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ABSTRACT

Istrian historiography written throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries tends to reflect the often contentious discourse between Italian irredentists and Slavic nationalists relating to the peninsula's nature and belonging. On the one hand, Italian historians and polemicists suggest that Istria and Istrianity were primarily Italian, and therefore the region should be part of an Italian state. Until the end of the Trieste Crisis in 1954, many Italians continued to debate the nature of the region and its population, but the frequency of such publications tapered off with most of the peninsula falling to communist Yugoslavia. On the other hand, Croatian scholars and polemicists claimed the region and its population were thoroughly Slavic, and that Italians historically were aggressors and oppressors. However, another group of scholars has entered the debate, suggesting that Istrian identity is a hybrid, and this hybridity has historical roots. Its population, they claim, professes and promotes an Istrian identity, which consists of Slovene, Croatian, and Italian influences. The new camp reflects the continued politicization of identity in Istria into the 1990s, by both nation-building Croatian nationalists seeking the construction of a monolithic Croatian identity and regionalists searching for more regional and local autonomy. This illuminates the historic and contemporary political and social struggles to ascribe some kind of belonging to this contested borderland region.

The gravest error a thinking person can make is to believe that one particular version of history is absolute fact. History is recorded by a series of observers, none of whom is impartial. The facts are distorted by sheer passage of time and . . . the inevitable corruption that comes from an accumulation of careless mistakes.¹

History is not, as someone once said, “just one damn thing after another.” Unless it is badly taught or written, it is not a dry record of events; it is about how people experience, study, and interpret the past. Each generation reviews and rewrites history in the light of its own experiences and understandings, aspirations, and anxieties. Different societies, different groups within society, and even different individuals will often disagree about the meaning of events, the ways in which events happened, and even, sometimes, whether events happened at all. There is no single history that tells the whole story; there can be many different *histories*, telling many different stories, and many different ways of remembering, recording, and recounting the past.²

Many groups feel the need to reach far back into history to feel some kind of existential connectedness to justify where and who they are and where they are going. However, the complexities that arise when looking at history stem more from perceptions of the history than the actual history itself.³

In the nineteenth century many European politicians and intellectuals viewed strong nations and nation-states as the pinnacles of human and political development. Since history emerged as a modern professional endeavor, the creation of historical works has been “closely interwoven with the making and legitimating of nation-states.”⁴ Nationalists needed to create national myths or “rediscover” or invent a past that tied their nation to the state, shaping and directing a targeted group toward a unified national identity.⁵ Historians across Europe depicted the “founding of their nations, the past of their nations, the coherence and unity of their nations” in this state- and identity-building process. To eliminate the possibility of strong competing identities and interpretations of history, scholars and polemicists had to “devalu[e] regions and their pasts . . . [resulting in] the triumph of the national historiographies” as they shaped national identities and legitimized nation-states. Furthermore, to insure the dominance of the nation, regional histories and identities were made suspect, and the study of subnational groups “reveall[ed] one’s lack of serious learning or . . . one’s dubious political allegiances.” Even into the twentieth century, when the historical and social science fields became more professional and complex, the persistence of the national project in historiography continued. Though more modern works often concentrate on fissures within nations and nationalisms, the national topic is still the prevalent focus.⁶ This trend in scholarship and polemics on issues of history, geography, and ethnology, which often attempted to justify imperial ambition by making claims to a region’s population and its “nature,” generally emerges during a period of uncertainty and crisis. We also must keep in mind that “each generation reviews and rewrites history in the light of its own experiences and understandings, aspirations, and anxiety.”⁷ The personal opinion and goals of the historian or polemicist must also be understood, because these individuals did not research and write in a vacuum. The case of Istria during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is no different, providing a wealth of publications seeking to illuminate its ethnic nature and illustrate its tenuous position as a contested borderland. These works were meant to persuade both domestic and international audiences to support the region’s inclusion into a specific body politic. They were also used to shape identity, often wrapping ethnic identity in a cloak of legitimacy, showing the historic continuity of a particular nation within the region. Even some Marxist historians, while often decrying nationalism and the nation-state, have written in much the same vein as nationalist historians, arguing for the region’s inclusion into the state.

Individuals familiar with Istrian history know that the region underwent periods of crisis and uncertainty. It seems unusual that such a traditionally impoverished territory (until the 1960s) would be so desired by many of its neigh-

bors. However, until the First World War, Istria was a geostrategic concern for the empires and nation-states bordering it due to its position on the northernmost part of the Adriatic Sea. The peninsula and its immediate surroundings had three port cities—Trieste on the northwest, Pula to the southwest, and Rijeka to the northeast—all of which could be developed for shipping and military purposes. In the nineteenth century such concerns were paramount for the Habsburg Empire, which controlled the region until 1918. Furthermore, control of the Adriatic was important for the empire’s Balkan policy and to check the rising challenge of Italy.

For the nationalists who achieved a united Italy in the 1860s, state-building did not end with the incorporation of Venetia into the kingdom in 1866. According to Dennison Rusinow, the Mazzinian concept of a democratic Italy in the “fraternity of free nations coexisting in friendship” was not shared by the second generation of *Risorgimento* zealots. Many of them hijacked this project, turning it into an experiment with imperialism to redeem much of the territory held by the former Venetian empire around the Adriatic. They, too, saw some of this land as Italy’s *natural* border along the Alps, which could be easily defended against German and later Slavic incursion.⁸

Desiring the Julian March was a continuation of the forcible removal of the Habsburgs from much of what is today northern Italy.⁹ Furthermore, the port cities were attractive bases for incursions into the Balkans, especially along the much desired western coast. For Italian shippers and merchants in Venice, Bari, and other Adriatic ports, the inclusion of Istria into an Italian state would eliminate international competitors. In order to justify the claim to these regions Italians from both the new kingdom and Istria wrote histories to illustrate the centuries of continuous Italian habitation and culture, attempting to define the territory and its urban culture as Italian.¹⁰ Their works provided justification for continued hegemonic power in the face of growing Slavic national movements in the late 1870s. “For men like . . . the Liberal journalists of *Il Piccolo* (an Italian nationalist newspaper) of Trieste, the Slavs were a semi-barbaric, peasant people” and dangerous to the Italian “nature” of the region and its environs.¹¹ Slovenes and Croats, especially once their national movements began to supplant Italian political influence in regional diets and the Reichsrat in Vienna, were said to be insidiously plotting a Pan-Slavic movement to keep the northern Adriatic and de-Italianize it. Therefore, Italy must secure all disputed land to protect Europe from the barbarian invasions.¹² In fact, for nationalist members of the Italian middle classes “the nationalities question had . . . become obsessive to a degree that was almost psychopathic,” as illustrated by Rusinow’s analysis of Scipio Slataper’s writing before his death in the Great War.¹³ Later nationalist polem-

ics, though often not as shrill as in this early period, continued to define Istria as Italian well into the twentieth century.

Croatian and Yugoslav historians and polemicists, too, had an interest in defining the nature of the region and building national identities to assert what they saw as valid claims to the territory.¹⁴ They argued that Istria was a distinctly Slavic territory administered by an Italian bourgeoisie supported by the Habsburgs.¹⁵ Like the Italians, they published in order to persuade both locals and foreigners of the potential strength of the Slovenian and Croatian nations, illustrate the victimization endured at the hands of their oppressors, and argue the right of these people to seek equality with the Italians.¹⁶ The illustration of victimization was a powerful tool of persuasion, seeking to radicalize opinion within a target population and reduce the chances for compromise. It was particularly powerful in the late nineteenth century when excerpts of works by the leaders of the national *preporod* (the national awakenings and the beginning of Slavic national movements in the region) were published in newspapers and read aloud in Slavic reading rooms in towns and cities around the peninsula. This facilitated the development of stronger Slovenian and Croatian identities by giving the working and peasant classes a foe to mobilize against, simultaneously countering the Italian propaganda in *Il Piccolo* (The Small [Newspaper]), which attempted to build and promote Italian national identity in Istria.¹⁷ Victimization, too, was emphasized in the periods just after World War I and World War II, to promote the unity of the Slavic populations and Istria's inclusion into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (KSCS) or later, communist Yugoslavia.

As it was for Italy, the peninsula was a geostrategic and economic resource for the KSCS, communist Yugoslavia, and the emergent Republic of Croatia. The port cities posed economic challenges to Italy's Adriatic ports. Politically and diplomatically the Tito regime would control an area that jutted into the West, confronting the United States, Britain, and postfascist Italy during the early period of the Cold War. Istria was also important for the emerging independent Croatia in the 1990s for many of the same economic and political reasons. Furthermore, due to the ruling regime's paranoia over the potential loss of territory during the immediate transition period in the early nineties, Croatian president Franjo Tudman felt it necessary to politicize Croatian identity and prevent what the nationalists perceived as a reemergence of Italian irredentism.

However, at about the same time that Croatian nationalists were envisioning a more autonomous Croatia in the Yugoslav federation, another group emerged that would eventually toss its hat into the political arena in the early 1990s. Istrian regionalists wanted to control and define the nature of Istria. For them, Istria needed stronger contacts with Western Europe to maintain economic vi-

ability and the high standard of living that Istrians enjoyed. The best way to achieve this goal was through *regional* autonomy within a democratic Croatian state that did not resort to the nationalist rhetoric that increasingly alienated the region from Western Europe. To do this the movement needed to define Istria as a borderland whose people shared a hybrid identity of Croatian, Slovenian, and Italian elements. They believed that this multicultural identity would appeal to Western Europe, potentially drawing more Western interest in the region.

This new “camp” of historiographers and polemicists recognized the different national groups and argued that a local specificity developed among Istrians of all nations that gave Istria a united character. This identity, they argued, rested on a multicultural, multilingual, and pluralistic foundation derived from historical coexistence and cooperation. However, these individuals, like those supporting either nationalist position, were inspired to write by contemporary political, social, and economic realities. Their need to distance Istria from nationalists of all stripes was influenced in part by Western distaste with virulent nationalism in the 1990s and by the success of the regional party, the Istrian Democratic Assembly (Istarski Demokratski Sabor, IDS) against the aggressive and nationalizing ruling party of Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Alliance (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ).

For these reasons Istria was regarded as a plum territory by a number of different political actors from the mid-1800s to the very recent past. To justify the competing claims to the region ideologues published tracts supporting one side and refuting the other. With this in mind, I begin the exploration of Istrian historiography with the nineteenth-century Italian nationalists who set the tone for analysis and polemics. After examining the Italian perspective, I review and analyze Yugoslav and Croatian historiography and conclude with a critical examination of that newer trend in Istrian historiography that attempts to illustrate the longer periods of cooperation and relative tolerance on the peninsula. Writers in this last group, while recognizing the internal differences through time, focus on Istria’s “peculiarity” and tend to portray it as “unified” in its resistance to pressures from “outsiders.” It is this final school of thought that generally appeals to those individuals inclined toward promoting regionalism, or at the very least a *regional unity*, and the concept of a hybrid regional identity.

