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REGIONALISM AND ETHNICITY

The Case of Friuli

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This article sketches ethnic revival movements in Friuli, a small region in the northeastern corner of Italy, bordering with Austria and Yugoslavia. Historical and structural conditions are reviewed, and the political and cultural features of the movement are discussed. The levels of mobilization and tensions are rather low (no violence has ever been involved), so the chances for the realization of the movement's stated goals seem dim.

THE BASIS OF FRIULIAN ETHNIC-REGIONALISM: AN ETHNOHISTORICAL SKETCH

Friuli lies in the northeastern corner of Italy, bordering with Austria and Yugoslavia; or, more precisely, to be true to a regional perspective, bordering Carinthia and Slovenia.

Its position, at the northernmost latitude of the Mediterranean basin and at the easiest point of entry from central and eastern Europe into Italy, determined much of its history. Friuli followed the fortunes of the large metropolises that successively flourished at the tip of the Adriatic "channel," to manage the trade between central Europe and the sea: Aquileia, in Roman times; Venice in modern centuries; and presently, Trieste. In the east-west perspective, from antiquity Friuli was a frontier, a battlefield, a stronghold and a first settlement for invaders and colonists. In Italy, probably only Sicily has been such a crossroads of races and cultures.

Historians of Friuli belong to two main schools. One emphasizes the non-Italian influences in blood and culture: the Hillirians, the Celts, the Lombards, the Austrians. The other extols the Venet, the Roman, the Frank, the Venetian, the Italian lineage. And, indeed, during 25 centuries these two sets of influences—plus innumerable ones of lesser importance, such as the Byzantines, the French, and the Slavs—left intricate traces on the people and the land. I will not go into historical or ethnographical details here. Suffice to remember that the name comes from the Roman town of Forum Juli (later called Civitas Austriae, now Cividale); that among the earliest expressions of ethnic-regional distinc-

tiveness is the establishment by the Lombards of a short-lived but prestigious "Duchy of Friuli," in the 7th to 9th centuries; and that the Lombards generally are considered one of the most important components of Friuli's heritage.

The golden age of Friulian mythology extended from the 10th to the 15th century, when the German (Roman-Christian) emperors set up the area as feudal endowment to the Patriarch of Aquileia, whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction extended far across the mountains into what is modern Austria and Yugoslavia, and whose (smaller) temporal jurisdiction came to be officially called the "Patria (from Patriarch?) del Friuli." In the early part of its history, the Patria del Friuli took advantage of the care the imperial power lavished on it because of its strategic importance as gatekeeper of Italy. In the latter part, it was involved in the general (relative) prosperity of Italy's "Trecento." But it succumbed to the rising regional power of Venice, which annexed it around 1410.

In the following four centuries, Friuli was ruled as a dominion: Local institutions, the Patriarchate included, were maintained, but real power was exercised by Venetian governors. Due to its peripheral position with respect to the capital, only belatedly did it attract the interests of Venetian investors in agricultural development; for much of the period, it was managed rather like a frontier, a military colony, important only as a battlefield and no man's land between Venice and her eastern foes—Austria and the Turks. This neglect explains much of the traits of modern Friuli: its protracted rurality, its underdevelopment, its archaisms.

THE EMERGENCE OF LINGUISTIC DIFFERENTIATION

A certain awareness of the difference between Friuli and other parts of the "terra-firma" is clear in Venetian reports, especially in derogatory terms. As is usual in center-periphery relations, Friulians were described as rather wild, miserable, and unruly people, with a broken way of speaking. In fact, the Friulian language displays traits different from Venetian dialects; although it belongs clearly to the neo-Latin family, it sounds closer to Provençal and Catalan than to Italian. It also bears some clear marks of a Celtic substratum and of Lombard influences. Unlike all Italian dialects, for instance, the plural is formed mostly with an *s*; most words end in consonants.

Such peculiarities generally did not seem important to Friulians. In writing, Latin and then "Tuscan-Venetian" (Italian) were used as a rule.

However, some literati, throughout these centuries, used Friulian in poems, giving rise to a sizable body of literature, now several centuries old. Some of this was for a taste of picturesque, of populism; in some cases, for the sake of vulgarity in the current meaning of the term (bawdy stories of clowns and rustics). In other cases, Friulian literature was tinted with political satire of an anti-Venetian, anti-Italian spirit. In these cases, it is evidence of self-conscious identity building and cultural distancing.

