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## ADRIATIC MEMORIES: A TROUBLED INTERCULTURAL JOURNEY IN THE POLITICAL-LEGAL HISTORY OF TRIESTE AND FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA\*\*

**Abstract [It]:** La Questione adriatica si pone come una questione di memorie divise dalla presenza non solo di un confine politico-giuridico ma anche linguistico-culturale. Concentrarsi sullo studio della memoria in Friuli Venezia Giulia significa entrare in un crogiuolo di culture politico-giuridiche e tradizioni Alto Adriatiche, che insieme a fattori economici hanno costituito la *ratio* profonda per la concessione delle attuali sfere di autonomia alla Regione a Statuto speciale, la cui stabilità è stata assicurata in forza della volontà dei politici di modificare gli equilibri locali, unendo – antistoricamente – la Venezia Giulia al Friuli, che costituiva un entroterra agricolo.

**Abstract [En]:** The Adriatic Question arises as an issue of memories divided by the presence not only of a political-juridical border but also of a linguistic-cultural one. Focusing on the study of memory in Friuli Venezia Giulia means entering a melting pot of political-juridical cultures and Northern Adriatic traditions, which together with economic factors have constituted the profound *ratio* for the granting of the current spheres of autonomy to the Special Statute Region, whose stability has been ensured by the will of the politicians to change local balances, uniting – anti-historically – Venezia Giulia with Friuli, which constituted an agricultural hinterland.

**Parole chiave:** Memorie adriatiche, Prospettiva politico-giuridica, Spazi di autonomia, Regione a Statuto speciale, Storia del Friuli Venezia Giulia.

**Keywords:** Adriatic Memories, Political-Juridical Perspective, Spaces of Autonomy, Special Statute Region, History of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

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It should be noted that the Author has autonomously translated the Italian quotations present in the text by transposing the translations into footnotes.

Translations have extended, where necessary, to the names of Associations, Organizations and similar, in order to make the understanding of the essay more immediate for the non-Italian reader.

## 1. Introductory Notes: The Binomial “Unity-Autonomy” and the Adriatic Question

Focusing on the study of memories in the territory of Friuli Venezia Giulia means entering both a melting pot of cultures and the history of the Northern Adriatic political, legal and economic assets<sup>1</sup>. The analysis of these data is necessary to understand the *rationes* that led to the establishment of the autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia and the entry into force of its Special Statute. The ultimate aim is to outline the subtle dynamics of the “unity-autonomy” binomial, characterizing a land with a troubled history and plural identities.

The Adriatic Question posed itself as a matter of memories divided by the presence not only of a political border, but also a linguistic-cultural one, as well as a potential religious border, if the Protestant Reformation had managed to take root in Istria<sup>2</sup>. The space granted to minorities is directly linked to the legal protections that politics has been willing to offer over time, so that, while creating a common identity of the Italian people, the ancestral identity of many of those who inhabited and still inhabit the regional territories of the far Northeast were not denied.

Therefore, to avoid compressing – or even suppressing – cultural pluralism through centralist lines and to guarantee substantial measures of protection, the “right” spaces of autonomy were offered, giving the Region its “special” legal status<sup>3</sup>. The granting of these prerogatives brought with it the fear of possible pushes toward independence: to stem this risk, it was decided to establish the Region, “anti-historically” uniting two very distinct

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<sup>1</sup> For a framework of the events of the Upper Adriatic, cf. G. DE VERGOTTINI, D. ROSSI - G.F. SIBONI, *Rapporti economici, mutamenti giuridici e sviluppi istituzionali nell'Alto Adriatico tra età moderna e contemporanea*, in G. DE VERGOTTINI - D. ROSSI - G.F. SIBONI (a cura di), *Fenomenologia di una macroregione: sviluppi economici, mutamenti giuridici ed evoluzioni istituzionali nell'Alto Adriatico tra età moderna e contemporanea*, vol. I, Milano, Leone Editore, 2012, 9-11; D. ROSSI, *La “questione di Trieste” e il voto del 2 giugno 1946: un problema anche costituzionale*, in G. DE VERGOTTINI - D. LO PRESTI - D. ROSSI (a cura di), *Il Territorio Adriatico: orizzonte storico, geografia del paesaggio, aspetti economici, giuridici e artistici*, vol. II, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2019, 181-223; D. ROSSI AND G.F. SIBONI, «Italia chiude e i suoi termini bagna», in D. LO PRESTI - D. ROSSI (a cura di), *Quarant'anni da Osimo*, Milano, Wolters Kluwer, 2018, 5-34; F. SALIMBENI, *L'euroregione e i suoi precedenti storici nell'Alto Adriatico*, in G. DE VERGOTTINI - G. CEVOLIN - I. RUSSO (a cura di), *Fenomenologia di una macroregione: sviluppi economici, mutamenti giuridici ed evoluzioni istituzionali nell'Alto Adriatico tra età moderna e contemporanea*, vol. II, Milano, Leone Editore, 2012, 52-67. To explore the history, culture and identity of Trieste, with particular attention to the political-legal conflicts that have marked the city and the surrounding Region, see J. MORRIS, *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*, London, Penguin Books, 2002; BOGDAN C. NOVAK, *Trieste (1941-1954): The Ethnic, Political, and Ideological Struggle*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970; G. SLUGA, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Albany (New York), State University of New York Press, 2001. Regarding the close relationship between the city of Trieste and the literary world, cf. K. PIZZI, *A City in Search of an Author: The Literary Identity of Trieste*, London-New York, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> On the theme of the clashes in the Slavic area, cf. J. TOMASEVICH, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*, Redwood City, Stanford University Press, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> E. BRESSAN, *Parte prima. Profili storici: introduzione*, in G. DE VERGOTTINI - D. ROSSI - G.F. SIBONI (a cura di), *Fenomenologia di una macroregione: sviluppi economici, mutamenti giuridici ed evoluzioni istituzionali nell'Alto Adriatico tra età moderna e contemporanea*, vol. I, Milano, Leone Editore, 2012, 13-22; G. DE VERGOTTINI - D. ROSSI - G.F. SIBONI, *Rapporti economici, mutamenti giuridici e sviluppi istituzionali*, cit., 9-11.

entities<sup>4</sup>, Friuli and Venezia Giulia, in order to generate new balances, redefining the local reality<sup>5</sup>.

Although history represents – in this research – the reading lens of legal and socio-political events, this study should not be considered irrelevant today. The intent is to find, in the historical depth, the true essence of the “unity-autonomy” binomial that characterizes Friuli Venezia Giulia, i.e. an area with multiple ethnic, social, cultural and legal peculiarities.

The territories involved are culturally linked to the Austrian Empire, but at the same time there is an international atmosphere, since Trieste has always been a center of trade, a transit area, but also a gateway to Europe and the Mediterranean. For centuries, Venezia Giulia has been a place of encounters and clashes among various great civilizations: the Latin, the Germanic and the Slavic. Trieste represents the border between the Po Valley and the Balkans, as well as between the Mediterranean and the Baltic<sup>6</sup>. The very architecture of the city of Trieste is a witness to its past: the historical-architectural paths, which intertwine around the streets of the city, keep the memory of the different cultures that have occurred on the territory alive<sup>7</sup>. Cities like Trieste make their contradictions an element of wealth, as they are “places of recognition”<sup>8</sup>.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Trieste underwent the alternation of six sovereignties: Austro-Hungarian, Italian, Nazi, Yugoslav, Allied and, once again, Italian. The unique socio-political context meant that the people of Trieste, once they became Italian citizens, struggled to feel fully represented by the decisions of the national capital, but their need for autonomy should not be confused with a desire for separatism: in fact, autonomy, which then took concrete form, was perfectly compatible with the annexation to Italy<sup>9</sup>. The granting of a space of “self-management” was necessary to protect local peculiarities and the memory of one’s origins, offering the population the opportunity to feel both Italian and Friulian or Julian.

Multiethnicity and autonomy are, even today, the dominant features of this regional area and, in particular, of Trieste, which already had assumed a completely exceptional position within the varied and composite structure of the Habsburg State. It may be recalled that, in the act of dedication that the city signed with the Habsburgs in 1382, one can read the

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<sup>4</sup> The Region has an “artificial” character, as it constitutes the result of a forced union of different souls: that of Venezia Giulia and that of Friulian Carnia, to which a further element must be juxtaposed, that of the Pordenone Veneto.

<sup>5</sup> P. AIMO - E. COLOMBO - F. RUGGE, *Introduzione*, in P. AIMO - E. COLOMBO - F. RUGGE (a cura di), *Autonomia, forme di governo e democrazia nell’età moderna e contemporanea: scritti in onore di Ettore Rotelli*, Pavia, Pavia University Press, 2014, IX-X.

<sup>6</sup> V. PIERGIOVANNI, *Parte seconda. Profili storico-giuridici: introduzione*, in G. DE VERGOTTINI - D. ROSSI - G.F. SIBONI (a cura di), *Fenomenologia di una macroregione: sviluppi economici, mutamenti giuridici ed evoluzioni istituzionali nell’Alto Adriatico tra età moderna e contemporanea*, vol. I, Milano, Leone Editore, 2012, 262-266: 265.

<sup>7</sup> A. RIZZI, *Pluralità degli ambiti ispirativi e scontro di culture diverse*, in A. RIZZI (a cura di), *Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Venezia, Electa, 1979, 65-526: 522-524.

<sup>8</sup> P. PAROVEL, *L’identità cancellata: l’italianizzazione forzata dei nomi e dei toponimi della “Venezia Giulia” dal 1919 al 1945*, Trieste, Eugenio Parovel Editore, 1969; D. ROSSI, *Lungo le vie di Trieste: strade, cultura e diritto tra Impero Austro-Ungarico e Repubblica Italiana*, in G. DE VERGOTTINI - V. PIERGIGLI (a cura di), *La toponomastica in Istria, Fiume e Dalmazia: profili storici, cartografici, giuridici*, vol. I, Firenze, Istituto Geografico Militare, 2009, 43-62.

<sup>9</sup> D. DE CASTRO, *La Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia: cenni sul problema regionale e proposta di Statuto*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1955, IX-XI.

privileges of autonomy granted to it; on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1849, the city was granted the dignity of *Reichsunmittelbare Stadt*, or “Imperial Free City”, which means that it enjoyed a special status of Carolingian origin, from which a direct relationship of the city with the emperor was derived<sup>10</sup>. It is therefore not difficult to understand the path that led Trieste, with its municipal Statute<sup>11</sup> of 1850, to become, during the twentieth century, the regional capital of a Region with a Special Statute.

The *iter* for the constitution of the Region and for the achievement of its special status was particularly complex: the foundation of autonomy was first sought in multiethnicity<sup>12</sup>, while at a later stage the troubled political issues affecting this area and its economic repercussions were placed at the center of the debate. The economic problems arose on the one side from the Second World War, which left long-lasting consequences in the Northeastern territory, and on the other from the economic fragmentation of a “new” Region, created from the union of an agricultural Friuli with the maritime vocation of Venezia Giulia.

