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THE "ISTRIAN EXODUS" AND THE ISTRIAN SOCIETY THAT FOLLOWED IT

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ABSTRACT

The "Istrian Exodus" and the Istrian Society that Followed It

This ethnologic study focuses on the aftermath of the "Istrian exodus", including the conflicting national discourses concerning it and the related silenced memories. Various migration processes are highlighted on the basis of memories. Analysing the social processes that took place in Istrian society after the exodus, the paper examines the concepts of the "other" and of "home", and the establishment of symbolic boundaries.

KEY WORDS: exodus, aftermath, Istrian society, migrations, symbolic boundaries

IZVLEČEK

»Istrski eksodus« in istrska družba po njem

Avtorica v etnološki raziskavi, ki se osredotoča na posledice »istrskega eksodusa«, obravnava tudi konfliktne nacionalne diskurze v zvezi z njim in z njim povezane utišane spomine. Na primeru spominov osvetli različne procese migracij. Med družbenimi procesi v istrski družbi po »eksodusu« pokaže na koncept »drugega«, »doma« in na vzpostavitev simbolnih meja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: »eksodus«, posledice, istrska družba, migracije, simbolne meje

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INTRODUCTION: THE "ISTRIAN EXODUS" AND ITS AFTERMATH

Due to the wounds it has inflicted upon society, the so-called Istrian exodus has been the subject of a fairly substantial amount of research (to list only monographs: Cataruzza, Dogo, Pupo 2000; Ballinger 2003; Volk 2003; Gombač 2005; Dota 2010; Panjek 2011; Hrobat Virloget, Gousseff, Corni 2015; etc., see Kalc 2019). However, almost no studies (Titl 1961) have been devoted to the question of what happened after the exodus, although it resulted in a dramatic change to the ethnic, social and cultural fabric of Istria (Gombač 2005: 11; Kalc 2019). The topic of the present paper will therefore be the social processes that took place in the Istrian society after the exodus.

During and after WW II, in the time of the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) (1947–1954) which was created as an attempt to deal with the conflicting Italian and Yugoslavian claims to the contested area in the northern Adriatic, and after the ethnically mixed Istria was annexed to Yugoslavia, 90% of the predominantly Italian-speaking population emigrated, mostly from urban areas. In total, between 200,000 and 300,000 people left Istria (Ballinger 2003: 1, 275, n. 1), 27,810 of whom emigrated from our study area, northern Istria, which is now under Slovenian administration. They were mostly Italians (70%), but also included Slovenes and Croats (Cunja 2004: 89; Troha 1997: 59; Kalc 2019). In 1960, a few years after the final phase of the exodus, the proportion of native residents in the Slovenian part of Istria dropped to 49%, according to registry offices, reaching 65% in rural areas and 33% in urban. The difference is accounted for by the fact that the Italian population was concentrated in urban areas, while the adjacent rural population was largely Slovene (Titl 1961; Kalc 2019).

This paper employs an ethnological/anthropological approach to the analysis of individual memories of present-day inhabitants of Istria, i.e. the memories of those who remained and those who arrived after the "Istrian exodus". My aim is to reach beyond a mono-national point of view by relating various memories of this overlooked part of contested history, shared by natives and immigrants, Slovenes and Italians, as well as people from other republics of Yugoslavia. The analysis is based on more than forty transcribed interviews, many other informal conversations, research performed with students, participant observations and four books on the life histories of people from Piran/Pirano and Koper/Capodistria (Pahor 2007, 2011, 2014; Menih 2011). As an ethnologist working with memories, which reflect personal sentiments rather than historical data, my aim is not to reconstruct the historical framework, but is rather an attempt to understand the social issues present in a society which was formed anew after mass migrations.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION AND MIGRATION PROCESSES

