

THE HISTORY OF THE ISLAND OF CHERSO

by

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This is a research on the history of the island of Cherso. We will skip the description of its geographical position, its climate, its flora and fauna known well by some of our readers, so that we may delve in the aspects less noted to most of us, such as the origin of its name, the first human cave settlements, the castellieri (citadels) period, the various dominations and invasions, the history of its various villages and its ancient families, ...

This story is not intended to delve deeply or be sectionalized because it is not intended for researchers on the subject, but for the common "chersini" eager to know their heritage, whether they stayed on the island or scattered throughout the world.

We would appreciate any contribution, collaboration, improvements and completeness in order to get to know better the events in our island.

The origin of the archipelago and its name

Its history

Twenty thousand years ago or more, the Adriatic Sea was much smaller of what it is today and the mainland reached to about the center of the Italian peninsula and, to the opposite side, about to where Sibenik is today. The climate was much colder and this area was under a thick layer of ice during this "second ice age". Eventually the temperature gradually rose and the ice melted causing the sea to rise, flooding the lowlands and leaving the land peaks of the ancient mountains exposed thus forming the present day archipelago on the Quarnero (Kvarner) - the seas adjacent the island of Cherso (Cres).

Regarding the name of the island, because of the lack of knowledge about the islands of the Quarnero by the ancient authors the island of Cherso (Cres) and Lussino (Losinj) were at the time considered a single island, to others a group of four islands: Apsyrtides, a name tied to the legend of Apsyrtius. Pomponio Mela, illustrious geographer of the first century A.D., with major precision, refers to the island of Cherso with the name of Apsyrtis and to the island of Lussino (Losinj) with Apsorus. But the confusion still continued, seems, to the 15th century, when Palladio Fosco, in one of his booklets, writes: "...two are the islands separated by the Euripo ⁽¹⁾, at mid-point Apsirzio (now day Losinj) ...to the north Crexa (Cherso) almost double Losinj's size".

Even in the following centuries the ancient group of the Apsirtidi (Apsyrtides), although forming two distinct islands, was known collectively as the "Isola di Cherso and Ossero (Island of Cres and Osor)", the two principal centers of the group. The name of Lussino, given to the part on the south side of the Euripo, appears for the first time in 1304 on a document regarding the layout of grazing grounds, but remained limited to single acts until the end of the 18th century. Only at the beginning of the 19th century the island of Lussino was completely distinct from that of Cherso.

The origin of the name "Cherso" is uncertain. Mitis (Mitis S., History of the island of Cherso-Ossero for the years 476 – 1409, Parenzo, 1925), deals with the nature of its ground, he derived it from the root word "Kar", rock or stone. The entry "Cherso"

appears for the first time on a document edited February 19, 1196 which closes with: "Ego Simeon de Kerso ...". Then we see its name spelled as: Kerzo, Kersio, Kersium Kersius, and finally Cherso.

The legend

According to the oral tradition of passing down local history, still practiced by the older generation on the island...

One time there was a king (Eeta of Colchide), who owned a golden fleece. A courageous young man, by the name of Gaisone, took possession of this veil with the help of the wizard Medea, daughter of the king and deeply in love with Gaisone. Stolen the Golden Fleece, Gaisone took flight, together with some of his companions, on the ship Argo; from which they took the name "Argonauts". Apsyrtius, son of the king and brother of Medea, took chase after the robbers and, after a long voyage, caught up with them. Medea convinced her brother to negotiate but Gaisone lured Apsyrtius in a trap and killed him. The body of this young man was cut into pieces and thrown into the sea and, from these pieces rose the islands which became known as the Apsyrtides.

First human vestiges on the island

Period of the caves

The ground on the island of Cherso, because of its limestone properties, is rich in holes and numerous large caverns, especially on its central and northern part (2). One may suppose, based on these discoveries, that these cavities were long used by the primitive people. In fact, archaeological diggings in more than one of these caves revealed strata of ash of considerable thickness with bone fragments, shards of cooking utensils, worked stones of a reddish color, worked bones, sharp stone blades and other worked items, which seems to originate as far as back as the Neolithic period (the "new" stone age, toward the end of the third millennium B.C., with the coming of the metal age). The substantial thickness and compactness of the ash strata found demonstrates that the people used these caves as shelters during many centuries, increasing in number and "civility", as demonstrated by the increasing elaborate works they did: ceramic vases with various ornaments, handles shaped as cordons and arches.

Here is how Nicolo Lemessi describes the directions for reaching one of the more noteworthy caves, the Cave Fortis (3):

"As you leave Ossero take the provincial road and make the first right. After about a ten minutes walk, at the fork of the road the left takes you to Puntacroce (Punta Criza) instead, take the other road straight ahead. Along the shore of the two lakes of Slatina climb a bit along barren landscape until reaching the ruins of the little church of S. Michele of Ghermosai, at 116 meters, on the western flank of Gran Guardia hill. Before reaching the gate, a short walk from S. Michele, go over the stone wall. You will see a footpath and by following it a short distance you will see a small hollow. Go down it and on its left is the large opening of a common cave, on the right down at the end you will see a small triangular opening just big enough to let one person crawl through. You enter a circular cavern, illuminated by a circular opening on the archway, which Alberto Fortis compared it to the Pantheon of Rome. In this cave were found traces of fossilized bones".



Ruins of a castelliere (from N. Mavrovic` Cherso e Lussino, Tevrvina d.o.o., Nerezine)



Entrance to a cave (from N. Mavrovic`, Cherso e Lussino ...)



Shown are five pot shards found in the ruins of castelliere Grande Guardia, situated 5 Km from Ossero in the direction of Puntacroce.(From writings cited in footnote n.5).

The castellieri(citadels) period

The era following the metals period, the main occupation of the island's inhabitants, whose number by now increased, was pastoral which, requiring open and free space for grazing, were obliged to leave the caves and establish themselves in the open. For reason of defense in the period when wars, invasions and raids was the norm, the places selected for habitation and defense were the higher points on the landscape, where they built villages surrounded by defensive walls build of dry stone – sometimes massive – built with large blocks of stone. These villages were known as castellieri (citadels), and reached their peak during the bronze ages.

Of these constructions today remains only agglomerations of stones, from which only the experts on this subject can identify the ancient castellieri. The remains of these castellieri are particularly plentiful on the central part of the island, somewhat less on the northern part and still less on its southern part, in relation with the geomorphology of the island, it is larger, stonier, with numerous barren and desolated peaks on its central part, narrower and woodier on the northern and southern parts (4).

Here is how prof. Marchesetti, archaeologist, M.D. and botanist from Trieste, describes the Gran Guardia castelliere, located about 5Km from Ossero, toward

Puntacroce (5).

“Its elevated position, about 50 meters from its surroundings, rendered it a first class strategic point. Its walls have a thickness of 4.6 meters where its nucleus can be distinguished very well within the enormous mass of debris resulting from its collapse. These stones, consisting of irregular blocks of limestone measuring 1 to 1.5 meters in girth, without any visible trace that they were worked on or cemented, the same as is at other prehistoric places of our region. Especially on the southwestern side, which is higher, the embankment now has a height of 3 meters, while the others are less than 1.5 meters high, in particular on the place sided by a large and precipitous kettle shaped glen and in it, toward sunrise, in the direction of the Stanzia (large estate) Ghermosai, where it descends steeply, thereby not requiring elaborate fortifications, as nature has provided such.

The castelliere inclines toward the south, and at its center is a semicircular raised terrace formed by a wall two meters thick, by which is a short inclined and rough stretch which leads to a ten meters wide opening, occupying the whole lower part of the castelliere ... The grounds of this castelliere contains a large quantity of 2 cm thick pottery shards of primitive manufacture ... These seems to originate from large kitchen pottery ... Few are the pottery fragments of smaller vessels ... Of varied designs are the handles of these vases, both of vertical and horizontal design, of which were found a considerable number. Very rare were found the remains of animals”. (n.38)

Footnotes

- (1) This is about the “Cavanella” (the canal between the islands of Cherso and Losinj); it seems an artificial canal dug during the Roman epoch. The name “Euripo”, given by Paladio Fosco and by some modern writers, like Fortis, is the name given, for analogy with the classic Euripo, natural channel, two meters in depth, between the island of Eubea and the Greek mainland, of the same currents characteristics as that of the Cavanella
- (2) We list, with the ancient Italian name, some of the cavities on the island which can be seen when proceeding from north to south: the cave of Zorbo (27 meters deep), the grotto of Petricevi (45 m. deep and 85 m. long), the cave of Sevicine (37m. deep), the cave of Tiglio (26m. deep), the cave of Lasca (8m. deep), The cave of Bugni (14m. deep), the Cave of Smergo (whose depth has not been determined), the cave of Lubenizze (23m. deep and 20m. long), the grotto of Cernilovo (9m. deep and 15m. Long), the cave of Cus (30m. deep and 17m. long), the grotto of the Colombi (27m. deep and 19m. long), the cave of Sadina (9m. deep), the grotto Fortis (28m. deep and 70m. long)
- (3) Nicolò Lemessi, Notes Historical – geographical – artistic on the island of Cherso, vol.V, Roma 1980
- (4) Also in this case we list, named with the old Italian names, some localities where can be observed remains of ancient castelliери. Proceeding from north to south these sites are: mount Sis (638 m.), Caisole (130 m.) which is on the site of an ancient Castelliери, mount S. Bartolomeo (314 m.), mount Ciulle (341 m.), mount Puccina (289 m.), mount Schulci (322 m.), mount Sella (403 m.), on the south of mount Chelm (483 m.), mount Ghermov (328 m.), mount Gellovizza (163 m.), mount Sillaz (196 m.), Gracisca (140 m.), Peschiegne (178 m.) and, last, mount of the Guardia
- (5) Carlo de Marchesetti, Notizie delli scavi, year 1924, fasc. 4, 5, 6

But who are these Chersini?

The dominations

The island of Cherso was inhabited from remote times. The people who reached her - and stayed, more or less for long periods mixing totally or in part with the local population - the Phoenicians, Romans, Franks, Bizantine, Arabs, Hungarians, Venetians, French and the Austrians.

Few are the localities in the world which were “crossed” with as many people as this limb of land, for which we really should ask ourselves “But these Chersini, who are they?” Numerous are the vestiges left by the population who crossed her, but the traces, less visible but which surely are there, left to show how they lived, their physical features, character and genetic code of these inhabitants?

The daily interaction of the local population with the newly arrived who came for reasons of work and/or family relations, settled through marriages which certainly occurred, may have left signs of their foreign literature not yet explored.

The science of genetics, in particular, today could answer many of these questions.

While waiting for modern science to answer some of these questions, we will refer to the existing literature (1).

The Quarnero (Kvarner) gulf, positioned near the shores of Istria, made Cherso an important commercial hub and shelter for ships, as those of the Venetian Republic, on their north/south routes and for the continental powers such as Hungary. Its position, which made the island of Cherso a prize for all those who wanted homogeneity on the Adriatic Sea for commercial or political ends, was the reason of her being under various dominations. The story of Cherso is a story of invasions, which its people sometimes opposed with force but could hardly fight a superior power, for which she chose the least evil, the protection of a superior power against the others and to prevent invasions and forays by pirates which frequently raided the island. This is the point of view through which we must interpret the notable “Acts of dedication”, which consisted of formalizing the existing situation, according to what was customary in those times.

The Illyrian domination

The castelleri, which we previously mentioned, were fortified villages (citadels), ruins of which were not only found on the island of Cherso, but also in Dalmatia, Venezia Giulia and in the Puglie. Which leads us to believe that all these lands were inhabited by people of the same civilization, which, due to interchange from one shore to the other across the Adriatic Sea, on those times was more or less homogenous.

Lubenizze and Caisole (Beli) – which became, together with Ossero and Cherso, the most important centers on the island – were built on locations where once were castelleri.

Cherso itself is not far from the castelliere of S. Bartolomeo which, according to some historians, is the original Cherso, eventually, for reasons of maritime commerce it would shift to the present location by the sea. This opinion is not shared by the archeologist Rukonic`, competent and passionate student of ancient Cherso and resident of the island according to whom, the city of Cherso rose, and was always where it is today, by the sea.

As we have already written, during the Illyrian period the habitants on the island, established on the elevated castelleri, were mainly occupied with herding.

Little by little the Illyrians – for reasons not entirely clear, because are founded on hypothesis, but probably due to invasion by other people – lost their unity and became divided in several tribes, among which, the most noted are those of the Giapidi, Liburnians, Istri and Illyrians. And it was really the tribe of the Liburnians who took residence, 600 years before the birth of Christ, on the islands of the Quarnero and therefore also on the island of Cherso.

The Liburnians were a maritime people. With their agile, speedy and sturdy ships (2) in a relatively short time they became masters of the Adriatic and Ionian seas on which they practiced, above all, piracy. Probably they also practiced a form of commerce, based on the exchange of goods, because the ancient writers claim that Istria and its nearby islands were rich in amber and lead. From the knowledge that on these lands, because of their geological conditions, could not have deposits of such materials, is presumed that these materials were imported from northern lands. Seems that the lead and amber were then worked on the island of Cherso then shipped to Greece where they were in great demand. This was demonstrated by the findings of numerous ornamental objects made of amber, especially necklaces, found in a necropolis near Ossero. Therefore, for their commerce or pirating if you will, the Liburnians had the need to stay by sea. This fact caused its people to shift their residences close to the seacoast.

The story of Cherso, populated by the Illyrian tribe of the Liburnians, at a certain point differentiates itself from those in Dalmatia where the Illyrians, toward the end of the 3rd century B.C. formed a strong state, governed by queen Teuta. The Illyrians came into conflict with Rome because, with their practice of piracy, were endangering navigation and commerce in the Adriatic seas. Rome fought the Illyrians of Teuta in two wars and won both of them. Then, on the wars she fought against Greece and Macedonia, the Illyrians, now siding with the Romans now against them, fell more and more in the orbit of Roman the supremacy, then became definitely their subject by 9 A.D. But the island of Cherso dedicated itself to Rome earlier than this date in order to have the empire's protection against the incursions of the Illyrian pirates.

From then until 476 A.D. Cherso remained under the dominion of Rome.

The Roman domination (28 B.C. to 476 A.D.)

The Island of Cherso, from 28 A.C., was annexed to the Roman Empire as part of maritime Dalmatia.

Rome subjugated Dalmatia and the Quarnero islands in order to secure its oriental borders and navigation on the Adriatic Sea. Anyway, the Roman domination – as is universally known by all historians, even those of the Slavic lands – was decisive for the development of the Dalmatian civilization.

The island of Cherso in particular, populated by Liburnians, who some years before were attacked by Dalmatians, performed the act of dedication to Caesar (from 58 B. C. pro-counsel of Illyria), while in Istria and Dalmatia wars between the local people and Rome continued until the year 9 A.D. This act of dedication facilitated, since its beginning, smooth relations with Rome. The process of assimilating with Rome the coastal region was favored by two other factors: the frequency of contacts with the other side of the Adriatic and the presence of Italian merchants, long time residents on the Dalmatian shores and on the islands of the Quarnero, amalgamated to the local population. With the arrival of the new conquerors, the Illyrian and Roman elements fused quickly. Roman ambassadors were sent to administer, the merchants, the legionnaire (soldiers) plus, the retired legionnaire to whom Rome habitually gave land as compensation for their long service to the empire. Furthermore, because of its geographical position functioned as a bridge between Illyria and the X Region Italica of Venetia and Histria whose capital was Aquilea.

During the Roman period the most important centers on the island were Ossero, Cherso and Caisole. The first two were Roman townships while Caisole, then named Caput Insulae makes its own history because it was inhabited only by Roman legionnaire. Cherso, although the townships were referred simply as a “vicus” and “saltus” post and did not assume, under the Roman domination, the importance of Ossero. The latter grew greatly because of its geographical location which commanded a favored sea passage, between the two islands, from the Italian coast to the eastern lands therefore this was an optimal position for the commercial traffic routes from Ravenna and Istria toward the Illyrian lands. Its development was total – as presented by the imposing grand designs which can be viewed today – with about 20,000 inhabitants, a large number for those times, when cities were much smaller than they are today. It is also an impressive number when compared to the total number on the island in more recent times. Comparing this with the total population on the whole island of Cherso in 1927 there were 9,101, in 1999, for the combined population of the islands of Cherso and Lussino there were 11,796 inhabitants.

The Romans brought to Cherso their own judicial and administrative system, their religion, their customs and language.

Ossero and Cherso, the two townships on the island, were governed independently through a magistrate who, at the beginning was elected directly by the people, assembled for the meeting of the curia. Afterward the emperors replaced the elected magistrate with a functionary appointed by them. The functions in the townships were regulated and inspired, if not directly copied from those of Rome.

The religion which the Romans brought to Cherso – like the Greek one, with which at a certain point in history fused – had numerous gods, because each aspect of human and natural life had its protective divinity. Above all was the god Giove (Jupiter), who resided on mount Olympus. Then there was Pluto god of the dead, Neptune god of the sea, Ceres goddess of agriculture, Minerva goddess of wisdom, Diana goddess of hunting and childbirth and others. In Cherso were mainly venerated Minerva and the goddess of Fortune.

Christianity reached Dalmatia and the Quarnero’s islands about the same time it reached Rome, preached by Tito in Dalmatia and by Mark in Aquileia, Istria and its islands, invited by the apostle Paul to convert that land. Therefore the edict of Constantine who, in 312, permits practicing the Christian religion, it does nothing but legitimize an existing situation. Christianity permeated by itself on every aspects of life, even political, of these lands. Ossero became the bishop’s residence. It seems from the fourth century on that more than one religious figure, who lived during those times, lives nowadays in the memory of people. Among those is S. Gaudenzio, S. Girolamo, S. Martino.

According Pozzo-Balbi, here Christianity and the Empire reached a perfect fusion, which caused the Empire to maintain its majesty and to remain incorruptible. Therefore when, in the 4th and 5th century, the barbarian hordes invaded Italy, on the islands and in Dalmatia the Roman ways survived intact. (n.39)



The Roman Empire

Footnotes:

(1) For this part of the story we will refer particularly to the college thesis of dot. G.Ganzetti, "Riflessi di storia dalmata sulle vicende dell'isola di Cherso", discussed at the university of Padua in 1977. The motive for preferentially using it is the fact that this is a recent work, from a subject who has no personal ties with the island, the same on consulting numerous works, also unpublished, that spans the time from antiquity to the present, among which are:

- A. Fortis, Saggio di osservazioni sopra l'isola di Cherso e Ossero, Venezia 1771
- L. Pozzo-Balbi, l'isola di Cherso, Roma 1934
- A. Orlini, Cherso, Trieste 1964
- J. Vlahovic', La comunita' di Cherso e Ossero, Rijeka 1968
- N. Lemessi, Note storiche, geografiche, artistiche sull'isola di Cherso, Roma 1979/80
- G. Praga, Storia di Dalmazia, Milano 1981
- G. Lucio, De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae, Trieste 1983
- E. Imamovic', Otoci Cres i Losimj, 1987

(2) The Illyrian ships, with two rows of oars, called "serille". Others described them as armed ships with sharp point for ramming enemy ships and propelled by a single row of oars. Then copied by the Romans, who called them "Liburnians", and used as them as light fighting ships.

THE ROMAN PERIOD

On the sea around the island of Cherso, at the beginning of the Roman domination, was fought an important naval battle between Caesar and Pompey, one of many that the two leaders fought in order to extend Roman domination but it actually was to prove their personal superiority. We glean this information from the "Bollettino interparrocchiale di Cherso" of May 1931. (1)

An episode of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey on the waters of the Quarnero (around the year 49 B.C.)