Of a Friulian race or stock there has been little talk and no serious study other than the usual 19th century ethnographic impressionistic stereotyping. If it exists at all, it can only be a peculiar alloy of at least a dozen different breeds including the three major ones in Europe—Latins, Germans, and Slavs, as well as exoteric groups such as the Hungarians. Indeed, most ethnic activists now insist that the originality of Friulians lies in their unique racial blending.

The originality of Friulian cultural expressions in higher and lower arts, in folkways, lore, and mores is difficult to assess, at least to me. Local scholars tend to treat everything as unique, but this may be attributed to patriotism and lack of perspective. Outside scholars tend to treat the culture as a variation of the Venetian or Alpine.

The 19th century was crucial to the entrenchment of the Friulian ethnic identity (as it was for most European "folk" groups). Romantic poets and novelists wrote extensively in the local language, and a "dialectal" literature grew in size, quality, and readership. Ethnographers scoured the countryside, collecting impressions of costumes, tales, myths, songs, rites, and "freezing" them in their volumes. Students of languages began to rebuild the history of large and small local groups, according to the sedimentations of words and meanings. In the case of Friuli, a potent thrust was given by the leading Italian linguist of the period, G. I. Ascoli (who happened to be a Jew, an Italian nationalist, and a citizen of the ethnically composite town of Gorizia). He decreed that Friulian was not an Italian dialect, but a distinct language, akin to that spoken in the Dolomite area and in the Swiss Grisons. He called it "Ladino," or "Reto-romantsch," and figured that Friuli was the eastern remnant of a once large homogeneous and continuous ethnocultural area, straddling the Alps from the St. Gotthard to Histria. So Friulians were given the dignity of a "real" language of the same status but different from Italian as well as a myth of national unity, dating from pre-Roman to early medieval times, pertaining neither to Italy nor to the German-speaking world, but to something in between.

THE EPOS OF MIGRATIONS

Such musings had little practical importance for the people of Friuli throughout the 19th century. Politically, in a little more than 50 years Friuli passed from Venetian to French, Austrian, and, finally, Italian rule. Economically, it was a century of hardship, with famines in the first part of the period and a population explosion in the second. As everywhere in Europe, population doubled (from about 350,000 to 700,000). All this in a region with no industry to speak of (save for rural-related silk spinning) and a rather hostile soil (one-third of the region is steeply mountainous, large parts are steppe-like, and the lower part was then swampy).

Emigration was the only alternative to starvation. It had long been endemic in the mountains; in the course of the 19th century it became cataclysmic everywhere. Friulians migrated seasonally or for longer all over Europe, as far as Siberia (where they worked on the railroad). They settled permanently in America and Australia. It is estimated that between 1871 and 1961 about 400,000 people left their homeland for good.

Emigration moulded the Friulian identity. It fed a "migration culture" made up of moving songs of farewell and homecoming, of tales of far countries, of epic hardships endured. It gave authority to women, left home to raise the children and tend the fields. It created the liquidity to buy land and own homes, sacrosanct symbols of migratory and career success. It created familiarity with many European countries and cultures, making them no more alien than the Italian interior.

The first great wave of Friulian migration ended with World War I. It was resumed shortly after and drastically curtailed by Fascism. The second wave started immediately after World War II and reached its peak in the late 1960s. Since the 1970s, the flow has ebbed and reversed. Permanent migrants often are organized in ethnic associations (*Fogol-ars*): many of them cling strongly to ethnic traditions and identity (although it seems that the TV-generation will put an end to this), often in the more purist fashion. They have been instrumental in mobilizing many host countries to help the home nationals, as in the case of the Friuli earthquake of 1976.

THE BULWARK OF ITALIAN CIVILIZATION:
NATIONALIST AND FASCIST INTERPRETATIONS OF FRIULI

In the formation of the contemporary ethnic identity, a few facts stand out. First, the great war with Austria (1915-1918), fought mostly

in this region, resulted in an orgy of Italian patriotic propaganda. After the Caporetto breakout, masses of the population fled in terror before the invading Austro-Germans (a story memorably told by Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*).

A second fact is the peculiar Fascist policy toward Friuli. The regime was staunchly centralist, opposed every trace of local self-government and abhorred the idea of protection of ethnic minorities. But Fascism supported the cultivation of Friulian literature, poetry, and songs, provided, of course, that these remained at the folkloric level. More important, it made sure that only the neo-Latin strands of Friulian heritage were stressed. Roman she-wolves and Venetian lions were enshrined wherever possible, and Friulians were exalted as the sentinels of Latin civilization against German and Slavic barbarism.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE WITH TRIESTE

A third fact is the implication of Friuli in the Trieste tragedy, after World War II.