The few existing studies on the structure of the immigrant population show that during the time of the FTT most immigrants came from within the Slovenian coastal region, moving from the rural hinterlands to urban areas, with other immigrants coming from Zone A of the FTT (the area around Trieste, annexed to Italy in 1954) and from Yugoslavia. The latter groups are not analysed any further except for (Slovenian) political immigrants from the pre-war Italian region of Venezia-Giulia who emigrated to Yugoslavia to flee fascist persecution, and who returned to the Primorska region after WW II. After the annexation of Istria to Yugoslavia, an influx of immigrants arrived from the coastal hinterland and Gorizia (15.2% in 1960), regions that share a historical affinity with Istria stemming from having belonged to a common administrative framework under both Austria and fascist Italy (Primorska region). The other immigrants came from the rest of Slovenia (19.5%) and from Croatia (11.7%), mostly from the Istrian peninsula and the coastal belt. They would replace the emigrant population in fisheries, the food processing industry and shipping (as sailors and officers), and many also settled in rural areas (Titl 1961: 31; Kalc 2019).

In the early period the immigration of ethnic Italians occurred as well, some of them originating from the Croatian part of Istria, while others came from Italy due to ideological reasons. Among them were thousands of communist workers from the shipyards in Monfalcone who moved to Yugoslavia after the Peace Treaty, particularly to the Croatian city of Rijeka/Fiume, however, most of them returned to Italy after the Cominform conflict (Puppo 2015: 33). The last substantial influx of immigrants has not yet received any research attention, and is usually mentioned only briefly. This immigration wave consists of immigrants from the former republics of Yugoslavia other than Slovenia, who migrated to the coast en masse during the 1960s and 1970s to answer the local demand for workforce in the newly established industrial plants (Kalc 2019). Large housing projects were built to provide "a roof over the heads" of these masses of workers, who found work at large companies including Tomos and the Port of Koper (Mlinar 1998: 70). The research data indicate that the immigrants originated from all of the republics of former Yugoslavia, while the interviews were conducted with people from Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia.

According to the individual memories and archival data, various emigration and immigration processes can be distinguished. The exodus reached its peak in northern Istria a year and a half after the annexation of Zone B to Yugoslavia, i.e. between 1955 and the beginning of 1957. The simultaneous immigration that ran in parallel exceeded the number of departures by 21%, with immigration in 1955–1956 representing 55.7% of all immigration that took place between 1945 and 1959 (Kalc 2019). The urban legend of a bunch of keys received by immigrants on their arrival is associated with this very time period: "[On the population structure upon their arrival in Izola in 1954] Mostly Slovenes. When I arrived, some 20% of the families in our street

were Italian. […] My father went to ask, when he got the pastry-shop, he went to the municipality to ask for an apartment. They told him: 'These are the keys for Koprska street ...', a bunch of keys, 'Go and choose something.' That is, it was all empty."

We can date the drastic change of the population in northern Istrian towns to this short two to three-year period. As a former military officer who emigrated to Koper in 1954 stated in response to my question of who had sent him to Koper: "From Ljubljana, most employees, I will not say all … Everybody that was able to write at least a little came here, because the district people's committees, a new authority, were established, on banks and so forth."

Memories describing the mass emigration that left empty streets behind date to this period. A Slovenian Istrian illustrated the total emigration of Italians from Piran/Pirano with an example from his school days:

> Three parallel classes at the Italian school. […] Next year! The next year, I had three pupils in one single class, and I was the fourth, we played basketball two against two as we had no one else. [...] In a single year this was ... 53, 54.[1] Such fluctuation! Such change! [...] Streets empty! There was no one! There were trucks! Day by day, night by night, one great rush! [...] Everything Italian was gone. Terrible! A terrible exchange!

This image seems to present a contrast with the long period preceding the exodus, when, according to the historical (Pupo 2015; Kalc 2019) and ethnographic data, migrations were sporadic. Especially the first immigrants, who used to play with Italian children on the streets, remember that friends would disappear out of the blue, during the night. An immigrant who arrived from Trieste in 1946 remembers: "[On the morning after playing with an Italian friend] I went to search for the toy [which had been forgotten], came to their door and it was broken. Two boards were nailed diagonally over the broken doors and I never saw either Valter or his grandmother again."