Italian Historiography

Much of the Italian historiography on Istria prior to the Second World War, with one notable exception, was written with the purpose of imbuing the region with an Italian character. It was influenced by literature from the *Risorgimento*

and irredentist projects, which supported the construction of an Italian national identity and the unification of territories perceived to have an Italian character. Based in part on the ideology expressed in the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini, pre-World War I histories and polemics often focused on Italian nationalism's greatest enemies—the Habsburg Empire and the growing Slavic nationalist movements. By the end of the nineteenth century, many intellectuals of the region wished to see the peninsula and much of Dalmatia incorporated into the Italian world economically, socially, and culturally.¹⁸ They argued the Italian nature and historical presence in these territories and illustrated the negative influences of the Habsburgs and native nationalist Slavs.

Carlo Cambi is generally considered to be the first promoter of the Italian nation and national project in the region. Influenced by Mazzinian nationalism, he presented the historic “spirit” of Istria as Italian; the Italian people had built Istrian civilization from the time of Rome. The peninsula thus had direct cultural and spiritual links to the newly formed Kingdom of Italy and should be redeemed from Austrian rule. He appealed to Istrian Italians to push for closer ties to the mother country and for eventual incorporation into the Italian nation-state to realize the goals of the *Risorgimento*.¹⁹ Following in the polemical steps of Combi, Carlo de Franceschi published the first modern history of Istria in 1879. In the Italian liberal tradition of the time, he claimed that the continued Italian political, social, and cultural influences, some from the time of the Romans, justified Italian economic and political hegemony in the region.²⁰

De Franceschi's work influenced generations of Italian historians in the pursuit of similar political goals. As a direct result of this political and social mission, groups of Italian historians and intellectuals from Trieste and Istria published numerous articles in historical and archeological magazines created to provide a public forum for an Italian discourse on Istria. *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Acts and memorials of the Istrian Society of archaeology and regional history), which began publication in 1884 in Poreč, focused on Italian cultural influences from antiquity to the early modern period.²¹ In many of these pieces, the authors attempted to prove the exclusively Italian nature of the Istrian peninsula.

The struggle to define Istria and to control it politically increased with the appearance and growth of Slovenian and Croatian national movements and their parliamentary successes in the early twentieth century. More exclusivist tracts then appeared, emphasizing the Italian-ness of the peninsula in the face of these Slavic challenges. Eminent Istrian historians, such as Bernardo Benussi and Camillo de Franceschi, the son of Carlo, published works that fell into this ideological category. These authors, using economic, historical, ethnic, and

social arguments, placed Istria directly in Italian space, often delegitimizing Slavic or Austrian claims to the territory or even ignoring them completely.²² Furthermore, some in this group downplayed the Slavic *preporod* in Istria in the nineteenth century as anti-Italian propaganda from Ljubljana and Zagreb. They claimed that it was merely a tool used by Vienna to weaken the Italian position and that the Slavic movements were not internal pressure for political, economic, and cultural recognition and rights, but external conspiracies against local Italians.²³ It was during the final years of the Austrian Empire that some Istrian Italian intellectuals, such as Ruggero Fauro-Timeus, clearly become exclusivist nationalists, making Istrian inclusion into the Italian nation-state a primary goal and de-Slavicization critical.²⁴

The only major Italian dissenter in the late Habsburg period was the socialist Angelo Vivante, a writer and editor for the socialist newspaper *Il Lavoratore* (The Worker). In *Irredentismo adriatico* (Adriatic irredentism), Vivante wrote a more balanced account of Istrian history, challenging the perspectives of the irredentists. He, contrary to many in the nationalist camp, highlighted the social differences between the Italians and Slavs, the Italianization of the Slavs, and the birth of the autochthonous Croatian and Slovenian national movements, suggesting that the Slavs played an important role on the peninsula. Such claims drew serious criticism from other Italian intellectuals.²⁵ Unfortunately, the more nationalist writers dominated the discourse on the Italian side until the end of the Second World War.

Recognizing the importance of history in resolving international and domestic disputes, nationalist efforts were redoubled when the Habsburg Empire crumbled. The Yugoslav Committee,²⁶ refuting the Treaty of London of 1915, attempted to influence the Great Powers to allow the creation of some type of independent South Slavic state. This period of crisis saw the emergence of more overt forms of Italian irredentist publications, where direct accusations of historic Slavic barbarism and inferiority, along with the growing fear of Bolshevism due to the successful Russian Revolution of November 1917, were openly expressed. For the domestic audience, these authors hoped to paint Istria as an Italian territory in need of redemption and to persuade much of the Italian and ethnically mixed population to recognize the richness and superiority of Italian culture and identify themselves solely as Italian. Thus these works were a continuation of the nation-building project.

One of the first pieces directed toward a foreign audience appeared almost immediately after Italy's declaration of war on its former allies in 1915. The propaganda tract, *Dalmatia, Fiume and Other Unreedemed [sic] Lands of the Adriatic: A Historical and Statistical Study with a Map of the Eastern Frontier*

of Italy, published in Rome in 1916, demonstrated the long-term Italian influence and cultural dominance of the region and advanced all the old arguments for Italy's right to most of the Adriatic. It was published in English in order to sway public opinion to a more pro-Italian stance in a future peace conference, playing on the belief that British officials were more likely to support the claims of the descendents of the Romans than barbaric interlopers.

Immediately after the war, President Woodrow Wilson expressed concern over the promise of territory to the Italians, made in the Treaty of London, which contradicted his idea of self-determination and transparent diplomacy. Recognizing that aggressive negotiation was needed to realize the expansion of Italian territory, Italian scholars and propagandists set pen to paper in the hopes of winning over the other Allies when it became obvious that the Adriatic was up for grabs. Unsurprisingly the Italian justifiers used all the same cultural, social, economic, and geopolitical arguments for the occupation and incorporation of Istria and Rijeka, a city not part of the Treaty of London, into Italy. However, Italian nationalists did conflict on how much territory should fall to Italy. The most radical wanted every bit of land as stipulated in the Treaty of London and often more. Others pressed for self-determination in the region, knowing that many of the urban areas would choose Italy. Those espousing the less radical solution of splitting Istria at the Wilson Line generally did not publish their views because they risked political and academic suicide.²⁷ Due to this split most Italian publications tended to be of the more radical sort focused on the issue of Dalmatia and Rijeka, because it appeared that Istria would fall to Italy without being contested by the Allies or the Serbian government.²⁸

When Istria was awarded to Italy as a result of the peace talks, much to the chagrin of Croatian members of the Yugoslav Committee, the frequency of nationalist Italian discourse on Istria receded.²⁹ However, some notable publications during the fascist period appeared, justifying Italian actions and the fascist movement on the peninsula. Many were directly descended from the more virulent works of Fauro-Timeus, a prime example being books by Attilio Tamaro. As an Italian fascist writer, Tamaro represented the extremist orientation of nationalist historiography. He was more a polemicist than a historian, fully accepting the claims of the Italian nationalists to the entire Adriatic and suggesting the inherent inferiority of the Slavs and Slavic culture (or lack thereof, in his eyes). For instance, from Valussi on, no Italian historian claimed the entirety of Dalmatia for Italy, except Tamaro. His historical views illustrated his fascist, racist, imperialist approach, but he was neither unique nor the first in suggesting the inferiority of the Slavs.³⁰ Though less antagonistic works also appeared,

they tended to delegitimize older Austrian or newer Slavic claims or definitions of the territory.³¹

The Second World War and its aftermath posed another crisis for Italy and Italian Istrians. Italy was on the losing side at the peace conferences after the war, and a victorious Yugoslavia held former Italian territories in Dalmatia and all of Istria, including Trieste (for the first forty-two days after liberation at least). Italian writers attempted to influence the Allies in the hopes of retaining Istria. Much of their propaganda was directed at the Anglo-American occupation forces and their representatives at the conferences, who ultimately divided the region between the Italian and Yugoslav states.³² Again, as after World War I, they attempted to place Istria into the Italian political and cultural framework, producing a number of arguments to influence the Allied powers to grant at least a significant part of the Julian March to a new, postfascist Italy. These writers still maintained a distinct Italo-centric point of view, but were generally less virulent than earlier polemicists. English-language publications included arguments illustrating the natural boundaries, railroad and economic links between the Italian and Istrian peninsulas, and ethnic statistics (heavily skewed toward the Italian population numbers) that “proved” the Italian character of the entire Julian March.³³

Well-known Italian historians also published when Yugoslavia and Italy were debating Trieste’s future between 1945 and 1954, adding academic weight to the regional debate. Carlo Schiffrer was very active in his attempts to influence the Allies. He wrote a document in English in 1945 that was used at the peace conference to determine how the area would be divided between Italy and Yugoslavia. This text on ethnic and national borders argued the Italo-centric point of view, as would all his future works, but he did not consider the Slavs racially inferior. In fact he rejected much of the propaganda from both sides in the immediate postwar period, negating the Yugoslav arguments and suggesting that the historical problems in Istria were the result of rural/urban competition that exacerbated national tensions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁴ Furthermore, using an economic and connectivity argument, he placed Istria solidly in the Italian cultural, and more importantly, political and economic spheres. In terms of culture, Schiffrer, without much evidence to support his claim, suggested the primacy of the Italian cultural element in mixed marriages in the region, thus further showing the Italian nature of the region and its need to remain in postwar Italy.³⁵ Throughout his career, he argued that the Slavs in Istria were simply economically and culturally underdeveloped and disadvantaged, and thus it would have been in their best interests to remain in some form of Italian state to reap benefits from the more advanced Italians.³⁶

At the end of the war an ideological split appeared in Italian historiography, mirroring the political one between the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) and the antifascist, liberal coalition, the Committee of National Liberation (Comitato di liberazione nazionale, CLN). The new camp of Istrian historiography argued from a distinctly Marxist perspective, which on the surface one may think would not make its case from a national perspective.³⁷ However, the Marxists and the nationalists tended to draw similar conclusions about Istria's future. Elio Apih, the father of this particular school of thought, concentrated on the antifascist struggle itself, especially in Trieste and Istria, where a virulent, brutal form of fascism developed in part because the region was a borderland. The fascists not only persecuted the Slavs of the region, but negatively affected the native Italians as well. Due to the nature of fascism in Istria and the peninsula's exploitation by Rome, Slavs and Italians of different political ideologies (but led by the communist parties) worked together in an antifascist coalition movement. There was significant worker and peasant resistance to exploitation by the Italian bourgeoisie, so cooperation among the exploited of all ethnicities seemed natural in such an abusive system. Unfortunately, according to Apih, this cooperation was strained by the influx of Yugoslav Partisan units, resulting in the weakening of class solidarity against the fascists and later the Nazi occupiers. As solidarity eroded, more interethnic violence occurred against the Italians of the region, regardless of whether the victims were collaborators or resisters.³⁸

One issue must be addressed in terms of the Marxists' analysis of Istria. Even while maintaining their socialist position, none ever suggested that the region should have fallen under the Yugoslav communist government, even when it appeared that the socialist movement was dying in Italy. Instead, some exposed the hypocritical nature of Yugoslav socialism where the torture and persecution of minorities could potentially pose a threat to Tito and his government (especially the Italian elements). Since Italy did not become socialist after the war, these scholars used Marxist interpretations focusing on class, not national struggles, to explain the course of history in Istria and the surrounding territory and why it eventually fell to the second Yugoslavia. Some even accused the Italian government of betrayal in letting all of Istria, except Muggia (the thin strip of territory near Trieste) and the port city of Trieste (in 1954), fall to Tito.³⁹ Therefore, one can argue that Marxist historiography is not fundamentally different from nationalist historiography at least in linking the region to an Italian "nation-space."