Trieste was developed by the Hapsburgs as the Empire's outlet to the sea. It never had anything to do with Friuli, except for a certain migration of manual workers from Friuli to Trieste, and a certain penetration of Triestino capital into the Friulian countryside when Trieste's commercial bourgeoisie acquired estates and built villas. Trieste's immediate natural hinterland was not Friuli, but Histria; however its real economic hinterland was the whole of the Hapsburg Empire. The tragedy was that, although ethnically very composite and cosmopolitan, Trieste's dominant culture was Italian. After the Risorgimento, a tiny intellectual minority agitated for annexation to Italy, complete nonsense from any functional point of view.

The nonsense occurred. In 1919 the Empire was dismembered, and Italy acquired still another harbor city for which it had absolutely no use. During Fascist times this was partly hidden, bestowing upon Trieste the mission of an Italian lightpost beaming to the eastern darkness: or, rather, a bridgehead for the Italian-Fascist planned penetration into the Balkans.

Such plans were shattered in 1943-1945, when Trieste emerged as a lamentable morsel of more or less Italian soil engulfed in a Yugoslav sea and appended to the rest of the country by a narrow utility corridor.

Trieste became an international case, almost like Berlin. It stood a good chance to become a free city, a city-state, under U.N. care; but the chance slipped away, for reasons connected with the international alignments of Italy and Yugoslavia. The Italian government wanted it back,

largely for reasons of national dignity and internal pacification. So it decided to integrate it securely in the network of Italian local administration. It designated it the capital of the new Friuli region: Which is something like deciding that New York is the capital of Vermont.

This shotgun marriage was fiercely resisted by Friulian regional leaders, but international and national political considerations prevailed.

The region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, with special autonomy, had been devised by the makers of the 1949 Italian constitution for much the same reasons as other "special-autonomy regions" at the periphery of the republic: Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige, and Valle d'Aosta. But while these were set up immediately, Friuli-Venezia Giulia was instituted 15 years later, in 1963.

The forced cohabitation of Friuli and Trieste soon became rife with conflicts and, as already mentioned, conflicts bolster identity. Friulian frustrations exploded in 1967 when, for the first time in its history, a Friulian political formation, the "Movimento Friuli," won mass support.

At this point, however, we can leave the historical narrative and turn back to a more synchronic-sociological mode of exposition.

AN ECOSOCIOLOGICAL SKETCH

A MODERN REGION WITH A RURAL SOUL

Until 1950, traditional Friuli was a peasant society. Urban centers were small and scattered. The bourgeoisie was professional, clerical, and commercial rather than industrial. In the mountainous northern part of the region, some of the land was parcelled out in small family holdings and, to a much greater extent, the woods and highland pastures were communally held. In the central plains, most large feudal estates and communal lands were subdivided by complex institutional and socioeconomic processes into smaller properties. In the lowlands, only recently reclaimed from the marshes, large capitalist farms with salaried workforces prevailed. These ecological subdivisions correlate in many ways with other variations. For instance, the communal tradition of the mountains is one of the reasons for the stronger-than-average support for socialist parties. In the lowlands, the Communists are strong, whereas in the median part, Christian Democrats command a large majority. Another correlation is with the type of economic development. When Friuli entered the modern economy—only in the last 50

years—the Alpine economy collapsed and the mountains were almost bereft of population. The newly reclaimed lowlands grew rapidly, not only in the primary sector but also in an industrial sector marked by large investments by outside enterprises (ship yards, chemical works). The central part of Friuli was hit by the industrialization wave in the late 1950s, a backwash of the "Italian economic miracle," and was part of that peculiar pattern of diffused, small-scale, "backyard" industrialization now seen as characteristic of the "Third Italy" (after the Industrial Triangle and the Mezzogiorno).

Now Friuli employs about 10% of the workforce in agriculture, while the rest divide themselves evenly between manufacturing and services. Yet it remains quite rural, both because modernization is very recent and the memories of the peasant world are still much alive and because most people continue to live scattered in traditional small communities, commuting, usually short-range, to work. The majority of Friulians own their homes and plots of land; many are part-time farmers, or at least cultivate a vegetable garden. Friuli has been suburbanized, rather than urbanized. It has become reasonably prosperous but has not forgotten the customs of life-long poverty.

