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THE "ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE MITTELEUROPEA"
IN THE EYES OF THE PRESS, 1974-1991

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1. Introduction

This paper addresses the conference subject through a little detour. Instead of examining the "image of Central Europe" in the media, we examine it in the views of a grass-roots socio-cultural "Mitteleuropean movement", started in 1974 in south-eastern Friuli. The movement attracted a certain attention of local, national and foreign media, whose reports also include some elemental images of Central Europe.

The source of data is the collection of newspaper clippings and other documentary material found in the archives of the Association. It can be reasonably maintained that this is the most complete source on the subject (save, perhaps, those in the Italian Secret Intelligence Services). The treatment is simply qualitative.

2. A Brief history of Movimento Mitteleuropeo

On October 26, 1974, about a hundred people gathered at a genuinely Neapolitan pizzeria in Cervignano, a town of 12.000 in southeastern Friuli, for a dinner in celebration of Kaiser Franz Josef, whose portrait presided the tables. The menu was based on Hungarian Gulasch, Tyrolean Kaiserfleisch, and German beer. When the imperial anthem was played, everybody stood in silence. The mood was a mixture of playfulness, arousal and pathos.

The word spread to Gorizia, Trieste and Trento, and after a few months, (february 1975) the group, now about 200 strong, met for a similar celebration in Gradisca, a few kilometers away. By December, the number of participants to a third dinner, in Monfalcone, had grown to 350; and there was a brass band from Trieste, in Imperial Marine uniform, specialized in K.u.K marches. By April 1976, 600 people gathered at the Dreher

Brewery, in Trieste, in Trieste; a distinctively Mitteleuropean structure.

One would expect that these people were rickety leftovers of the old loyalist nobility, or the heirs of the K.u.K public officialdom. Nothing of the sort. These were ^{mostly} genuine ~~low to~~ ~~lower~~-middle class, ~~mostly~~ energetic young adults, employed in modern trades, like banking.

There were no halls large enough in the region to hold the "mitteleuropean" crowds, so the next event was staged as an outdoor festival. The hamlet of Giassico near Cormons was chosen, for many good reasons; one being its physical suitability to such gatherings; the second being that the villages of the area were famous for having transversed sixty years of Italian rule without losing their traditional, although muted, loyalty to the old regime; the third was its central location with respect to the three concerned provinces, Udine, Gorizia and Trieste. The date was the Imperial Birthday, August 18. The "festa" was equipped, besides the usual stands for barbecue, beverages, dancing platform, etc., also with shops of Hapsburg insignia, memorabilia, stickers, books and cards, etc. Several thousand people attended. P

The phenomenon was strange enough as to tickle the curiosity of the press. While the local newspapers kept contemptuously silent, two of the leading Italian weeklies, "Panorama" and "Il Settimanale", happened to be informed of the very first Kaiser dinner, and ran rather amused but good-natured articles on it (November 14 and 21, 1974). Two months later, however, the leading Italian literary expert of Mitteleuropean matters, Claudio Magris, published on the "high-brow" national weekly "Il Mondo" (23.1.1975) an essay on the Hapsburg revival in Europe, with a few side snipes to the "know-nothing" vulgarities on the subject, with clear reference to the Cervignano dinner. By the end of the year, the news had spread to the neighboring Carinthian press (Kaerntner Tageszeitung, and Kleine Zeitung, both 14-11-1975) and also the local press started to pay some attention (the Udine fortnightly "Il Punto", 15-2-1976, the Trieste Weekly "Il meridiano", 6.5.1976). Perhaps more important, the Mitteleuropean movement had received ample and respectful reportages by the newly founded leading Italian Conservative daily, i. e. "il Giornale" of Indro Montanelli (6.12. 1975 and 4.5. 1976).

In 1977 the Associazione "Civiltà Mitteleuropea" staged three rallies where the "philosophy" and the "political" goals of the group were spelled out, and links with like-minded movements in neighboring regions were established. In January, 1200 people met in the Cervignano sports hall; among them, representatives of the Sudtiroler Volkspartei, of the Dolomite Ladinos, of the Movimento Friuli, the Movimento Trentino, Slovene "whites", Triestino committees, etc. Several reporters and a team of the Austrian television was there. In April, many thousands people responded to the call of the Associazione Culturale Mitteleuropea

to celebrate in Aquileia the 900th anniversary of the "foundation of the Friulian State", considered the expression both of the Friulian "nation" and of its links with the German culture area (the Patriarchate of Aquileia was a creation of the German emperors and, in its early centuries, staffed by a clearly German feudal ruling class). Finally, in December the Associazione organized a meeting in Udine, the capital of Friuli, to establish a local chapter. The local press either ignored the event or published violently disparaging comments.

