

HISTORY OF EMIGRATION FROM THE REGION

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Even in modern times many people from Carnia moved away, even far away, to follow their specialist trades just as happened in other Alpine regions. They were weavers, artisans, porters, household servants and above all peddlers, the crâmars.

The peddlers were also called materialists and such like. They went mainly to the countries of Central Europe, selling, from town to town, their haberdashery, and spices from Venice. Some became wholesale merchants of these products, setting up warehouses in the main towns where they sold their merchandise which were used by the retailers. Some large fortunes were built up on the basis of this, which was reflected in the improvement of living conditions in their hometowns, they built large houses, and acquired land both in Carnia and other areas, Istria for example. We can therefore speak, in this case, of a “wealthy emigration”, in order to maintain and consolidate a standard of living which would otherwise not have been possible.

A social and economic hierarchy was created: from merchants they became moneylenders or usually from sellers to crâmars.

This would all finish in the 19th century, when industrial change in Europe radically altered the European economy, although some small pockets in some areas continued. In the weaving trade the mechanisation of production processes and the diversification of products which became more ‘standardised’ and cost less, decreed the end of weavers and tailors, while the spread of industrialisation, urbanisation and the transport network needed more manpower for the building trade: farm labourers, unskilled workers, furnace workers, stonemasons, bricklayers, woodcutters and other specialists in the wood industry. Where the demand changed the workers adapted, taking the migratory routes already known in the communities they left, but the season changed: it was no longer in winter, but from spring to autumn, the period when most of the building could be done, with serious consequences over a long period on the delicate balance in the agricultural and pastoral sectors. With the lack of

strong manpower and expertise during the intense period of cultivation in the fields, the job was left to those remaining: the old, women and children. The result was a deterioration in the agricultural and pastoral system and production. A vicious circle ensued: faced with the drop in agricultural production, and its deterioration in quality, the increase in population, expectations of a better life style or at least job security and livelihood which the emigration of “skilled workers” seemed to guarantee, the only answer was to emigrate, both for individuals and for families.

During this period it was not only people from the mountains who emigrated, but from a much wider area. Affected by the famines of the first years of the 19th century and hearing the constant news about work and possible settlement, more than 17,000 people a year on average emigrated from Friuli between 1827 and 1836, despite the strictness of the Austrian authorities to give passports. Illegal emigration was certainly even higher; it was uncontrollable and in the end tolerated, especially if the emigrants headed for territories in the Hapsburg dominions.

From 1866 to 1914

Even after the annexation of Friuli into the Kingdom of Italy the phenomenon of emigration did not change substantially, it already had consolidated characteristics and a long tradition, and was directed mainly towards the countries of Eastern Central Europe, during the summer months. The migratory route, the destinations and the relevant trades, the reasons which pushed people to leave and to choose a particular destination did not change and, if anything, sharpened. The economic growth in Europe meant a development in the building trade and infrastructures which always needed more workers, not only an increasing number of unskilled labourers but also professionals and particular and up-to-date specialisation, and also the ability to move into an ever more complex work organisation. In the period between annexation and the new century many emigrated: street

traders, butchers, cutlers, carpenters, peat workers from the valley of the River Torre, the railway workers of the Tramontina valley, as well as farm labourers, sawmill workers, bricklayers, furnace workers, stonemasons, navvies and mosaic workers and tile layers. To the usual destinations of Austria, Hungary and Germany (where at least 90% of emigrants at the beginning of the 20th century went) must be added the countries of the Danube, Turkey, Russia, France and Switzerland.

The number of Friulian emigrants fluctuated from 17,000 to 25,000 a year from the middle of the century to the 1880s: the strongest fluctuations were linked to particular circumstances, and rose regularly from 20,000 a year in 1881 to 37,000 ten years later. The peak of 56,000 was in 1899, to then drop slowly to 36,000 in 1911, and then rise rapidly to more than 52,000 in 1914. This was 3.5% - 5.6% of the population resident in the province of Udine in the years up to 1881, 7.3% in 1892, 10.3% in 1899, 5.7% in 1911, and finally 8.2% in 1914. But these figures have a relative value and are below the real figure, at least as far as the beginning of the 20th century is concerned: in 1903 Giovanni Cosattini, in the first serious survey into temporary Friulian emigration confirmed that, on the basis of evidence from the railways, there were more than 80,000 emigrants a year, equal to 13% of the resident population, with extremes of 25% from Moggio Udinese, 18% from Gemona, 15% from Tolmezzo and San Daniele, down to 4.8% from San Vito al Tagliamento (1.5 in 1881), 4.8% from Latisana (0.99% in 1881). In 1914 the inspector of work, Guido Picotti, another keen observer of the migratory phenomenon of the time, estimated that there were 85,000 who left for Europe or overseas looking for work in that year, which represented 37% of the emigration from the area of the Veneto (in which Friuli was included for administrative purposes by the Italian government) which in its turn represented 18% of all the emigration from Italy¹. Furthermore, in 1877, Bonaldo

¹ To Giovanni Cosattini, founder and inspiration of the “*Segretariato dell’Emigrazione*”, then socialist MP and the first Mayor of Udine after the Second World War, we owe the fundamental description in *L’emigrazione temporanea dal Friuli*, Rome 1903, reprinted with an introduction by F. Micelli, Trieste, 1983. Guido Picotti noted the reluctance of the enquiries carried out by his office in various articles published in the daily Udine newspaper “*La Patria del Friuli*”. All subsequent studies on the phenomenon refer to it, among them B.M. Pagani, *L’Emigrazione friulana dalla metà del secolo XIX al 1940*. Udine. 1968, which reported the data on Friulian emigration for those periods, areas and sources. A similar picture is given in two volumes by G. Di Caporiacco, *Storia e statistica dell’emigrazione dal Friuli e dalla*

Stringher, the then vice-secretary of the General Manager's Office on Statistics, compared the data of the passports issued and the information from the mayors in Friuli, and recalculated the number of emigrants for that year from 10,000 to 16,000, and this was without being able to take into account the illegal ones.

