

SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE SLOVENE POPULATION IN ITALY

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Ethnic Structure of Friuli-Venezia Giulia

In Italy, the Slovenes live almost exclusively in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which is divided politically into four provinces. They are, from west to south-east, Pordenone, Udine (Viden),¹ Gorizia (Gorica) and Trieste (Trst), named after the respective provincial capitals. The regional capital is Trieste, which is also the largest city, having approximately 300,000 inhabitants. The provinces are subdivided into *comuni*, roughly corresponding to American counties. Data in this study are by *comuni*, since they are the smallest political divisions for which population and socioeconomic data are available.²

The region Friuli-Venezia Giulia is inhabited by four different ethnic groups: Italians, Friulians, Slovenes and Germans. Officially, however, the ethnic composition of the region is not clearly established, as the official Italian census, carried out at ten year intervals, does not report data by ethnic groups. This is true for the region as a whole, except for the *comuni* of the Trieste province, where the last two censuses (1961, 1971) did include data on the Slovene population. For the other *comuni* of the region only estimates are available, based on the work of various researchers,³ but there are no official statistics. The members of the non-Italian groups do not accept the validity of the results of these investigations, nor do they believe the census data where those are available. Their argument is that the census data are biased for political and socioeconomic reasons, that Italians are the so-called "state nation" and are politically, economically and socially dominant in the region, while the other three groups may be considered as dominated minorities. This fact was in evidence particularly during the Fascist period (1921-1943), when a violent and repressive policy was adopted against the Slovene minority in order to destroy its national and ethnic consciousness. It is still not easy

for a member of a dominated group to declare himself as belonging to one of the minorities because of the existing social, economic and political relationship of dominance by the Italian majority over the minority groups. This situation may change when a truly democratic tradition develops, along with ethnic tolerance. Until such time, however, all data based on direct inquiry are likely to contain a negative bias vis-à-vis the minority. It should be remembered that in the great majority of public institutions in the territories of the minorities only the Italian language is admitted despite the Slovene demand for bilingualism.

For these reasons, then, it is not easy to obtain accurate data about the ethnic composition of the population, a factor which handicaps this study. However, it may still be possible to estimate the basic socioeconomic trends associated with ethnic variability of the population by using the best data available, i.e., the data of the censuses of 1961 and 1971 for the *comuni* of the Trieste province and the data published by Valussi for the other *comuni* of the region. In those cases where data were available only for one year we extended the percentage of ethnic population also to the other years of the study, assuming that there would be little change in the ethnic composition of the *comuni* in a ten or twenty year interval. Clearly, this assumption is valid only if the territory has not undergone too much socioeconomic change. But as we shall see in the following exposition, the *comuni* with a high concentration of Slovene population are mostly rural in nature, so that the above hypothesis may apply. Table 1 shows the percentage of Slovene population for the *comuni* of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in which a Slovene minority is present.

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF SLOVENE POPULATION IN THE *COMUNI* OF
FRIULI-BENEZIA GIULIA IN 1971

Province of Trieste (Trst)	8.2
Duino-Aurisina (Devin-Nabrežina)	37.5
Monrupino (Repentabor)	77.3
Muggia (Milje)	4.7
S. Dorligo della Valle (Dolina)	70.5
Sgonico (Zgonik)	81.6

TABLE 1 continued

Trieste (Trst)	5.7
Province of Gorizia (Gorica)	7.4
Capriva del Friuli (Kopriva pri Krminu)	0.5
Cormons (Krmin)	4.4
Doberdo del Lago (Doberdob)	86.4
Dolegna del Collio (Dolenje)	15.0
Farra d'Isonzo (Fara)	1.9
Gorizia (Gorica)	13.0
Gradisca (Gradišće)	0.3
Grado (Gradež)	0.4
Monfalcone (Tržič)	0.9
Mossa (Moša)	3.1
Ronchi dei Leg. (Ronke)	4.0
Sagrado (Zagraj)	1.2
S. Canzian d'Isonzo (Škocjan)	0.2
S. Floriano del Collio (Števerjan)	91.4
S. Lorenzo Isontino (Sv. Lovrenc)	0.6
Savogna (Sovodnje)	93.4
Staranzano Starancan)	3.0
Turriaco (Turjak)	0.2
Province of Udine (Viden)	3.3
Attimis (Ahten)	20.0
Drenchia (Dreka)	96.0
Faedis (Fojda)	24.2
Grimacco (Grmek)	93.7
Lusevera (Brdo)	86.4
Malborghetto-Valbruna (Naborjet-Ovcja Vas)	27.6
Nimis (Neme)	3.5
Pontebba (Tablja)	2.3
Prepotto (Prapotno)	47.9
Pulfero (Podbonesec)	84.6
Resia (Rezija)	90.1
S. Leonardo al Nat. (Sv. Lenart-Podutana)	89.2
S. Pietro al Nat. (Špeter)	75.9
Savogna (Sovodnje)	92.0
Stregna (Srednje)	82.7
Taipana (Tipana)	92.9
Tarvisio (Trbiž)	13.3
Torreano (Tavorjana)	54.3
Cividale (Čedad)	0.9
Corno di Rosazzo	2.0
Manzano	4.0

