

## THE AUSTRIAN LITTORAL IN A CISLEITHANIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to provide a historical view of the Littoral in a comparative Cisleithanian perspective in general, and from a Galician perspective in particular. The historical premises of Dualism (from 1790ca to 1867) are examined. A comparative view of the Littoral in the Dualist Era (1867–1918) is then provided. The paper concludes with a brief examination of the post-Dualist period (1918–1948).*

*Key words: Littoral, Galicia, Austria-Hungary, Dualism*

## IL LITORALE AUSTRIACO VISTO ATTRAVERSO LA PROSPETTIVA DELLA CISLEITANIA

### SINTESI

*L'articolo si propone di presentare una visione storica del Litorale attraverso una prospettiva comparativa della Cisleitania in generale, e attraverso la prospettiva galiziana in particolare. Aprendo con uno studio delle premesse storiche del dualismo (dal 1790 circa al 1867), l'articolo prosegue con una visione comparativa del Litorale nell'era della dualità di governo (1867–1918), e conclude con un breve sguardo generale sul periodo successivo al dualismo (1918–1948).*

*Parole chiave: Litorale, Galizia, Austria-Ungheria, dualismo*

## Introduction: parallel and connected histories

The historiography of the Habsburg Dualist period experienced a significant expansion during the late Cold War period (c. 1966–1989). The Bloomington Conference of 1966 can be seen as a turning point, together with the 1967 Bratislava conference, and the beginning of the publication of the new history of the Habsburg monarchy in 1973.<sup>1</sup> There was an element of nostalgia for the *Die Welt von Gestern* (on both sides of the Cold war divide), but there was also substantive research and historiographical debate.<sup>2</sup> The end of the Communist era in Eastern Europe provided an additional element in making the subject more interesting, or at least more marketable in academic and publishing terms. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 briefly created some additional interest in the late Dualist era with a short-lived "Lessons from the Past" research agenda (See, e.g., Rudolph, Good, 1992; Barkey, von Hagen, 1997; Dawisha, Parrott, 1997).

It is too early to see what results post-Cold war Habsburg studies will produce, since historians trained in the Cold War era produce most studies. Gary Cohen has already provided an important contribution with his study of the educational system in the Austrian part of the monarchy (Cohen, 1996). More recently, he has reviewed the emerging trend of research that challenges the "absolutism and anarchy" paradigm.<sup>3</sup> In short, significant progress is being made in terms of providing the basis for a historical sociology of politics in the Habsburg regions.

Less progress appears to have been made in two aspects. The first is the overall development of social history in its broadest sense, at least as far as the Dualist period is concerned: a comparison with what has been already achieved in the field of economic history (See, e.g., Good, 1984; 1994) shows how much needs to be done in social history. The second aspect is the lack of any systematic comparative history of the Habsburg regions, let alone comparisons with other regions of Europe. This explains why Habsburg historiography is still conditioned by the predominance of outdated master narratives and of perspectives that remain narrowly regional, local or parochial. Even good local and regional history will have little impact on the overall picture until a new framework emerges.<sup>4</sup>

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1 For the Bloomington conference, see Jelavich, Rath, 1967; and Ara, 1974a; for the Bratislava conference, see Vantuch, Holotík, 1971; for the background to the publication of the history of the monarchy, see Wandruszka, 1973. For reasons of brevity alone this paper will use the expression "Habsburg monarchy", rather than "Habsburg Empire".

2 For a general overview of the historiography of the Dualist period of the Habsburg monarchy, see the bibliographies contained in Sked, 1989; Beller, 1996; Okey, 2001, and Cornwall, 2002.

3 The expression is derived from Höbelt, 1992, quoted in Cohen, 1998, 39. See also Cohen, 2004.

4 Research is also constrained by problems of infrastructure and shifts in disciplinary boundaries, but these topics lie outside the scope of this paper.

