



SECURITY, CONFLICT AND COOPERATION
IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD



Italy and the 'Shock of the Global' during the 1970s

Edited by

GUIDO FORMIGONI

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International Conference on Minorities in Trieste. 10–14 July 1974. The Defence of Linguistic Minorities and the Embryonic Beginnings of the Liga Veneta

Paolo Barcella

Translated by Mariangela Palazzi-Williams

1 THE TRIESTE CONFERENCE

In July 1974, the Italian press reported on the proceedings of a Conference on Minorities in Europe, organised in Trieste by Michele Zanetti, the young President of that particular Province in the Friuli region and the Conference's promotional committee. Hundreds of papers, representing all of Europe's minorities, were submitted and discussed by the delegates, as well as by academics, among them young linguist Tullio De Mauro, who had been invited as experts to offer their scientific assessment and take on a reality that was now both politically and institutionally highly

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charged.¹ The papers were divided into three main sections to examine the phenomenon, respectively, in its cultural-linguistic, socio-economic and legal-institutional terms.² For the most part, the reports of those days dealt with the situation of minorities from the usual perspective, in the main the geopolitical, referring to the charters signed in the various international fora that, in previous decades, had set parameters of what is to be a ‘minority’, qualifying their ethnic, religious and linguistic attributes, and addressing the crucial issue of the protection of their rights in countries where history had pushed them.³ In short, the Conference brought to the surface ethnic and national issues, the relations between minority groups and the central powers of states that had already agitated—and sometimes torn asunder—European political life in the past. Given the venue and the organising bodies of this particular Conference, discussions concerning the Italian Eastern Front, the problems of Italians in Slovenia and of Slovenes in the Italian border region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia were invested with considerable importance. However, alongside this perspective, different interpretative keys emerged in the papers submitted and singled out by the press, which connected the discourse on linguistic minorities to the broader phenomena that swept through the 1970s:

The genocides like that in Vietnam; the various forms of *social alienation*; the *sad migrations of workers connected to the growing European economic development*; the *territorial policies marred by property speculation*, which is often accentuated to the detriment of the territories of minorities; the *formation of new and different sub-proletariats*, all of the above cause very serious phenomena of internal colonisation. And the great pitfall of our time has been attributed by mutual consent to the *multinational corporations*, their highly refined *techniques of mass manipulation*, their intrinsic need to marginalise from development a large part of the world’s population, which thus becomes a gigantic, paradoxical minority. And so, in these respects, the

¹Sandro Meccoli, ‘L’Europa delle piccole patrie’, *Corriere della Sera*, 10 July 1974, 3; Sandro Meccoli, “No” a ogni discriminazione per i piccoli gruppi etnici’, *ibid.*, 11 July 1974, 11; Sandro Meccoli, ‘Come tutelare le piccole patrie’, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 July 1974, 3; Giorgio Fattori, ‘L’Europa delle piccole patrie’, *La Stampa*, 10 July 1974, 3; Giorgio Fattori, ‘A Trieste, mille delegati difendono le minoranze’, *ibid.*, 11 July 1974, 2.

²Tullio De Mauro, *Conferenza internazionale sulle minoranze: 10–14 luglio 1974, atti della Conferenza*, (Provincia di Trieste: 1979–1981).

³Fabrizio Dal Passo, ‘Storia e diritti delle minoranze’ [accessed 23 November 2023]. https://rosa.uniroma1.it/rosa03/semestrale_di_geografia/article/view/15352/14816.

ethnic, linguistic and economic problems of minorities are now only one face of the frightening problem that is ‘*opulent aggression*’.⁴

In other words, globalisation and modernisation—realised as much in the form of the new international migrations as in that of multinational corporations with their powerful instruments of mass communication—were perceived by many observers as serious threats to minority groups, which appeared, if left to themselves, helpless and incapable of self-protection. As they overflowed from city centres to the peripheries, the opulence and wealth of the urban and industrial worlds seemed to cause drawbacks and death: was the cultural fascination with the US-driven politico-economic hub losing its lustre?