TABLE 1 continued

Palmanova	0.2
Povoletto	0.2
Premariacco	4.1
Reana del Rojale	0.5
Remanzacco	1.0
S. Giovanni al Natisone	2.7
S. Maria La Longa	0.2

Note: In the province of Pordenone there are only small numbers of Slovenes in the *comuni* of Chions, San Quirino, Spilimbergo and San Vito al Tagliamento.

Source: Giorgio Valussi, "Le Minoranze..." See fn. 3 below.

Historical Development

If preceding data are superimposed on a map of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region it becomes apparent that the Slovene population is settled in a strip of territory along the border with Yugoslavia. Slovenes are present in almost all *comuni* which border directly on Yugoslavia and their density increases the closer the border.

The border line itself has changed a number of times during the last century, shifting either east or west as a result of tensions, wars, peace treaties and guerilla activities between the various political factions. These shifts have dominated the political history of the region. The fact is that it has never been possible to establish a line which would be completely satisfactory from an ethnic point of view.

Typical in this respect is the history of the city of Trieste during the last 150 years. Trieste may be considered as one of the focal points of the history of the region from a political, social and economic perspective, a view supported by a rich and important international literature.⁵

The fortune of Trieste rests on a geopolitical choice made by the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the eighteenth century. The Habsburgs decided to transform what had been a small fishing town into an important harbor. In consequence Trieste grew rapidly and within sixty years had a population of 250,000. Many of these set-

tlers were Slovenes who moved in from the surrounding countryside. The new maritime emporium with its dynamic socioeconomic development gave them an opportunity for economic and social advancement. They displayed a distinct sense of organization, which was remarkable for a group with little tradition in social and economic structures. Although Slovenes in the city initially were employed in typical blue collar jobs⁶ and thus lacked economic control, much of the land around the city was owned by Slovene farmers, which was favorable from an economic viewpoint.

As the need for farm and small business credit became more and more pronounced in the process of modern economic development, Slovenes developed a basic network of small rural banks and, later, a number of larger banking institutions in the cities (Trieste-Trst, Gorizia-Gorica) as well.⁷ In consulting the works of Italian historians of that period,⁸ it appears that the sudden economic advancement of the Slovenes was one of the reasons for the Italian decision to join the Entente powers in the war against Austria, since the Italian population of Trieste and other cities within Austria was fearful of seeing its relative position decline in view of the economic advances of the Slovenes.

Through its participation on the side of the Entente powers in 1915-1918, Italy was successful in occupying Trieste and a large area of adjoining territory at the close of the war. In order to change the ethnic composition of the population, Italy then engaged in a policy of fierce repression of the Slovene minority in the whole of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which at that time extended farther east than it does at present, that is, into presently Yugoslav territory. But this repression generated a resistance which culminated during the Second World War. At the end of the war Slovene partisans occupied the entire Slovene ethnic territory in the region, along with the major cities of Trieste and Gorizia. This led to a serious international crisis the outcome of which was the recovery by Italy of part of the lost areas including the principal urban centers.⁹

The present socioeconomic status of the Slovenes of Friuli-Venezia Giulia may be described by dividing them into different geographic and population subgroups, namely, Slovenes of the Trieste province, those of the Gorizia province and those of the Udine province. This

last group may be further subdivided into Slovenes of the Natisone (Nadiža), Torre (Ter) and Resia (Rezija) valleys, and those of the Valcanale (Kanalska dolina).