DISCOURSES AND SILENCE ABOUT THE "EXODUS"

A number of scholars have discussed Istrian migrations in the broader framework of the mass population transfers in Central and Eastern Europe resulting from the Allies' policies in the post-WW II period when the ethnic homogenisation of nation states was considered to be the only way to prevent violence and assure peace and stability (e.g. Ther 2001; Hrobat, Gousseff, Corni 2015). Recently, Pamela Ballinger (2015) has offered an alternative approach reaching outside the classical scope of population transfers, by interpreting the Istrian exodus as a (post-) imperial process

1 Memory, however, does not particularly care for historical time frames. Time can be referred to not by dates, but rather by the speaker's personal experiences, like referring to the time of living somewhere, going to school etc. (Halbwachs 2001; Brumen 2000).

accompanying the defeat of fascism and the loss of Italy's newly acquired territories in the Balkans and Africa.

However, the exodus has been a source of conflict in political discourses between Italy on one side and Slovenia and Croatia on the other for more than six decades. Both sides have long cultivated parallel official memories which attribute the migrations to different reasons; they have also come up with different numbers of migrants and differing appellations, for instance "exodus" for Italians or "opting" or "post-war migrations" for Slovenes (Ballinger 2003: 42–45; Gombač 2005; Hrobat Virloget 2015a: 159–162, 2017b; Verginella 2000; Pupo 2015). Italian migrants see themselves as victims of violence inflicted by the "barbaric" Slavs and the communist rule, but prefer to "forget" the period of fascist violence against the Slavs after 1919 and its victims. On the other hand, Slovenes emphasise their status as victims of fascist violence during the 20 years of Italian imperialist rule and during WW II. This victimhood together with heroic resistance and ethnic emancipation during WW II forms the cornerstone of the Slovene identity (Ballinger 2003: 129–167, 207–244; Baskar 2010: 110–118; Fikfak 2009: 358–359; Hrobat Virloget 2015a, 2015b, 2017b).

In the individual memories the main problem in researching the exodus is silence, especially among Italians. On one side this silence can be seen as a result of the incompatibility between the dominant collective (Slovenian) and individual memories (Hrobat Virloget 2017a). As Maurice Halbwachs noted, individual memories can be rejected and stigmatized if they do not correspond to the dominant image of the past (Halbwachs 2001). The memories of Italians who remained in Istria as a national minority are not compatible with either the dominant perception of the exodus as a voluntary migration or with the official Italian discourse. In contrast with the latter they are aware of the causal links between the exodus and fascist violence in Istria. As an Italian interlocutor put it in an interview, "Shifting things now [about the "exodus"] is like planting a mine and not knowing when it will explode", while another Italian answered, in a whisper, "Better be quiet. There are ears everywhere." During the decades following the "exodus", speaking about it was taboo in Istria even among Italians (Hrobat Virloget 2017a: 90; Hrobat Virloget 2017b: 40).

The silence can also be seen as a consequence of trauma, in the sense that avoiding remembrance protects one from re-experiencing the pain (Hrobat Virloget 2017). An Italian interlocutor, for example, who read her memories during our interview as they were written down, and to which she added some "objective" facts concerning the exodus, broke down in tears at the end of the reading, explaining: "My family was split in two [because of the exodus] and it never united again. This is a wound that never healed." We have to bear in mind that after the exodus, Italians in Istria became foreigners in their own homes due to the change in the social/political circumstances and the total loss of their social networks, including in some cases even the closest members of their families (Hrobat 2015a: 164–168; Hrobat Virloget 2017a, 2019; Ballinger 2003: 207–244). After the exodus and the introduction of the new national/political system they also experienced a change in their social status,

from the dominant self-perception as the representatives of *civiltá* (the civilized) as opposed to the "barbaric" Slavs, especially under fascism, to the marginalized in the new Yugoslavian context, and were held collectively responsible for decades of fascist oppression and war crimes (Baskar 2010: 110–118; Hrobat Virloget 2015b, 2017b; Hrobat Virloget, Čebron Lipovec 2017). The memories of many of my interlocutors can be understood as childhood trauma buried in the subconscious. As Primo Levi says, "[a] person who has been wounded tends to block out the memory so as not to renew the pain" (Levi 2003: 18; Jurić Pahor 2004: 52). Similarly, Andrea Smith (2006: 147–159) noticed that the *pieds-noirs* would censor, repress and consciously avoid their memories of the Franco-Algerian war, or if they had to speak about it, they would structure their memories in a rational, impersonal way. She interprets these tactics as an attempt to control the emotionally burdensome memories which were not compatible with the French collective memory of the war (not recognized for many years) and which recalled their own personal participation in that war.

