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**TRANSFRONTIER REGIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN
AUSTRIA, ITALY, YUGOSLAVIA
AND HUNGARY – A STARTING POINT FOR PAN-EUROPEAN
EAST-WEST REGIONAL CONTACTS AND EXCHANGE***

Regionalism – as a theoretical concept dealing with life values and developmental issues within a given geographical area, as well as its practical applications in Europe – has different dimensions.

It is most often considered from the point of view of pinpointing and analysing economic problems, space planning, ethnic, cultural and linguistic issues, and a number of similar problems in the development of an area and of the population that lives there and frequently identifies with it. It can be considered also from the point of view of settling the relationships within one country, which necessarily brings us to the question of the political system, decentralisation of power, relations between the central government and local or regional authorities. The experts also deal with the aspect of regionalism that concerns the cooperation between the borderland regions that are linked by historical, economic, infrastructural, ethnic and cultural ties. Most frequently the state border, determined by wider political and international events, has severed natural ties; therefore the transfrontier regional cooperation is one of the most relevant ways to mitigate the consequences of the separation of common vital interests of the populations of individual regions.

Quite frequently, the transfrontier regional cooperation is also the best reply to the present-day developmental needs of a given geographical region for which the remote mechanisms of central bureaucracy are unable find – in their global foreign policy – the right solutions due either to the lack of creative drive or due to the fact that problem-solving in today's world requires direct creative participation of the populations whose vital interests are affected by these solutions.

Pan-European dimension

There is, however, another important dimension of regionalism which has been dealt with scantily in the literature, viz. the impact of transfrontier regional cooperation on the relations between the European countries and

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on peace and security in Europe in general, and especially on the relations between European East and West. When speaking about Europe, we, in fact, often tend to forget about the socialist countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Regardless of the question to what extent the principles of regionalism – which have emerged during the last twenty years and in certain parts of western Europe also got implemented – can be asserted today on the all-European level, it is necessary, at least in a theoretical analysis of regionalism, to cover Europe as a whole.

One of such questions concerns the possible impact of the transfrontier regional cooperation on the complex East-West relations in Europe, and especially on the relations between those countries that are members of different politico-military blocs. Positive solutions to these problems might also create a convenient political basis for finding a way to general détente in Europe.

The historical experiences show that the global political climate in any two countries can often be improved much more by everyday contacts between ordinary people that live on the borderland and by settling their common life problems, than by the high-sounding political declarations of statesmen, which, unfortunately, do not always derive from realistic analyses of the actual state of affairs. It would be unrealistic, of course, to expect in the present-day European political circumstances changes in strategic decisions and reorientations of central systems to be carried out solely by supporting the idea of regionalism and transfrontier regional cooperation. Both poles of this global situation in the international relations are interrelated and therefore have to be analysed together if we are to identify their interconnecting elements and points of division.

In view of this fact, we are convinced that the growth of the idea of regionalism and transfrontier East-West cooperation in Europe will, if not change, at least politically stimulate new efforts at reestablishing the global strategic balance between the two blocs in Europe. The already developed transfrontier cooperation will sprout deeper roots in the soil of borderland communities that will not be easy to eradicate owing to the needs of global international policy of any given country or system as a whole.

Transfrontier regional cooperation figures in all the »baskets« of the Helsinki Final Act adopted at the conclusion of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in 1975, although it is not explicitly mentioned. As we have already mentioned, transfrontier cooperation creates security and fosters a climate conducive to general cooperation, which is the contents of the first »basket«. There is no need to prove that the promotion of transfrontier regional cooperation is a very good way to implement the recommendations of the second »basket« which covers the cooperation in the fields of economy, science, technology, protection of the environment, trade, industry, projects of joint interest, tourism, and the solving of social and other problems of migrant workers.