THE REGION AT THE TURNING POINT

Viewed from the air, little distinguishes it from neighboring Veneto. Behavior in work, leisure, institutional processes is similar to any other part of northeastern Italy. Structural statistics do not show differences. Even electoral behavior in national elections resembles that of the rest of the country.

Still, there is a widespread sense of distinction. The number of firms incorporating the root "Friul" in their logo is enormous; it appears that most do. Village festivals usually feature elements drawn from Friulian folklore—choir songs, theater pieces, groups, singers, dancers. Many of them advertise in Friulian. Most cars sport stickers referring to Friuli. Libraries usually have special displays of literature in Friulian or on Friuli, with dozens, even hundreds, of titles. Everywhere—even on radio and TV, as many local stations broadcast in Friulian—the Friulian language is spoken. And Friulian politics revolve largely around the issues of regional autonomy and the recognition and development of Friulian ethnicity (or "nationality").

Friuli clearly is a region at a turning point. It must decide whether to embrace completely the ethos of modernity, with all that means for culture and language, or whether to stick to its traditional ethnic soul. At the same time that the masses and everyday life become assimilated

to Italian ways, some élites and minor groups are swimming vigorously against the current, spreading the use of Friulian language into hitherto unheard-of circumstances.

THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION

Friulian normally is spoken by about 650,000 citizens out of about one million in "historical Friuli," which includes the provinces of Udine, Pordenone, and Gorizia. The rest either belong to other minorities (specially Slovenes along the eastern border) or speak the Venetian dialect along the western border and in the main urban centers, or recently have switched to Italian.

Friulian has never been taught in schools. The official, public, "high" language in the region always has been Italian (in some limited contexts, places, and periods it was German). But Friulian reproduced itself quite effortlessly and with remarkable fidelity in the family, the community, the street. A predominantly oral language, it has innumerable local variations; almost every village has its special sound and accent. But it is undoubtedly a single language, mutually comprehensible throughout the region. On the other hand, it is almost not understandable by other Italians, bearing to Italian about the same relation as Provençal or Spanish.

As we have seen, the origins of such differences are shrouded in myth and controversy. The theory of the "Retic" or the "Celtic" substratum held by Ascoli and some German philologists has been challenged by Italian scholars. But this need not concern us here. It is sociologically important that the Friulian language has become a banner of Friulian identity and search for autonomy. Indeed, one of the motives fuelling the claim for regional autonomy is that only in this way can the language be saved from the rapidly encroaching Italian.

It seems that in the last 20 or 30 years the age-old mechanisms for the reproduction of Friulian have broken down. About half of the parents no longer speak Friulian with their children. The street is no longer a socializing and acculturation mechanism. If this trend continues, in a couple of generations Friulian will become extinct as a popular language.

This, of course, is simply an outcome of the modernization process. Fluency in Italian always has been a prerequisite for upward mobility and professional success and now that the rigid peasant-class system has vanished, everybody aims at success at school and on the job. Italian (or, rather, the Venetian dialect) always has been the language of the Friulian bourgeoisie; the abandonment of Friulian is but an aspect of the "enbourgeoisation" of the working classes.

Of course, there is also the tremendous impact of mass, pop, electronic culture; in the face of such glitter and spice all expressions of traditional culture look pale and dull. Friulian youth are no less addicted to the rock music and show industry than any other element of world youth.

This situation saddens most of the generations who still value the traditional culture, and it terrifies the literati. As we have seen, through the centuries Friuli has accumulated a sizable literature. It has nourished a good number of associations and institutions for the promotion of Friulian language, culture, and historiography. The most important of these is the Società Filologica, founded after World War I, protected by Fascism and now well-funded by the region, provided it sticks to scholarly studies and does not meddle in practical, political problems. The prospect of an eventual extinction of Friulian does not move the pure scholars; but there is a wider Friulian "intelligentsia"—teachers, priests, amateur poets, writers, and so on—for whom the question is fundamental. Since the mid-1960s, they have been mobilizing wider and wider support for a language policy designed to save the Friulian language.