On the Quarnero there are three straits: the strait of Faresina (Porozina), between the island of Cherso and Istria; the strait of Maltempo, between the mainland of Croazia (Croatia) and the island of Veglia (Krk); the Mezzo (Middle) strait, between the islands of Veglia and Cherso. According to some historian the naval battle between Caesar and Pompey was fought in the strait of Faresina, according to others it was in the Middle strait, in front of Smergo (Merag), the third opinion is that it was fought in the strait of Maltempo which seems to be the most probable location because Caesar had his lieutenant Anthony, with his army, on the island of Veglia and his admiral Publio Dolabella, with a flotilla of 40 ships, in the strait of Maltempo.

It is remembered that Istria was backing Pompey and Dalmatia (Illyria) was backing Caesar.

Pompey had in place two fleets: the Greek fleet, commanded by Marco Ottaviano, and the Illyrian fleet, under Lucio Scribonio Libone, which joined together and hid in the strait of Faresina, behind the northern tip of the island of Cherso. At the opportune moment, in the dark of the night, the two fleet came out of their liar and proceeded to the strait of Mezzo, where they separate, one going to the left and the other to the right, in order to enter the strait of Maltempo from opposite direction and attack Caesar's fleet simultaneously. His fleet defended itself vigorously, but caught by surprise by two fleets, ceded little by little and was destroyed. The people on the island of Veglia who assisted the fight from shore, seeing that Caesar's fleet was being destroyed, scared, fled to the hills, even Caesar's soldiers, stationed on the island, fled by sea with any raft available.

Finished the battle, Ottaviano and Libone encircled the island of Veglia and landed on her with his sailors and took 13 squads prisoners. These squads were then transported to Macedonia and integrated into Pompey's army. Then Ottaviano attacked and subjugated the Illyrian coast, which was not longer being defended by Caesar's troops.

Remains of the Roman civilization

As we already have pointed out, the major centers on the island of Cherso during the Roman period were Apsorus (Ossero in Italian), Crepsa or Crexsa (Cherso), Ustrinum (Ustrine), Caput Insulae (Caisole), Hibernica (Lubenizze) and Pharum Insulae (Faresina). According to Matijasic` (2) remains of Roman architecture can also be seen near the villages of Bellei, Comunada, Guvnic`, Dolac and Pogana.

Unfortunately the major vestiges of this ancient civilization are lost because of

weathering, or were buried by nature. We may add, to it the destructive actions of humanity and barbaric invasions but also of the local farmer who, finding coins or piece of marble or pottery, not knowing its historical value would bring it home, or use the pieces of marble to build a wall. And this is what also happened to the remains of the Roman civilization. Therefore we must not wonder why remains from this epoch we find very little; is enough to evidence to convey us the fact of a long and important Roman presence on the island. But the research by scholars continues with casual finds, the discovery in 1997 by a Belgian tourist while scuba diving near the island of Lussino, of a stupendous bronze statue is evidence of this.

What other discoveries of that period science will bring to light?

Here we will limit ourselves to bringing you some tidbits of archaeological items which we got to know through various documents consulted.

Apsorus, Ossero in Italian, was, during the Roman period, one of the most important cities of the whole Adriatic region. As a mater of fact, an important commercial relations center between Venice, Istria, Illyria and all other major centers of the Adriatic. It peaked to a population of 20,000 inhabitants, who were registered with the Claudia tribe, proven by three inscriptions found in the city. From remaining items it is difficult to reconstruct its urban layout during the Roman period because of scarcity of archaeological data, and subsequent constructions erased or changed its Roman remains. Certain remains of its fortifications on the periphery of the present city were brought to light (southeast of the cathedral, west of the modern bridge, east of the church of S. Maria in the cemetery; on this three sites we also find the city's entrances). Along the city's perimeter, on its eastern tract, we can recognize remains of its encircling Roman walls. The city had two small entrances: southeast the one of Lasone and on the northeast the one of Viaro. In the inlet of Viaro we find remains of Roman ruins for mooring ships and, judging from the size of the bollards surviving to these days, and for the position of the bay, protected from the northern winds (Bora) and southern winds (Sirocco), it was the port where larger ships berthed.

Ossero is the seat of one of the more important archaeological collection exhibited partly in the municipal town hall, partly in the lapidary, and partly in on the walls of the city's loggia. The lapidary in the loggia contains Roman writings, architectural stone ornaments, renescent writings and a lintel with a standard (emblem). This collection contains mostly artifacts of the 1st and 2nd century A.D., that is, of the first Roman period. These are important because they allow us a peek at the daily life of that period.

Ustrina (others say Ustrinum), Ustrine in Italian, was instead very likely, an area where they were cremating the dead from the large population of Ossero, because there were found numerous Roman Graves. The name Ustrina in fact seems to be derived from the Latin *urere*, which translates to *burn*.

The other ancient Roman city, Named Crepsa or Crexa (Cherso), confronts us with numerous problems of a topographical character for the absolute lack of archaeological finds in the area of the modern city and in the historical nucleus inside its medieval walls. Instead, many Roman artifacts were found on mount S. Bartolomeo, north east of the city of Cherso (see I. Mitis *Pagine Istriane*, n, 5-6/1913). This place takes its name from the little Christian church dedicated to this saint, presumably built around the 14th century over the foundations of a pagan temple, which came into light when a large

triangular pillar, with the relief figures of three victims of a sacrifice, were discovered amongst its ruins.

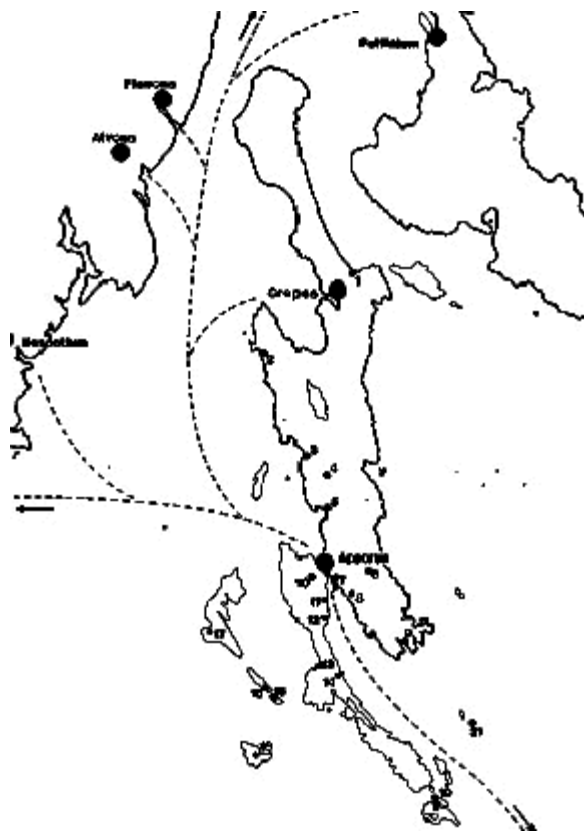
Of the little church still remains its advanced ruins which support the roof at an acute angle, made all of stone, and the apse open toward noon. At the front is the church yard, enclosed by a small wall in which was discovered a piece of alabaster, probably a piece of a small column of the pre Christian era. Inside nothing is left; nothing can be said of the walls painting, or its altar, because everything was destroyed by abuses during the long centuries of past times. Today the place serves as a shelter for grazing animals. Around the church, on the vast sun bathed hill which gradually descends west toward the sea, was the old Roman city, which fronted, a few Kilometers north, the castle of Caput Insulae, seat of a flowering Latin colony. Toward noon one can still see the thick defensive walls of the colony. It is believed that a depression, toward its north, was a necropolis, because many human bone remains came into light under the farmer's picks, when they, to prepare the grounds for cultivation, would knock down the tombs which were sheltered by sloped roofs. Because the material found at the beginning of the digs on mount S. Bartolomeo, for the major part, were rough shards, it was believed that the area was inhabited by a nucleus of poor farmers but then came to light a small Greek statue of exquisite features, which must surely have been the property of a rich noble family. Furthermore, on a tomb stone were found names of the Roman patriarchs Nigidio, Turio and Vulsonia. Other artifacts found were an arm of a life size male statue, which may have been part of a porch. On a vineyard was found a pavement, with good features, which might have been part of a Roman villa. All over the hill were unearthed pieces of vases, both rough and ornate, and other material. It is maintained that subsequently, probably for reasons of maritime commerce, the community shifted itself to the southwest by the seashore, on its present position, by a deep and protected harbor.

Even more important finds came to light in Caisole (see I. Mitis in *Pagine Istriane* n. 1-2/1913). Not far from the northern extremity of the island of Cherso, on the saddle of a rocky precipice which descends rapidly to the sea, facing the Liburnian coast, during Tiberius time, rose the splendid castle of Caput Insulae, site of a flowering Roman community. The castle dominated the expansive region of the Quarnerolo (Mali Kvarner), directed by twin magistrates who were elected in two, and by the "aedules" who constituted the supreme magistrate as they have had the duty of supervising the construction and maintenance of the roads, the aqueducts and public buildings. As testimony of the passage of Rome in this place remains numerous findings, for example stone tablet with Latin inscriptions exhumed during various recoveries and dated to the first years after the birth of Jesus Christ. Also can be seen the massive foundations of a Roman bridge, built to span a precipitous cavity, which connected Caput Insulae to a nearby hill. In the gardens adjacent to the community were also found numerous bronze coins.

Remains of Roman buildings with mosaic fragments and other remains characteristic of rural buildings during the Roman period (ceramic roof tiles and their through and other ceramic fragments) came to light in Lubenizze (Lubenice) harbor, below the village of Lubenizze, along the inlet's shore.

As for the daily living of its inhabitants during the Roman period, from the scarce archaeological and historical data available to us we can deduce only some vague idea

of a general character. They must have had an economy at the sustenance level. Their principal activity surely was agriculture, followed by grazing livestock, and followed by seafaring for the needs of merchant exchanges and communication. (n.40)



Sea routes of Cherso during the Roman period

Footnotes:

- (1) The battle is also cited in: Caes. Bell. civ.; Bandelli, La presenza Italica nel'Adriatico Orientale in eta` repubblicana in Aquilea, la Dalmazia e l'illirico, Udine 1985 (Antichita` Altoadriatiche, vol. 26, I) e altrove.
- (2) For writing this part of the Roman history on the island of Cherso we refer, when it is not otherwise cited, to the article by Robert Matijasic', Le isole di Cherso e Lussino in eta` romana, published in Atti, volume XX, Trieste-Rovigno 1989-1990, pagine pagine 255 / 273.

FROM THE FALL OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE VENETIAN DOMINATION

The years 476 – 998

As we have pointed out many times previously, in antiquity, the island of Cherso was part of the Roman Empire. Which, during the period of its maximum expansion, was composed of: on its south, besides Italy, all the lands which faced the Mediterranean Sea, extending to the north and covering most of Great Britain, east to the Aegean Sea and west to the Strait of Gibraltar including the Iberian Peninsula (see the preceding map).

In the year 395 the emperor Teodosio divided this immense territory into two parts, which were named Western Roman Empire with Rome as its capital, and the Eastern Roman Empire with Byzantium as its capital. The city of Byzantium was chosen by the emperor Constantine as his residence, whence later derived the name of Constantinople (Istanbul).

This division of the Roman Empire signaled the beginning of the end of Rome's power and splendor. Many factors contributed to its end, among them were its extensiveness which made it difficult to govern, administer and defend, decadence of its customs and, in particular the loss of its familiar links, and the constant external pressure on the people of its borders.

According to Indro Montanelli, "Rome was born with one mission, she abrogated this mission, and for that she ended. This mission was to glean from the civilizations which preceded her, Grecian, Oriental, Egyptian, Carthaginians, and spread these disciplines throughout Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. She did not invent much on the branches of philosophy, arts or sciences, but built roads for spreading these, the army for their defense, and a formidable complex of laws for guaranteeing the evolvement of order, and one language to render them universal. It has not even invented any the various political forms: monarchy, republic, aristocracy and democracy, liberalism and despotism were already experimented with. But Rome made some models, and was brilliant with each one of them for its practical and organizational genius". It is because of this that Rome left an indelible mark and being part of her empire was an honor.

With the fall of the Western Roman Empire, writes Fortis ⁽²⁾ "...Cherso and Ossero passed from one master to another; now to the Grecian Empire, now it was incorporated to the Hungarian Crown, now to bans, and from Slavic Kings received laws, although no remarkable events made them illustrious. Saba, captain of the Saracen, devastated her during the mid IX century; and from the chronicle of Andrea Dandolo it seems that the Venetian lords dominated her from 991".

But, the Venetian domination began, as Fortis writes, in 991 or in 998, or 1000, as others contend?

We, referring mainly to Ganzetti ⁽³⁾, as in the preceding three parts of our story will say few words more than Fortis on this historic period.

The Barbaric invasions

(476 – 535)

In 476, with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, begins, in Italy and in most of Europe, the barbarian invasions.

The barbarians were a population of nomads or semi-nomads who came from the north and the east in the Western Roman Empire and, to a smaller degree, from its Eastern part. This phenomenon had its major relevance from the middle of the 3rd to the middle of the 6th century. These people were principally descendants of Germans, Goths, Alemanni, Vandals, Svevi, Franks, Anglo, Saxons and others, plus people of other races as the Huns, Slavs, Bulgarians and Avars. These barbaric incursions were periodic at the beginning which the Romans were able to control but, when they became more frequent and powerful, the defensive apparatus of the Empire was not able to control them in part, because of the Empire's decline which affected its military might. In fact, during these times, its military were almost totally composed of mercenaries, whose generals were frequently dishonest barbarians.

The Dalmatian coast and the Islands were generally spared from the hordes of these new invaders, who exercised on these localities a control more nominal than factual.

In Cherso, in particular, the civil, religious and economic every-day life continued as usual, and its Roman way of life was not the least interrupted.

The first Byzantine domination

(535 – 774)

Whether it is Pozzo-Balbi ⁽⁴⁾ or Ganzetti and others writing about the Byzantine domination, but in a way we may also say "domination by the Eastern Roman Empire" or, "Domination by Constantinople" on which the island of Cherso depended, during the period we are considering, the Eastern Roman Empire, whose seat was Constantinople, the ancient Byzantium.

The Byzantine domination did not bring changes to the island of Cherso, which did not lose its administrative autonomy.

The Frank domination

(774 – 810)

In 774 began for a good part of Italy and Europe the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne. As for Dalmatia, and the island of Cherso in particular, even as the ancient chronicles refers that the Franks subjugated Liburnia, Istria and the Apsyrtides islands, is not clear what part of Dalmatia was conquered by Charlemagne, and of the island of Chesro there is no evidence that it was dominated by the Franks. It seems that the Franks applied on Dalmatia and on the Quarnero's islands a simple political prevalence, leaving the local government to administer the same way as it was under its ancient Roman rights. This is very important because from this point on will move, after the coronation of Charlemagne, on the new course of the story of Europe, the forming on the ways of Roman, Latin and Communes of the Dalmatian civilization, which was the fundamental way of life in the Eastern Adriatic. In this civilization the Communes, ancient and never dissolved Roman municipalities, will receive its last perfection and will consecrate the municipal liberties which is the glory of the Dalmatian past and by which distinguishes Dalmatia from the Balkans, the Latin from the Slavs. In 810 the

maritime cities, therefore also Cherso, were restored to Byzantium.

The second Byzantine domination

(810 - 998)

The rapport of Cherso with Byzantium was more organized than was with Charlemagne. The island's principal center was Ossero, which was governed by a protospataro (dignitary who carried the sword during military ceremonies), residing in Zara (Zadar). The inhabitants were obliged to pay to the Byzantine emperor a tribute of 100 gold coins. But as far as the other aspects of life, seems that Byzantium's influence on the island, and above all on its people was hardly noticed, if any, it had some influence on its dominant class. In this vacuum, little by little, Venice claiming its old international obligations which bound the Byzantine government started new undertakings without raising any reaction by Byzantium or Charlemagne. In this way the Venetian Republic bound rapports even more closely, on one side with the government of Constantinople and on the other side with the Holy Roman Empire (hence with the Orient and with the Occident), gaining ever more advantages for her commerce. This situation enabled her to place limits on the commercial activities of other Italian maritime cities on the Adriatic therefore reducing and nearly eliminating competition, and gaining almost exclusive domination of these seas.

Contemporarily because of the events previously cited, Dalmatia and the island of Cherso were exposed to Slavic immigration and their evangelization, by the Saracen incursions and by the birth of the Communes, significant phenomenon, which mark the passage from the ancient period to the medieval. (n.41)



Roman aqueduct of S. Martino (Martinscica)

Aqueduct of S. Martino in Valle built, according to the architect G. Duda Marinelli, by the Romans (Comunita` Chersina n.18)

Footnotes:

- (1) Montanelli, Storia di Roma, Rizzoli, Milano 1973
- (2) A. Fortis, Saggio d'osservazioni sopra l'isola di Cherso ed Ossero, Venezia 1771
- (3) G. Ganzetti, Riflessi di storia dalmata sulle vicende del isola di Cherso, Padova 1997
- (4) L.Pozzo-Balbi, L'isola di Cherso, A.R.E., Roma 1934

THE ARRIVAL AND PRESENCE OF THE SLAVS IN DALMATIA I

At a certain point, in the Roman world of Dalmatia and its islands, the chroniclers begin to write of the Slavs presence (2), by "Slavs", in this case, we mean the Indo-European people whose cradle was central Europe, in a place not exactly determined by scholars, whence they spread in all directions, scattering and differentiating, with time, in various groups of Croats, Serbians, Bulgarians, Bohemians, etc., as they are known today.

At its beginning, the Slavic world appears as a pure psychological space, horizon of silence, without writings before the 9th century, it came to light in an indirect way and very rarely from within; and to the vision of the bordering people it presented an image of a savage planet. Very little remains of their habitations, because they were nomads, these were not built to last but consisted of semi-subterranean shelters used during their stays, which with time and weathering, were nearly completely destroyed. What remains is completely of a linguistic or anthropological character, concerning a topology of villages, mountains and rivers or of physical characteristics of the inhabitants of a particular locality, varied traces which are difficult to interpret. Furthermore, we have chronicles of some monks and travelers.

Anyway, it seems that toward the 6th century, these people left, for reasons which are unknown to us, their original place in central Europe and began a long emigration which brought them – as illustrated on the enclosed map – east up to the rivers Dvina and Dnepr, by the Azov and Black seas, to the south by the Mediterranean sea, and west to the Adriatic sea and the rivers Drava, Danube and Elba, north to the Baltic sea. They were nited as a tribe, with an economy based on collective property, moved by foot or carriages, with women, children and their provisions, without a systematic plan for conquest, on the search of land to farm. Sometime invasions transformed into permanent colonization, accepted by both sides, with the Slavs assimilating with local culture.

Dalmatia and its island constituted their extreme territorial and temporal end for Slavic emigration, but to them their arrival on these lands attributed a significant reach for demonstrating its relevance for all the following centuries up to our days. Other information on the relations among Liburnia, Istria, Dalmatia and the more southern lands which face the Adriatic may certainly be added by more extensive and systematic historical-archaeological research which should be done, not only along the Oriental coast of Istria, but also along those of Dalmatia and the islands. In fact, certainly there is more to discover, because studies on the nationality of the inhabitants of Dalmatia at the dawn of the medieval period, presumably when the Slavs reached Dalmatia and the islands, only began about the middle of 1,800, and definite word on this argument

probably was not yet spoken. Certain attentive reflections on this argument are attributed to the illustrious Croatian historian V. Klaić who, among other things, refers to Porfirogenito, Byzantine emperor of the 10th century, who was a passionate lover of historical literature (3).

