

LABOR AND COMMUNISM IN YUGOSLAVIA AND ITALY.  
TRIESTE AND THE NORTHEASTERN ADRIATIC DURING  
THE COLD WAR (1945–1975). A CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE RENEWAL OF WORKERS' HISTORY

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**ABSTRACT**

*The article outlines research perspectives in the realm of labor history, a field that has lain idle for much of the past two decades. It sketches out potentials for methodological innovation, taking the northeastern Adriatic, and specifically the harbor and port cities of Trieste, Monfalcone, Koper, and Rijeka, as a case in point. The author points at the benefits of writing of the history of communism as social and cultural history, that is as a history focusing both on agency and on discourse analysis. In terms of agency, she focuses on the constitution of workers' milieus in the dockyards and harbors of the mentioned cities, after 1945 all of them multiethnic, two in Italy, two in Yugoslavia. The potentials of discourse analysis are shown through the topic of Yugoslav self-management – the Titoist economic model proved fascinating both to the other communist societies and the Left in the West. Hence, the topic offers a linkage between studying the communist movements in the West and the communist authority of state socialisms.*

*Key words: Communism, labor history, contemporary history, northeastern Adriatic, port cities, workers' milieus, methodology, agency, discourse analysis, Yugoslav self-management*

LAVORO E COMUNISMO IN JUGOSLAVIA E IN ITALIA.  
TRIESTE E L'ADRIATICO NORDORIENTALE DURANTE LA GUERRA  
FREDDA (1945–1975). UN CONTRIBUTO AL RINNOVAMENTO  
DELLA STORIA DEL LAVORO

**SINTESI**

*L'articolo tratteggia le prospettive di ricerca che si offrono alla storia del lavoro, campo che per ben più di due decenni non ha prodotto risultati rilevanti. Nel de-*

*lineare i potenziali forniti dall'innovazione metodologica, si sofferma sul caso dell'Adriatico nordorientale e, nello specifico, sui porti e sulle città portuali di Trieste, Monfalcone, Capodistria e Fiume. L'autrice si avvicina alla storia del comunismo in un'ottica sociale e culturale, focalizzata sia sulla categoria di esperienza (agency) che sull'analisi del discorso. A fronte dell'agency, l'articolo si focalizza sulla costruzione dei milieus operai nei cantieri navali e porti delle città menzionate, dopo il 1945 tutte quante multiethniche, site due in Italia e due in Jugoslavia. I potenziali dell'analisi del discorso sono mostrati attraverso il tema dell'autogestione jugoslava – il modello economico titoista si è rivelato affascinante sia per altre società comuniste che per la Sinistra in Occidente. Il tema pone pertanto in collegamento lo studio dei movimenti comunisti occidentali e l'autorità comunista dei socialismi di stato.*

*Parole chiave: comunismo, storia del lavoro, storia contemporanea, Adriatico nordorientale, città portuali, milieus operai, metodologia, esperienza (agency), analisi del discorso, autogestione jugoslava*

The following essay attempts to sketch the potential for a renewed history of labor, workers, and labor movements, taking Northeastern Adriatic port cities as prospective cases in point. The location of the study at an intersection between East and West allows it to suggest that labor history be reappraised as a genuine and comprehensive European history. The Yugoslav Communist model, which was also considered as a model by the West European Left, represents a particularly rich instance of entanglement.

The present inquiry stretches from the new constitution of state and society after 1945 to the »watershed« (Hobsbawm, 2009, 285) of the Cold War in the 1970s, which in the northeastern Adriatic coincided with the final legal determination of the postwar border between Italy and Yugoslavia in the Treaty of Osimo in 1975. The prospective methodological approach to the envisioned case studies – Monfalcone, Trieste, and Muggia in Italy, as well as Koper (Slovenia) and Rijeka (Croatia) in Yugoslavia – considers port and harbor cities that were distinguished in their multiethnic character and which were located only kilometers apart from one another. Koper and Rijeka each played a specific role in the promotion of industrialization in Communist Yugoslavia: the port of Koper represented one of the most important emerging Slovene industrialization projects, and the port of Rijeka, which was almost entirely destroyed during the Second World War, was the largest traditional port in the eastern Adriatic after Trieste. The modernization efforts in both cities were ideologically implemented, particularly in light of their rivalry with Trieste; while the city remained under Italian control, the

Yugoslav Communists had raised claims to it.<sup>1</sup> Even the leaders of the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI), above all Palmiro Togliatti, first spoke out clearly against the incorporation of the Julian March into Yugoslavia in the course of the »40 Days« of Yugoslav control over Trieste in May/June 1945. After 1948, the Italian communists remained aligned with Stalin, which in the Yugoslav-controlled portion of the border zone created a new set of circumstances that encouraged emigration to the Italian-controlled area and to Italy: Communists who disapproved of Tito's policies after his break with Stalin found themselves under threat. With the division of the region from 1945 to 1947 into Zones A and B under Allied and Yugoslav administration, respectively, a de facto border was drawn that was subsequently changed several times more and finally legitimated by the London Memorandum of 1954 and officialized by the Treaty of Osimo of 1975.

At the beginning of May 1945, Trieste, Gorizia, and Monfalcone, as well as the surrounding hinterlands, were liberated by Yugoslav troops; one day later Allied troops arrived in the region. The Germans had occupied the area between 1943 and 1945. The double-liberation ended with an accord among Yugoslavia, the United States, and Great Britain in Belgrade on 9 June 1945, whereby Yugoslavia agreed to withdraw behind the so-called »Morgan Line«. Until the coming into effect of Italy's peace treaty with the Allies on 15 September 1947, the so-called Zone B, comprising the Julian March between the Rapallo border and the Morgan Line (Istria, Rijeka, and the Slovenian coast), remained under the control of the Yugoslav military government, while Zone A, between the Morgan Line and the old Italian-Habsburg border (Trieste and its hinterland, reaching to Monfalcone, Gradisca, and Gorizia and its vicinity, but excepting the Val Canale), found itself under the control of an Anglo-American military administration.

