

EMIGRATION FROM FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA TO SWITZERLAND.

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Introduction

Emigration from Friuli dates back a long way, starting with the temporary and seasonal migrations to Austria, Germany, Hungary and even Romania, as well as to the neighbouring Italian regions, from Veneto to Piedmont, of which we have evidence from the 16 th century. These phenomena have been studied since the beginning of the 20 th century, especially from the point of view of the areas of emigration, and often in an approach between nostalgia for the Friuli of the past and a condemnation of the sorrows caused by chronic underdevelopment.

The important book *L'Emigrazione temporanea dal Friuli* by Cosattini (1903) analysed the areas of departure, the crafts of the emigrants and their destinations; similarly Zanini (*Friuli Migrante*, 1937) identified the special skills and tried to give a name and face to the builders, furnace workers, sawyers and wood cutters who left from Carnia and the hill region of Friuli heading for Central East Europe.

In the 1960s Gino di Caporiacco published his ambitious volume, *Storia e statistica dell'emigrazione dal Friuli e dalla Carnia*. It was a work of civil consciousness and critical spirit, as if to finish an era, when the migratory movements from Friuli had already assumed a different aspect, masterfully dealt with by Elena Saraceno 15 years later in her book *Emigrazione e rientri* (1981).

It proved however very difficult to find material and published works describing the key role of Switzerland as one of the preferred destinations of the migrant Friulians and as the main destination after the Second World War. The above mentioned books were not much helpful because Switzerland is rarely mentioned, and sometimes it is only referred to in passing, perhaps for comparison; for example di Caporiacco used

the case of Switzerland to confirm that emigration from Friuli was not an inevitable destination but the result of late development and political choices.

He talks about Switzerland, by that time a recent destination for the first migratory flows even from Friuli, to highlight the different fate of the Alpine regions between the 19th and 20th centuries; those regions chosen by emigrants, “*such as Switzerland*”, quickly became a welcoming place for immigration thanks to the industrial and infrastructural boom. Popular press was not much helpful neither. *Storia del Friuli* by Tito Maniaco published in the 1970s, recently republished, dedicates a whole chapter to emigration but dwells briefly on the migratory flow after the Second World War, and does not even mention Switzerland as one of the countries which welcomed the Friulians.

In short the history of Friulian migration to Switzerland is basically to be written. There are not reliable sources on the departures and returns. With particular regard to the migratory phenomena in the first decades after the war, the numbers can only be estimated by considering, by means of the data in the municipal and consul register offices, the communities settled in Switzerland nowadays.

During its period of maximum expansion, after the Second World War, departures for Switzerland were mainly for seasonal work, the first step to acquire a more stable job, and as such generated temporary absences in the municipality of residence, which were badly recorded in the statistics.

Even temporary migration was never systematically recorded, as often, when leaving, people did not remove their names from the register office to maintain close ties with their town of origin. The creation of the Register for Italians abroad in their municipalities of origin, and more recently the updating of the consular register offices according to the law concerning voting for Italians abroad into effect indispensable, are too late measures (when the flows were finishing) to get any useful information. The interest about the migratory phenomenon to Switzerland has always been lower than the attention given to overseas flows or the commuting of migrant

Friulian artisans and traders to Central Europe. The migration to Switzerland acquired some significance only recently, just before the change in the migratory flows which closed, after the end of the 1970s, the debate on migration from Friuli and the interest of researchers on the subject.

Nobody has yet been able to reconstruct and pass on biographies, faces, memories except for individual stories of life presented in some researches in Switzerland, investigating for example the biographies of migrant women (AllemanGhionda, Meyer, 1992; Ambrosi, 2005) or the presence of immigrants in the trade union (Steinauer, Von Allmen, 2000). The existence of large communities of Friulians in Switzerland was evident from the verses and the articles of analysis and condemnation by Leonardo Zanier beginning in the 1960s. It became visible only in the brief studies on migration carried out at the end of the 1970s – beginning of the 1980s. However no significant development occurred after the changes in socioeconomic situation and the consequent lack of interest in this declining aspect of local history.

This work aims therefore at asking questions and indicating the most useful ways to study the Friulian presence in Switzerland, emphasizing documents and biographies thanks to AMMER project, rather than giving an exhaustive or systematic view. The preconditions for such a work do not yet exist.

**The first migratory waves, the roots of the industrial takeoff in Switzerland.
Between the end of the 19 th century and the First World War.**

As it is wellknown, Friulian emigration dates back to the 16 th century, that is to the “cramars”, who were both craftsmen and merchants at the same time, travelling from their homes to bordering countries and to Central Europe. Migrant Friulians worked in the building trade, but there were also specialized craftsmen. Other movements were ordered by the various competent magistrates of the Republic of Venice who, especially in the 16 th and 17 th centuries, tried to repopulate those parts of their lands which had been decimated by war, famine or plague. Many peasants, craftsmen and wood cutters from Carnia were transferred to Istria and Dalmatia. When Trieste became a free port in 1719, Friulians were an important part of the immigration flows to the city.