One of the main problems when investigating emigration is in fact the numbers, especially in the periods when illegal emigration or at least that not controlled by suitable surveys was more considerable. Even when the Kingdom of Italy had the means to survey emigration statistics, they were only able to make an approximate calculation by default, at least until 1904, of the real extent of the phenomenon.

The last twenty years of the 19th century saw the mass migratory phenomenon to the plain and the appearance, together with the yearly movements, of a definitive move overseas. Even if the distinction between temporary and permanent (at that time it was called "real", because migration for a short period, with the intention of coming back to the homeland, was called "unreal") was and is imprecise, in so far as even those who went to Europe often decided to settle permanently, and those who went overseas planned to stay for a long period, to "make a fortune" and save up enough to return home, it still remains a useful distinction especially because it corresponds to different and specific realities, characteristics and consequences. Seasonal emigration to European countries followed well-established routes, often of groups of skilled workers who came from the same area, and on many occasions organised by a coordinator – mediator of that area, it guaranteed a steady but not high income, which could be invested back home to improve houses, extend family property, ensure a decent standard of living for the family and provide a basic professional training for sons. Emigration overseas however, either represented a radical abandonment of the homeland, or a risky venture for a more or less brief period of time to save up enough money to return home.

In 1875-1876 emigration towards the Americas began from the districts of Fagagna and San Vito and then progressively from other areas: by 1878 nearly 3,000 had

Carnia, Udine, 1969. From these books the big differences regarding numbers emerge from the various sources to which the authors refer, so that it is almost impossible to reach a figure which is not approximate.

emigrated, mainly to South America, also attracted by the propaganda put out by the governments of Brazil and Argentina through emigration agents who worked for the navigation companies and found a market ready to listen. The smallholders of the lowlands and plains who had begun to feel a reduction in their earnings not only because of the great agricultural crisis of those years but also because of the diseases which hit the vines and the silkworms, which drastically cut down production and earnings, and also because of the heavy tax burden (taxes on milled grain and on salt) and the rigidity of the farming agreements which burdened the tenant farmers with the effects of the crisis. The phenomenon exploded between 1887 and 1889, when there were nearly 5,000 departures a year for the New World, and it was not the poorest who emigrated, but those who had some capital, even if only modest, and the spirit of initiative: more than poverty it was the lack of opportunity, the uncertainty of the future, too rigid and oppressive social conditions which persuaded the people to leave. That which was becoming an exodus from the countryside began to worry the landed gentry, divided between hostility to a process which deprived them of a workforce and the inevitability of a phenomenon which eased the excessive population and solved the problem of poverty and backwardness without involving them, a problem which had to be sorted out. Towards the end of the century the tenant farmers and the smallholders of the plains swelled the ranks of the temporary emigrants: they did not have the trades of those from the mountains and had to be content with more menial and less well-paid jobs – labourers, navvies and furnace workers in Austrian and German brick works, where the ruthless competition brought by the Friulians to the local workers was based on forms of exploitation and self-exploitation, child labour and irreparable damage to their health.

The contrast between local labour and Friulian workers characterised, sometimes more sometimes less, the years of the big flow of emigrants to the Austrian and German labour market. The Friulians' readiness to accept lower wages, saddle themselves with a lot of work, save on everything, even food, (they continued to use polenta as their staple diet), to take the jobs of others without hesitation, all led to the

Friulians being considered as a disturbing element in the job market with relative disputes: they had a widespread reputation as *krumiri* (blacklegs). The union organisations of the towns where the emigrants went tried to soften this conflict, offering the immigrants their support and protection against the abuses of the employers, directing them to the places and the sectors where there was more demand for work, and above all encouraging the setting up of emigration support groups in the areas of departure too. On this premise the Secretariat for Emigration was set up in Udine in 1900, on the initiative of the young socialist lawyer Giovanni Cosattini, with the aim of helping, coordinating and directing temporary Friulian emigration, in collaboration with other institutions, both national and in the countries of destination. In 1901 the catholic Secretariat of the People was set up with similar aims.

Even overseas emigration reduced progressively to less than a thousand at the beginning of the century, rising suddenly in 1904, and rarely falling to below 3,000 a year, with peaks of 6,000 in 1906 and 1912, up to 10,000 in 1913 and 9,000 in 1914. The main destinations in Europe were still Austria, Germany and Hungary, but also Serbia, Romania and Turkey; since the beginning of the century France and Switzerland too had attracted thousands of emigrants.

The main destinations overseas were still Argentina and Brazil, but with a fall in emigrants from a peak of 4,500 and 2,500 respectively in 1888, up to 1904, when more emigrated to the United States and Canada: in 1904 1,500 Friulians emigrated there, rising progressively to 8,000 in 1914.

The trades and the towns they left.

Mainly bricklayers, carpenters, stonemasons and sawmill workers emigrated from Carnia to Austria and Germany. Some went to Romania, Turkey and even Egypt. In the first ten years of the 20th century 11% of emigrants from Carnia were women, half of these came from Val Resia and accompanied their husbands, artisans or peddlers; in other cases they were household servants or those assigned to the kitchens of the groups of workers, which included their husbands, or those assigned particular jobs

such as stacking wood in the sawmills or transporting materials in the building yards. There were fewer boys, about 3%, usually apprentice bricklayers or labourers, who nevertheless had heavy transport jobs.

Many also emigrated from the mountain and foothill areas of the west side of the River Tagliamento to work in the building trade, but with a particular specialisation, the mosaic layers and tile layers, who came from the area around Sequals, and the surrounding areas: these particular trades were welcome all over Europe and beyond. Many railway and road construction workers, stonemasons and miners from the areas of Aviano, Montereale and Val Cellina found work in the mines of North America.

Others from the plains of the Tagliamento emigrated to America to do non-qualified work in agriculture, the building industry or the mines but above all to stay in the various colonies built from nothing, on land granted by the government. From the beginning of the century only those who had a particular profession went to South America and they went to the big cities. North America attracted more with the chance to work in the big building industry, road and railway construction and in the factories: many went from San Daniele, Latisana and San Pietro al Natisone.

