

Populations' Transfers in 20th Century Europe.

The Case of Istria

(International Conference)



Koper-Capodistria, Friday 25 – Saturday 26 April 2014

Location: UP, Faculty of Humanities, Lecture Room: Burja 1, Titov trg 5, Koper-Capodistria

The conference is convened by

Katja Hrobat Virloget, *University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre, Institute for Mediterranean Heritage (UP SRC IMH) and Faculty of Humanities, Department for Archaeology and Heritage (UP FHS DAH), Koper-Capodistria*

and

Catherine Gousseff, director of the *Centre d'Études des Mondes Russe, Caucasien et Centre-Européen, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, L'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (CERCEC CNRS, EHESS), Paris.*

Organized in the frame of the project of Slovenian Research Agency: *The Burden of the Past. Co-existence in the (Slovenian) Coast Region in Light of the Formation of Post-War Yugoslavia*

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Conference Programme

Friday 25 April 2014

8:30 – 09:00 Registration

9:00 Welcome of the Participants: **Rado Pišot**, Director of UP SRC; **Irena Lazar**, Dean of UP FHS; **Anne Duruflé**, Director of the French Institute in Slovenia; **Angelo Izzo**, Director of the Institute for Italian Culture in Slovenia; **Alenka Tomaž**, Head of UP SRC IMH.

09:20 – 09:50 **Catherine Gousseff**, CERCEC CNRS, EHESS, Paris:
From a Local Narrative to a Situated Approach of Populations' Transfers History

09:50 – 10:30 **Keynote speaker: Gustavo Corni**, University of Trento:
The Displacement of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia at the End of the Second World War in the Framework of the Postwar Political and Ethnic Resettlements

10:30 – 11:00 Discussion

Coffee / Tea Break

11:30 – 12:00 **Raoul Pupo**, University of Trieste:
The Italian Historiography of the Istrian exodus. Topics and Perspectives

12:00 – 12:30 **Marta Verginella**, University of Ljubljana:
The Writing of the History of Migrations in the Border Regions between Slovenia and Italy

12:30 – 13:00 Discussion

Lunch

14:30 – 15:00 **Gloria Nemec**, IRSML Trieste – CRS Rovigno:
The Hardest Years. Private Stories and Public Acknowledgement of the Recollections of Istrian-Italians, either Exiled or Left Behind

15:00 – 15:30 **Lidija Nikočević**, Ethnographic Museum of Istria, Pazin:
Istrian Emigration Meets the Museum: Encouraging Dialogue and Understanding between Ideologies

15:30 – 16:00 Discussion

Coffee / Tea Break

16:30 – 17:00 **Katja Hrobat Virloget**, University of Primorska:
The Burden of the Past. Contrasting Memories on Co-Existence in Post-War Istria

17:00 – 17:30 **Neža Čebtron Lipovec**, University of Primorska:
"I'm telling the Story of my Town". Self-Discovering of a Community and its Urban Memory in the Multicultural Land of Koper – Capodistria

17:30 – 18:00 Discussion

Dinner

Saturday 26 April 2014

9:30 – 10:10 **Keynote speaker: Philipp Ther**, University of Vienna:
On the "British Track": Contractual Ethnic Cleansing 1919-1948

10:10 – 10:30 Discussion

Coffee / Tea Break

11:00 – 11:30 **Pamela Ballinger**, University of Michigan:
Remapping the Istrian Exodus

11:30 – 12:00 **Jure Gombač**, Slovenian Migration Institute, Research Centre of Slovenian Academy for Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana:
Some New Findings on Massive Post-War Population Movement from the Today's Slovenian Istria

12:00 – 12:30 Discussion

Lunch

14:00 – 14:30 **Jasna Čapo**, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb:
Merging Multiple Migrant Experiences and Perspectives: Croatian Refugees from Serbia 1990s-2000s

14:30 – 15:00 **Cathie Carmichael**, University of East Anglia:
Challenges to Writing the History of Europe 'as it actually was' in the 1940s

15:00 – 15:30 Discussion

15:30 – 16:00 Concluding Remarks and Discussion **Catherine Gousseff, Katja Hrobat Virloget**

Introduction

Decades after the mass departure of Italians from Istria due to the redrawing state borders, this part of contemporary history remains from many aspects unknown and silent. The expectation of this international conference is to improve among scholars and larger audience the knowledge of this past, by analysing it in a broader European perspective of the 20th century.