Historians also explain silence as a consequence of tense social relations that emerge in rebellious movements and which, upon the reversal of the social system and hierarchies, conceal social conflicts, shifts in power relations and civil war in a time when violence occurs among members of the same nation, community and even family (Portelli 1997; Van Boeschoten 2005).

On the other hand, there is the silence of "the invisible". By this I mean the descendants of the economically deprived immigrants from the former republics of Yugoslavia other than Slovenia, among whom only some of the first to arrive would experience the exodus, while most arrived after it had taken place and were therefore not aware of the local contested past. Upon Slovenia's declaration of independence in the early 1990s, the immigrants from the rest of Yugoslavia became transformed into the new "others" and experienced a profound social marginalization, becoming second-class citizens with no minority rights, and some of whom were literally "erased" from the Registry of Permanent Residence (Hrobat et al. 2016: 80, 85; Zorn, Lipovec Čebron 2008). Although they comprise the majority of the population in Istria's historic town centres, their memories remain unnoticed, mute (Hrobat Virloget et al. 2016; Hrobat Virloget 2017b). They never take part in public debates or demonstrations concerning Istrian culture and history, where Slovenian and Italian intellectuals dominate (ex. Čebron Lipovec 2015). Although my research has not focused on them to date, they do seem much more difficult to get in touch with. The case of an immigrant from Serbia is telling in this respect: he refused to speak with Slovenian students because of his poor mastery of Slovene. This clearly illustrates the uncomfortable feelings of the immigrants, whose places of origin are considered inferior in their new environment (see Smith 2006: 138).

Few Slovenes are aware of the drastic change in the population structure of Istria after the exodus. Silence about it extends over school curricula as well: with the exception of Italian minority schools in Slovenia, the topic is only mentioned very briefly in primary and secondary schools. A similar memory gap characterises the

Czech recollection of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, who were frowned upon during communist times (and also today) due to their alleged association with capitalist exploitation, international aggression, fascism and oppression, and also just for being German. The collective national guilt for their expulsion is countered by arguments that this was merely a reaction to the horrors that they had inflicted during the war. Thus the nation remains morally unscathed by claiming the status of victim (Spalová 2016: 16–22). All European nations recall their suffering in order to avoid being reminded of their guilt. As a result, national memory constructs are not in fact falsified, but selective, as they only maintain a "strategic selection of expedient recollections" (Assman 2007: 17).

THE PERCEPTION OF HOME, "US" AND "OTHERS" AFTER THE EXODUS

For the reasons mentioned above, what currently looks like a multicultural society in Istria at first glance is in fact a society divided by strong symbolic boundaries (Hrobat Virloget 2015a: 175–178, 2015b: 544–547, 2017b, 2019). Within the scope of the Orientalizing discourse, a symbolic boundary has emerged between the so-called Istrians, i.e. Italians and Slovenes, and the "non-Istrians" of Balkan origin. The discourse of Istrian hybridity, which seems to be progressive when confronting the nationalistic view of the Italian *esuli* as the only real Istrians, also exhibits a narrowness based on the exclusion of the "other" by only including Slovenes/Croats and Italians (Ballinger 2003: 245–265). A Slovene whose family escaped from Trieste during the period of violent fascism, for instance, shared this comment on the arrival of the workforce from the former republics of Yugoslavia other than Slovenia in the 1960s and 1970s:

> A different culture breaks in … There were fewer differences, many fewer, between us [Slovenes] and Italians, who actually lived in the same territory […]. But then a completely different culture strikes. They were picking people there, in villages, you know, they were herdsmen … They were carrying bags and such. […] You brought people, shepherds more or less, and you put them in a highly developed urban environment.