Many furnace workers came from the plains both from Pordenone and from around Udine and they represented about 80% of the emigration from those areas, among them many women and children who had to do heavy labour for long hours: they were recruited from small industries in Buia, Maiano and Fagagna, who in their turn sub-contracted production in the furnaces of Central Europe, keeping their offers low and consequently paying the workers very little. This is the typical emigration of an unskilled worker, who, except for the foremen, were not asked for any particular skills, in contrast to the bricklayers and master bricklayers who, if they were organised in homogenous groups of experts and specialists, could get good work and therefore good wages.

Protective legislation for emigration

The disruptions, illusions, cheatings and terrible living conditions of the first years of mass emigration gave rise to the direct intervention of associations for the help and protection of emigrants as well as a social and political debate which led, at the time of Giolitti, to the issuing of a series of legislations to regularise and protect the social and economic issues of emigration. The first law was in 1901 and was aimed at the protection of the emigrant in his homeland and during his journey, as well as aiming to keep a watch over and eliminate illegal emigration. A special government body was set up: the Commissariat of Emigration, supported by a Council of Emigration, who had as local reference points the municipal and district committees of emigration, whose task it was to provide details on passports, the cost of the journey, job opportunities and the precautions to take to avoid fraud. The figure of emigration agents was suppressed - they had been responsible for many cases of fraud and cheating - and they were replaced by agents of the “carriers”, that is the navigation companies, who moreover, were responsible for the economic and material conditions of the journey. The latter had to be checked by inspectors in the main ports of embarkation. The laws did not however get the desired results because emigration, even protected, was not organised and it was not possible to protect the emigrant once abroad. Only in 1904 and only with France was an agreement drawn up to that effect. In other countries of emigration, such as those where German was spoken, only the collaboration between associations and union organisations who supported job placements safeguarded the minimum economic and social guarantees. In 1910 some regulations updated the previous laws, ordering the institutes to help the emigrants and in 1911 the issuing of passports to unaccompanied children below the age of 12 was forbidden. In the same year an “emigration office for land borders” was set up: its task was to help emigration on the continent and repress illegal emigration. In 1913 the authorisation of the Commissariat for the transfer of any Italian workers abroad was made obligatory: it was possible only if there was a work contract and insurance against accidents. This legislation and the controlling bodies and the

protection they provided had no effect whatsoever on autonomous or illegal emigration of either individuals or groups, which remained substantial.

Effects of emigration

In a positive sense emigration alleviated the overpopulation in the agricultural section, improving, in general, the earnings of the population as a whole. It reduced competition in the agricultural job market, improving work contract possibilities for those who remained on the land. The remittances of the emigrants, valued at 20 to 30 million lire of the time annually at the beginning of the century, enabled the consolidation of small family properties, houses, land and animals. The increase in the demand for land, however, led to an increase in prices and the basic value of land, which was reflected in the rents charged to the tenant farmers. The poorest emigrant, such as the furnace worker, found himself forced with his work to meet the farm debts at home, without managing to find a way out of the vicious circle. In the cases where earnings from emigration were higher, they were not used to set up a professional activity back home, but rather to improve their situation abroad as an intermediary or small self-employed businessman. The future of the emigrant was in the emigrant environment whilst the goods at home, entrusted to the wives, the young and the old, were a reserve. The absence, for long periods, of young and older men in the medium term led to a not always positive change in habits and way of life (the spread of alcoholism, the abandoning of families for example) and a drop in the birth rate which had considerable consequences, influencing the demographic structure permanently (too many women and too many old people).

1915-1939

The outbreak of the First World War in August of 1914, which involved the places of seasonal emigration of the Friulians, suddenly interrupted the work routes, consolidated for decades, and imposed a return home, if not always forced, nevertheless inevitable. In 1915 there were only 2,000 expatriates: less than 800 were

in Central Europe, 500 in Switzerland, 200 in Argentina and about 300 in North America.

Within the space of a few months the income from emigrants was reduced to nothing, the emigrants were unemployed, only some were employed in jobs with the military. Many fortunes, some considerable, which had been built up in Central Europe by Friulian entrepreneurs were lost, requisitioned by the enemy after Italy entered the war. Only a few, and only a part were able to be recovered after the war, and only after interminable judicial arguments, when political and economic conditions in the countries of conflict no longer made it possible to work as it had been before the war. The end of the war, the destruction caused on the battlefields and behind the lines, the territory occupied and plundered by the Austrians and Germans after the Battle of Caporetto, had left a land of desolation and misery for those returning. After a few attempts at reconstruction by cooperatives of workers, emigration seemed the only way out also because of the population problem, even despite heavy loss of life during the war. The same fate awaited those Austrian territories which had been annexed to the Kingdom of Italy; they too, in the past, had seen emigration along the same routes as the Friulians.

The destinations changed though, but not the work. Bricklayers, tile layers, and mosaic layers headed for France, Belgium, Luxemburg and Switzerland. In 1920 there were more than a thousand in these countries and 16,000 in France.

Those living in the plain headed once again for South America (a thousand left in 1919 and 1920, and just from Cordenons alone a thousand left in these two years), for the United States (almost 3,000 in 1920) and Canada (more than 1,500 in 1920).

The face of emigration changed too: it was no longer groups organised by entrepreneurs or local contractors but individuals looking for work, the homogenous groups of workers which had characterised their trade in the countries of Europe were split up. Specialist workers no longer came from one particular area, those working in the building trade left from all over the territory now and those who went to work in the mines of North America came from all over too, agricultural workers from the

plains and the area west of the River Tagliamento worked on the farms in Brazil and Australia. Most of the emigrants still came from the foothills and the mountains.