The first extensive migrations from Friuli date back to the middle of the 19 th century and mass migrations started in 1880, involving 6% of the population. As Valussi noted in *Il movimento migratorio (Enciclopedia Monografica del Friuli Venezia Giulia, 1974)*, the migratory phenomenon was typical of an economic transition. Following the development of communication, seasonal migrants left their villages in the summer and went to earn money to supplement the meagre earnings from farming, thus perpetuating the survival of a rural society which had been put under serious threat by industrialization.

Emigration from Friuli remained constant until the outbreak of the First World War representing 10% of the total departures of Italians.

Despite the possibilities of emigrating across the ocean¹, the Friulians continued to prefer the European countries where they moved on a temporary basis and then returned home. The main destinations (80%) are the traditional ones: 40% migrated to Germany (as regards Carnia between the end of the 19 th century and the beginning of the 20 th century), 34% to Austria and 7% to Hungary.

In this period, from 1890, Switzerland, for the first time, became a significant destination for Friulian emigrants (about 3% emigrated here towards the end of the 19 th century). This happened due to the new conditions of the job market in the countries of immigration. At that time Switzerland underwent serious social and economic changes, with the building of important roadways and railways, such as the two fundamental NorthSouth routes across the Alps: the Gottardo and Sempione tunnels. These works, which were financed by international groups, thanks to the interest of German and Italian entrepreneurs in providing fast means of communication, attracted plentiful of workers from abroad. The tunnels were built by big Central European and Swiss companies, German and local technicians and a workforce mainly from the bordering regions of Northern Italy. Probably in this context the first Friulians went to Switzerland, but a major flow arrived when Swiss high plateau, firmly bound to the NorthSouth railway, began its industrial and urban development, attracting a workforce from both the building and the manufacturing industries.

The mass emigration from Friuli which occurred between 1881 and 1914, came to an abrupt halt with the outbreak of the First World War, even though it was partially supported by the Italian government and by Catholic organizations, with at least a minimum of social assistance. The first Catholic missions settled in Switzerland in 1896 and in 1901 the Italian government set up the first Commission for Emigration

¹ Emigration to the Americas (to Argentina, Brazil, the United States, Canada) went from 7% in the 19 th century to 20% in the first ten years of the 20 th century)

(Valussi, 1974). Religious and lay institutions created support systems, in Friuli too, for helping the migrants, protecting them from workforce recruiters and looking after their moral welfare. There is thus an indirect evidence of Friulian emigration to Switzerland which was already articulated at professional level. At the end of the 19th century services to help young migrants and children started to appear. A basic community of Friulians in Switzerland was beginning to emerge, with both legal and illegal arrivals of men – with the traditional skills of emigrants to Central Europe – and women, who worked mainly in the textile industries. The Swiss Permanent Women's Secretariat to protect migrant women and children founded *Heime*, that is shelters for workers, financed by the local entrepreneurs and entrusted to the nuns of Menzingen. Valussi also wrote that, from 1890, Switzerland was the emerging destination for temporary migrants from Friuli who wanted to work seasonally in the building trade. Usually they arrived in the spring and left before the harsh winter set in. He does not give any further detail.

A second indirect source to understand the growing relevance of the Friulians in Switzerland between the 19th and 20th centuries is provided by the events of the rising workers' movement in Central Europe. The role of Friulian migrant workers has been much debated in historical research, which doubted on the stereotype of the migrant "blackleg", according to the representation of Friulians as a docile workforce (*solid, honest, workers*), used for blacklegging by the local companies to repress the Socialist trade union demands. This aspect is highlighted in some documents analyzing the development of the trade union movement in Friuli, which owes emigration a debt, because it undisclosed to many workers the ideas and practices of Socialism in Germany and Austria. Migrant brought these ideals back to their country. Marco Puppini (*L'emigrazione dal Friuli, in Friuli Venezia Giulia, Storia del 900*, 1995) reminds that Friulian emigrants were among the activators of the Builders' and Workers' Association of San Gallo, and that Luigi Vuattolo, a migrant

Friulian who had trained in Germany was one of the main leaders of the Swiss Woodworkers' Union at the beginning of the 20 th century.

This seasonal migration, marked by cyclic arrivals and departures and by the widening presence of qualified men (in the building trade and farming) and women (in the textile industry) involved a generic workforce looking for their fortune (they came not only from the mountains but also from the central and hill areas of Friuli). This trend was however brusquely interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War from 1914-1918. The migrant workers returned home quickly during the period of "Italian neutrality". The borders were then closed and for some years the army was the only possibility for emigrant workers who couldn't find a job in their places of origin.

The raise of Fascism and the Second World War

At end of the First World War migratory flows in Friuli had a lively revival up until 1924-1925.

They no longer headed to Germany and Austria, torn by the war, but chose other destinations such as France, which needed a workforce for its rebuilding phase and mines. These flows were more controlled, based on bilateral agreements, government support and organized forms of negotiation, such as the agreements between the Associated Workers' Movement of the Friulian builders and the French contractors. In the 1920s there was a peak of 30,000 departures annually, from places of origin and with crafts very similar to the prewar period, but towards different destinations, among which Switzerland. In 1920, when we had data relating to the destinations of the emigrants (Valussi, 1974), Switzerland was fourth in the list of destinations from the province of Udine, with 1,100 migrants, more or less the same number as Austria and slightly less than Canada or the United States. The reasons for the new emigration to Switzerland was both the uncertain and difficult job market in Friuli,

which gave new strength to the migratory chains, and the favourable job market in Switzerland, given that the country had embarked upon a phase of industrial development, facilitated by its neutrality during the war. However, there are no clear data about the number of emigrants but they were undoubtedly fewer than those who went to France, which was the destination of about 300,000 migrants between the two wars.