The major and most glaring commonality between nationalists and Marxists is that both place Istria directly within the Italian social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. Most Italian scholars of all political stripes, from the fascist

to the nationalist, the nationalist to the liberal, the liberal to the communist, posit Istria's geopolitical importance and its "natural" link to Italy. All claim the region to be Italian and conclude that the entire territory should have been included in whatever Italian state emerged from the ashes of the Second World War. All regret, to varying degrees, the "Slavicization" of Istria, which in their eyes damaged the Istria of the prewar period. Even those more liberal scholars, recognizing the Slavic influence on the culture and society of Istria, feel that the region suffered under Tito's brand of communist rule and suffered again in the wake of the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation in 1991.

During the 1980s and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Italian publications opened up a debate on the Yugoslav atrocities against Italians in the 1940s and 1950s. These texts attempted to show Italians as victims or paint the Yugoslavs as communist barbarians and ethnic cleansers. What is disconcerting about some of the conclusions drawn by later polemicists and historians is the reification of the concept of Slavic barbarity (at worst) or hypocrisy (at best). Two examples of this come from Italians with widely different political views. Both write forty years or more after their experiences in Istria. Giacomo Scotti, disappointed at the failure of the socialists and communists to come to power in Italy, went to Tito's Yugoslavia in the late 1940s, in what Ballinger labels a counterexodus of Italian communists. They expected to participate in a developing socialist "utopia" under Tito, but instead, according to Scotti, with forty years hindsight, many were investigated and imprisoned by the Yugoslav secret police. "Scotti contends that the Cominform split [the rift between Tito and Stalin in 1948, partially due to Tito's hard-line stance against the Allies driving the Trieste Crisis] provided the Yugoslavs with a handy pretext for 'cleansing' the leadership of the Italian minority of any suspect elements while it encouraged even more autochthonous Italians to emigrate from Yugoslavia."⁴⁰ Thus, the Slavic state found a convenient vehicle to purge Istria and its surroundings of its Italian population, and therefore its character, by labeling them enemies of Yugoslav socialism.

In the second example, Mario Rossi contrasts the Italian fascist regime favorably against Slavic brutalities after the Italian surrender in September 1943. He produced a handwritten account of his experiences in fascist Italy fully fifty years later, *Il fascismo a Rovigno: Un giudizio a quasi mezzo secolo dalla fine* (Fascism in Rovinj: An assessment a half century later) in which he downplays fascist atrocities by illustrating all the benefits they brought to Rovinj during their twenty-year tenure. What is more important here, however, is his suggestion that the fascist regime paled in comparison to the "ruthlessly efficient regime of terror constructed by the Titoists."⁴¹ Again, the Slavs are portrayed as infinitely

worse in both accounts by two Italian writers on opposite sides of the political spectrum.

A later example of the demonization of the Slavic element is pointed out by Ballinger in the case of Italian lawyer and member of the *esuli* community,⁴² Renzo de' Vidovich. In an article appearing in the newspaper *Il Piccolo* in 1996, de' Vidovich denies claims that the Italian fascists perpetrated atrocities on the Slavic population. He further suggests that it is in the nature of the Slavs to commit acts of barbarity, giving evidence with the examples of the *foibe*, executions, and persecution of Italians. In this "analysis" he links the murders of this period with the ethnic cleansing of the 1990s, showing conclusively, at least in his eyes, that Slavs are prone to barbaric behavior.⁴³ Such claims and aired perceptions are dangerous on a political battlefield where claims to victimization are common on both sides; in times of crisis, political agendas became increasingly militant.

Most apologists for Italian fascist rule were not as crude as Rossi and de' Vidovich. For example, Renzo de Felice, a preeminent historian often criticized for his moderate position on the fascist period and fascist responsibility, emphasized a major difference between the Italian fascist regime and German Nazism: Italian fascism lacked the racial character that was crucial to German fascism in the 1930s and 1940s. In a sense, this lessens the responsibility for racial atrocities perpetrated by the Italians in Europe. What it does in relation to Istria is to "paper over a history of violence and chauvinism towards the Slavs." Thus, Italians are portrayed as "good," the German Nazis as "evil," and the Slavs as "barbaric."⁴⁴

These Italian works also highlight the Slavic effort to push the indigenous Italian population out of Istria during the Trieste Crisis between 1945 and 1954. Ballinger pays special attention to one point in particular concerning the *foibe*, calling the 1943 violence spontaneous, while the 1945 executions were more organized. Giampaolo Valdevit, Raoul Pupo, and Roberto Spazzali, in separate works with similar conclusions, contend that these supposedly planned, less hot-blooded murders were attempts by the Yugoslav government to destroy all lingering vestiges of an Italian state, and that random acts against Italians served to frighten them into accepting a subordinate position within a communist Yugoslavia. The violence was not an attempt at ethnic cleansing, as believed by some. Both Pupo and Valdevit suggest that terror was used to prevent opposition Italian groups and noncommunist antifascists from challenging Tito as had happened throughout Yugoslavia during and immediately after the war.⁴⁵ Thus Italian historiography and polemics in the 1990s continued during a time of international crisis.

Yugoslav and Croatian Historiography

On the other side of the divide are the Slavic polemics and historiography, that argue the Slovenian and Croatian nature of the peninsula and its surroundings, highlighting the *preporod* of the Slavic nations in some cases and illustrating the predominantly Slavic spirit of the region. Since the Italian nation had a head start from the early 1800s in producing nationalist literature, fewer Croatian publications appeared until the end of the First World War. However, it is evident that in the prewar era Slavic intellectuals from Istria such as bishop Juraj Dobrila, Matko Mandić, Vjekoslav Spinčić, and Matko Laginja began to encourage ethnic awareness among the Croats.⁴⁶

The first Slavic nationalist agitators appeared in Istria in the middle of the nineteenth century. The majority were priests. The best known, and the person responsible for sparking the Croatian *preporod* in Istria, was Bishop Juraj Dobrila. A follower of Bishop Juraj Strossmeyer, who advocated an autonomous South Slavic region within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Dobrila advocated the establishment of a Croatian-language education to build a sense of national awareness in a peasant population he felt was victimized and undergoing Italianization.⁴⁷ To create awareness and draw more Croats to his banner, he established a newspaper seminal in developing national consciousness among all classes of Istrian Croats. *Naša sloga* (Our Unity) began publication in Pula and Trieste in 1870 with Dobrila as a leading contributor and editor for a number of years. It printed many of his articles on the history of the Slavs of the peninsula and warned of the threat of the loss of Croatian culture if Italianization was not checked. He also implied that Croats were victims of Italians politically, economically, and culturally, and that this trend needed to be reversed for the betterment of his Croatian flock.⁴⁸ These articles were available to Croats in a number of reading rooms that he and other nationalists established throughout the last sixty years of Habsburg rule. These reading rooms, along with the educational institutions Dobrila helped establish, encouraged the growth of the Croatian national movement and of Slavic resistance to the Italian domination of the peninsula.⁴⁹

The next generation of intellectuals differed from Dobrila in that they were influenced by Ante Starčević's more overt and exclusivist Croatian nationalism rather than by Strossmeyer. Some published articles and books, all of which delved into the history and culture of Istria, painting it with a thoroughly Croatian color and suggesting that the region had had a primarily Slavic nature since the medieval era. Vjekoslav Spinčić, a Croatian Istrian priest and politician from the 1870s to the First World War, wrote a number of works describing the political and historical conditions of the Slavs of Istria. He dismissed the claims of his

Italian contemporaries and attempted to illustrate beyond a shadow of a doubt the Croatian character of the peninsula. One of Spinčić's earlier works, *Hrvatskoj il' Italiji?: Rieč* (Croatia or Italy?: A Word) was a response to Italian claims on the nature of the region. The book denied that Slavs were a barbaric people with no self-awareness and suggested that the greatest threat to Istria was Italianization through the loss of language and culture. To support his claims he used the 1869 census figures of Istria and Trieste to show Croatian superiority in numbers. Furthermore, he provided a brief historical analysis, concluding that the Italians were not the only major influence on the region and that Slavs made a significant impact as well. His primary argument was his claim that uniting with Croatia would be best for the peninsula and its people and that the Croats of the region desired this union. He pointed out that the Italians were opposed, which he felt was hypocritical because the *Risorgimento* project had advocated democratically establishing one nation under a nation-state.⁵⁰ Later in the century, after the Slavic groups achieved a mass ethnic and political movement, he defended his earlier assessments by illustrating the manipulative practices of Italian politicians and the willful damage they did to the Croatian national being.⁵¹

The crisis of the First World War and the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, as in the Italian case, saw the whirlwind production of publications designed to influence the talks at the Paris Peace Conference.⁵² Like the Italians, the government of the KCSC wished to influence the Allies on the questions of Istria and Dalmatia. These documents argued that since the Yugoslav peoples fought for their independence against all forms of imperialism, they had a right to establish a state that included all Slavic territories.⁵³ Unfortunately for this group, Istria fell to Italy.

Even though this loss seemed permanent, Yugoslav authors continued to publish works that demonstrated the continuous presence of Croats in Istria in response to Italian and fascist claims of their social, economic, and historical irrelevance and lack of culture. Spinčić, now in exile, rose to the occasion, helping to keep the question alive among Croatian nationalists. His 1926 book *Crtnice iz hrvatske književne kulture Istre* (Notes on the Croatian literary culture of Istria) demonstrated the existence and vitality of a continuous Croatian literary and political culture dating back to the fourteenth century, as illustrated by political and church documents written in the Glagolitic script, to disprove the claims by Italian historians that the Slavs were somehow inferior, possessing no high culture or political maturity of their own.⁵⁴

The next wave of publication on Istria came at the end of the Second World War and shared many of the same motivations as Italian historiography of the time. What was different though, especially in relation to literature targeting

a domestic audience, was that the analysis came from Marxist historians who for political reasons had to follow party lines.⁵⁵ This scholarship focused on the historical connections between the different Slavic groups and promoted the myth of “brotherhood and unity” in the Partisan movement and the subsequent communist government. Examining interethnic violence and competition was frowned upon, while histories showing “traditional” cooperation were promoted.⁵⁶ Even descriptions of national conflict between a Yugoslav and a non-Slavic nation had to be portrayed as more of a class than an ethnic struggle, especially if such groups were constituents of the new socialist regime. This solid linkage between the national movement and Marxist class struggle remained typical for Yugoslav and Croatian scholars until the 1980s, with a brief period of liberalization between 1967 and 1971. In the final years of the Titoist regime historiography took a decisively nationalist turn, flooding the market with revisionist histories after Tito’s death.⁵⁷

Even though Croatian historians had to be careful about what they wrote, Croatocentrism was evident in most of their works relating to Istria.⁵⁸ As in the period following World War I, a significant body of literature was produced for a foreign audience in an attempt to influence the Great Powers on the question of Istria and Trieste. Two of the most interesting pieces were clear attempts by Yugoslav scholars, backed by the government in Belgrade, to paint the Italians as aggressors, thus morally weakening Italian claims to any part of the Julian March during the Trieste Crisis. Both are collections of official Italian documents that show the malicious policies applied to the Slavs of Istria during the interwar period and the Second World War. They demonstrate the supposed aggressiveness of the Italians,⁵⁹ and that Italians officially excluded Croatians and Slovenes from the public sphere, attempted to assimilate Slavs, issued instructions for the arrest and/or deportation of problematic Slavs, and tried to erase Slavic elements from the society and territory.⁶⁰

Yugoslav organizations, supposedly non-governmental, did much the same. One such group, a local council of Slovenes, published a document in English in 1946, the *Memorandum of the Regional National Liberation Committee for the Slovene Littoral and Trieste*, which, unsurprisingly, argued the Yugoslav nature of Istria and Trieste and thus its logical place within socialist Yugoslavia.⁶¹ The Yugoslav government also submitted supporting material in its *Memorandum of the Government of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia Concerning the Question of the Julian March and other Yugoslav Territories Under Italy* of 1946.

