

THE FORMER AUSTRIAN LITTORAL AND THE REDISCOVERY OF ETHNIC CLEANSING*

Guido FRANZINETTI

Università del Piemonte Orientale, Alessandria

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This paper addresses two distinct issues. The first is the emergence of a variety of interpretative paradigms within Nationalism Studies in the 1980s and 1990s. The second is the actual use of an interpretative model derived from such debates, with special reference to the former Austrian Littoral.

Nationalism Studies re-emerged in the 1980s out of the convergent efforts of historians and social scientists on both sides of the Cold War divide. The more specific issues of genocide and ethnic cleansing were not central to that debate, except as issues which belonged to a relatively distant past. This radically changed in the 1990s, when the issues re-emerged for a variety of reasons, not least the Wars of Yugoslav Dissolution and the massacres in Rwanda. It led, on the one hand, to a normative turn in Nationalism Studies (which were no longer expected to explain, but also to judge the historical legitimacy of national claims), on the other, to a hasty re-discovery of historical cases (which, in fact, had never been neglected, let alone forgotten).

In recent discussions of the Austrian Littoral in the period 1918-1948 the final turn of events in the region has been explained by some authors as the result of the partly "Eastern European" nature of the region. It is argued that this paradigm of ethnic cleansing may be challenged, and a more nuanced perspective can be applied to the historical problem of the Austrian Littoral.

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1. Paradigms redefined: genocide, ethnic cleansing, and conflict resolution

The issue of genocide, let alone ethnic cleansing, did not appear in what Eric Hobsbawm defined as the Classical (or Golden) Age of Nationalism Studies (1968-1988),¹ or even in a wider period, taking as a starting-point the publication of Elie Kedourie's book (1960-1991).² For example, in 1983 Benedict Anderson reflected on the occurrence of the wars between Communist Vietnam, Cambodia and China: "These wars are of world-historical importance", adding that the Vietnamese-Cambodian war of 1978-79 "represented the first *large-scale conventional war* waged by one revolutionary Marxist regime against another".³ There was, in fact, no discussion of the Khmer Rouge massacres, or, for that matter, of any other massacres or genocides.⁴

The debate in Communist Eastern Europe was unavoidably more constrained than in the West. Miroslav Hroch's classic study was conditioned by the political circumstances of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s.⁵ On the basis of an unrivalled command of literature and sources concerning the emergence of national movements all over Central and Eastern Europe, Hroch was able to define

1 E. J. HOBSBAWM, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 [1990], 4.

2 E. KEDOURIE, *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson, 1960; E. GELLNER, *Thought and Change*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964, and *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983; A. D. SMITH, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986; J. A. ARMSTRONG, *Nations before nationalism*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982; J. BREUILLY, *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1982; B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso 1983.

3 ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*, 11 (italics in the original). Anderson was already well established as a specialist on South-East Asia, so his work was directly affected by the events in Cambodia. See also his *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*, London: Verso 1998, which is much closer to his actual field of specialization than *Imagined Communities*.

4 In this aspect no significant changes were introduced in the revised editions of *Imagined Communities* (1992 and 2006).

5 M. HROCH, *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas*, Praha: Universita Karlova, 1968. Hobsbawm was the one of the first to point out the relevance of Hroch's work in *Some reflections on nationalism*, in *Imagination and Precision in Social Science. Essays in memory of Peter Nettl*, T. NOSSITER, A. H. HANSON and S. ROKKAN (eds.), London: Faber and Faber 1972, 385-406. For the background to the publication of his book, see M. HROCH, "Learning from Small Nations", *New Left Review*, 58 (2009), 41-59.

a precise typology and periodisation of these movements.⁶ Jenő Szűcs' collection of studies on the nation and history focussed on a strictly historiographical debate.⁷