On the contrary, as noted, the Austrian media were paying growing attention to the phenomenon. Leonardt Paulmichl produced a TV documentary titled "Viva l'Austria", broadcast on Channel I, on October 13, 1976 (a second documentary of the same director was produced in 1981, asnd broadcast on January 11). Several newspapers of the Austro-German culture area reported on the Friulian mitteleuropeo movement: "Kurier", April 6, 1977; "Dolomiten", April 16-7, 1977; "Voralberger Nachrichten", 14-10 1976; "Kleine Zeityng", 18.7.1977; "Passauer Neue Presse", 27-8-1978; "Die Presse", 27-8-1980. On the "Neue Kronen Zeitung", columnist Ernst Trost has often reported and commented the subject; and, of course, neighboring Carinthia newspaper regularly publish news on it.

In 1978, the Associazione "Civiltà Mitteleuropea" threw its considerable weight in the electoral arena, supporting the ethnic-regional party, Movimento Friuli. This inevitably lead to a split between its Friulian wing, headed by the original Cervignano group (Paolo Petiziol) and the Trieste wing. The first round was won by the Triestino fraction; the Cervignano group was thrown out of the Associazione, and founded a parallel association, named "Associazione Culturale Mitteleuropea". For a couple of years there was some nasty bickering between the two, with reciprocal charges of various sorts. The differences were both "regional" - the Triestini could hardly bear to be lead by a group from puny Cervignano - and ideological. The Friulian group was more conservative and confessional, seeking support mainly in the Catholic parties, both in Friuli, in South Tyrol, Austria and Bavaria; the Trieste group reflected the predominantly lay political culture of that city, sympathized rather with the neutralist policies of the socialist Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky, and paid particular attention to the Slavic components of Trieste (while the Friulian group orients itself distinctively to the Austro-German world). The Giassico celebrations for a couple of years were organized by the Trieste group; but then this retreated to more municipal politics (its leader, Paolo Parovel, had been elected city councillor in 1980), and the leadership of the Movement, outside Trieste, was recaptured by the Cervignano group (1).

In the last few years, the movement has stabilized itself organizationally. The Imperial Birthday Celebrations in Giassico have become one of the largest folk festival in the region. Since 1988, it has been renamed "Festival of the peoples of Mitteleuropa", the change is not without meaning. The attendance,

in the three evenings, runs in the tens of thousands. People come not only from the Trieste-Gorizia Area, but from many other Italian regions as well; and rather strong is the participation from Carinthia and Austria in general. Regional authorities, both of Friuli and of Carinthia (not Slovenia or Croatia, until now; tyhings may change after the demise of the Communist regime), attend or send well-wishing messages; so do members of national and European parliament. Intellectuals, like the late Leonardo Sciascia, the famous Sicilian writer - have been drawn here, to interpret the phenomenon, and write about it (2). In 1990, Claudio Magris is quoted as having uttered appreciative remarks (3). Local and national dailies regularly report on the event (4) which, year after year, has enriched itself with more massive and refined pageantry, with bands and ballets coming farther and farther; but also with historical exhibitions, multi-language divine services, cultural-political debates, civil ceremonies (for instance, the bestowing of medals to surviving K.u.K. servicemen). The Associazione Culturale Mitteleuropea also multiplied its activities throughout the year, staging other, more local celebrations (two formal balls, participation to events elsewhere, study tours). Among her most significant achievements, the return (1981) of a bronze statue of Kaiser Maximilian in the central square of Cormons, whence it had been removed by Italian occupants in 1915. Delegations of the Associazione are regularly invited to festivals, peagants and ceremonies in neighboring Carinthia; they have established particularly solid friendship ties with civic authorities in Klagenfurt. Perhaps their greatest hour, so far, was their admission as the only official delegation from Italy inside St.Stephen's Dome in Vienna, for Empress Zita's funerals (April 1st, 1989) (5). Local chapters have been established in other places - one in nothing less than Milan (1989) (6). But Giassico remains the climax of the whole movement, having made herself a name, in a wide area, from Turin to Kracow, from Regensburg to Budapest, as the only place in the old Central Europe where the Hapsburg myth lives on among the populace (7).