Departures of Friulian emigrants from 1919 to 1933

Year	European Countries	Overseas Country	Total
1919	3,052	1,479	4,531
1920	20,986	5,601	26,587
1921	11,293	4,356	15,649
1922	28,751	3,517	32,268
1923	28,212	7,655	35,867
1924	31,156	5,655	36,811
1925	23,373	3,983	27,356
1926	16,779	5,538	22,317
1927	9,149	7,741	16,890
1928	11,695	3,011	14,706
1929	14,130	2,313	16,443
1930	27,787	3,092	30,879
1931	14,661	1,824	16,485
1932	7,144	792	7,936
1933	6,132	709	6,841

Departures of Friulian emigrants from 1926 to 1932

Emigration in Europe

Emigration overseas

Year	Emigration in Europe		Emigration overseas	
	men	women	men	women
1926	12,425	4,354	4,294	1,244
1927	7,093	2,056	6,571	1,170
1928	8,860	2,835	1,939	1,072
1929	11,790	2,340	1,142	1,171
1930	24,687	3,100	2,042	1,050
1931	10,157	4,504	1,113	711
1932	4,514	2,635	408	384
1933	3,654	2,478	354	355

Emigration to European countries and the Mediterranean basin from 1926 to 1933

Country	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Albania	32	26	97	50	38	374	154	101
Algeria-Tunisia	5	8	28	232	160	1,021	357	371
Austria	185	211	198	172	192	231	72	65
Belgium	778	601	1,282	2,743	1,369	7,987	3,197	3,101
Bulgaria	89	4	7	27	51	169	37	40
Czechoslovakia	24	58	87	35	38	1,283	580	285
Egypt	13,758	38	12	18	46	550	272	26
France	133	5,539	6,642	7,572	21,433	3,046	7,144	2,143
Germany	183	202	265	186	186			
Hungary	173	85	59	58	70			
Luxembourg	177	884	627	221	155			
Netherlands	73	294	231	263	314			
Romania	884	112	103	52	48			
Switzerland	19	996	856	1,270	1,514			
Turkey	22	5	93	32	12			
Yugoslavia	246	41	33	29	32			
Other countries		45	1,075	1,170	1,746			
Total	16,779	9,149	11,695	14,130	27,409	14,661	7,144	6,132

OVERSEAS EMIGRANTS FROM 1926 TO 1933

Country	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Argentina	3671	5004	1598	1196	2042	1125	426	322
Australia	274	415	160	95	134	34	57	93
Brazil	115	179	56	35	22	12	10	1
Canada	605	1246	281	284	361	33	-	-
U.S.A.	777	767	86	576	402	620	181	142
Others	96	130	830	127	131		118	151
Total	5538	7741	3011	2313	3092	1824	792	709

Annual statistics of Italian emigration from 1876 to 1925 published by the Commissariat general for emigration, Rome 1926, table n° 1 from p. 1381; table n°3 from p. 1403; table n° 4 from p. 1453.

The emigration of non-Italians from Venezia Giulia

The end of the Great War and the end of the Hapsburg Empire radically upset the institutional and cultural scene and the national identities of the people involved in the border changes and the changing of one nationality to another. In Venezia Giulia the first community to be profoundly effected by the events was the German speaking one, who left the area almost immediately: over 40,000 left, including those of other nationalities who had no intention of living under Italian jurisdiction. In the following years it was the new Italian citizens of Slovenian and Croatian nationality from Venezia Giulia and Istria who decided to emigrate for economic reasons, as did those from other parts of Italy, but also and often above all for political and national reasons. After the advent of fascism the “aliens” were the object of discrimination and an obvious plan of “de-nationalisation”, centred on the progressive limiting of any national, cultural and linguistic representation (associations, schools, use of their language). There was a widespread diffidence and hostility against the Italian state by the Slovenes and Croatians, who they considered the usurper of their national rights which would be better represented by the nearby new kingdom of Yugoslavia. This opposition became much more intense in the face of fascism. The spread of fascism in Venezia Giulia brought with it a strong nationalist intransigence and intolerance towards other nationals living in the area (because of this it was called “frontier fascism”) which became violent against associations, and not only Slovene and Croatian ones. In such a context the movement of these people was encouraged and unhindered and people from other parts of Italy came to take their place. Nearby Yugoslavia also offered the chance to keep their language and their nationality intact as well as offering work which Italy was taking from them, above all in the public sector. Teachers and railway workers were particularly discriminated against, sacked or moved within the kingdom of Italy. More than 350 teachers moved to Yugoslavia before 1923, 180 had been sacked, and 400 had already moved in 1919. Some

Slovenes and Croatians had also been part of the migratory flow from the Hapsburg Empire to the Americas. It is difficult to calculate the numbers for the first years after the war because of the confusion of dates and information and the methods and criteria used. Estimates vary from 20,000 to 50,000 which reached 150,000 over the fascist period².

More realistic estimates indicate a number of non-Italian permanent emigrants from Venezia Giulia and from Istria at no less than 50,000. But only for the period from 1930 to 1938³ which is better documented, the real extent of the phenomenon was nearer 100,000.⁴

The majority of expatriates went to Yugoslavia, particularly in the first years, and then in the second half of the 1920s to Argentina and the United States. The navigation companies of Trieste advertised their reduced tariffs to South America all over the Slovene and Croatian towns.

The particular aspect of emigration from Venezia Giulia in the immediate post-war years was contrary to the national trend, with emigration to European countries prevailing over emigration overseas, at least until 1923. Moreover, after 1927, the year which restricted emigration, among other reasons, “to defend the demographic power of the nation”, permanent emigration was forbidden. In Friuli Venezia Giulia emigration visas were given with no problem to those who were born in the annexed territories before 1919 and to those who were not Italian. In the areas of Venezia Giulia, Istria and Dalmatia, emigration increased in 1927 by 14% and even more over the following years. With the liberalisation of emigration following the economic crisis of 1929, even more emigrated to France, Switzerland and Belgium rather than to the Americas. From 1926 to 1930 there were many smallholders (a thousand a year) and many from Istria above all, who could not pay the debts they had

2 The various assessments and numbers are analysed by P. Purini, *L' emigrazione non italiana dalla Venezia Giulia dopo la prima guerra mondiale*, fr “Qualestoria”, ns, XXVIII, n. 1, 2000, pp33-54.