The publication of these collections in English and the selective nature of their documents and argumentation attempted to direct Anglo-American focus away from the anti-Slavic/anti-communist analyses streaming from Italian pro-

pagandists and scholars in the immediate postwar period. They offer “proof” of a sort to legitimize Yugoslav claims to the territory. Their analysis suggested that anti-Slavic policies were needed to destroy the dominant Slavic nature of the region after the controversial occupation of Istria following the First World War, and implied that if Trieste became Italian, ethnic cleansing of the Slavic population would surely ensue as it had after World War I. The works also attempted to remove the Trieste question from the framework of the budding Cold War by portraying Italians, not just the fascists, as antidemocratic, intolerant, and prone to genocide in areas predominantly non-Italian.

To juxtapose minority treatment by the Italians with that of Yugoslavia, another document was released in 1952 that clearly showed the advantages of national minorities living in Yugoslavia. The work portrayed Tito’s regime as very tolerant of all national groups. In the section on the Italian minority, the authors suggest that a significant number remained after liberation in 1945, and as a respected and protected minority, they enjoyed the full rights of any citizen of socialist Yugoslavia, including the protection of cultural institutions and schooling in Italian.⁶² This work endeavored to differentiate the intolerant, aggressive Italian regime from the accepting and inclusive Yugoslav government, hoping to influence international opinion in favor of the Yugoslavs at the conferences to decide the Trieste question.

Publication for a domestic audience had much the same purpose: to place Istria solidly inside Croatian cultural space within a communist Yugoslavia as a constituent part of the Federal Republic of Croatia. To avoid the scrutiny of the government censors and party hacks in the academic community, the tone of these works and the type of analysis used had to justify Istria’s inclusion into a reformed socialist Yugoslavia via Croatia. Many such works focused on the historical resistance of the Slavic peoples to all oppressors. Unsurprisingly, they emphasized the centuries-long struggle of the Slavs against the Italian ruling and middle classes. Such language satisfied the necessarily Marxist bent of the Yugoslav historical field while highlighting, in an acceptable way, the national struggle for cultural, social, and economic liberation. Of course, the inevitable outcome came during the war for national liberation; the “natural” culmination of the effort to unite Istria with the “mother country” occurred, according to the editors, under Tito and the partisans.⁶³

Writing, of necessity, from within the socialist framework, some authors linked beginnings of the national question to the class struggle in Istria. They posited that the 1848 revolution had sparked the national question among the Slavs on the peninsula. In the Italian nationalists’ desire to unite what they considered all Italian territories into a single Italian nation-state, they, in effect, alienated the

small but growing Croatian middle classes, some of whom had been influenced by the first organized Croatian national movement (the Illyrian movement) in Zagreb and increasingly desired unification with Civil Croatia under Habsburg sovereignty. Taken aback by Slavic resistance to the Italianist program, Italian nationalists began to treat many nationally aware Croats as enemies, thus enticing more Croats to resist Italian rule and the Italian national project. Increasingly, Istrian Slavs were coming into national awareness due to economic competition and exploitation by the Italian middle classes, and their desire for a separate, non-Italian identity was manifested in this particular struggle. Such analysis, linking the national struggle with the class struggle, is very reminiscent of the strategy of the partisan movement during the “War of National Liberation,” claiming that the Slavic movements were often reactive to the Italians’ desire to dominate and assimilate the Slavs of Istria.⁶⁴

Slavic resistance to the exploitative Italian ruling class during the *preporod* period was a favorite theme in the Tito years as well. For example, Fran Barbalić suggested that the national struggle of the Croats was more a “people’s” struggle against oppression and inequality than a national fight. One major vehicle of resistance was the Croatian newspaper *Naša sloga* (Our Unity), which countered Italian pressure to assimilate and lay claim to Istria. The language employed suggests that the Croatian struggle and the newspaper itself were authentic efforts to express culture and political opinion in one’s native language and to resist any hegemonic group that limited freedom and prevented Istria’s inclusion into the Croatian banate. Barbalić concluded that this newspaper had a major impact on the struggle to preserve and protect Slavic culture and economic interests in the face of increasingly aggressive drives to assimilate the Croatian population.⁶⁵

Another favorite theme of Croatian historians and polemicists was demography. Branko Marušić’s demographic/historical study showed that from the late medieval period the urban/rural divide mirrored the ethnic one, with Italian towns along the coast and Slavic rural settlements in the hinterland. However, in the modern period, instead of assimilating Italian norms and culture as had been the case in the past, the Slavs retained their culture and language, and by the 1870s, under the leadership of a burgeoning middle class, had entered the arena of modern ethnic politics. Marušić went on to describe Slavic resistance to Italianization in the interwar period, the exodus of Italians after World War II, and the influx of Slavs immediately afterward when Tito sought to justify Istria’s inclusion into the second Yugoslavia by increasing the percentage of Slavs in the region. This policy permanently shifted the demographic structure of the peninsula, placing the Croatian element in the dominant position for the first time in Istria’s history. To the author’s credit, he does mention the cooperation

between the ethnic groups in opposition to exploitative landowners and to the governments that controlled the region until its 1945 liberation, a point that was also acceptable to the censors of the time.⁶⁶ Such examples of cooperation would be glossed over by later nationalist historians and then picked up by those seeking to broaden the Istrian debate beyond the national question in the 1990s.

Another acceptable method of studying the Croatian nation while avoiding the critical eyes of communist censors was through the analysis of Italian historiography.⁶⁷ One of the most popular forms criticized those Italian historians who claimed that under Austrian rule, the Habsburgs favored Istrian Slavs as a way to counterbalance the power and influence of the Italian bourgeoisie. Turning the tables on such claims, some authors showed that de Franceschi, Benussi, Tamaro, and other Italian writers all said that Italian governance would put the Slavs on a “road to civilization,” implying Slavic inferiority and lack of culture. They were further criticized for suggesting that Austria encouraged Slavic national development to oppose Italian power in order to weaken claims on Istria by the Kingdom of Italy. In line with the historiography of the time, the exploitation of the working class by the Italian bourgeoisie was stressed, which sparked the desire for liberation and was articulated in the Slavic national movements that challenged Italian hegemony in the public sphere. For example, Berislav Lukić, countering both older and newer Italian historiography, claimed all Austrian policy at the end of the nineteenth century was not anti-Italian, but anti-Slavic.⁶⁸ In this way, scholars of this bent could publish arguments of a national nature while attacking the Habsburg Empire and the bourgeoisie, two traditional enemies of communism and Yugoslav socialism.

This particular type of historical analysis remained dominant among Yugoslav and Croatian scholars until the mid-1960s when the political winds of liberalization began to stir. In 1966, Tito, recognizing the growing dissatisfaction with the regime in Belgrade, especially among the Croats, purged the party of the strongest opponent of this liberalizing trend, Aleksandar Ranković.⁶⁹ Soon after his ouster, a group of intellectuals in Croatia began a push for increased freedom of cultural (i.e. national) expression, especially in relation to language. Sprouting from the Serbo-Croatian language debate, other academic disciplines, including the field of history, soon followed, sparking a wave of publications more openly nationalist.

The years 1967 to 1971 proved to be a very fruitful phase in Istrian historiography by Croatian historians. This period was one in which nationality, especially in Croatia, was coming to the forefront of scholarly analysis through new or revitalized cultural and academic organizations, supported by respected scholars. The national struggle was presented more overtly while class struggle

was downplayed for timely political reasons. Both Dalmatia and Istria, the two most contested regions of the Adriatic in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, needed to be portrayed as Croatian *national* space. What this ultimately did was to imply that most Italians, except those who actively participated in partisan-controlled antifascist cells, were complicit in the nationalist drive to incorporate the region into Italy and to assimilate the “less developed” Slavic elements across the Julian March.

Two very good examples of this trend in historiography were collections of articles published by two Croatian cultural institutions. The first, published by Matica Hrvatska, the cultural and educational institution linked to the late 1960s and early 1970s movement for more Croatian cultural and political autonomy (Croatian Spring), was a collection of essays reexamining the national *preporod* era in the contested Croatian territories along the Adriatic. It focused on the struggle of the Croats in Istria to develop and preserve national culture and demand equality with the hegemonic Italians. Each essay dealt openly and almost exclusively with the national question without the dominant Marxist emphasis on class struggle apparent in earlier pieces. While economic and class issues were presented, they took a back seat to nationalist interpretations of the nineteenth-century events in Istria. Instead, the articles emphasized the importance of the church and its leaders, especially Dobrila, in the beginning of the national struggle, the role of education in building Croatian national awareness, and the politically charged atmosphere clearly articulated in a national struggle.⁷⁰

The second collection, *Priključenje Istre Federalnoj Državi Hrvatskoj u Demokratskoj Federativnoj Jugoslaviji, 1943-1968* (The inclusion of Istria into the Federal State of Croatia in the Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia, 1943-1968), published in 1968 by the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences, more specifically its Northern Adriatic Institute, provided a wide array of legal, political, and cultural justifications for Istria’s incorporation into Croatia, and through Croatia into Yugoslavia. The authors, while solidly placing Istria inside Croatian space in a Yugoslav socialist context, focused on Istria’s ethnic composition (Croatian primarily) as the main reason for its position as a constituent part of Croatia.

In order to meet their goals, the editors provided the full text of a number of selected documents from the time of the Second World War to the end of the Trieste Crisis in 1954, which they believed were paramount in drawing the peninsula into its “mother country.”⁷¹ The selection is very revealing in showing the editors’ particular view of this struggle and illustrates its nationalist nature. This clearly does not fit with earlier scholarship, which made overt analyses of the national struggle taboo. For example, in the majority of the documents

presented, the antifascist struggle is clearly national, encouraging a *national* uprising and liberation, more often than not downplaying the socialist aspects of the movement. In some the Italians are portrayed, regardless of individual involvement in the antifascist movement, as the “occupiers” of Istria (see the first picture, on an unnumbered page at the end of the book, of a document calling for resistance to the “Italian occupiers” of the peninsula). Of the eighty-two documents in Croatian, only six appeal to “Istrians” without regard to national affiliation (173-74, 175, 286, 287, 291-93, 298).