In June 1945, a further demarcation line was drawn within Zone B along the Dragonja River, dividing the Slovene- and Italian-populated district of Koper/Capodistria from the Croat- and Italian-inhabited district of Buje/Buie. Today this line remains the object of a border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. With the enactment of the peace treaty in 1947, a large part of Zone B came under Yugoslav administration, while a smaller part of Zone A went to Italy. Of the remainder, the districts of Koper/Capodistria and Buje/Buie were assigned to Zone B of the newly-created Free Territory of Trieste (FTT), while Trieste and its environs represented Zone A of the FTT. The United Nations deemed the installation of an international governor necessary for this buffer state in light of its location along the front of the escalating Cold War. The fact that such a governor was never appointed, however, signals that the FTT existed only on paper. The buffer-state concept was abandoned with the signing of the London Memorandum in October 1954; thereafter, Zone A fell under Italian and Zone

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1 The shipyard in Rijeka continues to bear the name »May Third«, in memory of the day the liberation of the city was achieved by the Tito partisans in 1945.

B under Yugoslav jurisdiction. A precondition for the actual transition to the FTT had been the withdrawal of the Allied troops. The Allies were no longer willing to do so soon after the ratification of the peace treaty with Italy, as they had realized the importance of the city of Trieste as a bulwark against communism. From 1950, then, as Yugoslavia began to draw closer to the West after the break with Stalin, it became increasingly clear that the FTT would never become a functioning entity.

The development of the Communist parties in the region was unique and complex: In August 1942, the Comintern issued a ruling officially allowing the existence of two separate Communist parties in the Julian March. These were, on the one hand, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and, on the other, the Communist Party of Slovenia (*Komunistična Partija Slovenije*, KPS), as part of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The Communist Party of the Julian March was founded in 1945 on the basis of an agreement between the Italian and Yugoslav Communist Parties, and was renamed the Communist Party of the Free Territory of Trieste (*Partito Comunista del Territorio Libero di Trieste*, PCTLT; *Komunistična partija Svobodnega tržaškega ozemlja*, KPSTO) after the ratification of the peace treaty in 1947, seeing its operational territory reduced from the entire Julian March to the sole TLT. This party favored the annexation of the Julian March by Yugoslavia and through this stance differed from the PCI's policy. After the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform a schism divided the party – the pro-Yugoslav section was led by the Slovene ex-partisan Branko Babič, while the pro-Cominform section was led by the former Comintern agent Vittorio Vidali, who ultimately prevailed over Babič. Under Vidali's leadership the PCTLT/KPSTO also began to oppose the annexation of the FTT by Yugoslavia, and consequently the party was no longer able to operate in the Yugoslav-controlled Zone B. As a matter of fact, Vidali reclaimed the actual enactment of the TLT, rather than an annexation to any of the two states. The PCTLT/KPSTO found followers among both the Italian and Slovene populations. After Zone A fell under Italian control in 1954, the regional party joined the PCI in 1957 (Valdevit, 1986).

The issue of which party organization should exist within Zones A and B was resolved in August 1945 with the establishment of the autonomous regional party. The initiative issued forth from the PCI, which hoped in this way to exert a greater influence on the Yugoslavs / Slovenes, who exercised a dominant role in the region. The PCI also aimed to gain influence among the local Italian Communists, who were often at odds with the official party line. The influential Communist factions of the cities of Koper/Capodistria and Piran, which until 1945 were comprised of nearly 95% Italians, refused to recognize the regionally-defined party that now held responsibility for them. These factions conformed to the PCI party line and found themselves operating illegally once more (after 20 years of fascism, that is). At the same time, Italians fled Zone A for Zone B to avoid the pursuit of both Italian and Allied authorities for being communists. Many of these communists had worked together with the Yugoslavs in the

national liberation war, assisting the Slovenes and Croats in their attempt to establish the new communist Yugoslavia in Zone B (Troha, 2006).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Trieste, Monfalcone, and Muggia traditionally possessed strong labor movements, and the workers encountered Tito-Communism with interest and goodwill. From 1946–1947, several thousand people migrated from Friuli-Venezia Giulia to Zone B or to Yugoslavia, in order to construct a communist society there.<sup>3</sup>

Migrations out of Yugoslavia were many times larger than the pro-Communist motivated migrations eastward, however. Massive migrations, comprised mostly of Italians, had come from Croatian Istria since 1945 – and especially after the peace treaty of 1947, which had transferred a large part of the peninsula to Yugoslav sovereignty. After the Tito-Stalin conflict the migration took on also a different tone, as those communists who condemned Tito's policies found themselves in danger (Banac, 1988; from the Italian perspective, Scotti, 2002). This new quality added on to the various migratory waves the region had experienced since 1943. An intensified migration out of Zone B first occurred in the second half of 1953, as it became increasingly apparent that the area would eventually fall under Yugoslav control. Emigration to Italy seemed to many to be the last chance to surmount the Iron Curtain once more. For the Yugoslav state, the migration caused significant damage, both in terms of economy and of image, seeming to signify that life under communism was impossible. The Italian state, for its part, sought to lure migrants through propaganda and through a concerted policy of settlement – to Italianize those areas of Trieste's hinterland that had formerly possessed an ethnic-Slovene majority (Ballinger, 2006; Panjek, 2006; Volk, 2004; 2003).