3. Some explanatory hupotheses

How could all this happen? and why just here? We offer here an interpretation pertaining the 1) the cultural re-legitimation of the Mitteleuropa concept, occurred in the Trieste-Gorizia area and from here spread to the whole Italian culture; 2) the loss of loyalty to the Italian Nation-State, because of its various "crises" of the seventies; 3) the growth of regional-ethnic, autonomists movements in the region Friuli-Venezia Giulia. 4) micro-local factors, pertaining to the Cervignano area (8).

a) The legitimization and popularization of the Mitteleuropa concept.

The concept of Mitteleuropa and of the "Hapsburg myth" had

been introduced in Italian high culture in 1963 by a book of bright young Germanist from Trieste, then at the University of Turin, Claudio Magris. In his wake (but pointedly without his participation), a political-cultural group in Gorizia (progressive Christian-democrats, supported by a Jesuit cultural center, the Austrian cultural attachè in Rome, etc.) launched (1966) the "Incontri Culturali Mitteleuropei", yearly gatherings of (50-100) intellectuals of Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, to discuss subjects like poetry, literature, architecture, philosophy, music, theater, etc; mostly in an historical perspective. Usually, the concept of "Mitteleuropa" served more as a geographical framework of the phenomena discussed, than a subject of discussion (9). The overall goal of the initiative was to provide a cultural legitimation to the efforts of Gorizia to rebuild the cultural ties with her traditional Danube "hinterland", as a featherbedding for the rebuilding of economic relations (the "open frontier" policy). These meetings popularized and completely legitimized the concept of Mitteleuropa in the regional culture; albeit still only at a high-brow level (10).

b) National factors: the Italian crisis

In the seventies, many Italians felt that their country was in an awful mess. The economy was in crisis, for many reasons, both internal (sudden growth of cost of labor, 1973 energy shock, two-digits inflation, etc.). The 1968 "revolution" left a legacy of disorders in many institutions. Leftist culture was hegemonic, and the Communist party seemed on the verge of seizing power by means of free elections ("compromesso storico", "sorpasso"). Some representatives of South Tyrol declared that, in that case, they would secede from Italy. Crime was swelling; particularly fearsome was the spread of the kidnapping industry, from its traditional Sardinian and Calabrian bases to the rest of country; and of organized crime (Mafia and Camorra). New social customs, like drug addiction and liberated sex (pornography, etc.) also were spreading. A series of political scandals, exposing rampant corruption at the higher levels, exploded. Political violence and terrorism were shaking the country in a bloody escalation, culminated later with the Moro murder. The Italian state seemed powerless to control all this, and its legitimacy dropped. A fault between North and South emerged, both because crime was blamed mostly on the South, but also because the crisis of the State was in part plamed on its mostly Southern personnel. In this disarray, in some quarters of the country - in the Northern regions, and especially in the North-Eastern ones - the memories of better times began to resurface. In contrast to the present chaos, the good old Habsburg administration seemed a model of equity and efficiency. "Revisionist" books on old Austria, the Habsburg dynasty, Maria Theresia, Radetzky, Mitteleuropa etc. found growing audiences. In 1980, important celebrations were held, in many formerly Hapsburg Northern Italian regions, in honor of Maria Theresia. Her monumental portrait, together with

her son Joseph's, were restored in the main lecture hall in the University of Pavia, whence they had been banned since Lombardy's annexation to Piedmont, 1860. Writers from the Trieste and Friuli area - Magris, Tomizza, Sgorlon, Cergoly, etc. - became bestsellers nationwide. Austria and other formerly K.K countries, like Hungary, became favourite dreamlands for growing numbers of Italian visitors.

c) Regional factors

In this framework, more local factors came into play. Trieste and Gorizia have belonged for some 500 years to the Hapsburg empire. Although predominantly Italian in culture, they were ethnically composite, with strong Slovene lower-class minorities, a German-speaking upper class, and other groups. The Gorizia plains, west of the Isonzo, was (and is) solidly Friulian; Gorizia itself was usually and officially defined as "Gorz in Friaul", i. e. belonging to the same cultural as the province of Udine, which was part of the venetian "Terraferma" dominion. The Friulian identity was taken for granted in Gorizia, throughout the centuries, and strongly stressed since the mid-XIX century. The Austrian administration held a subtle and sophisticated balance between all the different ethnic, national and territorial claims, granting a large degree of autonomy and recognition to the different groups. The loyalty of the great majority of these peoples to the Hapsburg Empire was solid. When Italy conquered this land, in 1918, all these traditions was brutally suppressed, National Italian values and institutions imposed, and history completely rewritten, both in schoolbooks and in the physical environment (statues, monuments, names of streets and squares; even the landscape was italianized). Immigration from the rest of Italy was encouraged. During fascist times, and well into the 1950's, the suspicion of being "austriacante" could lead to unpleasant consequences. This forced the collective memories underground, and the signs of those times - the pictures of Father or Grandfather in Austrian military uniforms, the medals, the diplomas, the furniture etc. - ended up in the attics or in the cellars, where they mostly disintegrated forever. But some survived, and re-emerged when the political-cultural climate changed.