The contents of the third »basket« – the cooperation in humanitarianism and similar fields – has by now already become one of the basic guidelines in the program of the regional communities in Europe. Contacts between people, cooperation in the field of information and culture, cooperation and exchange in education etc., all appear in the recommendations of the third Helsinki »basket«. However, they acquire their true meaning and vital importance especially if considered from the viewpoint of deepening the contacts and cooperation between the people that live close to each other but are artificially separated from each other by state borders.

This, of course, does not at all mean that we are trying to diminish the far-reaching importance of these recommendations for the reconciliation of the European nations and cultures in general. The implementation of the Helsinki recommendations will require the elimination not only of regional, but state-political and other obstacles hampering man's creativity and civilisation. Culture cannot simply go hand in hand with borders and limitations since it is inherently universal, global and owned by all mankind. Therefore it can perform its panhuman function of opening new perspectives and giving mankind a meaningful existence only under the conditions of total and universal orientation to planetary issues of Man and not to the issues invented by »care-takers« of man's thought and creativity, who try to implant them in everyday practice in different systems of political and economic power.

Regional co-operation in the heart of Europe

In the following section we shall examine two important forms of implementing transfrontier regional co-operation between Austria, Hungary, Italy and (to some extent) Federal Republic of Germany. The first form is the so-called Working Community of Alpe-Adria, (Alps-Adriatic), and the second consists of cultural-history meetings known as »Mogersdorf's meetings«, named after the Austrian town where these meetings were first organized.

The Alps – Adriatic romance and reality

The »Working Community of Regions (**Länder, regioni** and republicos) of the Eastern Alps« was founded in Venice on 20 November 1978.

The members of this community are the following regions – In Italy: Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia; in Yugoslavia: Socialist Republic of Slovenia and Socialist Republic of Croatia; in Austria: the states of Carinthia, Styria and Upper Austria. The states of Salzburg and Bavaria and the region of Lombardy have the observer status. The Hungarian districts of Vas and Zala have also shown interest in the community.

Compatible variety

In the field of economy, specific features of these regions should be mentioned as regards their economic systems and their integration into international politico-economic communities and associations.¹

There are also great differences among these regions as regards the competences and authority that they have within the political and constitutional systems of the countries they belong to.²

We should not, of course, simply forget the history of these countries which formed until the First World War (except Bavaria) part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. More or less sentimental feelings of varying intensity, towards this common past are present in these regions. People from these

¹ The economies of Italy and Austria are based, as is well-known, on the free market and privately-owned means of production. (However, we should not forget the great economic potential in the hands of the state.) The Yugoslav economy, on the other hand, is characterized by social (and not state!) ownership of means of production (private property also exists) and socialist selfmanagement of workers as a system of management of economy, controlled market, social planning carried out directly by subjects of social and economic development (from the bottom upwards). The Yugoslav enterprises all have the possibility of trading abroad directly and on their own behalf in all the fields, of international cooperation as well as of setting up their own enterprises abroad. The Hungarian economy is based on state-owned means of production. The planning is in the hands of the state which also determines all the other basic lines in economy. However, we should bear in mind that new forms of management and planning have been introduced there. Workers have a greater participatory share in the management of enterprises. Planning is done with considerable participation of basic economic cells. Personal initiative in economy is increasing and market laws are being gradually introduced as a means of evaluating good working results of individual enterprises.

Considered from the international point of view Italy is a member of the E.E.C., Austria is a member of the E.F.T.A, Hungary of the COMECON. Yugoslavia has special agreements with the E.E.C. and the COMECON and has developed economic ties with the EFTA countries.