The socioeconomic structure in these subregions differs as a consequence of historical development. Politically the Slovenes of Trieste, Gorizia and Valcanale were Habsburg citizens before World War I and thus shared a common inheritance of relative liberality and prosperity present in Austria in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Slovenes of Natisone, Torre and Resia, meanwhile, inherited a tradition of autonomy dating back to the middle ages, when they were citizens of the Republic of Venice. From a socioeconomic standpoint the Slovenes of Trieste are the most developed group. This is the result of their historical struggle for affirmation, a solid economic tradition, and not least because of an institutional structure functioning in the Slovene language. There is an almost complete set of public primary and secondary schools, a permanent theatre, a radio station, a music school, a printing house and a daily newspaper, several weekly and monthly reviews, cultural and scientific centers, sports clubs, three banking institutions, and a variety of private enterprises engaged to a large extent in the trade between Italy and Yugoslavia. In a similar position, but reflecting the smaller urban structure and larger rural environment are the Gorizia Slovenes, whose institutional sphere includes Slovene schools, magazines, clubs, a bank and several enterprises in the industrial field, as well as in the area of specialized agriculture, especially viticulture. On a third level of development are the Slovenes of the Valcanale. They lack a larger population center but are involved in well developed tertiary activities like tourism and border trade with Austria and Yugoslavia. Often these activities are pursued on a part-time basis and thereby complement the basic economy of the valley, which consists of alpine agriculture, stockraising and forestry. There are no Slovene institutions in the Valcanale other than church preaching and a recent voluntary Slovene language course organized in the Ugovizza (Ukve) public school by the local priest, after a protracted dispute with Italian authorities.

The *comuni* of Udine province which lie in the valleys of Natisone, Torre and Resia are the least developed parts of Slovene inhabited territory in Friuli-Venezia

Giulia. The socioeconomic base consists of relatively poor agriculture, grazing and forestry, coupled with high emigration of the work force toward the most developed European countries, especially Germany, France, Switzerland and Belgium. In this part of the Slovene area there still are no Slovene public institutions or schools and public use of the native language is nonexistent. Very recently there has been a revival of cultural activity on a minor and voluntary basis. This reflects a desire to preserve the folklore traditions native to the inhabitants and also a degree of renewed awareness of the political autonomy enjoyed under the Republic of Venice.

A basic conclusion which emerges from this brief description is the close association between the socioeconomic development of a given population and the emergence of public institutions functioning in the native language. It is debatable as to which factor induces the other, public institutions the economic and social uplifting or vice-versa, but the fact remains, as elaborated by Hočevar in an important theoretical study on this subject, that indigenous institutions are a central matter of minority policy.¹⁰ Only such institutions can guarantee the full use and development of the minority language in situations of rapid socioeconomic change. In fact, if the minority language is restricted to agricultural activities and lifestyle, it tends to disappear as a result of social change.¹¹ Public use, in contrast, tends to lift the minority language to a higher socioeconomic level and thereby makes its survival possible.

Statistical Analysis

This section of our study presents the results of a number of tests which have been performed to show the broad relationships between ethnic and socioeconomic structure in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Correlation, regression, and analysis of variance were utilized for this purpose.

Table 2 contains the linear association, as measured by the partial correlation coefficients, between each of the social and economic variables considered in this study and the percentage of Slovene-speaking population.

TABLE 2

CORRELATION BETWEEN PERCENTAGE OF SLOVENE POPULATION
AND VARIOUS SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Year/ Var.	Illit.	Laurea	L.F.P.	Industr.
1951	0.262	-0.366*	0.128	-0.547*
1961	0.062	-0.277	0.462*	-0.599*
1971	0.270	-0.253	0.409*	-0.396*
Pooled	0.193	-0.308*	0.292*	-0.491*

Note: Illit. = % of population illiterate
 Laurea = % of population holding Laurea
 L.F.P. = Labor Force Participation.

Continued

Year/ Var.	Agric.	Manag. & Clerks	Entrep. & Prof.
1951	0.481*	-0.589*	-0.487*
1961	0.348	-0.647*	-0.456*
1971	0.500*	-0.596*	-0.357*
Pooled	0.428*	-0.536*	-0.396*

*Indicates coefficient is significant at 95%.