The change came when Friuli-Venezia Giulia ceased to be a "closed frontier", a "bulwark" against "Northern and Eastern barbarism", a place of ethnic and civilizational clash (as it was defined by Italian nationalist propaganda), and redefined herself as a "bridge" between Italy and the Danube area. This came in the early sixties, in connection with the pacification of the South-Tyrol question, and the improvement of relations between Austria and Italy; and the contemporary opening of the frontier with Communist Yugoslavia. At the same time, the area was given a degree of self government, with the setting up of the Autonomous Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia. This set in motion various political processes; one of them being the growth of ethnic-regional identity in Friuli, and the birth of a corresponding

political movement ("Movimento Friuli"). One of the components of Friulian identity is the emphasis on the non-latin (Celtic, Langobard, German) genetic bases of this "lesser nation", its claim of being not an Italian, but a different neo-latin group, like the Swiss Retho-Romantsch (11). This, of course, implies a stressing of the distinction from other Italians, and especially from Southerners. It can hardly be denied that one of the reasons of the growth of Friulian identity and movement is the unhappiness with Southern immigration, especially in the public service sector; the authorities here, from the Prefect to the mailman, from the schoolteacher to the carabinieri, mostly speak with Southern accent. This anti-southern attitude is undoubtedly one of the deep forces propelling, at least initially, both the Movimento Friuli and the Movimento Mitteleuropeo. The fact that the latter was born in a neapolitan pizzeria, whose owner, Gegè Imbimbo, was an honorary member and close friend of the founding group, only gives a typically Italian, paradoxically good-natured, flavor to the story.

d) Local factors

Some hypotheses could be spun on the reasons why the Movimento Mitteleuropeo was born in Cervignano and in Cormons, instead of Trieste or Gorizia; excluding the indeterminable personality factor. One more general explanation could descend from the theory of borders (11). Both Cervignano and Cormons had been for centuries right on the boundary between the Venetian (and since 1866 Italian) and the Hapsburg states, and, like most border towns, were particularly sensitive to and proud of the difference. They were the "Austrian Friulians", in amiable opposition to the "Italian Friulians" "across the stones". (Boundary stones, with the Austrian insignia, dotted their territory, long after the 1918 annexation). Being small towns, they were mostly working-class and rural, and thus less affected by Italian Nationalism, a characteristically bourgeois, i. e. urban, phenomenon, always stronger in Gorizia and Trieste. In the case of Cervignano, the fact that Marshal Radetzky, having married in the local church a local lady, was almost a household figure, may have played some part.

4. "Warum nur in Friaul?"

Could something of this sort happen elsewhere in the former Hapsburg countries? Hardly, in those times. Certainly not in the socialist countries, as long as the regime had the power to suppress all expressions of nostalgia for those "reactionary" times. But as soon as the cap was lifted, we have seen it erupting all over the place; there is no need to recall the innumerable signs of "Mitteleuropen revival", from Cracow (13) to Zagreb.

Certainly not in Germany, where Mitteleuropa had at least three meanings unpalatable to the dominant political culture: the first is the "pangermanic" Mitteleuropa, exemplified by the name of Friedrich Naumann, and then associated with the Nazi "Drang

nach Osten"; the second is the multi-national, "hybrid", weak and inefficient political organization of the Hapsburg (the world of Schweik, of "Oesterreichische Schlamperei") which most Germans (either "Prussians" or Bavarians) never appreciated too much; the third, more modern, is the idea of a "neutral", demilitarized, Mitteleuropa, as a strategy to lure Germany away from the Western allies, to build a Europe in opposition not only to Russia and Communism, but also to America and capitalism. Thus, only very weak signs of interest for the concept could be detected in Germany, in the seventies (14).