Studies on the Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933 were promoted mainly by research centres based in Canada and in the USA (i.e. countries with relatively large and moderately influential Ukrainian communities, especially in Canada).⁸ These studies fuelled the subsequent debate on the nature of Stalinist policies towards the Ukraine in the 1930s.⁹ The increasingly plausible estimates of Soviet human losses due to Stalinism¹⁰ provided a new basis for the discussion on the connection between Soviet nationality policies and Stalin's deportation and extermination of 'class enemies' (who, when examined more attentively, could now be seen as 'national' enemies).¹¹ Even the Armenian issue was still relatively peripheral

6 For an overview of the historiographical context in which Hroch's work emerged, see G. FRANZINETTI, *Il problema del nazionalismo nella storiografia dell'Europa centro-orientale*, *Rivista storica italiana*, 103/3 (1991), 812-46; ID., "Mitteleuropa in East-Central Europe From Helsinki to EU Accession (1975—2004)", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11/2 (2008), 219-235. For an overall appreciation of Hroch's work, see A. MAXWELL, "Twenty-Five Years of A-B-C: Miroslav Hroch's Impact on Nationalism Studies", *Nationalities Papers* 38/6 (2010), 773-776.

7 J. SZÜCS, "Nemzet és történelem" Gondolat, Budapest 1974. The book was published in German translation as *Nation und Geschichte*. Studien, Budapest: 1981. (Predictably, only Hobsbawm took note of it in the Nationalism debates of the 1980s.) A translation into English is forthcoming from the Central European University Press. For the historiographical and historical context of Szűcs' studies, see G. KLANICZAY, "People and "Nation": A unfinished inquiry into the genesis of two concepts", *Budapest Review of Books*, 4 (1994), 25-29; B. TRENCSENYI, P. APOR, "Fine-Tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s", in *Narratives unbound: historical studies in post-communist Eastern Europe*, S. ANTOHI, B. TRENCSENYI, P. APOR (eds.), Budapest: Central European University Press 2007, 1-8 (on the period 1945-1989). For the background to Szűcs' better-known study on *The Three Historical Regions of Europe* (1980), see FRANZINETTI, *Mitteleuropa in East-Central Europe*.

8 See R. CONQUEST, *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet collectivization and the terror-famine*, London: Hutchinson 1986. Conquest had already published widely on the topic of Soviet nationality policies. See, e.g., *The Soviet deportation of nationalities*, London: Macmillan 1960; and *The Nation Killers: the Soviet deportation of nationalities*, London: Macmillan, 1970.

9 For an overview and discussion of recent studies on the topic, see A. GRAZIOSI, "The Soviet 1931-1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor: Is a New Interpretation Possible, and What Would Its Consequences Be?", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 27/1-4 (2004-2005), 97-115.

10 See, e.g., S. MAKSUDOV, "Pertes subies par la population de l'URSS, 1918-1958", *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 18/3 (1977), 223-265.

11 For one of the first re-examinations of the topic, see M. AGURSKY, "The Birth of Byelorussia", *Times Literary Supplement*, June 30, 1972, 743 (and the subsequent discussion in R. A. MEDVEDEV, *On Stalin and Stalinism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 112). Needless to say, there had always been discussions on these themes in the field of Soviet Studies. See, e.g., R.

to debates (outside the field of Turkish Studies and outside the Armenian and Turkish Diasporas).¹²

The topic of genocide and ethnic cleansing was therefore rather marginalized. In the case of scholars operating in Communist Europe, communist censorship and control was sufficient to discourage any research in this field, with the significant exception of Poland.¹³ Censorship reflected also the need to avoid controversies with neighbouring countries of the Communist bloc. There would have been in any case an additional form of self-censorship at work, since any investigation of post-1945 forms of ethnic cleansing was also problematic from a local (non-Communist) nationalist perspective (e.g. the Sudeten issue in Bohemia-Moravia, Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania, etc.).

In the non-Communist world (Western Europe and North America) there was no institutional constraint, and funding did not play a major role in directing research in these fields. What did matter, instead, was the institutional and conceptual framework which was prevalent in the social sciences, strongly conditioned (in a positive or negative sense) by Modernization Theory (e.g., D. Lerner, W. Rostow, etc.).¹⁴ In this perspective, genocide did not loom large. In any case, it was seen as an issue of the past. Nationalism, in fact, was considered an element favouring modernization. The extermination of the Jews was only starting to become a mainstream topic, and even this process was very hesitant and contradictory. (The literary critic George Steiner was advised by his Cambridge

PIPES, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism: 1917-1923*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954.