² According to the Yugoslav federal system SR Slovenia and SR Croatia are federal units with a status of a state that are vested with important powers regarding decision-making in all social matters that are relevant to their development. However, certain domains are left to the authority of the federal government, such as the foreign policy, the basic rules of economic system, financial affairs, foreign trade and foreign currency system, national defense, etc. These questions are also dealt with by the bodies of the Federation in cooperation with the socialist republics and provinces which make up the Yugoslav federation. On the other hand, the Hungarian districts have, in the context of a centralized country, very limited possibilities of independent decision-making in matters concerning their development, especially so in the field of transfrontier regional cooperation. The regional identity of the population in an Austrian land is quite strong and is reflected in historical tradition as well as in considerable constitutional powers. However, in our opinion the fundamental matters are decided by the federal bodies in power or in political centres that are in power. The same holds true for the two Italian regions that have the status of regions with special statutes. Nevertheless, these two regions, viz. Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Trentino-Alto Adige, have a more favourable position in relations to central power than the regions that do not enjoy this status, for example Veneto and Lombardy. A special case is the Free State of Bavaria which has, according to the West-German constitutional law, important powers in both internal affairs and foreign affairs: it makes contact independently and may conclude even certain international treaties as well as establish its own diplomatic relations with foreign countries.

regions view this question differently. Those circles from Trieste who are unhappy with the present, for instance, remember with nostalgic bitterness the splendid times when the port of Trieste was one of the most important seaways on the way to the great world. This brought the economic flourishing to the city and well-being to the population. The Slovene and Croatian nations, on the other hand, were repressed in their national ambitions by the monarchy that imposed restrictions on their political, ethnic and cultural development. For certain Austrian circles the memories of monarchy are not unpleasant, for those were the times when tiny Austria was the centre of events on a world-wide scale and controlled the affairs in the Balkans, part of the Italian peninsula, and in the east of the Mediterranean as well. For certain Hungarians, this was a period in history when, at least in their opinion, Hungary was deciding, after 1867, on a par with others, about matters concerning the great empire. Thanks to such a position Hungary itself asserted its own (often imperialistic) interests in dealing with its neighbouring nations and countries.

In our opinion, the foregoing vestiges of the past do not have an essential impact on present-day choices and decisions. However, the ideas that seemingly derive from the common historical interlinkage of this geographic region, are still felt. Let us just mention the idea of Mittel Europa which has arisen (outside Austria) especially in Italian borderland regions, and the idea about the cooperation of the Danube lowland countries, which is (again outside Austria) in the Hungarian literature present much more prominently than the transfrontier regional cooperation. Undoubtedly several centuries of common life of the people of these regions within one single state imprinted the consciousness of the people with certain ideas that cannot be neglected for the mere reason that today they are not in accordance with the ideological and political choices of the countries in question. But it would be totally unrealistic to use this as a basis for the contemporary transfrontier regional cooperation of these countries. To exaggerate in emphasizing the common past would deepen rather than diminish the differences between peoples and nations, for it would open the wounds that have not yet healed and rekindle the prejudices that are still present in the people's minds.

The meeting point of ethnic groups and cultures

In dealing with problems of regionalism, geographic factors, economic structures, infrastructural ties and similar questions are regularly treated in depth, but the most important factor – the people – is often neglected. Peoples, nations, ethnic minorities, their cultures, traditions, customs, languages and other expressions of man's essence determine a certain civilisation and give sense to both man's existence as an individual and to his community.

The regions of the Alps-Adria community together with Bavaria have, 35 million inhabitants, or about 35.5 million, if the Hungarian districts of Vas and Zala are included. Bavaria is the largest of them – 11 million people, and the smallest is Salzburg (a little less than 500,000 people). Veneto in Italy has the greatest population density, with 235.2 people per square kilometre, while Carinthia in Austria has the lowest density of population with 56.4 people per square kilometre.

In the region delimited by the Alps, the Adriatic Sea and the Pannonian Plain several European cultures meet: Romance (Italian), German (Austrian), South Slavonic (more precisely Slovenian and Croatian) and Hungarian. Other minor cultures arose here that find their spiritual power in the traditions of the individual geographical zones (for example, the Venetian regional culture and language) or in the ethnic roots of the populations living in this region (for example Friulian culture, the existence of which has been disputed).