## The Littoral and Galicia compared

A comparison between the Littoral and Galicia may seem irrelevant in a historical context.<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, such a comparison could well have already occurred to at least one historical figure, on the basis of his administrative experience of the two provinces of the Austrian Monarchy: Franz Stadion-Werthausen, who was first assigned to Galicia in 1828–1830, then nominated governor of the Littoral (Küstenland) 1841–1846, governor of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria (1846–1848), before playing a crucial role during the Austrian revolution of 1848–49.<sup>6</sup> Both in Galicia and in the Littoral he was portrayed (at the time and in subsequent historiography) as having favoured the Ruthenian/Ukrainian and the Slovene national groups. From the Polish side (and in subsequent historiography) he was accused of having invented the Ruthenian/Ukrainian nationality.<sup>7</sup> From the Italian side, Stadion was sometimes seen as "one of the most dangerous opponents of [Italian] national reawakening".<sup>8</sup>

Throughout his career, Stadion in fact carried out policies that were quite liberal by the standards of the time. The accusation of having been an architect of a "divide and rule" policy has little to do with the actual realities of Habsburg rule, and more with the persistence of a political and historiographical figure of speech. Playing off one side against another is, quite simply, part of the essence of politics in any form. The nationalist trope of a Machiavellian divide et impera is simply an inverted assertion of a hegemonic design by political actors (in the Littoral and in Galicia, these were the Italian and Polish political elites). The persistence of this trope in some sectors of historiography is both as remarkable as it is revealing.

Beyond the specific connection provided by Stadion's career, the Littoral and Galicia were connected in more than one sense. For a start, they were both provinces of the Austrian monarchy, and later of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In the Dualist Era they were both peripheral provinces, respectively on the Southern and Eastern borders of the monarchy, opposite two imperial systems that were, to some extent, hostile entities.

They were both provinces of Cisleithania, despite the distance that separated them geographically. There are many parallels that can be drawn, and some of these

5 The choice of names for locations is always controversial. This paper will strive to follow a choice of names which have a justification based on historical sources used, as distinct from political and cultural preferences.

6 For Stadion's life and activities, see Hirsch, 1861, and Oettl, 1878; for his activities in Galicia, the best starting-points are Markovits, Sysyn, 1982; Magocsi, 1983; Leitsch, Wawrykowa, 1989.

7 For assessments of Stadion's role in Galicia, see Rudnytsky, 1982, 40; and Wandycz, 1982, 79.

8 This is the way in which Apollonio summarizes Tamaro's views (Tamaro, 1924, II, 290–317). Apollonio himself, on the contrary, considers Stadion's liberalism to have played a positive role from the point of view of Italian national reawakening. Apollonio (1996, 32, n. 1).

could provide a wider perspective for analyzing the historical context of the Littoral. Parallels could be drawn also for the post-Dualist Era, indeed up the end of the Cold War, and perhaps even beyond. Historical parallels do not imply a common destiny, let alone any intimate connection. They do imply some degree of similarity (or, quite simply, of common intelligibility) in the problems faced by the economic, social and political actors of the two provinces. They also imply crucial differences, which can also contribute to explaining the historical outcomes of the end of the Dualist Era.

The Littoral and Galicia shared one common element: the timing of their creation as administrative entities in the Habsburg monarchy. Galicia was a late addition, following the three partitions of the Polish Rzeczpospolita (1772–1795). The Littoral had emerged somewhat earlier, but the end of the Venetian Republic determined its configuration in the post-Napoleonic era in 1797, with the subsequent addition of Venetian Istria. Overall, it can be argued that both Galicia and the Littoral (in its mature version) were products of the post-Josephine (and then post-Vienna Congress) configuration of the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>9</sup> The Napoleonic era undoubtedly affected both the Littoral and Galicia, but in every respect the effects were much greater and more lasting in the Littoral.

The immediate similarities end here. Trieste had of course a much longer connection to the Monarchy, and always derived some administrative privileges from this historical pedigree, starting with the status of immediate (unmittelbar) connection with Vienna. From this point of view, Galicia was more similar to Venetia. But, leaving aside the obvious differences in size, wealth and historical traditions, Venetia was never incorporated into the Monarchy as Galicia was. In any case, after the Austro-Prussian war Venetia was incorporated into Italy.