Also, in the introductions to the various document sets in the text, the editors express a nationalist perspective on the situation in Istria. For example, they openly suggest that the struggle involved the *national* survival of the Slavs, who, throughout history, had been subject to foreign regimes and pressures. True, they give some credence to the idea that Italians did participate in the antifascist movement, which jibed with the concept of “brotherhood and unity” in establishing “a single socialist community” in a united Yugoslavia. However, in the same paragraph, the focus is on the desire of the Croatian Slavs to link Istria to its natural “homeland”—Croatia—and through Croatia to socialist Yugoslavia (128).⁷²

In the post-Croatian Spring era, when Tito shut down a number of cultural institutions, historians had to return to Marxist analysis. Miroslav Bertoša and Petar Strčić, perhaps the two most prolific and respected Croatian scholars of Istrian history, are excellent examples of how Croatian historiography dealt with Istria from the period after the Croatian Spring until the reemergence of more nationalist historical works. Bertoša dealt mainly with Venetian rule during the early modern period, and his arguments focused generally on the Croatian population and its relationship to the ruling empire.⁷³ Even though he often skirted issues of Slavic nationalism, since it was nonexistent in Istria until the mid to late nineteenth century, his position illuminated the struggle between the classes on the peninsula, namely the struggle between the privileged Italian landowners and the Slavic lower classes.⁷⁴ His work on bandits and pirates in Istria during the early seventeenth century argued that these mostly Slavic corsairs challenged Venetian hegemony in the northern Adriatic. By dealing with the period in these terms, Bertoša could study these “national heroes” and romanticized bandits while couching the analysis in terms that implied a social reaction to economic hegemony by the mostly Italian administrators on the peninsula—an argument clearly in the historiographic tradition of the pre-Croatian Spring period.⁷⁵ This, in a sense, made publication safer because it only indirectly addressed nationality. Bertoša’s study of later periods also followed Marxist guidelines. In one piece he argued that organized resistance throughout the interwar period in Istria was

antifascist, that the protestors were not anti-Italian. Instead they fought against the intolerance of the emergent and rapidly strengthening fascist cells.⁷⁶

Petar Strčić followed a similar pattern in his work on Istria and the Kvarner Islands. In some studies he openly criticized Italian historiography, claiming it was either irredentist or fascist, depending on the author and the period in which the piece was written. It was during the Croatian Spring that Strčić began to analyze history from a more nationalist perspective, but, like other historians of the time, he never completely abandoned the Marxist analyses that were part and parcel of the field prior to 1967. For example, in one work he showed that the class struggle allowed for the development and spread of nationalist ideology among the Slavic Istrians in the first organized mass meeting in 1870, suggesting that a rudimentary form of ethnic identity already existed and was growing.⁷⁷ In this brief monograph, Strčić highlighted the national conflict without the emphasis on class struggle present in the majority of works before 1967.

After the failure of the Croatian Spring and the purges in the political and academic spheres, Strčić, like many other adaptable historians, again turned to topics and that were not nationally controversial.⁷⁸ He was able to do so by concentrating on the criticism of Italian interpretations of Istrian history, while encouraging multinational and multiethnic approaches to the subject. Showing his ability to change with the political times, he also criticized Croatian historiography after World War II, who clearly argued from a single-minded nationalist perspective. Strčić suggested that to alleviate such partisanship, a synthesis of Istrian history by Croatian, Slovenian, and Italian historians needed to be undertaken, counteracting the effects of Italian irredentist publication and skewed Yugoslav historiography.⁷⁹ This proposal served two purposes. First, it showed that even with Tito's crackdown in 1971, there was still room for criticism if done properly. Second, it directly appealed to the proponents of "brotherhood and unity" by offering a forum for international debate on the study of Istria. However, as evident in his work and activities in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Strčić preferred to analyze Istria within a nationalist context.

By the late 1980s Croatian historians generally abandoned Marxist ideology and analysis and offered increasingly nationalist arguments about Croatian history and Istria. The nationalist struggle and the Croatian nature of Istria were glorified, partly in response to a perceived move by Belgrade to encourage regional and Yugoslav identities as opposed to a purely Croatian one in Dalmatia and Istria.⁸⁰ Again Istria was solidly placed in the Croatian world and Italian claims refuted.

As the political winds changed, so too did historians. For one, Bertoša was able to adapt to this new political environment in Yugoslavia and Croatia.

Though not changing his style or method of analysis to any great degree, he did shift toward a more ethnically based analysis of Istrian history in his later works, and in the preface of a nationalist colleague's book he attacked the politicization of regional identity.⁸¹ His political orientation is very clear in a special issue of the Croatian journal, *Društvena istraživanja* (Social Research), where Bertoša comments on the Istrian theme of the issue. He suggests that Istria was unmistakably the most western *Croatian* territory, multicultural to be sure, but primarily Croatian.⁸² Because of his increasingly nationalist positions, one can assume that Bertoša, though very fair to the Italian side in most of his historical analyses, was affected to some degree by nationalist politics in the late eighties and early nineties. Like many of his colleagues, Bertoša transitioned from a socialist to a nationalist academic environment during this period.

Strčić too changed his direction of analysis, becoming a strong supporter of Croatian nationalism and the new nationalist republic under the HDZ. In effect, his shifting positions followed the shifts in politics, explaining his continued success in both the communist and nationalist regimes. In 1989, Strčić released a book revisiting the first mass political meeting of which he wrote in 1970. This book was a slightly revised version of his earlier work, but substantially expanded due to a longish list of his published pieces and a selection of documents illuminating the Croatian struggle for national survival and political recognition in Istria. The movement was described in more combative terms in relation to the Italians than in his earlier work. That same year he published an article whose title clearly illustrates the direction in which his future works would be shaped: "Naša hrvatska Istra" (Our *Croatian* Istria).⁸³

By 1996, Strčić had fully embraced nationalist analysis, and this can be seen in a brief comparison between his 1970 article, "Oko pokretanja *Naše sloge*" (A Look at the Launch of the Newspaper *Our Unity*), with a later work, a collaborative effort with his wife, Mirjana, *Hrvatski istarski trolist: Laginja, Mandić, Spinčić* (Croatian Istrian Clover: Laginja, Mandić, Spinčić). In his earlier publication, he focused on the effects of *Naša sloga* on the Croatian national *preporod*, especially in its opposition to Italian bourgeois hegemony. In this piece, one can undoubtedly see the prevalence of Marxist analysis, with a focus on class struggle. However, in the later work, he and his wife glorified three heroes of the *preporod* without the trappings of Marxist theory and methodology evident in his earlier article.⁸⁴ The tone of the book enhances the sense of national victimization at the hands of the Italians and Austrians. The authors claim, for instance, that the Austrian government's political "orientation was in the spirit of Italian irredentism."⁸⁵ By evoking this victimization, the authors

wished to justify the Croatian right to the peninsula without regard for the indigenous Italian population.

Strčić, like many other Croatian historians after independence in the 1990s, continued to place Istria inside the Croatian national territory and often disregarded forms of nonnational identity as frivolous and misguided. In a 1993 article, he highlights Italian irredentism on Istria and the Italian perception that the Slavs were barbarians without history. Illustrating his now anticommunist position, he states that the Slavs of the peninsula did not fight for the implementation of communism, but instead for national liberation. Communist rule was only accepted due to the later self-management of Tito's unique brand of socialism and the economic growth in the region. His opinion of Istrians in the 1990s who did not self-identify with a national group was not high. He said that promoting regional identity drew Istrian Croats away from the mother country, and though not mentioning the regional party by name, he suggested that regionalism and the idea of a Europe of the Regions was not in the best interests of the nation-state. Therefore the struggle against the regional movement was paramount for a safe and secure Croatia.⁸⁶

Unsurprisingly, during the period of political crisis and nation-building that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Croatian nationalist historians stepped forward to defend the Croatian nature of Istria in order to stave off possible, but improbable, Italian claims to parts of the territory and to challenge the regionalist political movement under the dominant regional party, the IDS. These historians, much like Strčić, provided historical excuses for Istria's slow inclusion into Croatian national space and the population's lagging sense of Croatanness (victimization). Nevio Šetić, a nationalist historian and an HDZ politician, placed the blame for this squarely on the shoulders of the Italian bourgeoisie during the *preporod* and on the Italian fascists in the interwar period. By doing so, he suggested that the Italians were not an integral part in the construction and continued maintenance of an Istrian identity, but instead were outsiders attacking the true nature of the Croatian peninsula. He also challenged the communists who promoted some form of Yugoslav ideology, which Šetić saw as artificial, and discouraged studies concerning national issues among Istrian Croats. Therefore, according to Šetić, not enough research was conducted on the Croatian nation in Istria during the forty-five years that the peninsula was a part of communist Croatia inside a united Yugoslavia, retarding Istria's national development.⁸⁷

The issue we have to address at this juncture is whether or not Yugoslav/Croatian historiography produced in the communist period differs to a great extent from that produced by Croatian nationalist historians in the post-Tito,

dissolution, and postdissolution eras. Fundamentally only methodology and particular points of view were different. Unsurprisingly, Marxist historiography, with a noticeable break during the Croatian Spring, often argued from a class struggle point of view that mirrored the ethnonational competition between the Italian and Slavic populations of Istria. Questions of nationalism, while present, took a backseat to topics stressing ethnic cooperation by antifascists in the interwar period and World War II. However, Croatian scholars in the communist era openly emphasized that Istria was Yugoslav territory, but only within the context of a Croatian state. To them, this connection with Croatia was distinct and indisputable.

After Tito's death, the nationalist viewpoint expounded by Croatian scholars from 1967 to 1971 and again during the 1980s became the dominant paradigm for historical exploration. A class-based interpretation, no matter how thinly veiling the national struggle, need no longer be employed in historical and political analysis. Historiography, like politics, now hinged on nationalist interpretations, reevaluating analyses through a nationalist prism.

Other than in methodology and ideological points of departure, there do not seem to be radically different interpretations of Istrian history among Croatian scholars past and present. Both suggest that Istria was an integral part of Croatia culturally, socially, politically, and economically. Both highlight a centuries-long competition between the Italians and Slavs of the peninsula, either by class (Italian landowners vs. Slavic peasants) or by ethnicity (from the nationalist perspective). Thus the Italian camps (liberal-nationalists and later Marxist), which also do not differ significantly in placing Istria within the Italian cultural sphere and claiming it for Italy politically, and the Croatian camps are similar in their ultimate goals. Both seek to justify the inclusion of the region into their respective nation-states regardless of political ideologies.

A New School of Thought in Istrian Historiography

Reflecting recent political events in Istria, and arguably in the spirit of Vivante and some historians writing during Tito's Yugoslavia, a final school of thought has recently emerged among a younger generation of Croatian and Italian scholars led by historians such as Darko Dukovski and Giovanni D'Alessio. These individuals see Istrian history as a process involving all groups of the region. Their works illustrate the often cooperative nature of the Istrian experience in response to the "imperialist" tendencies of outside powers on the peninsula and its population. To be sure, they do not see Istrian history through rose-colored lenses, but they do understand that the rather brief episodes of conflict

between the nations were separated by very long periods of coexistence. And like historians and polemist before them, the contemporary political environment influenced their analyses.