It was in this framework that Friuli-Venezia Giulia (today Friuli Venezia Giulia) was formed and it was for these reasons that it acquired its Special Statute.

## 2. A Territory with an Uncertain Border: Trieste and Venezia Giulia

The areas of the Northeastern Italian border were the open terrain of a political clash between two totalitarianisms, Nazism and Communism, that is, between Germanism and Bolshevism, and subsequently an economic-legal and political confrontation between a capitalist Democracy and a Communist Regime.

Trieste found itself involved in a struggle that was not typically Italian; Trieste fluctuated between being an Italian periphery and a Central European reality<sup>13</sup>. There was no demarcation line linking the territory to the Western Allies or to the Soviet Union.

A plurality of nationalisms claimed the same land and the Italian people didn't join the Slovenian one, even in the fight against the fascist regime. Two local Resistances were born, quite distinct from each other: Italian Anti-Fascism and the Yugoslav Resistance. With the exception of communists in the two groups, there were no collaboration between them.

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<sup>10</sup> The Municipality had the same rights of political representation that were conferred to the Provinces in other places.

In addition, many State powers (from public services to commerce, from schools to healthcare, from safeguarding the artistic heritage to culture at large) were objects of a fiduciary delegation to the City Council, headed by the Podestà.

<sup>11</sup> The city of Trieste with its limited territory, by virtue of this Statute, assumed the dual configuration of Municipality and Province of the Crown and, exceptionally, enjoyed some State powers.

<sup>12</sup> On the subject, cf. V. D'ALESSIO, *Limiti e formazione degli schieramenti nazionali in Istria: identità e confini vecchi e nuovi dell'Ottocento asburgico*, in D. ANTONI (a cura di), *Revisionismo storico e terre di confine*. Atti del Corso di aggiornamento (Trieste, Centro di Studi per la Scuola Pubblica, 13-14 marzo 2006), Udine, Kappa Vu, 2007, 33-52; B.M. GOMBAČ, *Trieste-Trst, due nomi una identità: contributo ragionato sulla storia degli sloveni di Trieste fino al 1918*, in D. ANTONI (a cura di), *Revisionismo storico e terre di confine*. Atti del Corso di aggiornamento (Trieste, Centro di Studi per la Scuola Pubblica, 13-14 marzo 2006), Udine, Kappa Vu, 2007, 11-32.

<sup>13</sup> G. VALDEVIT, *Trieste: storia di una periferia insicura*, Milano, Mondadori, 2004, 41-52.

The fall of Fascism was followed by the Armistice<sup>14</sup> and from the day after the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1943 the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale [CLN – Committee of National Liberation] was established. However, the Slavic partisans, hoping for the same liberation, began, after the Armistice, to carry out brutal executions in Istria and Dalmatia towards former hierarchs of the fascist dictatorship, as well as, in general, towards those who didn't want to be part of the annexation of the border lands to Yugoslavia. Many Italians from the Northeast were chained together and killed, by throwing them into the Karst cavities of the Trieste hinterland, i.e. the so-called foibe [sinkholes]<sup>15</sup>, continuing to perpetrate the massacre until 1945. The conflict between the two peoples escalated day by day<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1943, the *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland* (or Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral) was established in the areas of Trieste, Gorizia, Udine, Pola [Pula], Fiume [Rijeka] and the Autonomous Province of Lubiana [Ljubljana], with the aim of guaranteeing communication routes to the German military administration (which had removed the territories from the control of the Italian Social Republic, to which they formally belonged) and of stopping the Yugoslav partisans. The invasion of the German army caused more blood to flow. A part of the *Einsatzkommando Reinhard*, after organizing the four *Vernichtungslager* [extermination camps] in Poland, arrived in Trieste and General S.S. Odilo Globocnik transformed the Risiera di San Sabba structure [San Sabba Rice Mill] into a *Polizeihäftlager* [police detention camp], the only one in Western Europe with a crematorium<sup>17</sup>. Until April 1945, numerous partisans and anti-fascist militants – mainly of Slovenian and Croatian origin, but also of Italian nationality – were killed there. As for the Jews, the Risiera di San Sabba was used as a transit camp rather than an extermination camp.

In opposition to the German occupation and repression, in March 1944, the communists carried out two attacks in Trieste: one against a cinema frequented only by German soldiers and another against the Casa del soldato tedesco [German soldier's House], which has been established in the Ryttemeyer Palace, that is a building in the city center. As a reaction, over fifty hostages were hanged, left dangling for days in the Casa del soldato tedesco<sup>18</sup>.

It was in this framework that, at the end of the Second World War, the so-called “race for Trieste” started, i.e. the competition between the Slavic and the Western world to try to define the fate of these lands.

<sup>14</sup> B. STEFFÈ, *Partigiani italiani della Venezia Giulia*, Padova, A.P.I., 1946.

<sup>15</sup> There are numerous places that today testify to this massacre: Basovizza, Castelnuovo d'Arsa, Checchi, Sossi, Carnizza, S. Domenica di Albona, Antignana, Brioni del Monte Maggiore, S. Servolo, Racievaz, Scadaiscina, S. Lucia, Scopetti, Tupliaco, Jurani, Villa Franzi, Tarnovizza, Cantrida (multiple foibe), Paugnano, Cradaro, Vines and others. Cf. D. DE CASTRO, *Il problema di Trieste: genesi e sviluppi della questione giuliana in relazione agli avvenimenti internazionali (1943-1952)*, Bologna, Licinio Cappelli, 1953, 170. On the subject of foibe, see also G. BARACETTI, *Foibe: Nationalism, Revenge and Ideology in Venezia Giulia and Istria, 1943-5*, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. XLIV, n. 4/2009, 657-674.

<sup>16</sup> The film *Red Land (Rosso Istria)* offers a harsh, but effective and direct, picture of the climate of fear and repression experienced at the time in this geographical area. Director Maximiliano Hernando Bruno has focused his work on the life and bloody death of Norma Cossetto. The film is as raw as it is realistic.

<sup>17</sup> E. APIH, *Trieste*, Bari, Laterza, 1988, 144-182.

<sup>18</sup> G. VALDEVIT, *Trieste: storia di una periferia insicura*, cit., 35-41.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 the Yugoslav troops were 41 km from the city and the Allied ones were 222 km away. Moreover, one must add to this dynamic the attempt of the CLN to make Trieste an Italian city, which liberated itself autonomously.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, the Corpo Volontari della Libertà [Volunteers of Freedom Corps] – i.e. the general coordination structure of the Italian Resistance, recognized by both the Allies and the CLN – forced the Germans to retreat to some fortified places. At the same time, the formations of the “Unità operaia” [“Workers Unit”], which collaborated with the Yugoslav Resistance<sup>19</sup>, rose up and came from the industrial areas to the center. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, the Yugoslavians had their weapons delivered by the Corpo Volontari della Libertà, while the Allies were 29 km from Trieste. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, the Germans finally surrendered with the arrival of the New Zealand Second Division.

The Yugoslav IV Army prevailed and occupied the city for forty days. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1945, the newspaper *Il nostro avvenire* wrote of a «futura piena autonomia di Trieste nella nuova Jugoslavia di Tito»<sup>20</sup>. Edward Kardelj was the main thinker of the concept of city autonomy within the Yugoslav Federation. In this climate, the CLN was accused of fascist reactionism<sup>21</sup>. Only on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June did the Yugoslavians leave the city after they signed an agreement in Belgrade on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June: from that moment the border was placed a few kilometers East of the city<sup>22</sup>.

This agreement provided for the establishment of two zones: Zone A which included Trieste and a small surrounding area, to which was added an enclave around Pola in Southern Istria, and Zone B which included a large part of Venezia Giulia. Zone A was managed by the Anglo-American Military Government and Zone B by a Yugoslav military administration.

When on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June the Allied Military Government (AMG) settled in Zone A, the two peoples, that is, the Italian and the Slovenian, who had fought so hard for those territories, were both deprived of it: the AMG was nobody’s State, but, at the same time, the 12<sup>th</sup> of June marked the real end of the war for the community of Trieste, with the liberation from both Nazism and Communism.

The AMG adopted a colonial regime with strong limits to the opportunities for self-government, having taken in consideration the deep fractures that would have made it very difficult, and therefore presented itself as the sole guarantor of legality and governability, as well as – thanks to the Marshall Plan<sup>23</sup> – of economic growth; thus, local parties were downgraded to a marginal level. The AMG’s choice of management through “direct rule”

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<sup>19</sup> They were clandestine formations composed mainly of Italian and Slovenian workers from Venezia Giulia and in particular workers from the shipyards of Trieste, Monfalcone and Fiume [Rijeka].

<sup>20</sup> Trans. as: «future full autonomy of Trieste in Tito’s new Yugoslavia». For the Italian version, cf. *Il nostro avvenire*, Trieste, 15 maggio 1945.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. R. PUPO, *Matrici della violenza tra foibe e deportazioni*, in F.M. DOLINAR - L. TAVANO (a cura di), *Chiesa e società nel Goriziano tra guerra e movimenti di liberazione*, Gorizia, Istituto di storia sociale e religiosa, Istituto per gli incontri culturali mitteleuropei, 1997, 233-244.

<sup>22</sup> E. APIH, *Trieste*, cit., 152-167.

<sup>23</sup> Officially the European Recovery Program (ERP).

implied the objective of ensuring the victory of Democracy in the historical clash between Democracy and Communism.

The Postdam Conference of July 1945 outlined the fate of Italy, dominated by the Three Great Powers and destined not only to lose the colonies, but also to disintegrate part of the metropolitan territory, due to the occupation of Venezia Giulia by Yugoslavia.

At the beginning of September 1945, the United States released their proposals for the Treaty of peace with Italy: Trieste remained Italian, but the free port was expected to be administered by a Commission constituted by representatives of the Nations that would use the port; for the rest, many lands would pass to Yugoslavia.

Instead, the British intended to grant Italy part of Istria to the West of Trieste and Pola, and Yugoslavia lands in the areas of Gorizia.

The French opted for an Italian Trieste with a Slavic hinterland.

The issue of Fiume [Rijeka] and Zara [Zadar] remained open: while Italy could still hope that Fiume would become a neighboring Free State, there was no hope for Zara from the beginning.

In addition, there was Russia, whose ideological position at the time was close to the interests of Yugoslavia.

During September 1945, the Council of Foreign Ministers discussed the Italian Treaty in London. In the end, it was decided to send on site an Inter-Allied Commission of inquiry, formed by experts of the Four Powers, to identify:

- where to draw the border line so as to force as few people as possible to remain under foreign rule;
- and what was the international regime that guaranteed equal conditions in the use of the port of Trieste and the communication routes with the surrounding countries<sup>24</sup>.