Key local, national (on both sides of the border), and international events can be entangled in a meaningful way in the era from 1945–1975. After the end of the war in 1945 and the formation of Zones A and B came the peace treaty between the Allied and associated powers and Italy in February 1947, which included the establishment of the Free Territory of Trieste; the small portions left to comprise Zones A and B became part of the Iron Curtain. The conflict between Stalin and Tito in 1948 initially caused a harsh isolation of Yugoslavia. 1950 saw the establishment of self-management as the Titoist economic model, and in 1951 Western financial aid began to flow into Yugoslavia. In 1954, the London Memorandum was initialled (yet never signed), assigning Zone B of the FTT to Yugoslavia and Zone A to Italy. In 1955, Allied troops pulled out of neighboring Austria. Among other events, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956,

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2 Troha's essay vividly illustrates the numerous animosities between the local ethnic groups, which were intensified by the unstable political situation, the appropriation attempts of the new Yugoslav authorities, and anti-fascist »cleansing« actions, among others.

3 The largest group in number comprised over 2,000 skilled workers from the Monfalcone shipyard. Cf. Wörsdörfer, 2004, 485, where the dockworkers in Monfalcone are described as »enthusiastic adherents of the Yugoslav Revolution.«

Khrushchev's »Secret Speech« at the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as the dissolution of the Cominform in the same year resulted in reestablished relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. The success of the Soviet Union in launching the first artificial satellite into space in October 1957 led to the »Sputnik Shock« and called into question the until-then widely-assumed superiority of the West. The years between 1959 – the beginning of the quarrel between the Soviet Union and China – and 1961 – the construction of the Berlin Wall – seemed to represent a central turning point in the history of state socialisms. If the Soviets had still consulted the Chinese and Italian Communists before marching into Hungary in 1956, by 1961 there was no longer any such discussion between the Soviet regime and its political allies. In 1963, Yugoslavia enscribed its self-managed socialism into its constitution. Croatia developed what was called by its political opponents *Maspok* (*masovni pokret*, a »mass movement«) parallel to the student revolts and the Prague Spring of 1968. The Croatian Spring led to demonstrations and arrests in 1971, but resulted anew in a Yugoslav constitutional reform in February 1974, which promoted federalization, legally codified many of the demands from 1971, and granted the right to secession to Yugoslavia's constituent republics (a right that most exercised in 1991). One and a half years later, in August 1975, the Helsinki Accords marked the watershed of the Cold War. Only shortly afterwards, in November 1975, the Treaty of Osimo officially defined the border between Italy and Yugoslavia, thereby ending the conspicuously long postwar era in the region (Pirjevec, Klabjan, Bajc, 2006).

#### THE STATE OF THE ART

Border regions tend to produce a unique social dynamic and historical development.<sup>4</sup> For the Yugoslav state, the »loss« of Trieste at its Northwestern border was indeed more than a mere incident, however for the development of the state as a whole the episode was rather peripheral. For Slovenia, on the other hand, it was of great significance; for Croatia, it was something less – Istria here again took a peripheral position (Pirjevec, 2007b; cf. Troha, 2008b). Marina Cattaruzza has produced the first comprehensive history of the eastern border of Italy and reveals why the region has been nearly entirely removed from the Italian national master narrative (Cattaruzza, 2008; cf. Pupo, 2007).

In the 1980s, the theme of self-management inspired several common Italian-Yugoslav academic endeavors.<sup>5</sup> Their existence not least confirms the center-

4 A good, yet somewhat outdated overview of the historical comparison of borders and border regions is Baud, van Schendel, 1997. On Trieste, Rijeka and Istria cf. the essays in Rutar, 2006.

5 *Cooperazione ed autogestione*, 1986; *L'autogestione jugoslava*, 1982, with contributions from Jože Pirjevec, Stefano Bianchini, Marco Dogo, Karel Šiškovič and others. References to the Yugoslav model can also be found in Holmström, 1989.

periphery discrepancy in the Italian collective memory: Whereas the aftermath of the Second World War along the eastern border until 1954 maintained everyday importance through the unresolved border issues and the exodus of the Istrian population, elsewhere in Italy, after the ratification of the peace treaty in 1947, the focus shifted to the construction of an anti-fascist founding myth for the Second Republic, which in some respects paralleled the relevance of the Yugoslav national liberation myth for the foundation of the Titoist state. The Italian occupation in the Balkans and the events at the eastern border were largely lost to collective amnesia.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Italy could hardly ignore the Western Bloc's aspired normalization of ties with Tito's Yugoslavia after the break with Stalin (Galeazzi, 1995). The history books used in Italian schools, traditionally Left-leaning in their outlook, gave detailed treatment to the Yugoslav economic model until way into the 1990s. They exhibit a certain tension, both with regard to diachronically-constructed memories and in the manner they approach the center-periphery dynamic of historical interpretation regarding their eastern neighbor. Positive references to Tito-Communism seem to be motivated primarily by egocentrism, insofar as the Italian Left considered the Yugoslav economic »third way« beneficial in terms of the construction of their own anti-fascist founding myth.<sup>7</sup>

The state of Italian and Slovenian research on the border region and their respective integration with one another can be seen in the recent bilingual coproduction within the research program Interreg III,<sup>8</sup> organized by the European Fund for Regional Development (Catalan et al., 2007).<sup>9</sup> This volume collects the contributions from the closing symposium of the project, organized by the Department of Geography and History of the University of Trieste and the Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia (Regional Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IRSML), with the cooperation of the Scientific Research Centre and the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska in Koper. Others involved included the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana, the Slovene National- and Study Library in Trieste, the Polytechnic Institute in Nova Gorica, the Slovene Research Institute in Trieste, as well as many cul-

6 This clearly changed after the end of the Cold War and the founding of the Republic of Slovenia in 1992. The polemic concerning the *foibe* is emblematic of the Italian deconstruction of the anti-fascist founding myth, which has gone as far as to lead to a quite problematic trend to rehabilitate fascism. Mattioli, 2010; Favretto, 2004, 163–166. On the foibe cf. Pirjevec, 2009; Wörsdörfer, 2004, 476–503; Cernigoi, 1997; Valdevit, 1997.

