

COMMENTARY: THE BORRUSO-DANIELIS AND DEVETAK PAPERS

Emidio Sussi

I shall limit myself to a short analysis of two papers: the one by Borruso and Danielis and, at a little greater length, the one by Devetak. I find that there is a basic theme common to both these papers, a theme that can be summed up as follows: the Alpe-Adria Community, as an institutional form of cooperation, is surely an important, and in any case a positive, unifying factor in this region of Europe—a region that has until recently been shaken by various conflicts. Its importance in this regard is many-sided: it is important economically, socio-culturally, and in specific vital areas such ecology, the use of energy, and so on. Although the Community has been active for nearly ten years, it is still at a beginning stage; as these authors have mentioned, there is a series of inhibiting factors involved, which the Community has been, slowly and with great difficulty, trying to overcome.

In my opinion the Alpe-Adria community will, in the future, make speedier progress in the area of socio-economic cooperation, perhaps even move toward economic integration; but it will develop more slowly in the area of socio-cultural integration—in other words, in those fields where socio-cultural and socio-psychological factors play an important role.

Let me briefly analyze the last-named area, which Professor Devetak described from many points of view. His analysis was not limited only to the institutional activity of the Alpe-Adria Community in this area, but embraced a wider picture: we may say, it took in all the international, interethnic and intercultural circumstances. In the section headed 'Sensitive Issues' he mentions some very delicate problems regarding interethnic relations which are present in the Alpe-Adria area. The basic question is the problem of nationalism, with respect to both majority (dominating) as well as minority groups, discrimination between groups, relationships based on the dichotomy between **we** and **they**, and the outward expansion of minority cultures—both toward their mother nations and toward the majority cultures.

It is essential for us to consider these problems seriously and scientifically, to attempt in-depth analyses, and to try to avoid the differing viewpoints and the high-sounding phrases that are usually met with in this heterogeneous area. These viewpoints—although positive—are often no more than the result of wishful thinking, with no regard to the different and complex factors with which this problem is tightly linked.

The essential problem is to find a satisfactory form of integration between the various majority and minority ethnic groups; in order to be considered satisfactory, integration must be based on the highest possible degree of cultural pluralism and on the preservation and growth of the particular ethnic characteristics that typify minority cultural groups. The evolution of ethnic relations may even lead to two further situations, each controversial in its own way: on the one hand, the assimilation of the minority into the majority; on the other, isolation and auto-segregation. I agree that the analysis of this problem is a difficult task, and that it is an even harder task to prescribe "correct" solutions thereto for those who are actually involved in politics—in this instance, in ethnic politics—and who face decisions on a daily basis.

The ethnic situation, as analyzed from both synchronic and diachronic points of view, forced me to call into question—at least to a certain extent—the existence and preservation of minority ethnic groups, especially with regard to specific aspects of the situation. In the

first place, the number of members of minority groups is (in my opinion) decreasing constantly and, with rare exceptions, quickly. I emphasize that this is my own opinion: in most instances official data can not be found, or are not accepted by minority groups. Secondly, it may be that we are faced with the problem of defining the dimensions, or the meaning, of "belonging to an ethnic group," of ethnic identity. Very often I have the feeling that the minorities in the Alpe-Adria region are coming constantly closer to a **totally symbolic ethnicity**—as Gans defined the way of life of many ethnic groups living in the U.S.A.

If this is really the mood of today, if the conditions are right for this kind of evolution (in the context of wider social processes, relations and other factors) then it is absolutely necessary to try to contain and limit the negative trends which threaten the minorities—including the institutional threats—within the Alpe-Adria Community.

Meanwhile it is necessary to further illuminate, as quickly as possible and from all points of view, the model of interethnic relations. I believe that there is a strong interest in this particular model, although at the same time there remains great confusion about it, both in theory and in practice.

Università degli studi di Trieste

POVZETEK

PRIPOMBE NA BORRUSO & DANIELISOVA IN DEVETAKOVA IZVAJANJA

Izvajanja obeh referatov povezuje misel, da je Alpsko-Jadranska Skupnost, tako gospodarsko kot sociokulturno, — pozitiven in pomemben pojav. Avtor pričakuje, da bo bodoči socioekonomski razvoj hitrejši kot razvoj na sociokulturnem področju, in poudarja potrebo po zadovoljivih (to je, kulturno pluralističnih) oblikah integracije večinskih in manjšinskih etničnih skupin. Zdi se, da so sodobna stremjenja usmerjena v izgubljanje etnične individualnosti, in ta stremjenja bi treba zavreti in omejiti.