12 In Soviet Armenia in 1967, following the unofficial demonstrations in Yerevan commemorating the 1915 massacres in 1965, a commemorative monument was finally unveiled.

13 In Poland, the creation of a relatively more tolerant climate after 1956 gradually made possible research on postwar population transfers of Poles, Ukrainians and Belorussians. This research may well have been restricted to the field of specialists, but it nevertheless belonged to the public (and legal) sphere. See, e.g., the book by Krystyna KERSTEN, (*Repatriacja ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej: studium historyczne*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1974), and the specific instructions concerning discussions of her work in the instructions for Polish censors. See *Książka zapisów zaleceń Głównego Urzędu Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk w Warszawie* [1974-75], reproduced in *Czarna księga cenzury PRL*, Londyn: Aneks, 1977-1978 (vol. 1), 65. Scholarly discussions on the issue of the extermination of the Jews in Polish lands were instead subject to much greater control (and self-censorship). See *The Neighbors Respond: the controversy over the Jedwabne massacre in Poland*, A. POLONSKY and J. MICHLIC (eds.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

14 For an overall discussion of Modernization Theory, see N. GILMAN, *Mandarins of the future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. For a relevant case study, see S. CONRAD, “‘The Colonial Ties are Liquidated’: Modernization Theory, Post-War Japan and the Global Cold War”, *Past and Present*, 216 (2012), 181-214.

colleagues that talking about concentration camps and gas chambers was not the best way of achieving academic advancement.)

Furthermore, the topic was seen as belonging to the past, not an issue which could be seen as having contemporary relevance. The German *Historikerstreit* in some respect revived the issue, to the extent that it challenged the idea of the uniqueness of the extermination of the European Jews (which in the 1980s was beginning to be called, in American style, the “Holocaust”).

Two general remarks should be made at this point. The belated response of Marxist (or neo-Marxist or even Post-Marxist) scholars and commentators to the issue of genocide and ethnic cleansing should not be interpreted in crudely political terms, i.e. as an expression of Communist Party orthodoxy (even though this may have played a role, on both sides of the East-West divide). In fact, research on the Cambodian massacres was often conducted by scholars who had a New Left background.¹⁵

There is a much wider issue, which is the historical understanding of the role of violence. As Gellner repeatedly pointed out, Marxism lacks a theory of violence and coercion, since violence is seen as a mechanism which is derivative.¹⁶ In his discussion of Soviet Marxist debates Gellner argued that “Marxism does not of course deny [the existence of violence and the means of coercion]; but they cannot be primary. On its view, they reflect or express pre-existing conflict; they do not initiate and engender it”.¹⁷ This absence often deprived Marxists of a language for addressing the all too evident role of violence and coercion in Communist regimes. In fact, this rendered difficult and tortuous even a Marxist understanding of the extermination of the Jews.¹⁸

15 See, for example, B. KIERNAN, “Vietnam and the Government and the People of Kampuchea”, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 11/ 4 (1979), 19-25. Kiernan had originally associated himself with Noam Chomsky’s equivocations on the Khmer Rouge massacres, but on the basis of his fieldwork research changed his views. Chomsky stuck to his positions on this point, stating in 1987: “I don’t find it particularly useful to march in parades” (N. CHOMSKY in conversation with F. HALLIDAY, in *Writers and Politics*, B. BOURNE, U. EICHLER and D. HERMAN (eds.), Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1987, 80).

16 See E. GELLNER, Reflections on Violence, *British Journal of Sociology*, 5/3, 1954, 267-271 and E. GELLNER, *State and Society in Soviet Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1988. This issue is addressed more specifically in G. FRANZINETTI, *Gellner and the Historians*, forthcoming.