With the raise of the nationalism and consequently the disintegration of multinational European empires and the (re)emerging of states after World Wars and the Yugoslavian wars, the politics based on principles of collective guilt and punishment, as well as the allies' politics of erasing minorities in central-eastern Europe, led to ethnic cleansing, exclusion of the imagined "other", "mass repatriations" etc. The populations' transfers to the supposed "countries of origin" performed voluntarily or under pressure enabled in this way the ethnic homogenization of national states. The people that emigrated out of the country, the ones that immigrated in the emptied places or the population that remained struggled with new social circumstances, social relations, ideological systems, individual/collective memories/oblivions, with discourses of autochthony etc. Their individual experiences become part of the complex games of memories/oblivions that can be included or denied in the parallel national historiographies.

Katja Hrobat Virloget, Catherine Gousseff

Abstracts

Catherine Gousseff

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From a Local Narrative to a Situated Approach of Populations' Transfers History

C. Gousseff, author of a (forthcoming) book on soviet-polish populations' transfer (1944-1947) propose to discuss from this case study a way to approach this kind of forced populations movement taking in account different historical models and conceptions, states' practices of implementing departures and resettlements, the diversity of spaces and times it occurred in order to situate the range of experiences which compose the history of populations' transfers in the second half of Central Europe century.

Keynote Speaker: Gustavo Corni

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The Displacement of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia at the End of the Second World War in the Framework of the Post-war Political and Ethnic Resettlements

At the end of the Second World War a dramatic series of forced population transfers took place, changing the social, ethnic, national fabric of a large region in Central and Eastern Europe. This change, which is partly neglected by the international historiography, focusing on the consolidation of borders in the context of the beginning Cold War, cannot be understood without referring to its prime mover: the aggressive policy pursued by Nazi Germany during the war. A policy which was dictated by consolidated economic interests, but also by a diffused and clear ideological motivation: clearing the field for the realization of a *Lebensraum* on which the German people/race could finally have the possibility of realizing fully its racial qualities. In some way, with a weaker ideological quality, also Italian Fascism had similar (although much more limited projects) in view of strengthening a sphere of Italian hegemony at the Eastern borders, in the Balkans.

The German (and Italian) occupation policies during the war were accompanied by measures of population control, cleansing the field and expelling people who were part of dangerous or inferior races (the case of Poland is in this sense emblematic), and at the same time introducing racially “good” colons in that territory. At the same time, Hitler’s state tried to bring back home parts of German minorities scattered throughout Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe, from South Tyrol to the Baltic states in a huge centrally-planned population transfer: “*Heim ins Reich*”. The brutality of the German populationist drive eastwards is not to be compared with Italian occupation policies, but the Fascist authorities too pursued in the occupied parts of Yugoslavia a harsh policy, imbued with nationalistic undertones. German populationist policies were performed also in Yugoslavia. This is the direct historical background, on which the “exodus” of the Istro-Dalmatian Italians has to be measured in order to better understand its place in the immediate post-war European history.

A larger historiographical contextualization is in my view necessary in order to de-nationalize this dramatic event, which has been so often instrumentalized by both parts in recent years for political reasons.

Raoul Pupo

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The Italian Historiography of the Istrian exodus. Topics and Perspectives

The Italian historiography has dealt later with Istrian exodus. The first scientific and comprehensive study has been published in 1980. Then, just a couple of studies in the Nineteens and the explosion of them in the new century. The main questions examined by the historians concerned the number and the ethnical identity of the refugees, the timing of migration, the motivations of the exiles and those of the Yugoslav authorities, the relationship between choice and compulsion, the comparison with other forced populations' transfers in Europe. These will be the topics of the report, which gives a survey of the latest trends in Italian historiography.

Marta Verginella

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The Writing of the History of Migrations in the Border Regions between Slovenia and Italy

For long decades have emigration of Slovenians and Croats from Friuli–Venezia Giulia to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Istrian exodus of Italians been mainly discussed in the writings of emigrants and refugees themselves, or political agitators and publicists. Representing two traumatic processes, connected to the establishment of political regimes averse to national minorities, they have been subjects of powerful political usage, which undoubtedly also strongly affected their rendering in historiography. Both, Slovenian and Italian historiographies were relatively late at studying the emigration and refugees. The research began in Italy in the 1970s, while in Slovenia even later. And to what extent can we find similarities and differences in the process of establishing historiography of both migratory phenomena, and where is their study positioned inside each national historiography? Has a peripheral theme been transformed into a nationally important subject in Slovenia as well as in Italy?