According to Klaić, the only source of history which is testimony of the arrival of the Slavs and whence they originally came constitutes, exactly, works from Costantino Porfirogenito. His work however, written for his own use was probably not written all by himself, is full of contradictions and not very homogenous, is immensely contested by modern historiographers, among other things, seem strange the contradictions on the writings of the ancient history of the Slavs, which author Klaić by duty must have known well, dealing, for him, with the more recent past.

It seems that the Slavs arrived on the Balkan peninsula on the 7th century (between the years 600 and 700), at the time of emperor Eraclio and Pope John IX, but signs of their presence on the island of Cherso-Ossero indicates that they came on about the middle of the 9th century. According to others, they came even earlier. In Dalmatia they encountered a strong resistance. The colonies and those of the Roman caste, as in Zara (Zadar) and Trau were able to prevent being overrun, or as in the case of Epidaurum and Solona, its inhabitant, unable to resist attacks by the assaulting horde, abandoned their cities and founded others nearby. This way Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and Spalato (Split) were born.

Little by little, in front of the Slavic invasion, the Romans retreated in the coastal cities, which were well protected and fortified, leaving to the Slavs the interior lands of the Balkan Peninsula. The Slavs, in order to legalize and consolidate their holdings, asked and obtained from the Byzantine emperor permission to make the occupied lands their home.

If it is difficult to date the epoch of the Slavs arrival in Dalmatia, it seems there is no doubt on the occasion of their coming. Toward the middle of the 6th century the emperor Justinian asked the help of the Avars to contain and subdue the barbarians of German and Slavic origin who permeated the empire's southern borders, the emperor's enemies. These Avars asked, as compensation, to settle on corresponding land on the actual Dubrovia, a region situated between the Black sea and the Danube, and Justinian agreed to it. But Justin II, his successor, revoked this permission of settlement inducing the Avars to find a new territory to settle on, in order to be able to sustain their people. The territory to the north-east was occupied by the powerful Gepidi, to the Avars the only option remained the Carpathians.

During this search for a new place to settle, the Avars met the Slavs, whom they subjugated. The Slavs were the type of people they really needed. In fact the Avars, being a nomad people, dedicated to raiding and robbing, considered the Slavs as a people lacking warring attitude, therefore people whom they needed that is, foot soldiers destined to be the first to confront the enemy in battle.

According to other authors the Slavs were a race of ferocious warriors.

The first Slavs who later reached the island of Cherso certainly were foot soldiers. They settled in the small internal agglomerations on the island, denominated "castellieri", where they dedicated themselves to raising livestock, mainly sheep.

At the beginning it seems that they lacked experience with the sea, but gained it by being in contact with the local population and by learning it they began pursuing piracy.

This activity was not practiced by them as something that was wrong but as a commercial activity, as a livelihood source. How could this activity be “disapproved” by the law if part of the booty went to the king or master?

Pushing themselves onto the islands of Cherso-Ossero and the other islands of the Quarnero, toward the middle of the 9th century, were mainly the Croats, that is, part of the people residing between the rivers Arsa and Cetina, whose base was at the mouths of Sirbenik. From these positions, of great strategic value, they began affecting the security of the Adriatic Sea with their acts of piracy.

As a confirmation of the Slavic presence on the island of Cherso, at about the middle of the 9th century, was cited by the peace stipulated in the year 835 between the commander of the Venetian fleet, Pietro Tradonico, prosy leader of the Narentian pirates and Mislav, leader of the Croatian pirates, in a locality called S. Martino.

According to P. Diacono and S. Mitis this S. Martino would be the village situated on the west coast of the island of Cherso. This interpretation however is not a confirmed proof, as it seems that in Dalmatia, in that epoch, were at least a dozen settlements bearing this name, while it is not certain of the existence, during that epoch, of the settlement of S. Martino on the island of Cherso. Furthermore, there is no trace of Slavs on the island until few years before the year 1000, as is confirmed by the same Porfirogenito, about 100 years later, when he observed that the inhabitants of Ossero, near where S. Martino is located, were Romans.

Seems that the Slavs arrived on the island of Cherso few at the time and must have been of a small number during the whole 10th century and until the first few dozen years of the 11th century if they did not have, until this epoch, any form of political organization, nor they had counties (zupanije) therefore the island conserved its Latin character. An indirect source of this affirmation comes also from Giovanni Diacono ⁽⁴⁾ when he refers that, for the arrival in Ossero of the doge Pietro Orseolo II, convenes in the city not only the Roman citizens but also the whole people of the nearby castelliere, whether Romans or Slavs. According to Pozzo-Balbi, only in 999 we find a document on which was reported a Slavic surname, the one of a certain Dalio Dalione.

The Slavs, in Dalmatia and on the Quarnero islands – being constantly present and living peacefully with the Romans and with the Venetians first, then with the Italians – never had a dominant role as for language, culture or customs, until the end of World War II. Generally the population of the larger centers and those on the coasts were Italian while that of the interior was Croatian.

Present, but not dominant or prevalent, was also the Croatian language, generally a Croatian dialect. Therefore, the religious functions, at that time were celebrated in Latin everywhere, the sermons and rosary could be delivered also in Croat. The teaching in the schools was, depending on the location and period, in Croatian or Italian during Hungarian period and in Italian during the Fascist period. Within families, apart from the official language used in formal dealings, everyone spoke the mother language. (n.42)



Da F. Conte, *Gli Slavi*, Einaudi, Torino, 1991.

Slavic migration routes.

Footnotes:

- ↳ Also in this part of the history of Cherso, as in the preceding ones, we will refer to, in particular, to G. Ganzetti, *Riflessi di storia dalmata sulle vicende dell'isola di Cherso*, Padova, 1977.
- (2) Whoever wishes to delve deeper in the references about the migration of the Slavs, we recommend reading the volume by Francis Conte, *Gli Slavi (The Slavs). Le civiltà del Europa centrale e orientale (The civilizations of central and eastern Europe)*, Einaudi, Torino 1991.
- (3) V. Klaić, *C. Porfirogenito, de Thematibus et de Administratio Imperio*, Washington 1967.
- (4) G. Diacono, *Cronica Veneziana*, a cura dell'Istituto Storico Italiano, Roma 1890.

EVANGELIZATION OF THE SLAVS

Between the east and the west

Because of their territory's location, between the east and the west, the Slavic people were prime candidates for religious conversion by Christians, Hebrews and Mohammedans. The Hebrew and Mohammedan religions had scant success. The Christian religion was widely accepted by the Slavic people. Christian missionaries were sent by the emperor of Byzantium and by the Pope. To understand the importance of this conversion, not only for the identity of the Slavic people but also for the whole so called western world, think how different the history of Europe would be if, instead of converting to Christianity, the Slavic people would have converted to Judaism, or Islam.

But this has not happened!

Christian penetration in the Slavic lands seems to begin as early as the 2nd Century, in the 3rd century according the Illyrian (2), but was interrupted by barbaric invasions to be picked up again in the 9th century by Byzantine and franco-carolingi missionaries.

In the east, the emperor of Byzantium was in fact convinced that the salvation of the empire – continually threatened and attacked by Arabs, Slavs and others – could come from no other than the conversion of its enemies to Christianity. With the Arabs this was impossible because of their zealous adherence to Mohammed, but this was possible with the Slavs who were pagans. According to what confirms Costantino VII Porfirogenito in *De Administrando Imperio*, the emperor Eraclio convinced the Slavs (mainly Serbians and Croatians) to abandon the region north of the Carpathians and to descend toward the Balkans to protect, with their help, the western borders of the empire from attacks by the Avars (as we already have said). The Slavs were helping Byzantium on and off and were used by the Avars as battle fodder against the empire. In order to have better control of the Slavic tribe emperor Eraclio thought of converting to Christianity through the priests of the Roman Church, not the ones of Byzantium. This date is significant as the 9th century was marked by the struggle between the Church of Rome and the church of Byzantium for control of Illyria, which finally resolved itself in favor of Rome during the Papacy of John VII (872 – 882).

In the west, following the accords between emperor Charlemagne and the Pontificate, being both of them interested in uniting in one western Christian empire all the pagan peoples of Europe, was initiated a program of evangelization. At the beginning of the 9th century thousands of Slavs were baptized in Nona (3). The coordinating center of this apostolic drive was Aquilea, which gained great importance and became the place for pilgrimages. Beside Aquilea, Spalato (Split) and Zara (Zadar), the major centers of the Dalmatian church, had more the characteristics of the Byzantine church than the Franco-carolingie (Franco-Carolingian) church of Aquilea.

An alphabet for evangelization and for other things

But the greatest push for the Slavs conversion was given by the monk Costantino-Cirillo who created an alphabet – the glagolitic – for recording Slavic sounds and

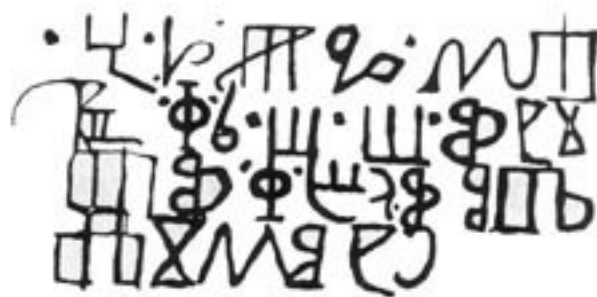
writings and for the translation of sacred writings. The glagolitic alphabet, very complex, was, in a short time substituted by a simpler alphabet invented by the disciples of Methodius, brother of Costantino, and by them called "Cirillico" (Cyrillic), in honor of their teacher. Cirillo is in fact the name which Costantino assumed when he became a monk. Costantino-Cirillo was chosen by the Byzantine Emperor Michele III (Michael III) to be a missionary of the Slavic people, certainly on counsel of the patriarch Fozio, because he was born in Tessalonica of Grecian father, mother probably Slav, and was brought up, together with his brother Metodio (Methodius), in a bilingual household. As a matter of fact Tessalonica was sort of a Greek island in the middle of Slavic land. Thanks to Costantino-Cirillo a cultured Slavic language was constituted, the paleo-Slav, modeled after the Greek. Invented the proper alphabet, Costantino-Cirillo proceeded to translate the Bible, Greek liturgical texts, chronicles of Byzantine origin, and of some scientific text.

He was, undoubtedly, the first Slav grammar teacher. With his work of evangelization and translation Costantino-Cirillo (Costantine) was always by his brother Metodio (Methodius) side, the latter continued Costantine's work after his death.

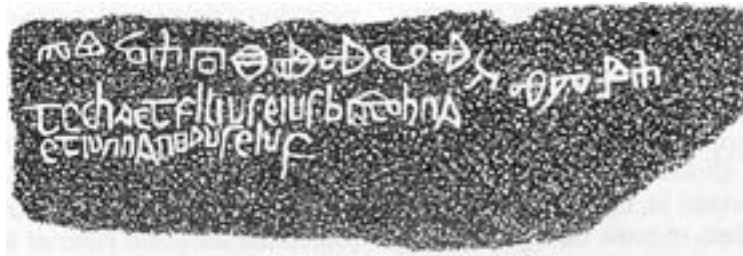
Maintained the necessity of their national language and liturgies against the ecclesiastic world of the epoch, according whom the only dignified language to express the word of God in the liturgy was the Latin, Greek and Hebrew, that is those which were on the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. The ecclesiastic celebration in Slavic language, concerning the pope for some time now, was then revoked. Only in our times, with the Reformation of the Vatican Council II (1965), the national languages, not only the ones of the Slavs can be used in the catholic liturgies.

The importance of the invention, by Cyril and Methodius, of an alphabet for the Slavic language, was paramount for the evangelization because it gave Slavs the means for spreading their culture and learning from those of others. (n.43)

Č • H • J G • MA
 Ê • FR(A) • Š • Š • U(ČI)NI
 TU • F(A)B(RI)KU OD
 LIMO(ZI)NE



Ossero (Osor): glagolitic inscription in the Church of Vier.



Glagolitic inscription on a stone tablet in the village of Valun

Footnotes:

- (1) From F. Conte, Gli Slavi, Einaudi, Torino, 1991
- (2) The Illyrium was composed of Dalmatian and the Danubian provinces.
- (3) Nona, the present day Nin – the Croatian seaside resort, situated 15Km north of Zara – and the ancient Aneona, an important seat of the bishop whose jurisdiction was the whole ancient Croatia.

THE EXPEDITION INTO DALMATIA AND THE ISLANDS BY THE VENETIAN DOGE PIETRO ORSEOLO II

After our digression into the history of the Slavic people, we resume to talk about Cherso (1).

Around the year 1,000, east of Cherso was the Byzantine Empire, to which Cherso belonged, and which was already breaking apart, pressured as was, from all sides, by Arabs, Turks and others; to its west was stretching Italy, with the barbarians, then Charlemagne, then city-states. In this environment, the maritime Republic of Venice was making progress in gaining control of the Adriatic Sea for her commerce, the doge Pietro Orseolo II, at the command of a strong and well organized armada, completes an expedition in Dalmatia and on the islands.

This expedition was made following the request by a Dalmatian delegation, who promised their eternal subjection to Orseolo and his heirs.

Called an immediate meeting of the Council and obtained their consensus, Orseolo assembled a large fleet, composed of warships and troop transports, then went to S. Peter cathedral to implore heaven's protection for this enterprise, as was commonly done in those times. Received from the bishop's hands the standard of the Republic, together with his blessings, Ascension Day of the year 1,000, which fell on the 9th of May – as was precisely written by Silvio Mitis (2) – Orseolo departed with his large fleet

for a stopover in Grado where, in the patriarchal church, in the presence of a cheering and approving public, the religious ceremony previously celebrated in Venice was repeated. From here the fleet went toward Istria and a brief stopover in Parenzo (Porec) then Pola (Pula). Here the doge made a stopover of few days in order to receive the delegations of Capodistria (Koper), Pirano (Piran), Isola (Izola), Umago (Umag), Rovigno (Rovinj), Albona (Labin). Received their homage and pledge of fidelity, Orseolo completes the recruitment of needed troops and sailors then raises sails for Dalmatia. The fleet crosses the Quarnero then, on the 19th of May, moors in Bier, a harbor near the city of Ossero ⁽³⁾. In Ossero he was greeted as a liberator and was showered with extravagant feasts to which also participated the Slavic population from the interior villages of the island. According to Italian historians these were few and peaceful farmers while quoting Romanin ⁽⁴⁾ "Orseolo landed on the stony islands of Cherso and Ossero then occupied by the Croatian Slavs", information which is held as unfounded because, if true the Slavic population would have been so large on these islands in that epoch that they surely would have had some form of organization, of which there is no record.

The 5th of June, feast of Pentecost, in the cathedral of Ossero was held a solemn ceremony in the presence of the illustrious guest, in whose honor the "Laudi" (Lauds), were sung which up to then were dedicated only to the emperor of Byzantium.

According to other sources this expedition occurred in 998 but I do not believe this small difference in years is of great importance after so many centuries.

In Ossero came to render homage to the Venetian prince people from the nearby islands of Veglia (Krk) and Arbe (Rab), whence the expedition continues to Zara (Zadar). Here came, to honor him and swear their fidelity, the representatives of Serbenico (Serbenic), Spalato, Trau` Almissa, Ragusa, besides those from the surrounding islands of Pago (Pag) Brazza, Lissa, and from many other parts. The exception was only the islands of Cruzzola and Lessina, which were places of refuge and depository of booty for the Narentan pirates and therefore in their possession.

The doge occupies the two islands then goes on the mainland, inhabited by pirates, and put siege to it until the same pirates come to him to implore mercy. They obtained a ceasefire in exchange of payment for damages done to Venetian citizens and a promise to cease their piracy.

With this the doge concludes his enterprise. Before returning to Venice he revisits the places which submitted to the Republic and reinforced their allegiance. Finally, returning victorious to the city in the lagoon, he calls for a general assembly in order to give account of his expedition, for which he was widely hailed. In exchange for his services to the city he was also conferred the title of Doge of Venice and Dalmatia, a title conveyed also to his successors.

With this expedition the Duke Orseolo II wanted to show Venice's power in order to demonstrate that in the upper Adriatic the Franco-Byzantine supremacy ceased to exist and began that of Venice.

The occasion for this Venetian expedition was brought about by the lack of payment, by Venice, of the tribute required by the Croats which was imposed by the Byzantine emperor Basilio (Basil) as *praetium pacis*. We already talked about this and we remember that it deals with Emperor Basilio's attempt to discourage piracy by the Slavs

in order to have peaceful commerce in the upper Adriatic by routing to the Slavs the tribute which the maritime cities made in order for them to be able to navigate safely these waters.

As a matter of fact this piracy was mainly the selling of slaves, a principal source of livelihood for the coastal population. It is not even clear how Venice came about paying this *praetium pacis*. According to Orlini, Venice assumed the obligation of paying this tribute for the Dalmatians, because it became a heavy burden for them. However there are no documents supporting this thesis. It is certain that Venice, in 991 or 992, under the dogeship of Pietro Orseolo II, decided to discontinue the tribute. The Croats reacted violently provoking a counter-reaction by Venice, which anyway was not able to quiet the Slav's protest. Orseolo then warns them of an armed intervention, which followed as we have already said.

Independent from the motive which provoked the expedition, if we think that maritime Dalmatia was a Byzantine dominium, it raises doubts on the expedition legitimacy. As a matter of fact Orseolo, according to international rights, violated the sovereignty of a country and assumed the role of an aggressor. It is very likely that the subjugation by Orseolo's expedition, in some ways, made it official.

While pro-Venetian historiographers generally extol the event and justified them by the Byzantine ineptitude to control the ever increasing pirate raids in Dalmatia, the Slavs usually condemns the even but their interpretation of the facts is not unanimous. The major part of Slav historians maintains that the goal of Venice was to extend its dominium in order to economically exploit these conquered lands meanwhile making its maritime traffic more secure. Interesting is the version of Smiciklas who, after having stated that the Dalmatian cities and the islands of the Quarnero were autonomous as was Cherso or subjects of the Croatian king, maintains that the emperor of Byzantium, in 995, ceded to the duke Orseolo the rights to Dalmatia in exchange for her help with his war against Germany and the Croatian pirates. Furthermore the emperor would have conceded important privileges to the Venetian merchants in exchange for a likewise arrangement by Venice with the Dalmatians. All this done, including the breach of faith by the littoral region's ban Svetoslao, in order that Orsoleo would be received with open arms.

Officially, the Dalmatians continued to recognize the Byzantine sovereignty even after Orseolo's voyage their emperor continued to dispense honoraries. Also may be that this expedition was undertaken without Informing Byzantium and without her consent, but it probably can be confirmed that the emperor overlooked this happenings, but he may have done so out of weakness, because of palace's affairs or the conflicts with the Arabs or Bulgarians or for other motives. On the other hand the Dalmatians needed help in freeing themselves from annoyances by the Slavs, even if the later preferred being governed by Byzantium which, because of its distance, permitted them greater liberties.

For this motive maybe the local authorities would not have welcomed the Venetian duke's voyage if it was not for the emperor's consent. Venice, who already enjoyed great prestige in the Adriatic Sea, needed to confirm it, for this reason the enterprise of Orseolo was viewed as a political and military need. It may be also that the emperors, Constantine and Basil, both knowing that Dalmatia would be lost anyway, preferred to know that it would be under the friendlier Venice than under

the Croats. The later ones in fact if they would have become more powerful, would have been a danger for the whole empire.

Among the others, one of the more logical theses seems to be the one by De Voinovich, who maintains that their meddling in the Byzantine lands can be explained only if we suppose an explicable agreed situation or implicit acknowledgment by the maritime jurisdictions – evidence of Venetian pertinence – and territorial sovereignty pertaining to the emperor.

In the everyday life of Cherso and Ossero we can not verify any changes as the Byzantine domination was only nominal and the substitution of the doge with an overseer is a strategy solely for Dalmatia leaving the people of the island to themselves.