The importance of the overall institutional framework of Habsburg provinces (Länder), which has been rightly stressed by Gerald Stourzh (Stourzh, 1989; 1992), emerges when we look at the quite different position of the Littoral and Galicia. The Polish province was never part of the Empire (i.e. the Holy Roman Empire). It was not part of the German Confederation, nor was it ever considered part of the Hereditary Lands. Trieste had been connected to Vienna since the XIVth century. It had been part of the Empire, and later of the German Confederation. Görz and Gradisca were also considered part of the Hereditary Lands. (Formerly Venetian Istria was a different matter.) During the Dualist Era the Littoral and Galicia were both part of what was known, for lack of a proper label, as Cisleithania, but their institutional baggage was quite different.

Geography also mattered. Trieste was a port, indeed the port for the Cisleithanian provinces. Galicia could never have played the key role Trieste played for the monar-

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<sup>9</sup> For an introductory bibliography on the establishment of Austrian Galicia, see Franzinetti, 2002; 2004. For a description of the phases of the creation of the Littoral, see Dorsi, 1994, with bibliography. For 1790 as a turning-point, see Macartney, 1969; 1978, 1–20.

chy, especially after 1866. History and politics mixed with geography also matter. The losses of Lombardy, and then Venetia were severe losses for monarchy, from a financial and demographic point of view. But for the Italian-speaking elites in the Littoral, these losses also meant the loss of direct access to Italian universities, giving rise to a thorny *Universitätsfrage* (See Ara, 1974b). After all, the Italian elites of the Littoral could not be treated like Ruthenian peasants; they were a "historic nation". In short, the proximity of the Littoral to a rival state, the Italian nation state, affected the situation in the province. The Galician situation was totally different. Leaving aside the issue of the Russophile tendency in the Ruthenian camp (See Wendland, 2001), the province was surrounded by Hungarian-ruled provinces, by Russian-ruled territories, and by Prussia itself. There was no threat of any eastward-oriented Irredentism.

What is perhaps less obvious is the sense in which Galicia actually mattered, not just on the front line, facing the threat of the Czarist army, but also from the point of view of Vienna and the monarchy as a whole.

Size mattered. In 1890, Galicia occupied 26% of the territory of Cisleithania, the Littoral 2.65%. In terms of population, Galicia represented 27.65% of Cisleithania, the Littoral 3.65%. In terms of size, only Bohemia-Moravia (added together) could compete with Galicia: 24.73% of the territory, with 33.98% of the population. (The population of Upper Austria reached only 11.14%).<sup>10</sup>

Wealth also mattered. According to the estimates made by David Good, income per capita in Austria was (in 1911–1913) on average 569 crowns; for the Littoral the figure is 522, but Galicia was at 316, barely above Bukovina (310) and not far from Dalmatia (264) (See Good, 1984, Table C.6, 278). So it would appear that Galicia did not really matter much. But population size means also men (for the armies of the monarchy), taxpayers (to some extent). It also means electors, which meant members of the Imperial Council (*Reichsrat*), who ultimately voted on laws, budgets (including military budgets), and ultimately governments.

So, ultimately, numbers did matter. Understanding this involves accepting that the political system of the monarchy (and of Cisleithania in particular) was, to some extent, a parliamentary system, at least in the two decades before the war. It was, of course, imperfect. It had strong limitations as far as foreign policy went (as most parliamentary systems had at the time).<sup>11</sup>

This all takes us to a crucial point of any comparison between the Littoral and Galicia. The most important difference was not represented by the obvious gap in terms of levels economic and social development. It was instead that of political power. Galicia mattered. The Littoral also mattered, but in a quite different sense, in a more indirect way. The Littoral was of course essential to Körber's plans for rail-

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10 Figures taken and calculated from Rutkowski, 1898, 1.

11 For the current debate on the limitations of the Austrian parliamentary system in the late Dualist period, see Beller, 1996; Cornwall, 2004.

ways and canals.<sup>12</sup> But Galicia mattered always, for the entire Dualist Era. The strength of the Polish Circle at the Imperial Council was such that it managed to obtain a specific clause in the Electoral reform of 1906, which introduced universal suffrage.<sup>13</sup> These changes were made to protect the Polish parties in Eastern Galicia, where their position was threatened by the Ruthenian majority.