Gloria Nemeč

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The Hardest Years. Private Stories and Public Acknowledgement of the Recollections of Istrian-Italians, either Exiled or Left Behind

In the long post-war years of the Northern Adriatic areas, the manifold, changing worlds of the peoples of the Exodus abroad and the few left behind in the new Yugoslav Socialist Republic, now making up a minority group, both drew the dividing lines of the Cold War in its political and cultural consequences. Yet, the overcoming of the deprivation of a wiped-out world, along with the uprooting, brought together different social groups of Istrian-Italians, even though splintered up by the options' device. The Istrian-Italians were in those years committed to a hard work of adjustment to the new situation, and consequently new identity. Thus, they experienced feelings typical of minorities, set up various means of interaction with the new state, experimented with a new status plight, as well as tried to give themselves new social rules in order to overcome the ravages of war, home upheavals, land and communities shattering up.

This contribution deals with the topic of memories and story-telling of the Exodus and its aftermath in the post-war years through a comparative approach. On the grounds of the study of written as well as oral sources, some of the main problems of families and communities splitting up will be dealt with, along with the loss of places and past power-balance, stories of forlornness, attribution of blame and new integration processes. Within this framework, some gender dynamics will be taken into account, concerning the great commitment of Istrian women to reconcile different means of action, mediating between private and public sphere, choosing among customs and behaviours those compatible with the new social context.

Lidija Nikočević

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Istrian Emigration Meets the Museum: Encouraging Dialogue and Understanding between Ideologies

The peninsula of Istria (Western Croatia) changed hands between five different states during the 20th century. Many residents of Istria have therefore had difficulty in identifying with only one state or culture. This has contributed to the shaping of a regional, Istrian identity. In the period between two world wars, many people left Istria in response to the Italian totalitarian regime, which envisioned only Italians in Istria. After the Second World War, Yugoslavia also introduced a totalitarian regime based on communist ideology. This resulted again with mass migration to Italy, the USA, Australia and elsewhere, both because of political and economic reasons.

In 2005, the Ethnographic Museum of Istria started a project focusing on Istrian emigration and life in the Diaspora during the last 100 years. After four years of fieldwork, the resulting exhibition “Suitcases & destinies: Istria out of Istria” touched many of the significant historical and political events and developments of that period. Interviews with emigrants and their objects show individual, multi-layered histories. This material resulted in a new, non-nation-oriented perspective of the Istrian Diaspora and of the Istrian past in general. This paper will illustrate that the medium of an exhibition has the possibility to create an understanding of intercultural relationships and ideologies that politicians and historians have avoided discussing for generations.

Katja Hrobat Virloget

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The Burden of the Past. Contrasting Memories on Co-Existence in Post-War Istria

The ethnological research investigates how the conflict memories on post-war massive displacement of (mostly) Italian speaking population from (the Slovenian part of) Istria affects the identifications and co-existence of its today’s multicultural population. The attention of the study is refocused from those who left to those who after mass migrations and great political-ideological turning points remained and resettled the emptied space (from Italian and Slovenian speaking Istrian population to Slovenian and ex-Yugoslavian immigrants). On the one hand the identity of a community is founded on the notion of the victim; on the other hand the same tragic events will be neglected, reinterpreted and censored by the winning collective (national) memory, which will refer to the concept of victim too. What is understood as “exodus”, forced national migrations on one side, as a traumatic event letting strangers in their own home behind, it is on the other side taken as voluntary migrations denying its effects but admitting to miss (emotional) connections to place. However the research surpasses the prevailing two conflict collective memories showing the multiplicity of memories which according to Halbwachs could be explained by associating the individual memories to the various groups to which a person is simultaneously a member.

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"I'm telling the Story of my Town". Self-Discovering of a Community and its Urban Memory in the Multicultural Land of Koper – Capodistria

The contribution presents an on-going initiative of debate evenings, started in collaboration with the Regional Museum of Koper, which was set-up with the aim to discover the places in the town that the nowadays inhabitants of the town of Koper-Capodistria value as important for them and to collect their memories regarding these places. Considering the tectonic shift in the population structure in this area after WWII, such coral acts turned out to be a momentous driving force in the mutual discovery of the common identifiers among the members of a supposed community. At the same time, such collective significance assessment process plays an important role in developing participatives practices.