17 GELLNER, *The Asiatic Trauma* (1984), in GELLNER, *State and Society*, 65.

18 See, e.g., N. GERAS, “Marxists before the Holocaust”, *New Left Review*, 224 (1997), 19-38.

2. The Normative Turn

After the end of the Cold War there occurred what might be termed a ‘normative turn’. The entire field of social sciences and, indeed, the humanities as a whole were called upon not simply to provide scholarly understanding in their different specialization (as they were supposed to do during the Cold War era). They were now entitled to provide, advice and support for specific policy options, if not actually to prescribe preventive policies.

This reorientation was the result of a series of quite distinct factors, which included the following: the growth and expansion of the role of NGOs (which had begun already in the 1980s); the rapid dismantlement of many parts of Cold War infrastructure (such as Radio Free Europe, etc.); the shift of US academic funding from Area Studies to global studies; the prospect of enlargement of the European Union to Eastern European regions; the consolidation of the Cultural Turn in the social sciences. The rapid growth of Nationalism Studies led to the renewed attention to the issue of civic vs ethnic nationalism, the legitimacy of secession, minority rights. In a sense, it appeared to be a return to Wilsonian idealism, or, indeed, to what has been termed the “Wilsonian moment”.¹⁹

This paper is not arguing for or against the ‘normative turn’. It simply takes note of its occurrence, and argues that this shift has conditioned the development of social science research, and historical research in particular.

In this new setting, genocide and ethnic cleansing acquired a new relevance and impact in Nationalism Studies. No longer classified as aberrations of the recent past (or even ‘ancient hatreds’), these categories could be applied to a whole range of historical phenomena, which had not been previously analysed in these terms. A classic case was that of the Soviet experience and of Stalinism in particular. Terry Martin’s seminal article was published in 1998, and rapidly established itself as a new direction in the study of Soviet nationalities policy.²⁰ A further step in a similar direction was taken later (in 2010) by Timothy Snyder, whose *Bloodlands* argued for an interactive view of the role of Soviet Socialism and National Socialism.²¹

19 E. MANELA, *The Wilsonian moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. See also the more wide-ranging study by M. MAZOWER, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*, London: Allen Lane, 2012.

20 T. MARTIN, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing”, *Journal of Modern History*, 70/4 (1998), 813-861. Martin illustrated more fully his argument in *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

21 See T. SNYDER, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books,

This was the setting for the emergence and rapid codification of a new paradigm of “ethnic cleansing”. In short, twentieth-century European history could (and should) be read in terms of a succession of ethnic cleansings, genocides, forced population transfers. The classic illustration of this paradigm was provided by Norman Naimark:

“The character of mass violence in Europe changed the course of the twentieth century. The world wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 gave way to civil wars, wars of ‘national liberation’, and ethnic wars. Ethnic cleansing, on the other hand, has remained remarkably consistent over the past hundred years...Ethnic cleansing will probably happen again, and the community of nations should be prepared for the next round.”²²

A further stage in the definition of the new paradigm was subsequently provided by Michael Mann’s work, which argued that “Murderous cleansing is modern, because it is the dark side of democracy”.²³ As it happens, Mann was the same author who, in 1973, had confined to a footnote the issue of foreign immigrant workers in a survey on *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class*.²⁴ The shift in emphasis (from class struggle to genocide) is remarkable.

An extensive discussion of the different strands of research on ethnic cleansing and genocide lies beyond the scope of this paper. The fact that all these

2010. See the debate on Snyder’s book in R. J. EVANS, “Who remembers the Poles?”, *London Review of Books*, 32/21, 4.11.2010 (and the subsequent correspondence in 32/23, 2.12.2010); and the Forum on Snyder’s book (organized by M. MAZOWER), *Contemporary European History*, 21/22, (2012), 117-168.

22 N. NAIMARK, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 185. For a critical discussion of Naimark’s work, see E. HAHN and H.-H. HAHN, “Alte Legenden und neue Besuche des ‘Ostens’. Über Norman M. Naimarks Geschichtsbilder“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 54/7-8 (2006), 687-700. For an overview of the topic, see A. FERRARA and N. PIANCIOLA, *L’età delle migrazioni forzate. Esodi e deportazioni in Europa, 1853-1953*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012. For a range of views on NAIMARK’s *Stalin’s Genocides* (2012), see the Forum organized by Mark KRAMER, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 14/5 (2012), 149-189.