Why the Mitteleuropean revival did not start in Austria is perhaps a little more intriguing. It probably has to do with the contentment with the domestic "petit bonheur", miraculously obtained at the cost of political eclipse; with the deliberate (and often vulgar) folklorization of the Hapsburg memories, seen only as a tourist attraction, but strictly denied of any meaning on the political, practical as well as intellectual level; and with the absolute break with the imperial past, and hence the self-imposed limitations in the scope of relations with neighboring countries, which would exclude any reference to past situations, to history (15). For many years, the Austrian government stayed fastidiously clear from the Movimento Mitteleuropeo; and, on the contrary, often let know her displeasure with it. Only in the eighties, when the Movimento won acceptance by Italian authorities, and when Austria began again to search a role for herself in the tumultuous Pan-european system-in-the making, did authorities in Vienna show some interest for the Mitteleuropean Movement in Friuli (16).

Only in Friuli and Trieste, then, the right mixture of factors occurred - just the right degree of unhappiness with present social, political, and moral conditions, leading to the search of a radically different, better world, a little utopian model of order, efficiency, justice, self-government, etc; just the right degree of marginality and estrangement, so as to be unaware of the darker sides of the real, historical Mitteleuropa; and just the right degree of political freedom to organize memories and programs around it and to publicly express sentiments about it.

5) The ideas of the Movimento Mitteleuropeo

In this section we shall try to spell out the guiding ideas of the Movimento Mitteleuropeo, to which only passis reference has been made so far. Some of them compose the "image of Central Europe" in the mind of the Movimento. Needless to say, their "objective truth" or "realism" is not in question here; some of them are clearly questionable. The order in which they are here listed is not of importance. It is typical of all "ideologies" to constitute a circular set, and not a linear hierarchy, of mutually supporting ideas. It can also be noted here that there

has been, in this 16-years' history, a sliding of the emphases, from a regional to a continental level. In the first years, the accent seems to have been on Friuli's differences from the rest of Italy, and its appartenance to Central Europe; in the more recent ones, the emphasis is on Mitteleuropean heritage (shared also by Friuli) as an anticipation and a moment in the formation of a United (Pan) Europe.

a) Friulians are not like other Italians; they are a distinct ethnic group. One of the main basis of distinction is the multi-dimensional, (historical, genetic, cultural, social etc.) influence from the Northern, "German" culture area (Celts, Langobards, German feudality, Hapsburg rule, etc). This distinct Friulian identity had been suppressed by Italy; but it had been appreciated and promoted when Friuli, or parts of it, had been part of the Hapsburg system (17). Therefore, it is in the Friulian's moral duty, as well as interest, to revive the ancient links with Austria.

b) Italy had grossly falsified history, trying to cancel every memory of the Austrian and, more broadly, Mitteleuropean past of this land. It is a matter of ethics, of intellectual honesty, of justice, to tell the true story, and to restore the symbols of that past. The revival of the Hapsburg symbolism - the two-headed eagle, the ubiquitous portrait of avuncular Franz Josef - is not a manifestation of Monarchist doctrines, of an attempt to turn history back and to restore the Hapsburg in Vienna. Rather, it is a revenge against 60 years of systematic, deliberate historical falsification.

c) Italy - no matter whether liberal, fascist or republican, - has been since its birth a centralistic, "unitarian" state, intolerant of any internal differentiation. Ethnic-regional minorities are not recognized. By contrast, old Austria was a model of a pluralist political system, in which a number of larger and lesser nations co-existed peacefully through very sophisticated institutional arrangements. Italy grants very little autonomies to local communities, while self-government was much larger under Austria. Ethnic regions like Friuli, who had experienced that situation, are more legitimized to claim similar treatment from Rome (18).

d) Old Austria was a model of administrative efficiency and honesty: justice was given equitably and in reasonable times, pensions were paid on the first day of retirement, police was rigorous but honest, public works were carried out competently, rapidly and without corruption, everybody paid their right taxes because was confident in the use of public money, social policies were more advanced in old Austria than in Italy; people were loyal to the government and trusted in God (19). Exactly the opposite of all this, of course, prevailed in the Italy of the Seventies. Memory of those good old times should be cultivated not as idle nostalgia, but as a source of inspiration and

commitment to live up to them again.

e) One of the main political goals of the present generation is the building of a United Europe. In this endeavour, the Hapsburg Empire stands as a model of multi-national system, which was peacefully evolving toward a true federal arrangement. Thus it is an anticipation and a source of inspiration for the future United Europe. Mitteleuropa could have been, and can again be, a nucleus of a whole, integrated Europe. To feel Mitteleuropean is only a special way to feel European (20).

f) In the desired United Europe, all ethnic-regional groups and minorities will be recognized and given a just place ("Europe of the Regions"). Also Friuli can put her hopes for dignity and identity only in the weakening of the Italian state within a stronger, federalist Europe.

g) Mitteleuropa is essentially the area formerly under the Hapsburg rule and influence; plus Bavaria and some other undetermined parts of southern Germany, having had a mostly separate political history, but strong genetic-cultural commonalities with Austria.