(44)

Footnotes:

- (1) Lacking otherwise specific indication, this part is mainly treated by G. Ganzetti. *Riflessi di storia dalmata sulle vicende del Isola di Cherso*, Padova 1997.
- (2) Silvio Mitis, *Storia di Cherso – Ossero dal 476 al 1409*, Parenzo 1925.
- (3) For a description of the expedition of the duke Orseolo II, we referred to the text by Matteo Nicolich, *Storia documentata dei Lussini*, Rovigno 1871.
- (4) S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Venezia 1972.

BEGINNING OF THE VENETIAN PERIOD

The troubled eleventh century (1)

Four powers, two eminent, the pope and the emperor, and two sovereign, the doge of Venice and the king of Croatia who are jockeying among themselves in Dalmatia, Croatia and Italy.

In particular, in the year 1,000, following the duke Orseolo's expedition into Dalmatia and the islands and the defeat of the Narentian pirates, the Republic of Venice stops paying tribute to the Croatian princes which, times ago, was established by Byzantium as "pro bono Pacis", and begins her maritime supremacy on the Adriatic Sea. At this time Venice was not interested in territorial possessions. It follows a relatively peaceful period of security for her commerce. The emperor of Byzantium maintains his political power, in fact he continues with his political duties, distributes honors, and his political acts carries the empire's stamp of approval, in church they always sing lauds in his honor – but weak, far away and constantly busy with internal and external conflicts – has minimal influence on the political and social life of those lands.

But the peace is short lived because new political conflicts, among the Byzantine emperor, the pope and the Venetian Republic in which, because of their position, our lands became inevitably involved, not as much for Cherso, where these events were reflexes rather than affecting her directly, as were the Dalmatian cities, such as Spalato and Zara. Further complicating things, among the emperor, the pope and the Venetian Republic is the desire by the Slavic people to conquer new territory toward Dalmatia and the islands, favored by the birth of the Slavic national party and by two strong princes: Cresimiro and Demetrio Zvonimiro. Anyway the peace lasts until the death, in 1009, of the duke Pietro Orseolo II. Who was succeeded by his son Ottone Orseolo, at

the age of 15; and attacks by the Slavs to Venetian shipping and incursions into the maritime cities of Dalmatia, instigated by Cresimiro I, king of the Croats, resume. Ossero, Cherso and the other islands of the Quarnero live in a situation of constant danger for which, in 1018, asks the duke Ottone Orseolo to intervene. Thereafter the Venetian fleet confronts king Cresimiro in the Quarnero seas where she defeats him. The doge, during his return voyage to Venice, briefly stops in the more important cities to ask for payment of a tribute. In Ossero the doge is greeted by the bishop Martino and by Priore Giovanni who took charge, in the name of the local population, to give as payment, on Christmas day of every year, forty marten skins.

According to some Croatian historians, among who is Kralič, Cresimiro was then in charge of all Dalmatia, including the islands of Arbe, Veglia and Ossero, where he ruled in the name of the emperor of Byzantium. According to Ganzetti there is no document in existence which support this statement even if it is proven that in 1052 Cresimiro was called king by the Dalmatians “for kind divine leniency” (2) having the omnipotent God, extended his reign on land and sea.

Alarmed by the number and power of the Slavs, Pope Gregory VII and the Dalmatians, separately, requested help. Gregory VII first asks a noble of Denmark, to subjugate Croatia and to become its king; then he allied himself with the Dalmatians, who had already asked for help from the Norman King Amico. He defeats the king of Croatia and imprisons him on the island of Pago (Pag) but did not become king of Croatia because of some political and religious conflict of interest. Even the Venetian Republic did not see as a good thing this Norman presence in Dalmatia, other than in southern Italy and, in 1076, sent a powerful fleet, commanded by doge Domenico Selvo against Amico, Domenico Selvo defeated Amico, re-establishing Venice’s dominance on the Adriatic Sea and re-takes the title of Dux Dalmatiae. After this victorious expedition, the doge Domenico Selvo reunites, in Spalato, the representatives of the Dalmatian communes and made them promise – what has never happened before – that from then on no one could introduce in Dalmatia Normans or other foreigners, through them or through others. This way was established two separate kingdoms: the one of Dalmatia, whose imperial sovereignty was represented by Venice, and the one of Croatia with its king.

King Michael VII, weak and incompetent, was king of Byzantium until 1081; with a coup he was substituted by Alessio Comneno, active and energetic, who brought to an end thirty years of disorder, of anarchy, of humiliation and rebuilds its army. He is totally absorbed in this task for which he neglects Dalmatia. This lack of interest was noticed right away by Roberto the Giuscardo, who had decided to conquer a kingdom on the eastern coast of the Byzantine Empire. Allied with him were the Croatian king and the Dalmatian Communes, this is in open violation of the pact of Spalato. This – according to Ganzetti – is the first time that the Dalmatian Communes betrays the Eastern Roman Crown, represented by the Venetian Republic, and many historians do not mention this. The reasons for this turnabout could be:

- the hard monopolistic Venetian intransigence along their coasts;
- the desire to regain their own autonomy;
- the influence of the Benedictine monasteries, always richer and more potent, and favoring alliance between the pope and Roberto the Giuscardo.

More difficult to explain is the alliance with the Croatian king.

The fact is that Byzantium and Venice become alarmed and, in 1081 there was a clash first between the Venetian fleet and the one of Giuscardo, resulting in a Venetian victory, then between the one of the emperor and the one of Giuscardo. Regrettably the winner was the Norman fleet and Roberto the Giuscardo settles in the Dalmatian littoral, but was compelled, after a brief time, to abandon camp after being recalled to Italy because the pope needed help against Enrico IV. His son Boemondo remained in Durazzo, Dalmatia.

Between 1085 and 1086 the doge Domenico Selvo, because of the defeat of Roberto il Guiscardo, was replaced by Vitale Falier, who allies himself with Byzantium and, finally, together were able to defeat the Normans and remove them from Dalmatia. Because of this victory, whose credit was attributed mainly to Venice, the emperor Alessio Comneno and the doge Vitale Falier stipulate an accord that the doge, bearing the title "leader of Dalmatia and Croatia and imperial *protosebaste*", gains the full possession of Dalmatia.

This is an act on which were given various interpretations. We will rely on the one by Romanin according to whom, in reality, Byzantium did not renounce Croatia or Dalmatia even if the fact is that the Venetian doge was nominated leader of these two regions. Was only granted to Venice certain rights on the eastern Adriatic Sea, but Dalmatia continued to be, nominally and officially, part of the Eastern Roman Empire even after 1085 and until the fall of Constantinople.

However, few months later the situation changes again with the nomination, by the pope, of the pontifical aide Demetrio Zvonimiro as king of Dalmatia and Croatia. In exchange he pays the pope 200 Byzantine gold coins and promise to defend with his army all rights of the Church.

While in the political arena all this happens, the peoples of the islands govern themselves, with their own laws and statutes. The city of Ossevo, as the other cities, have their own magistrates for administering the city's affairs, collect taxes, and provide for the people's necessities. The Venetian Republic keeps the local Authority in place but sends, to direct her own interests, a Curator or Mayor. As a sign of dependence, to the government of the duke Ottone Orseolo, is understood that the major cities must pay Venice a tribute, based on the quantity and quality of the natural local products; that is, Ossevo, on Christmas Day of every years, must give Venice, a tribute of forty marten pelts; Arbe, ten pounds of silk; Muggia, Umago, Cittanova and Parenzo a certain quantity of oil and wine and, in case of need, a certain number of boats.

Aside the social class of nobles and clergies, begins to gain importance and being recognized is the middle class, consisting of people of commerce, and artisans.

While the political power in Dalmatia and the islands, as a matter of fact, was passing from the hands of the Byzantine emperor to those of the doge of Venice, in the religious camp Christianity had two loci: Rome and Byzantium, often fighting between themselves, especially for the control of Illyrium and the Dalmatian coasts. The bishops of Zara, Ossevo and Spalato, sometimes unsure which way Christianity was leaning, decided to adhere to the Church of Rome, Instead Byzantium became the religious capital of the Slavic people.

While the other spheres of the Church had their so called battle, on the territories of our interest, was being founded and developed the monastic order of the Benedictines: it seems that along the shores, from Veglia to Cattaro (Kotar), were established,

between men and women, at least forty monasteries. Ossero was an important seat of the bishops, who left more than an important trace on the Church history. Here, during this period, we find the notable bishop Gaudenzio, who later became Saint Gaudenzio, Ossero's protector. He founded numerous Benedictine convents, among which, in Ossero is the ones of S. Pietro dentro le Mura and the other one is for the nuns of S. Maria delle Grazie. According to popular belief, he also founded the *chiosi* (cloisters) of S. Francesco of Neresine and that of S. Martino. These convents were not only centers of religious life but also true centers of language, culture and Roman traditions for people who were at the edge of Byzantine and Slavic influence. For their indisputable cultural and organizational superiority, they had great influence not only on the religious life of the place but also on its civil and political life; in the monasteries they studied, learned a trade and often treaties of peace between belligerent parties were penned there. (n.45)



Footnotes:

- (1) Except where stated, for this part of the story I used the following sources:
 - P. Ganzetti, *Riflessi sulla storia dalmata sulle vicende del Isola di Cherso*, Padova 1997
 - M. Nicolich, *Storia documentata dei Lussini*, Rovigno 1878
 - A. Fortis, *Osservazioni sopra l'isola di Cherso ed Ossero*, Venezia 1771
- (2) G. Lucio, *De regno Croatiae et Dalmatiae*, Trieste 1983
- S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Venezia 1972

The twelfth century (1)

For the island of Cherso, the other islands of the Quarnero and Dalmatia the twelfth century was not quieter than the eleventh. The Adriatic Sea which laps this territory is always the object of interest for the Venetian Republic but during this period other players enters the arena, such as the Republic of Pisa and Hungary. In this century the Venetian government was not as prominent as it was during the past centuries, for which the various Dalmatian communities often suffers during confrontations. Another important happening during this century is the fourth crusade. But we delve a bit deeper on this century's happenings that is, from the year 1100 to about 1200.

With the year 1000 and the famous expedition in Istria, Dalmatia and the Quarnero's islands by the Venetian doge Pietro Orseolo II does not start the peaceful predominance by Venice on the Adriatic Sea. As a matter of fact this Venetian predominance on the Adriatic Sea was fiercely contested by Hungary who desired an opening on the sea and asserted rights on Dalmatia through Demetrio Zvonimiro, the pontifical aide named king of Dalmatia and Croatia by the pope. Zvonimiro was the husband of Helen, sister of the king of Hungary Ladislao I this is why, when, in 1091, Zvonimiro was assassinated and the country was in turmoil caused by fights among numerous pretenders to the crown, Helen asked her brother for help.

This is the more credible thesis for explaining the Hungarian descent into Dalmatia, but others maintain simply that king Ladislao took the occasion for an easy conquest, of the country, weakened by civil wars. According to others he was solicited by an important Croatian political person to take this opportunity that is, called to help the Dalmatian cities. According to Ganzetti this region welcomed the Hungarians, the same way they have previously welcomed the Normans, with the illusion of conserving the political-administrative and religious liberties which so far no one was able to take away and which was easier to conserve when the rulers were far away. The presupposed who form the base of this new dominance are the same as the preceding ones: conflicts among the various ruling groups and incapacity, by the Dalmatian communes, to maintain their own autonomy because of political and military weakness, which renders them vulnerable, that is, for fear of being conquered by anyone, they search and offer themselves to some power agreeable to them with the illusion that, provided the necessary protection, the chosen power, quietly disappears without taking nothing in exchange. Anyway, the action of king Ladislao touched only Croatia and not the maritime region of Dalmatia but is important to know this because it affects what follows.

In 1095 king Ladislao I died, was succeeded by Colomano, who has the same aims on the Adriatic Sea as had his predecessor and, for lack of interest by the pope, by Venice and by the emperor because they were all busy with the fourth crusade, descends into Dalmatia and conquers her.

Colomano leave to the Dalmatian Communes their liberties but... does not keep his word and, few years later (in 1112) there was an insurgency by the Communes against the Hungarian power and the king reviews his position.

However, Venice and Byzantium can not tolerate this foreign interference on the

Adriatic Sea and Byzantium turns to Pisa offering her, in exchange for her help against the Hungarians, the privileges and favors once granted to Venice and never revoked. This caused a break of the ancient Byzantium-Venice ties.

The maritime Republic of Pisa does not ask for a prayer because for her this is an occasion for her to extend her political power and her commerce on the Adriatic Sea, where Venice always dominated. The latter however can not take Dalmatia and the Quarnero islands, which would confer her a position and rank of a great power meanwhile, in 1115, while the Venetian fleet was in the Holy Land, the doge Ordelafo Falier place himself personally as the head of an expedition to conquer the Dalmatian lands.

According to Venetian historians the doge, conquers Dalmatia, also takes Croatia and assume the title of "Dux Croatiae et Dalmatiae". However Dandolo does not mention it.

Ordelafo Falier succeeds the doge Domenico Michiel, during whose government is enjoyed five years of peace, negotiated by the pope in view of the fourth crusade.

Passed this truce, the Hungarians take to the offensive against the Dalmatian cities, taking advantage of the fact that Venice was busy in the Holy Land, but at their return home, the Venetians re-conquer the lost lands. It is a continuous back-and-forth which renders difficult the life of its inhabitants. Things are not any easier for Venice either, whether because of particular disregards by the Communes or because of fighting for religious supremacy. Zara, for example, does not want to stay united with Spalato (Split) not religiously nor politically, for this reason the bishop of Zara request and obtain from the pope the declaration that his city be declared archdioceses and it is for this reason that the dioceses of Ossero, Arbe, Veglia and Lessina became dependent of Zara. It was an act which practically sanctioned Zara's autonomy, something to which Venice did not agree for which, in 1155, the pope placed Zara to the dependence of Grado, whose Patriarch assumed the title of Pre-eminence of Dalmatia. This fact had great political-national and religious relevance because it sealed her civil control on Zara and the islands and, from the religious point of view, with this act the Dalmatian communities became less prone to Slavic influence.

But with it Zara also lost its autonomy, for which she struggled so much and...gives itself to Hungary.

Venice, to assure herself of closer control over this region, reacts by imposing in all the Communes a Count chosen from among the more noble Venetian families who are faithful to the doge and, in order to render the situation even more stable, to some of these nobles were imposed marriages with members of royal families of the frontier towns; this way the count of Ossero marries the daughter of the *grangiuppano* of Serbia. The Venetian Counts become true feudal who limit or truly annul every communal liberty, they build imposing palaces and appropriate all the sources of rights and sustenance of the people. The communes try, without success, to correct this situation for the whole sixtieth decade of the century (1160).

With the new decade (1170) in this panorama Pisa is inserted, who binds commercial and political relations with Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Spalato and the Eastern Empire but not with Venice, as a matter of fact the Venetian residents in the Empire were imprisoned and their respective properties confiscated.

In Zara and on the islands there were no significant changes: the Venetian counts

continued to govern with an iron fist and exploit the local population.

Venice however is in difficulty because of conflicts with Dalmatian ships which prevents the development of commerce causing a crisis in the economic sector which induces Venice to conclude a truce with Hungary lasting two years.

At the end of these two years the Hungarians and Serbs form an alliance then occupies Ragusa and Spalato. Zara takes this opportunity to replace their Venetian count with a man who they trust and esteemed by the Hungarians, and for tying an alliance pact with Pisa in order to have her help in case of a Venetian reaction. As a matter of fact, after two years (about 1180) Venice reacts sending a fleet to conquer the city, but it was defeated.

During the last decade of the twelfth century to Venice remained only the islands of the Quarnero, (n.46)

Footnotes:

(1) Also in this part of the History of Cherso, except where indicated, we refer to the volume of Gianluigi Ganzetti, *Riflessi di storia Dalmata sulle vicende dell'isola di Cherso*, Padova 1997.

The thirteenth century (1)

The 13th century is characterized by the authorization and organization of the Fourth Crusade in the Holy Land and, from the social-political point of view, by the ongoing communal regulations.

In the milieu of the Fourth Crusade, which the pope was soliciting, Venice assumed the burden of transporting the troops with its fleet *“but – as it is sustained by doge Enrico Dandolo in a letter which he subsequently sent to the pope – Our fleet was caught in this a late season voyage and, with the bad weather approaching, we were compelled to spend the winter season in Zara. A city which belonged to us and despite the pact she swore she rebelled against us. We vindicated on her and we think we have had the rights...”*

The whole Christian world fiercely criticizes this act: the pope hits Venice with excommunication.

Venice's use of the crusaders to regain Zara certainly was not a proper gesture but the behavior of the rulers during the Middle Ages can not be judged on its actual merit and, on the morality of that epoch, her act was, if not really permissible, it was consented.

But, as soon as the Crusaders leave, the people of Zara, with the pope's help, who sends them the Knights and a fleet of ten fighting ships (galere) re-take the city.

We touched on the Venetian expedition to Zara because it has great political significance from the international point of view and with her policy toward the communes of Dalmatia and the islands because, for the first time, Hungary was forced to back out from the Dalmatian coasts by an international force and, having taken the

city with a large European armada (the one of the Crusaders), this act places her within the circle of the great continental powers, which increases her prestige and the revival of her preponderance on the Adriatic Sea. Furthermore, this fact signals the beginning of a new political policy by Venice toward the Dalmatian communes and the islands, which will not be considered anymore as her fiefdoms, but as free lands, administered by simple functionaries obliged to observe its citizens statute.

This was the itinerary but to reach the objective of free communes there was a long road ahead. But look to see what happened in the 13th century on the island of Cherso.

The thirteen century on the island of Cherso

During this period we talk, indifferently, of Ossero or of Cherso when we refer to the island or we may use the two names together. According to Mitis, the county of Ossero also covered the nearby islands of Lussino, Veglia, Arbe, Pago, Selve and Premuda and the reefs (small islands) of Levrera, the two Canidole, Sansego, S. Pietro in Nembi, Asinello, the two Oriuole, and of Ordura, and Palazzuolo.

Also on the Island of Cherso the road toward a free commune begins with the count of the fiefdom. The first person of this category in Cherso was Guido Polani, who in the year 1145 was named count-for-life for this city. As it is shown in the list of Mitis on the document titled "*Cherso ed Ossero sotto la serenissima*", Guido Polani was not the only son of a doge but so were nearly all others counts-for-life of this city who were not, as some other authors maintain, "decadent nobles, full of arrogance and self importance who often were trying to redo themselves in the cities of the province..." Even if the feudal counts of Cherso were not the transplanted ones, they obliged the inhabitants of the island to pay a series of tributes, allowances, and abundant gratuities for which the citizens complained constantly even committing acts of violence. A happening of this type occurred under the governorship of Guido Polani when, was assassinated Nicolo Guercini, sent to the island by Venice to quiet the revolt which occurred out of desperation, by some people from Caisole, (Beli), a large possession owned by the Morosini family.

The rebellion quieted down only after Venice held hostage some nobles from Cherso and the governorship of the island was trusted to Matteo Giustinian, who assumed, for the first time, the title of Podesta` (Mayor).

The brief governorship of Matteo Giustinian however was only a parenthesis, which signals the end of power for the Morosini family but not for the feudal period. The Morosini were replaced by the family Tiepolo, with the title of count-for-life, in 1234, Pietro Tiepolo was the son of doge Jacopo. The family Tiepolo governed the island for 34 years, until 1268. Then the governorship passes to four Venetians (2), who held the governorship for one biennial each. During the governorship of the latter, Marco Michiel, there was discord between Ossero and Cherso because sheep and pigs belonging to the Chersini (people from Cherso), where breaking out of their pastures and were grazing on the cultivated farms of the Osserini (people from Ossero); on their part the Chersini complained that the Osserini were not paying for their grazing rights that is, the tax levy due for using the Chersini's fields for feeding their cows. In order to settle this discord they send to Venice their respective representatives: Michele, known as Panza, for Ossero and, for Cherso, Angelo Bocchina, of the family who will eventually take the name Antoniazzo, one of the ancient noble families of this city.