The rhetoric is based not only on ethnic/national differences, but also on the distinction between the urban vs. rural population. Similar social boundaries were observed during the time of fascism in Istria, when the urban Italian population held a superior attitude towards the Slavic-speaking population of the hinterlands (Brumen 2000: 124–133; Hrobat Virloget 2015a: 163). The dominant discourse of "brotherhood and unity" among Yugoslavian nations was difficult to reconcile with the reality of being the "other". As an Albanian immigrant from former Yugoslavia recalls:

> That the locals accepted us grudgingly ... It would be unfair [to say], they stood next to us at most. On the other hand, our first duty was to accept people, be the same as

> they were. You have all that other stuff in your family. So, our church rituals, we held them at home. [...] It's clear that you are not one of them. But again, not so much as to hate you or anything [...]. The opposite direction was more important. In fact, we were more orderly, when we stepped out the door, than everyone else. Precisely to avoid any such complaint.

However, as observed in other cases of so-called co-ethnic migrations, a symbolic line was drawn between the newcomers and native inhabitants despite sharing the same nationality (Čapo Žmegač 2010: 189–192; Čapo 2015; Hirschon 1989: 30–35). In a local Istrian joke two boundaries can be discerned: "Two women from Štajerska [a region in eastern Slovenia] were chatting on Čevljarska street [in Koper] when they overheard two old women talking in Italian. So one lady from Štajerska said to the other 'We still have foreigners here!' So Slovenes from Maribor, therefore aliens, considered themselves to be the locals!!! [laughter]." The joke shows how the local Istrian Slovenes perceived the immigrants from continental Slovenia as foreigners and, on the other hand, how the immigrant Slovenes perceived the local Italian Istrians as a foreign element, while to the local Slovenian Istrians the Italians represented part of "us".

The research indicates that the "pre-exodus" divide along the Slavic-Italian line, which coincided with the urban-rural division, was reformulated in the "post-exodus" socialist time; the ethnic element was omitted and replaced with claims to sociological "oldness", i.e. seniority in the area along regional lines or, as Norbert Elias and John Scotson observe, the regularities in migrations. They argue that with the arrival of the immigrants the previous "old" independent groups become interdependent as neighbours. The "old" inhabitants would form a community that fought against the newcomers, the "established" against the "outsiders". Seniority of habitation in the area is the decisive factor in the formation of a gap between the old and new inhabitants. By keeping the newly arrived inhabitants at a distance, by rejecting them and ascribing them a lower status, the old inhabitants could preserve their status and position of power (Elias, Scotson 1965: 149, after Čapo Žmegač 2007: 153).

After the exodus, the Slovenes and Italians from the region realigned themselves against the newcomers. The Italians arriving from the Croatian part of Istria were perceived as "others" as well, which shows that ethnicity was not always a decisive factor. As an Italian informant, a newcomer from Croatia, commented, in the eyes of Italians from the Slovenian part of Istria she will always remain just an "immigrant". Related research shows a dislike for immigrants, perceived as privileged in competition for basic needs such as housing and jobs (Tanc 2001; Čapo Žmegač 2007; Fakin, Jerman 2004). As a local Istrian commented: "Immigrants got housing for free, entire farms! They simply made them owners immediately. They worked in collectives. Those who were not worth a thing went into collectives. They went to the field with an accordion and a flag!"

Although today many descendants of immigrants oppose this perception, stating that their immigrant parents or grandparents received no privileges, some individual memories confirm that certain craftsmen who were in demand were lured to Istria by being awarded certain privileges, apartments for example. An Istrian director of a construction company ventured to the neighbouring Karst in search of missing craftsmen, offering jobs and housing in Istria:

> I did not have masons here [Piran]. And where did I go? I went to the Karst. [...] I knew that there are masons in Renče, I knew that there are carpenters in Dutovlje ... And I came up, we had a meeting, I said: "Listen. We need masons down there. Are you willing? You get a house, an apartment." [...] I went to Dutovlje. "I need carpenters, cabinet-makers too, if you come." […] And I got masons from one place, carpenters from another. [...] And I went to the housing office, to the municipality. "I need some houses for the people I will bring." And the director gave me a cardboard box, a shoe box, full of keys!!! There was a label, a street name and a house number on each. "Here you go," he said, "Choose. Wherever you want!"

With the exodus, craftsmen and other professionals disappeared, which created a need for a skilled workforce (Kalc 2019). The same was reported by my interlocutors: "Everybody was missing, because they had gone away […], engineers, doctors too, teachers ..." Despite the need for workforce, especially the highly educated, the inflow was limited due to housing problems (Kalc 2019).