7 This sympathy is consistent with that of the political Left in most European countries, cf. Rutar, 2004b, 197ff.

8 Interreg III encouraged projects between 2000 and 2006 that would strengthen transnational cooperation and socioeconomic solidarity among the regions of the European Union. Inter alia, the regions along the borders with new EU member-states received special attention (INTERREG, 2010).

9 For an annotated bibliography on the history of the post-World War II era in Trieste see the website of the local Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia-Giulia (IRSML, 2010).

tural organizations in Monfalcone and Nova Gorica – however none from Italian Gorizia. The IRSML has served for years as an Italian nerve center for border-bridging cooperation and communication.

Straightaway in the introduction, the editors display only partial confidence in the success of the project - they write that due to inadequate synchronization of finances, in particular in the years before the accession of Slovenia to the EU, its potential was not able to be truly maximized. An emphasis of the project lay in locating, collecting, and systematizing as yet unevaluated source materials in the diverse archives of the region, as well as beyond. Such collections beyond the northeastern Adriatic include the files of the Allied Control Commission in the Central State Archive in Rome, the files of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in the archive of the European University Institute in Florence, the relevant holdings of the National Archives in London and Washington, and the files of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) at the Istituto nazionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione in Italia (National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy) in Milan. The materials collected through the project cannot be deemed exhaustive by far. Difficulties, according to the editors' introduction, occurred in the attempt to comparatively analyze the situation on both sides of the border, which related to the differing states of the art in research in both countries. In the domains of administration, the economy, and politics a methodological exchange proved possible, while in other realms, like the cultural and social, such an exchange remained rather difficult (Catalan et. al., 2007a, 11–12).

This appraisal eliminates any possibility of a border-transcending comparison in any single analysis. Instead, the focus lies on the respective national histories and the difficulty of conducting a comparative academic exchange. Symptomatic of this attitude is also the nearly complete lack of attention to the existing international research on the border region, which in the majority of cases does take into account both sides of the border and analyzes source materials from all three involved language groups (most important for the post-World War II era is Wörsdörfer, 2004; abridged Italian version Wörsdörfer, 2009). Altogether, the contemporary history of the Italian-Yugoslav border region is characterized after the conclusion of the multiyear project as an »unknown sea with a few precarious rocks« (»un mare ignoto con pochi affioramenti incerti«) in many regards, and is recognized as a major gap in the research in, among other fields, the history of labor, the integration of refugees, and the modernization efforts of Yugoslavia in the cities of the border region (Catalan et al., 2007a, 12).

The study is divided into five sections, which engage with the political systems in Zones A and B (on the Communist Party of the Free Territory of Trieste a concise four pages, Verrocchio, 2007), with the military administration in the same setting (methodologically most interesting Rebeschini, 2007; Troha, 2007), culture in the



border region (with several interesting, but similarly succinct essays, most notable Vinci, 2007; Karlsen, 2007), the economy in Zones A and B (here especially illuminating Mellinato, 2007; Panjek, 2007), and migration in the border region (useful here Panjek, 2007a; also Nanut, Pahor, 2007). When the four editors, all of whom are natives of Trieste (three Italians, one Slovene), observe that the dialogue between national historiographies remains difficult to accomplish, there is a notable difference: the Italian historians offer only cursory reference to the historiographies of the neighboring regions, because they do not possess the necessary language skills to engage with such works. The Slovenes, on the other hand, operate more openly – their society in the last twenty years has been an emblem *expressis verbis* of transformation; in much, it would seem, they have outdistanced the Italians. Linguistically, the Slovenes have always been more accomplished; when they predominantly study their own area, it is largely up to the Slovenian research structures and organizations, which assign themes and epochs to recognized researchers. In spite of the traditionally narrow focus on Slovenia and of more recent being rather heavily attuned with the legitimation of the young nation-state, methodological approaches have been opened up and modernised, in particular at the new University of Primorska in Koper. In the meantime, the inability to overcome age-old mental barriers seems in some respects to be an Italian idiosyncrasy.

The Trieste question is the subject of world-political oriented studies on the Cold War (Heinemann, 1998, esp. the chapter »NATO und der abtrünnige Satellit: Triest und die Entstehung des Balkanpaktes«, 11–70; and in parts »NATO und Blockfreiheit: Das Ende des Balkanpakts und Zypern«, 71–126). The ambiguous position of Palmiro Togliatti on the question of the opportune state affiliation of the Julian region and with it, Trieste, inspired controversy in the Italian research until recently (Raito, 2006; Galeazzi, 2005; Gori, Pons, 1998; Aga Rossi, Zaslavsky, 2007; Gualtieri, 1995), and the Slovenian research has also examined the actions of the Communist parties on the Trieste issue.<sup>10</sup> Overall, those studies engaged with the actions of the population in the region have concentrated on the first postwar decade (Troha, 1998; 1999). A monograph has recently appeared in Slovenia on the Tito-Stalin conflict (Režek, 2005; cf. Režek, 2007; Pirjevec, 1990; Gibianskii, 1997). While the history of the Treaty of Osimo is still largely unwritten on the Italian side,<sup>11</sup> on the Slovenian side it was recently discussed, stimulated by the thirtieth anniversary of the event (Pirjevec, Klabin, Bajc, 2006. On the Helsinki Process Pirjevec, 2005). On the Croatian side, the works of Darko Dukovski represent a solid treatment of varied aspects of Istrian postwar history (Dukovski, 2007; 2001; 2003). A five-year project entitled »Authority and

10 While Italian research in this regard remains self-referential, the Slovenians have taken the position of the Italian comrades into account. Cf. Troha, 1993; cf. also Troha, 2008b.