3 Ivi, p.52, with indications of the assessment criteria and reasons for which the author thinks it is an underestimation of the real figure.

4 100,000 is the figure which the Slovene historiography gives : see Ivi, p.36.

contracted in buying houses and land after the revaluation of the lira had considerably increased their interest rates, they had to give up and go.

As in the case of Italian emigration, and perhaps even more so, emigration for political reasons and more specifically national reasons was mixed with purely economic ones.

The fascist policy of emigration

At the beginning fascist power did not interfere in emigration, except in the re-organisation of the Commissariat for Emigration, structured in provincial delegations, which had to oversee the placement of workers abroad and suppress illegal emigration. Despite the fact that 40% of Italians who emigrated abroad came from the Province of Udine, it did not have a delegation. In 1925 the regional office for emigration, which was the peripheral body of the Foreign Ministry, was transferred from Treviso: its task was to help and coordinate in the sector. To the usual emigration for economic reasons, emigration for political reasons was added, those against fascism who were persecuted by the regime: any past militant unionists and workers were, as a consequence, not only the objects of violence and judicial proceedings but also had difficulty finding work, and so they emigrated, especially to France and South America for the double reasons of economy and politics.

In 1924 the first signs of difficulty for emigration appeared: the United States drastically limited access for Italian emigrants and three years later the fascist regime put political restrictions on emigration, with legislative and administrative measures. In fact in the second half of 1927 permanent emigration was strongly prevented, which would have reduced “the demographic power of the nation”, temporary emigration was tolerated because it was a source of income and a way of spreading the propaganda of fascism to the Italian communities abroad. “Free” emigration was forbidden, that is, those who went abroad without any point of reference, and emigration visas were only issued to those who had a work contract with a recognised employer, and for a period no longer than three years. Re-joining families was

allowed but with strict limitations. The effect was to increase illegal emigration and to change what was temporary emigration into permanent emigration: people did not return after seasonal work because they were afraid they would not be able to get away again and so they stayed in the foreign country trying whenever possible to be joined by their families. This happened particularly in France in 1932, when the Italian government refused to give visas to work there, and in reprisal the French refused to give resident permits. Among the emigrants organised propaganda in favour of fascism increased, as did political police informers, creating tension with the governments of the host countries.

In 1930 the depression led to an increase in emigration visas, but the effects of the depression at an international level, with a subsequent drastic reduction of job opportunities in all industrialised countries, and the beginning of an aggressive foreign policy on the part of Italy, gradually closed the emigration channels until the Second World War. On the other hand mobility within the Italian state increased, which involved over 40,000 people in the 1920s, and fell to 25,000 about the middle of the 30s. It had, however, a new aspect which was indicative of the seriousness of the economic and material situation of the place of origin: a very high percentage (55% in 1931) were women, and what is more girls who went to be household servants in the cities. 300 families, from the plains of the area west of the River Tagliamento, moved to the farms which had just been built in the Pontine Marshes which were in the process of being reclaimed, and it was their job to complete the work.

At the beginning of the 1930s a policy of demographic expansion was initiated, beginning with the "colonisation" of Libya, where about 200 Friulian families went in 1931-1932 and were given small farms to improve in Cirenaica. The majority came from the areas of Pordenone, San Vito al Tagliamento, Latisana, Codroipo and Palmanova. They were supposed to be chosen and picked for their ability to work, efficiency, soundness and faithfulness to the regime, dismissing any who had to support old people or children. In actual fact more often than not it was families who

had difficulty finding a job and risked being a burden on the state who went there. More than 13,000 Friulian workers found work connected with the military conquest of Ethiopia, and many remained there in the following years, only to find themselves overcome by the events of the war in 1940, and put on a par with the “colonists” of Libya.

In 1938 a new form of organised emigration began: following agreements between Italy and the Third Reich, the fascist unions, together with their German counterparts, organised the transfer to Germany firstly of agricultural and then industrial workers, at economic conditions unimaginable for Italy at that time. The conditions of life and work were then found to be very hard and discipline at work and outside was very strict, and even the financial rewards were subject to restrictions. Unemployment and under-employment, hidden but heavy, which involved more than 50,000, persuaded many Friulians to ask to be part of the contingents of workers who left Udine in 1938. Among them were 1,800 agricultural workers, many of whom were women, and 2,600 building labourers, which rose to 7,000 and 2,500 in 1940. In the following years the numbers of Italians working in Germany rose to more than 25,000 in 1942 after requests from Germany; the whole German economic system needed manpower and was able to offer higher wages than in Italy.

The Italian armistice in 1943 surprised many of these workers who, though formally maintaining their condition as voluntary workers, saw a considerable worsening in their working conditions and standard of living, which became more and more like those who were interned⁵.

The war in September 1939 forced many emigrants to return home, not only because they were called to arms but also because in many cases they were living in countries, such as France, which were at war with the Axis powers, even if Italy maintained it was still “not at war”. When Italy finally did join the war many emigrants were interned in the countries Italy had declared war against, or in some particular

5 Matteo Ermacora, *Campi e cantieri in Germania. Migranti friulani nel Reich hitleriano (1938-1943)*, in *Emigranti a passo romano. Operai dell'Alto Veneto e Friuli nella Germania hitleriana*, a c. di M. Fincardi, Verolla, 2002, pp.155-198.

situations where emigration had had political connotations, the emigrants joined in the war against the Axis powers (for example the participation of some Italians and Friulians in the French resistance).