The concept of home as perceived by immigrants can help to further clarify the social boundaries present in contemporary Istria and to answer the question "who besides the 'natives' is Istrian today?" Many immigrants from inland Slovenia and former Yugoslavia did not identify with Mediterranean environment and Venetian heritage of the Istrian towns. One interviewee, who came to Koper with his family after WW II as a refugee escaping the fascist oppression of the Slovenian minority in the area of Trieste, acknowledged that the new settlers lack trans-generational memories linked to their new home environment and are not very attached to the place. Departure has broken the primary ties to the place of the population who left their homes: "That's what we miss here where we settled … the connections, the stories, knowing what happened here in this house, for example, who lived here … These ties were broken when the majority left. That's why we don't have any attitude, let's say, towards certain buildings. If it was about our own ancestors, it'd be different" (Hrobat Virloget 2015a: 174, 2019). This seems to be true especially for the settlers who did not find any resemblance to their previous homes in their new environment, some of them having seen the sea for the first time.

The published life stories (Pahor 2007, 2011, 2014; Menih 2011) and interviews indicate that some of the immigrants originating from totally different environments have adapted to the Mediterranean way of life, while others maintain a nostalgic attachment to their place of birth. One interviewee, an immigrant from the

former Yugoslav republic of Serbia, explains that his life and the lives of his immigrant friends took place around factories, on football pitches and around housing blocks, all of which are places that lie outside the old town centre. In contrast to Italian Istrians, who identify with Venetian heritage (Hrobat Virloget 2019), this heritage does not seem to hold any value for him. His affections, memories and roots remain with his place of origin, to which he is still considering returning and building a house (ibid.). As migration researchers contend, the return home as the "natural" outcome of the migration process derives from a strong tie between a person and her/his land of origin (homeland). These immigrants do not experience their new social and physical environment as "their own" (cf. Čapo Žmegač 2013, 2015: 184–189).

However, looking from the Slovenian national perspective, at least the emigrants from inland Slovenia refer to Istria as "ours", Slovene: As noted above, in their eyes Italians are frequently perceived as foreigners who settled in Istria only recently (during the time of fascism). As a teacher who immigrated from Ljubljana commented, "there were still locals, but they emigrated back to Italy from here. Masses!" The phrase "back to" clearly expresses her perception of who is native to Istria.

Under the influence of Yugoslav collective memory, immigrants do not seem to have known a lot about the local contested past, at least those who came later, when Italians remained only as a minority. The lack of awareness concerning life in a bilingual society is evident in their responses, and many of them never learned Italian (although their children did). On the other hand, a feeling of being overlooked by these immigrants can be discerned among the remaining Italians:

> This first Slovenian wave [of immigrants] is the one who respected us the most. […] We understood each other. They came and they cannot say, 'you were not there' because they found us here. They were the ones who came from elsewhere while we were already here. [...] Then another round of people, all from Bosnia, came after the war. [...] They brought their traditions, their world. They brought little respect for this place [...].

The narratives indicate the importance of "oldness" in the place in the construction of Italian identity and the feelings of being invaded by "others" who lack respect for "their" heritage. Italian memories are anchored in the pre-war material environment of the Istrian towns and they are hurt by many post-war changes to the historical built environment or simply by observing its decay (Hrobat Virloget 2019). As one Italian interlocutor remarked:

> The palace … It has been undergoing reconstruction for so long … But it's always closed, abandoned, they don't take any care of it … The same goes for many things in Capodistria, more respect should be paid to the environment … From the trees which are so easily cut down … /…/ They don't have this sentiment, they say we are Mediterranean … Us? /…/ I never felt Mediterranean /…/ This is the Adriatic. We

> were born on the sea. We love the light /…/. Those who came, well, embrace this light! No! Let's cover everything! Heavy jutting roofs, everything covered! One does this in a different climate, not here. So they have no sensibility for the local and they bring things from other environments … But this here is a different type of environment also in terms of culture, climate and all these aspects …