SOME FRIULIAN ETHNIC-REGIONAL COMPLAINTS

THE PROBLEM OF PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROBLEM OF MIGRATION

In the mid-1960s, Friuli still had to fill a sizable gap in the race for economic development in comparison to other northern Italian regions. The first task of the newly instituted regional government of Friuli-Venezia Giulia was to draw up plans to spur and rationalize economic development. Consultants were hired from the center, as there were then no local planning professionals. Some rather crude documents, high in utopian vision but low in knowledge of local realities first emerged. A first-draft regional plan provided for a concentration of resources in a ribbon of growth poles, and the correlated neglect of the more peripheral parts of the region. In particular, the plight of the mountain area was stated as inevitable, and continuing emigration a "physiological" condition. This understandably raised concern in the affected areas. The plan was denounced as technocratic, urban-centered, anti-rural, and anti-Friulian.

Migration, until then considered a natural way of life for Friulians, if not one of the peculiar glories of this people, was redefined as the outcome of wrong policies, of sheepish submission, of capitalist exploitation, of "internal colonialism," of "Italian imperialism." This reflected

not only a changing attitude toward poverty and socioeconomic realities, but also the spread of a new socioeconomic culture, largely Marxist, among Friulian intelligentsia. The storms of 1968 gathered in Friuli 100.

THE PROBLEM OF "MILITARY SERVITUDES"

Friuli always has been a frontier region, often a garrison community. In the context of the advanced defense policy of NATO, it became more than ever a military outpost. More than one-third of the Italian army is stationed here, on 2% of the national territory. For every 15 citizens there is a soldier. The military presence is conspicuous in terms of barracks, installations, and training grounds. This creates some competition and disturbance for civilian activities and needs. Since the mid-1960s, this has been known as the "problem of military servitudes." Technically, the term implies that the development of settlements and infrastructures must be channelled to accommodate military needs (clearance areas, etc.). Politically and emotionally, this was an oppressive burden the military imposed on Friulians. Military servitudes were cited as the main, or one of the main, obstacles to socioeconomic development of the region. They also were taken as the clearest example of a generally bureaucratic, centralistic, Roman grip on local affairs, the negation of regional autonomy. Around the military servitudes theme a large alliance of forces rallied together: Some of the strongest opponents came from the Friulian clergy. But the theme also attracted the anti-military soul of the youth movement and the standard bearers of the industrial spirit—the planners and business groups.

THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIVERSITY

The Friulian community had no university, so students had to go to Trieste or Padua. In the mid-1960s, largely at the instigation of the local medical lobby but with the active support of some literati, a movement formed to establish a university in Udine. Friulian students demonstrated their support en masse, at once and for a long time. Committees were formed all over the region and 125,000 people signed petitions. The university was seen as a symbol of ethnic and regional dignity, as an instrument of regional economic development, and as an effective tool for the protection and growth of the Friulian culture. But it also was seen, by promoters and adversaries, as a partial divorce from Trieste. It was bitterly, even viciously opposed by the regional capital and by most of the Friulian political establishment in the name of "regional unity" and "institutional efficiency," and for fear of student unrest.

The battle for the university, in which students, the clergy, the literati, and some professionals joined forces on the same barricade, was the loudest and most effective cradle of the *Movimento Friuli* and all the subsequent strivings for Friulian ethnic representation.

THE PROBLEM OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

By the late 1960s, industrial, urban, and infrastructural development had begun to bite conspicuously into the traditional landscape of the region. At the same time, environmental doctrines began to circulate. Citizen groups began to protest the deterioration of the environment. The first episode was the struggle of a small community, Lestans, against a cement plant that spread its thick soot on the surrounding crops. There were barricades, arrests, and night vigils, until the industry was defeated. Environmentalists also joined hands with antimilitarists in the struggle against the use of environmentally valuable areas as training grounds. Finally, many public works came under fire, in the name of causes such as protection of agricultural land, conservation of traditional landscape, and ecological balance. One of the most important conflicts, as far as territorial transformation is concerned, was and is over the modernization of the agricultural landscape, through drainage, irrigation, clearing of hedges, woods, and rural lanes. In most cases, the fight for the environment was waged also in the name of ethnic values and local autonomy against the technocratic planners. In such struggles, farmers, environmentalists, and left-radicals found themselves allied with the more romantic defenders of the traditional landscape.