2 THE PERIPHERIES AND THE HEADWINDS OF GLOBALISATION

Particularly interesting is the interpretation of the Conference printed in the monthly *La Patrie dal Friûl*, a publication that proved very popular in Friulian emigrant circles, which provided a North-Eastern analysis on the nature of the processes unleashed by the world’s economic and political hubs. The issue of Italian emigration returned to feature on the pages dedicated to commenting on the Conference from a variety of perspectives. Firstly, in fact, *La Patrie* argued that ‘the phenomena of industrial concentration and labour exploitation [had] provoked massive waves of emigration’ which were responsible for the ‘depopulation of the countryside and mountains, [as well as] chaotic urbanisation’.⁵ As a consequence, the power of attraction of the industrial centres threatened the minorities—understood as marginal groups with respect to the processes of global development—because it denuded their historical homelands, making them spaces devoid of the energy of the youth and places increasingly inhabited mainly by the elderly, who were inevitably unable to pass on their language and culture to their grandchildren since these were now born and raised far away. Secondly, emigration forced Italians abroad to experience what all the world’s linguistic minorities were experiencing, having to share the same specific problems. The monthly magazine, for

⁴ Meccoli, ‘Come tutelare le piccole patrie’, 3.

⁵ ‘Relazione dei lavori della commissione prima: uso della lingua e della cultura – Trieste, 14 luglio 1974’, *La Patrie dal Friûl*, II:3, 15 October 1974, 2.

example, recorded how ‘schooling among the children of emigrants, which presents great analogies with the problems of minorities, [had] been the subject of many initiatives’.⁶

The Friulian political and cultural world—from the right-wing to the left—debated these issues extensively, occasionally managing to bring their demands to national attention. It was precisely in those years, for example, that a key player of the Friulian emigration to Switzerland, Leonardo Zanier, made his first appearance in the national media and world of publishing. He was a political and trade union activist and dialect poet who dedicated much of his political and literary work to the question of minorities in their relationship with migration and with the processes of socio-economic transformation caused by globalisation.⁷ In 1977, a few months after the earthquake that devastated Friuli, Garzanti, a major Italian publishing house, reprinted his main work, which had already been published by a local Friulian publisher in the mid-1960s, *Libers ... di scugnî lâ / Liberi... di dove partire*—in which the end of peripheral societies was described as one of the most serious threats of the day.⁸

In addition to this aspect, *La Patrie* emphasised two factors which it viewed as a serious threat to minority languages and cultures: schools, first of all, were pointed out as the agents responsible for the ‘distortion’ of the cultures of the ‘small nations’;⁹ the mass media also seemed to contribute to the same objective, which ‘in a communications civilisation such as ours’ would play a decisive role—depending on the particular political deployment—in the development, survival or disappearance of linguistic minorities.¹⁰

The fallout from the factors that constituted the lifeblood of globalisation was highlighted, while a reversal of perspective with respect to the reality that had characterised the previous decades, their hopes and expectations, was evident. From the point of view of the Italian ruling classes, in fact, schooling had been one of the crucial instruments in the construction of an Italian-speaking national and linguistic community, which would

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷ Paolo Barcella, Valerio Furneri, *Una vita migrante. Leonardo Zanier, sindacalista e poeta (1935–2017)*, (Rome: Carocci Editore, 2020).

⁸ Leonardo Zanier, *Libers... di scugnî lâ / Liberi... di dove partire. Poesie 1960–1962*, Preface by Tullio De Mauro, (Milan: Garzanti, 1977).

⁹ ‘Fatto il punto a Trieste sulle minoranze dell’Europa occidentale’, in *La Patrie dal Friül*, II:3, 15 October 1974, 1.