Keynote Speaker: Philipp Ther

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On the "British Track": Contractual Ethnic Cleansing 1919-1948

The keynote tries to explain the far reaching international consensus about ethnic cleansing in the first half of the 20th century. The presentation starts out with the peace treaties after World War I and their stipulations about the protection and reduction of minorities. The second section deals with various international treaties between 1939 (treaty of Munich) and the end of Nazi dominance over Europe in 1944. The third key period are the post-war treaties which mainly affected post-war Germany and East Central Europe. In accordance with the specific topic of the conference, the paper will also have a closer look at the ethnic cleansing at the rim of the Cold War, including the upper Adriatic region. While ethnic cleansing has often been associated with authoritarian regimes and dictatorships and located in studied within Eastern Europe, much less is known about the fact that Great Britain was involved in almost all major cases of ethnic cleansing regulated by international treaties. Since the concept of territorial partition along ethnic lines was influenced by colonial rule, the paper will also analyse this dimension of the "British track".

Pamela Ballinger

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Remapping the Istrian Exodus

Although the mass migration out of Istria after World War II remains relatively unknown in Slovenia and Croatia, the Italian “rediscovery” of this history has given rise to an extensive field of memorialization, political debate, and scholarly discussion since the 1990s. An increasingly dominant narrative of the Istrian exodus depicts it in terms of longstanding Italian-Slavic enmity and ethnic cleansing *avant la lettre*. Erasing the complexities of class antagonism and Italian fascism by attributing the exodus to Balkan violence, such an interpretation also emphasizes a regional frame of analysis. A number of scholars and initiatives, however, have sought to situate the Istrian case in a broader framework of displacement out of Central and Eastern Europe during and immediately after the Second World War. Drawing upon a range of recent studies of displacement in post-war Europe, this paper inquires into both the potential and limitations of this perspective for understanding the causes and consequences/legacies of the Istrian exodus. What does an interpretation of the Istrian exodus as one among many examples of the violent unmixing of peoples in early post-war Central and Eastern Europe open up, what does it foreclose? How does our analysis shift if we view the Istrian exodus through the lens of contemporaneous repression in and migrations out of other Yugoslav border regions, such as Vojvodina and Kosovo?

After critically reviewing both emphases and silences in the historiography on post-war Istria, the final section of the paper offers yet another approach: Istrian population movements seen as part of a broader history of migrations from the various African and Balkan territories Italy lost with the defeat of fascism. Inserting migrations out of Istria within this (post)imperial frame teases out the global dimensions of the story and underscores the dangers in reading it only as following out of the logics of Balkan or Eastern state-building, ethnic homogenization, or the consolidation of socialism.

Jure Gombač

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Some New Findings on Massive Post-War Population Movement from the Today's Slovenian Istria

This contribution will try to add some new findings to the discourse about the situation in Istrian coastal area that is a part of Slovenia today, during a period of mass populations' movement after the Second World War. With the help of content and discourse analysis of some of the documents, local newspapers and testimonies from that time the construction of the atmosphere of fear, distrust, intolerance will be problematized and discussed as one of the important reasons for the mass movement of the populations. This was not an simple linear process, as five different waves of migration during that period can testify, but a complex mixture of different factors, such as nationalism, clash of ideologies, class struggle, personal grudges...

Jasna Čapo

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Merging Multiple Migrant Experiences and Perspectives: Croatian Refugees from Serbia 1990s-2000s

The presentation describes refugee, immigrant, returnee and diasporic aspects of the experiences of Croatian refugees from Serbia who settled in Croatia at the beginning of the war between the two countries in the 1990s. These people call themselves refugees, even after they have acquired Croatian citizenship; the state of settlement views them as some kind of 'returnees' to their 'ethnic homeland'; researchers have dealt with this and similar migrations under the heading of 'co-ethnic' or 'ethnically privileged migrations' and 'ethnic/ancestral returns'. Their ways of being and belonging point out simultaneous attachment to the Croatian nation and their present homes on the one hand, and diasporic-like consciousness linking them to the villages abandoned in Serbia on the other. While discussing this intersectionality of being and belonging over time, the presentation criticizes the ethnic framework within which these—and similar displacements—have been studied and argues for a non-compartmentalized approach in migration research combining insights gained from refugee, migration, diaspora and return studies.

Cathie Carmichael

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Challenges to Writing the History of Europe 'as it actually was' in the 1940s

This paper will examine the problems of recording and interpreting the events of the 1940s, especially the death and displacement of populations officially allied with the Axis powers. The empirical focus will be on Central Europe including Istria, the Czech Republic and Poland/ East Prussia. In particular, I will look at the impact of the work the American lawyer Alfred de Zayas with reference to his 1977 book 'Nemesis at Potsdam' and subsequent debates about the phenomenon of 'ethnic cleansing' in both European and North American historiographies.