The Commission of experts was appointed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1946, but the hopes of finding a meeting point between the Nations were in vain, since, on the eve of the Paris meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, four separate and divergent reports were presented by the delegations of the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and France<sup>25</sup>.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1946, the Council met in Paris. There were tense discussions. Between the 16<sup>th</sup> of May and the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, diplomatic negotiations took place and the idea of the internationalization of Trieste began to take hold. It was only between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July that the Free Territory of Trieste was created: its integrity had to be assured by the United Nations Security Council, which was required to approve the Permanent Statute of the Free Territory and to appoint the Governor<sup>26</sup>, following consultations with Italy and Yugoslavia. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1947, the Treaty of Paris was signed between Italy and the Allied and Associated Powers: as Annexes there were the

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<sup>24</sup> D. DE CASTRO, *Trieste: cenni riassuntivi sul problema giuliano nell'ultimo decennio*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1953, 65-74.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-79.

<sup>26</sup> The Governor was a figure that should have been solid and central, while instead it became the umpteenth matter of debate between parties with opposing interests, who were therefore unable to converge towards naming a subject.

Permanent Statute of the Free Territory of Trieste and the Instrument relating to the Free Port of Trieste, by which the regime of the international territory was established.

In concrete terms, however, the constitution of the Free Territory of Trieste was considered by the Americans as non-existent, so much so that when the Peace Treaty came into force on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1947, Zone A was retained.

At that point, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1948, three notes were sent by the three Powers to Russia and three similar ones to Italy: the content of the notes made it possible to consider this historical moment as the beginning of the path that led to the Memorandum of Understanding of London. The formula “Tripartite Declaration” is used to indicate this agreement among the three Western Powers, with which the decision to bring the Free Territory of Trieste back under Italian sovereignty was communicated, inviting Russia and Italy to adhere to the decision. The reasons that led the United States, England and France to develop such a choice were the inability to name a person for the office of Governor and the attitude adopted by the Yugoslavians in the Zone entrusted to them, managed as if it were part of the Yugoslav Federation, i.e. without granting the independent and democratic status that the three Powers had previously demanded<sup>27</sup>.

They were complex years, in which numerous spies roamed the city, which was a kind of Cold War laboratory<sup>28</sup>. The Marshall Plan, in which Trieste was included in the middle of 1948, intended “to break” the communist control over the workers.

However, from June 1948, at the same time, the degree of international attention towards the city of Trieste changed. Trieste slowly ceased to represent a nerve center from which European and world balances could be decided: the triggering fact was the break between Tito and Stalin, which led the Americans to no longer consider Yugoslavia as a great enemy and even to support Tito against Stalinist Communism<sup>29</sup>.

The path was naturally gradual: at first a “provisional solution” was implemented that provided for the withdrawal of the AMG from Zone A and the takeover of the Italian administration; only with the so-called “Two-Power Declaration” (by the British and the Americans) of the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1953, the two Governments declared that they wanted to end the AMG experience, giving way to the Italian administration. Tito sent troops to the border, preparing to invade Trieste; the Allies, therefore, interrupted the application of the Two-Power Declaration, however this aroused lively protests – which lasted from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1953 – from the Italians, resulting in street clashes, which led to the death of six civilians. The balance was restored by diplomacy on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1954 with the Memorandum of Understanding of London. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October of the same year, Zone A – which included Trieste – effectively passed from the Anglo-American military administration to the Italian civil administration and Zone B passed from the

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<sup>27</sup> D. DE CASTRO, *Trieste: cenni riassuntivi*, cit., 81-147.

<sup>28</sup> The city of Trieste, considered its geographical position, was the protagonist of the “creation” of the Iron Curtain, i.e. the wall that divided the two blocs of the Cold War until 1989.

<sup>29</sup> D. DE CASTRO, *La questione di Trieste: l'azione politica e diplomatica italiana dal 1943 al 1954*, vol. II, Trieste, Lint, 1981, 497; G. VALDEVIT, *La questione di Trieste (1941-1954): politica internazionale e contesto locale*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1986, 214.



Yugoslav military administration to the Yugoslav civil administration<sup>30</sup>; however, sovereignty over Zone B still remained with Italy. The territorial question was finally resolved on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1975 with the Treaty of Osimo<sup>31</sup>, enforced by Law no. 73 of the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1977: it was in this way that the Italian Government renounced sovereignty over Zone B, which passed definitively to Yugoslavia<sup>32</sup>.

The Treaty of Osimo put an end to the long-standing question of the Eastern Italian-Yugoslavian border, but at the same time the decision of the Italian center-left government<sup>33</sup> to sign the Treaty was harshly criticized locally, particularly considering the secretive manner of the negotiations.

The regional population regarded Istria as an Italian territory, considering that, until the recent past, a significant Italian-minority community had lived in the area. For those people who had had to give up their land and their origins, as well as abandon their homes, the Treaty of Osimo – which deprived Venezia Giulia of its largest part – was perceived as a betrayal of the last hopes that had remained alive in their hearts.

### 3. The Typically Julian Multiethnicity

Venezia Giulia is a land in which two nationalisms<sup>34</sup> – i.e. Italian and Slovenian – faced each other: this area was claimed by both, which made coexistence complex, even when the political issues had been defined. In fact, the concept of “nationalism” often constitutes the basis of a violent Nation, by being structured on totalizing ideologies and borders that separate peoples, accentuating their differences, perceived, even *a posteriori*, as insurmountable obstacles.

Poets, musicians, politicians and men of influence praised Italian symbols, memory and culture, creating a common language, which fostered a sense of belonging to Italy, based on identification. The war had made relations with neighbors bitter and the exodus of Istrians<sup>35</sup>, who fled from a cruel Yugoslav nationalist intolerance, increased the divide between such geographically close peoples.

<sup>30</sup> G. VALDEVIT, *Trieste: storia di una periferia incicura*, cit., 52-78.

<sup>31</sup> M. UDINA, *Gli accordi di Osimo: lineamenti introduttivi e testi annotati*, Trieste, Lint, 1979.

<sup>32</sup> N. GIRALDI, *Storia di Trieste: dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Pordenone, Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine, 2017, 282-288.

<sup>33</sup> D. D'AMELIO, *Il dibattito pubblico sul trattato di Osimo fra ragion di Stato e protesta locale*, in *Qualestoria*, n. 2/2013, 83-107.

<sup>34</sup> M. PACOR, *Confine orientale: questione nazionale e Resistenza in Friuli e Venezia Giulia*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1964, 28-29; R. PUPO, *Guerra e dopoguerra al confine orientale d'Italia (1938-1956)*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> The final thrust of the exodus, which began with the end of the war, came from the Two-Power Declaration of the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1953 and the following Memorandum of Understanding of London that induced the escalation of violence in Zone B, transforming the “small exodus” from several Istrian towns into a “great exodus” of the Italian communities as a whole, including the peasants who reluctantly separated from their lands. Yugoslavia became a protagonist of one of the many tragic episodes of “purging” in history.

This “diaspora” initially involved the city of Trieste, but then extended to neighboring Regions, as well as to European and even transoceanic countries. The choosing of distant places often depended on the desire to forget the suffering and forced uprooting, by immersing oneself in a completely new reality. Today there are many descendants of emigrants who seek their roots, returning to their places of origin.

The Slovenian minority, present in Venezia Giulia, became a scapegoat that suffered the consequences from the history of clashes and, for this same reason, the Slovenes of Venezia Giulia began fighting for their rights as a minority<sup>36</sup>.

Discussing history without preconceptions and without fear of diversity<sup>37</sup> proved to be the necessary way to overcome disruptive pressures: one cannot expect to recompose the memory of the anti-fascists with that of those persecuted by the Yugoslav Resistance, just as one cannot think of recomposing the memory of the Triestines of the Slovenian minority or of those with Jewish origins – who avoided the Risiera di San Sabba – and that of the Triestines whose relatives were thrown into the foiba<sup>38</sup>. These memories have been and should be kept alive, by having been stitched together to give shape to a democratic State in the fullest sense of the term<sup>39</sup>, building a single history starting from distant – and sometimes opposing – experiences<sup>40</sup>.

Thus, the wound between Democracy and Nation was sutured<sup>41</sup>, promoting a common political citizenship based on the universal value of Democracy<sup>42</sup>.

#### 4. An Economy in Crisis

In remembrance of Trieste's glorious past as the great port of the Austrian Empire, almost as a legacy of independence, the Permanent Statute of the Free Territory of Trieste

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Many Associations keep the memory of the exodus; there are numerous films, publications and works in a broad sense that deal with the history of exiles. In this regard, a mention should be made of the theatrical show, set up by the songwriter Simone Cristicchi together with Jan Bernas, entitled *Magazzino 18* [*Warehouse 18*]: the name comes from the warehouse of the old port of Trieste where the goods of refugees were stored. Cf. P. BALLINGER, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002; C. DONATO, *Un caso singolare di mobilità geografica: l'emigrazione giuliana*, in ISTITUTO REGIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE NEL FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (a cura di), *Friuli e Venezia Giulia: storia del '900*, Gorizia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1997, 561-580; O. MOSCARDA, *L'esodo dall'Istria*, in ISTITUTO REGIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE NEL FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (a cura di), *Friuli e Venezia Giulia: storia del '900*, Gorizia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1997, 551-560: 558-559; F. ROCCHI, *L'esodo dei 350 mila giuliani fiumani e dalmati*, Roma, Difesa adriatica, 1990; S. VOLK, *Esuli a Trieste: bonifica nazionale e rafforzamento dell'italianità sul confine orientale*, Udine, Kappa Vu, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. P. STRANJ, *La comunità sommersa: gli sloveni in Italia dalla A alla Z*, Trieste, EST, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> C. BONVECCHIO, *Premessa*, in L. VIOLANTE - G. FINI (a cura di), *Democrazia e identità nazionale: riflessioni dal confine orientale*. Atti della Convention (Trieste, Teatro municipale "G. Verdi", 14 marzo 1998), Bagnaria Arsa (Ud), Edizioni Università di Trieste, 1998, 5.

<sup>38</sup> A. ARA, *Introduzione*, in A. ARA - E. KOLB (a cura di), *Regioni di frontiera nell'epoca dei nazionalismi: Alsazia e Lorena/Trento e Trieste*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1995, 7-12: 7-9; L. Mattina, *Introduzione all'incontro: democrazia e identità nazionale. Riflessioni dal confine orientale*, in L. VIOLANTE - G. FINI (a cura di), *Democrazia e identità nazionale: riflessioni dal confine orientale*. Atti della Convention (Trieste, Teatro municipale "G. Verdi", 14 marzo 1998), Bagnaria Arsa (Ud), Edizioni Università di Trieste, 1998, 9-14: 9-11; A. MERMOLJA, *L'identità slovena: una memoria travagliata*, in ISTITUTO REGIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE NEL FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (a cura di), *Friuli e Venezia Giulia: storia del '900*, Gorizia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1997, 491-502.