¹⁰ ‘Relazione dei lavori della commissione’, 2.

otherwise remain fragmented in a complex mosaic of dialects and regional tongues.¹¹ Furthermore, a large part of the organised working classes had identified school education as one of the key engines to unite proletarians around the world, to build a global democratic citizenry and to provide paths to social emancipation, starting with the acquisition of a rich and evolved linguistic background that would free the working classes from all forms of subjugation and subordination. Within the more general framework of what has been described as the golden age of mass schooling,¹² the organisations of the Italian political Left and trade unions led bitter battles for the increase of both spaces and hours of schooling open to all. One need to only think of the battle for the ‘150 ore’ (i.e. 150 hours), a law passed in the early 1970s, which granted Italian workers the right to attend up to 150 hours of training for their cultural and professional development during paid working hours.¹³ Now, however, in the speeches of sections of the Italian provinces, the educational system itself appeared to be in the dock, accused of threatening local communities because of its power to homogenise and annihilate traditional knowledge in favour of a flat global culture. The aforementioned Leonardo Zanier, who in 1975 was chosen by the trade union CGIL as the national head of its Studies, Training and Research Office (Ufficio studi, formazione e ricerche), was one of the few who tried to pick up on this type of concern within the Italian left-wing world of the day. In fact, between 1976 and 1977, he organised a national conference in which was discussed the advisability of introducing the teaching of cultures, popular and minority languages and

¹¹ Vincenzo Sarracino, Enricomaria Corbi, *Storia della scuola e delle istituzioni educative (1830–1999)*, (Naples: Liguori, 1999); Giovanni Genovesi, *Storia della scuola in Italia dal Settecento a oggi*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza), 1998; Ester De Fort, *Scuola e analfabetismo nell'Italia del '900. Il lento diffondersi dell'istruzione di massa dall'inizio del secolo alla seconda guerra mondiale*, (Bologna: il Mulino, 1995); Remo Fornaca, *Storia della scuola moderna e contemporanea*, (Rome: Anicia, 1994); Simonetta Soldani, Gabriele Turi (eds), *Fare gli italiani: scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea*, (Bologna: il Mulino, 1993).

¹² Irvin Sobel, ‘The Human Capital Revolution in Economic Development: Its Current History and Status’, *Comparative Education Review*, 22:3, 1978, 278–308. See also Michele Dal Lago, *Supply-Side Education. Occupabilità, formazione e mercato del lavoro nel dibattito contemporaneo*, Doctoral Dissertation, (Bergamo: University of Bergamo, 2012).

¹³ Eugenia Valtulina (ed), ‘*Questa voglia di cambiare la condizione umana*’. *Per una storia della FIOM CGIL di Bergamo dall'Autunno caldo alla scala mobile*, (Palermo: NDF, 2017); Alfiero Boschiero, Annamaria Lona, Filippo Maria Paladini (eds), ‘La scuola delle 150 ore in Veneto’, *Venetica*, 1, 2015.

dialects into schools: once again, renowned linguist Tullio De Mauro played a key role as primary scientific interlocutor.¹⁴

At the same time, as previously mentioned, the mass media—from national newspapers to radio and TV—stood indicted. Over the preceding twenty years they had made a crucial contribution to the diffusion of Italian, both through specific cultural products—think of Alberto Manzi’s famous *Non è mai troppo tardi*—and via simple national-popular programming—think of the quiz *Lascia o Raddoppia?* and the *Sanremo*, Italian song festival: all programmes that were highly instrumental in the diffusion of shared customs and models. These same media stations were spreading new languages, Anglicisms and foreign words, such as *rock ‘n roll*, considered by many as a threat to local traditions.¹⁵ On the other hand, numerous intellectuals of opposing political persuasions had already articulated critical elaborations of the culture industry and technological modernity, and even among leading politicians, there were those who paid attention to such instances. Gaetano Arfé, for example, would go on to present a resolution to the European Parliament in 1981 to promote the drawing up of a charter for the protection of ethnic and linguistic minorities: among other things, it called for the training of delegates specialising in the work of enhancing the value of minorities and their cultural heritage, so that they could be regularly hosted by the local media.¹⁶

The pages of the Friulan monthly *La Patrie* presented a simplified political reading of these issues, contrasting the mass media’s progressive potential with their homogenising power and their ability to annihilate traditional, regional, minority cultures.