Emigration to Switzerland continued constantly, with ups and downs, during the 1920s, but it suddenly reduced in the second decade of the Fascist period. The economic conditions, with the devastating aftermaths of the 1930s crisis, stopped and redirect migration flows more efficiently than the laws expressly promulgated by the Italian government in 1927. There were still more than 20,000 departures a year at the end of the 1920s, whilst the great reduction only started from 1932, when the countries of destination, such as France and Switzerland, drew up laws to regulate and limit the migrant flows, even by closing the doors to immigrants. There is evidence then of “illegal” immigrants, probably brought in by the communities already settled abroad.

During the twenty year period of Fascism, starting from the 30s, there was a strong reduction in migration from Friuli to foreign countries, which went down to only 3,000 persons a year; on the contrary, migration within the country or to the colonies was uppermost.

Emigration after the Second World War. Switzerland as a preferred destination.

The wave of emigration from Friuli, when Switzerland played an important role, was undoubtedly after the Second World War. This began with the first illegal arrivals, driven by desperation and mass unemployment, in 1945, despite closed borders. Between 1946 and 1970 just under 364,000 people left Friuli (Valussi, 1974), and, according to general estimates of all flows as a whole (of which we do not have

precise evidence), almost half went to Switzerland. It is difficult to infer from this figure – about 180,000 departures – the exact number of migrants who actually went to Switzerland, because in this first phase there were frequent comings and goings, and because many migrants arrived to Switzerland after their first migratory experiences in France, Belgium and Germany.

Emigration to Switzerland was almost entirely (more than 95%) from Friuli: from the Province of Udine, the mountain area of Carnia, the hill regions, the central plain and, at least in the first phase, from the areas on the right bank of the River Tagliamento which, since 1968, are part of the newly formed province of Pordenone.

At first, despite the efforts of the Swiss government to make the presence of the immigrants precarious (according to the needs of the job market), the phenomenon took on the connotations of a “real” migration, as it no longer was a temporary or seasonal choice to round up the insufficient income families produced in Italy.

In the post war period, emigration never reached the peaks of the first phase of the phenomenon or of the years of Fascism. However the nature of emigration changed: a larger number of emigrants went overseas, exacerbating the radical depopulation of the traditional places of origin, with the mountain area affected the most. Departures were widespread throughout Friuli, but when they came back, even if they had been from the hill area or the mountains, emigrants tended to resettle in the plain and in places with a new industrial development. This phenomenon of “sliding” towards the valleys has been analysed in a research promoted by the Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia at the beginning of the 1980s, and was carried out by the *Centro Ricerche Economiche e Sociali di Udine* (Economic and Social Research Centre of Udine). The complete results of this study have not been published yet. The data of AIRE in 2006 clearly show this trend: 11% of the citizens are registered with AIRE in the province of Udine, but this figure goes up to 20% if we take into account the mountain area.

Emigration to Switzerland started again in the 1940s even before the end of the war. At the beginning, some particular factors, with roots in the war period, played a significant role.

Switzerland in fact welcomed a limited number of refugees fleeing from racist and political persecution, and in 1943 it opened its doors to Italian deserters. Valussi, quoting Lorenzon, recalled the arrival in Switzerland, since 1943, of Italian soldiers, who were in France at the time of the armistice, signed after the fall of the Fascist regime, looking for a shelter to avoid deportation to Germany. These refugees were employed in the local companies and, after a brief return to the homeland after the war, went back to take up their jobs with advantageous conditions from the Swiss companies.

After the war Switzerland was ready to welcome a workforce. Their productive system was undamaged and capable of working at full capacity, counting on an interesting market for heavy industries and manufactures in general, on the background of European reconstruction. Switzerland was also preparing to invest hugely in energy infrastructures, with the building of dams and hydroelectric plants. *“So, from August 1946 on, the first groups of bricklayers from Carnia and Central Friuli could emigrate to Switzerland”* (Valussi, 1974, page 888). Then on 22nd June 1948 the Italian and Swiss governments signed an agreement to facilitate the assumption of workers in Swiss companies, although longer times to acquire a residence permit were introduced. The route was now easier.

The revival of emigration from Friuli after the war was in some way regulated and enhanced by the actions of the local institutions. At the end of 1948 the Provincial Administration of Udine and the Provincial Committee for Unemployment (with representatives from each municipality, the economic bodies, the trade unions and the relevant offices) met to discuss both permanent and temporary emigration *“ to foster*

collaboration between State and local Bodies” . The Provincial Deputation set up a coordinating office to face the problems of unemployment; its final objective was to retrain and help specialise the unemployed workforce, even for migration, establishing close ties of collaboration with the trade unions and the Employment Exchange.

Organizations begin thus to play an important role in linking emigrant Friulians to their homeland, by promoting a system of assistance to organized emigration, already tested at the end of the 19th century.