<sup>39</sup> G. FINI, *Il testo del colloquio*, in L. VIOLANTE - G. FINI (a cura di), *Democrazia e identità nazionale: riflessioni dal confine orientale*. Atti della Convention (Trieste, Teatro municipale "G. Verdi", 14 marzo 1998), Bagnaria Arsa (Ud), Edizioni Università di Trieste, 1998, 15-45: 15-18, in particular 18.

<sup>40</sup> L. VIOLANTE, *Il testo del colloquio*, in L. VIOLANTE - G. FINI (a cura di), *Democrazia e identità nazionale: riflessioni dal confine orientale*. Atti della Convention (Trieste, Teatro municipale "G. Verdi", 14 marzo 1998), Bagnaria Arsa (Ud), Edizioni Università di Trieste, 1998, 15-45: 19-22, in particular 19.

<sup>41</sup> G. FINI, *Il testo del colloquio*, cit., 15-45: 42-43.

<sup>42</sup> L. MATTINA, *Introduzione all'incontro: democrazia e identità nazionale*, cit., 9-14: 9-11.

and the Instrument relating to the Free Port of Trieste were attached – as already mentioned – to the Treaty of Paris between Italy and the Allied and Associated Powers signed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1947, establishing the regime of the international territory. The Ente Porto [Port Authority] and the Ente Zona Industriale [Industrial Zone Authority] were identified as indirect “managers” of international *munera*: however, these entities limited themselves to only considering the areas deemed as warehouses, in which to practice the mere exercise of export and import, instead of creating centers of integrated marketing.

A citizenship grown in the shadow of a “hypertrophic localism” was lulled by the dream of a “great Trieste”, but, from the mid-twentieth century, the “question of Trieste” no longer constituted an issue of international importance. The myth of the “great Trieste” was overshadowed by the course of political events<sup>43</sup>, which put the economy of a now decentralized and weakened city in crisis.

Trieste could have been a focal point among three economic blocs, the Common European Market (i.e. the single market of the European Economic Community, now European Union), the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (that was an economic and above all commercial organization of the Socialist States, dissolved in 1991, following the fall of the Eastern Bloc) and the European Free Trade Association (i.e. an interstate organization promoting free trade and economic integration among Member States, aimed at those European States which did not wish or could not yet enter the European Economic Community), but the conditions were not created for this to happen.

Moreover, the port of Trieste didn't develop a flourishing economic activity neither on the international nor on the national level; instead, this happened in historically Italian cities such as Genoa, Venice and Bari. It should also be remembered that the industrial physiognomy of Trieste, which had been focused on shipbuilding, was disfigured by the loss of many factories, due to bombings during the Second World War.

Since 1947, the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale [Institute for Industrial Reconstruction]<sup>44</sup>, for its part, was inclined to redefine the balance between the Cantieri dell'Alto Tirreno e dell'Alto Adriatico [Upper Tyrrhenian and Upper Adriatic Shipyards], favoring agreements between the new Ansaldo of Genoa and the Cantieri Riuniti dell'Adriatico, in order to develop exchanges of experiences between the two groups; however, the result was a further blow to the economic leadership of the port of Trieste, caused by the intensification of competition<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> G. SAPELLI, *Trieste italiana: mito e destino economico*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1990.

<sup>44</sup> The Anglo-Americans allowed the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale to retain ownership of all of the city's largest industries. Cf. P. PURINI, *L'indipendentismo triestino*, in R. MICIELI - G. ZELCO (a cura di), *Venezia Giulia: la regione inventata*, Basaldella di Campoformido (Ud), Kappa Vu, 2008, 200-215: 210-211.

<sup>45</sup> It can also be remembered that in 1953 there was a Ministerial Decree that led to the reduction in the number and periodicity of the shipping lines, thus stifling the activities of the Lloyd Triestino and enabling the port of Genoa to excel.

Between 1962 and 1963 the burden of a brief economic crisis led to a worldwide relocation of industrial production and transport; inevitably, the countries with low-cost labor and high productivity plants prevailed.

The killing blow was struck by the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale plan for shipbuilding of early 1966, that entailed the substantial elimination of Trieste's shipbuilding industry due to its marginality, without weighing the economic consequences on the city.

To guarantee an economic rebirth for the lands of Venezia Giulia, it had inevitably become necessary to grant facilities and a certain autonomy in the management of resources.

## 5. A Land so Close and yet so Different: Friuli

In order to frame the economic and demographic evolution of Friuli, the starting image is that of a land that came out of the Second World War deeply affected. There was serious damage to infrastructure, such as railways, bridges, roads, electricity production and distribution plants; in particular, the most afflicted were the mountain areas, which were historically the poorest.

Furthermore, there was a high rate of unemployment, a marked gap between prices and wages and a shortage of basic necessities: even when the availability of goods increased, the meager wages did not even allow the purchase of subsistence goods. That is why a period of unrest and strikes began.

Excluding workers employed in industries<sup>46</sup>, historically the majority of the population of the Province of Udine led a rural and miserable life of hardship. The productive model was that of the traditional peasant family, with high labor intensity coupled with low capital intensity<sup>47</sup>. During the war, the lands were exploited to the point of compromising their fertility. Moreover, the technical means to cultivate were lacking or were obsolete: a poor and unprofitable production ensued. The problem of the distribution of landed property was added to what had just been said: it was divided according to non-egalitarian criteria<sup>48</sup>.

As for the political and administrative management of the territory, from the end of 1945 until September 1947, the Province of Udine remained under the authority of the Allied Military Government, represented by a Provincial Commissioner or Governor, specifically by the British Lieutenant Colonel Bright. The rules issued by the National Government were automatically applied, but the possibility for the AMG to suspend or modify them, in whole or in part, remained unchanged. The Provincial Commissioner exercised a constant

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Overall, the light industry and the steel industry of Venezia Giulia managed to survive the economic crisis, to the point that, at the end of the sixties, half of the port traffic derived from raw materials and finished products within local industries; however, the great *vulnus* was inflicted upon the third pivot of the triad, i.e. the shipbuilding industry of Trieste.

<sup>46</sup> There was only one industrial center that deserved to be mentioned, Pordenone, but even there it was difficult to achieve the levels of production of the pre-war period. Cf. G. VALDEVIT, *Un dopoguerra e un lungo dopoguerra: il Friuli e la Venezia Giulia dalla fine della guerra alle soglie del Duemila*, in ISTITUTO REGIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE NEL FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (a cura di), *Friuli e Venezia Giulia: storia del '900*, Gorizia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1997, 415-442: 420.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> ISTITUTO FRIULANO PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE (a cura di), *Il Friuli Venezia Giulia dalla Liberazione alla Costituzione*, with the collaboration of A. BUVOLI, M. DE AGOSTINI AND F. FABBRONI, Udine, IFSML, 2006, 6-8.

control, with the interposition of the Prefect, over the local administrations established after the Liberation<sup>49</sup>.

At the same time, as early as July 1945, Tiziano Tessitori<sup>50</sup> began to fight for Friulian autonomy and for a Friulian Region. This political orientation was firmly supported by people of the caliber of Gianfranco D’Aronco, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Don Giuseppe Marchetti and was also held by the Philological Society of Friuli, the Chamber of Commerce of Udine and the newspaper of the CLN *La Libertà*.

However, there were scepticisms in the parties: in particular, a contrary position was assumed in the Pordenone area, i.e. in a zone linked mainly to Veneto, and in the Province of Gorizia, where Yugoslav claims were feared<sup>51</sup>.

Due to the state of political uncertainty and the conditions of poverty in which a large part of the local people lived, a flow of illegal emigration from Friuli was created; they were mainly former partisans and activists of the left-wing parties who had taken the decision to look for a future in Yugoslavia – suffering discrimination when some of them decided to return to Italy – and in France, where many of them were imprisoned in internment camps or subjected to harassment by mediators without humanity or sometimes found support in other Friulian emigrants, active in French trade union associations.

In January 1947, there was another wave of migration, but this time organized by the Udine Labor Office, again towards France and also towards the coal mines in Belgium on the basis of international agreements.

Despite the departures from their native land, many emigrants maintained economic ties with Friuli, demonstrating a strong solidarity and a deep-rooted love for their origins, such as to help ensure a rapid recovery in Friuli following the dramatic earthquake of 1976. So,

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<sup>49</sup> As for the Carnic Community, since the immediate postwar period, the need to identify an organ of self-government and coordination of the Municipalities of Carnia was felt.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1946, in Tolmezzo, a meeting of the Mayors and Presidents of the Committees of National Liberation of Carnia took place in front of the Deputy Prefect and the Allied Provincial Commissioner, who became aware of the problems of the territory connected to the war. After a series of meetings, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1946 the Statute of the Carnic Community was approved by the first fifteen Municipalities: this Community was a particularly innovative body for the time, especially considering that the Mountain Communities were only established in 1971.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1947 the constitution of the consortium was formally approved by a Decree of the Prefect. Cf. *ibid.*, 9; G.C. BERTUZZI, *Friuli 1946: il primo anno di pace*, Trieste, IRSML, 1999.

<sup>50</sup> Tiziano Tessitori was a leading figure of the regional special status of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

He fought for an autonomy of the territory, which could not be reduced to a mere administrative decentralization, and demanded the full political responsibility of those who ruled in the suburbs. The reasons behind this position were closely linked to the concept of “Democracy”: he intended to give shape to a conscious ruling class and to get the population out of its state of political minority.

In order for the democratic rule of the responsibility of elected officials towards their voters to be affirmed, Tessitori believed that independence and autonomy should be offered to the public administration. He never intended to undermine national unity, but to redefine the State functions of coordination, synthesis and integration.

Due to his regionalist positions, in 1945, Tessitori was accused of being anti-Italian and it was precisely in that moment that he decided to take an even more radical position, founding the Associazione per l’Autonomia Friulana [Association for Autonomy of Friuli] on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1945.

His presence within the Constituent Assembly proved to be essential for the establishment of the Northeastern Region with Special Statute. Cf. M. MELONI, *Tiziano Tessitori*, Pordenone, Edizioni Studio Tesi, 1993, 36-74.

<sup>51</sup> ISTITUTO FRIULANO PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE (a cura di), *Il Friuli Venezia Giulia dalla Liberazione alla Costituzione*, with the collaboration of A. BUVOLI - M. DE AGOSTINI - F. FABBRONI, cit., 8-9.

in a few years, a reversal of course was created, transforming Friuli into a place no longer of emigration, but of immigration<sup>52</sup>.

## 6. Towards the Institution of Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Tiziano Tessitori's work to create a Friulian Region was intense. He argued that the State needed a radical reform in the organizational and administrative structure compared to what had been provided until then in the Albertine Statute<sup>53</sup>. His ideas did not imply a desire for separatism, but simply the claim that, within a united Italy, the vitality of local authorities was not stifled through centralist attitudes. Unity and centralism are, in fact, two concepts to be kept clearly distinct<sup>54</sup>.