¹⁴Ufficio studi, formazione e ricerche (ed), ‘Aggiornamento e formazione insegnanti, materiali per problemi: minoranze linguistiche, parlate locali, sviluppo delle capacità espressive nella scuola’, (Rome: ECAP-CGIL, 1977), <https://www.reteitalianaculturapopolare.org/archivio-partecipato/item/2795-aggiornamento-e-formazione-insegnanti-materiali-per-problemi-minoranze-linguistiche-parlate-locali-sviluppo-delle-capacita-espressive-nella-scuola.html> [accessed November 2023].

¹⁵Pietro Cavallo, Pasquale Iaccio, *Penso che un sogno così non ritorni mai più. L’Italia del miracolo tra storia, cinema, musica e televisione*, (Naples: Liguori, 2016); Leonardo Campus, *Non solo canzonette. L’Italia della ricostruzione e del miracolo economico attraverso il Festival di Sanremo*, (Florence: Le Monnier, 2015).

¹⁶Gaetano Arfé, ‘Risoluzione del Parlamento Europeo su una carta comunitaria delle lingue e culture regionali e una carta dei diritti delle minoranze etniche’, 16 October 1981, <https://1.flcgil.stgy.it/files/pdf/19811016/risoluzione-arfe-su-minoranze-etniche-parlamento-europeo-16-ottobre-1981-1878912.pdf> [accessed November 2023].

It was precisely in the 1970s, moreover, also in the wake of the implementation of ordinary administrative regions, that numerous other factors contributed to fuelling the tensions between national and local identities in the Italian media, with non-linear and, in many respects, counter-intuitive and controversial outcomes. Throughout the history of Italy, in fact, the local press had exercised a marginal and secondary role compared to its national counterpart, for reasons due, at least in part, to the task assigned to modern journalism after Unification, i.e. contributing to the construction of the nation and ‘facilitating the national integration of a country that for centuries had been characterised by divisions and fractures with enormous social and cultural distances between the different territorial realities’.¹⁷ The local daily press—which produced some significant examples, thanks to territorial political and economic initiatives that gave rise to papers such as *La Prealpina* of Varese, *L’Eco di Bergamo* or *L’Unione Sarda*—was impacted by this process and developed a tendency to devote a certain number of pages to national and international events, emulating broadsheets such as *Corriere della Sera*.¹⁸ After 1975, however, a reversal of the trend occurred and provincial papers entered a phase of significant expansion, a phenomenon that was experienced throughout the peninsula, but particularly in Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Marche, Trentino, Tuscany, Puglia and Sicily.¹⁹ Two main factors contributed to this process: on the one hand, the improvement in the literacy rate together with the increase in the number of Italian readers had expedited the process, and, on the other, the technological development, which lowered production costs and allowed for more efficient printing works and fewer employees. At the same time, the crisis of the Italian parties and trade unions was beginning, a crisis that involved also their local, sectional and factory news sheets: through those instruments, in the two decades following the Second World War, parties and trade unions had deeply penetrated the territories, dealing with local issues from a general, national or class perspective. The information void caused by such crisis was filled by

¹⁷ Carlo Sorrentino, ‘Il giornalismo locale. Nuova frontiera del giornalismo italiano?’, in *La professione giornalistica in Italia. Anno primo 1988–89*, (Città di Castello: il Campo, Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, 1990), https://www.byterfly.eu/islandora/object/librib:20554/datastream/PDF/content/librib_20554.pdf, 57 [accessed November 2023].

¹⁸ Mario Isnenghi, ‘La stampa quotidiana locale’, in Valerio Castronovo, Nicola Tranfaglia (eds), *La stampa italiana nell’era della TV. Dagli anni Settanta a oggi*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2002), 320.