This geographical zone is populated by many national or ethnic minorities.³ The national and ethnic minorities are interlinked in these regions but state borders have separated parts of nations that now live as minorities in the neighbouring countries. Some ethnic communities do not have their »matrix-nation« but are in a very true sense of the word autochthonous in both cultural and ethnic respects (Friulians and Ladinians).

³ We shall briefly discuss the national minorities which live in the Alps-Adria Community, in the Austrian state of Burgenland and in the Hungarian border districts of Vas and Zala. The Italian region of Trentino-Alto Adige, which has a special autonomous status, has a total population of 433,215 inhabitants, out of which number more than 250,000 are members of German national minority – mostly from the Bolzano province. Besides the Italian majority and German minority, there are in this region 15,456 Ladinians (1971 census), who are scattered over the Dolomites (it is supposed that the total number of Ladinians who live in Italy is about 30,000–35,000). The Ladin language like Friulian and Romansh belongs to the Rhaeto-Romanic family of languages. In Friuli-Venezia Giulia nearly one half of the population (600,000) speaks the Friulian language. However, much fewer are those who are aware of their Friulian ethnic identity and who consider themselves part of the Friulian culture, which has been pushed to the rear by Italian culture. In this region live about 140,000 members of the Slovenian national minority: 65,000 in Trieste province, 20,000 in Gorizia and 40,000 in Udine. All the three provinces border on SR Slovenia, Yugoslavia, where the Slovenian matrix-nation numbers 1,712,445 people (according to the 1981 census) within their state community which is part of Yugoslavia. In Friuli-Venezia Giulia, there is also a smaller German ethnic minority as well as people who use the Venetian dialect as their everyday language. There are some other minor ethnic and linguistic minorities which will not be treated in this paper.

In the SR of Slovenia there are 10,000 Hungarians who have, according to the Yugoslav constitutional system, the status of nationality. They live in the two communes that border Hungary, namely Lendava and Murska Sobota. In Slovenia there are also 3,000 Italians; this nationality resides in three communes, viz. Koper, Izola and Piran, on the Italian border.

Tu SR of Croatia is populated, besides the majority population of Croats and Serbs, by the following national minorities (nationalities): Hungarians (25,439), Czechs (19,001), Slovaks (6,533), Ruthenians (3,321) and Italians (11,661).

It is estimated that there are in the Austrian State of Carinthia 45,000–60,000 Slovenes; however, in the 1971 census only 22,000 members of the Slovenian national minority were

The existence of numerous ethnic minorities that live in this area together with majority nations, exerts so many diverse influences on regionalism and transfrontier regional cooperation that in the future a more detailed study of this phenomenon will be needed. In this part of Europe the unsettled status of the issue of national identity has often been a proof of the assimilatory policy, or even of attempts at genocide.

The historical experiences have, certainly, retained a considerable impact on the psychological and political evaluation of certain matters, by the minority or majority, which bear on the rights of national minorities. The members of the minorities cannot, for instance, simply forget all the psychological traumas and hardships that were in the past caused by the assimilatory policy of the majority nations with which they shared the same country. These feelings of the minorities are, of course, justified since they are likely to encounter even today aggressive nationalism and chauvinism in their struggle for human rights and especially minority rights.

There are great differences, for example, in the constitutional and legal status of national minorities in the above-mentioned areas. While in the SR Slovenia and SR Croatia the minorities are constitutive parts of these two republics regarded as state and self-managing communities, the Slovenes in Italy still struggle to make the state adopt the law which would regulate their status and rights – which, after all, is also the international-legal obligation of Italy, stipulated in the Osimo Treaty of 1977. The Friulians are not entirely recognized by the Italian Constitution either ethnically or culturally and linguistically as a distinct community. Only recently has Italy started to think of adopting a law that would lay down the rights of all the minorities living there, including the Friulian one.