11 There exists an annotated version of the treaty: Udina, 1979; as well as references within general research on Italian foreign policy, Romano, 1993; Gaja, 1995.

Society: The Communist Regime in Croatia 1945–1990« at the Croatian Institute for History in Zagreb has not yet yielded any publications (ISP, 2010).

There exists a literature anchored in social history on the labor union movement in Venezia Giulia (Gobessi, 2001; Sema, 1989; Colummi, 1986; Sema, 1981), on the combination of politics and the economy (Dukovski, 2005; Sapelli, 1990), and on the anti-fascism of the Monfalconese dock workers, which has become a local *lieux de mémoire*, but the communist character of which has never been examined (for the interwar era, cf. Fogar, 1982). On the Slovenian side, Jože Prinčič has studied the Slovenian economic history in socialism (Prinčič, 2008; 2006. Not specifically related to the coastal areas: Prinčič, 1999a; 2005. Cf. Lazarević, 2009); furthermore there is a noteworthy dissertation on the Slovenes' supply of consumer goods in the first postwar decade, most of which entered Slovenia via Trieste (Himmelreich, 2007; cf. Luthar, 2007).

The enormous literature on the theme of workers' self-management, the majority of which is contemporaneous, can be grouped into five categories: 1) the Yugoslav-socialist;<sup>12</sup> 2) the Western and the Serbo-Croatian translated for a Western readership, which until about the mid-1980s demonstrated a great fascination with the model of the social market economy, and subsequently accounted for its crisis symptoms (to mention only some: Horvat, 1972; Pusić, 1972; Lemân, 1973; Hamel, 1974; Zukić, 1975; Drulović, 1976; Stein, 1980; Höpken, 1984; Gumpel, 1988; Bićanić, 1988); 3) the post-Yugoslav, undertaken mostly by Western scholars in the course of the martial process of state dissolution (Woodward, 1995; Samary, 1992; Simmie, 1991; Djeković, 1991); 4) of late, the Slovenian (Fikfak, Prinčič, Turk, 2008; Prinčič, 1999b); 5) the literature that studies the non-Yugoslav models of workers' self-management, in particular in France<sup>13</sup> and Czechoslovakia,<sup>14</sup> and, of late, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in rudimentary terms (Sattler, 2006; Reichel, 1999), as well as, in the form of anthologies, many other countries (Rosenstein, 1969; Mandel, 1971; Nutzinger, 1982). Much of the older research concerned itself with the political-ideological and/or economic contexts and was often solidly embedded in the Cold War East-West framework. Social historical or discursive analytical approaches were rather rare (in the older research, one finds only Soergel, 1979; Eames, 1982).

With regard to contemporary witness testimonies and interviews, two promising initiatives exist on the Italian side, as well as a border-crossing Italian-Slovenian one:

12 A search in the Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian library catalogues under the key words *self-management* and *Yugoslavia (samoupravljanje, Jugoslavija)* returns more than 500 monographs, most of which are of a policy-oriented, economic, or sociological nature.

13 For example, calls were made for workers' self-management in the course of the general strike in France in May 1968, cf. Münster, 1974; Neff, 1983.

14 Dubček's policies included plans for expanded forms of self-management, cf. Borin, 1970; Fišera, 1978; Pernes, 2006.

Since 2006, the Trieste Trade Union Institute »Livio Saranz« has been compiling an Archivio sonoro della Memoria sindacale e del lavoro [Audio Archive of the Memory of Unions and Labor] (Guidi et al., 2008); since the same year an Osservatorio del lavoro transfrontaliero per le aree portuali di Trieste, Monfalcone e Koper/Capodistria [Observatory of Transfrontier Labor for the Ports of Trieste, Monfalcone, and Koper/Capodistria] has been operating, which not least is concerned with the future developments of the three ports. By studying the reflection of self-perceptions of a separate past and a common future (in the EU), it seems to acknowledge that an understanding of the decades of the Cold War is essential to overcome mental borders between peoples. Accordingly, the Osservatorio has concerned itself with the study of the connections in the region from a historical perspective, with the participation of current and former protagonists from the harbors of the three cities.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the Consorzio Culturale del Monfalconese [Cultural Consortium of Monfalcone and its Vicinity] has tasked itself with the compilation of an Archivio della Memoria [Archive of Memory] and has called for »photographs, diaries, letters, memories, texts of all types, private film material, and all other documents, that are typically not encountered in the public archives« from all interested parties to be donated to the archive, in order to tell their piece of history (CCM, 2010).

#### RESEARCH PROSPECT 1: DAILY LIFE, EXPERIENCE, *EIGEN-SINN* AND LABOR IN THE NORTHEASTERN ADRIATIC (1945–1975)

In the multiethnic border region, the national confrontation was inextricably entangled with the political-ideological one. The dock and shipyard workers could look back on a vibrant communist underground movement in interwar Italy. They were simultaneously shaped by two decades of fascism, and by the war. The composition of the workforce was transformed through war casualties and the influx of non-industrial workers' groups, war veterans, refugees, and displaced persons. Neither labor history nor economic history have yet tied the construction of a »new order« of industrial relations closely to the issue of the political integration of the workforce in the respective social system. Till Kössler has used the example of the Communist movement in the Ruhr after 1945 to observe an increasing »integration of the workforce in the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany« (Kössler, 2006). Was there an analogous development in the postwar Italian Republic, which referred to anti-fascism as its founding myth?<sup>16</sup> What differences were there with respect to this integration between center and periphery? How did workers on both

15 Cf. the conference of February 2008, where the contributions addressed the history of the ports of Trieste, Monfalcone and Koper, leading to a roundtable on the theme »Three Ports, Two States, One Market« (INTERREG-IT-SI, 2010).