¹⁹ Cf. Castronovo, Tranfaglia (eds), *La stampa italiana nell’era della TV*.

the proliferation of local periodicals—and with a localist outlook, as opposed to party and trade union ones—which also came to the fore between the 1970s and 1980s following the public financing of the press.²⁰ Moreover, Italian radio and television also trod a similar path. The free and democratic radio stations took hold in the Italian provinces assuming the role of radios of the territories that, regardless of their political outlook, intended to participate in the life of the communities, to animate them, sometimes with explicit reference to the value of proximity between media and users.²¹ With regard to television, however, as TV journalist Aldo Grasso has written:

In the wake of the student and workers' protest movement, public broadcasting seemed to participate in the process of deconstructing national identity in the totalising sense affirmed until then: the reform of national Italian TV, RAI, of 1975 develops [...] a policy aimed at giving visibility to multiple identities [...], through the so called 'programmi dell'accesso' [10-minute independent broadcast programmes]; with the launch of the TV channel RAI 3, in 1979, there is also a desire to respond to a need to bring the audience closer together [...]. Commercial television [...] on the one hand kept the local horizon alive through a robust 'secondary' advertising market expressed, for example, in 'teleshopping'; [on the other hand,] at the same time [...] private TV created the hybrid of the 'local-national'.²²

3 THE REACTION IN VENETO

While the processes described were under way, in the Veneto region some individuals were taking their first steps into public life, people who, within a few years, would give the tensions of their day a new political shape, from a conservative and, at times, reactionary perspective. This was at the end of 1977, when Bruno Bosetto, Franco Costantini, Maurizio Calligaro, Michele Gardin, Armando and Antonia Lorenzet, and Tarcisio Zanchetta decided to launch a season of initiatives aimed at recovering the Venetian language and culture. They were soon joined by Franco Rocchetta, who

²⁰ Paolo Barcella, *Stampa locale e storia: tra localismi e regionalismi*, in Barbara Bracco (ed), *Sfogliare il passato. La storia nei giornali italiani*, (Rome: Viella, 2019), 51–64; Gruppo Cronisti Lombardi, *La stampa locale in Lombardia*, (Milan: Quaderni di documentazione regionale-Regione Lombardia, 1984).

²¹ 'Sulla cresta dell'onda. Suoni e parole alla conquista dell'etere', *Zapruder*, 34, 2014.

²² Aldo Grasso, 'La TV negli anni Settanta', in Fiamma Lussana, Giacomo Marramao (eds), *Culture, nuovi soggetti, identità*, (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2001), 58–59.

within a few years would become the most important figure of the early days of Liga Veneta, as well as president of political party Lega Nord in the early 1990s.²³ National broadsheet *Corriere della Sera* dealt with that group of ‘Venetists’ in February 1978, by which point the propagandist literature they produced and disseminated had gained a fair amount of visibility:

In reaffirming the worth and dignity of the Veneto language, as a linguistic tool valid at every level of communication, and recalling that the use of one’s mother tongue does not hinder, but rather encourages, the learning of other languages, the authors of the flyer invited parents brought up in the Veneto language ‘to speak their mother tongue Veneto proudly to their children’. A similar invitation was addressed to teachers, journalists, and cultural figures, called upon respectively to promote the knowledge and study of the language of this region [...] and to contribute to its revival, ‘*by curbing the current indiscriminate and homogenising use of the Italian language*’.²⁴

In the same year, the instigators of this initiative set up the Venetian philological society (Società filologica veneta), which appealed to the charters and international treaties on minorities, affirming their desire to recognise Venetian dialects as a language to be promoted in all public fora, and also proposing that they be taught in schools. The first article of the society’s statute highlighted the political vocation and polemical force that animated its founders:

‘Società filologica veneta’ was founded to broaden and spread knowledge and awareness of the linguistic heritage of the Veneto, to reaffirm the nation’s right [...] to maintain and develop its culture, its language, its roots and its identity, in accordance with the spirit of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Italian Constitution, the Statute of the AIDLCM, the Charter of Helsinki, the Manifesto of the Veneto Language, the Statutes of the Veneto Region and neighbouring

²³ Davide Mutto, *Venetismo. L’invenzione identitaria e i suoi usi politici nel Veneto contemporaneo*, (Lucca: Tralerighe editore, 2020), 26; Giovanni Fracasso, ‘Alle origini dei venetismi: la Società filologica veneta’, *Venetica*, 7, 2003, 93–107; Ilvo Diamanti, *Il male del Nord. Lega, localismo, secessione*, (Rome: Donzelli, 1996); Ilvo Diamanti, *La Lega. Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico*, (Rome: Donzelli, 1993).