23 M. MANN, *The Dark Side of Democracy. Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 2.

24 This was pointed out at the time in T. NAIRN, “Immigration under Capitalism”, *New Left Review*, 80 (1973), 111.

different elements tend to converge in a single paradigm does not mean that they are all of equal value, or that their authors actually share common premises, or even common conclusions. It simply means that there is a general assumption that ethnic cleansing, and maybe even genocide, should be seen as an integral part of European history, rather than as an occasional aberration. It can be seen – retrospectively - as a reaction to the facile optimism which was enshrined by Fukuyama's *End of History* essay (May 1989) and which had already begun to dissolve by the beginning of 1992. At the end of the decade Mark Mazower provided a well-argued case for dismissing any optimism on the inevitable triumph of democracy and peace in European history.²⁵

It may seem that 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide' are merged, or used interchangeably. This is not the argument of this paper. The argument is that these terms were (sometimes unwittingly, other times quite intentionally) merged as a way of arguing in favour of a re-evaluation of a historical event (e.g., the expulsion of German populations after the Second World War)²⁶. It could also be used to justify an actual policy option: if the massacre qualifies as 'genocide', then military intervention would be justified; if, instead, it qualified as only 'ethnic cleansing', military intervention was to be ruled out.²⁷ Whatever the merits of the different historiographical interpretations and policy options, the result has been that the terms 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide' have been used in an increasingly confused and interchangeable manner.

3.The revival of the Kohn dichotomy and the Austrian Littoral²⁸

The use of ethnic cleansing as a generalized paradigm for European history tends to pre-empt any critical discussion of sources used, of historical

25 M. MAZOWER, *Dark Continent: Europe's 20th Century*, London: Allen Lane 1998.

26 For a summary discussion of the implications of such re-evaluations and the related process of "Holocaustization" of populations transfers in Germany and in Italy, see G. FRANZINETTI, *La riscoperta delle "foibe"*, in J. PIRJEVEC et al., *Foibe. Una storia d'Italia*, Torino: Einaudi, 2009, 326-327 (Isti, *Ponovno odkritije fojbe*, in J. PIRJEVEC et al, *Fojbe*, Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2012, 329-333).

27 For US debates on military intervention in the wars of Yugoslav dissolution, see S. POWERS, *"A Problem From Hell": America and the Age of Genocide*, New York: Basic Books, 2002.

28 The term 'Austrian Littoral' is used as a historical term. It is to be understood as referring both to the actual Austrian Littoral and to the now Former Austrian Littoral (by analogy with the term 'Former Soviet Union').

argumentation, providing a ready-made answer to issues which still require a full historical investigation, and adequate historical contextualization.²⁹

Two examples of the historical decontextualization will be examined in this part. The first is the revival of the Kohn dichotomy between a benign Western form of nationalism a malignant Eastern/Central European. The second example concerns the use of dichotomies of this kind to explain the history of the Austrian Littoral in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Kohn dichotomy has been discussed and often criticized, to the extent that it is often considered an irrelevant topic. Not many scholars would nowadays accept the dichotomy. Nevertheless, as various critics have observed, the actual content of the Kohn dichotomy has been accepted by many influential authors.³⁰ On the other hand, Israeli scholars have recently been arguing (on the basis of Kohn's writings during his stay in Mandatory Palestine and after) that Kohn did not in fact believe in the dichotomy which is generally attributed to him. This does not, however, explain why Kohn never disavowed this dichotomy.³¹

In any case, the dichotomy, according to which there is a benign Western European nationalism and malign Eastern European nationalism still circulates widely. It may be contested on various grounds. The first is historical accuracy. The second is in terms of the validity of normative political theory which lies behind the dichotomy.³²

From a historical point of view, however, there is a more fundamental flaw in the dichotomy: it is the fact of presenting as a *solution* what is in fact a *problem*. Is Western nationalism really less problematic than Eastern European nationalism? Even if that were the case, one could still ask why is it so? For any historian, these are crucial questions. The dichotomy simply erases the problem. Why was the Kingdom of Italy assumed to have a problem on its Eastern Border, instead of its Western Border? The fact that French and Italian were both Romance languages was never any guarantee of peaceful coexistence (as events in 1940 duly proved).