1940-1968

At the end of the Second War Friuli VeneziaGiulia bore the signs of the German occupation which had aimed at annexing the territory, imposing Nazi racial politics and destroying any opposition with cold-blooded, ruthless methods. It had been the theatre of partisan warfare carried out by both the Italian and Yugoslav resistance. The national appurtenance of Venezia Giulia, the Gorizia area and a part of Friuli were the object of contention which involved anti-Nazi fighters, the countries concerned and the allied powers. The way the last months of the war went foreshadowed the destiny of the contested lands. A large part of the territory acquired by Italy after the First World War, inhabited by Slovenes and Croats, became part of the new state of Yugoslavia, which also claimed the main cities of Trieste and Gorizia, and the eastern stretch of Friuli, while the kingdom of Italy, weak and under protection, recalled the old appurtenance of these lands to Italy and the sacrifices faced to redeem its fascist past. Diplomatic action and the military presence already defined the post-war situation even then: Fiume, Istria, the eastern part of the province of Gorizia went to Yugoslavia. The allied military government kept control of the territory until the ratification of the peace treaty in September 1947, in an indirect way in the province of Udine, in a direct way in the province of Gorizia and zone A of Trieste. Zone B of the province of Trieste was under the administration of the Yugoslav military. For Trieste the situation was prolonged, because the Free Zone under the aegis of the United Nations was never entirely put into effect until 1954, when the two zones passed under the direct sovereignty of the two countries.

In that period the drama of the exodus from Istria, Fiume and Dalmatia increased, and a large part of the Italian population (between 250,000 and 300,000 people) collected

as refugees in Trieste and other parts of Italy. Many, either immediately or in the following years, emigrated.

Emigration from Friuli

At the end of the conflict many problems came to light which the war had hidden: the backwardness of agriculture, the lack of material and financial resources, the weakness of the productive system, the excess of manpower; to all these was added the damage caused by the war, above all in the infrastructure, in the buildings and the lines of communication. There were 50,000 unemployed, and the cost of living was impossible even for those who had work. Emigration was once again almost compulsory. In the middle of 1946 the first group of workers left to work in the furnaces of Austria, then the mines of Belgium and then to other European countries. By the end of the year there were 1,300 official emigrants, 10,000 in 1947 and 1948, and there were many more who emigrated illegally. The roads followed were the same as before, to France, but also to Belgium and Luxemburg; from 1951 Switzerland was preferred for the first time rather than France and Belgium, because of the demand for manpower triggered by industrial growth. In 1947 many left for Argentina and to a lesser extent Brazil, which were both asking for agricultural workers, and to Venezuela which attracted workers from the building trade. From 1949 many young people headed for Canada and in the following years Australia. At the end of the 1950s it was West Germany, in full economic development, which became the point of attraction.

Governments played a more important role in emigration after the Second World War, through contracts and agreements which directed and controlled the flow of migrants. For Italy this represented a basic change whereby she could control the surplus of manpower, she could guarantee an input of foreign currency and instigate stricter diplomatic relations with the countries of emigration.

The intergovernmental agreements were useful to overcome any obstacles or limitations which every country imposed on the freedom of movement and job-seeking for foreigners, in order to protect their own countrymen, upon the frequent requests of the local union organisations which feared a negative effect on both the employment and earnings of the local workers.

Assisted emigration, by the Ministry of Employment, involved a lot of workers, taken on with collective work contracts, and guaranteeing help with any documentation, with the cost of the trip and with the first 'welcome' in the new country. Quid pro quo was given by the high standard of physical condition and professional ability required to be accepted for this type of emigration; therefore, the 'free' émigré, with no preliminary contacts, following the traditional 'migratory chain', with the presence of relatives or friends or the news which they sent, directed the migratory routes.

The post-war growth in the European economy, together with a greater possibility of knowing the job market which public bodies and private organisations were offering, with subsequent international agreements and the relations kept up with fellow countrymen abroad, focused more attention on the place to choose. Industrial advancement favoured change in the job market, and the traditional occupations connected to the building industry changed more and more to jobs in industry.

The 50s and 60s marked an increase in emigration from Friuli, with a constant number from the foothills and mountains, but in this case too, it is difficult to define the reasons for migration. Some reliable sources put the figure at 44,000 in 1951 and a number varying from 53,000 to 80,000 in the 1960s⁶. But more than the phenomenon as a whole, its distribution is relevant because it involved the outer areas of the region. In a debate at the Regional Council of Friuli Venezia Giulia in October 1965 it was underlined how in the area of the Carnia foothills 24% of the active

⁶ The first figures are indicated by O.Lorenzon and P. Mattioni, *L'emigrazione in Friuli* Udine Chamber of Commerce, 1962. According to G. Bazo, *popolazione e forza lavoro*, Camera di Commercio di Udine, 1961, at that time the number of emigrants was 80,000, according to G.B. Metus, *Una politica di sviluppo regionale*, Udine, 1966, the number of emigrants was 70,000 over all the region, this same estimation is subsequently indicated by G. Bazo, N. Parmeggiani, G. Maggi *Esame dei problemi economici della provincia di Udine*, Udine Chamber of Commerce, 1967.

population (8,000 people) had emigrated, with a growing trend compared to previous years (13.5% in 1957, 17% in 1961), with some places over half the active manpower leaving, and in some cases as much as 90% of the workforce. Similarly in the foothill region of Venezia Giulia it involved more than half the active work force. As far as Carnia was concerned there were more than 22,000 emigrants in 1961, rising to 26,000 in 1965: in the same period information from the Carnic community showed that the average number of seasonal migrants from between the first ten years after the war and the 1960s rose from 9,000 (10% of the resident population) to 12,000 (13.5% of the resident population between 1945 and 1960), bringing about a further de-population of the mountain areas, which, between 1951 and 1971 lost 24% of its residents, equal to 34% of the active population.

The disagreements over the numbers is also reflected in the difficulty in distinguishing the movements: whether seasonal, periodical or definitive both inside and outside Italy. However up until the end of the 1960s more emigrated than migrated to other parts of Italy. Many emigrants tended to keep their residence in the town they came from for a long time and so cancellations from the registry do not take into account all those seasonal and temporary emigrants.

Emigration abroad continued to have a negative effect on the places left, above all in the case of individual emigrants who were not then followed by their families, in that it increased inflation caused by monetary remittances which were used in non-productive sectors (family consumption, paying off debts, buying or improving property). If these amounted to 2.5 billion lire in 1942, they increased to 7.17 in 1958, and almost 10 in 1963, mainly gathered from the banking sector⁷.