²⁴ Arnolfo Pacini, ‘Otto “paladini” in difesa della lingua dei dogi’, *Corriere della Sera*, 4 February 1978, 7.

regions, in order to help overcome the cruel prejudices and discriminatory and *denaturalising* practices which have been carried out against Veneto culture for too many decades, to promote the use and study of the Veneto language and the teaching of the history of Veneto civilisation in schools.²⁵

A few months later, the 'Lettere al *Corriere*' column published a letter echoing the controversy over the role of the mass media in the stifling of regional language communities:

While noting with satisfaction the start of TV broadcasts in the Ladin language by the RAI offices in Bolzano and Trento, broadcasts aimed at the Ladin populations of South Tyrol and Trentino, I would like to ask these RAI offices [...] until when they will delay the start of similar TV programmes in the Veneto language for the populations in the Veneto language and culture of southern and eastern Trentino.²⁶

These sentiments took the form of orchestrated political action after the meeting between key figures of the Veneto circuit and the experience of the Union Valdôtaine, an autonomist organisation that, on the occasion of the first European elections in 1979, had spearheaded a list of parties devoted to defending the interests of linguistic minorities and Italian regional communities.²⁷ Bruno Salvadori, a regional councillor and theorist of Valdostan autonomism, had moved in those months in search of men and women committed to federalist projects and, in the process, had accidentally met Umberto Bossi in Pavia, the future Lega Nord politician, then still unknown. In the last months of that year, the people of Veneto thus had crucial ideas for forming their own party, the Liga Veneta, whose objective was to pave the way for 'el autogoverno e la autodetermination de la nathion veneta'.²⁸ The posters and slogans of the Liga immediately focused on the issues that had also emerged from some of the speeches presented at the Trieste Conference and analysed at the outset, although rethought in the light of a political battle that needed to find concrete opponents to fight against, and not just theoretical aspects to discuss. According to the *Lighisti*, Veneto had to defend itself against the attempts

²⁵ Quoted in Mutto, *Venetismo*, 29.

²⁶ Nico Orso, 'Quando in TV la lingua veneta?', *Corriere della Sera*, 23 February 1979, 5.

²⁷ Gianluigi Da Rold, 'Rivolta ideologica per mettere in cassaforte la ricchezza', *Corriere della Sera*, 9 May 1980, 7.

²⁸ Mutto, *Venetismo*, 272.

at Italianisation conducted by the ‘Roman’ state with the instruments of schooling and radio-television. Ethnic, social and economic ‘preservation’ then could be achieved only by closing of emigration tap and implementing political initiatives to bring back to Veneto the people who were originally from Veneto.²⁹ In addition, it became necessary to address the issue of the southern immigrants, whose presence was perceived by a growing number of Veneto people as problematic, especially as such immigrants were employed in public administration, schools and the police forces. Southerners were accused of playing the role of public officials without having the right to do so, because they lacked the necessary language skills to speak to the local population. In schools, moreover, southerners were experienced—and not only in Veneto³⁰—as hostile, on the occasions when they prevented native children from expressing themselves in the language of their parents, concealing regional history and culture. Those were the years when, from Verona to Venice, from Belluno to Treviso, graffiti appeared on walls calling for the expulsion of people from the South. Some went so far as to invoke the eruptions of Mount Etna and Vesuvius in their writings on the sides of bridges and on palaces, in the hope that the southern regions themselves would be razed to the ground, always in the name of safeguarding Veneto’s society, language and culture.³¹ Anti-meridionalism was back on the agenda.³² Fervent polemics developed that, at the beginning of the 1980s, made the national headlines and were noted by the most attentive observers of the political and cultural transformations sweeping the country.³³ Riding on these tensions, in the 1983 parliamentary elections the Liga Veneta elected a deputy and a senator: Achille Tramarin and Graziano Girardi. Tramarin, in order to send a strong signal about the objectives of his party’s battles, even attempted to speak in Veneto dialect during parliamentary proceedings.³⁴

²⁹ ‘Electoral Programme of the Liga Veneta (1980)’, *ibid.*, 248–249.