Tessitori highlighted on the one hand the ethnic-linguistic and historical peculiarities of Friuli that made Friuli a *quid* that had to be kept distinct from Veneto, on the other he portrayed Friuli as the outpost for the defense of the Italic civilization. With the aim of finding memberships, he founded the Associazione per l'Autonomia Friulana [Association for Autonomy of Friuli] on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1945.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1946, the Second Subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly recognized Friulian autonomy, giving life to “Friuli-Venezia Giulia” (according to the denomination proposal of the Hon. Giovanni Uberti); the Region was counted among those with Ordinary Statutes. The regional capital would have been Trieste, provided that this city had remained to Italy; before the “Triestine Question” was defined, the provisional capital was to be Udine. Uberti's speech was then taken up by the official rapporteur, the Hon. Giuseppe Fuschini, and, at the time of the vote, by the President of the Assembly himself, namely the Hon. Umberto Terracini.

This first step strengthened the local regionalist positions, so much so that in January 1947 the Movimento Popolare Friulano per l'autonomia regionale [Friulian Popular Movement for regional autonomy] was born.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1947, the Commission for the Constitution, also known as the Commission of the 75 – which had the task of examining the Articles drawn up by the Subcommittees and concluded the work that very day –, for the first time hypothesized to shape the controversial Northeastern Region as a Region with special autonomy, due to the widespread presence of a linguistic minority, as stated by the Hon. Gustavo Fabbri

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<sup>52</sup> On Friulian migrations, cf. G. DI CAPORIACCO, *Storia e statistica dell'emigrazione dal Friuli e dalla Carnia*, vol. II, Udine, Edizioni Friuli Nuovo, 1969; G. PANIZZON, *Aspetti demografici friulani del secolo 1866-1966*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1991; M. PUPPINI, *L'emigrazione dal Friuli*, in ISTITUTO REGIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE NEL FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (a cura di), *Friuli e Venezia Giulia: storia del '900*, Gorizia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1997, 517-534; E. SARACENO, *Emigrazione e rientri: il Friuli-Venezia Giulia nel secondo dopoguerra*, Udine, Il Campo, 1981.

<sup>53</sup> T. TESSITORI, *Riforma dello Stato e autonomia degli enti locali*, Roma, Camera dei deputati, 1947.

<sup>54</sup> On the theme, cf. G. D'ARONCO, *Friuli, regione mai nata: vent'anni di lotte per l'autonomia (1945-1964)*, vol. II, Udine, De Agostini, 1983, 314; G. DI CAPORIACCO, *La regione friulana (1945-1947)*, Plaine di Pagnacco, Grafica Moderna, 1978; P. PURINI, *La nascita della Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, in R. MICHIELI - G. ZELCO (a cura di), *Venezia Giulia: la regione inventata*, Basaldella di Campoformido (Ud), Kappa Vu, 2008, 179-199: 179-180.

(monarchist), supported by Palmiro Togliatti (Partito Comunista d'Italia) [Communist Party of Italy]. The Commission referred the decision back to the Constituent Assembly.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1947 the Constituent Assembly, in plenary session, began to examine Title V of the constitutional project, dedicated to Regions, Provinces and Municipalities. Regarding the discussion of Art. 108, paragraph 2, of the draft Constitution (now Art. 116 of the Constitution) inherent to the Regions with Special Statute, it was therefore necessary to decide whether to add Friuli to the four Special Regions already approved: on that occasion, the deputy Fausto Pecorari proposed with an amendment to proceed in this direction and opted for the name “Regione Giulio-Friulana e Zara”, loudly claiming with this name the Italian character of the lands that were being torn from Italy<sup>55</sup>. The Friulian deputies then presented a correction to the Pecorari amendment, changing the regional denomination to “Friuli-Venezia Giulia”, a name previously proposed by Giovanni Uberti and now proposed again by Tessitori.

This was the occasion on which Tessitori was able to highlight the delicacy of the situation on the Eastern border: beyond the problems linked to the presence of non-native minorities, it was necessary to give these lands a particular autonomy, in order to promote peace among the peoples. Tessitori's amendment was approved by the Assembly almost unanimously, thanks to the Honourable Member's idea of linking the regional problem with that of the peaceful settlement of the Eastern border issue; that day “Friuli-Venezia Giulia” was born as a Region with a Special Statute and corresponded to a single territory composed of the two Provinces of Udine and Gorizia. The Region should have taken concrete form on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1948, if it had not been for the subsequent political events.

Numerous local political forces expressed great opposition to the Special Statute, which seemed again to emphasize the diversity rather than the unity of the Italian territory and therefore kept fears of possible Slavic claims alive; instead, Tessitori was certain that the special status, through future regional legislation and above all through its application, would allow the realization of a collaboration between peoples<sup>56</sup>. The Movimento Popolare Friulano per l'autonomia regionale was therefore fully satisfied, while the Democrazia Cristiana [Christian Democracy] was embarrassed by the general dissent of the population with respect to the regional special status.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1947, the Constituent Assembly, before moving on the examination of Art. 123 (today Art. 131 of the Constitution), approved an agenda according to which only the historical-traditional Regions, such as Veneto and not Friuli, were constituted. This would have in any case prevented the constitution of Friuli among the Regions with Ordinary Statute: Friuli could only have joined Veneto as an Ordinary Region. The alternative was the union with Venezia Giulia as a Special Region: Tessitori wisely opted for this second possibility.

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<sup>55</sup> C. BELCI, *Trieste, memorie di trent'anni*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1989, 132.

<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that Tessitori himself had not always been of this opinion on the issue of the regional special status: in fact, when the question emerged for the first time at the meeting of the Commission of 75 of the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1947, as a consequence the Regional Committee for Friulian Autonomy, chaired by the Hon. Tessitori, met on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1947 and unanimously approved an agenda in which this proposal was forcefully rejected.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1947, a group of regionalist and left-leaning deputies asked for the revision of the decision taken in June: then with the X Transitional and Final Disposition of the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly opted for a Friuli-Venezia Giulia with a provisionally Ordinary Statute<sup>57</sup>.

At the end of the session of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1947, Enrico De Nicola promulgated the Constitution, leaving open, within the framework of the X Transitional and Final Disposition, the decision on the configuration of Friuli-Venezia Giulia:

«Alla Regione del Friuli-Venezia Giulia, di cui all'art. 116, si applicano provvisoriamente le norme generali del Titolo V della parte seconda, ferma restando la tutela delle minoranze linguistiche in conformità con l'art. 6»<sup>58</sup>.

This Disposition led to a prolonged compromise between ordinary and special status.

Taking a step back, one must bear in mind, in fact, that the draft Constitution presented by the Commission of 75 to the Constituent Assembly on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1947 did not consider a potential special status of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Art. 108, subsequently absorbed in Articles 115 and 116, was articulated in the following terms:

«Le Regioni sono costituite in enti autonomi con propri poteri e funzioni secondo i principi fissati nella Costituzione.

Alla Sicilia, alla Sardegna, al Trentino-Alto Adige e alla Valle d'Aosta sono attribuite forme e condizioni particolari di autonomia con statuti speciali adottati mediante leggi costituzionali»<sup>59</sup>.

In an original note of the project perplexities were clearly expressed in relation to the special status of the Region:

«La Commissione si riserva di decidere sulla aggiunta della Regione del Friuli-Venezia Giulia alle quattro cui è attribuita un'autonomia speciale»<sup>60</sup>.

There were no similar doubts about the other Regions, whose Statutes<sup>61</sup> were adopted by the Constituent Assembly itself<sup>62</sup>.

Only with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding of London, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1954, the debate on the configuration of regional autonomy reopened, considering

<sup>57</sup> L. COMELLI, *27 giugno 1947-27 giugno 2017: 70 anni dalla concessione dello Statuto speciale al Friuli Venezia Giulia*. Atti del Convegno (Trieste, Aula del Consiglio regionale, 27 giugno 2017), Trieste, Stamperia del Consiglio regionale del Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2017, 1-11.

<sup>58</sup> Trans. as: «The general rules of Title V of the second part shall apply provisionally to the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region, referred to in art. 116, without prejudice to the protection of linguistic minorities in accordance with art. 6».

<sup>59</sup> Trans. as: «The Regions are constituted as autonomous entities with their own powers and functions in accordance with the principles established in the Constitution.

Particular forms and conditions of autonomy are attributed to Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta with special statutes adopted by constitutional laws».

<sup>60</sup> Trans. as: «The Commission reserves the right to decide on the addition of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region to the four to which special autonomy is attributed». On the point, see in Italian, <<https://www.nascitacostituzione.it/03p2/05t5/115/index.htm?art115-008.htm&2>>, site consulted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, as well as see Italian constitutional Articles 115 and 116 subsequently approved in the Constitution.

<sup>61</sup> Constitutional Law no. 2 of the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1948, Conversion into Constitutional Law of the Statute of the Sicilian Region; Constitutional Law no. 3 of the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1948, Special Statute for Sardinia; Constitutional Law no. 4 of the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1948, Special Statute for the Valle d'Aosta; Constitutional Law no. 5 of the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1948, Special Statute for Trentino-Alto Adige.

<sup>62</sup> For an overall view of the legislative activity of the Constituent Assembly, see the website of the Italian Parliament.



that by that time the Italianness of Trieste was certain. In February 1955 the Senate voted and the X Transitional and Final Disposition was declared lapsed.

Between 1957 and 1959 several draft Special Statutes were proposed: almost all parties delineated a Region structured on provincial autonomies or with conditions of particular autonomy for the Province of Trieste.

With the approval of the Special Statute – by Constitutional Law – in January 1963, the minority line prevailed, that is, the one which outlined a unitary solution for the Region<sup>63</sup>. Therefore, only during the III legislature (1958-1963) Art. 116 of the Constitution found concrete implementation:

«Alla Sicilia, alla Sardegna, al Trentino-Alto Adige, al Friuli-Venezia Giulia e alla Valle d'Aosta sono attribuite forme e condizioni particolari di autonomia secondo statuti speciali adottati con leggi costituzionali»<sup>64</sup>.

The elements of complexity, which caused this delay, were numerous: the evident territorial inhomogeneities, the pressure of multiple cultural and linguistic identities, the vast network of small Municipalities, the uncertain and unstable organization of local public services. A great capacity for political synthesis was therefore necessary to give effective shape to a Region characterized by clashes between divergent interests rather than by a “naturally” unitary aggregation<sup>65</sup>.

## 7. From the Invention of a Region to the Elimination of a Hyphen

Many politicians defined the lands of the Eastern border as “italianissime” [“very Italian”], but this exact superlative absolute ended up highlighting the will to nationalize areas that historically were not Italian. The “italianissima” Trieste was called by many – who knew very little about the history of the Northeast – “the capital of Friuli”, even if the past of Trieste was in no way attributable to Friuli, but rather to Venezia Giulia. These same people probably eliminated the hyphen that had separated the two territorial realities, building – after decades from the formation of Friuli-Venezia Giulia – a more

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<sup>63</sup> A. AGNELLO - S. BARTOLE, *La Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia: profilo storico-giuridico tracciato in occasione del 20° anniversario dell'istituzione della Regione*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1987; S. DI GIUSTO, *L'autonomismo friulano (1945-1964)*, in ISTITUTO REGIONALE PER LA STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO DI LIBERAZIONE NEL FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA (a cura di), *Friuli e Venezia Giulia: storia del '900*, Gorizia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1997, 453-464.