The national minorities which live in the above-mentioned areas have many other problems too, but it is encouraging to note that the last decade has witnessed the strengthening of those political and cultural circles that support the change of all such legal, political, psychological and other cir-

counted. The results of the census were rejected, on good grounds, by the minority. In the same census 3,169 Slovenes, 1,074 Croats and 1,028 Hungarians were counted in Styria out of a total population of 1,184,175. It should be emphasized that the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 (Article 7) provides for protective measures only for members of the Slovenian national minority in the state of Styria.

The Austrian state of Burgenland has a population of 272,119. It is estimated that the Croat minority numbers about 40,000 people. In the 1951 census 34,338 Croats were »counted«, and in 1971 only 24,526. Besides, 5,673 Hungarians live there (most of the others live in Vienna).

The Hungarian border district (county) Vas Megye has a population of 283,000; of these 2,000 are German, 4,000 Croat and 4,000 Slovene. In the Zala Megye district (county) the total population is 267,000 and the Croat minority totals 6,000 people.

The other regions referred to (Bavaria, Salzburg, Upper Austria, Veneto) are ethnically more or less homogeneous; however, there are advocates of a special Venetian culture and language, and supporters of three cultures and linguistic communities that live in Bavaria.

cumstances as impede the many-sided development of national minorities on terms of equality. The number of advocates of the participation of minority culture achievements in the transfrontier regional cooperation is likewise on the increase.

In this regard the experiences of the Slovenian nation in developing linguistic and cultural ties with the Slovenian minorities across our borders (in Austria, Italy and Hungary) are interesting also from a broader European perspective. In the last 15 years the Slovenes have developed a comprehensive national/ethnic development programme called »Cooperation in the unified Slovenian cultural space«. The essence of this approach to the national issue lies in the premise that state borders, which must be strictly respected, do not represent an obstacle to the cultural and linguistic development of national minorities that the borders »cut off« from their matrix-nations, provided that a wholehearted cooperation develops on the borderland, allowing for smooth mutual contacts and cooperation between cultural and other institutions of the nations in question. The implementation of this idea, of course, necessitates open borders, democratic political atmosphere in the countries where minorities live, a climate of mutual confidence and friendship between the countries concerned, and finally the existence of a clearcut cultural programme of the matrix-nation. We believe that such a conception of national development, valid at least for those minorities of Europe that have their matrix-nations, can be challenging and that it might encourage the study of the relation between the idea of regionalism/transfrontier regional cooperation and the question of national minorities and regional cultures in Europe. In the context of openness and cooperation the issues of state borders and their alteration for ethnic reasons, or in the wake of self-determination in the sense of secession, become meaningless. Such an approach to solving the minority (and in some cases national or ethnic) question can contribute to the consolidation of pan-European security and peace and to the expansion of pan-European cooperation.

A busy »working community«

The Alps-Adria community organizes meetings of presidents of regional governments and other high officials, but most of the work is done in six working commissions, each in charge of cooperation in a specific field of activity (space planning, transport, culture, economy, agriculture and forestry, health care).⁴ Many working teams have been established in the fra-

⁴ As far as space planning is concerned in the Alps-Adria regions, a comprehensive report has been prepared that will provide a basis for future cooperation in this field. A similar report on the protection of the environment is now in preparation. There has been a symposium held on this topic that highlighted the protection of forests (acid rain). There are also propo-

mework of the commissions dealing with specific issues of common interest (for instance, ethnic minorities and information).

Fair criticism

Finally we should like to express a few critical thoughts about the cooperation in the Alps-Adria Community. The first results are favourable and convincing; we do need such a community and its expansion in the future, since this is in the interest of the people from these regions. Like in other cases of international cooperation, there is a danger that these meetings might turn into »tourist trips« which cannot contribute sufficiently to the needed working atmosphere in which problems of the populations concerned can be discussed.

There exists also the danger of bureaucratising the activity of the community, a phenomenon which increasingly impedes cooperation and integration also on a broader international level. It seems that most of the cooperation in the Alps-Adria Community is performed at the level of administrative bodies and institutions. These can well be very important links in establishing interconnections between organizations and institutions in

sals to study the problems of pollution of the Adriatic Sea, and to initiate a cooperation of regions aiming to protect the population against natural disasters.