Besides Italian Istrians, a strong perception of "home" in relation to Istria can also be perceived among the immigrants who came from the wider Primorska region. According to historians (Kalc 2019; Titl 1961) and my interviewees, they were mostly part of the first influx. When describing the towns on their arrival, they emphasize the peaceful cohabitation with Italians in their new home environment. Here they experienced a way of life that was familiar from their original homes, a kind of Mediterranean lifestyle, an "open" way of life which includes speaking Italian and the regional Slovene dialect with Italian words characteristic of the Primorska region (see Todorović 2016), chatting on the streets, shopping in Trieste, enjoying Mediterranean food etc. Whether arriving from the Slovenian minority in the Trieste area and emigrating due to fascist oppression, or coming from the wider Primorska region and being accustomed to everyday business in Trieste, they spoke Italian upon their arrival and were already used to living with Italians. Therefore they had a different attitude towards the remaining Italian Istrians. In a way they simply continued their habitual everyday communication in their new environment. One interesting case is that of an immigrant, the daughter of a partisan fighter, originally from Brkini (in Primorska), who came to Izola/Isola in 1954 after spending a few years living in the house of an expelled German family in the Kočevje region, where she was waiting to "return home" while the border with Italy was being determined. Describing her childhood in Izola and her school days in Koper, she described the rapid changes in the structure of the population:

> Italian was very much present then. These things changed very quickly. […] These empty homes and new blocks were built ... They were filled with people from Štajerska, many immigrants from Maribor and from Gorenjska, Jesenice. This was not a coincidence. Maribor had a lot of industrial engineers. Jesenice as well, probably because of the ironworks. These people, this cadre, were extremely welcome because in Koper, later in Izola too, mechanization began with the Tomos factory. The spaces filled up quickly. In the second part of elementary school […] I already had classmates from all over Slovenia. So, upon my arrival, I was alone [among speakers of the Istrian dialect – a mix of Slovene and Italian]. Young families poured in from all over. [...] Very, very quickly this area was filled with Slovenes. Those who came after did not have as much contact with Italian culture as I did.

Later on she explains that these children had to learn Italian from scratch, and observes that "this wave of immigrants that came after we did, they did not feel this kind of attachment [to this region]".

From this this kind of narrative we can conclude that the "others" are not composed only of "working class" people from the republics of Yugoslavia other than Slovenia who had arrived during the last mass influx, but also of immigrants from inland Slovenia who arrived during the previous influx that coincided with the mass "exodus". The research confirms the regularities observed by Norbert Elias and John Scotson (1965; Čapo Žmegač 2007: 153), i.e. that "the established" redefine themselves in relation to the later immigrants, "the outsiders", regardless of ethnic origin and according to the question of who was there first.

Although it has been observed in the rural hinterland of Istria that after the formation of the independent states of Slovenia and Croatia the previous common identity of Istrians split into two separate regional-national identities, the Croatian Istrian and Slovenian "Šavrin" (Brumen 2001), this boundary is not clear in the present study. What is strong is the perception of the latest influx of immigrants from former republics of Yugoslavia other than Slovenia as "others", however, this was already present before the declaration of Slovenian independence in 1991.

It is also interesting to note the boundary between the "established", "native" Istrians and those who came from the neighbouring parts of the wider Primorska region and shared historical similarities such as living under Italian rule and with Italians. Although both groups feel "at home" in Istria, the native Istrians still perceive the latter group as "others", but less so than immigrants arriving from inland Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

CONCLUSION: ON THE ISTRIAN EXODUS IN MEMORIES AND SHIFTING BOUNDARIES IN THE NEW ISTRIAN SOCIETY

This study attempts to address the taboo question of the Istrian exodus and its aftermath, which has been subjected to collective amnesia and misinterpretations for many years. It deals with memories and sentiments, some visible but most of them marginalized and silenced. The article highlights various Italian and Slovene national discourses on the exodus, which also include silences. These silences can be interpreted as the consequences of incompatible individual and collective memories, but also as the results of traumas, power struggles and the reshuffling of the community's social hierarchy. The ethnographic data have augmented the findings of historians concerning the two main processes of the exodus in northern Istria: the sporadic migrations and mass migrations after the annexation of Zone B of the FTT to Yugoslavia (from 1955 to the beginning of 1957).