Emigration of women

A relatively new phenomenon was the number of independent women who emigrated. Starting from 1947 it was Switzerland which attracted them most and by

⁷ R. Meneghetti, *Le rimesse degli emigranti]945-]964. Politica economica e politica del diritto*, in "Storia contemporanea in Friuli", XVI, n.17, 1986, pp 31-60.

the beginning of the 1950s they represented 30% of the immigrant workforce there. From the beginning the work they did was traditional: servants in families and hotels, then they became workers in the textile industry, the confectionery industry and finally precision mechanics in other sectors. Light industry also attracted young women to Belgium and Germany.

Emigration from the Giulia region

A new phenomenon in the context of the region, but also of Trieste and Venezia Giulia, was the emigration from these areas after the Second World War.

The first signs were the departure of 3,167 refugees from Istria who, having refused in 1948 either to return there and become Yugoslav citizens, or to opt for Italian citizenship, found themselves stateless and through the *International Refugee Organisation* emigrated to Australia in 1951. The Australian government had in fact decided in 1947 to open its doors to European immigration, and in particular to refugees and political refugees: its aim was to populate the vast uninhabited areas of the continent and this was an alternative to the dreaded immigration of Asians.

Until then Australian immigration policy had been rather restrictive, especially with regard to Italians. In this case too, the change came with an Italo-Australian agreement of March 1951, renewed, with modifications, until 1964, which provided help in immigration to those specialised or not, according to their predicted needs, and selected according to criteria of age, civil status etc. The worker had to respect various commitments and the government had to guarantee that the system worked well. At the same time, in 1952, the *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration* (ICEM) was founded, which gathered numerous adherents worldwide. Its aim was to ease emigration from overpopulated European countries to countries overseas which offered the chance of regulated immigration, providing such services as recruitment, selection, reception and placement of the workers as well as language and professional training courses. The basic structure was the emigration centre, with areas adapted to host the emigrants who were waiting to leave (in Italy, for example,

there were six) and stopping places, with the chance of accommodation in transit. Trieste was one of these stopping places for those emigrating to Australia, with organisational support from the local employment office. It was through the ICEM that emigrants left for Australia, also from Trieste, starting from 1955, when the intergovernmental agreement was really put into force by the Australian government. Following this process, 23,000 from Trieste and the Venezia Giulia area emigrated between 1954 and 1964, 10,000 alone by 1957 (this is approximate as the exact number is difficult to quantify). Among these a quarter may have been refugees. The choice of emigration to a distant destination which was made possible by the existence of help in the cities, was due to the widespread economic and unemployment crisis, which was a result of the withdrawing of the allied military government and the support, with its social and security functions, this had given to the local economy,. The shipbuilding industry was in crisis, as was the port, which was cut off from links with Central Europe. There was no body of medium-sized industries and the small industries were undersized. The thousands of former employees of the military government, the tide of refugees from Istria and the commuting workers from neighbouring areas were also a burden on the job market. There were nearly 20,000 unemployed or under-employed. The psychological aspect also weighed heavily, the feeling of being in a place and situation which by now were of no significance, and with no prospects. To avoid reprisals, the police, employees of the GMA, who were accused of having shot at the crowd in November 1953, were embarked secretly. More than half of the emigrants who went to Australia were skilled workers, who thus left a dearth in their home country and could not always use their skills to the full when they arrived there, where they lost status on the job market; and to this was added also the workforce from the lands ceded to Yugoslavia, who were mainly farm labourers.

In the following years less than 4,000 of those who had left for Australia during the period 1954-1961 returned to Trieste⁸

8 On this topic see: F. Fait, *L'emigrazione italiana in Australia (1954-1961)*, ERMI, Udine, 1999

International emigration agreements reached by Italy between 1946 and 1951

DATE	COUNTRY	AGREEMENT
23.06.46	Belgium	Protocol for the transfer of 50,000 miners.
21.03.47	France	Agreement regarding immigration in France
19.04.47	Sweden	Agreement regarding emigration of workers
06.04.48	Luxemburg	Agreement for the emigration of 1,000 agricultural workers
22.06.48	Switzerland	Agreement relating to immigration
04.12.48	Netherlands	Agreement for the recruitment of miners to work in the Dutch mines
18.05.49	France	Agreement regarding the emigration of workers in the Saarland
15.07.50	Brazil	Migration agreement N° 19
21.03.51	France	Emigration agreement
29.03.51	Australia	Agreement for assisted emigration

Source INPS *Accordi internazionali per le assicurazioni sociali e l'emigrazione stipulate fra Italia e altri paesi*, (International agreements for social insurance and emigration stipulated between Italy and other countries) Rome, 1954

Departures of individual emigrants from Friuli from 1951 to 1957

Country of immigration	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957
French Equatorial Africa			171	7	1			
Argentina	7	381	561	1	13	584	218	44
Australia	103	77	10	2	9	8	102	387
Austria	103	2,000	569	263	21	1,195	34	258
Belgium	37	98	10	25	2	5	13	541
Brazil	12	56	76	14	1,211	113	2	24
Cameroon	12	26	210	307	1,142	272	3,710	35
Canada	241	1,696	3,023	1,423	28	1,468	761	1,054
East Africa	158	362	36	10	7	258	3	65
France	31	3	1	1	69	22	41	7,331
West Germany	3	130	38	44	1,616	1,669	2,236	1,328
Kenya	193	1,082	869	1,372	2	7	43	19
England	15	6	4	44	228	6	40	149
Luxemburg		9	1	6	4,575	5	27	3,365
Nova Scotia		3,190	2,096	12	2	1	2	20
Holland		3	1	2,554	20	5,383	8,277	141
Rhodesia			1	20		1	1	120
South Africa			43	80		8	6	44
Switzerland								9,735
U.S.A.								77
Venezuela								206
Other Countries								48
Total	915	9,119	7,720	6,185	8,947	11,005	15,518	24,995