16 Cf., for several preliminary insights in regard, Bermani, 2003.

sides of the border position themselves in relation to the antagonism between Stalinist-Italian and Titoist-Yugoslav Communism? How was this enmity reflected in the milieus of dock and shipyard workers on both sides of the border? Were there unique Slovenian or Croatian characteristics? What was the collective Yugoslav disposition? How did the integration of the workforce in the workplace milieus and in the political system occur in the process of inner state formation? What role did the ideological struggle between East and West play?

A comparative microstudy of labor milieus in everyday life on either side of the border between the Eastern and Western systems that takes the workplace as a realm of social activity seriously and connects the change in internal worker relations with the general transformative processes in the Italian and Yugoslav societies possesses great potential for methodological innovation. The problems of writing a contemporary history of the Italian-Yugoslav border region resembles, if not in structure, then in substance, the absence of a »comprehensive account of common German history after 1945,« particularly the lack of a »theoretical approach that could place dictatorship and democracy into a relationship with one another« (Jarausch, 2004, 2). The layers complicating the writing of such a history of the Italian-Yugoslav border area are even more intricate, however, given the multiethnic composition of the region.

This essay aims at offering a corrective to this methodological-theoretical gap by envisioning a social history of communism that is informed by cultural history, while also renewing interest in currently-unfashionable labor history, particularly in the formerly state-socialist countries. There exists a »glaring discrepancy between the political role assignments of the 'working classes' in the socialist planned economies (and more broadly in the real-existing state socialist countries) and the knowledge about their social-historical dimensions« (Tenfelde 2005, 17).<sup>17</sup> Methodological references include Till Kössler's dissertation (Kössler, 2005), but also the investigation of early German Social Democracy by Thomas Welskopp (Welskopp, 2000; cf. Welskopp, 1996; Roth, 2006), as well as my own study of the Social Democratic cultural movement in Habsburg Trieste (Rutar, 2004a). Above all, three concepts appear to animate inquiries on this subject: *Eigen-Sinn* and *authority as a social practice* in the meaning offered by Alf Lüdtke and Thomas Lindenberger (Lüdtke, 1993; 1991; Lindenberger, 1999; Davis, Lindenberger, Wildt, 2008), as well as Heiko Haumann's definition of *life worlds* as the result of »interaction between structures and individual thoughts and actions,« which unfold against the backdrop of socioeconomic and sociopolitical contexts (Haumann, 2003, 106; cf. Haumann, 2006).

*Authority as a social practice* constitutes itself in a complex sphere of influence: the relationships inside a social group, thus forms of communication, solidarity, competition, power, work, and cooperation fall under this rubric, but also simultaneous

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17 The case of Yugoslavia remains undealt with in this volume.

with the power, market, labor, and social relations among differing social groups. The gateway to this analysis of structures that become manifest through the actions of individuals is the search for possibilities of action (*Eigen-Sinn*) within social systems, communication networks, and relationships of power. At the foundation of these two concepts, as well as that of *life worlds*, lie the constitutive factors, in the Weberian sense, for the creation of social reality – collective interpretive schemes that become forms of thought, mentalities, and mindsets of individuals and groups (Weber, 1973, 180f.).

The comparative analysis of dock and shipyard workers should make (labor's) daily life apparent as a »code for a complex perspective,« as »an entire cluster of elaborated, theoretical, and methodological approaches,« whose common denominator »remains the critique of concepts of social order by and large, of master narratives, whose claim to be able to systemize history is called into question.« The respective master narratives (whether national or ideological in nature) stand in contrast to the diverse horizons of experience and the actions of individuals, which could be totally at odds with them. In most cases, however, individuals revise, alter, or selectively perceive the master narrative – if at all. *Eigen-Sinn* stands for »the contemporaneity of possibilities for action: participation, consent, avoidance, retreat, coping, solidarity, allowance, dissociation, refusing aid, resistance« (Davis, Lindenberger, Wildt, 2008, 17).

The negotiations of sociopolitical and sociocultural processes of constructing meaning among the different Communist groupings in the Italian-Yugoslav border region and their impact on the workforce, the transformation of the bases of legitimation of those who were constitutive participants in the establishment of political milieus, and how they related to the central parties in their respective countries as well as to changes in international politics have as yet remained unexplored. The existing research on Communism is – as in most other European countries – largely disconnected from such a cultural history of the political (Stollberg-Rilinger, 2005; methodologically important in this context is Wydra, 2007). The Italian purveyors of *microstoria* following the path cleared by Carlo Ginzburg have not yet engaged with the contemporary history of Italy's eastern border (of the most interest are Verrocchio 2004; Toninelli, Vinci, Mellinato, 2004; Valdevit, 1986; Tonel, 1985; 1983). Such efforts have increased recently in Slovenia, particularly since the founding of the University of Primorska in Koper in 2003, which alludes to a paradigm change toward a social and political history that is informed by cultural history. In October 2008, in cooperation with the research project »Social Dictatorship as a World of Meaning« (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung / Center for Contemporary History, Potsdam and Institute of Contemporary History, Prague), a conference was held at the Faculty of Humanities entitled »Modern Dictatorship as Practice and Experience: New Approaches in the Study of Authoritarian Regimes in Central and Southeastern Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup>

Century« (Sinnwelt, 2010b). This thematic volume of *Acta Histriae* also points in the same direction.