6. The image of Mitteleuropa in the Italian press

The reactions of the cultural-political Italian establishment to the Movimento Mitteleuropeo, as reflected in the local and national press, were rather mixed, as we have seen (21). The Movimento's insistence on the distinction between Friulians and other Italians, and especially Southerners, elicited the charge of "racism", which is almost automatic in the face of any ethnic-regional movement. Its celebration of the good old Austrian times was labelled as "anti-historical", a serious indictment in a culture long dominated by "historicist" philosophies, both liberal (Benedetto Croce) and Marxian. Its emphasis on the resumption of good-neighbor relations across the border drew the charge of "separatism" also serious in a country with the problem of South Tyrol still open and with a then still disputed Eastern boundary. That is why the movement specially in the early years, had been monitored very closely by Italian security services. The central icon of the movimento, Kaiser Franz Josef (which the press consistently referred to with the contemptuous nickname "Cecco Beppe", of Risorgimento origin and occasional contacts with Otto von Hapsburg elicited the charges of Monarchism; which, in republican rhetoric, prevalent in Italy, is associated with reactionarism, with feudal privileges, with idle, corrupt and parasitic nobility, with court pomp and wastes, with authoritarianism, hierarchy and militarism. The old charge of "austriacantismo" was resumed, with all the connotations of treason of Italian national interests.

The image of Mitteleuropa prevalent in the press (it must be stressed that the rank-and file Italian journalists, in the

average, have only a modest education) in the early years of the Movimento was that of a quaint Alpine world, inhabited by rather gross and stolid people in colorful, funny traditional costumes, playing marches and given to the consumption of "rivers of beers and mountains of sausages" (this was, for many years, the stereotyped description of the Giassico festival in the local press); or by fatuous aristocrat-officers dancing waltzes in glittering uniforms in sumptuous Rococo ballrooms (the Operetta world, beamed by the popular New Year Concert from Vienna). However, under the surface both are seen as heirs to the "barbarians" that for millennia had threatened and ravaged Italy; more closely, heirs to a regime that had ruled Italy with brutality, as witnessed by the martyrs of the Risorgimento; prone to hanging opponents (Franz Josef was usually called, by Italian irredentist, the "Boia", the Executioner), and to massacre wounded and prisoners (in the battles of the Great War). Little difference is done, in Italian middle culture, between Austria and Germany; so that a continuity is seen between Austrian rule in the Risorgimento Italy and Nazi occupation in 1943-45. Nostalgia for Mitteleuropa is branded as "Pan-germanism"; Franz Josef confused with Otto Von Bismarck (22), and the spiked helm put on Austrian heads (the bones of Constantin Frantz must have been rather restless, those days). Contacts of the Movimento Mitteleuropeo with the South-Tyrolese Volkspartei raised suspicions of collusion with "terrorists", and those with Bavarian CDU of "clerical reactionarism".

In later years, the attitude of the press changed considerably. The early attacks and the ironic and disparaging reports gave way to more respectful ones, as the suspicions of separatism faded and the Giassico festival became, to some degree, "Floklorized". The local press still keeps at a distance, reporting the events and printing communiques, but usually abstaining from substantial comments; which only reflects the uneasy relation between the Movimento Mitteleuropeo and the political establishment. Although some local (communal and provincial) authorities, as well as national and European members of parliament, do participate to some of the events staged by the Associazione Culturale Mitteleuropea, the much more powerful Regional Government has avoided, so far, any recognition of it (22).

On the national press, reports are usually kept in the sympathetic-ironic key: the Movimento is interesting and nice, Austria a quiet, clean, well-ordered, pleasant world - a little boring and narrow-minded, perhaps, but certainly a desirable counterpart to chaotic, messy and challenging Italy; and it is understandable that people living close to that world feel some nostalgia for the times when they belonged to it; but, of course, their attempts to revive those links are quichotic, and not to be taken seriously. Their activities nurture good feelings, add color to the regional panorama, and are good for tourism; but that's that.

Of course, there is more than that; and Italian media also

discuss Mitteleuropa in other, more intellectually sophisticated context; but that is not the theme of this paper and of this meeting.