At the end of the 1940s a new phase of emigration started with some noticeable peaks: over 24,000 in 1948 (the maximum), about 22,000 in 1951, and 21,000 in 1955. Numbers of emigrants gradually reduced, and this trend was confirmed in the following period.

This migratory phase fits in with a period of postwar development in the region, conditioned by the contrast between urban areas of industrialization and rural areas (Saraceno, 1982). Industrialization could not meet the chronic need for employment in either the mountain or the hill regions, thus leading on the one hand to a migration and depopulation of the mountain region and of some valleys, and on the other hand to some migrants accepting the old philosophy of temporary migration. Some therefore chose to work abroad as a temporary “investment”, rejecting the possibility to move to developing urban areas in the region, and this was a welcomed solution for many families who had fields and houses in their areas of origin.

Emigration from Friuli, as from the rest of Italy, tended to assume new characteristics. The flows were more articulated with regard to destination and composition: men and women, qualified workers and manual labourers, usually left taking advantage of the social and welfare rights granted by agreements between the Italian government and the country of destination. The reasons for exchange were

more favourable than before, because the countries of destination had a real need for a workforce and the processes of industrialization made a certain social and professional mobility of migrants possible. Anyone who possessed a qualification in the building or even mechanics sectors – managed to plan a career, while farmers could get jobs in the brick yards or, in some cases, even into the manufacturing industry.

In a similar context, emigrants from Friuli to Switzerland were first and foremost bricklayers and specialists in the building trade. Leo Zanier made a vivid description in his collection of poems (wellknown in 1964 *Libers....di scugni' là, [Free... to leave]*). He also wrote articles and, as well as being a poet, he was for many years active in politics, in the trade union movement and in associations and training. The typical Friulian migrant described by Zanier is a seasonal bricklayer, who lived in Switzerland for 11 months of the year, alone and welcomed by the federal authorities, concerned about the country being overrun by foreigners (a debate which opened at the end of the 1960s alongside the xenophobia phenomenon which gave rise to the antiforeigner incidents of Schwarzenbach). He lived in a shack, saved everything he could and had few social contacts apart from his colleagues.

But Zanier also wrote about a different kind of migratory experience, such as Friulians who managed to get a residence permit, first for one year and then “Niedergelassene ”: a permanent residence. These were the Friulians who became managers in companies, worked in factories or set up their own business.

Switzerland was an attractive destination for the Friulians; it was near and in some instances culturally similar. There was a plentiful demand for workers, not only in the building trade, abandoned by the local workforce, but also in other sectors with insufficient local workers. The Swiss companies organized a network for the recruitment of labourers and qualified workers in the regions of origin, offering

tempting contracts. These measures were within a system of rules which facilitated the shift of working groups, and supports what Reyneri described as the “migratory chain”. Young migrants were almost already trained and ready to specialize in the field of the company; they began the long procedure to become permanent (usually beginning as seasonal workers), and then replaced the older workers who returned to the homeland, taking advantage from the welfare agreements settled between the countries. In case of no immediate working possibilities in an industrial sector with career prospects, young emigrants accepted more menial jobs to begin with, as unskilled labourers in farming or the building trade, and then perhaps acquired a little of the language and learnt how to get on and make themselves known. Many Friulians began this way, in the 1950s, their professional and migratory careers, which led them to become skilled workers in the mechanical industry, in the factories in German speaking Switzerland (the big companies such as Sulzer, Brown Boveri and Escher Wyss of Zurich, Winterthur and Sciaffusa) or French speaking Switzerland between Lausanne and Geneva.

In the first decade after the Second World War, Friulian emigration began again, without however reaching the peaks of the preceding period. Between 1946 and 1958 more than 230,000 people emigrated and only 65,000 came back, that is less than 30%. However it must be borne in mind that in the past flows, despite the characteristics of temporary migration, people returning were even fewer, amounting to only 15% of the departures.

In Switzerland, the Friulians settled and at the same time split up; often the migrants had no particular plan of where to go, whether to settle in the host country or when to return to the homeland. Generally they always tried to escape the oppressive seasonal conditions, to get a temporary and then a permanent residence permit. Some migrants however continued to live on a temporary basis even once they had established

residence and reinvested their savings in the homeland: some sending money to their families in Friuli, others saving towards building their own house, in the hope of coming back and grant a better future for their children, who, in many cases, were sent to study in Friuli and entrusted to grandparents and relatives until the return of their parents. Some migrants were forced to put off their return *sine die* until they got their pensions because their savings were not enough. Others started their families there and became integrated, simply because they felt “happy” there (*topos* of many migratory biographies written in the last few years) or because their children attended schools there and, even if they have the means to return to the homeland, they prefer to stay with their families. The closeness to their homeland meant leaving was less painful and visits back and short holidays were frequent, perhaps spent in the house they had left (which in the meantime had been renovated).

During these years a Friulian community tended to settle more permanently in Switzerland, revoking that feature of temporary migration. At the beginning of the 1950s a vast membership network was set up and in 1953 it became the organization Friuli nel Mondo (Friuli in the World).