Galicia mattered for governments. The recurrence of Polish-sounding names in Austrian governments in the Dualist era did not reflect mere Slavic ancestry in the Viennese political and military elites (which of course existed). There was a special Galician minister in Austrian cabinets, and there were many other Galicians at all levels of the government.<sup>14</sup> In short, the Galician Polish elite wielded a strong veto power. It had less power than the Hungarian political elite, but it certainly had power.

The level of power and influence that the Italian elite of Trieste exercised in Vienna is simply not comparable. The connection of Trieste with the German Confederation, and later with Germany, made a difference. So did the presence of a small but important German element in Trieste (and even more in Görz and Gradisca). It was handicapped in terms of freedom of manoeuvre vis à vis Vienna.<sup>15</sup> Lwów did not have to contend with any significant German presence in Galicia. What is more, there was a clear hierarchy of social and national groups: Poles, Jews, and Ruthenes. In the Littoral social and ethnic hierarchies were much more complex, because of the more stratified nature of society. The social hegemony of the Polish elite in Galicia was much clearer than that of its Italian counterpart in Trieste. In the Dualist Era the governors came from the Polish elite. It would have been unconceivable to have a Hohenloe in Lwów.

It might seem that the Littoral and Galicia really had very little in common. But there remains an aspect in which they did have a lot in common. This is, of course, the nature of the ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict in the Habsburg monarchy has always attracted the interest of historians. It has in fact been used as the default explanation for the collapse of the monarchy. If the economy was not such a failure, the cause of the collapse must have been the nationalities question. If the political system did not work, the cause must have been the nationalities question.<sup>16</sup> Another complication is the excessive concentration on the case of Bohemia. In fact, the Bohemian conflict was quite unrepresentative of nationality conflicts in the monarchy. It was

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12 On Körber see Gerschenkron, 1977, and the subsequent debates.

13 For Austrian electoral reform, see the introductory bibliography in Franzinetti, 2002. For the specific cases of Galicia and the Slovene lands, see Binder, 2005, and Melik, 1997.

14 For the Polish presence in the central bureaucracy, see Goldinger, 1978. For the case of military officers, see Rydel, 1989.

15 On the German element in Trieste, see Dorsi, 2001a; 2001b.

16 It should be noted that at least some recent historians have shifted away from this default paradigm. See, e.g., many authors present in Cornwall, 2004; Cohen, 1998; 2004. But the old "absolutism and anarchy" paradigm remains dominant in references to the Habsburg monarchy by non-specialists.

the only case in which a "non-historical" nationality managed to catch up economically, socially and politically with a "historical" nationality. The Slavs of Bohemia (to a lesser extent also those of Moravia, leaving aside the special case of Austrian Silesia) managed to recover the ground they had lost over centuries to the Germans of Bohemia. This was due to special circumstances, which did not exist anywhere else in the monarchy. The Bohemian case could not have been repeated elsewhere. But this case, with its extraordinary verbal violence (but quite limited physical violence) was and is used as the exemplary case that proves the intractability of the nationality problem.

Nationality problems in the monarchy (leaving aside Bohemia-Moravia) did have many common features. But there is still, to date, a very strong tendency to ignore these similarities. Italian historiography of the Littoral is a case in point. In 1946, in the context of discussion over the future borders between Italy and Yugoslavia, Carlo Schiffrer published his essay on Italo-Slav relations in the Littoral (Schiffrer, 1946). What stands out is his theory of the polarity between the Italian city-oriented culture and the "Slav" countryside-oriented culture. This is a classic figure of speech, a trope, which of course has a strong basis of fact. What does not appear equally founded is the assumption that this somehow represents a peculiarity of the Littoral. This kind of polarity, with its obvious consequences in terms of patterns of settlement, was in fact the rule in the territories of the monarchy. (Bohemia was, once again, an exception to this general rule.) In itself, the use of this trope describes certain features, but does not actually explain any historical process.<sup>17</sup>

It is also disconcerting to see how Schiffrer used historical analogies. As it happens, he chose to make a comparison between the Littoral and Eastern Galicia:

"The well-known objection according to which between the Italians of Trieste and of Istria on the one hand and those in Friuli on the other there is no territorial continuity, does not have a solid statistical basis...Even the comparison with Lemberg does not hold. Between this city and lands inhabited and tilled by Poles there are one hundred kilometers; between Trieste and Friuli twenty.