NOTES

1) A much more detailed analysis, but covering only the years 1974-1981, can be found in R. Strassoldo, M. Gorbahn, "Civiltà Mitteleuropea": Geschichte und Soziologie einer Bewegung an der Nord-östlichen Grenze Italiens, in K.v. Bonin (Hrsg.), Mitteleuropa, Evangelische Akademie Hofgeismar, 1981. Some further elements can be found in the third part, "Der Lokale Rahmen", of a more theoretical paper of the same author: R. Strassoldo, Grenzen und Systemen, Soziologische Gedanken ueber Mitteleuropa, in H.-A. Steger, R. Morell (Hrsg.), Ein Gespenst geht um...Mitteleuropa, Eberhard Verlag, Muenchen 1987.

2) L. Sciascia, Alla festa del vecchio imperatore, front page, four-column article in "La Stampa", Turin, August 1988

3) C. Magris, quoted in "Il Messaggero Veneto", the main Friulian daily, Udine, August 17, 1990: "the appreciation of Hapsburg civilization, even though often exaggerated, has a self-evident real basis...To respect (those values) is a duty for everybody, to love them is natural for those who know them closely, to be nostalgic of them is an instinctive reaction for those who live in a society that appears utterly lacking them. That to restore them is impossible and ridiculous is but too clear to all".(Our translation).

4) For instance, "Il Corriere della Sera", Milan, August 22, 1988: six-column article by V. Feltri, titled: In Friuli, the traditional celebration for the Emperor's Birthday overcomes hostilities and divisions among ethnic groups. For a day, all together(but in the name of Cecco Beppe).

5) The "Stampa" of Turin dedicated half a page to Zita's funeral (April 2, 1989). The delegation of the Mitteleuropean Movement got a 2-column box.

6) A four-column box was dedicated by the "Corriere della Sera" (december 3. 1989) to the opening of the Milan chapter of the Associazione Culturale Mitteleuropea, while on March 30, 1990, it published a half-page service, with photos and interviews to the leaders of the Associazione, historical anecdotes about Radetzky, and interesting pieces of information, like the opening of a "Bar Radetzky", in the historical center (largo la Foppa) and the existence of a shop specializing in Hapsburg curios in Corso Garibaldi.

7) The statement was made by Polish historian J. Borejsza, in Polen und Mitteleuropa, in H.-A. Steger, R. Morell (Hrsg.) op.

cit. p. 102. In fact there is now (since 1984) at least one other celebration of the Imperial Birthday, at Millstatt; but it seems to be a wholly touristic operation. See "Kleine Zeitung", August 19, 1990, p.14

8) Also for the further explanatory analysis the reader is referred to the previous works of the author cited at note 1

9) On the activities and philosophy of the Istituto per gli Incontri Culturali Mitteleuropei, see S. Katunarich (S.J.) Incontri Culturali Mitteleuropei. Die Goerzer Erfahrungen, in H.-A. Steger, R. Morell (Hrsg.), op. cit. The Institute has recently also published a summary report of its activities: R. Tubaro, (ed.), Cultura mitteleuropea. Vent'anni di lavoro, studio, ricerche. Cominiana, Casier (Treviso), 1986. It also is experimenting with a multilingual bulletin, called "Kadmos", specialising in Mitteleuropean cultural news.

10) In fact, just as the Triestino Star-scholar Magris has kept aloof from the Gorizia political-cultural, promotional initiative, so the Istituto per gli Incontri Mitteleuropei has always snubbed the Cervignano-Cormons populist movement as the "Mitteleuropa of beer and sausages", implying vulgarity and ignorance. A nice example of the dynamics of spatio-structural diffusion of ideas ("trickling down" from high to middle to low culture, from center to periphery, etc.)

11) For a recent, brilliant book on the three Retho-Romantsch (Ladino) ethnic groups, see W. Catrina, (with G. Ricchebuono, A.M. Pittana) I Retoromanci Oggi. Grigioni, Dolomiti, Friuli. Casagrande, Lugano, 1989

12) R. Strassoldo, La teoria dei confini, in Temi di sociologia delle relazioni internazionali, Isig, Gorizia, 1979

13) In april 1990 we have come across, in the Kracow newsstands, to a brand-new, 16-pages magazine called "Gazeta Galicyjska", whose front page was occupied by the familiar Franz Josef icon, and the back page by a map of the Hapsburg empire. Other portraits and pictures of the Good Old Times appeared in the other pages. The producers are mostly respected professors of the History Department of the Kracow University.