These are only some examples of the discords which continually afflicted our islands. But there were discords which caused blood to be spilled, as the one we previously wrote about, or episodes as the following one, which happened at the end of the year 1275 or at the beginning of the following year when the Chersini and the Osserini, this time in agreement, assaulted some passing Venetian ships and stole their cargo. The doge ordered the count to obtain, at any cost, the restitution of the stolen cargo, and to guarantee it, he wanted in Venice six citizens representing the two communes.

After this episode the inhabitants of the island asked Venice to send a count-for-life instead of every two years. Their motive for this request is probably because if one is there for only two years he would be hard pressed for time during his short period as the count, and would tend to take advantage of them. Another motive may have been their desire for a permanent count instead of a temporary one.

Venice accepts their request and, in 1280, doge Giovanni Dandolo names Marino Morosini, also known as Bazeda count-for-life of Cherso. Thereafter the city comes under the governorship of this family.

Marino Morosini however remains in this city only a few months because of disorders. The conflicts between the counts and the citizens are caused by the same thing: the exploitation of the citizens by the nobles. This leads to revisions of the old orders and induces the establishment of new regulations. The most significant clauses of these new regulations in Cherso were as follows:

- The community will have to give the count the sum of 800 lire per year, taken from the fines inflicted to the citizens.
- To the count will also be assigned 700 lire per year in the form of gratuities.
- The income of the commune will be left to the citizens.
- The count will nominate, in accord with the citizens, two judges, who will hold office for seven months and whose pay will be the responsibility of the commune.
- The citizens will have to host the count during his visits of inspection.
- The inhabitants will have to give the count half of their chickens.
- The count will have no right to any personal allowance except those for his trips to Venice.

Established the above explicit regulations for the count and citizen's behavior, Marino Morosini comes back to Cherso, where he remains until his death in 1303. (n.47)

Footnotes:

- (1) Also in this part of the history of Cherso, except where noted, we refer to the volume by Gianluigi Ganzetti, *Riflessi di storia dalmata sulle vicende dell'isola di Cherso*, Padova, 1997.
- (2) Marino Dandolo, Tommaso Giustinian, Marco Gradenigo e Marco Michiel.

The thirteenth century on the Eastern Adriatic coasts ⁽¹⁾

As we have written before in the preceding pages of our story, in a larger picture, the 13th century was characterized, at an international level, by the expedition in the Holy

Land, in the Dalmatian cities and in Cherso by the shift toward a communal order.

Contemporaneously, along the coasts of the Adriatic Sea, especially the eastern part, there was a long war for dominance between the Venetian Republic and Hungary during which the Dalmatian cities and the islands of the Quarnero several times passed from the dominion of one to the other.

From among all the coastal cities of the Adriatic Zara was particularly prominent, who constantly was trying to conserve her administrative, if not her political autonomy, for which she continuously fought with all lords – Venetians, Hungarians or Croats who were – or were trying to appropriate her.

Ragu, Spalato, Trau` Serbenico and Nona were not less in the same predicament.

During the periods of heightened tension also inserted itself the intensification of the never completely stopped pirating activity.

At about the middle of 1241 also descended the Tartars who, having conquered Russia, invaded and devastated Hungary compelling king Bela IV with his wife and three sons to find refuge in Trau`. Then the Khan of Tartars Caidano, for revenge and while trying to capture king Bela attacked Spalato, Trau`, Ragusa and Cattaro. It caused so much fury by the fact that capturing the Hungarian king would assure the possession of the rich Danubian plains. Fortunately these expansionistic objectives ceased by the death of the Tartar Grand Mogul Ogodai, which forced the recall of the invaders.

All this was happening under the vigilant eyes of the Venetian Republic, of the papacy, the German emperor and of the king of Sicily, all interested, for their own motives, to a secure Adriatic Sea. However at the end there was always Venice for intervening in a more decisive manner, because she was most affected by the events in this region.

The Croatian barons in Dalmatia

Also the Croatian nobles were not losing sight of what was going on in Dalmatia, ready to take any appropriate opportunity to take possession of these lands.

With the death of king Bela, the Hungarian influence in Dalmatia diminished and increased that of the Croatian magnates, because it was enough the death or birth of some personage to change, in that period, the balance of power in this region. The power of the Croatian nobility in this region began in the last twenty years of 1300 and protracted for about seventy years. Among them emerged the counts Subich and Cacich. They obtained from the Hungarian king the hereditary banate of Croatia and Dalmatia where, by eliminating the communal liberties and by trampling the ancient Venetian rights exercised absolute power. They circulate practically undisturbed because the centers of the great powers – Venice and Hungary – were far away. Lets not forget that these Croatian barons took power in this zone after the devastating invasion by the Tartars which impoverished Dalmatia and Hungary. The king of this last one, among other things was always economically in crises and a bit after the passage of the Tartars to whom we have just referred, was not in shape to intervene in the defense of Dalmatia, which he abandoned to the Croatian counts. It seems that the presence of the Croatian nobles was solicited by the Dalmatian cities in defiance of Venetian and Hungarian pressure, this brought to the progressive loss of its communal liberties which they soon regretted because these “helpers” revealed themselves worst

than their old oppressors and this brought the population closer to Venice. To counter this, count Subich imposed a more severe government and incited its citizens against Venice. The consequence of this politic was manifested with the rebellion of Zara against Venice, who entrusted the government of the city to Mladen Subich, who took the title ban of Croatia, perpetual count of Zara, prince of Dalmatia and second ban of Bosnia.

After two years of hard battles Venice conquered Zara and, by spontaneous submission, re-acquired Serbenico and Trau`.

At this point the king of Hungary finally remembered that he was also king of Dalmatia, descended to oppose the domination by the Subich, and defeated them.

Spalato and Nona made the act of dedication to Venice.

A pause of peace

Followed a period of peace during which the communes see order and their commerce in the Adriatic began to flower with the support of Venice. She however understood that she must reinforce Dalmatia as a bulwark against Hungarian and Slavic expansionism.

This period of peace ended with the death of the Hungarian king Caroberto. His successor was his son Lodovico, a doted man of great capacity for which he passed into history as Lodovico the Great. He right away promised himself of re-conquering Dalmatia, also as a base to move into Naple to help his brother Andrea, who was king of that city.

The war between Venice and Hungary

Venice, was scared of being squeezed between the kingdoms of two brothers, joined a coalition of Dalmatian communes and Croatian and Serbian lords. Yet another time, after forty years of Venetian sovereign, Zara rebelled and gave herself to Hungary. Venice was compelled to intervene militarily in order to counter these Hungarian menaces and prevent the Zara rebellion to spread. Arbe, Trau, Spalato, Serbenico and Nona backed Venice while Zara was backed by Genoa.

The pope, the czar of Serbia and the patriarch of Aquilea tried, without success, at mediation. Finally Venice accepted the one by Albert II of Austria, who had no interests in the area; the treaty however was unsuccessful. The war re-started and Venice was defeated but did not cede and continued the siege of Zara until the city, exhausted, surrendered. Venice imposed Zara though conditions for her surrender but also Venice's economy sustained serious damages because of this war for which voices were raised in favor of abandoning Zara and the whole of Dalmatia. A criticism rejected by the government.

The situation remained difficult because the Hungarian king continued to lay claim to the region and Venice was able to stipulate with him a truce of eight years which assured the free circulation in the Adriatic to the Hungarian ships. Ended the truce, Lodovico, aware of the risks of a naval battle against Venice, attacked Venice inland and conquered Sacile Conegliano, Alos placed siege to Treviso.

Treaties were signed which lasted for quite a while, favored by both parties and all the great European powers, who were afraid of an expansion of the conflict. One of the locus was Zara, toward which Venice maintained a hard and intransigent position. At a

certain point Spalato, Serbenico, Trau` and Ragusa, rose against and chased out the Venetian counts. At the end even Zara joined Hungary. After these facts Hungary imposed even harder conditions against Venice, and laid claim to the whole Dalmatia, including Zara and the islands of the Quarnero.

In 1358 Venice ceded. In exchange for the Dalmatian lands obtained from Hungary the restitution of all the Venetian cities on the mainland formerly conquered by Hungary.

With the loss of Dalmatia Venice lost these very important maritime bases for re-supplying her ships and for the recruitment of personnel.

This brought to light the fact that Venice, although invincible on the sea, was weak on land. (48)

Footnotes:

- (1) Also in this part of our story of Cherso, except where noted, we refer principally to the volume of G. Ganzetti, *Riflessi di storia Dalmata sulle vicende dell'isola di Cherso*.

The Hungarian period (1358 – 1409)

After the peace of Zara

In 1358, after the peace of Zara, begins the second period of Hungarian domination on Dalmatia and the islands of the Quarnero. The first period began at the beginning of the 12th century, under king Colomano. These are the only two times which interrupted the Venetian period, which began with the voyage of duke Pietro Orseolo II in the year 1000, until the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797.

After the peace of Zara the situation, in Dalmatia, becomes paradoxical: Venice, a marine power, has no rights on the territory washed by the same seas traveled by her commercial ships; Hungary gained an outlet to the sea but does not have a navy to take advantage of this outlet.

The Dalmatian communes especially Zara who always fought with Venice in order to conserve her autonomy, does not passively accept this passage from Venetian to Hungarian domination but negotiates and obtains from Lodovico, sovereign of a country still under the feudal regime, noteworthy privileged among which was a communal government composed of local people, including a mayor, that the tribunals of first recourse be presided by judges chosen by the people, that the Hungarian bans do not interfere with the city's government.

At the beginning Lodovico concedes and tolerates these "liberties" but then, it seemed to him that these menaced his power and clashes with his centralistic and imperialistic politics, places restrictions, such as instituting a direct government on the commune, and demonstrates not to appreciate Italian mayors and magistrates. This provokes the population to long for Venice. This thing is emphasized by Italian authors, and less revealed by the Slavic authors. According to Ganzetti the nobility and high clergy favored Hungary because Venice took away many of their privileges, while the

general population favored Venice, having her aristocrats and oligarchy home, in Dalmatia she represented herself as an advocate of democracy thereby loathed by the nobility.

Ended the years of war against Venice, the economy re-flourishes but the gains of the economy was right away blocked by Hungary who imposed onerous tariffs on all the productive activities, she appropriates public properties and confiscates the patrimonies of the private citizens. Excessive tariff creates difficulties for commerce to flourish, especially that of salt. All this brought about a grave economic crisis which opened the gates to the Florentine financial and commercial operators and, as time went by they missed ever more Venetian rule. She, expelled from the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, however was allowed to navigate the western coast and the rivers Po and Brenta, forbade Dalmatian merchants the use of her ports.

It is an economic situation which is convenient to no one. Lodovico understands this and with Dalmatian help tries to build a fleet, however they can do nothing without Venice's help because she holds monopoly on the equipment for both commercial and military ships.

The fact of not being able to have his own fleet the king of Hungary sees it as a defeat of his dream of becoming the sovereign of a large empire extending from the Danube regions to southern Italy across the Adriatic coasts.

The Dalmatians realize that they need the Venetian fleet for defending their coasts but Venice can not help them because those territories no longer belong to her and because she is busy defending herself from all those who are placing obstacles to her commerce, and particularly from the pirates of Almissa (Omis).

In order to make her navigation as secure as possible, Venice institutes, at the beginning of the 14th century, the "Fleet of the Gulf" which, during spring and summer patrols the Adriatic Sea and the Venetian Levant.

Having failed to build a fleet with Dalmatian help, and knowing that Venice is not tamed and that she can be defeated only on the sea, Lodovico gets closer with Genoa, the only one with the ability to counter her, entrust a Genoese the duty of admiral general of the kingdom, and solicits the Dalmatian communes to add to the government of their cities some Genoese and... waits for the proper occasion to attach. Lodovico shares this *waiting* with his ancient allies – the German Emperor, the duke of Austria, the count of Gorizia, the patriarch of Aquilea – they also hold the desire to defeat the Venetian Republic in order to be able to freely do commerce in the Adriatic Sea. This time however The Venetian armada, commanded by Vittor Pisani, forestall the allied action by confronting them on the Tyrranean Sea, at Capo d'Anzio, destroying the Genoese fleet. Re-enters the Adriatic, takes Cattaro (Kotor) and Sebenico (Sibenik), receives the devotion of Arbe but was not able to conquer Trau` and Zara (Zadar), the principal bases of the Genoese and Dalmatian fleet. However the following spring the Venetian fleet was defeated outside Pola (Pula) by the Genoese-Dalmatian armada guided by the Genoese general Luciano Doria. Then Doria headed toward Venice but, warned by this danger, the whole city mobilized, every ship goes out to sea and the enemy was blocked and forced to surrender.

The peace of Torino (1381)

In 1381 the interested parties met in Torino (Turin) to draw the conditions of a peace

treaty, the resulting situation was as follows:

Venice loses Cattaro (Kotor) in favor of Zara (Zadar) and was prohibited from entering Dalmatian ports; to navigate the Adriatic she must pay Hungary 7000 ducati; must consent to the entrance and exits of Dalmatian merchandise in her ports of a value of 3500 ducali but maintains the monopoly of the salt commerce which the Dalmatians must not sell to the cities of the western coast controlled by Venice: Venice keeps her eastern possessions and the liberty to navigate in the whole Oriental Empire.

Hungary obtains possession of the Adriatic littoral and 7000 ducati from Venice for the navigation of the Adriatic.

In 1382 the Hungarian king Ludovico the Great dies and begins a grave crisis of succession for his throne. As a matter of fact his heir was his daughter Maria who, at the death of her father was only eleven years old; her mother, queen Elisabeth, becomes, for the time being, her tutor and regent of the throne. The fight for the throne become also implicated the Angioni of Naples with Ladislao and the potent Bosnian family of the Horvati. At the end Maria was able to have the Hungarian throne by marrying Sigmondo of Luxenburg.

During this period the island of Cherso was governed by the Saraceno family, to whom it was ceded by Lodovico, with all the rights and income from her derived. From the scarce documentation regarding this epoch we can deduct that the Saraceno were governing with an iron fist, received onerous tributes therefore the people of the island did not support the state of these things and protested. To render even more difficult the situation there were the continuing incursions by pirates. When Sigismondo became king he gave the island to his brothers Nicolo` and Giovanni Di Gara, in exchange of the favors received from them. Together with the possession of the island they received the rights to withhold the profits received by the sale of salt and one-thirtieth of the revenue of the island which from the times of Lodovico was reserved for the Hungarian crown. To all this Sigismondo also added the patronage in perpetuity on the church of the Beata Vergine of Ossero.

At a certain point on the fight for sucession also enters Ladislao the king of Naples, who in Zara was also proclaimed king of Dalmatia but who, after a stay of some months in this city went back to his city of Naples leaving it to the Zaratino Giovanni di Lussignano, duke of Bari, with few troops and poorly equipped. This situatin favored the aims of the Frangipane of Veglia on the islands of Cherso and Arbe, and of the Bosnian duke of Spalato Hervoje on Nona and the zone of Spalato. Sigismondo and Ladislao, the two sovereign at the center of this political and expansionistic movement, who were in a perpetual economical crisis, were trying to extract every worthwhile thing possible.

Venice who during the whole of this time, while she was reinforcing her land power, was not losing sight of what was going on in the Adriatic Sea whose dominance in effect never renounced, she profits by the fact that Ladislao is ready to cede Dalmatia for money, does not let the occasion escape.

They began the treaties, Venice sure that the "affair" will be done, is not in a hurry. The accord as a matter of fact is concluded after about a year of treaties which leads Venice to buy from King Ladislao Zara, Pago, Aurana, Cittanova and all the rights to Dalmatia for the sum of 100,000 ducats, a sum equivalent to 1% of the worth of Venice's properties and 7.5% of her annual income.

The treaty started with the request, by Ladislao, for 3000,000 ducati. (N.49)



Novelli, Dedication of the Dalmatian cities to Venice (BCT, 824-No. 20) from T. Pizzetti, *With the flag of S. Marco*, protector of Venice, Campanotto 1999, pag. 114

THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC Bulwark of Western Civilization and Christianity

The true Venetian period of Dalmatia and its islands began with her influence in the region on the year 1000, politically consolidated during the first years of the 14th century, we may say in 1409 – as we said in the preceding part of this story – by the “acquisition” by Venice from Ladislao (Ladislav) of Naples, for 100,000 ducats, Zara, Pago, Aurana, Cittanova and all the rights on Dalmatia.

Venice however was aware that this transaction did not imply a peaceful governance of this region, whether because Ladislao of Naples maybe was not the legitimate person to treat this subject or, because without question it would have been a duty to consult with Sigismondo (Sigismund), king of Hungary; with the Bosnian duke Hervoje who, with

the blessings of Sigismondo, occupied various cities in Dalmatia (Nona, Serbenico, Trau`, Spalato, Curzola) and Dalmatian communes and the islands, always desiring to preserve their autonomy even though the impossibility to adequately defend themselves from piracy or any other invasion without a powerful protector. The dream of the Dalmatian communes and the islands during this period seems as a matter of fact to be that of finding some stronger power to defend them from invaders without them in exchange having to renounce their administrative liberty.

The abovementioned act of acquisition aroused, even during this period, great clamor even though these doings were not isolated. Historians have varied opinions on this subject, dependent on to which country they belong and their nationalistic leanings. We abstain from commenting but want to note only that it can not be taken as gospel. Anyway, it seems that Venice felt the need for justifying her action by saying that she was inspired by her understanding that this region was in need of liberation...from piracy.⁽¹⁾

For good measure, and to leave nothing to chance, she instituted a “magistrate of wise men for the new possessions” so that they may oversee this type of transactions.

Sigismondo, as was foreseen, did not resign himself to the loss of Dalmatia and initiated laborious treaties with Venice. She, in order not to be misjudged, maintained that she occupied this region in the interest of Sigismondo, thereby blocking Lodovico’s way to Hungary. Venice offered Sigismondo 50,000 ducats if he would renounce his title as king of Dalmatia. Sigimondo refused but then... asked Venice permission to cross her territories in order to go to Rome. Venice negated the permission for his passage... and there was a war! (1413).

This war dragged on for few months with a series of clashes which concluded with a truce of five years signed on the basis of “Uti possidentis”, which means that each party kept the conquered lands.

During this truce Sigismondo reinforced his Adriatic bases, politically and militarily, with headquarter in Trau; Venice tried to gain support of the Dalmatians.

During the last century the Serenissima (Venice) made substantial gains on the mainland but this did not cause her to lose sight of Dalmatia and the cities of Serbenico, Trau`, Spalato, Curzola, Brazza, Lesina and Cattaro of which she could not abandon without a fight therefore, in 1420, the war with Sigimondo resumed, with Pietro Loredan commanding the Flotta del Golfo (Fleet of the Gulf). The hostilities protracted until the end of 1437 and, when they ended, in one way or the other, Venice came into possession of the Dalmatian cities; the emperor (Sigismondo of Hungary) recognized the Venetian annexations in northern Italy but did not mention Dalmatia which was still considered a Hungarian dominion. Venice did not seek legal acknowledgement of her conquest which by right remained her possession until her fall in 1797.

The Dalmatian Communes waver, now with Venice, now with Hungary but they did not know how to profit from it in order to obtain and maintain their longing for liberty. The only one who knew how to defend her independence was the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik).