<sup>64</sup> Trans. as: «Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Valle d'Aosta are attributed particular forms and conditions of autonomy according to special statutes adopted by constitutional laws».

After the 2001 reform, paragraph 1 of Art. 116 of the Constitution is formulated as follows:

«Il Friuli Venezia Giulia, la Sardegna, la Sicilia, il Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol e la Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste dispongono di forme e condizioni particolari di autonomia, secondo i rispettivi statuti speciali adottati con legge costituzionale».

Trans. as: «Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste have particular forms and conditions of autonomy, according to their respective special statutes adopted by constitutional law».

<sup>65</sup> S. PIROVANO, *Passato glorioso e sofferta unità*, in A. RIZZI (a cura di), *Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Venezia, Electa, 1979, 43-64: 43.

accommodating Friuli Venezia Giulia, creating a false united identity that had never existed in the past<sup>66</sup>.

In this regard, the analysis of the historian Enzo Collotti reveals that these distortions had contributed to make the intra-regional relations more complex between the different communities:

«Sin quando si continuerà a voler parlare della Venezia Giulia, di una regione italiana, senza accettarne la realtà di un territorio abitato da diversi gruppi nazionali e trasformato in area di conflitto interetnico dai vincitori del 1918, incapaci di affrontare i problemi posti dalla compresenza di gruppi nazionali diversi, si continuerà a perpetuare la menzogna dell'italianità offesa e a occultare (e non solo a rimuovere) la realtà dell'italianità sopraffattrice»<sup>67</sup>.

Trieste, the fulcrum of Venezia Giulia, is still a place of coexistence of numerous ethnic and religious communities<sup>68</sup>, it is a cosmopolitan city<sup>69</sup>. The psychoanalyst Ettore Jogan described well the air that was breathed and is still breathed in the city:

«Se per nevrotico intendiamo qualcuno che vive il disagio di un passato che gli condiziona il presente, allora Trieste è nevrotica»<sup>70</sup>.

The reasons for the union between the tormented lands of Venezia Giulia and Friuli were essentially of political nature: the declared reason was that the territory of Venezia Giulia was too small to constitute a Region, but, in reality, if one reflects on demographic data, it was much more populated than both the Valle d'Aosta and Molise; the real reason, instead, consisted in wanting to reorganize the political, social and ethnic balances that had historically been created in Trieste, so as to make the city more Italian and less pro-independence<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> A. KERSEVAN, *Perché questo libro*, in R. MICHELI - G. ZELCO (a cura di), *Venezia Giulia: la regione inventata*, Basaldella di Campoformido (Ud), Kappa Vu, 2008, 7-18.

<sup>67</sup> Trans. as: «As long as one continues to want to talk about Venezia Giulia as an Italian region, without accepting the reality of a territory inhabited by different national groups and transformed into an area of interethnic conflict by the winners of 1918, unable to face the problems posed by the coexistence of different national groups, one will continue to perpetuate the lie of the offended Italianness and to conceal (and not only to remove) the reality of the overwhelming Italianness». Cf. for the Italian version E. COLLOTTI, *Giù le mani dalle foibe*, in *il Manifesto*, 11 febbraio 2007, <<https://www.resistenze.org/sito/te/cu/st/cust7b13-001078.htm>>, site consulted on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Even today many cults coexist here. One has a clear perception of it if, wandering through the streets of Trieste, one turns one's gaze towards sacred architecture: one can admire, in addition to the Catholic Churches, a Greek-Orthodox Church, a Serbian-Orthodox Church, an Evangelical Lutheran Church, an Anglican Church and a Synagogue which is second in size at the European level only to the Temple of Budapest; Islamic centers and other places of worship of small communities – not historically related to the territory – have been added recently.

As for the social nuclei, there are essentially three prevalent ones: the Triestines of ancient origin, the Istrians of the Julian-Dalmatian exodus and the Slovenes of the minority.

<sup>69</sup> On the multiethnicity of Trieste and the surrounding area, see D. ANDREOZZI, *Il peso delle parole: linguaggi di esclusione e linguaggi di inclusione nella storia di Trieste*, in R. SCARCIGLIA (a cura di), *Trieste multiculturale: comunità e linguaggi di integrazione*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011, 13-38; C. SCHIFFRER, *Sguardo storico sui rapporti fra italiani e slavi nella Venezia Giulia*, Trieste, Stabilimento Tipografico Nazionale, 1946.

<sup>70</sup> Trans. as: «If by neurotic we mean someone who experiences the discomfort of a past that conditions his present, then Trieste is neurotic». Cf. for the Italian version E. JOGAN, in *L'Espresso*, Roma, 22 aprile 1984.

<sup>71</sup> P. PURINI, *La nascita della Regione*, cit., 179-199.

From the parliamentary acts dating back to both 1946 and 1963, the Italian Parliament is effectively aware of constituting an “artificial Region”<sup>72</sup>.

A further question was that of the special status: the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region is the “least Special” of the Special Regions<sup>73</sup>, having been defined as the last of the Regions with a Special Statute and the first with an Ordinary Statute<sup>74</sup>.

The choice of the name itself of the Region had been difficult and after the reform of Title V of the Constitution (in 2001), as mentioned, it was amended, arbitrarily deleting – in the text of the Art. 116 of the Italian Constitution – the hyphen that had separated the two distinct entities Friuli and Venezia Giulia. However, no uniformity was given to the denomination: both Art. 131 and the X of the Transitional and Final Dispositions of the Constitution, as well as Articles 1, 32, 49 and 65 of the Statute of special autonomy remained unchanged.

Contrariwise, the diametrically opposed choice of “integrating” the name of two other Regions with Special Statute by translating their denomination into the language of protected minorities took on a paradoxical aspect: the names «Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol» and «Valle d’Aosta/Vallée d’Aoste» reflect a greater protection of the plurality of identities.

The controversial hyphen, after the reform of Title V of the Constitution, disappeared from all the regional road signs, as if the “dogma” of regional unity could, with this apparently imperceptible modification, replace the characteristic element of these territories, namely diversity. As if history and geography could be pulverized in an instant by the will of an unconscious political class. The most critical element of the affair was the lack of legal explanation of this change, as if nothing had happened: non-information turned out to be an easy way to bypass an unwanted political debate<sup>75</sup>.

If Friuli and Venezia Giulia were merged into a single Region with the start of the republican phase, in more recent times there have been claims to give the Region a permanent unitary nature<sup>76</sup>: the process began with the “invention” of a Region and ended with the elimination of a hyphen, which was the residual element of the past.

## 8. A Decisive Passage: The Multiple Proposals for the Regional Organization

The first Friulian initiatives for regional autonomy have already largely emerged. In this regard, it is recalled that Tessitori’s proposal to create a model of the Autonomous Region

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<sup>72</sup> R. MICHIELI, *Un trattino di troppo? Una strana storia poco conosciuta*, in R. MICHIELI - G. ZELCO (a cura di), *Venezia Giulia: la regione inventata*, Basaldella di Campoformido (Ud), Kappa Vu, 2008, 240-250: 240.

<sup>73</sup> P. PURINI, *La nascita della Regione*, cit., 179-199: 198.

<sup>74</sup> See in this regard M. DEGRASSI, *L’ultima delle regioni a statuto speciale*, in R. FINZI - C. MAGRIS - G. MICCOLI (a cura di), *Il Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, vol. I, Torino, Einaudi, 2002, 759-804.

<sup>75</sup> R. MICHIELI, *Un trattino di troppo?*, cit., 240-250.

<sup>76</sup> S. VOLK, *Nel nome della Venezia Giulia*, in R. MICHIELI - G. ZELCO (a cura di), *Venezia Giulia: la regione inventata*, Basaldella di Campoformido (Ud), Kappa Vu, 2008, 253-261.

was already published on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1945 in *La Libertà*, the Udinese newspaper of the CLN, printed for the first time on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1945<sup>77</sup>.

The weight of the action of the Movimento Popolare Friulano per l'autonomia regionale has also been highlighted in this essay. In particular, starting from various publications on autonomy, many of which found place in the newspaper – written in Friulian – *La Patrie dal Friûl*<sup>78</sup>, a relevant proposal for a Statute was born and published in 1947. Another draft of the Statute dated back to 1948, while from 1948 to 1954 there were no projects to mention. It was only when the process of defining the fate of Trieste began that this question, which had already been pending for many years, was revived.

If, therefore, a relevant autonomist movement was generated in Friuli, similar requests for spaces of freedom also came from Venezia Giulia.

What was perhaps the first official act in favor of a regional administration of Venezia Giulia, drafted by the CLN of Venezia Giulia, dates back to January 1945:

«I partiti del C.L.N. saranno fautori dell'amministrazione della stessa [cioè della Venezia Giulia] da parte del popolo giuliano medesimo, direttamente interessato, salvo sempre il principio dell'unità nazionale»<sup>79</sup>.

The Julian Committee of the Partito d'Azione [Party of Action] in May 1945, on the occasion of the liberation of Trieste from the Germans, presented a manifesto, which considered the need for a special order for Venezia Giulia: it was based on broad administrative autonomy within the framework of Italian unity, conceding a particular regime of customs and economic exemptions<sup>80</sup>.

In August 1945 some Julian delegates reported to the Government the necessity to overcome nationalist conceptions, preferring a solution in which a point of balance was found in order to allow a peaceful coexistence with the Slavs of the territory<sup>81</sup>. This requirement was reiterated in a Memorandum dating from early September, in which the representatives of all political organizations of the Julian Region highlighted:

«il dovere del governo italiano di proclamare con solenne impegno le linee di uno statuto della regione, il quale, attuando i principî della democrazia, garantisc[a] come legge imprescrittibile a tutti i cittadini il diritto di autogoverno nei limiti massimi consentiti dal vincolo statale, assicuri il diritto della nazionalità agli slavi, con tutela espressa in tribunali vigilanti il nuovo diritto pubblico, realizzi nella Venezia Giulia quella società politica

<sup>77</sup> T. TESSITORI, *L'autonomia regionale ed il Friuli*, in *La Libertà*, 12, 13 e 14 luglio 1945.

<sup>78</sup> On the theme, cf. G. D'ARONCO, *Per la Regione friulana*, Roma, Cuggini, 1946; G. D'ARONCO, *L'«isola» ladina del Friuli*, Udine, Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1947; G. D'ARONCO, *Il Friuli: sguardo generale*, Udine, Camera di Commercio, Industria e Agricoltura, 1951; G. PIETRA, *Il problema economico-sociale del Friuli*, Udine, Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1946; T. TESSITORI, *L'autonomia friulana: concetto e motivi*, Udine, Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1945.