THE PROBLEM OF THE ENCROACHING SOUTHERNERS

Friuli is a land of emigration of manual workers and immigration of service workers. Most Italian public bureaucracy is staffed, at all levels, by people from the south for reasons that need not detain us here. So are many other sectors—the railroads, schools, and especially the armed forces. Some rapidly expanding industries began in the 1960s to attract manual workers from the south. The encroachment of southerners in most public offices and, later, in the catering sector (*pizzai*) began to be resented. Not least among the motivations for ethnic revival, is a reaffirmation of distinctiveness and the desire for provisions to limit the "invasion". Self-government means, to many, a primary right to be governed by one's coethnics. The issue is delicate because it touches basic principles of the Italian constitution and because it arouses the imputation of racism. There have never been overt cases of intolerance

against southerners in Friuli, but the resentment runs deep under the surface. Friulians are distinctively northern people—taller, on the average, than all other Italian regionals, often fair-skinned and fair-haired, rather cool and reserved, soft speakers, controlled drinkers, hard workers, home-loving, earnest, disciplined, law-abiding, moderate about sex. The difference with southerners usually is palpable, and the desire to stay different equally so.

"FRIULANIST" FORCES

The established political parties and institutions were slow in realizing the polarizing potential of Friulian complaints. For some years they variously stigmatized Friulian activists as reactionary, subversive, anti-historical, romantic, or fanatic. Such judgements reflected the different perspectives of the parties as well as real differences in the Friulanist field where one can distinguish at least three major components:

(1) A traditional, clerical, populist element that has the longest tradition and a wide popular base. A fundamental document of Friulian revival is the 1967 "manifesto" of 526 priests, almost all of the diocese of Udine. They were heirs to the long-standing, if muted, Friulian Catholic hostility to annexation to the Italian lay, liberal, freemasonic, anti-clerical state, and later to the Fascist "pagan" and centralist state. They also were steeped in Catholic sociopolitical doctrines, emphasizing local autonomy. The "Democrazia Cristiana" was in 1945-1948 the strongest and almost the only supporter of Friulian regional autonomy and some of the most authoritative intellectual and cultural leaders of Friulanism have been priests (G. Marchetti and F. Placereani) who emphasize the historical roots of Friuli in the golden age of the patriarchate, the Christian essence of the Friulian ethos, and the value of small-scale, rural, wholesome, communal living. Adherents to these doctrines belong to the social strata on which the Christian Democrat power is based.

(2) The second component is more secular, drawing on a lower-middle social strata of skilled workers, artisans, clerical employees, and the petty bourgeoisie. Many of them have had migratory experiences. Their main motivation is a growing distaste for party politics, corruption, the erosion of traditional values of rigor, honesty, earnestness in work, and resentment of southern encroachment in offices. Most have broken away from lay-center-left parties, especially from the socialists. The affinity of Movimento Friuli and the Socialist Party, especially in the

mountains, has been amply demonstrated by vote fluctuations between the two formations.

(3) The third major component of the "new" or radical left is the "orphans of '68" or the "ex-sessantottini." Many of the young utopians of those years, disillusioned by the weak revolutionary propensities of the working class at the national and international level and by the failure of revolutionary visions in the Third World and in other "marginal" areas of society, turned to the more modest, if practical, objective of making their regional community an example of an alternative society. They concluded that social palingenesis begins at home, starting with very concrete matters. They discovered the values of localism, regionalism, ethnicity, and environmentalism, and linked individual freedom with small-scale democracy with local self-sufficiency, pacifism with ecologism. In Friuli these political formations (Radical Party, Proletarian Democracy, etc.) have strong affinity with Friulanist movements. They all speak the same language of Italian/capitalist exploitation of Friuli and angrily protest the American/imperialist/NATO domination of this frontier region. They propose a self-consciously utopian model of a Friulian nation, an egalitarian regional society, neutral, nonviolent, self-reliant, in harmony with nature, and freely federated with a network of sister regional-ethnic communities within a Europe of regions. The popular appeal of such ideas is limited mainly to younger, more educated, idealistic social groups.

(4) Besides the three main groups, there are occasional supporters such as the medical profession with respect to the university issue, or small farmers with respect to some environmental causes.

It seems useful to point out, after this review of Friulian forces, that the level of political conflict in Friuli is well below the threshold of violence. There never has been anything more serious than some street demonstrations and an occasional roadblock; relations between adversary groups are quite decent.