The diverse structure of the immigrant population was presented to enable the understanding of the ethnological analysis of the shifting social boundaries in

Istrian society after the exodus. In the pre-exodus period the main symbolic divide separated the ethnic categories of Italian vs. Slavic, which coincided with urban vs. rural categories, the latter in a pejorative sense. With regard to the strong emphasis on ethnicity in the social hierarchy, fascist ideology must have played an important role, with its strong ethnic segregation linked to ideas of superiority and "civiltà". The present research confirms the observations made by Norbert Elias and John Scotson (1965; Čapo Žmegač 2007) concerning the redefinition of social boundaries in a society composed largely of immigrants. The members of the post-exodus society realigned themselves according to the claims of "oldness" in the area along territorial lines, while ethnicity no longer played an important role.

The first settlers to arrive, who came mostly from Istria, Zone A of the FTT (the area around Trieste) and the wider Primorska region, would align themselves with the Italian Istrians against "the others", composed of immigrants from outside the wider region who did not speak Italian. The boundary dividing the community was made regardless of ethnic affiliation; it did not matter whether the settlers had arrived from inland Slovenia or elsewhere in Yugoslavia. An even more pronounced status of "other" seems to have been given to immigrants who arrived during the most recent mass influx, who came from republics of Yugoslavia other than Slovenia, and are perceived as the "working class" or "rural" in the pejorative sense. It is interesting to note that "rural" in pre-exodus times denoted the Slavs as opposed to the "urban", "civilized" Italians, while in post-exodus times "rural" has come to represent the opposite of "urban", "Istrian", Slovene and Italian. It remains unclear, however, whether this last boundary is linked only to "oldness" within the territory or also to ethnicity. In any case it seems that the "ethnic other" was already present during the time of Yugoslavia and probably became more pronounced after Slovenia's declaration of independence.

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POVZETEK

ISTRSKI »EKSODUS« IN ISTRSKA DRUŽBA PO NJEM

Katja HROBAT VIRLOGET

Namen članka je analizirati socialne procese v istrski družbi po »eksodusu«, ki je v dosedanjih raziskavah zapostavljena tema. Avtorica v uvodu najprej predstavi kompleksnost teme t. i. »istrskega eksodusa«, ki še po desetletjih buri duhove tako v Italiji kot Sloveniji. Tudi individualni spomini, v katerih se avtorica srečuje z molkom, so pod vplivom konfliktov, nastalih kot posledica različnih interpretacij »eksodusa«. Molk interpretira kot posledico neskladnosti med individualnimi in dominantnimi spomini, boja za družbeno moč, čustvenih travm in spremenjenih družbenih vlog. Zgodovinska spoznanja o različnih migracijah avtorica dopolni z etnografsko raziskavo, v kateri se pokaže, da so sporadične migracije po priključitvi obravnavanega ozemlja Jugoslaviji zamenjale masovne migracije. V analizi simbolnih meja in odnosa priseljencev in domačinov do »doma« avtorica potrdi predhodne sociološke hipoteze, da se v skupnosti migrantov meje lahko preoblikujejo glede na to, koliko časa nekdo živi v regiji.

Raziskava je pokazala, da so se simbolne meje iz obdobja pred »exodusom«, ki so temeljile na etničnem razlikovanju, tj. na slovansko *versus* italijansko, urbano (civilizirano) *versus* ruralno, preoblikovale na temelju regionalnega ključa oziroma časa bivanja v regiji, medtem ko etničnost ni več igrala pomembne vloge. Meja se je namreč vzpostavila med t. i. domačini, ki so lahko ali slovenski ali italijanski Istrani ali tudi prvi prišleki iz širšega primorskega prostora, vajeni sobivanja z Italijani, in »drugimi«, torej vsemi poznejšimi priseljenci, ki so v Istro prihajali z masovnimi migracijami. Tudi tu etnični element ni igral bistvene vloge, domačini so se kot skupnost vzpostavili proti vsem poznejšim prišlekom. Se pa v pripovedih zazna tudi »etničnega drugega«. Predstavljajo ga ljudje iz nekdanjih jugoslovanskih republik, ki so kot delovna sila v Istro prišli v najpoznejših masovnih migracijah v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih 20. stoletja.