29 For some examples of the need for adequate historical contextualization, see G. FRANZINETTI, "Irish and Eastern European Questions", in *Southeast Europe. Comparison, Entanglement, Transfer. Contribution to European Social History of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, S. Rutar (ed.), forthcoming from LIT Verlag, Berlin-Münster.

30 For references to the critical discussion of Kohn's theories, see FRANZINETTI, *Irish and East European Questions*.

31 For reference to Israeli research, see FRANZINETTI, *Irish and East European Questions*.

32 This is essentially what is done (without mentioning Kohn) in W. KYMLICKA, "Nation-building and minority rights: Comparing West and East", *Journal of Migration Studies*, 26/2 (2010), 183-212.

After all, the fact that French and Italian cultures are relatively similar could have been the basis for a classic case of what Freud called “the narcissism of minor differences”.³³

With hindsight, it all seems so logical. Historical actors, however, do not have the benefit of hindsight. For this specific reason, the model proposed by Raoul Pupo, to explain the nature of national conflicts in the Austrian Littoral, seems inadequate. On many points, his explanation is (as usual) balanced and extremely convincing. But he then feels the need to say that “in the Julian region, the hinge between the East and the West of Europe and therefore between two partly different ways of understanding the conflict, there instead a resolute and stable drift into the history of Eastern Europe”³⁴ This amounts to saying that there is a historical problem; but it is not an explanation.

In recent years, Marina Cattaruzza (one of the pioneers in the study of the social history of the Trieste area) has put forward her own interpretation of the process of ethnic cleansing in post-war Europe.³⁵ She summarizes her argument in the following way: (i) the expulsion of minorities began in the Balkans, and then transferred to Eastern and Central Europe; (ii) the National Socialists racialized this process of expulsion (or extermination); and (iii) Great Britain latched on to the idea of solving the national minorities problem in Eastern Europe through a process of repatriation, The completion of the process was finally determined by the following factors: (i) the interaction between British and Soviet policies in the field; (ii) the success of the Soviet Union in establishing alliances with the Czechoslovak and Polish governments; and (iii) the radicalization of the

33 See, e.g., M. IGNATIEFF, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, New York: Henry Holt (1997), 34–71. On the Italo-French conflict during the Second-World War, see D. ELLWOOD, “Il Comando Alleato e la questione della frontiera delle Alpi Occidentali, 1944-1945”, *Mezzosecolo*, 3 (1978/1979), 167-196; and D. ELLWOOD, *Italy 1943-1945*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1985, 182-183.

34 R. PUPO, „Alcuni problemi di storia comparata: l'alto Adriatico dopo le due guerre mondiali“ (text kindly provided by the author) (“*la spinta nazionalizzatrice rimane comunque prioritaria, in linea del resto con una tendenza europea, specie nella parte mediana ed orientale del continente“ and then: „Nell'area giuliana, zona di cerniera fra est ed ovest d'Europa e quindi fra due modi parzialmente diversi di interpretare il conflitto, si ha invece un deciso e stabile slittamento nella storia dell'Europa orientale“*).

35 M. CATTARUZZA, “Espulsioni di massa di popolazioni nell'Europa del XX secolo”, *Rivista storica italiana*, 113/1 (2001), 66-85; M. CATTARUZZA, ““Last stop expulsion”- The minority question and forced migration in East-Central Europe: 1918-49”, *Nations and Nationalism*, 16/1 (2010), 108-126.