At present Switzerland is second in Europe, just after France, with the number of *Fogolars*. In both cases they show the choice of the community to settle down, while keeping their roots and the cultural and linguistic values of their region of origin. The *fogolars* are an aspect of Friulian migration to Switzerland, historically different from Germany (where these structures don't exist), Austria and the historical areas of the first migratory wave. Despite the temporary nature of the migratory flows to Switzerland, stable communities were established by people coming from the same regions and interested in keeping their identity even abroad. They were similar to communities in of Belgium and France, as regards Europe, but event to those who emigrate overseas definitively. Moreover, the expansion of the *Fogolars* – which later joined up with the ALEF associations – all over Switzerland, accounts for another peculiarity of the Friulian presence, if compared to other emigration

communities of Italians there: the Friulian community, widely spread throughout Switzerland, shows the lesser influence of the way in which they called their family members and friends over to join them, and mirrors a socioprofessional composition of the migrants which had become, over time, wider and more heterogeneous. This community met together and had their customs and special dates, such as the annual autumn meeting at the historical Catholic abbey at Einsiedeln.

The history of the distribution and fragmentation of the Friulian migrants according to the tensions of integration or their willingness to return, is still mainly to be written about, both from the point of view of statistics and the quality of the phenomenon. This should be done gathering evidence and data from those who came back between the end of the 1960s and the 1980s, either retired or still working, to give a shape to the temporary migratory plans. At the same time stories of permanent emigration should be told; experiences determined by a conscious choice or due to the end of the plan to return or to the cases of life.

The stories of the migrants should be studied; they often left alone, to start up a family and consolidate their migratory experience or they decided to return home. We might start with the stories of the marriages in Switzerland between bricklayers or craftsmen and the women who arrived there to work in the textile industry. Stories of happy marriages but also of families breaking down, stories of temporary migrations but also permanent settlement. Every now and then a story emerges such as that of Aldo Fasano, who died on 18 th August 2007 at the age of 85. He was a migrant poet, musician and craftsman; born in Pozzuolo, Fasano emigrated to Switzerland in the 1940s. "He had hidden talent, he was an artist", said his son Claudio, thinking back to his father's life. In Switzerland Fasano devoted himself to music, playing the saxophone and the clarinet in several orchestras. He was employed as a small craftsman, he loved to work with iron and copper manufacturing stoves, firedogs, frames and other typical Friulian objects. In Switzerland he met Erta Del Medico,

originally from Tarcento, they married and had three children: Claudio, Gianni and Sandra. He and his wife came back to Friuli at the end of the 1950s and built their house at Paderno, where he lived until his death.

The stories of the “mixed” marriages between Friulians and Italians coming from other regions, as well as between Friulians and the Swiss, should be reconstructed. In this way, we should go beyond the stereotype stating that Friulians were better integrated in Switzerland because of the closer cultural affinity, compared the immigrants recruited from the South of Italy by the Taylorist industries between the 60s and 70s. One should go beyond the stereotype of emigration which had always been aimed at returning and, if they “decided” to stay, it was only because of bad luck and contrary fate.

Emigration with a definite time and aim

Starting from the end of the 1950s the flows of migrants leaving Friuli slowed down, despite the peaks of 1960 (17,500 departures) and 1996 (1966?). Paradoxically this phenomenon coincides with the opening of a lively political debate on emigration and with the birth of the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (1963), the new public body in charge of finally maintaining a model of development that would cure the plague of migration (Zanier 1974). In fact, as Saraceno would show in her book about emigration and returns, this period is the core of an evolutionary phase when the features of emigration changed and Friuli was preparing for an industrial takeoff. In this context, returning emigrants would play an important role, in a competitive system founded on the role of small companies and production lines decentralized over the territory. There were now the conditions to restore the role of temporary emigration which had characterised departures at the end of the 19th century, but in a more updated form; emigration thus became an instrument for development and no longer the simple survival of the rural settlements of origin.

This phenomenon is clear in the case of emigration to Switzerland. On 10 th August 1964 a new agreement between the Italian and Swiss governments was ratified. The new provisions hindered settlement in the host country; a hierarchy of permits and statutes was introduced, slowing down and rationing over time the possibility of integration and the reuniting of families,; quotas of workforce were established; all this measure were taken to face the increasing xenophobic movements in the country, fuelled by the local workers' organisations. These restriction, however, did not stop the migratory flows but led the migrants to move their social and professional objectives closer and closer to their region of origin. The departures tended to be more selective and conscious, determined by the choice between working in the big factories near the urban centres (for example Zanussi – Rex near Pordenone) and emigrating for a short time, with the certainty of faster and higher savings. To tell the truth this type of emigration happened especially in some rural areas of Friuli, in the foothills, in central Friuli and in the plain near Pordenone, and represented a model of development which would occur again during the 1970s (Bednarz, 1984).