³⁰ Paolo Barcella, ‘Gli insegnanti meridionali nella provincia di Bergamo’, in Michele Colucci, Stefano Gallo, *In cattedra con la valigia. Gli insegnanti tra stabilizzazione e mobilità*, (Rome: Donzelli, 2017), 137–154.

³¹ Paolo Morando, *’80. L’inizio della barbarie*, (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2016).

³² Antonino De Francesco, *La palla al piede. Una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2012).

³³ Mario Isnenghi, Silvio Lanaro, ‘Un modello stanco’, in Silvio Lanaro (ed), *Storia d’Italia. Le regioni dall’Unità a oggi. Il Veneto*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1984).

³⁴ C.P., ‘Spaccatura nella Liga Veneta per i finanziamenti pubblici’, *Corriere della Sera*, 15 November 1983, 4.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The political form which the Liga battle took was characterised as a reaction to the social, cultural and economic developments that, having imposed themselves forcefully in the Golden Age years, after the mid-1970s were increasingly perceived as the cause of the disappearance of peripheral communities and cultures. The mass media, the school that trained Italian-speakers, internal and international migrations driven by the attractive potential of the great industrial centres frightened the peripheries; Euro-American consumerist opulence, in the 1970s, no longer generated the fulfilment that, in the 1950s and 1960s, its mere promise had seemed to guarantee; dissatisfaction was accentuated by the awareness of losing, as a consequence of development, the certainties of familiar worlds. All these aspects took centre stage, starting with the issue of the defence of minority languages, in the controversy of the first Liga Veneta. The party grew during the 1980s and gained popularity as a majority force in a large part of the territories of the Veneto province, its fortunes intertwined with those of the Lega Lombarda, founded by Umberto Bossi in 1984. Lombard leagueism had many common elements with that of the Veneto region, but also profound differences, which explain the tensions that characterised their relations. When Lega Nord—which federated the northern leagues with a statute signed at the end of 1989—spread nationwide, in the wake of the events of 1992 and the set of problems that came to the attention of the media under the label of the ‘questione settentrionale’ (northern issue),³⁵ the tendency developed to explain its success, both in scientific and media terms, precisely from the crisis of the First Republic. As we have tried to demonstrate here, however, some of its original characteristics can only be understood by observing the tensions produced in the peripheral areas of the North East by the shock of the 1970s: those same moods of reaction to post-war modernisation were, moreover, still clearly recognisable in the words used by Umberto Bossi to explain the nature of his party in *Vento dal Nord. La mia Lega, la mia vita*, the first work of evolved Lega self-representation that, significantly, opened with this food for thought:

³⁵ Filippo Sbrana, ‘Nord non chiama Sud. Genesi e sviluppo della questione settentrionale (1973–2013)’, in Simona Colarizi, Agostino Giovagnoli, Paolo Pombeni (eds), *L’Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi*, (Rome: Carocci Editore, 2014), 361–381.

I had not returned to these parts [i.e. in the Varese suburbs] for more than thirty years. What was holding me back was the fear of seeing my world transformed, gutted, destroyed. Of finding cement in place of trees, factories where the fields of my childhood used to be. I preferred to keep the images of memory, populated with people and landscapes that had disappeared.³⁶

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³⁶ Umberto Bossi, Daniele Vimercati, *Vento dal Nord. La mia Lega, la mia vita*, (Milan: Sperling&Kupfer, 1992), 4.

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