The above-mentioned project, »Social Dictatorship as a World of Meaning: Representations of Social Order and Regime Change in East-Central Europe in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century« (Sinnwelt, 2010a), which has been undertaken since September 2007 by the Prague Institute of Contemporary History and the Potsdam Center for Contemporary History is instrumental as a direct methodological point of contact. »The mechanisms for the establishment, reproduction, and dissolution of communist authority in East-Central Europe from a cultural historical and comparative perspective« (Sinnwelt, 2010a, Detailed Description of Project) would also be valid objects of study for the northeastern Adriatic, in order to make apparent the discursive – rather than a priori – the political contextualizations of social order, legitimation strategies and patterns of allegiance in a multiethnic border zone where the rival ideologies of the Cold War converged. A key concept is *allegiance*, on the one hand a »structural-functional category«, serving as a »cement« or »bond« between differing authority-wielding and authority-subjected social groups; on the other hand, *allegiance* is a »discursive category«, serving in the construction and articulation of horizons of expectation and perception, representations, worlds of meaning, and competitions of interpretation, a concept that contributes to understanding communicative interaction in the creation of relationships among social groups. Both categories are to be understood as gradual and process-like with certain events, structural crises, and changing political constellations playing a decisive role in changing patterns of allegiance (Haslinger, 2008). The »set of diverse 'motives of compliance' of the people that make authority possible« (Sinnwelt, 2010a, Detailed Description of Project) should be diversified here through the connection between East (Yugoslavia) and West (Italy); thus, authority should not be understood only as a synonym of dictatorship. Generally, the reference is the Weberian dialectic between an established network of social relationships between rulers and the ruled, between those who exercise authority and those who submit to it (some thoughts in this regard in Pirjevec, 2007a).

#### RESEARCH PROSPECT 2: THE YUGOSLAV MODEL OF SELF-MANAGEMENT BETWEEN THE BLOCS, OR: THE QUEST FOR A »GOOD SOCIETY« (1950–1975)

The Yugoslav workers' self-management as a model social market economy – as a »Third Way« – is relevant throughout Europe, insofar as it absorbed the attention of both Western and other state-socialist societies and was even called for in some places, if not directly imitated. The chance to historicize this economic model beyond premises defined by political-ideological objectives has not yet been seized. Over the last two decades, Yugoslavia stood for different topics. The concentration on nationalism

and state dissolution has had a direct impact on the writing of contemporary history. The few existing works focus on the immediate postwar years, on the repressive aspects of Stalinist Yugoslavia and on the Cominform Conflict. Little work has been done on the period between these events and 1980. The decade before the outbreak of the Yugoslav War was viewed, nearly without exception, from the perspective of a search for the reasons for the breakup of the state. Titoist Yugoslavia is often characterized as a state imposed from above, as a false path in the history of the separate nations that was only maintained through the use of violence (Brunnbauer, 2007a, 97f.).<sup>18</sup>

It seems valid, then, to pose new questions regarding a theme that has lain idle for twenty years. Articulations on self-management, on basic political concepts such as *justice, equality, solidarity*, and, more broadly, the search for a *good society* can be semantically located in the workplace milieus on both sides of the border.<sup>19</sup> Those studies on the Cold War that argue in terms of a historicization of Western political semantics informed by cultural history serve as a model, especially in reference to *freedom* and *democracy*.<sup>20</sup> A renewed comparative sociocultural history of the Cold War would focus on as-yet unstudied discursive concepts, seen recently, for example, in the work of the Italian historian Valentine Lomellini on the effects of the crises of Communism, above all the Prague Spring, on the ideological self-definition of the PCI (Lomellini, 2008; 2009a; 2009b). Also useful in this context are various works of the Slovenian sociologist Sabina Mihelj concerning the memory of the Cold War in the border region.<sup>21</sup>

18 This is all the more astonishing given that for several of the Yugoslav constituent peoples – Bosniaks, Montenegrins, Macedonians – socialism was also constitutive of the nation. Cf. the project »New and Ambiguous Nation-Building Processes in South-Eastern Europe« at the Osteuropa-Institut of the Free University, Berlin (FU, 2010). On the weak institutionalization of contemporary history in the post-Yugoslav states, cf. Petrungaro, 2008a; cf. also Petrungaro, 2008b.

19 For example, the first director of the port of Koper, Danilo Petrinja (deceased 2002), wrote extensive autobiographic accounts in the last years of his life, cf. Petrinja, 2001; 1999; in the interwar period, Petrinja belonged to the first European anti-fascist underground organization, TIGR (an acronym for Trst, Istra, Gorica, Rijeka); during the war he was a partisan, and following the war he became the first director of the Koper Port. Cf. Rebeschini, 2008.

20 For example, Kuznick, Gilbert, 2001; Major, Mitter, 2003, which particularly notes the lack of regionally-oriented studies on the Western Bloc (5). For Italy cf. Duggan, Wagstaff, 1995.

21 Drawing the East-West Border: Narratives of Modernity and Identity in the Julian Region, 1947–1954. In: Lindenberger, T. et al. (eds.): European Cold War Cultures: Societies, Media, and Cold War Experiences in East and West. Oxford, Berghahn (in print); Imperial Myths between Nationalism and Communism: Appropriations of Imperial Legacies in the North-eastern Adriatic during the Early Cold War, 1947–1954. European Historical Quarterly, 41, 2 (forthcoming 2011); Nationalism and the Cold War at the Italo-Yugoslav Border, 1947–1954 (in preparation); Mediating Culture at the Crossroads of East and West: Uplifting the Working People, Entertaining the Masses, Cultivating the Nation (in preparation); and (together with M. Rebeschini): Remembering the Cold War at the Italo-Slovenian Border: Narratives of Progress and Decline (in preparation).