The Turkish danger

Toward the middle of the 15th century in Dalmatia began the Turkish incursions. The

danger was serious because, within ten years, they conquered Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Constantinople becoming a threat to Albania which they finally conquered in 1479. Already in possession of the whole Balkan Peninsula, they also began to threaten the northern Territories along the Adriatic Sea. The inhabitants along the seashore were fearful and many, especially the nobles and their personal servants, emigrated onto the Italian regions on the other side of the Adriatic, (Marche, Abruzzo, and Puglia).

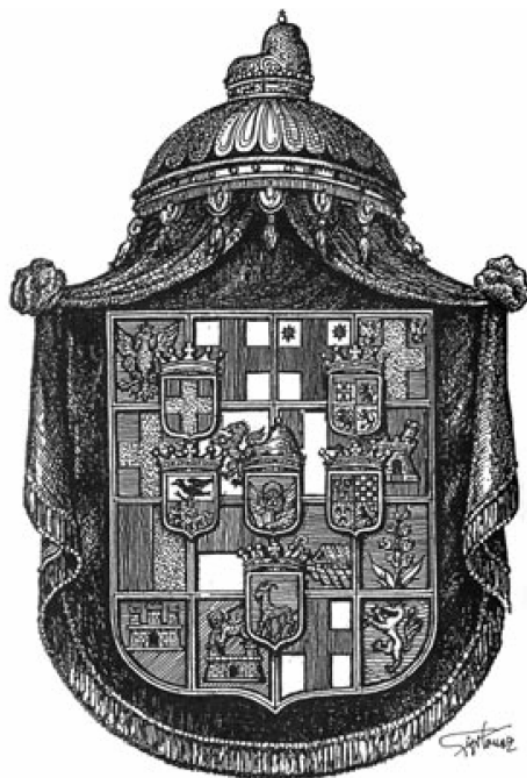
There were constant hostilities between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire.

Usually were the Turks who attacked; Venice, by herself or with allies tried to defend her territories. This war – particularly at the beginning – was not a traditional war, waged for conquering and holding territory, because often consisted of lightning raids, by fast light cavalry, adapted for plundering and devastation. Their aims were the booty, that is the farms harvest and livestock, the farm commodities located in undefended positions and far away from fortified centers.

Venice defended herself with a cavalry of similar caliber. Furthermore the Serenissima employed her well established espionage service and reinforced her vigilance and defensive/offensive capacity of the coasts consisting of strategically placed defensive castles, moats and observation towers.

However, the Turks also fought for conquering and holding territory therefore for expansion, to which particularly Venice played the very important role of a bulwark not only for her territory and commercial interests but also for Western civilization and Christianity against the expansionistic aims of the Ottoman Empire, representing the oriental civilization and Islamic religion. If this action by the Venetian Republic was not carried out, a large part of Europe, if not all of it, would have fallen under Turkish rule, which would have brought her the influence of Muslim religion and Oriental civilization. This signifies that the whole Western culture would have gone through a profound transformation and would have evolved differently from what it is now. It is not known whether it would have been better or worse, but certainly different.

The more salient episodes are: the fall of Constantinople, the naval battle of Lepanto, the war of Candia and the one of Morea.



From the book "Galia Chersana", p. 228: Coat of arms of the dominion of the Venetian Republic with the coat of arm of the County – capitan of the island of Cherso and Ossero (XVI 4th quadrant – on the lower right).

The fall of Constantinople and the end of the Eastern Roman Empire

The 29th of May 1453 Constantinople, after a two months siege, was conquered by the Turks headed by Mohammed II. The city was strongly defended by the Venetians and Genoese commanded by the Genoese Giovanni Giustiniani Longo, who was the last emperor, Constantine XI Paleologo, called to defend the city in the name of the Christian brotherhood. During the siege the emperor lost his life and his general, gravely wounded, died of his wounds two months later.

This way ended, after over a millennium, the Oriental Roman Empire and Byzantium became seat of the Ottoman Empire. This fact made an enormous impression in the whole Europe and had noted consequences on many aspects on the life of culture, religion and economy of the West. As a mater of fact Byzantium was the Oriental door of Christianity and the European civilization, an obligatory passage to the Levant with which the Venetian and the Genoese Republic had important commercial relations. The Mosque inherited the religious life; the commerce re-started even though the sultan Mohammad II imposed tough conditions. But this happening also served to warn the Western world of the danger of the Turkish invasion and to spur it to search new ways to reach "India" the Levant because the old route became dangerous. As a mater of fact in 1492 Christopher Columbus tried to reach India by the way of the Atlantic which brought him, as we well know to the discovery of America. (n.70)

Footnote:

R.Cessi Introduction to "Il dominio del mare Adriatico" of P.Satpi, Padova, 1945, pag. XXV. The author recounts the Venetian justification for acquiring Dalmatia in 1409: "Dabamus pacem quietem et bonum statum civitatibus et insulis supradictis, que maxime indigebant, et essecuramus totum culphum nostrum, in quo cursarii, robatores et nequissimi homines ita multiplicati errant, quod multa damna et continua nobis et nostris interferebant, quibus si voluissemus ostare, fuisset nobis opportunum facere publicam guerram terries Dalmatie, que latorum et cursariorum spelonche et receptacula facta errant, et finite alia bonafaciebamus, que Sua Serenitaseque bene videre et considerare potest".

Part XIV

In the preceding part of this story we wrote about the struggle of Venice against the Turks in order to defend her commercial activities on the Adriatic Sea. At the same time the Serenissima (Venice) served as a bulwark of western civilization and Christianity against the expansion of the Oriental civilization and Moslem religion.

The more salient points of this struggle were the fall of Constantinople – which we have previously described synthetically – the battle of Lepanto, the war of Candia (Crete) and the one of Morea which we are about to describe.

The battle of Lepanto (1571)

A very important event in the continuing struggle by Venice and Christian Europe to stop Turkish northward drive was the battle of Lepanto.

A snapshot of the period in history during which this event happened was of a Europe shaken by strong discords between France and Spain and worries by the rising hegemony of the Ottoman Empire.

The more important cause of this battle however was the Turkish attack on the fortified Venetian city of Farmagosta (Farmagusta) on the island of Cyprus, whose defense was assigned to the able and resolute Venetian commander Marcantonio Bragadin. The walls of Farmagosta were massive and imposing but, after 11 months of heroic resistance, men, food and munitions were reduced to a minimum and from distant Venice came no help because the Capitano Generale "da Mar" (general captain / admiral) Sebastiano Venier was busy organizing the Venetian fleet. Meanwhile, Bragadin, although personally was against any agreement with the Turks, pushed by the population, by now decimated, and the advice of his subordinate commanders, requested for an agreement of his surrender. Obtained dignified stipulations, the city survivors surrendered.

The fifth of August the Turkish commander Mustafa` invited to his presence the Bragadin and his subordinate commanders declaring that he wanted to know the man who, together with his underlings, distinguished themselves with their valor during the siege.

The Pascia` cordially welcomed the Venetian captain and his followers but soon after he stopped and accused, without proof, Bragadin of decapitating Turkish slaves in the fortress. Then asked Bragadin where was the provisions and munitions of the city and, hearing that there were non left, became infuriated, placed the Venetian under irons, cut off Bragadin's ears and ordered the immediate execution of his underling commanders. Maybe he realized only in that moment that 7000 persons, among whom were many civilians, with little food and scarce

ammunition held off for almost a year his 250,000 fighters, killing almost 80,000. At the same time the Turks, in the city, were violating all the stipulations of the surrender agreement, assaulting the ships departing the island, killing the Venetians and Italians, chaining the Cypriots at the oars of their ships and violating their women then enslaving them and their children.

Few days later Bragadin was taken in the presence of the Pascia` who proposed him to convert to the Muslim faith in order to spare his own life, a proposal which Bragadin declined. Thereafter he was brutally tortured.

Meanwhile the Venetian fleet reached Messina, where it joined the forces of the Holy League, organized by the pope to combat the infidels. To the Holy League the Christian armada was added, comprised of the Venetian and the pope's fleet, also including those of practically all the other European states. The supreme command of the whole Christian force, which comprised a total of 224 vessels, was entrusted to Giovanni (John) of Austria. Venice had contributed 121 vessels, including the galley Chersana (from Cherso) "San Nicolo` della Corona" commanded by Collane Drasa.

The Turkish armada, commanded by Pasca`, had a total of 282 warships. These were two imposing fleets!

Seem that each of the two fleets considered itself superior to the other for which both were impatient to measure up to the enemy because they were convinced that they would be victorious.

The galleys of the Lega (League) joined, side by side, nearly touching each other's oar tip: a formidable force in front of which, for protection of the three principal squads, were six Venetian galeazze (large galleys) tied to each other, forming three potent fighting platforms.

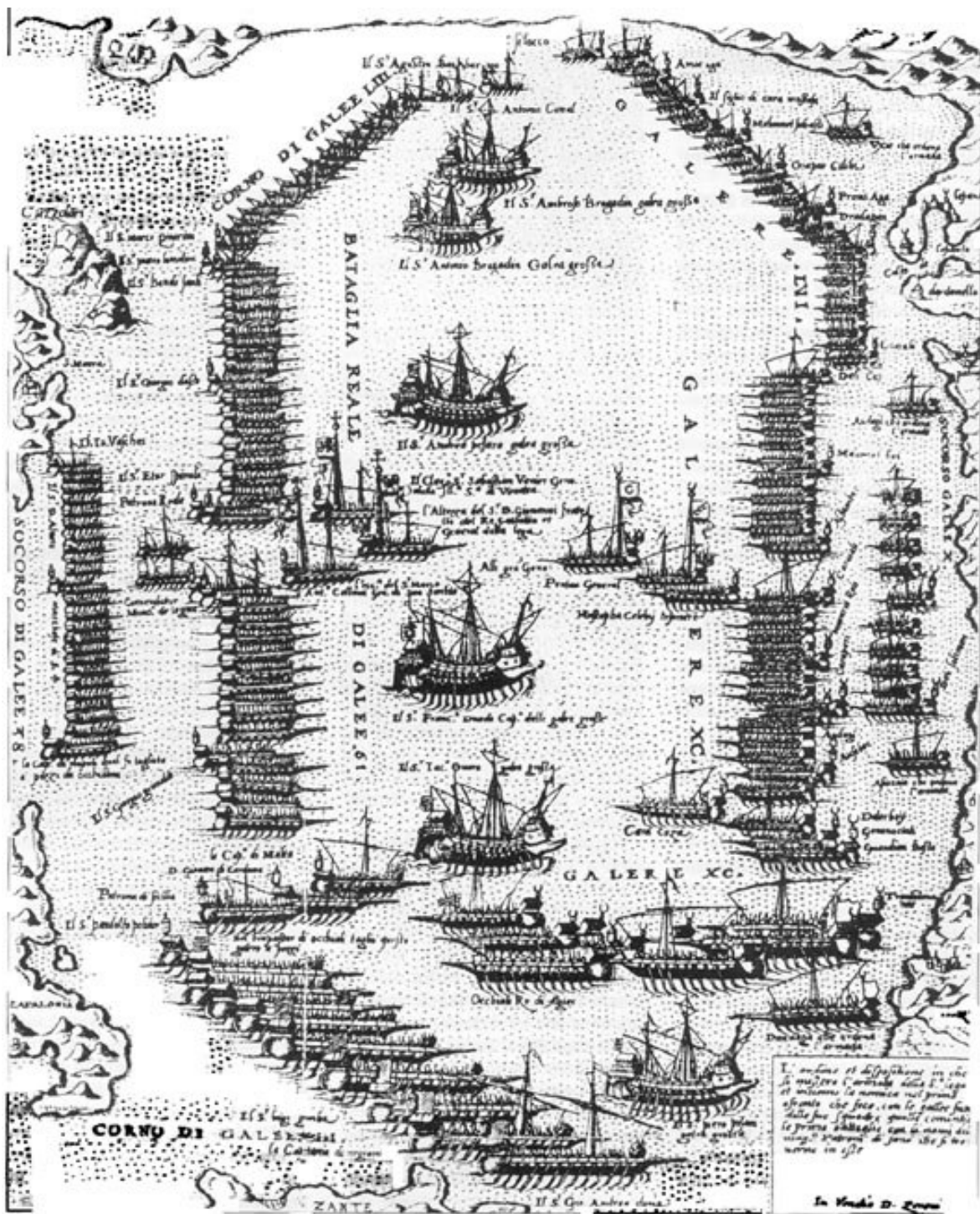
It was nearly mid-day when from a Venetian galeazza departed the first salvo toward the Turkish fleet, which was immediately followed by an infernal barrage from small arms of the six galeazze. Bypassing the larger Venetian vessels, the Turkish fleet, already partially damaged, engaged the wall of Christian galleys. At a certain point it became impossible to follow any particular tactic or command and became a total pandemonium where each one was fighting wherever and with whatever weapons available. The fighting was most intense between the Turkish and the Christian admiral ships, supported by their respective command ships and other vessels from both sides which came to help. At the end the two ships coupled and the assault began. At the same time there was fighting throughout the rest of the front.

Many Christian slaves chained in the Turkish galleys succeeded in breaking their chains and united to the warriors of the Christian League.

Many galleys, both Christian and Turkish, were sunk or burnt; many men from both sides died in this infernal fire which seemed it would never end... but finally it ended with the defeat of the great Turkish armada. The Christian fleet remained master of the sea.

The balance of this naval battle was heavy for both sides: the allied counted more than 7000 dead, the major part of whom were Venetians, and about 20,000 wounded: the Turks had 30,000 dead, among whom were the major part of their captains.

This battle bore the results hoped for, that is the triumph of Christianity and the end of Turkish predominance on the Mediterranean seas.



Da "LA GALIA CHERSANA" di L. Tomaz, pag. 144, riproduciamo lo schieramento iniziale a Lepanto. Un esemplare di questa stampa è al Museo Civico Correr di Venezia.

From "LA GALIA CHERSANA" by L. Tomaz, p.144 depicts the initial deployment at Lepanto.

The War of Candia (Crete), ca 1645/1669

Peace with the Turks however never lasted too long. Whether by herself or with the other Christian states, Venice was continually busy defending the Adriatic seas, and the lands washed by it, against the Turks.

A long and weary war which Venice fought by herself was the war of Candia (Crete). Fought on the island and surrounding seas, for intercepting the convoys from Turkey to Crete, in defense of her sea lanes. On this island, beleaguered by the Turks for more than ten years and valiantly defended by Francesco Morosini, toward 1666 the situation precariously deteriorated. The Turks, personally guided by the Gran Visir, launched a violent attack that the heroic defenders of the city, with the support of the naval fleet, succeeded to push back. That this island was very important for both sides was demonstrated by the fact that the Gran Visir offered Morosini the principality of Valacchia and Moldavia in exchange for the delivery of Candia. Morosini refused and the war restarted. Thereafter Venice ordered a whole fleet to be stationed permanently in Candia's harbor, that most of its crew would fight on the defensive walls of the city and that Francesco Morosini assumed the overall command for its defense.

The valiant defense of the island by the Venetians became legendary. The Frenchmen came to help but after few months abandoned this task and returned to home. The Turks took advantage of this and unleashed a new attack occupying the last pieces of the walls and part of the city of Candia. The city was already lost when Morosini proposed surrender. Venice lost Crete but kept the fortified little islands around it.

Being an important strategic point, Venice did not resign herself at the loss of this important island and, about ten years later, with the help of the Austro-Prussians, resumed the struggle against the Turks.

In 1684 the New Venetian Armada, always at the command of Morosini, went to Corfu, where she joined vessels of the Holy League, of the Granducato of Tuscany, and of the knights of Malta.

To appease her allies they attacked mainly Morea (the actual Peloponnesia).

After a series of brilliant operations, in 1687 the Venetian Armada captured Piraeus, few days later her infantry conquered Athens.

For this victory Morosini was given the title of "Peloponnesiaco".

In 1687 the Doge died and Francesco Morosini succeeded him conserving his title as Commander of the fleet.

The Morean War (1684/1699)

This war represents the last expansionistic adventure of the Serenissima Republic of Venice, for regaining her old territory in Dalmatia and in Greece. Also, Venice's only offensive war against the Turks because, ordinarily, the wars fought by this marine Republic against the Ottoman Empire were wars to defend her territory and her seas against Turkish invasion. She joined the victorious counterattack by the Holy League organized for relieving Vienna from the Turkish siege.

The choice of the offensive, tactical and different from those habitually adopted by the Republic of Venice, was in large part the result of the naval politics inaugurated by the Republic toward the end of the 1600 consisting of the enlargement of the fleet of sail powered warships, the so called Armata Grossa (Heavy Armada).

It was treated as an answer to the evolution of the Barbarian or French menace in the eastern-central Mediterranean seas. The war of Candia brought out the weakness of the Ottoman Empire in front of the English and Dutch sail powered warships hired by the Serenissima for that occasion. Therefore we deem opportune to substitute these foreign, costly, and sometime unreliable units, with new vessels provided by our Arsenal (Shipyard). Therefore in 1675 were ordered seven new vessels, which were added to the five already in service and the two under construction. At the same time it was decided to restructure a corresponding number of covered docks of the Arsenal.

In 1684 Venice became a member of the Holy League, particularly thanks to the capacity of conviction of Piero Valier.

The battle plan envisioned that the Heavy Armada, 15 vessels strong, be the first one to strike in battle. Once in the Aegean sea, this Armada would rapidly destroy the weak Ottoman fleet then on to the Dardanelles, where she would have joined the Polish army which came down from the Ukraine by crossing the lower Danube. Then together they would have attacked Istanbul. In the meantime the Austrians would have kept busy the Turkish army in Hungary.

The Venetians however overvalued the power of her vessels under sail, which in fact were great for defense but difficult to maneuver in an offensive. Besides, the Turkish fleet refused to engage and took refuge in the well fortified ports of Chio and Rodi. The Polish army was many times blocked along the Dnester for which the planned pincher maneuver could not be carried out. To the Heavy fleet was left nothing but to roam the Aegean sea in search of some objective of strategic value to confront, not having found it, decided to engage in terrorist naval bombardments and at sacking tribes living on the Greek islands.

And this is how ended the first two naval campaigns of the Heavy Fleet.

Her failures however were counterbalanced by the brilliant results of the Light Armada, composed of heavy and light vessels guided by Francesco Morosini. Between 1684 and 1688 the Morosini, by using efficiently a new type of mortar which was introduced by the French during their bombardment of Algeria and Genoa, completed the conquest of Morea and landed in Negroponte, ancient symbol of Venetian power. (n. 71)

Part XV

In Cherso during the Venetian Period

While the Superpowers of then, like today, were jockeying for control of the world, on the island of Cherso the four municipalities of Ossero (Ossor), Cherso, Caisole and Lubenizze retained their administrative freedom.

At the beginning of the Venetian period, Ossor, which during the Roman period counted about 20,000 inhabitants, was in full decline. The situation which caused this problem can probably be found on the abandonment of the salt producing flats due to the fact that, for some motive, the commerce of salt shifted to some other regions. This caused two major things which affected the

well being of its population: one is that the ships remained tied in the harbor, the other is that the flats, which used to contain the salt water for evaporation, filled-up with putrid water which was infested with malaria carrying mosquitoes. This prompted the bishop and the Count to abandon the city, causing further deterioration, which in turn favored the development of the town of Cherso which, from the middle of the 14th century, became seat of the Count-captain and the most important and populous center on the island, containing almost 3,000 of the 7,000 inhabitants in the whole island.

Bit by bit Cherso also absorbed the townships of Lubenizze (Lubenice) and Caisole (Beli) because, impoverished, they were not able to pay tribute to Venice.

One of the most important characteristic of Venetian society of that time was the communal organization, articulate and complex; for this motive and because it varied with time, is not easy to explain it in a simple, artificial and correct way. The principles and norms which regulated the life of the townships were gathered in the Statutes, fulcrum of civic life, and were transcribed in the “Libri Consiglio”, which survived to our times thus giving us a peek at life during those times. .