Emigration soon acquired the characteristics of a temporary phenomenon, as a chain made up of continuous departures and returns. Between 1959 and 1968 only a few more than 120,000 persons emigrated from Friuli but more than 102,000 returned; the rate of returns was thus 84.2% (Saraceno, 1982). The temporary migratory chain was made up of stays abroad, often short and repeated, and to different destinations. The Friulians arrived in Switzerland for short seasonal experiences and then moved to other developing countries or to Germany. The building trade and the manufacturing industry were the favoured sectors. The new wave of emigration to Switzerland now included young men who had received their basic training in Friuli and they developed their work experience in the factories and the brick yards. They kept up a constant contact with the homeland, to which they often returned, alternating migratory experiences (even to different countries, either within Europe or not) with periods of work at home. They started families, often with girls they met when they

came home, and rarely altered their plans but simply continued as a nuclear family. They tried to take their wives abroad, getting a work permit for them too, and to save enough to return home and start work in Friuli, which had now interesting opportunities (*“finally leaving his wives at home, as she no longer had to work”*). The turning point in this new wave of temporary migration was always the birth of children: after the first child was born, the wife came back, while the husband carried on commuting or came back when the child began to go to school. He then started planning his return, either to his town of origin or hers, or the place with the best economic opportunities. (For this reason, as Saraceno argued, temporary emigration has in the end helped the reorganization of the Friulian people and the depopulation of the mountains.)

The fundamental work of Saraceno went alongside a detailed survey promoted by the Region to understand what had happened in the 1970s during the return phase of the migrants. The survey carried out hundreds of interviews with families, but the results are not very well known and are not available in any published material. This matter has never been studied in detail since then. The history of this period of Friulian emigration, in which Switzerland played an important role, remains to be discovered under many aspects.

In Switzerland this process certainly brought about further splits in the Friulian community which in the meantime had strengthened with the presence of a significant number of permanent emigrants, who had started with their families to integrate in the host country without giving up their own culture.

Alongside people who planned and realized their return, there is also the story of emigrants who, out of choice or because the plan to return faded away, settled in Switzerland. These are the Friulians who sired a second and third generation; often they had an important role in the migrant community and their children might

become “Swiss”, after the law concerning naturalization and dual citizenship in the 1980s came into force, or might keep their strong identity refusing themselves to ask for citizenship. The story of Bruno Cannellotto is a perfect example: he was an active recruiter with his fellow countrymen Bulfon and Borsetta and an official in the trade unions, and decided not to naturalise despite his long service and the decision to stay in the country until he retired.

In the postwar period the story of Friulians in Switzerland is also the story of associations as the community developed. Initially these associations resemble the catholic ones, providing services similar to those already cited by some sources in the 19 th century. As already mentioned, in the 1950s the organisation “Friuli in the World” was founded, and the number of *Fogolars* increased, giving rise to a fine network which devoted itself to the culture of the community and perpetuating the ties with the homeland. In this same period a leftwing lay association developed and was mainly interested in promoting the self respect of migrants in the local community, and at the same time in influencing the politics concerning migrants of the newly formed Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. These associations gave rise to charitable institutions and service structures and developed training activities to help the Italian community in Switzerland (with the support of the Catholic associations). There were many associations in Switzerland and as well as the *Fogolars* there was a vast network of organizations, which from the end of the 1960s, affiliated to ALEF (*Associazione Lavoratori Emigrati del Friuli Venezia Giulia*), the Association of Emigrated Workers from Friuli Venezia Giulia. ALEF was founded in 1968 and had close ties with the trade unions, with the Federation of Free Italian Colonies in Switzerland (*Federazione delle Colonie Libere Italiane in Svizzera*) and with the parties of the historical left.

The whole net of the historical associations, representing the different components of the migrant community, developed in those years, such as the *Pal Friùl*, close to

autonomies and to the radical left. With the birth of the Province of Pordenone, an association of migrants from Pordenone was founded too, aiming at distinguishing their presence in the world of associations of a catholic inspiration represented by the organisation “Friuli in the World”. There was also an association of Slovene and Giulian emigrants (“Giulians in the World”), even though migrants from the border area in the east were not many and their presence was almost linked to personal biographies.

These associations gradually managed to make themselves heard and became the mediator with the Autonomous Region, which in the meantime was preparing the first Regional Conference on Emigration and the legislation which would accompany the subsequent phase of the big returns to the homeland.

The associations in their turn began talks with the trade unions. At first it was just cells from the Italian trade unions which the local unions looked on with hostility, the result of a deeprooted anticommunism and of a closing behaviour against immigration, seen as a phenomenon bringing unemployment and damaging working conditions and wages of the local workforce. Only with time did the presence of immigrants in the ranks of the unions become emancipated from the mere role of basic militancy. In the 1960s the first officials were taken on (among the Friulians there was Canelotto in Zurich and Bertolo in Sciaffusa), and from the end of the decade to the first half of the 1970s, relations and agreement were established involving Italian organizations and the Swiss trade unions, both lay and Christian.

As had happened at the beginning of the century, Friulian migrants were a leading force in the associations and then leaders of the Swiss trade unions, in particular those active in the building trade and industry (Steinauer, Von Allmen, 2000). Romeo Burino became national secretary of the FLEL, the union of builders and wood workers, then GBI/SEI. Severino Maurutto, a Friulian who had followed his family to Belgium and trained at Charleroi, became the leader of the big strikes in the 60s in French speaking Switzerland in Geneva, where he became important to the FOMO at

a political level in the *Partito del Lavoro* (Labour Party) which was communist inspired. Marjian Gruden, one of the few Trieste Slovenes to arrive in Switzerland, found in trade union membership a way to enhance skills which otherwise he would have had difficulty using. His professional career took off thanks to his linguistic ability and his capacity to establish an intercultural dialogue, which made him a point of reference for both the Italian and the Yugoslav emigrants, whose number was rapidly increasing.