<sup>79</sup> Trans. as: «The parties of the C.L.N. will be supporters of the administration of the same [that is, of Venezia Giulia] by the directly concerned Julian people themselves, always without prejudice to the principle of national unity». For what concerns the Italian version, some brief words have been reported from *Resoconto dei lavori della Sottocommissione per la «Amministrazione locale»*, in MINISTERO DELLA COSTITUENTE (COMMISSIONE PER STUDI ATTINENTI ALLA RIORGANIZZAZIONE DELLO STATO), *Relazione all'Assemblea Costituente*, vol. II: *Autonomie locali. Problema della Regione. Amministrazione locale*, Roma, 1946, 437.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

democratica, che conced[e] a tutti il godimento della libertà tutelato dalla legge direttamente creata dai suoi cittadini»<sup>82</sup>.

The greatest difficulty was, of course, to converge the multiple proposals on the future regional organization drawn up by the various factions. One went from positions contrary to the constitution of the Region (idea supported, for example, by monarchists) to peculiar solutions, such as that of the “limited self-government” of Cecovini, which at a later time seemed to lean instead for the thesis of the unitary Region<sup>83</sup>, or such as the solution of January 1955 suggested by the Triestine group Unità Popolare [Popular Unity], which proposed a sort of Regional Council<sup>84</sup>; there were then those who intended to create two separate Regions (the political identities that opted for this line were very varied, from communists, to independentists, to Nennian socialists up to the Friulian group linked to Senator Tessitori) and those who aimed at a Region united by the mere aim of obtaining facilitations for the entire area (the reference is, in particular, to the Slavic groups, i.e. White Slavs and Titoist Slavs); finally, there were those who fought for a single Region, without conditions (wanted more by the Italians of Trieste than by the Friulians).

The debates, between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, focused mainly on ethnic and economic peculiarities, national political-legal issues and autonomous needs, as well as the provisional nature of the Memorandum<sup>85</sup>. In particular, the legal-political definitions of the fate of the Region were closely connected with the ethnic and economic reasons that had to justify a certain structure rather than another.

As evidence of the reasons that prevailed, it is useful to read a direct source, which found space between January and February 1960 on *Messaggero Veneto*, i.e. the column entitled *Regione sì, Regione no* [*Region yes, Region no*], from which it emerged that the primary theme was economic rather than ethnic: those opposed to regionalism prefigured only an increase in bureaucracy and taxation, while those in favor hoped for economic advantages that would have made it possible to overcome the economic depression<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Trans. as: «the duty of the Italian Government to solemnly proclaim the guidelines of a statute for the region, which, by implementing the principles of democracy, guarantees the right of self-government as an absolute law for all citizens within the maximum limits permitted by the state constraint, grants the right of nationality to the Slavs with protection expressed in vigilant courts supervising the new public law, realizes in Venezia Giulia that democratic political society, that grants everyone the enjoyment of the freedom protected by the law directly created by its citizens». For the Italian version, see *ibid.*, 453-454.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Il Piccolo*, 4 marzo 1955.

<sup>84</sup> The idea was taken up on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March by Dr. Gruber Benco who proposed the establishment of a consultative body during a reunion of the City Council of Trieste.

<sup>85</sup> D. DE CASTRO, *La Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, cit., 37-43.

<sup>86</sup> One can read a reworking of the articles in G. D'ARONCO, *Friuli, regione mai nata: vent'anni di lotte per l'autonomia (1945-1964)*, voll. I-III, Udine, De Agostini, 1983. Other texts on the theme: V. MARANGONE, *Finalmente la regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1962; M. MARTINA, *La Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia: discorso pronunciato alla Camera dei Deputati il 27 giugno 1962*, Gorizia, Tipografia Bressan e Campestrini, 1962.

From this last point of view, it was also necessary to consider the difficulties connected with the unification of a regional territory historically structured on different local economies<sup>87</sup>, which required differentiated interventions<sup>88</sup>.

## 9. The *Ratio* of the Special Status of Friuli Venezia Giulia

The forces that gave their contribution to shape the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and its special autonomy were numerous.

Autonomy was a common need: it was a means to make bordering areas interdependent and complementary as they had been characterized by very distinct experiences, and, if in the phase of the Constituent Assembly the hypothesis of conferring the special status were linked essentially to the plural identity element, instead in the fifties and sixties the debate was focused on economic difficulties and diversity. Precisely these last reasons determined the special autonomy of the Region, which managed to pursue, as a consequence, a slow recovery, albeit with various stages of stalemate. In fact, one of the essential passages of the Statute of Friuli Venezia Giulia concerns financial autonomy<sup>89</sup>: the Region enjoys the right to participate in a predetermined share of tax revenue made on the territory (Art. 49 of the Regional Statute) and, moreover, its revenues are constituted by the income of its assets or by its own taxes which it has the power to establish by Regional Law, in harmony with the tax system of the State and the Municipalities, also in the form of Metropolitan Cities (Art. 51, paragraph 1, of the Regional Statute).

In this way, the Region, once the Regional Statute started being applied, began to enjoy a certain amount of predictable resources and obtained the advantage of being able to spend without any allocation constraints other than the political one<sup>90</sup>.

In addition, the Statutory Text also provides the possibility for the State to allocate special contributions by Law to the Region to provide for specific purposes, not falling within the normal regional functions, and for the execution of organic development programs (Art. 50 of the Regional Statute).

Thus, in the years following 1963, a gradual programming of the different modes of implementation of the forms of autonomy began<sup>91</sup>, outlining a regional coordination

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<sup>87</sup> There were several publications and *pamphlets* on the issue: R. ACCERBONI, *Perplexità sulla regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, Trieste, Tipografia Riva, 1959; M. LIVI, *La regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia contro la specialità*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1960; T. METUS, *Problemi e prospettive della Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1962.

<sup>88</sup> For an overview of the issue, cf. D. ANDREOZZI - L. PANARITI, *L'economia in una regione nata dalla politica*, in R. FINZI - C. MAGRIS - G. MICCOLI (a cura di), *Il Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, vol. II, Torino, Einaudi, 2002, 807-889.

<sup>89</sup> Regional Statute, *Title IV Finanze – Demanio e patrimonio della Regione* [*Finance – State Property and Heritage of the Region*], Art. 48: «La Regione ha una propria finanza, coordinata con quella dello Stato, in armonia con i principi della solidarietà nazionale, nei modi stabiliti dagli articoli seguenti».

Trans. as: «The Region has its own finance, coordinated with that of the State, in harmony with the principles of national solidarity, in the ways established by the following articles».

<sup>90</sup> M. DEGRASSI, *L'ultima delle regioni*, cit., 759-804: 773-775.

<sup>91</sup> For example, it should be highlighted that the Regional Statute provides in Art. 5, no. 9), among the matters in which the Region has concurrent legislative power: «istituzione e ordinamento di Enti di carattere locale o regionale

among the multiple economic vocations of the Provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Udine and Pordenone. The economic fragmentation was the result of the morphological diversity of the Region and of a plurality of sovereignty that alternated on the same areas<sup>92</sup>. The goal became to create not only a political-legal Region, but also an economic one, that is, a complex territorial structure constituted by interdependent realities, articulated on the basis of diverse forms of labor spread over the Region's geography. In it, the different areas represent as many members of a body coordinated with respect to a unified and common purpose.

In addition to Udine and Trieste, which are respectively the symbolic cities of Friuli and Venezia Giulia, there are two other Provinces in the Region: in Friuli, the Province of Pordenone, which never acquired centrality, despite being characterized by a rapid economic development, thanks to the cotton sector first and then to the Zanussi industries; and, in Venezia Giulia, the small Province of Gorizia, which – devoid of its Karst and mountainous hinterland – covered a merely marginal role from the beginning.

Therefore, this left two macro-areas of reference: on the one hand, Friuli, that evolved over time, enriching itself with mainstream industries, after having been described at the end of the fifties – by Guido Piovene<sup>93</sup> – as a rude and peasant land with just some circumscribed industrial initiatives of the traditional type; on the other hand, Trieste's area in Venezia Giulia, that from being a financial center between the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the beginning of Fascism, passed to having a merely peripheral and decentralized character in the Italian territory.

Overall, in this context, the special status seemed to guarantee a balanced progress of the different regional areas. In the first decades of the life of the Statute, the legislation and, in general, regional activities were mainly directed to the following matters: within the scope of primary legislative power – pursuant to Art. 4 of the Regional Statute – the focus was on agriculture, mountain economy, industry and commerce, crafts, as well as tourism; within the framework of concurrent legislation – pursuant to Art. 5 of the Regional Statute – the concentration was addressed to employment policies, such as professional education, as well as cooperation; and, finally, within the legislative integrative-implementing power – pursuant to Art. 6 of the Regional Statute – work was the most considered matter.

But history intervened once again: two events led to a new balance between State and Region in the economic field. These were the catastrophic 1976 earthquake of Friuli and Italy's ratification of the Treaty of Osimo in 1977, which definitively destroyed any hope of the regional right-wing to regain Istria and other lands left to the Yugoslavians after the end of the war, generating an inevitable indignation<sup>94</sup>. As for the earthquake, it resulted in the

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per lo studio di programmi di sviluppo economico» [trans. as: «institution and organization of local or regional Entities for the study of economic development programs»].

<sup>92</sup> For an evolutionary picture of the regional economy, see D. ANDREOZZI - L. PANARITI, *L'economia in una regione*, cit., 807-889. See also E. APIH, *Dal particolarismo all'idea di regione nell'Italia nord-orientale: lineamenti per un discorso*, in *Clio*, n. 4/1983, 537-552; M. DEGRASSI, *L'identità provinciale: crisi istituzionale e nuove forme di aggregazione*, Gorizia, I.S.I.G., 2000; L. FORTUNA, *Il Friuli: tesi per uno sviluppo economico*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1963.

<sup>93</sup> See G. PIOVENE, *Viaggio in Italia*, Milano, Mondadori, 1957, 49-55.

<sup>94</sup> M. DEGRASSI, *L'ultima delle regioni*, cit., 759-804: 779-787.

growth of a “municipal” spirit and in the enhancement of Friulian identity, according to the line “fasín di bèsoi” [“let’s do it alone”, in Friulian language]<sup>95</sup>: this was due to the fear of possible interventions of an innovative State which might have ended up not respecting the historical morphology of the Friulian cities. The special status was expressed at its highest level when, with Law no. 546 of the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1977, in addition to the allocation of other money beyond that already disbursed for the first reconstruction operations, the State ruled that the Region had full powers for ninety-one percent of the interventions and for what concerned the remaining nine percent there had to be a close collaboration<sup>96</sup> between the central and regional bodies by reaching an agreement between the Commissioner for the reconstruction Giuseppe Zamberletti<sup>97</sup> and the President of the Region Antonio Comelli. This Law led to an intense coordination between the State and the Region, aimed at a rapid reconstruction and economic-social development of the devastated territory. In the perspective of development, Art. 26 of the aforementioned Law established the University of Udine, starting from the 1977-1978 academic year, in order to increase the civil-social progress and the economic rebirth of Friuli, as well as to ensure the preservation and development of the culture, language, traditions and history of Friuli<sup>98</sup>. This provision is linked to what had been established in the Special Statute, where it is stated that the Region can contribute with its own grants to the development of university education within the Region itself (Art. 9 of the Regional Statute)<sup>99</sup>.

