo in da so jih vse od predzgodovinskih časov sèm povezovali močni tokovi gospodarskega dopolnjevanja in menjalne trgovine. Do prve politične povezave je v tem prostoru seveda prišlo šele veliko kasneje; taka tvorba je bila Notranja Avstrija, v katere okviru so bile Koroška, Kranjska, Štajerska in Primorska tesno povezane vse do razpada Avstro-Ogrske monarhije. Čas nacionalizma jih je potem razdelil na tri države in v vsaki posebej so se deli teh historičnih dežel nenadoma znašli v izrazito obrobem položaju. Razumljivo je, da so v taki konstelaciji zlasti Koroška in Furlanija-Juljska Krajina mnogo izgubile, in prav tu se je v sedemdesetih letih porodila zamisel Delovne skupnosti Alpe-Jadran. Dejstvo namreč je, da ni mogoče kar tako odpraviti silnic, ki so v tem prostoru na delu že tisočletja. Tako je danes v Delovni skupnosti Alpe-Jadran povezana cela vrsta italijanskih, jugoslovanskih, avstrijskih, nemških in madžarskih dežel in pokrajin. Uspeh njihovega sodelovanja bo predvsem odvisen od uspeha sodelovanja dežel samega jedra tega območja, v katerem živi slovenski narod kot celota. Manjšinski problemi tega območja nam lepo kažejo, da vsaj tukaj nacionalizma še nismo preboleli.