Between the end of the 1950s and the 60s, two important processes were accomplished. On the one hand the model of temporary migration from Friuli was confirmed, with ever more rapid departures and returns and people looking more towards coming back and the completion of a project of social and professional mobility, whereby emigration speeded up savings and gave new skills to use in the region of origin. On the other hand many Friulian communities established in Switzerland, where they had their associations, kept their identity but at the same time managed to integrate and have leading roles in the organization of Italian emigration and in the local trade unions. Both these stories of emigration appear in the testimonies directly gathered, but it remains nevertheless difficult to analyse the number of emigrant and their personal vicissitudes. How many Friuians decided to stay in those years? How many returned definitively from Switzerland or simply decided to “commute” between their region of origin and Switzerland when they had retired? How large exactly are the second and third generations? How many have been naturalised?

The return of the emigrants and the consolidation of the community

1967 was an important year in the history of emigration from Friuli: it is the first year in the postwar period when there were more people returning to the homeland than departing. In this year there was a definitive inversion of the migratory flows, which, as we have already mentioned, was studied by Elena Saraceno. This process was assisted by the policies drawn up by the Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia right from the beginning of the 1960s. The Region began legislative initiatives to help the emigrants who still today are referred to in the regional legislation. In 1969 the first Regional Conference on emigration was held, followed by the adoption of two regional laws: the one in 1970 and the other in 1976. The earthquake in 1976 did not set off the feared flow of migrants from the hit areas, but strengthened the return of emigrants which had been happening for a few years; in 1979 the second Conference on Emigration took place. In 1980 the already mentioned research on people returning was carried out, based on the data from 11,000 families (about 27,000 people) to whom an allowance had already been paid, in accordance with the regional law of 1970 (1,500 interviews all over the region on a sample of people who had returned). The study allowed to understand the changes in the features of the migratory phenomenon, thinking of a temporary investment abroad aimed at a return to the homeland while still of working age. This confirmed the idea of temporary migration as a potential resource for the region of emigration, as stated even in the “Reform of the regional interventions on emigration”, put into effect by regional law n. 51: the law undertook to maintain the reinsertion of people returning to the homeland, also through incentives to starting up a business, and to maintain the cultural links between Friuli and its communities abroad.

The return of the emigrants characterized the 60s. It was a phenomenon which accompanied the end of the movement to and from abroad: expatriates lowers from about 6,500 in 1969 to a little more than 2,500 at the end of the 1970s, while those returning went from about 8,300 to about 3,700.

Overall there were about 60,000 returns, which was some 20,000 more than departures. Temporary absences abroad reduced with respect to the preceding period and two results from the migratory route were confirmed: on the one hand Friulians who decided to return reregister themselves at the register office of the municipality of origin or often in a different municipality with more opportunities for life and work (many of those returning settled in the hill region and there was a general depopulation of the mountain areas) and on the other hand Friulians who opted for permanent settlement in the host country.

Referring to the data from the consular registers, updated at the end of the 1990s and cross referencing it with registrations from AIRE of the municipalities of origin, we can trace a final balance of emigration to Switzerland after the Second World War.

Italian citizens resident in Switzerland as of 31.12.2001 according to region of origin.

	AIRE	Consular registers *
	31.1.2001	31.1.2001
Piedmont	16,860	21,263
Valle d'Aosta	1,405	1,772
Lombardy	62,466	78,779
Trentino	10,599	13,367
Veneto	34,809	43,899
Friuli Venezia Giulia	14,545	18,343
Liguria	4,945	6,236
Emilia R.	14,077	17,753
Tuscany	9,537	12,028
Umbria	3,383	4,266
Marche	7,934	10,005
Lazio	14,385	18,142

Abruzzo	6,221	7,846
Molise	6,397	8,068
Campania	54,407	68,615
Puglia	51,507	64,958
Basilicata	11,887	14,991
Calabria	28,155	35,508
Sicily	50,313	63,452
Sardinia	6,148	7,754
Others	6,611	8,338
Total	416,591	525,383
North-West	85,676	108,050
North-East	74,030	93,363
Centre	35,239	44,441
South	158,574	199,985
The islands	56,461	71,206

The regional origin of the Italians registered in the Consular register have been estimated on a basis of a subdivision of people registered with AIRE

SOURCE: AIRE and Consular registers.

As the table clearly shows, the two censuses are very different, and they are notably different even from the statistics published by the Central Register of Foreigners kept by Switzerland (which do not include emigrants who did naturalise). In 2001, when all results became available, the Swiss Confederation censored a little more than 300,000 emigrants from Italy, while AIRE recorded 100,000 Italians more as resident in Switzerland (according to this figure the rate of naturalisation is around 25%), and, according to the consular registers, the figure was even higher (some 200,000 units more than the data from Swiss registers). This discrepancy, as related to our study, would highlight the presence of Friulians in Switzerland varying between 14,500 and 18,000, including those who have become naturalised.