The Italian request to maintain sovereignty over Trieste could be compared with a Polish request to preserve Lemberg, only if all the countryside to the east of the Piave were inhabited exclusively by Slavs, i.e. if the Slav nation state were deprived, non a mere district, but two provinces such that of Udine and Treviso." (Schiffrer, 1946, 33)

The problem with Schiffrer's comparison is that it is quite simply wrong. He seems quite unaware of the fact that Polish settlements in Eastern Galicia were of a leopard-spot kind. Furthermore, Lwów is much less than 100 km from Przemysł/Peremyshl', as any visitor to the present Polish-Ukrainian border knows. Schif-

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17 This trope has been recently revived after the Wars of Yugoslav dissolution. See Bougarel, 1999.

frer was a scholar who had just emerged from the war, and who was trying to provide arguments for the negotiations for the peace treaty; perhaps his arguments should not be taken too literally. On the other hand, Schiffrer continues to this day to be celebrated not merely as a public figure, but also as a guiding light for the historiography of the Littoral.<sup>18</sup>

In the decade before 1914 there was a quite genuine feeling of panic among the "historical" nationalities. One of the leading Polish economic historians described this feeling in his book on Galicia:

"Our prospects in Eastern Galicia [i.e. where there was a Ruthenian majority] are unfavourable. The fate of the English nationality in Ireland, of the German in Czech lands, and the probable fate of the German nationality in Upper Silesia, serve us as a bad augury" (Bujak, 1908, 94, as quoted in Rudnytsky, 1982, 65).<sup>19</sup>

In other words, the writing was on the wall for the formerly dominant nationalities. It is significant that Bujak offers a purely sociological view, seeing the analogy between the Anglo-Irish elite, the Germans of Bohemia, and the Poles of Eastern Galicia. He does not seem concerned by criteria of culture or even civilization. What mattered for Bujak was the structural analogy. This is also what really matters historically.

The Italian elite in the Littoral appeared no less doomed: demographic trends, the expansion of electoral suffrage, political trends in the monarchy all seemed to point toward their social and demographic decline. Even a staunch supporter of the Italians of the Littoral such as the intellectual Graziadio Ascoli, in a famous article published in 1895, expressed serious misgivings on the risks involved in any Irredentist campaign:

"sarà lecito dubitare se sia opera di oculato patriottismo il non badare alle conseguenze che derivano agl'italiani di laggiù [in the Littoral] da un'agitazione che muove lo straniero alla vendetta insieme e alla disistima" (Ascoli, 1895, 68).

Attilio Tamaro put forward a more strident and aggressive version of these fears some twenty years later in a wartime pamphlet:

"La sensazione della progrediente sopraffazione era però in tutti...anche dopo ogni vittoria era nell'animo di tutti la domanda angosciata e tormentosa: E domani? La storia della Dalmazia appariva allora come uno spettro...Lo sforzo compiuto dall'Austria e dagli Slavi nell'ultimo quinquennio fu enorme. Il prossimo censimento sarebbe stato disastroso per l'italianità" (Tamaro, 1915, 52).

18 See, e.g., the introductory remarks by Pupo, 1998.

19 The original reads as follows: "*Widoki nasze przyszłość w G.[alicyi] wschodniej nie są podobmyślne. Los narodowości angielskiej w Irlandyi, niemieckiej w krajach czeskich i prawdopodobny, acz w dalekiej przyszłości, los niemieckiej narodowości na Górnym Śląsku jest złą dla nas prognozą*".