Contrary to the majority of other historians of Istria, Dukovski suggested that the endless conflict between the Italians and the Croats in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries might not be as prevalent as the nationalists contended. Instead, he saw significant cooperation between the two groups, often cross-cutting both class and national boundaries, belying the thesis of unrelenting antagonism. He argued that there was a sense of community among many in Istria, where outsiders of whatever ethnicity were seen as the major source of tension. Furthermore, Istrians, more often than Strčić and Šetić would like to admit, had a sense of regional identity that sometimes clashed with the goals of nationalist actors.⁸⁸

Dukovski also differed from earlier Marxist historians in that much of his argument was not based on “internationalism” and “class struggle,” but on themes of regional coexistence and cooperation. He affirmed that preserving national identity was important for all of the peninsula’s inhabitants and expressed approval of the regional population’s historical and contemporary resistance to outside pressure from both Italy and Croatia. While he recognized the fact that there were significant tensions between the nations and classes in Istrian history, he believed it was valuable to examine how the Istrian population itself dealt with both internal and external pressures, and why multiculturalism and toleration, in varying degrees, survived these often devastating challenges.

Another historian, dealing with issues of conflict and cooperation in Istria is Giovanni D’Alessio. He examined the population of Istria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing to a great extent on the central part of the region in the “traditionally” Croatian town of Pazin and its surrounding villages. D’Alessio found that in mixed areas such as Pazin, local elites from both ethnic groups often exacerbated the national question to maintain personal and family power in a society increasingly under pressure by the Habsburg government, the First World War, and the rise of fascism on the peninsula.⁸⁹ As more Croats inevitably entered the middle classes, the national question became more acute, and attempts to mobilize the Slavic population rose through education and in the creation of secular and religious associations devoted to sports, drama, or charity, for example.⁹⁰ What is unusual and intriguing about his analysis is not so much the fresh look at the national struggle between the *elites* of the region, but his implication that the lower classes of both communities needed significant pressure to follow the nationalist programs, in part stemming from the fact that a goodly portion of the population was ethnically mixed. In an unpublished paper,

thoroughly consistent with his later works, he maintains that, “centuries of wars, immigrations and mixed marriages created a strong multiethnic substratum. Many people could not identify themselves with any specific ethnic group.”⁹¹

D’Alessio also shows that until the 1880s, markers between the two national communities were economic in nature, and mobility between the communities was possible through marriage and social contact. Only in times of crisis did the elites of both ethnic communities in Istria mobilize their target audiences, but this mobilization, while highly conflictual at times, could not erase the commonalties and connectedness of the Istrian communities.⁹² Perhaps this resilience of a hybrid identity and community is why non-Istrian Italians and later the fascists resorted to measures that could be labeled ethnic cleansing to purge the Slavic elements of the peninsula in the interwar period.⁹³ D’Alessio attributes the hardening of boundaries between the Italian and Croatian Istrians to the atrocities on both sides in the interwar and post-World War II periods.

Even though neither Dukovski nor D’Alessio expressed an overt political agenda in their research activities, their conclusions may have been shaped by their distaste for the political situation in Istria during the 1990s. Because of the long-lasting economic problems facilitated by the nationalist stance of the HDZ, which alienated all of Croatia from the West, these scholars, and others like them, wrote not only to point out the shortcomings of the stances they found defective in previous studies according to the evidence they collected, but also to discredit the disastrous HDZ policies that adversely affected Istria. By refuting the nationalists’ claims as to the nature of the peninsula and its population, they were also indirectly calling into question the validity of the HDZ’s territorial claims. These scholars do not deny that Istria should remain a part of the Republic of Croatia, but they suggest that its hybridity and multicultural orientation make the population unique in relation to both Italians and Croats from outside the region.

Furthermore, such historians were seen by both the ruling party in independent Croatia and regionalists as vehicles for spreading the concept of regionality and regional identity at the expense of the Croatian nation. The supporters and ideologues of the regional party used the historiography of the nonnationalist historians to justify their multicultural polemics in attacking the ruling party’s exclusivity and portrayal of Istria as a “Croatian” territory.⁹⁴ Thus recent Istrian historiography became politicized during the economic and political crises characteristic of Croatia during and after the wars of dissolution.

Conclusion

Periods of crisis, as in all histories of all places, have forced historians and polemicists to produce materials that use history to justify particular positions. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Istrian peninsula and its population underwent a series of crises: the *preporod* and irredentist periods, the death throes of the Habsburg Monarchy in World War I, the Paris Peace Conference, fascist transition and rule, World War II and occupation, the Trieste Crisis, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It was during these periods that Istria's position as a geostrategic and political entity could more easily have changed. It is precisely in these times of crisis when arguments must be presented to influence and justify particular positions. Not all of these arguments are necessarily objective or well-researched, but they do use history to achieve their various agendas. The polemicists recognize the importance of establishing links to the past, in some cases the ancient past, and understand this must be done to provide irrefutable evidence of continuity in order to define the nature of Istria and its population.

These authors tend to focus on the ethnic nature of Istria's historical and current demographics. It has generally been accepted, especially in Eastern Europe, that national belonging and territorial integrity were often delineated by ethnopolitical concerns and claims. Thus historical analysis tended to replicate the contemporary political situation of the area in question. Since the nation-state and nation were paramount in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both in terms of politics and historical interpretation, analysts had to describe the population in borderland regions as belonging to a particular nation, proving their points by illustrating a longer continuity, a longer history than their rivals.

The abundance of written material about Istria and its position shows that the region is and has always been a disputed territory, a borderland with a population composed of numerous "national" groups. It also tells us indirectly that these groups must have cooperated and mixed throughout the centuries, or at least enough to force polemicists to make broad, sometimes inaccurate, generalizations to disprove the existence of cooperation and hybridity. Unfortunately historians, with the faults suffered by all human beings, attempt to influence, not only for academic, but for political reasons as well. Many have argued that the nature of Istria is defined by one of the ethnic groups native to the region. They may have acknowledged the influence of "the others" yet still argue that Istria is more Croatian or Italian, that Italians were historical victims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or that Slavs are victims throughout their history. Italian and Croatian historiography and polemics have a surprising

continuity over time, sharing similar goals of ascribing Istria's belonging to one of two worlds—Italian or Slavic.

However, a new historiography has emerged that challenges the claims and conclusions of both Italian and Croatian historiography. This historiography, while analyzing both class and national competition, starts from a different point of departure and emphasizes the cooperation between the major national groups in Istria. Dukovski focuses on the antifascist movement and finds significant Italian participation in its activities, which to a certain degree suggests some sense of community between Istrians of whatever nationality. D'Alessio analyzes the late Habsburg period and the 1920s in Istria and concludes that the mixed communities, though highly mobilized from time to time, generally continued their historical cooperation. Both authors, and those falling into this new historiographic camp, emphasize significant cooperation between the national groups, punctuated by briefer periods of competition, and the extensive mixing of cultures (especially among the lower classes). Their evaluations of history, like those of writers in both national camps, reflect their authors' particular political positions and current trends in European politics. In the 1990s many liberal-minded individuals saw the nation and the power of the nation-state as both limiting to personal freedom and causing numerous, bloody conflicts over the past two centuries. As Europe seemingly becomes more and more integrated, where states that were traditional enemies in the first half of the twentieth century have ceded a certain amount of national sovereignty to belong to the European Union, issues of ethnonationalism are often viewed as anachronistic throwbacks to the era of rabid nationalism, jingoism, and world war. For those scholars who see regional identity as one means to reduce nationalist tensions, analysis highlighting cooperation and resistance to nation-building provides historical legitimacy to nonnational movements and identities. These historians have provided the "proof" of Istrian cooperation and the uniqueness of Istria's Croatian population, which has been picked up by the regional party in Istria in its struggle to define Istria and "Istrianity" against the attempts at homogenization by the nationalist ruling party in the 1990s. These arguments, showing resistance to nationalization and the multinational makeup of Istria's population, allow the regionalists to posit the nonnational, regional nature of the peninsula. They would be touted by these politicians in their attempt to politicize identity in Istria. One could hypothesize that while Italian and Croatian scholars and nationalists attempted to show Istria as "ours" in their prose, those scholars who focus on Istria as a place belonging to neither exclusively argued that Istria was "theirs," or more precisely "the Istrians' own" without regard to claims of ownership from outside the territory itself.

Notes

1. Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson, *Dune: The Battle of Corrin* (New York: Tor, 2004), 9.
2. Colin Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 1999), 2. Emphasis in the original.
3. Hayriye Avcisoy, "The Effects of National and International Economic Policies on Regional Disparities: The Case of Yugoslavia," Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1993, 24.
4. Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-national Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review* 104 (4) (1999): 1159.
5. Eugene Weber, *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23.
6. Applegate, *A Europe of Regions*, 1158, 1160, 1164.
7. Calloway, *First Peoples*, 2.
8. Dennison Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage, 1919-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 15, 20 (quote), 18. These Italian nationalists ignored the fact that three-quarters of a million Slavs resided in this region. It was assumed that most Slavs would simply assimilate into the "superior" culture over time. Virginio Gayda, *L'Italia d'oltre confine* (Turin, 1914), 141-49.
9. Historically the Julian March is considered to be a politically contested territory made up of Gorizia, Trieste, and Istria.
10. They often traced the Italian presence as far back as Rome. Writings of Romans during the empire's occupation of Istria and archeological studies were used as evidence of "Italian" presence and control and its civilizing mission in the region. See F. Babudri, *Relazione commemorativa* (Trieste: Atti e in emorie della Società istriana di archeologia e storia patria, 1910), 404, for an example, and Robert Matijašić, "Starija povijest Istre i njezini odrazi na novije razdoblje," *Društvena istraživanja* 2 (6-7) (1993): 571-72 for a discussion on this issue.
11. Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 28.
12. Gayda, *L'Italia d'oltre confine*, 364-68.
13. Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage*, 29.
14. With a few exceptions, I omitted texts by Slovenian authors due to my focus on the 1990s' struggle between conationals in the Republic of Croatia over the nature of the County (Županija) of Istria in a Croatian political framework. Therefore, I examine the leading trends in historiography and publication from primarily Croatian and Italian scholars.

15. This representation of the Habsburgs as consistently anti-Slavic, plotting against the growing Slavic national movements, still appears in more modern Croatian history. For example, see Petar Strčić and Mirjana Strčić, *Hrvatski Istarski trolist*, cited in n. 81.

16. Later they would strive for Slavic sovereignty within the empire equal to that Hungarians obtained in the 1867 *Ausgleich*. When it was apparent the Habsburg Empire would fall at the end of 1918, they pushed for inclusion into some kind of Yugoslav state.

17. Branimir Crljenko, "Hrvatske čitaonice preporodne Istre u obrani jezičnog i kulturnog identiteta istarskih hrvata," in *Međunarodni znanstveni skup: Talijanska uprava na Hrvatskom prostoru: egzodus Hrvata, 1918-1943*, (Zagreb: Društvo egzodus istarskih Hrvata, October 23-4, 1997), and "'Slavjanska čitaonica' u obrani jezičnog i kulturnog identiteta istarskih Hrvata," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 22 (1-2) (1990): 1-17.