There is no clear adverse association between linguistic composition and any of the educational variables, except for those with university degrees, or *Laurea*, in 1951: it seems that at that time Slovenes were participating less at the highest Italian educational level, but that the disparity was reduced over time. From a general point of view this would seem to indicate that linguistic discrimination is not institutionalized within the educational structure in the sample area. There is a tendency for areas with high Slovene concentrations to be agricultural rather than industrial. This may seem in contrast with what we asserted previously as regards the socioeconomic structure of the population. Actually, it may reflect the simple fact that the classes of Slovene population which are not occupied in agriculture tend to

concentrate in major centers, where their percentage is low as compared to the total population.

A negative association exists between the percentage of Slovene population and the proportion of the labor force employed in high-skill, high-remuneration white collar jobs (managers, clerks, professionals, and entrepreneurs). This may be a reflection of the agricultural orientation of heavily Slovene areas. But it may also reflect true discrimination, due to the fact that public institutions are managed almost entirely by Italians and function in the Italian language. It is interesting that the highest values of negative association have been found for Managers & Clerks in 1961 and 1971, indicating the relative absence of Slovenes in administration. The figures for entrepreneurs and professionals are somewhat lower, due probably to the fact that Slovenes who have completed the highest educational level tend to enter professional activities, where they can enjoy relative independence and the possibility of using their native language. Labor force participation (L.F.P.) was positively associated with the Slovene-speaking population, which may reflect the agricultural orientation of areas with a high concentration of Slovenes.

Correlation analysis gives no indication of the changes in dependent variable to be expected from a given change in the explanatory variable. Regression analysis is designed to yield this information, as well as to test the statistical significance of the relationship.

In each of the following tests, the null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between the independent variable (the percentage of the Slovene-speaking population) and each of the dependent variables. This means that the slope term should be equal to zero in the regression equation:

$$Y_i = a_j + b_j X_{ij} + u_{ij}$$

In the above equation, Y_i is the percentage of Slovene speaking population in the i th commune, and X_{ij} represents the observation on the j th explanatory variable in the i th commune. The null and alternate hypothesis are formally:

$$H_0: b_j = 0$$

$$H_A: b_j \neq 0$$

The reader should note that in the case of a simple bivariate linear regression, $b_j \neq 0$ in the above regression equation would imply $b'_j \neq 0$ in the transposed equation:

$$X_{ij} = a'_j + b'_j Y_i + u'_{ij}$$

That is, statistical results alone cannot identify the direction of causality, if indeed there is causality, which is driving the association between X and Y.

With this caveat in mind we present the regression results in Tables 3 and 4.

TABLE 3

REGRESSION RESULTS FOR EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Var.	Illiteracy			
Year	1951	1961	1971	Pooled
b_1	0.0199	0.0021	0.0074	0.0123
S.E.	0.0126	0.0072	0.0044	0.0064
T-ratio	1.584	0.296	1.657	1.931

Continued

	Laurea			
b_1	-0.0650	-0.0440	-0.0363	-0.0500
S.E.	0.0285	0.0318	0.0234	0.0157
T-ratio	-2.284*	-1.384	-1.544	-3.175*

These results complement the correlation analysis. No significant relationship exists between Slovene-speaking elements of the population and illiteracy; only in 1951 was there a significant relationship between the Slovene population in the more recent samples, and it was again found that the Slovene areas are more agricultural, less industrial, and have less of their labor force in white collar occupations.

TABLE 4

REGRESSION RESULTS FOR SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Var.	Labor Force Participation			
Year	1951	1961	1961	Pooled
b ₁	0.0190	0.0794	0.0560	0.0502
S.E.	0.0253	0.0317	0.0211	0.0168
T-ratio	0.752	2.502*	2.650*	2.995*
Continued				
Industrial Labor Force				
b ₁	-0.0140	-0.0084	-0.0010	-0.0095
S.E.	0.0027	0.0026	0.0004	0.0020
T-ratio	-3.811*	-3.233*	-2.550*	-4.821*
Continued				
Agricultural Labor Force				
b ₁	0.3006	0.1605	0.2179	0.2444
S.E.	0.0939	0.0901	0.0638	0.0527
T-ratio	3.201*	1.781	3.417*	4.642*
Continued				
Managers and Clerical				
b ₁	-0.0917	-0.1224	-0.1519	-0.1234
S.E.	0.0216	0.0301	0.0346	0.0198
T-ratio	-4.248*	-4.073*	-4.396*	-6.228*

TABLE 4 continued

Var.	Entrepreneurs & Professionals			
	1951	1961	1971	Pooled
b ₁	-0.0133	-0.0167	-0.0171	-0.0157
S.E.	0.0041	0.0068	0.0076	0.0037
T-ratio	-3.249*	-2.457*	-2.262*	-4.223*

* Indicated coefficient is significant at 95%.