In the field of transport a presentation of the potential of the north-Adriatic seaports (Rijeka, Trieste and Venice) was organised in Munich. The presentation will be organized also in other cities which gravitate to these ports. A list of proposals for future cooperation was drawn up: a plan for priority transport routes, introduction of regional air-traffic between the countries of the Alps-Adria regions, elimination of the existing customs, legal and other obstacles at border crossings, coordination of regulations for the flyover of sport aeroplanes, etc.

In the field of culture and scholarships for study, the regions have prepared regulations on scholarships and grants for research personnel. The first scholarships for studies at various universities of the Alps-Adria regions will be granted this year. Another good idea is the »culture card« which allows the holder to visit cultural events and institutions under favorable conditions. Earlier this year a »summit« meeting was held on the islands of Brioni in Yugoslavia where it was agreed that also in future common festivals in the fields of music, fine arts, drama and sports would be encouraged. The publication of a monograph on the cultural centres of these countries has also been envisaged, and a questionnaire is projected on the national minorities that live in the area of the community; on this basis a special working group is preparing a common report.

Cooperation in the field of economy is also quite advanced. Besides the already established cooperation between the Chambers of Commerce, direct cooperation between businessmen and banks, and in the fields of tourist advertising and energy (mutual supply in case of need) will be promoted. A symposium on joint ventures and production cooperation will be organized and a map of tourist routes will be prepared.

In the field of agriculture and forestry the experts from the Alps-Adria countries will study the socio-economic problems in this branch of economy. They will also exchange information on schooling systems for the training of personnel in agriculture and forestry, and prepare a joint research study on veterinary practice.

The health commission has an extensive program covering such sensitive human problems as alcoholism, drug addiction, epidemiologic situation, thermal cures, etc.

specific domains of cooperation. The problems emerge when the administration fails to see the wider perspectives of regional cooperation. In such a case contact or cooperation between administrative organs may easily become end to itself. The results of such agreements are usually not accepted by people as their own, because they do not derive from the realities of life and do not stand for actual interest in cooperation.

The analysis of past achievements in transfrontier cooperation of the Alps-Adria regions has shown that cooperation was successful mostly when experts in diverse fields of research worked together. In our opinion, this method of work should become the basic form of cooperation in the community, for only in this way will the cooperation in the community become life's day-to-day need. This sensible basis will spawn new ideas that will reflect not only the wishes for political ostentation, but first and foremost a joint approach to solving diverse questions of man's existence and creativity. In joint work the interpersonal ties created through joint work are a strong binding tissue that cannot be disrupted by the changing political climate of the governing structures of the day in the individual regions or countries in question.

Reconciliation on the Austro-Hungarian-Yugoslav border

The second form of regional cooperation we would like to describe is the transfrontier contacts between the border regions of Austria (Burgenland and Styria), Hungary (Vas district) and Yugoslavia (Slovenia and Croatia). We have already mentioned the possibilities of a closer cooperation of the Hungarian border districts of Vas and Zala within the »Working Community« of Alps-Adria. At this point we should therefore say something about the other form of transfrontier regional co-operation in this geographical area, namely about the »Mogersdorf's cultural-history meetings«.

From 1969 on, the Hungarian border district of Vas has cooperated with the Austrian state of Burgenland (and Styria from 1978) and with the Yugoslav republics of SR of Slovenia and Croatia in organizing regional Mogersdorf's (Modinci) cultural-history meetings.⁵ The meeting is held

⁵ Hungary has been traditionally a centralized country where even all the main roads intersect in Budapest. This fact and the international position of the country determine the extent to which the transfrontier cooperation of the Hungarian border districts of Vas and Zala can develop. Vas has an area of 33,390 km² and 283,000 inhabitants; Zala covers an area of 32,810 km² and has a population of 267,000. In these two districts (counties) resides a minority of 16,000 Germans, Slovenes and Croats. The minorities live mostly on the Austrian and Yugoslav borderland.