18. The question of Istria was part of a larger "Adriatic Question" posed by the growth of the Italian kingdom and the fall of the Habsburg Empire. Questions of control of the wider region between the Yugoslavs and Italians shaped the political and diplomatic realms throughout the twentieth century. Istria tended to be the most contested territory after the Second World War, since most Italians fled their small enclaves in Dalmatia ahead of Partisan units in 1944 and 1945. However, Dalmatia, as much as Istria, had been a point of contention from the mid-1800s and this is reflected in the published works of the time.

19. See Carlo Combi, *Appello degli Istriani all'Italia* (Padova, 1867).

20. Carlo de Franceschi, *L'Istria* (Poreč: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1879).

21. Of course there were earlier publications focusing on the Roman/Italian aspect of the region, such as *L'Archeografo Triestino* from the first half of the nineteenth century, but this magazine was not influenced by de Franceschi or his contemporaries.

22. Bernardo Benussi, *Manuale di geografia, storia e statistica della Regione Giulia (Litorale)* (Poreč, 1903), and Camillo de Franceschi, *L'Italianità di Pisino nei secoli decorsi* (Kopar, 1907).

23. Miroslav Bertoša, "Jakov Volčić i njegova prepiska s kulturnim radnicima u Hrvatskoj u drugoj polovini XIX. stoljeća," *Historijski zbornik* 23-4 (1970-71): 327.

24. See Ruggero Fauro-Timeus, *Trieste, Italiani e Slavi: Il governo austriaco, l'irredentismo* (Rome, 1914).

25. Angelo Vivante, *Irredentismo adriatico* (1912; reprint, Trieste: Edizioni Italo Svevo, 1984). For a discussion on both the support and criticisms of Vivante, see Elio Apih, "La genesi di *Irredentismo adriatico*," in Angelo Vivante, *Irredentismo Adriatico* (Trieste: Edizioni "Italo Svevo," 1984), 263-313.

26. The Yugoslav Committee was an ad hoc committee of mostly Croats who argued for the creation of some type of post-war Yugoslav state with an autonomous Croatian political unit.

27. The Wilson Line was a compromise boundary suggested by Woodrow Wilson. It bisected Istria into two parts with the majority of western Istria going to Italy, and a smaller portion falling to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. All of Dalmatia, except the city of Zadar and a few islands, would be included in the South Slavic state. This line was not acceptable to the majority of Italians. John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 112.

28. See Cairoli Gigliotti, *The Truth About Fiume and Dalmatia* (Chicago, 1919), which falls rather short of offering the “truth” in any objective sense since it misrepresents both the Italian and Slavic elements of both places. For more balanced and well-argued pieces, see *Italy's Right on Dalmatia* (Zadar: S. Artale, 1919), which, in parts, argues from a legalistic point of view, and *The Trentino, Julian Venetia and Dalmatia: Military and Political-Economic Considerations Regarding the Boundaries of Italy* (Paris, 1918).

29. This may also be due to the rise of Benito Mussolini's fascists and their seizure of power in Italy in the 1920s, which restricted much of the free inquiry needed to produce high-quality analytical material.

30. See Attilio Tamaro, *La Vénétie Julienne et la Dalmatie* (Rome, 1918), and *Storia di Trieste* (Trieste, 1924), a radical propaganda piece published in the post-Versailles era. Other such opinions were typified in publications by fascist historians such as Michele Risolo in *Il fascismo nella Venezia Giulia dalle origini alla Marcia su Roma* (Trieste, 1932).

31. See Bernardo Benussi, *L'Istria nei suoi due millenni di storia* (Trieste, 1924), Giovanni Quarantotto, *Figure del risorgimento in Istria* (Trieste, 1930) and *Uomini e fatti del patriottismo istriano* (Trieste, 1934), for examples of this type.

32. For examples of national and local Italian administration publication, see *Trieste: The Italian Viewpoint* (Rome, 1946), a collection of documents presented by the Italian government to the Council of Foreign Ministers and to the Paris conference in September 1945; and the later publication, *Trieste, November: Facts and Documents* (Trieste: Committee for the Defense of the Italian Character of Trieste and Istria, 1953), which was submitted to the international committee dealing with the lingering question of Trieste when it was feared that Trieste's hinterland would fall to socialist Yugoslavia.

33. M. Bandiera and E. Bonetti, *Venezia Giulia and the Problem of the Italian Eastern Boundary* (Trieste: Typography lithography Moderna, 1946).

34. See Giovanni D'Alessio, *Il cuore conteso: Il nazionalismo in una comunità multi-etnica l'Istria asburgica* (Naples: Filema, 2003), for an analysis of the role of Croatian urban elites in Istria during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

35. Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 84-85; Carlo Schiffrer, *Historic Glance at the Relations Between Italians and the Slavs in Venezia Giulia* (Trieste: Stabilimento Tipografico Nazionale, 1946).

36. Carlo Schiffrer, *La questione etnica ai confini orientali d'Italia, antologia a cura di Fulvia Verani* (Trieste: Italo Svevo, 1990). Ernesto Sestan was another historian of this stripe and a

Catholic working at the end of World War II in the Committee for National Liberation (Comitato di liberazione nazionale, CLN) in an area where the organization was not dominated by communists. As in Schiffrer's publications, he did not deny the Slavic influences in Istria and Trieste, but like many others before him, he solidly linked the entire region to Italy, focusing to a great extent on the ethnic history of the Julian March and the predominantly Italian culture and nature of the area. Ernesto Sestan: *Venezia Giulia: Lineamenti di una storia etnica e culturale* (1947; reprint, Udine: Del Bianco, 1997).

37. The ideological split is well documented in Ballinger, *History in Exile*, 112-21, both in historiography and the Italian political scene in this period.

38. Elio Apih, *Italia, fascismo e antifascismo nella Venezia Giulia, 1918-1943* (Bari: Laterza, 1966), and *Trieste* (Bari and Rome: Laterza, 1978). Andrea Benussi suggests that Italian fascists made Istria a colony for exploitation and terrorized both Italian and Slavic populations to realize their goals that did not benefit the peninsula. See *Ricordi di un combattente istriano* (Zagreb: Državno izdavačko poduzeće hrvatske, 1951).

39. Ballinger, *History in Exile*, 115.

40. *Ibid.*, 109. Ballinger examines both Scotti and Mario Rossi, but I have concluded from their texts that the two share the same desire to expose the nature of the Slavic element in Istria. See Ivo Banac, *With Stalin Against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) for a detailed description of the split and the resulting anti-Stalinist purges of the party from 1948 to 1952 and beyond.

41. Quoted in Ballinger, *History in Exile*, 124.

42. According to Pamela Ballinger, the *esuli* community is made up of the individuals who fled Istria after the Second World War and their immediate descendents, who claim that Istrianity is a purely Italian identity. Many express irredentist attitudes toward the region.

43. Ballinger, 122. The *foibe* are karst geographical structures, caves and fissures, ubiquitous in the limestone formations in parts of Istria. They were convenient execution sites since the bodies could easily be dumped into them. They were the setting for a number of atrocities by Partisan forces in 1943 and again in 1945.

44. *Ibid.*, 120-23.

45. *Ibid.*, 129-45 and note 9, 282-83. See also Giampaolo Valdevit, "Foibe: L'eredità della sconfitta" and Raoul Pupo, "Violenza politica tra guerra e dopoguerra: Il caso delle foibe giuliane, 1943-1945," both in Giampaolo Valdevit, ed., *Il peso passato* (Venice: Marsilio, 1997), 15-32, 35-58; and Robert Spazzali, *Foibe: Un dibattito ancora aperto* (Trieste: Editrice Lega Nazionale, 1990).

46. Petar Strčić, *Prvi tabor Hrvata Istre i Kvarnerskih otoka* (Rijeka: Zavičajna biblioteka, 1971).

47. Josip Bratulić, "Istra u prošlosti i sadašnjosti," *Istra* 24 (3-4) (1986): 10; Ivan Beuc, *Istarske*

studije: *Osnovni nacionalni problemi istarskih Hrvata i Slovenaca u drugoj polovini XIX. i početkom XX. stoljeća* (Zagreb, 1975), 2; Dragovan Šepić, “Borbe istarskih Hrvata za nacionalnu ravnopravnost i priključenje Istre Hrvatskoj i Jugoslaviji,” *Istarski mozaik* (4) (1968): 182.

48. Beuc, *Istarske studije*, 53, 2.

49. Crljenko, “Hrvatske čitaonice” and “Slavjanska čitaonica.”

50. Vjekoslav Spinčić, *Hrvatskoj il’ Italiji?: Rieč* (Sušak, 1880), 10-12, 21, 80. In 1880 the population of Istria was 178,381. The Croatian population stood at approximately 81,000, while the Italians numbered 79,000. The remaining 18000 were a mixture of Slovenes, Germans, and “others.” In the 1991 Yugoslav census, the population of Istria was 234,145, of which 135,170 (about 58%) self-identified themselves as Croats; 15,627 as Italians (almost 7%); 7301 as Yugoslavs (almost 4%); and 37,654 by the region in which they lived (about 16%). The remaining population included Slovenes, Albanians, and other national minorities. Regional identification was substantially higher in 1991 than in 1981, and the number of Croats somewhat reduced. This dramatic change in population ratios over a hundred or so years became permanent with the emigration of the majority of the Italian population in the decade and a half immediately following the Second World War. See Mladen Klemenčić, Vesna Kušar, and Željka Richter, “Promjene narodnosnog sastava Istre: Prostorna analiza popisnih podataka, 1880-1991,” *Društvena istraživanja* 2 (4-5) (1993): 623-27. Thus, while the “nature” of the peninsula could be argued on a more equal quantitative footing in the late nineteenth century, after World War II the Croatian numbers overwhelm those of the native Italian element.

51. Vjekoslav Spinčić, *Le condizioni politiche e nazionali nel Litorale* (Gorizia: 1893).

52. Ballinger claims that Yugoslav propagandists outpaced Italian authors in the publishing of tracts directed to a foreign audience to influence border decisions after both wars, but does not offer the titles or the numbers to support this generalization. *History in Exile*, 84-85.

53. See *Memoranda Presented to the Peace Conference, in Paris, Concerning the Claims of the Kingdom of the Serbians, Croats and Slovenes* (Paris, 1919), and *The National Claims of the Serbians, Croats and Slovenes* (Paris, 1919), for examples.

54. Vjekoslav Spinčić, *Crtice iz hrvatske književne kulture Istre* (1926; reprint, Zagreb, 1982).

55. See Ivo Banac, “Historiography of the countries of Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia,” *American Historical Review* 97 (4) (1992): 1084-1104, for a discussion of this issue.

56. A prime example is France Skerl’s *The Struggle of the Slovenes in the Littoral for the People’s Authority* (Ljubljana: University Press in Ljubljana, 1946), which illustrates the supposed connection between the Slovenes and the antifascist Italians of the region and also suggests that both the Slavic and Italian people welcomed the Yugoslav Partisans as liberators. This is much contested by the Italian Istrian diaspora community in Italy (*esuli*) and some of the Italian community still living in Istria, according to Ballinger, *History in Exile*.