To evaluate whether the results of the tests on the proportion of the labor force engaged in white collar occupations were distorted by the agricultural orientation of the Slovene-speaking areas, two-way analysis of variance tests was performed by controlling for the percentage of the agricultural population. The results are shown in Table 5.

After adjusting for agricultural orientation, the association between the Slovene population and the labor force participation disappears. The relationship between the percentage of the Slovene population and managers and clerks, and between the percentage of the Slovene population and entrepreneurs and professionals, however, still remains.

TABLE 5

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Agric. Pop.	Slovene Group	Labor Force Part.	Managers & Clerks	Entrep. & Prof.
High	1	40.76	6.69	0.47
	2	40.48	5.94	0.54
	3	39.48	3.41	0.34
	4	39.96	3.25	0.13

TABLE 5 Continued

Agric. Pop.	Slovene Group	Labor Force Part.	Managers & Clerks	Entrep. & Prof.
	1	45.80	3.30	0.37
	2	43.91	4.45	0.62
Low	3	51.00	2.01	0.13
	4	45.98	2.22	0.12
F-level		0.6	6.62	7.28
Significance Level		38.08	99.96	99.98

As a conclusion we can assert that statistical evidence is consistent with linguistic discrimination of a particular type: the lacking of public institutions in the Slovene language. For this reason Slovenes are less present than Italians in public and administrative professions. Until now the Slovenes have tried to find an escape from this situation by concentrating in free professions and entrepreneurship (clearly, this is true only for those members of the ethnic group who displayed a degree of social mobility), but this is becoming more and more difficult since the most dynamic sectors of development are to be found in publicly or semi-publicly managed enterprises and institutions.

The next step in the research begun in this study would be to try to establish the differentiations within the Slovene group, i.e., determine the differences in socioeconomic and educational variables between the Slovenes living in various administrative subdivisions of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region.

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NOTES

¹The Slovene form is given in parenthesis.

²The data have been drawn from the Italian censuses for 1951, 1961, and 1971 (Rome: ISAT), except where specified otherwise.

³Gruppo di studio "Alpina"—Bellinziona (Switzerland)," *I quattro gruppi nazionali del Friuli-Venezia Giulia* (Bellinziona, Switzerland: Arti Grafiche A. Salvioni & Co. SA, 1975); Giorgio Valussi, "Le Minoranze Etnico-Linguistiche della Frontiera Italo-Jugoslava," *Atti IV Incontro Geografico Italo-Sloveno, Pordenone, 28-29 Ottobre 1973* (Udine, Italy: Istituto di Geografia, Faculta di Lingue e Letterature Straniere dell' Università di Trieste, 1974).

⁴Cf. Giorgio Valussi, "Il Confine Nordorientale d' Italia," (Trieste: LINT, 1972).

⁵Esp. Bogdan Novak, *Trieste 1941-1954: The Ethnic, Political, and Ideological Struggle* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

⁶For an oral history of a Slovene blue collar family in Trieste, see James C. Davis, "A Slovene Laborer and His Experience of Industrialization," *East European Quarterly*, 10, No. 1 (1976), pp. 2-19.

⁷Toussaint Hočevar, *The Structure of the Slovenian Economy, 1848-1963* (New York: Studia Slovenica, 1965).

⁸Vladimir Turina and Darij Cupin, "Zgodovinski in politični oris gospodarskega življenja Slovencev v Italiji," Testimony at the International Conference on Minorities, Trieste, July 10-14, 1974. In course of publication.

⁹Cf. Novak, *op. cit.*

¹⁰Toussaint Hočevar, "Equilibria in Linguistic Minority Markets," *Kyklos*, 28, No. 2 (1975), pp. 337-357.

¹¹Vladimir Klemenčič, "Prostorska urbanizacija in narodne manjšine v Srednji Evropi," Contribution to the International Conference on Minorities, Trieste, July 10-14, 1974. In course of publication.

Editor's Note: An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Chapter of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, in Chicago, Illinois, in May 1976.