In Cherso power was held by the Consiglio della Magnifica Comunita` (Council of the Magnificent Community), which was administering the island from its northernmost end, south to the villages of Ustrine and Bellei, encompassing both nobles and common citizens. All the nobles were entitled to be part of the Consiglio (Council) when they became eighteen years of age; instead, the common citizens, in group of twelve, were nominated by the count at the recommendation of four common citizens, ex-councilmen.

The most important office of the community was the one of the **Conte (count)**, to whom belonged the presidency of the Council. He represented Venice, but his activities were controlled by the same.

The count covered this charge in certain periods temporarily, in other instances for life. He was supported in governing the city by a chancellor, magistrates, officials and salaried employees.

The chancellor was nominated by the count, with whom he was a close collaborator, respected and feared but sometime also his accomplice in covert robberies and shoddy dealings which hurt the citizens. To him appertained the obligation of verbalizing the decisions in the “Libri di Consiglio” (Council Books) and update the book of judgments, monthly and trimestrally with the name of committee leaders, the captains of the “cernide”(rural militia), of the soldiers, and their payments. At the beginning he was paid for only the work he did and did not received a fixed salary; however this system was prone to abuse thereafter it was preferred to assign him a fixed salary. The other duties expected by the Cherso’s Statute were:

the magistrates, that is, two judges and two attorneys, elected by the Council the 2nd of January and the 29th of June, with the duty of tutelage over the Community’s general interests, they were sided by four of the Curia’s attorneys,

two camerlenghi (magistrates in charge of controlling the finances) with the duty of overseeing the Commune’s finances,

two Contradittori (Contradictors) who oversaw that the elections were held according to the rules and that the norms of the Statute were respected,

one conestabile for organizing and overseeing the great annual fair in the month of August,

one sopracomito, prestigious duty, to whom was given the command of the galia chersana (the island’s defense vessel) when needed,

the commander of the “cernida”(rural militia), who was the head of the city’s garrison,

the Provveditori generali ad partes maris with the duty of controlling the count's government, hear the citizens grievances and to intervene in case of irregularities in the Community's administration

The magistrates were elected by the Council and chosen from the nobles and commoners who lent their services gratis to such posts as scribes, health deputies, measurers of feedstock, procurators for the nuns, the directors of Mount Piety, the overseers of the woods and defensive walls and the deputies of the food warehouse.

The salaried were: the medic, the barber, the pharmacist, the school master, the organist, the sanitary overseer and the torturer.

The Council also had the right to nominate the parsons and the public notaries. Then there were also the "picigamorti" (morticians), nominated by the church and paid by the Community.

This way – regulated by her Statute – was the life in Cherso during the government of the Serenissima Republic of Venice and, I believe that we may conclude this summarized description with the words of Silvio Mitis: "Despite all, this Statute is a splendid testimonial of the meaning of being free, orderly and civil... during a time where in other places there was in vigor ignorance and servitude within feudal systems. This Statute is also a mirror of being faithful to Rome, without Croatian, Hungarian or Teutonic medley.



After the communal organization, structure – as we say today – dignified of note were, at my advice, the Confraternities or Confraternal schools.

The Confraternities

The Confraternities, also called Fraterne or Schools, which was an essential function on the social life of Venice and among the populations of her dominium. Usually established principally for religious devotion and spiritual well being – for the care of a particular altar or of a church, the celebrating of Masses, etc. – with time, more and more they assumed the figure of an association for assistance of the brotherhood and others as often they dispensed, sometime very

generously, mobile and immobile items, and donated capitals received as donations or bequeathed.

In the whole island of Cherso the Confraternities, with nobles and commoner associates, were numerous, very active and rich because they owned many assets: woods, pastures, vineyards and money which provided for the needs of the church, the maintenance of their lands and buildings; for the feasts, in particular for the feast of their patron, provided for the regalia, and for the authorities but also to help the poor, to provide for indigent children, and lend capital to private citizens and to the same Commune. Their management was usually honest and rigorous for which the patrimony was not only conserved but increased ever more. We remember the Confraternities of : San Lorenzo, San Vito, the Sacramento, Corpus Domini and of San Giovanni Battista of Smergo. (n.72)

COMMERCE DURING THE VENETIAN PERIOD ⁽¹⁾

Part XVI

Venice's commerce during the Roman period was carried out almost exclusively by ways of the sea and concerned the island of Cherso because it touched also her shores and employed her populations, the same was also true for all the populations of the Adriatic littoral, in the navigation, in their own commerce, and in the production of merchandise for exchange. Items which were of particular commercial value: salt, olive oil, firewood and livestock. Venice had the monopoly of these products because they were very important in the administration of commerce, producing duty (taxes) and for her keeping navigation busy.

The commerce of salt

Marine salt – an element indispensable to man, which can only be produced in localities along the seashore – in antiquity placed the people who possessed it, economically and politically, in a privileged position because of the non-existent refrigeration for conserving certain foodstuff there was the requirement for large a amount of salt (one kilogram of salt for conserving three kilograms of fish!). Beside its requirement for conserving foodstuff (fish, meat, olives), salt was also important in the making of cheese, in preparing leather goods, for certain livestock and, then as today, in the kitchen.

In fact, salt was a highly valued item when bartering for any other type of merchandise, almost like money. Having gained prominence since the middle ages, the Venetian Republic had a virtual monopoly for the production and commerce of salt on the whole alpine region and this became one of her first and very important source of profit.

Salt flats were constructed first in Murano and then in Chioggia – which became the salt producing capital in the Middle Ages – in Cervia (a commune now situated in the province of Ravenna), in Istria and Dalmatia, especially in Muggia, Capodistria (Koper), Pirano and Pago (Pag). There also were salt producing flats in Isola (Izola), Orsera, Rovigno (Rovinj), Pola

(Pula), Brioni (Brijuni), and in Canal di Lime (Limski Kanal) but, as they were not involved in Venetian commerce, we have little information on them.

Beside, producing salt in the lands under her dominium, Venice also imported it from Crete, Cyprus, Ibiza, Gerba, Alessandria and other localities. Import of salt was utilitarian to the maritime politics of Venice because the other means for its transport and her construction of large transport vessels, which can be used in case of war, favored the use of these in the Mediterranean sea. Furthermore, thanks to its specific gravity, the salt could be used as ballast dependent on the type of merchandise transported. For example, the Venetian ships plying commerce to the Orient, transported salt on the way to, and precious fabrics and spices on their return trip or other merchandise on going and a load of salt from Cyprus or Alexandria on returning, while those going to Flanders or England, on their way back they would pick up a load of salt in Ibiza in Italy, or Cagliari in Sardinia, and so on. This way the ships would travel always loaded thereby optimizing the commerce.

Concerning salt, Venice adapted a diverse politics, depending on the zone, which was supervised by a Magistrate *of salt*. In general, Venice maintained monopoly of the salt, that is she reserved the right to the acquisition and sale of this product, which was acquired at a low fixed price, previously agreed-on with the owners, with contractual stipulation that (generally one fifth) of the salt, was to be left to the owners and to the producers for their own use. In exchange the Republic subsidized the cost of repair, maintenance and construction of new salt producing enterprises.

The oldest and highest producing centers of salt in Istria were those of Pirano. In the islands of Cherso-Ossero it seems that production of salt was negligible.

We know that in Ossero, in 1416, salt flats were built but were already abandoned in 1460 because of the bad air (*malaria*) generated by the stagnant water on these flats.

The commerce of oil

As salt, also oil was subject to monopoly during the period of the Venetian Republic, because it also was a very important product, not only for the kitchen but also for lighting, for the production of soap and for working with wool. However the commerce of oil was not free, in the whole region, the *Stato da Mar* – Istria, Dalmatia and the Near East – except for local use, the oil had to be shipped to Venice, and only by sea, and the same for foreign oil.

Everything regarding oil, from about 1250 on, was regulated by the Magistratura Temaria (magistrate responsible for oil trade), superseded, in 1500 by the *Provveditore sopra Ogli*, who had the task of providing the city: price control, shops, olive trees cultivation, authorizations of exports and penal prosecution of those involved in contraband. From them also depended certain arts connected to the commerce of oil: the *Sagomadori* (inspectors for the measure of oil containers), oil transport boats, the *bottieri* of oil, the *Sensali* and the *Saoneri* (soap makers).

In order to be self sufficient and independent of foreign sources for such a strategic product, the Republic prohibited the cutting down of olive trees, whether cultivated or wild and instituted norms specifically to extend the culture of the same on any land adept for grafting wild varieties. All the produced oil, accompanied by proper documentation, had to be shipped to Venice.

It seems that in the island of Cherso the production of oil became significant around the middle of 1500, when the *Fondaco dell'olio* (oil warehouse) was built, and expanded as time went by when Fortis, visiting the island in 1771, estimated that the total production of oil in the island of Cherso-Ossero was around 3,000 to 3,500 barrels per year.

The principal source of oil for the Republic was Corfu, followed by Zante, Cefalonia and S. Maura. However, despite all her efforts, the Venetian Republic was not able to satisfy her total

need of this product, nor of its total commerce of which, in 1700, the commerce in Venice was in the hands of about 50 firms of which only 28 were Italian, 10 were Jews, 5 Greek, 4 German and 4 Dalmatian.

The Venetian oil merchants were united in a consortium.

The commerce of oil was subjected to hefty customs duties, of use and of export, a situation which induced contraband; particular exemption was granted to oil from Istria destined for Friuli and, traditionally to oil destined for the Bocche di Cattaro (Gorski Kotar).

The two communities of Cherso and Ossero were always searching ways of exporting freely, at a better price, their oil, which was of a better quality with respect to oil from other places and much appreciated in Venice for its delicacy. For this end it was awarded in 1765, through the clergyman Giuseppe Detcovich, officer of the Collegiata of Cherso, a memorandum permitting duty free export to foreign countries. After two years this award was voided but received a reduction of customs duties.



G. Zompini, “Battellante”, seller of firewood for domestic use

The commerce of firewood

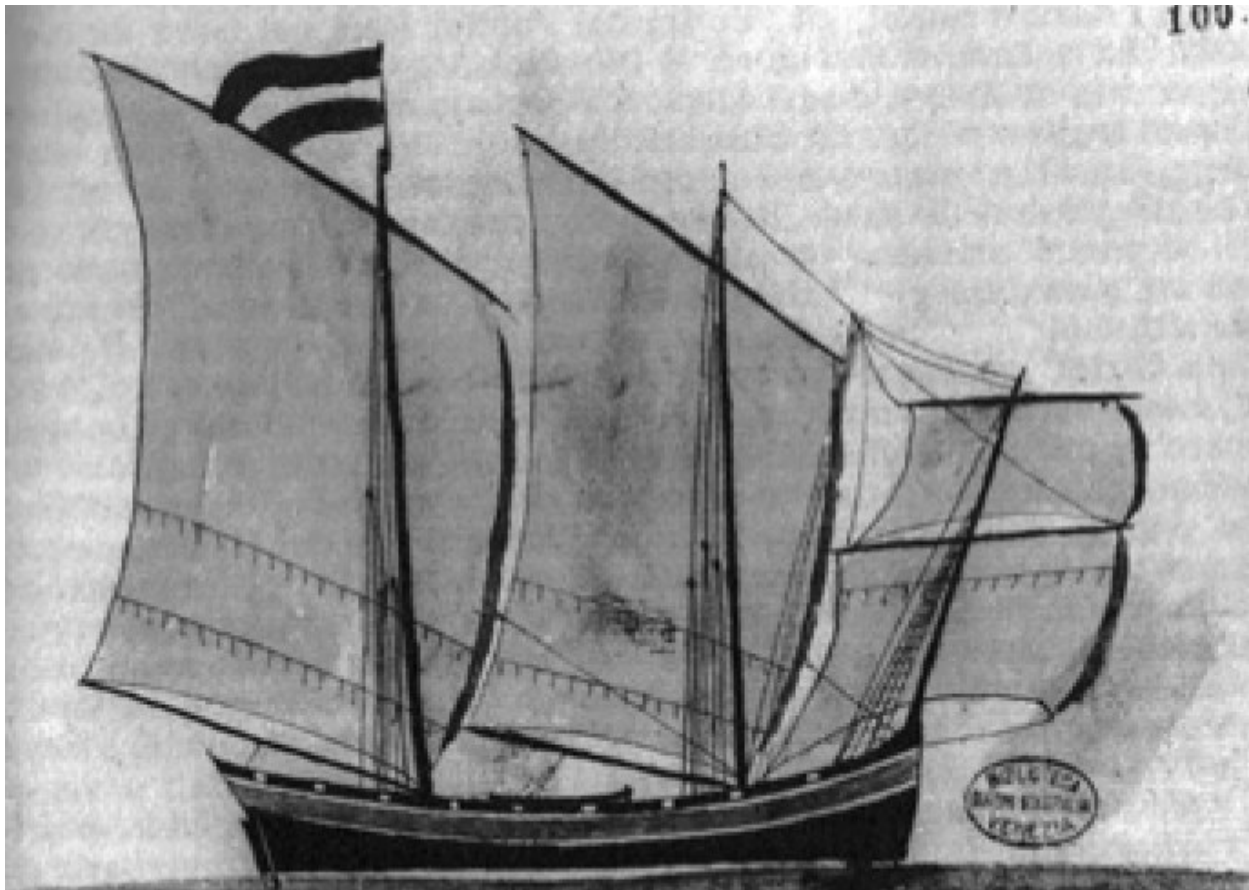
Firewood, during the Venetian period, was the principal source of energy, as is oil today. Indispensable be it being used for furnishing energy for her numerous industries (Arsenal, Zecca, glassworks and dyeing works) be it used for cooking and ambient heating. Seeing the importance of this product, the Venetian Republic made sure, from more ancient times, to assure a steady and reliable supply of firewood, especially during the winter months, and carefully controlled the commerce and price of this commodity, above all for the less affluent consumers. All the firewood produced in her territories had to be brought to Venice except that portion allotted for local and personal use.

On entering Venice the firewood was subjected, like all the other merchandise, to custom duty payment. It was forbidden to ship or sell firewood to foreign countries. To avoid illicitness or *cornering the market*, the transport and commerce of firewood was strictly regulated and had to be accompanied by proper documentation. To prevent abuses by the transporters of firewood, tending to swindle by lying on the quantity and quality being transported outside the Republic of Venice, it was ordered that softwood had to be cut to a length of three feet and hardwood to a length of two and one half feet; that the wood shall be inspected and issued cargo stamp by the *Rettori*; that the vessels be loaded or unloaded on the docks on a first-come-first-served basis; that upon docking in Venice, the owners, seamen, and public inspectors, be banned from cornering part of the firewood for themselves.

Control of this business was trusted to the *Magistratura delle Rason Vecchie* (Magistrature) and, from the year 1500 on, a *Magistrato sopra legne e boschi* (Magistrate over firewood and forest), who remained in effect until the Republic's fall. He was responsible for all matters concerning firewood regarding judgments, civil, penal and inherent control of the trades linked to the commerce and selling of firewood such as those of the *Burchieri* (people involved in its transport and sale), those of the *Biavaroli* and the *Fruttaroli*,) people involved in selling in the spot-market).

In earlier times, to satisfy the needs of the city of Venice there were enough wood-lands inland along the Adriatic coast, but already in about 1500, it became necessary to import firewood from Istria, Dalmatia, the islands of the Quarnero and from the regions of Friuli, Padova (Padua) and Treviso. The island of Cherso, from the 16th century on, was among the principal sources of firewood for Venice, especially of "elese" (*Ilex ilicis*), which was loaded daily from various landings (loading sites) along the coast. In order to prevent over-harvesting and devastating woodlands, Venice severely regulated these sites, be those for firewood or those for construction wood, with requirement of reforestation and prohibition of harvesting for a certain number of years, with permission, harvesting only dead and fallen branches, prohibiting local communities from harvesting wood without central authorization, of destroying woodlands by converting it to grazing land or to dig up their roots.

Shipping vessels were the *trabaccoli*, *brazzere*, *tartane* and *tartenelle*, mostly of which were of light tonnage, with few seamen, often-time only three plus the owner. On shipping from Cherso and Ossero the ship owner had to register at the chancellery of Ossero declaring himself ready to load firewood at a given nearby loading zone (landing): Porto Vario (Vier, by Ossero), S.Andrea (Jadrischizza) by Puntacroce of Cherso, Porto Lovo (or Lischi by Lussino), Porto Camisa (below Ustrine, Cherso), Porto Gherbocca (or Galboca, below Verin, Cherso), Porto Pernata (at the entrance to the gulf of Valun), S.Giovanni (below Caisole). The most active in this area were the ship owners of Lussinpiccolo and Lussingrande and, beginning from the second half of the 16th century, the one of Neresine.



Manzera a type of vessel used for the transport of steers to Venice from Zara (Zadar)

Livestock Commerce

The supply of meat to Venice was assured by Dalmatia because the Italian mainland's supply of livestock was not sufficient for the needs of this populous city. It appears that since 1500, if not before, there was a regular transport vessel, by the name *Zara's ferry*, for transporting livestock: beef and lamb from the Dalmatian interior to Venice, by way of Zara's harbor. As a matter of fact, the transport of livestock from Dalmatia to Venice was traditionally reserved for the patrons of the district of Zara (Zadar), and particularly those from the city of Selve, subsequently to which were added the patrons of Lussino. The point of livestock loading in Zara was located in the cove north of the city in a place whose name was derived from this unique function, by this name is also known today: Barcagno, where there was also a livestock holding pen by the name of *Lazzaretto di S. Marco*, and a livestock loading dock (carigador).

The vessels for the transport of livestock were known as *manzere* (for the transport of steer) and *castrere* (for the transport of sheeps), able to transport 80 and 400 heads respectively.

The procurement of livestock meat was contracted out by the State to *partitante* (procurer), who in turn were required to find individual sellers, generally Bosnians. Another group was occupied with arranging transport for shipping the animals to Venice. The steers had to be fat and of commercial quality, excluding the bulls ...weighting 880 lb. per pair and, before being loaded, could be inspected by the procurer; the cost of transport was the responsibility of the

seller-merchant; the transport by sea risk was divided between procurer and seller provided that the steers cargo did not exceed 75/82 animals, otherwise the risk would exclusively be borne by the merchant. The date of departure from Zara had to be fixed in advance unless there was a lack of vessels in which case the date could be any time. The handling of the animals during the trip was trusted to the vessel's crew who, in exchange for this service, received a fixed bonus for each trip. The unloading of the animals was done in Lido, where the payment was also done, in Venetian money or in sequins of gold of value determined by the then current market. From the steers which perished during the voyage was salvaged only the hide and the fat. If, at unloading, the weight of a pair of steers was less than 800 lb. the merchant had to pay a penalty but would receive a premium if it was above the established weight. The prices were spelled-out in the contract and ranged between 19 and 141/2 sequins per pair, depending on the season. If, during the voyage from inland to the point of loading, some animals disappeared or were stolen, the merchant had the right to receive compensation. However, seems it was not a rarity for requests of unlawful compensation for which the heads of the villages situated along the animal's transport route were obliged to keep vigil so that no stealing took place and the military had to cooperate in the recovery of lost and abandoned animals. Furthermore, in all the villages along the transport route was published a ban by which the village heads, Judges and village elders were required to be present in the place of rest for the animals in order to count them in the presence of their drivers that if, at the moment of their departure there was not present a representative of a village, that village was risking of being held liable for any missing animals.
(n.73)

THE ISTRO-DALMATIAN CULTURE BELONGS TO THE ROMAN TRADITION

Part XVII

The Dalmatian, a Romance language

For the Italians of Dalmatia and its islands Venice is a myth, the only thing that they are disposed to remember the Serenissima (Venice) for is that She brought them their region and Italian culture, because for them this is part of the uninterrupted Latin tradition, and to Venice, at the most, can be acknowledged the merit of having conserved this tradition.