## 10. Final Considerations

Boundaries are nothing other than imaginary lines drawn by mankind for political reasons; the borders are always “porous”, but this characteristic assumed exasperated profiles in the case of the Italian Northeast<sup>100</sup>.

From 1420 Udine and its territory were subject to Venetian domination; with the arrival of Napoleon the Republic fell and these zones were then annexed to the Habsburg area to become part of Italy only in 1866 with the Third War of Independence.

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<sup>95</sup> REGIONE AUTONOMA FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA, *Friuli-ricostruzione (1976-1986)*, edited by SEGRETERIA GENERALE STRAORDINARIA PER LA RICOSTRUZIONE DEL FRIULI, Udine, Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1988.

<sup>96</sup> Even at the regional level, the different parties engaged in cooperation.

<sup>97</sup> In 2006, Giuseppe Zamberletti related his experience linked to the earthquake in *Se la terra trema: a trent’anni dal Friuli Giuseppe Zamberletti racconta la nascita e lo sviluppo della protezione civile italiana*. If improvisation prevailed at the beginning, then experience led to organization. In this way, a globally competitive civil protection network was born. Cf. A. PIZZI - G. ZAMBERLETTI, *Se la terra trema: a trent’anni dal Friuli Giuseppe Zamberletti racconta la nascita e lo sviluppo della protezione civile italiana*, Milano, Il Sole 24 Ore, 2006.

<sup>98</sup> G. DEMURO, *Università e ricerca come risorsa economica: la rivoluzione dell’intelligenza*, in *Le Istituzioni del Federalismo: Regione e Governo Locale (Bimestrale di studi giuridici e politici della Regione Emilia-Romagna)*. Atti della Convention *Poteri pubblici e sviluppo economico locale* (Udine, I.s.g.re., 14 novembre 2008), n. 2/2009, 295-302.

<sup>99</sup> E. D’ORLANDO, *Genesi, sviluppi e prospettive dell’autonomia speciale della Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia*, in E. D’ORLANDO - L. MEZZETTI (a cura di), *Lineamenti di diritto costituzionale della regione Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Torino, Giappichelli, 2018, 1-37.

<sup>100</sup> R. FINZI - C. MAGRIS - G. MICCOLI, *Una tormentata regione «artificiale»*, in R. FINZI - C. MAGRIS - G. MICCOLI (a cura di), *Il Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, vol. I, Torino, Einaudi, 2002, XXI-XXVI: XXIII.



The fate of Pordenone was similar but with a historical exception since Venice had exercised its power over the city only from the XVI century.

Gorizia and Gradisca were linked to the Habsburgs from 1509 to 1918, while Grado – today in the Province of Gorizia – was Venetian from the late Middle Ages to the end of the Republic, as were Muggia – today in the Province of Trieste – and some lands of Istria.

Trieste was Austrian from 1382 to 1918, before experiencing the troubled history described in this essay<sup>101</sup>.

A significant part of the population of Trieste and the Gorizia area still harbors a strong pro-Austrian sentiment, which usually manifests itself in the form of a convinced adhesion to the political-cultural suggestion of “Mitteleuropa”; considering the loss of centrality of Trieste and in general of Venezia Giulia in the current geopolitical framework, there is an evident attempt to restore the majesty of that area which was the only outlet to the sea of the Habsburgs and, therefore, Trieste was the port of the Empire.

Over time, Trieste has remained suffocated by a poignant nostalgia for the past that mixes with the tension of waiting for something that never seems to happen; the city is driven by that *Streben*, typical of the sensitivity of the romantic man who feels an eternal intolerance for his present, yearning for transcendental destinies.

There is an intense contrast between a remote past like the Austro-Hungarian one and the present: in particular, in the sketches of the “Maldobrie” by Lino Carpinteri and Mariano Faraguna, a popular past re-emerges through an evocative memory that selectively recovers images of a world that has now disappeared, with a narrative style that finds its foundations in the Venetian dialect<sup>102</sup>.

In such a complex and varied regional context, the only possible way to guarantee the Region a future was to offer a large area of autonomy, which could allow a development marked by new forms of interdependence among foreign peoples from one another in terms of history, traditions, politics, economics and, often, even language<sup>103</sup>. “Friuli-Venezia Giulia” was sometimes described as a “Regione problema” [“problem-Region”], because on the one hand it needed territorial cohesion to heal existing diatribes and on the other it suffered from its marked peripherality with respect to the national territory, which also entailed economic losses<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> By now, Trieste is out of the international political game, but manages to repropose its international vocation, establishing itself as a center of excellence in scientific research. As early as 1964, the *International Centre for Theoretical Physics*, promoted by *Unesco* and by the *International Atomic Energy Agency* of Vienna, founded its headquarters there; also, in 1982, the *Area Science Park*, which is one of the largest multi-sector science parks in Europe, was established in Trieste. These realities were joined by: the *International School for Advanced Studies*, which deals with training and research in physics, mathematics and biology; the *National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics*; the *Astronomical Observatory of Trieste*; the *Marine Biology Laboratory*; and the *Experimental Thalassographic Institute*. Cf. D. ANDREOZZI - L. PANARITI, *L'economia in una regione*, cit., 807-889: 888-889.

<sup>102</sup> R. SPAZZALI, *Trieste di fine secolo (1955-2004). Per una storia politica del secondo Novecento*, Trieste, Edizioni Italo Svevo – Istituto Regionale per la Cultura Istriano-Fiumano-Dalmata, 2006, 16-18.

<sup>103</sup> R. FINZI - C. MAGRIS - G. MICCOLI, *Una tormentata regione «artificiale»*, cit., XXI-XXVI: XXV-XXVI.

<sup>104</sup> See R. MAINARDI, *Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, in A. RIZZI (a cura di), *Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Venezia, Electa, 1979, 7-22. For an evolution of the political-economic situation of the territory, cf. E.J. HOBBSAWM, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, trans. as *Nazioni e nazionalismi dal 1780: programma, mito e realtà*, Torino, Einaudi, 1991, 31 and 155-156; C. TILLY, *Capital, Coercion and European States, AD 990-*

Indeed, looking at the works of the Constituent Assembly, the regional special status seemed to be the result of the presence of the linguistic minority, but later this configuration found exquisitely economic bases, connected to the cohabitation between different economies in an “artificial” and decentralized Region<sup>105</sup>. As evidence of this, as stated by an authoritative doctrine<sup>106</sup>, the Region assumed a “special” competence in many key matters of economic intervention<sup>107</sup>.

If one were to judge this troubled history, despite the nostalgic echoes of the past, one could define it a story with a happy ending, although even talking about an end is not correct, since the special status deriving from the Statute is in continuous implementation. The «rustic amòur»<sup>108</sup> that flows from the fountain of a village in Friuli and the «scontrosa grazia»<sup>109</sup> of Trieste built a unique Region together: the coexistence between the various local realities of the Region takes on complex and composite traits with reference to the relationships between the Julian and Friulian communities. This attitude corresponds to an imprint of history that cannot be erased and sometimes, by trying to remove its footprints, one risks opening a real wound. A case in point is when it was decided to eliminate the hyphen between Friuli and Venezia Giulia.

One cannot ignore the “culture of particularism” that distinguishes the roots of Northeastern Italy<sup>110</sup>: being a culturally “mixed” area constitutes in itself a determining element of local memory<sup>111</sup>. Nowadays, Friuli and Venezia Giulia represent a successful example of cohesion, probably because they didn’t try to crush local diversity in the name of regional identity. The path was one of coexistence, based on an equal dignity of all differences rather than forced homologation. “Equality” and “diversity” are not opposing words (their opposites respectively are “inequality” and “identity”), but they express complementary concepts<sup>112</sup>.

Starting from the linguistic data, the Regional Statute provides for the protection of ethnic and cultural roots in a broad sense, as expressly stated in Art. 3:

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1990, Cambridge (Mass.), Basil Blackwell, 1990, trans. as *L'oro e la spada: capitale, guerra e potere nella formazione degli stati europei 990-1990*, Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie, 1991.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. G. CERIA - I. DALMONEGO - F. DEBIASI, *Le regioni a statuto speciale: profili istituzionali e finanziari*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1989, 20.

<sup>106</sup> S. BARTOLE, *Passato e presente delle Autonomie speciali*, in *il Mulino*, n. 3/1979, 368-386: 375.

<sup>107</sup> L. PALADIN, *Commento allo Statuto della Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1969, 9.

<sup>108</sup> Trans. as: «rustic love». For the Italian version, see P.P. PASOLINI, *Casarsa*, in *Poesie a Casarsa*, 1942.

<sup>109</sup> Trans. as: «grumpy grace». For the Italian version, see U. SABA, *Trieste*, in *Canzoniere*, section *Trieste e una donna*, 1910-1912.

<sup>110</sup> R. SPAZZALI, *Trieste di fine secolo (1955-2004)*, cit., 16.

<sup>111</sup> C. MAGGIO, *Il confine orientale italiano nei verbali dell'Assemblea costituente (2 Giugno 1946-31 Gennaio 1948)*, Trieste, Edizioni Italo Svevo – Istituto Regionale per la Cultura Istriano-Fiumano-Dalmata, 2005, 11-12; BOGDAN C. NOVAK, *Trieste (1941-1954)*, cit., 17-20.

<sup>112</sup> M. BARBERIS, *Eguaglianza e differenza: variazioni su temi di Ferrajoli*, in G.P. DOLSO (a cura di), *Dignità, Eguaglianza e Costituzione*. Conferenza interdisciplinare. Progetto FRA 2016 (Trieste, Università di Trieste, 27 novembre 2018), Trieste, EUT, 2019, 31-46.

«Nella Regione è riconosciuta parità di diritti e di trattamento a tutti i cittadini, qualunque sia il gruppo linguistico al quale appartengono, con la salvaguardia delle rispettive caratteristiche etniche e culturali»<sup>113</sup>.

This plurality, that is an object of protection, is the result of the tormented legal-political events of a territory which is still today a sort of Babylon. The same plurality is also connected to the economic diversities of the area, which are an element of “tradition” to be valued and coordinated jointly through regional planning, in order to ensure a constant growth of the Region in economic terms, making good use of the special status.

The “regional experiment” can be said to be successful, precisely because autonomy and the special status have made it possible to mend divided memories, without denying the past, but looking towards the future.

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<sup>113</sup> Trans. as: «In the Region equal rights and equal treatment are recognized to all citizens, whatever the linguistic group to which they belong, with the safeguarding of their ethnic and cultural characteristics».