### Conclusions: 1914 and after

The verbal violence of Tamaro's formulation was quite in line with the tones of the nationality conflicts of the late Dualist Era. What happened after 1914 involved a less verbal kind of violence. Population transfers, deportations of suspect individuals took place both in the Littoral and in Galicia. In the Littoral these actions were carried out first by the Habsburg authorities, in Galicia by the Czarist authorities (with much greater brutality). There was a certain parallelism between the policies of forced nationalization of the new created "national minorities" in the successor states (Greater Italy in one case, Greater Poland in the other). Again, the level of brutality in South-eastern Poland in the aftermath of World War I was greater than that of North-eastern Italy in the same period, but the parallelism remains.

The Age of Successor States began in 1918, and ended in 1948. That year saw the completion of the redrawing boundaries and transferring (or exterminating) populations. Eastern and Western Galicia were separated by a border that corresponded to the (new) ethnic or linguistic border, with the incompleteness that always survives in life and history. With a slightly less brutal process of boundary redrawing, population transfer or elimination, also the boundaries between the different parts of the former Austrian Littoral were redrawn by 1948 (but sanctioned somewhat later).

Both in the former Littoral and in the former Galician provinces there followed a relatively peaceful Ice Age (1948–1991), based on the immutability of territorial and ethnic borders. These physical and mental boundaries are likely to be as permanent as any human creation can be.

The parallelisms between the Austrian Littoral and Galicia are striking, despite the all too evident differences. This is not surprising, taking into consideration the fact that these administrative entities were created in the same period and ended in the same period. They belonged to the same collective entity, which repeatedly changed its name. This entity dissolved into a series of Successor states. The end of Czechoslovakia in 1992 marked the end of the last Successor state created after the First World War.<sup>20</sup> The End of the Age of Successor states offers the chance to look again at contemporary history no longer burdened by the need to judge how effective the architects of these states were.

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<sup>20</sup> Greater Romania was not re-established in 1945. Greater Poland ended in 1939. Yugoslavia ended in 1991. Almost all currently existing states in East-Central Europe and the Balkans existed before 1918.

## AVSTRIJSKO PRIMORJE SKOZI PERSPEKTIVO CISLAJTANIJE

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**POVZETEK**

*Prispevek predstavlja kratek pregled razvoja in aktualnih tendenc v zgodovino-pisju Habsburške monarhije v obdobju dualizma. Med najnovejšimi izsledki je kar nekaj takih, ki oporekajo paradigmi "absolutizma in anarhije", s katero ponavadi označujemo obdobje dualizma, še posebej glede zadnjih dveh desetletij monarhije. Kljub temu pa družbena zgodovina tega obdobja ostaja premalo raziskana, k čemur botruje tudi pomanjkanje sistematičnih komparativnih zgodovinskih študij habsburških dežel.*

*Med Primorjem in Galicijo je mogoče potegniti več vzporednic, prav tako pa veliko povedo tudi razlike med obema provincama. Članek poudari tako pomen splošnega institucionalnega okvirja kot tudi vlogo geografije, vendar pa kot ključne razlike definira velikost prebivalstva in raven politične oblasti, ki sta jo na Dunaju izvajali poljska in italijanska elita.*

*Če odmislimo zavajajoče primerjave s Češko, ki je bila v smislu etničnih ali narodnostnih konfliktov v monarhiji dokaj netipičen primer, lahko naravo etničnih konfliktov, ki jih je bilo moč zaslediti v Primorju in Galiciji, prepoznamo kot precej podobno. Članek nadalje obravnava tudi stališče Carla Schiffrerja o edinstvenem značaju Primorja ter zaključi, da je šlo tu v resnici za tipičen primer politične in demografske panike vseh "zgodovinskih" narodov (tj. Nemcev, Madžarov, Poljakov in Italijanov) v poznem obdobju Habsburške monarhije.*

*Vzporednice med Primorjem in Galicijo so se ohranile tudi po razpadu monarhije, v medvojnem obdobju (za časa konsolidacije Velike Poljske in Velike Italije). Obdobje, ki je sledilo drugi svetovni vojni (pretežno med leti 1945 in 1948), pa je zaznamoval zaključek procesa ponovnega črtanja ozemeljskih meja in selitve prebivalstva.*

*Ključne besede: Primorje, Galicija, Avstro-Ogrska, dualizem*

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