Taken from *L'Emigrazione in Friuli*, Udine, 1962 by O. Lorenzon and P. Mattioni

EMIGRANTS DIVIDED INTO WORKERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

YEAR	Workers		Family members	
	MF	M	MF	M
1955	11,005	10,750	1,060	384
1956	15,518	13,219	835	238
1957	24,995	20,439	3,042	1,070

INDIVIDUAL WORKERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS WHO EMIGRATED TO EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND OUTSIDE EUROPE

YEAR	COUNTRY OF EMIGRATION	WORKERS		FAMILIES	
		MF	M	MF	M
1955	Europe	10,136	9,884	484	168
	Outside Europe	869	866	576	216
1956	Europe	15,161	12,868	445	145
	Outside Europe	351	351	389	93
1957	Europe	22,863	18,645	1,420	502
	Outside Europe	2,132	1,797	1,622	568

Taken from *L'Emigrazione in Friuli*, Udine, 1962 by O. Lorenzon and P. Mattioni

Towards the end of emigration

By in-depth surveys of the territory it is possible to hypothesize how migration was differentiated according to periods over the last thirty years, underlining the differences in the territory⁹.

Between 1962 and 1964 there was a short period when there was a drop in emigration, with a positive effect linked to the beginnings of growth in the industrial sector in the region, especially in the area around Pordenone, which required unskilled labourers on low wages.

⁹ *Movimenti migratori in Friuli 1960-1975: un'indagine orientativa*, Udine, CRES, 1977.

From 1965 to 1969 there was a consistent upswing in migration involving not only abroad but also within the country. It involved mainly unskilled labourers from the agricultural or building trade who left from small, underdeveloped areas. The traditional building industry became the means of getting experience and some qualification for those from the agricultural sector. This crisis of the technological progress of traditionally poor building caused a transfer towards the areas of industrial development in Europe. Those who had professional qualifications but could not find suitable work in the region also moved to Switzerland and Germany, where they found good jobs and higher wages. These were also alternative solutions for those who had emigrated overseas in the preceding years.

Young people, more men than women, but with a decisive increase in the number of women, emigrated from the usual areas such as the mountains. They already had a trade either through an apprenticeship or had attended a professional/technical school. They stayed away for long periods with short trips home, keeping up family ties and residence, even though they may have married abroad, although if they married abroad more often than not they stayed abroad or in other Italian communities. This kind of emigration went down during the 1970s when people preferred shorter stays of between five or eight months, abroad or in other parts of Italy, returning with better professional qualifications.

1969-2005

Emigration and returns

From 1968 onwards more people returned than emigrated. Internal mobility was higher than emigration: this is confirmed in 1971 when more people transferred their residence from abroad than to abroad¹⁰. In 1973 the international economic crisis led to a stagnation in the migratory flow, while the effects of local industrial development and a specific regional legislation aimed at encouraging the return of the

¹⁰ See G. Valussi, *Il movimento migratorio*, in *Enciclopedia Monografica del Friuli Venezia Giulia*, voi. 2.2 *La vita economica*, Trieste, 1974, pp.897-899.

migrant workforce which had emigrated periodically, and even of those who had settled abroad. The regional job market was now able to employ the workforce which had been too much for it in the past, especially if they were qualified, whilst there was still an abundance of unskilled workers, which had mainly come from the agricultural sector. The long-term effects of emigration were felt on the demographic structure, which had felt a loss of young people, mainly men, in the preceding years, that is, the lack of the more productive intermediate-age group and the increase in the numbers staying on at school meant fewer young people on the job market. The work available needed more qualifications. Emigration abroad was replaced by migration to other regions of Italy or within the region itself, particularly from the less important areas not involved in economic development, which, of course, made the demographic situation even worse in these areas. Emigration abroad was linked to particular professions and types of work (young specialised technicians, with high salaries, in extremely highly qualified sectors, such as big engineering projects in various parts of the world).

Those returning were married couples of 35-40 years old who had been away for 10-20 years, with high professional qualifications, who built their own houses and set up, in some cases, their own business. There were fewer retired people who came back, especially if their children remained abroad.

The main periods of return were 1966-1970 and 1970-1974, especially from European countries, whereas there were fewer returns from overseas.

The earthquakes of 1976 and the subsequent rebuilding, after an initial phase of uncertainty and some emigration, accentuated the process already going on, offering the chance of work and enterprise which were not limited to the first phase of reconstruction, bringing to an end the phenomenon of migration even from outlying areas, which had still had in 1976 a fair number of emigrants and were the areas most hit by the earthquake.

People still go abroad to work but for highly qualified jobs, to work for big Italian companies or to take on contracts for important jobs.

How many citizens from Friuli Venezia Giulia are abroad today?

The latest figures (June 2005) are 134,862 registered at AIRE (*Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero*) the registry of Italians resident abroad, who originally came from Friuli Venezia Giulia and present in 180 countries in the world: more than 76,400 in European countries, 32,000 in South America, 15,300 in North America, 6,300 in Australia, 3,700 in Africa and about 1,000 in Asia.

There are more than 400 places in the world where they meet and socialise: the “*Fogolars Furlans*”, *Ente Friuli nel Mondo* (Friuli in the world), *Circoli dell'Associazione Giuliani nel Mondo di Trieste* (The Association of Giulians from Trieste in the world), *ALEF, Associazione Lavoratori Emigrati del Friuli Venezia Giulia di Udine* (The Association of Emigrant Workers), *Segretariati dell'EFASCE, Ente Friulano Assistenza Sociale e Culturale Emigranti di Pordenone* (Social and cultural assistance for emigrants from Pordenone), *ERAPLE, Ente Regionale ACLI per i Problemi dei Lavoratori Emigrati di Udine* (Regional body for the problems of emigrant workers abroad from Udine), and *Unione Emigranti Sloveni del Friuli Venezia Giulia di Cividale del Friuli* (The Union of Cividale del Friuli of Slovene emigrants from Friuli Venezia Giulia).