THE MOVIMENTO FRIULI

The imperviousness and inertia of established parties toward Friulanist claims led to the formation of a new political organization, the Movimento Friuli (M.F.), which had a spectacular success at the polls in 1968 (11.4% in the province of Udine). Its growth soon was stifled by a set of internal and external circumstances. Internally, the different components described above produced conflicts and splintering. Soon

the leftist faction seized the party, leading to the secession of the Catholics. Externally, the established Italian parties slowly mounted a counter-offensive against the newcomer. The strategy was twofold. One was the old stick and carrot policy, the judicious use of gratifications and sanctions which political forces command: contracts, assignments, credits, licences, and so on. Many professionals and business people whose livelihoods depend on political benevolence were dissuaded from supporting the M.F., as were leading scholars of Friulian affairs whose research depend on public funding. This prevented the M.F. from benefiting from many intellectual and technical resources and lowered the quality of its intellectual analysis and political propositions.

The second strategy was to incorporate, little by little, most of the agenda of the M.F. We shall review various political activities in this direction. We should point out that the M.F. is now a modestly established political formation with representatives in most local administrations, a small but loyal organizational machinery, and a rather stable electorate of about 5%. Other political forces, both "white" and "red," routinely accept it as a partner in coalitions.

EXTERNAL SUPPORTS TO THE FRIULIANIST CAUSE

Friulian political protest movements probably would have been reabsorbed by the establishment by the mid-1970s and reduced to folkloric limbo were it not for three external developments.

The first was the spread of ethnic-regional movements all over the West and in other parts of Italy in the same years, and for many of the same reasons as in Friuli. They enjoyed increasing attention at both the international and the national levels. The European Community and the Council of Europe gave them serious thought. They formed a general political-cultural issue. Each of them was legitimated by the existence of the others. (This can be taken as an example of "linkage politics," or morphogenetic, self-organizing processes, and of mutual reinforcement between the parts and the whole.)

Second, the ethnic-regional issue in Italy was incorporated into the agenda of the Communist Party in its effort to rally opposition to the dominance of the center (both ideological and institutional). Little in the Communist ideological arsenal could be found in favor of ethnic-regional movements; indeed, its main tradition was strongly centralist and (inter)nationalist. But political opportunism prevailed and we note that the change in Italian Communist official policy was brought about, step by step, largely by the efforts of Communist representatives from Friuli.

The Communists feared that ethnic-regional movements would be hegemonized by competing new left parties. In Friuli, they presented themselves as the most serious interpreters of ethnic demands. They even started to speak Friulian in official circumstances.

Because of the wide power and prestige enjoyed by the Communist Party in Italy, its sponsorship of the Friulian (as of other ethnic-regional) claims forced all other parties to fall in line. The most reluctant was the Christian Democratic Party which is paradoxical given its autonomist traditions and the populist bases. But the paradox is easily explained in terms of the central position in the party holds in the Italian sociopolitical system, and the overwhelming concern for national equilibrium and the smooth operation of the national institutional order. As a consequence, however, the Christian Democrats have become the main political foes of Friulanist forces, although there is a strong "anthropological" affinity between them.

The third external factor was the 1976 earthquake. The 1000 victims, the suffering and destruction provided a formidable basis of legitimation, the sort of martyrdom and epos needed to substantiate and justify higher political claims and recognition. The earthquake bolstered Friulian self-consciousness to unheard-of heights. For weeks Friuli was at the center of national attention and the media were full of praises and admiration for the virtues of its people.

It immediately became clear that everything they asked for under such circumstances would have to be granted. So Friuli got ample funds to rebuild and rebound to new levels of development. For example, the charter of the new university stated that it was to be a tool not only for general social progress, but also—uniquely in Italy—for the preservation of the Friulian cultural heritage and language.

PROVISIONS AND PROPOSALS ON BEHALF OF FRIULI

In recent years, there has been widespread if somewhat half-hearted and sometimes only opportunistic consensus on the need to do something to strengthen Friulian autonomy and to promote its cultural identity.

Autonomy affects relationships with Trieste, and various schemes are under discussion for a soft, consensual divorce between the two. There are other examples of regional splitting (Molise from Abruzzo) and, of course, there is the Trentino-Alto Adige model. But there are technical-constitutional difficulties, especially a national concern that a lone

Trieste may drift away, one does not know where. It is such an erratic town.

Several bills have been introduced in the National Parliament by all parties—even by those traditionally strongly opposed to ethnic regionalism—to provide for the teaching of Friulian language in the schools, and for some sort of official bilingualism in the region. The central problem here is to balance group rights to protection with individual rights to assimilation in the national, modern system. There are the problems posed by the large non-Friulian regional population, the hiring policies, and so on. The technical complexities are generally acknowledged, and it probably will take years to work out a generally acceptable legislative solution.