14) For two examples of the political-cultural discussion in Germany on this topic: K. Schlogel, Die Blockierte Vergangenheit, Nachdenken über Mitteleuropa, in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Beilage Bilden und Zeiten, 21-2-1987: W. Weidenfeld, Mitteleuropa: Dream or Nightmare, in

15) Symptomatic of a change in attitude is the active role taken by the Austrian Sociological Association in promoting contacts with neighboring, i. e. Central European sociological centers; see e. g. the collective work (J. Langer, ed.) Geschichte der Oesterreichischer Soziologie, Verlag fuer Gesellschaftskritik, Wien 1988; the Sociological Congress in Graz, 1987; the

organization of central European Sociological meetings; etc. As for the subject Mitteleuropa, a sign of renewed interest is E. Busek, G. Wilflinger (Hrsg.) Aufbruch nach Mitteleuropa. Rekonstruktion einer versunkenen Kontinents, Atelier, Wien, 1986

16) Channels between Foreign Minister Alois Mock and the leader of the Mitteleuropean association, Paolo Petiziol, have been established.

17) It is commonly replied, by the Italian side, that the promotion of an "artificial" Friulian identity was a clear maneuver of the Austrian rulers to weaken the ties of the Friulian, i. e. Italian, population with the rest of Italy. The policy had been resumed by the Nazi "Gauleiter" of the short-lived (1943-1945) entity, the "Adriatisches Kuestenland" (Karl Reiner, a shrewd Carinthian well cognizant of Friulian-Gorizian matters); which gave Italian nationalists the opportunity to accuse the budding, and soon aborted, Friulian autonomist movement (1945-7) of being heir to the Nazi plans to separate again this area from Italy.

18) On this, there is a wide consensus of historians. The Trieste and Gorizia "irredentists" appreciated the positive side of the superior Austrian administrative arrangements, and the Italian Government had promised to preserve them. Indeed, according to some high official, they should have been extended to the rest of Italy. Instead, after the victory, all traces of administrative autonomy were swept away, and the Piemontese rigidly centralist system imposed. This caused a shock and a delusion also to former Italian sympathizers in these lands.

19) This picture of Old Austria is so common, almost proverbial, in Italian middle-brow culture, that citations are not needed. Let us just quote, surprisingly, none less than Claudio Magris: "The richness and variety of her culture, the equity of her administration, the wisdom of her policies, aimed at the maintenance of a precarious balance, the fastidiousness and dedication of her bureaucracy are, beyond all occasional rethoric and myths, real values" (Quoted in "Messaggero Veneto", August 17, 1990; our translation)

20) For instance, upon the opening of the Trieste chapter of the Associazione, the local leader E. Mazzoli issued a statement, published in most local media, which is all dedicated to the theme of the Hapsburg Empire as an anticipation and model for the future United Europe. The same ideas are elaborated in an interview of Paolo Petiziol to the Messaggero Veneto, August 17, 1990: we are not "austriacanti" but Europeist; we are not nostalgic of an irretrievable past, but find inspiration in it to work for European Unity.

21) See paper cit. at note 1

22) The article by Luciano Moia on "Il Giornale", on the opening of the local chapter of the "Associazione Culturale

Mittleuropea" (November 3, 1989) is rather surprising, in light of the long record of sympathy of the Montanelli newspaper for Mittleuropa, the Hapsburg revival, Radetzky and Maria Theresia, etc. It is marked by very heavy irony; it portrays the group as pan-germanists, and, at the same time, anti-nationalists; instinctively monarchists and anti-democratic, although forced to accept those values for lack of credible alternatives; to them, Bismarck is not a suitable icon for Mittleuropa, because "lacking in decisionism"; they are pipe-dreaming about a New Leader, who would detach Lombardy and Veneto from Italy and restore them to Mittleuropa. Others reports of the event (see note ...) say nothing about all this; so it can be assumed that they are all phantasies of the journalist; and interesting only as a perhaps typical reaction of the Italian middle-culture to the Mittleuropean message.

23) The Movimento is completely self-financing; the main source of income is the Giassico Festa. Its normal maintenance expenses are very modest, having no staff or premises; most collateral initiatives are also self-financed. In a Region that windfalls money on thousands of cultural initiatives, and heavily subsidizes those that contribute to implement the "open Frontier" "Bridge-function" "good neighboring" International, transnational, European and "Alpe Adria " regional policies (see, lately, the alleged one million dollars for setting up a "festival of Mittleuropean Theater" in Cividale), not a penny has gone to the Associazione Mittleuropea, which is also never invited to events of like kind staged by the Region. The more plausible hypothesis of this rejection is that the Associazione has steadfastly refused to find itself a niche in the ruling party system.