The comparison between these figures allows some conclusions: in the first place the Friulian community is still proportionately important, if we take into account that the

number of Friulians out of the whole total of Italians present in Switzerland remains almost double compared to the percentage of Friulians in the total Italian population.

In the second place the figures show the relevance of the stable Friulian community in Switzerland, despite the nature of the temporary migration determined many returns to the homeland between the 1960s and 70s. at present, the stable Friulian community in Switzerland is the result of the postwar migratory flows and it is made up mainly of emigrants from Udine (more than 10,000 out of 16,000 registered with AIRE) and Pordenone (5,000).

In the third place, the difference between the data of the foreigners' register (which does not mention the region of origin), consular records and AIRE indirectly testifies a significant Friulian component, probably of second or third generation, who have almost always become naturalised.

Even though they recognise their national and regional roots, they do not keep up significant contact with the municipalities of origin of their families, so much so that they are not registered with AIRE.

It must however be noted that the reports of the municipal register offices are not exact, and are influenced by changing factors not easily interpretable, as highlighted by the notable annual variations in AIRE data during the years 2000-2008.

The return of the emigrants is the main aspect of this last phase of migration, as it played an important role in the economic takeoff in the region between the years 1970s and 2000. Many Friulians came back precisely from Switzerland and they transferred their abilities and resources from the country of emigration to the region, crowning their process of social and professional mobility, thanks to the industrial development of the central and hill regions of Friuli in the 70s. At least in the case of the Friulians, therefore, there were no notable cases of the expulsion of migrants from

Switzerland; this phenomenon was mainly tied to the economic crisis of 1973, when thousands of Italians from Southern regions of Italy were forced to come home. The flow of returns began earlier and spread itself out over time. Some emigrants, after returning home, started up their own small businesses (Bednarz, 1989), showing an attitude to invest in the prospect of returning.

The Friulians in Switzerland did not show this particular attitude (except for some entrepreneurs who set up mediumsized companies), at least not as much as emigrants from the southern regions of Italy, who set up restaurants and small artisan businesses.

The returns did not hamper the consolidation of the local communities, which followed different patterns. Once again there is an important political commitment and the involvement in associations. During these years, a wide network of service and patronage, assistance and professional training, develops, and within it the Friulian emigrants played an important role in organisation and leadership. Leonardo Zanier, trade union member and poet, organised in the 60s “*la felis*” and, in the 70s, the professional training activity from which ECAP Foundation was born, which today is the third largest organisation for continuous training in Switzerland and the main body dealing with the integration of the migrants at a local level. Alongside Zanier, Bruna Miggiano and Isella Fucentese got interested in the educational sector: Bruna Miggiano promoted the presence of ECAP-CGIL at Basle, and protected the Foundation at a national level between the 80s and the 90s. Isella Fucentese was involved in linguistic training, and was in charge of ECAP in Zurich in the 80s. Many qualified Friulians worked voluntarily to train less qualified Italian immigrants from the southern regions: for instance Giacomo Colautti worked for 20 years at ECAP in the professional training sector, and Moricchi, working for Brown Boveri, was involved in the life of associations and, on his return to Friuli, managed ALEF. On the Catholic front, Di Bernardo and Dassi worked at the national secretariat of ACLI for Switzerland; Di Bernardo continued to exercise important roles in the running of

the Christian union movement, as an organiser of cooperation initiatives in Africa. When they returned to Friuli both were part of the organising committee of “Friuli in the World”.

The “dichotomy” of destinies, between permanent settlement and return is clear in the case of Switzerland, even as regards the particular characteristics of legislation which regulated the residence permits in loco. The nearby geographical position may justify the choice of a “dual residence”, in the region of origin and in the host country, perhaps to take advantage of the properties owned in Friuli and, at the same time, keep up contact with children and grandchildren growing up in Switzerland. But the risk of losing their residence permit as a result of moving back to the region of origin, in years still characterised by serious difficulties of naturalisation, pushed many Friulian families to root definitively, giving rise to communities of migrants of the first generation, who found in the associations their natural connection with the homeland. The two Friulian communities (the one settled in Switzerland and the one returned home, thus contributing to local development) found in 1976, in the great chain of solidarity after the devastating earthquake in Friuli, a meeting point which still today celebrates the associations and the local current affairs.

With the end of the migratory flows, the political perspectives of the migratory associations changed. The organisation “Friuli in the World” for example, tries to be at the same time protector of “*values of cultural and social solidarity in Friuli*” and promoter of “*the importance of the ties of migrants with their land of origin and of the building up of ethnic networks (sic) in the world economy, above all in the light of the most recent theories on economic development*” .

It is therefore difficult to quantify the participation of the large presence of Friulians in Switzerland in the internationalisation plan in Friuli over the last years, by

enhancing the values of social, cultural, scientific, political and economic of the Friulian communities. Reading through the programme of events the *Fogolars* or the ALEF associations hold annually in Switzerland, the image emerges of a world which is trying to maintain its identity, in a context of growing integration of second and third generations in local society. Their network could, however, represent an important resource to gather historical evidence of a migratory movement which, in spite of its quantitative relevance has so far left very weak traces of itself.