57. Banac (1992), 1085-86, 1094. He suggests that this trend sparked wild “sensationalist debunking and diminished scholarship.” Of course, showing Banac’s particular slant on this

issue, he attributes the least scholarly material to Serbian historians over the issue of Kosovo.

58. This trend increased as the regime became more decentralized and liberal in relation to the expression of national identity.

59. Ive Mihovilović, *Italian Expansionist Policy Towards Istria, Rijeka, and Dalmatia, 1945-1953* (Beograd: Institute for International Politics and Economics, 1954).

60. *Documents Concerning the Denationalization of Yugoslavs in the Julian March* (Belgrade: Yugoslav Institute of International Studies, 1946), and *Italian Genocide Policy Against the Slovenes and the Croats: A Selection of Documents* (Beograd: Institute for International Politics and Economics, 1954).

61. Oblasni narodno oslobodilački odbor za Slovenačko primorje i Trst, *Memorandum of the Regional National Liberation Committee for the Slovene Littoral and Trieste*, 1946.

62. Ljubiša Stojković and Miloš Martić, *National Minorities in Yugoslavia* (Beograd: Publishing and Editing Enterprise “Jugoslavija,” 1952), 152-62; and *Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji* (Beograd: Rad, 1953), 176-98.

63. Istra i Slovensko primorje: Borba za slobodu kroz vjekove (Beograd: RAD, 1952).

64. Matko Rojnić, “Nacionalno pitanje u Istri 1848-9,” *Historijski Zbornik* 2-3 (1949-50): 77-114.

65. Fran Barbalić, *Narodna borba u Istri od 1870 do 1915 godine: Prema bilješkama iz “Nasa sloga”* (Zagreb, 1952).

66. Branko Marušić, “Iz povijesti kolonata u Istri i slovenskom primorju,” *Jadranski Zbornik* 2 (1957): 237-79.

67. For example, see Vjekoslav Bratulić, “Međunacionalni odnosi i razvitak socijalističkog pokreta u Istria,” in Ferdo Čulinović, Vjekoslav Bratulić, and Vinko Antić, *Priključenje Istre Jugoslaviji, 1943-1968* (Rijeka: Sjeverojadranski institut JAZU, 1968), 11-42.

68. Berislav Lukić, “Neka mišljenja u talijanskoj građanskoj historiografiji o karakteru nacionalnog pokreta u Istri,” *Jadranski zbornik* 1 (1956): 157-60, 162. This seems to be a recurring and common theme in Croatian Marxist historiography that continued into the openly nationalist camp in the post-Tito period.

69. This was not the only reason for Ranković’s removal. He was also accused of overstepping his bounds as the leader of the Yugoslav secret police in allegedly bugging his boss’s living and sleeping quarters.

70. For economic and class issues, see Vjekoslav Zidarić, “Razvitak zadrugarstva u Istri i njegova uloga u narodnom preporodu,” in Vjekoslav Bratulić, *et al.*, eds., *Hrvatski Narodni Preporod u Dalmaciji i Istri* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1969), 457-75. On the church, see Božo Milanović, “Biskup Dobrila i njegovo doba (1861-1882),” *ibid.*, 351-402. On education, see Tone Peruško,

“Borba za osnovno školstvo—borba za nacionalni opstanak,” *ibid.*, 423-43. For the national struggle, see Vjekoslav Bratulić, “Političke stranke u Istri za vrijeme narodnog preporoda,” *ibid.*, 289-334; and Dragovan Šepić, “Nacionalna borba u Istri i izbori za carevinsko vijeće 1907,” *ibid.*, 403-22.

71. This concept of a mother country is repeated throughout the collection in the essays, the editors’ introductions to the specific document sets, and in the documents themselves. For example, see an introduction, Ferdo Čulinović Vjekoslav Bratulić and Vinko Antić eds., (128) and the numerous mentions of Croatia as the “homeland” of the peninsula in the various documents presented (256, 256-67, 260-61, 264-65, *et. al.*).

72. This sentiment is reiterated in the introduction to the legal and diplomatic documents, which determined Istria’s fate after the war (314). See also 334, which states that even the Italian antifascists struggled to liberate Istria and “include [it] into Croatia within the framework of a new Yugoslavia that would establish the rights of all nationalities, remove injustice, eliminate forever the exploitation of working people from villages and cities.”

73. Perhaps his most comprehensive work, based on much of his earlier scholarship, is *Istra: Doba Venecije, XVI.-XVIII. stoljeće* (Pula: Žakan Juri, 1995).

74. See “Istarsko ‘akulturacijsko’ ravnotežje druge polovice XIX. stoljeća,” in *Juraj Dobrila—Istarski Preporoditelj, 1812-1882* (Pazin, 1985), 76-97; “Istra se zove različito: kolonizacijski etnički iceberg XVI-XVIII. stoljeća,” *Istra* 25 (5-6) (1987): 167-73; and “Između gospodarske kategorije i socijalne napetosti (Suboki na mletačko austrijskoj granici u Istri od XVI. do XVIII. stoljeća),” *Problemi sjevernog Jadrana*, Svezak 5 (Rijeka: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za povijesnu i društvene znanosti Rijeka, 1985), 91-146.

75. Miroslav Bertoša, “Uskočki rat i slom istarskog gospodarstva,” *Jadranski Zbornik* 11 (1979-81): 239-86.

76. Miroslav Bertoša, *Proština 1921: Antifašistički pokret seljaka jugoistočne Istre* (Pula, 1972), 98. Resistance movements such as this failed uprising occurred throughout fascist rule. Most tended to be small, clandestine cultural and intellectual movements attempting to preserve the Slavic languages and cultures, but did have Italian elements as well.

77. Petar Strčić, *Prvi tabor*.

78. For example, see his bibliographic work on the Partisan movement, *Zapisnici sjednica Okružnog narodnooslobodilackog odbora za Hrvatsko primorje 1943-1945. godine* (Rijeka: Historijski arhiv, 1975); his book on Tito’s international efforts to include Istria in a socialist Yugoslavia, *Vanjskopolitička borba Josipa Broza Tita za Istru od 1941 do 1945 godine* (Rijeka: Historijski arhiv, 1978); and an analysis of the multiethnic worker’s movement in Istria during the war of liberation, *Radnički pokret i NOB općine Labin* (Rijeka: Centar za historiju radničkog pokreta i NOR-a Istre, Hrvatskog primorja i Gorskog kotara, 1980).

79. Petar Strčić, “Pripreme za sintezu ‘Povijesti Istre,’” *Historijski zbornik* 27-28 (1974-75): 357-79.

80. Sabrina Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991*, 2d ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992): 105.

81. This appears in Nevio Šetić, *Istra između tradicionalnog i modernog* (Pazin: Naša sloga, 1995) where he claims that much of the 1990s debate on Istrian identity was political “garbage,” taking to task the regionalist position. See Bertoša, *Doba Venecije* and “Istarsko akulturacijsko,” where he clearly argues that the Croatian subjects of Venice, the Benečani, and the Croatian subjects of Austria, the Kraljevci, identified with their feudal levels, classes, and *ethnicities* in the period of the solidification of borders between the two empires (137).

82. Miroslav Bertoša, “Uz teme,” *Društvena istraživanja* 2 (4-5) (1993): 567-68. Emphasis added.

83. Petar Strčić, *Na velikoj prekretnici: Prvi hrvatski tabor Istre i Kvarnerskih otoka* (Pula : Cavakvi sabor, 1989); “Naša hrvatska Istra,” *Hrvatski iseljenički zbornik* (1992), 81-87.

84. Petar Strčić, “Okolo pokretanja ‘Naše sloge’,” *Pazinski memorijal* (1970); and Petar and Mirjana Strčić, *Hrvatski istarski trolist: Laginja, Mandić, Spinčić* (Rijeka: Izd. centar Rijeka, 1996). Mirjana Strčić, though not a scholar who exclusively focuses on the northern Croatian Adriatic, follows a similar pattern to her husband in her nationalist outlook and negative views on Serbs. For example, see her open and scathing criticisms of Serbian and Montenegrin authors in *Kritička ogledanja: Srpske i crnogorske književne teme* (Rijeka: Izdavački Centar Rijeka, 1991).

85. *Hrvatski istarski trolist*, 9. This victimization of the Croats is evident throughout the work in their description of the leaders defending the “imperiled Croatian population” (84).

86. Petar Strčić, “O nekim nacionalno-političkim pitanjima hrvatske Istre u XIX. i XX. stoljeću,” *Acta Histriae* 1 (1993): 120, 123, 126, 127-28.

87. Šetić, *Istra između*, 15-17. This also suggests his belief in the absolute necessity of historical analysis in building national awareness and feeling.

88. Darko Dukovski, *Fašizam u Istri, 1918-1943* (Pula, 1998); “Disidenti istarskog fašizma,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 27 (2) (1994a): 285-306; “Židovi u Istri između dva svjetska rata,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 29 (1) (1997b): 77-95; and *Svi svjetovi istarski* (Pula: Histria Croatica, 1997).

89. Giovanni D’Alessio, “Riflessioni sul problema dell’identità etnica e nazionale nell’Istria tardoasburgica,” *Ricerche Sociali, Centro di Ricerche Storiche di Rovigno* (8-9) (1998/1999): 5-12; “Il crollo dello Stato in una società multi-etnica: L’Istria nel passaggio da Austria a Italia,” *Bollettino del diciannovesimo secolo* 5 (6) (2000): 87-96; and more recently in *Il cuore conteso*.

90. Giovanni D’Alessio, “Problemi školstva i politički problemi—počeci italijanske uprave u Pazinu,” *Hrvatska Gimnazija u Pazinu, 1899-1999* (1999), 147-64 and “Nacionalna društva i politička borba u Pazinu krajem habsburške Vladavine i drugoj polovini 19 i početkom 20 stoljeća,” *Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa “100 godine Hrvatske čitaonice u Pazinu”* (1999), 75-106.

91. Giovanni D'Alessio, "Ethnic Relations in Central Istria Between the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Century," 1997.

92. D'Alessio, *Il cuore conteso*.

93. For an excellent example of how this was accomplished, see Paolo Parovel, *Izbrisani identitet* (Pazin-Poreč-Pula: Udruženi na kladnici, 1993). On hybrid identities, see Pamela Ballinger, "'Authentic Hybrids' in the Balkan Borderlands," *Current Anthropology* 45 (1) (2004): 31-60. Emilio Cocco argues for the authenticity of a hybrid Istrian identity, which fuses Italian and Slavic cultural influences into a regional identity, in *Metamorfosi dell'Adriatico orientale* (Faenza: Homeless Book, 2002), 172.

94. See Loredana Bogliun-Debeljuh, "The Istrian Euroregion: Sociocultural Situation and Problems," in Stefano Bianchini and Paul Shoup, eds., *The Yugoslav War, Europe and the Balkans: How to Achieve Security?* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1995), 93-105, for one of the numerous polemical pieces arguing for the hybridity of Istrianity and its history of cooperation and tolerance.

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