Czechoslovak and Polish resistance forces.³⁶

Much of what Cattaruzza writes is quite uncontroversial. There has never been any great mystery over the process of expulsion of German populations from Eastern European territories.³⁷ As far as the responsibilities of Edvard Beneš on this issue were concerned, any lingering doubts were dispelled in 1972, after the publication of the text of his conversations with Stalin and Molotov.³⁸

In her more recent article, Cattaruzza argued that “there was a close relationship between the violent removal of populations and the goal of creating an ethnically pure living space, and these should be seen in historical terms as constituent parts of a specific type of nation-building in East-Central and south-Eastern Europe”.³⁹ So we are back to Hans Kohn once again. Cattaruzza neglects to prove her case or to actually explain the historical problem.

4. Conclusions

An awareness and understanding of the mass transfer of populations in the post-war period is undoubtedly a basic requirement for any understanding of contemporary European history. Indeed, it is so basic that it is difficult to think of any serious historian (or any interested layman, for that matter) to have been unaware of it. In Western Europe the issue may have been sidelined, but it was never suppressed during the Cold War era. In most of Eastern Europe it was materially impossible to suppress all forms of social knowledge of these transfers, for purely statistical reasons.

The idea that in post-war Europe the minorities issue was brutally solved (through population transfer, expulsion or ethnic cleansing) sounds very plausible. Unfortunately it does not fit the facts. This is a classic case of first defining a paradigm and then deducing what should have happened (according to the paradigm). Authors construct an impressionistic and wide-ranging overview of European history, and the pattern seems clear. In reality these authors are (unwittingly or wittingly) using a short cut to skip the hard questions of European

36 CATTARUZZA, “Espulsioni”, 83-84.

37 See M. FRANK, *Expelling the Germans. British Opinion and Post-1945 and Population Transfer in Context*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

38 See V. MASTNÝ, “The Beneš-Stalin-Molotov Conversations in December 1943: New Documents”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, NF, 20 (1972), 367-402.

39 CATTARUZZA, “Last stop expulsion”, 120.

history: the origins of economic backwardness in Eastern Europe, the German and the Italian *Sonderweg*. In short, they are avoiding the questions which do not contain in themselves a ready-made reassuring answer in terms of some kind of 'liberal' consensus. (The shallow debates over 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalism are a case in point.)

The minorities issue was effectively solved in Poland (through extermination and deportations, at various stages) and in Bohemia-Moravia. There was a serious attempt to do the same in Slovakia (with the Hungarian minority), but the policy was reversed.⁴⁰ Socialist Yugoslavia was able to rid itself of its German minority in Vojvodina, and of most of its Italian minority, but not of its other minorities. Socialist Romania was not able to rid itself of minorities (except for most of the Jewish minority). Socialist Bulgaria was not able to rid itself of its Turkish minority. If there was a Communist master-plan to ethnically homogenize Communist Eastern Europe (as may well have been the case), it was rather ineffective (except in Poland and Bohemia-Moravia). Plans matter, but facts on the ground matter even more.

Undoubtedly there were many plans, Communist and non-Communist, concerning the future of Eastern Europe. In the Austrian Littoral and all over East-Central Europe what really mattered was that there never was going to be any Allied landing on the Eastern side of the Adriatic.⁴¹ As W. H. Auden put it (in words he later regretted)⁴²

*History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.*

40 See S. BOTTONI, "Politiche nazionali e conflitto etnico. Le minoranze ungheresi nell'Europa orientale, 1944-1950", *Contemporanea*, 5/1 (2003), 85-115.

41 On this specific point, M. LOJKÓ, "The Failed handshake on the Danube: the Story of Anglo-American Plans for the Liberation of Central Europe at the end of the Second World", *Hungarian Studies*, 13/1 (1998-1999), 119-127.

42 W. H. AUDEN, "Spain 1937", in Auden, *The English Auden. Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings*, 1927-1939, London: Faber and Faber, 1977, 212.

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tel +385(0)51/265-638

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Jezična redakcija:

Autorska

Grafička priprema:

Jan HYRAT

Kontakti/Contacts:

Vanni D'ALESSIO
dalessio@ffri.hr
tel +385(0)51/265-638

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