The agenda of the Friulanist movements of the 1960s has become a common concern of all political forces in the region, although, of course, to differing degrees, with different twists and emotional commitments. Many inflammatory issues have faded away or become matters of routine administrative practice.

The most lively issue now seems to be environmental. Although all parties pay lip service to the need for protection of the "ethnic territory," development policies pursued by the establishment often cause environmental effects that raise strong opposition from Friulanist forces.

Thus, the battle for Friulian ethnic-regional identity has been reduced to its two most elementary terms: the language and the landscape. They both are threatened by the processes of modernization and it remains to be seen whether, to what degree, and under what conditions they will survive the impact of modernization. It is by no means certain that institutional and normative provisions can harness the forces of technology (communication and production) that are the ultimate causes of crises of ethnic regions.

What are the prospects for survival and development of ethnic-regional cultures? Can they be reconciled to the requirements of modern, national, and global society? Is contemporary ethnic revival the last spasm of an intellectual elite, for whom historical memories, language, and literature are of paramount importance because they are their bread and butter, or because they try to use ethnic activism to resolve their own identity crises or dissatisfactions with their social status and professional roles? Is the apathy or meager support of the masses the result of alienation and false consciousness? Or is it an indicator that ethnic-regional systems are inadequate to real contemporary needs?

Answers to such questions can come only from empirical evidence that we lack. They also depend on wider considerations and value orientations.

Can local variations in culture, language, and institutional arrangements coexist with the large-scale uniformity and standardization required by efficient technical-economic processes? Does a choice have to be made between participation and efficiency, between large-scale organization and authenticity? Can an acceptable trade-off between such contradictory but equally desirable values be worked out?

This is the classic problem of federalism, from the time of Hamilton. It seems significant that federalist literature has been produced almost totally by philosophers, lawyers, and literati, and lately by sociologists and ecologists. The absence of economists and other business-minded people is notable.

There seem to be two basic answers to the problems set by federalism and regionalism. One is that small-scale community, local diversity, participation, authenticity, preservation of cultural heritage, and so on are so important that opposing values must be sacrificed to some extent. In its radical form, this means the "para-primitive solution," the return to simpler ways of life, the rejection of much high-tech civilization. It has been the solution suggested by anarchist-ecologist fringes for at least a century.

The second answer assumes that modern information technology has radically altered the terms of the problem, that computers finally make possible the coexistence of infinite local diversity with the operation of large-scale systems. One of the most passionate contemporary federalist philosophers, G. de Rougemont, believes that real federalism has become possible only since the computer because it permits a match between the complexity of overall system to that of the sociocultural environment.

To the first of these answers it has been objected that you cannot turn back history, that evolution is not reversible, that most people would rather choose an easy and materially prosperous, albeit alienated, life than the hardships of small ecological communities, however spiritually or politically rewarding.

The second answer prompts the objection that a computer-assisted federalism would still be something radically different from a collection of small, local, autonomous, ethnic-regional communities.

Ethnic-regional cultures are products of centuries and millennia of interaction between men and nature. They evolved in the context of peasant life, in more or less isolated environments, in the course of labor in the fields, in village rituals, in the long winter evenings around the fireplace, when the elders told stories and sang songs to their wide-eyed offspring.

All this is irretrievably gone and cannot be recreated by computer. Only a cataclysmic destruction of modern production and communication technology can do that; and we doubt that many are prepared to argue for that.

What remains is the value of local diversity. There are well-known arguments for it based on principles of biological evolution and general systems theory: diversity as a source of both stability and further evolution.

There are more philosophical arguments based on the eternal value of all human cultural creations, on the absolute worth and dignity of all traditions and languages. These are expressed by the 90-year-old French historian who felt that the most pressing research project to complete was the study of an old Caucasian language whose speaking population was reduced to one aged individual.

There is the sociopolitical argument, that political participation at the grass roots—the basis of real democracy and liberty—can only be motivated by the defense of cultural diversity (from the outgroups) and identity (within the ingroup); that is, by ethnic-national conflict.

And there is the more pragmatic argument that a world without regional variation in institutions, modes of communication, mores, patterns of architecture, preferences for musical rhythms and melodies, in the tastes for food, drink, dress, and bodily shapes would be an unbearably boring world in which to live.

I believe that the protection of diversity, even at the expense of efficiency and material development, is an important and positive goal and a worthy object for scientific research.

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