The idea of linking nations and countries in central-eastern Europe has been present in the Hungarian literature and political thought for more than a century. In 1849 the Hungarian revolutionary Lajos Kossuth championed the idea of founding a Danube Confederation which would unite the countries spanning the area from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and the

every year in another region. In the foundation document of 1970 the representatives of those regions agreed that the objective of the Mogersdorf's meetings was that »scientists jointly try to create a new historical image of the borderland areas of the nations concerned, by means of lectures and discussions, in order to overcome prejudices caused in the past by frequently distorted presentations of this historical image, and in this way to contribute considerably to the understanding of cultures and peaceful coexistence among the nations«.

So far, sixteen regional meetings, where mainly the period up to the First World War was first treated, have been organized. From 1978 on, topics relating to modern history have been tackled with increasing courage. Besides lectures, art and other exhibitions and cultural evenings (arts festivals), where the audience has an opportunity to get to know culture and art of the nations and minorities from this area, have been organized. The program of meetings and events is published annually in the Proceedings, which have become an important channel for the dissemination of reliable information about the history of this area.

Every year political representatives of all the five regions participating in the Mogersdorf's meetings come together and have talks which are not at all mere protocol but a two-day fruitful debate about wider issues concerning either the transfrontier regional cooperation of the five regions or their bilateral relations.

Is this cooperation a starting point for pan-European East-West regional cooperation?

Before answering this question, we would like to call attention to the role played by this area in pan-European relations, and in this way already to provide a partial answer to this question.

Black Sea. At the turn of the century the poet Endre Ady upheld the idea of a special central-eastern European identity. At the same time, Oszkár Jászi likewise supported the idea of founding the association of the Danubian countries. In the domain of art and literature the well-known composer Béla Bartók, and under his influence the writer and journalist Dezső Szabo propagated the idea of sympathy and understanding in this region at the beginning of the century. Between the two Wars the writer László Németh claimed that the nations of central-eastern Europe were »brothers in milk« and called for mutual understanding of cultural and other values of the nations living in that area. In those times the magazine Magyar-ságtudomány, published in Szeged by Gyula Ortutay, disseminated knowledge of the central-eastern European literature and the Appoló magazine contributed to the birth of »special humanism« in this part of Europe. In 1941 the research institute Teleki Pál was founded in Budapest that was later renamed the East European Institute. The institute closed in 1949, during the Stalinist period. In the late 1970s a similar institute was opened yet again at the Hungarian Academy of Science. The most prominent supporter of contacts between the nations and cultures of the Danubian lowland region was in the last decade the late Gyula Illyés, the author who wrote in his works that the people of this area were in »the same boat«. Illyés contributed also to the clarification of such important notions as aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, internationalism, national intolerance and forced assimilation. Inadequate understanding of these notions has, witness our recent past, led to many predicaments in this region.

In this area the countries and nations meet at the global European »demarcation line« running from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Particularly SR of Slovenia, SR of Croatia, Carinthia and Styria lie in the front line, as it were, of the NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The function of transfrontier regional cooperation, however, is not to promote physical division of the regions and countries which are members of opposing politico-military systems but to strengthen their mutual ties. In the complex international situation of today »buffer zones« too can be an adequate means of avoiding situations which could lead to a critical deterioration of international relations.

In this geographical area cooperate regions which form part of countries with different positions in the present European system of the international balance of power. Italy is the most exposed member of the NATO alliance in the south of central Europe and in the east of the Mediterranean (if Turkey, having a special status, and Greece, championing altered relations in the NATO, are not considered). It is known that the NATO military bases are deployed in Italy that in 1983 installed medium-range missiles, which has caused heated public debates throughout Europe. Less than 300 km to the north-east, on the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, Soviet military bases have been deployed since the Hungarian events of 1956.