The focus of the study envisaged here falls on those historical moments in which a strengthened thematization of the above-designated topoi is to be expected: the establishment of the Yugoslav self-management economy in 1950, economic crises and strikes, but also the key dates in the history of European Communism. Especially the events of 1953, 1956, and 1968, as well as the stepping stones of *Eurocommunism*,<sup>22</sup> can be assumed to have produced commentaries on the desired configuration of society – and of Yugoslav society in particular. The central thesis in this search for »big politics« in local sources on either side of the Iron Curtain is the following: It was the Left critique of real socialism that had more of a hand in undermining the state-socialist system than bourgeois-liberal or conservative anti-Communism. The crisis of the Yugoslav »Third Way« culminated in the Croatian Spring of 1971 and the Constitution of 1974, as well as the simultaneous economic decline. On the other side, the Italian Communists from 1973 signaled their final willingness to act as participants in the political establishment of the Italian Republic with the offer of the so-called *compromesso storico*. Not least, the study prospected here points to Communism's ongoing decline both of efficiency and of the power to be creative at a crossroads between East and West.

#### CONCLUSION: TOWARD A RENEWED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The Yugoslav »Third Way« and the strong Italian Communism – with the PCI as the largest non-ruling Communist party in Europe – offer the opportunity to compare Communism in the northeastern Adriatic with other Western European societies (in particular, but not exclusively, France). It also contains the potential for an opening in the direction of Southeastern Europe, where it can enhance the understanding of four, in terms of social history, widely understudied varieties of Communism: the Albanian self-isolation; the failure of the Communists to seize power in Greece, mostly due to shifting alliances and the actions of the superpowers; National Communism in Romania, which conformed only partially to the Soviet system; and the comparatively unspectacular and dogmatic Bulgarian regime.<sup>23</sup>

As demonstrated, the above-mentioned methodological model offered by research on the GDR and East-Central Europe in the areas of institutional, social, and cultural

22 Relevant to West-European communism are Kössler, 2005; Kroll, 2007. Inspiring proves to be Bartolini, 2000. Also interesting is a collection of essays concerning the concept of a »Third Way« during the Cold War: Geppert, Wengst, 2005, therein: Rajak, 2005.

23 Especially interesting in this context is the statement of the Federal Delegate regarding the documents of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Marianne Birthler, on the occasion of the founding of a »European Network of Agencies Responsible for Secret Police Files.« She expressed hope that Slovenia and the Baltic countries would be admitted as their next members, cf. DW-World, 2008; BStU Pressemitteilung, 2008. The core study on Bulgaria is Brunnbauer, 2007b; on the process of rehabilitation in Romania, cf. Müller, 2007; Bottoni, 2008.



histories, as well as the history of everyday life, can be profitably applied to the study of labor movements and communism in the Italian-Yugoslav border region. On the other hand, the latter will equally be able also to enhance the former. The discussion of the Achilles' heel of GDR research, namely its far-reaching isolation and self-referentiality, is by now a decade old (Middell, 2000, 30–31) and has caused a marked adjustment in research parameters and outlooks. Since Jürgen Kocka's call in 2003 to strive for »the comparison of the GDR with other Communist dictatorships in East-Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe« (Kocka, 2003, 6) there has been a development towards a more comparative perspective in GDR research (cf. Lindenberger, Sabrow, 2003; Meckel, 2006). This development has occurred in the direction of East-Central Europe, in particular Czechoslovakia and Poland, and now seems to have reached a point where an enlargement or yet another shift in focus is on display – both Southeastern Europe and the West beyond Germany bear substantial gaps in the research.<sup>24</sup> The Italian-Yugoslav border region, as one of the most complex regions in contemporary European history can provide inspiration in both directions.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to Sabina Mihelj for providing me with the manuscripts or proofs of her texts.

DELO IN KOMUNIZEM V JUGOSLAVIJI IN ITALIJI.  
TRST IN SEVEROVZHODNI JADRAN MED HLADNO VOJNO (1945–1975).  
PRISPEVEK K POSODOBITVI ZGODOVINE DELA

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#### POVZETEK

*Članek nakazuje možne smeri raziskovanja v sklopu zgodovine dela, področja, ki je ostalo v toku preteklih dveh desetletij povsem nedotaknjeno. Članek na značilnem*

<sup>24</sup> The most far-reaching comparative research project on southeast European variants of state socialism is »Remembering Communism: Methodological and Practical Issues of Approaching the Recent Past in Eastern Europe« (directed by Maria Todorova and Stefan Troebst), a Romanian-Bulgarian comparative study. Over the course of its development, the project has moved away from a narrow focus on memory research and toward a heavier emphasis on social and cultural history, cf. the project's conference of September 2008 in Sofia, »Remembering Communism. New Approaches to the Memory and History of Communism. Bulgaria and Romania in Comparison« (Remembering communism, 2010). The project relates specifically to the existing scholarship on the German Democratic Republic and Poland, cf. Troebst, 2006.

*primeru severovzhodnega Jadrana, bolj specifično na pristaniških mestih Trst, Tržič, Koper in Reka, orisuje potencialne metodoloških inovacij. Avtorica izpostavlja dobrobit pisanja o zgodovini komunizma kot družbeni in kulturni zgodovini, ki se kot zgodovina osredotoča tako na izkušnjo kot analizo diskurza. V smislu izkušnje se osredotoča na ustroj delavske sredine pristanišč in skladišč v omenjenih mestih. Vsa štiri mesta so bila po letu 1945 multietnična, dve sta se nahajali v Italiji – torej na Zahodni hemisferi – dve pa v Jugoslaviji – torej sta pripadali komunističnemu območju Vzhodne Evrope. Potenciali analize diskurza so prikazani skozi temo jugoslovanskega samoupravljanja – titoistični gospodarski model se je izkazal za fascinantnega tako za ostale komunistične države kot za levico na Zahodu. Tako obravnavana tema ponuja povezavo med raziskovanjem komunističnih gibanj na Zahodu in komunističnih oblasti v socialističnih državah.*

*Ključne besede: komunizem, zgodovina dela, sodobna zgodovina, severovzhodni Jadran, pristaniška mesta, delavske sredine, metodologija, izkušnja, analiza diskurza, jugoslovansko samoupravljanje*

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