Austria enjoys, according to the 1955 State Treaty, a neutral status. In 1948 Yugoslavia, after the breakoff with the Soviet Union (Stalinism), had started to develop her international relations independently that later led to the Non-Aligned movement. Differing positions in international politics of the countries in which the discussed regions are located, in certain cases doubtless limit in advance the extent and content of their cooperation.

Any progress in the cooperation of these regions is all the more important in the context of pan-European relations precisely because it has developed in such a complex political situation. On the other hand, under these circumstances, all the promoters of this cooperation have a greater responsibility for further development of this transfrontier regional cooperation than they would have in the case of cooperation between the regions situated in the countries that cooperate extensively as a matter of course, where there are no formidable obstacles to cooperation caused by their international, ideological and political differences.

If all these international and political circumstances are taken into account, we have good grounds for claiming that the above transfrontier cooperation of the Austrian, Italian, Yugoslav and Hungarian regions represents an important achievement in the field of pan-European regional cooperation between East and West.

There is no other example in Europe where – on the »global demarcation line« – the political leaders, specialists, arts people, artists, the youth, etc. from the countries having disparate social systems and international political status would meet wholeheartedly in such a friendly and fruitful atmosphere. Since some of these contacts have already taken on an inter-

national institutional character, the topic of transfrontier regional cooperation should be considered also in discussing détente in Europe. We firmly believe that this is one of the most important perspectives in the development of the idea of regionalism in Europe.

Summary

TRANSFRONTIER REGIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN AUSTRIA, ITALY, YUGOSLAVIA AND HUNGARY – A STARTING POINT FOR PAN-EUROPEAN EAST-WEST REGIONAL CONTACTS AND EXCHANGE?

The so-called Working Community of Regions and Republics Alpe-Adria was founded in 1978. In the following years new members have joined the founders of the community. Today they number eleven: Carinthia, Salzburg, Styria and Upper Austria from Austria, Bavaria from the FRG, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto and Trentino-Alto Adige from Italy, and Croatia and Slovenia from Yugoslavia. Recently there have been rumors that the Hungarian border districts of Vas and Zala will join the Working Community too. This regional cooperation is a unique phenomenon in Europe, given that it incorporates regions or republics which, although forming parts of the states with different sociopolitical and economic systems and a different international political status, nevertheless strive to reach common goals.

The author describes the territory in question and the economic and demographic characteristics of the Working Community, with a special emphasis on the existence of several ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities in this area. He goes on to describe the activities of the Working Community in seven main areas of interest (economy, culture, infrastructure, health, agriculture, ecology, tourism). Interesting is also his information on the transfrontier regional cooperation between the borderlands of Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

Keeping in mind the already mentioned political, ideological and international-political differences between the subjects involved in the foregoing transfrontier regional co-operation, the author in conclusion tries to answer the question he has brought up in the title: Are these forms of co-operation a starting point for the pan-European East-West transfrontier regional cooperation? While pointing to the existing difficulties emanating from the political reality in Europe, he nevertheless expresses an optimistic view of the future.

THE MAP 1:
THE AREA OF THE „WORKING COMMUNITY“ ALPE - ADRIA AND THE
HUNGARIAN DISTRICTS OF ZALA AND VAS AND BURGENLAND (AU-
STRIA).



THE AREA OF THE „WORKING COMMUNITY“ ALPE - ADRIA:

- Bayern
- Kärnten
- Oberösterreich
- Salzburg
- Steiermark
- Friuli - Venezia Giulia
- Lombardia
- Trentino - Alto Adige
- Veneto
- Hrvatska
- Slovenija

THE MAP II:
THE LOCATION OF NATIONAL/ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE AREA OF THE
"WORKING COMMUNITY" ALPE-ADRIA AND HUNGARIAN DISTRICTS ZALA
AND VAS AND BURGENLAND (AUSTRIA).