But, since the spoken and written language is the cultural expression of a people, which language was spoken in antiquity, in Dalmatia and on the islands?

During the whole 1300, legal documents, the church's and public writings, whether of the communes or states, were written exclusively in Latin or Greek, language used in the Constantinople court and in Western Europe. To these two languages was also added Arab if there were frequent rapports with the Orient or, if rapports were with the Serbs the Serbian-Cyrillic was used.

But the people, what language they spoke?

The spoken language was the "Dalmatian (dalmatico)"

This language was not – as one would tend to think – a variation of the Venetian dialect spoken in the Dalmatian littoral and its islands from 1400 to 1900, that is during the Venetian domination and onward to our days. The Dalmatian is a true and proper language, a neolatin language, that was formed in the Middle Ages, through progressive transformations from the Latin. Therefore it was distinct from the dialect imported during the successive Venetian epoch, because it did not represent a new variation of the autochthonous Romance.

The academics differentiates the Ragusa-Dalmatian from the "Veglioto" (spoken on the island of Veglia (Krk), because only in Veglia it was spoken longer than anywhere else, being spoken up to the end of the 18th century, when the last person, Antonio Udina, who could express himself with the use of the Dalmatian language, died.

The Veglioto dialect came to the attention of linguists as a result of Giulio Bartoli having chosen it as his laureate thesis argument, presented at the University of Vienna in 1898 to the great glottologist Meyer Lubke, having as colaborator Adolfo Mussafia from Spalato (Split). The thesis, written in Italian, was translated into German at the solicitation of the same who, wished to have it published in the collection of the Imperial Academy of Science in Vienna, maintaining that the German translation would insure it a wider readership.

The Dalmatian, after having been discovered by German linguists, was studied by the Istrian, Matteo Bartoli. Is interesting the fact that the Dalmatian Neo-Latin had affinity to the Ladino, Friulano, Tergestino, Istrioto and that the Dalmato-Ragusan had affinity to the Neo-Latin Pugliese and to other common Italian languages spoken in central and southern Italy. Certain documents written in Dalmatian came to light back in the 1300 and 1400 particularly regarding private correspondence, but also legal acts, such as some of the Republic of Ragusa ordinances. The whole toponymy of Dalmatia, be it Venetian or Slavic, is rich of Dalmatian roots. Certainly of Dalmatian origin are terms used in legal acts concerning agriculture, commerce, seafaring, household tools, textile, etc...

Many of these words permeated the Slav dialects of the Middle Ages, as a mater of fact many Dalmatian Neolatin words passed into other, more distant, Slavic languages, through mediation of the Croatian and Serbian for which, in the actual Slavic languages is not easy to distinguish the etymon of certain words used in the seafaring, legal or commercial lexicon, which clearly are of a Latin origin and which may directly have entered the Dalmatian from the Romanian or from the Middle Ages Venetian or from mediation of the Greek, used by merchants and Byzantine money changers in the Balkans and in the Grecian and Genovese colonies of the Black Sea. If we think of how numerous were the Venetian, Ragusan, Genovese, Puglians, Pisans, Amalfians, etc. colonies in Constantinople during those centuries, we may understand why that city was the crucible of languages.

From the Latin used for the whole 1300, although increasingly with more voices using the popular vulgar Neolatin, we pass to the 1400's Italian or, more rarely, to an Italianized or Venetianized Dalmatian; infrequent, for many centuries, were documents written in the Slavic language.

But, an example of this ancient idiom, extracted from a volume of Matteo Giulio Bartoli II Dalmatico, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, Roma 2000, in the care of Aldo Duro, will give you a good example which may be better than any ulterior explanation. (n.74)

24. *el mi túŕta e-l sú fero d-akúard ke fùr-me el matrimón nojiltri dój; e dapú ju jaĭ kaminút — ju mĭàt ... vĭant kál ... ē plé! — a verbenĭk, per kost afúr del matrimón, perkè i vetrúni fero kontĭánti. ma jù se jaĭ stufát, perkò ju jaĭ avùt tájma deĭ tróki, de kúŕlke pítra ke-i me butúa e ke-i me dramúa, per la ninápta, perkè féro joĭn paĭs forĭást, ke jú non konosúa nanka joĭn trók ke fero lúŕk. e kosáĭk ju jaĭ píers la ninápta per kúálp de koli tróki, ma ju jaĭ inparút la skòl di sláv, toč!*

Mio padre e il suo erano d'accordo che faremo (= facessimo) il matrimonio noi due; e [allora] poi sono andato — scommetto ... 20 volte ... eh più! — a Verbenico, per questo affare del matrimonio, perché i vecchi erano contenti. Ma mi sono seccato, perché avevo paura dei giovanotti [di là], che non mi gettassero qualche pietra e non mi ammazzassero, per la sposa, perché era un paese straniero, dove io non conoscevo neppure un giovanotto (di quelli) ch'erano là. E così perdetti la sposa per colpa di quei giovanotti, ma imparai la lingua slava (la scuola di s.), tutta!

Part XVIII

PIRACY IN THE ADRIATIC

*“War, Commerce, Piracy are a trinity,
which can not be separated”*
W. Goethe, Faust

The criminal life – wrote the historian from Zara (Zadar) Giuseppe Praga in his *Storia di Dalmazia* (the History of Dalmatia) – more or less organized, more or less legalized, insurgent in a certain way during political crisis, is an endemic manifestation in the Balkans.

It was really like this! Up to the beginning of the 19th century piracy was an important part in the life of the population living on the Adriatic Sea coast and on voyagers in these waters because pirate incursions presented a grave danger for the seafarers, commerce and the inhabitants of the coastal towns and villages and because many inhabitants of these coasts were engaged in piracy as a resource for their living, were themselves pirates. In those times as a matter of fact, this sea was infested by Illirians, Narentans, Saracenes, Almissians, Uskoks and other pirates.

It is not easy to narrate the story of pirating in the Adriatic Sea because it is tightly intertwined with all the happenings in this region. This region was favored by geography, characterized by its numerous long and deep inlets in Istria, the islands and peninsulas; jaggedness of the whole oriental coast, with optimal refuges for navigators, both honest and dishonest. Besides, this sea in antiquity was very important for navigating from West to East and vice versa, therefore it was constantly used by vessels carrying all types of merchandise, often precious, whose interception offered to the pirates rich plunder which oftentimes included important persons, who were held for ransom; men women and children who were sold into slavery.

On pirating during earlier times there is a lack of documentation, but in findings which came to light so far we deduce that the first pirates who appeared in the Adriatic Sea belonged to the Illyrian, Istrian, Liburnian and Dalmatian tribes. As a matter of fact Tito Livio writes that the king of Sparta, Cleomene who, in the year 303, in order to visit the Venetian beaches (Lido), had to keep distant from the Adriatic eastern coast “for fear of the Liburnian and Istrian pirates infesting those shores”. The Istrians resided around Pola (Pula), where they founded a small state whose capital was Nesazio but, as shown above, the inhabitants of these shores were occasional pirates. About the 8th – 6th century B.C. in the Adriatic appeared the Greeks: a seafaring people, navigators, merchants... and also pirates. They established colonies which we know as Magna Grecia. Some of these colonies became powerful and rich city-state (polis) with its own money and a commercial fleet with which they also gave chase to seafaring marauders, who were an ever present danger to their commerce.

From their presence in the upper Adriatic remains the ruin of Palaziol. As a matter of fact it seems that, at the time of the Byzantine rule, a number of Greek families established themselves on the southern part of the island of Lussino (Losinj) and that a community of Greek nuns (calogeri) established themselves on the small rocky islands of Ordura where, on the smaller island they built a fortified expansive and solid convent, which in the ensuing years was known as Palaziol, and on the larger island they built a church with spacious subterranean rooms.

Following tradition, these rooms were used as warehouses for booties raided by the Greeks who resided in the island of Lussino, of which we spoke before. However, at a certain point, the community of Ossero (Osor), who, with the support of Venice, chased, for good, the Greeks from the island and destroyed the buildings on the two islands of Ordura. The Greeks were vanquished and superseded by the Romans.

The Romans were not concerned with the affairs in the Adriatic Sea until they defeated Carthage.

As a matter of fact during this time because of these wars against the Romans, they became expert navigators. The occasion for intervention in the war against the Illyrians was offered to the Romans by the frequent attacks to their grain loaded vessels partly by the subjects of queen Teuta (widow and successor of the Illyrian king Argon who died in 230) during that period the most dangerous pirates in the Adriatic. In order to avoid interferences with their commerce in the Adriatic Sea, the Romans sent two ambassadors to queen Teuta. The response they receive from the queen was that pirating by her subjects was a customary practice which she could not nor intended to forbid. One of the two emissaries answered that the Romans would teach the Illyrians better manners. At which point an Illyrian warrior struck him to death. This episode gave the Romans the pretense for intervening with a powerful fleet, defeating the Illyrians of queen Teuta and the Greeks, thus replacing them in the domination of the Adriatic.

We are now circa 230 B.C. The Romans gradually transformed the Greek colonies into military fortifications, home bases for their navies or for exploring the Balkans in search of new resources, such as iron, copper and silver. But, as the Greek presence disappeared from the northern Adriatic, this was not so for the pirates, who were not active in the presence of the Roman military forces but came out as soon as these diminished. For two centuries the Romans had to dispatch their best legions in order to quell uprisings by Ardiei, Dalmatians, Istri and Liburnians, with unimaginable slaughter.

Besides being the theater of wars against the pirates for the peaceful business of commerce, in this sea were fought the very important battles for power by Pompeo, Crasso and Ottaviano. The coastal people allied themselves sometime with one sometime with the other Roman chieftains but at the end the local fighting vessels were totally destroyed and to sail this sea remained only the Roman navy.

The last roman battle against the Illyrians, the one which brought to their destruction, occurred during the very first years of the Christian era. The Romans were in the process of recruiting in Illyria troops for fighting the Germans. The Illyrians rebelled and the revolt extended on the whole of Dalmatia and beyond; under the command of Batone, 800,000 of them fought Rome. The war lasted three years, at the end of which the Illyrians ceased to exist and Illyria became the Roman province of Dalmatia. In order to consolidate Roman power on the Adriatic Sea and its coastal population centers, Ottavian founded Pietas Julia (Pola, now Pula), Salona (elected capital of Dalmatia, Jadera (Zara, now Zadar), Parentium, Nesactium, Albona, Fianona, Tarsatica (Fiume, now, Rijeka), and many other cities.

The Romans brought into Dalmatia and her islands their civilization, language, and culture.

However, the pirating problems did not end with the defeat of the Illyrians because from the south, from time to time, appeared the Saracens, Arab pirates, to do the raiding. Their action in the Adriatic was not as frequent as those of the preceding Illyrians and the ensuing Uskoks because they were not residents of this zone and came specifically for robberies.

In the same period began raids by the Narentans, a Slavic tribe whose settlement was at the mouth of the river Narenta, which was a very secure refuge, because it was un-reachable by sea,

was about 15 kilometers inland, near Narona, an important Roman center. Other bases of the Narentians were on the islands of Lagosta and Curzola.

Around 830 A.D. the risk of incurring pirating incursions became particularly grave, Venice stipulated an accord with the Narentians by which the latter would not attack Venetian ships in exchange for a tribute of money. It seems however that this pact was never respected. In 839, in S. Martino di Polizza, another pact was stipulated by doge Tradenigo, with the same result, thereby forcing the Venetians to fight for the security of their commerce. Emboldened by the presence of the Saracens, the Narentians pushed themselves to Venice's doors, attacking her ships near the island of Sansego (844) and two years later attacked and sacked Castrum Crapulense (Caorle). Practically, from about the middle of the IX century and throughout the second half of the same, also because of the weakness and lack of interest by the Byzantine emperor, the southern part of the Adriatic was infested by Saracen pirates and its northern part by Narentian pirates with lightning incursions by the latter toward the north and the former in the southern Adriatic.

The pope, worried by the ever increasing Arab power in the Adriatic, repeatedly asked the Slav princes for help but with scarce results.

The harms to commerce, ships, the coastal population, bloodbaths were very frequent; among them we may mention the sacking and destruction of Ossero (Osor), by the Saracen pirates, in 841. The Saracen fleet appeared in Ossero the 30th of March, the day after Easter. At that time Ossero was guarded by strong defensive bulwarks and a strong fleet, which nevertheless were not enough for protecting the city which was sacked, plundered of her most important treasures and destroyed; many of her inhabitants were killed, others were taken into slavery. The same happened in Cattaro (Kotor) and Ancona. The following year the Saracens again pushed themselves to the north, defeated the Venetian fleet near the island of Sansego (Susak), took Bari, and used it as a base for their incursions into the northern Adriatic and the Dalmatian cities.

The Saracen pirates were also credited with the capture, in the area of Durazzo, of the pontifical ship carrying the bishops who participated at the Council of Constantinople in 870, of which remains no written documentation, because the documents were thrown into the sea and the bishops who participated at the event were taken prisoners for ransom.

Two years later were the Narentians who captured a Venetian ship near Salvatore, in Istria, and massacred all on board. Following this, the Narentians sacked Emona (Cittanova), Umago, Rovigno, Parenzo, where the magnificent basilica of S. Eufemia was sacked and devastated. The doge Pietro Candiano intervened by land and sea but was captured and brutally killed. Following this episode many coastal cities asked Venice for protection, as a result a pact was stipulated with the Croatian king Branimir, who in exchange for a sum of money held back the Corsairs. And peace reigned for over half a century! This period of peace was assured not only by the monetary accord "pro bono pacis" by Venice but also thanks to the peaceful and wise Croatian king Tomislav. Immediately after his death the Narentian pirates, not being held back by anyone, began raiding again. The most outstanding episode surely is the Narentian incursion in Venice itself during the feast of the Purification in the year 948. This feast, which will come to be known as the feast of the Marys or of the Martimonia, was held the 2nd of February every year. During this feast all engaged couples, rich and poor together, boarded boats ornate with flags and standards, paraded to the cathedral of S. Pietro in Castello, on the island of Olivolo, headquarters of the bishop. The procession accompanied by music and singing was closed with the solemn benediction. The Narentian pirates thought that this ceremony was a great occasion to get rich booties...also of young girls. Therefore, night between the 1st and 2nd of February they

disembarked on a small nearby uninhabited island and hid until the parade entered the church, they followed in and took anything of value, took the brides-to-be and escaped on their fast ships. The doge immediately organized a fleet and followed the pirates, whom they reached in the lagoon of Carole, slaughtered them and freed the young girls. As a result of this serious episode another pact was stipulated for the free navigation in these seas and remained in effect until 996, when the doge Pietro II Orseolo decided to finish for good the practice of piracy. Above all he refused to pay the pre-established monetary tribute and, when the Croatians and Narentans in reprisal attacked some Venetian ships, he sent six warships, under the command of Bragadin, against the Corsair's stronghold of Lissa (Vis), destroyed it, took prisoners many of its inhabitants and brought some of them to Venice as hostages. But the Narentans did not surrender, as a matter of fact they undertook a series of plundering raids against the flowering coastal cities. In Zara (Zadar) sequestered forty Venetian citizens. As a result Zara requested Venetian help, as did some other coastal cities. The doge Pietro Orseolo II answered with the now famous expeditionary force of the year 1000. During this last, he was made aware that some Narentan ships were coming back from the Puglie with on board forty noble merchants, he sent ten warships to intercept. These captured the Corsair ships and took prisoners the noble merchants, who were set free in exchange of the promise, by the Narentans, that Venice would not have to pay them any tribute and that their pirating activity would cease. The strongholds on the islands of Curzola (Korcula) and Lessina (Hvar) were destroyed. Regrettably, after some years of tranquility, pirating actions began again, goaded by Venetian and Dalmatian shipping, loaded with rich merchandise, which were mainly on their way coming and going to the Holy land during the Crusades. This time was the Almissan (Omis) pirates (13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries) from the city of Almissa, on the littoral between the rivers Cetina and Narenta where they had their base. Besides Almissans, in the 13th century the Adriatic was infested by Istrian pirates attracted by the richness of the Serenissima (Venice) and in opposition to the Venetian monopoly on commerce and the want to maintain their own administrative autonomy which was clashing with that of Venice; Pisans and Genoese who contested the Venetian and others dominance in the Adriatic. The problem with piracy was so serious that at the beginning of the century the pope called for a Crusade against them, according to pope Onorio "the most savage enemies of Christ". However the meager forces assembled were easily defeated by the Almissans. Afterward, pope Federico II organized a force against them but with little success. Then Venice intervened with 160 ships which attacked and liberated Pola (Pula), Spalato (Split), Durazzo and Corfu. Afterward the Almissans were the ones to propose a pact for peace. It too was never respected, the same as other pacts during that period. At a certain point even the king of Naples, Carlo d'Angio, intervened in the fight against the Almissans, who to fight them called for a league among the principal cities of the Adriatic. But Venice, to whom it was not agreeable that the king of Naples should interfere in the affairs of the Adriatic, diplomatically intervened and managed to stipulate a new pact of peace with the Almissans. The war between the cities of the league and the pirates began with a surprise attack in the siculo-Neapolitan territory where the later were taken prisoners. But sackings by the corsairs were reduced only by the Venetian fleet and ceased when their centuries old refuges of Almissa, Lessina and Brazza were destroyed and with the commitment by the principal coastal cities to combat piracy.

At the beginning of the 14th century there was a brief surge of pirating by the Almissans who were supported by Croatian counts belonging to the dynasty OEubiu, but the Venetian forces, unite with those of Serbenico and Trau, and with the subsequent intervention by the Hungarian king Caroberto, brought a definite end of the Almissans and the OEubiu counts. With the total

Venetian conquest of Dalmatia in 1409, no one was talking about pirates until the 16th century.
(n.75)

Part XIX

Writings for this article were taken from:

Giacomo Scotti, *I pirati dell'Adriatico*, Lint., Trieste 2001

Tullio Pizzetti, *Con la bandiera del protettor S. Marco*, vol.III,

Campanotto, Pasion di Prato (UD) 1999

“War, comerce, and piracy are a trinity, they can not be separated”

W. Goethe, Faust

(Continuation and end of the article on the piracy published in the preceding number 75)

At the beginning of the 15th century, with the consolidation of power by the Venetian Republic on the Adriatic Sea and its coasts, began a truce of pirating incursions on this Sea, which lasted about one and a half century. This peace regarded only the war against piracy because during this period there were constant skirmishes for power between Venice, Genoa, Pisa, the Hungary-Croatian kingdom and the Ottoman Empire.

Decisive for the history of piracy was the Turkish-Ottoman expansion toward the north, starting at the dawn of the 15th century.

The Turks, of Islamic religion, were also the carriers of their religion and culture for which, fighting them meant also to maintain and defend Christianity. Not only, the Ottoman army, which often was composed of an enormous mass of men, by itself was a danger for the lands which they crossed, be it for requiring provisions and other support, be it for their habit of enslaving and burning the villages of the people who resisted their advance. This created terror and flight, which at times, induced entire populations to seek refuge in the Venetian territories of Dalmatia and the islands on the oriental coast of the Adriatic Sea.

But not all of them fled! The Turkish invasion as a matter of fact provoked also a movement of resistance expressed through wars, organized and fought by the Christian states, but which also manifested itself, in a spontaneous manner less organized, through brigandage and piracy, by the Christian population of the invaded territories.

Haiduks and Uskoks

Haidúk, from the Check = *brigand*, were fighting brigands; the Haiduks of the seas were known as Uskoks, (*uskok* is derived from the Croatian verb *uskočiti*: to jump in; as a matter of fact the uskoks were persons originating from Bosnia: Croats, Serbs, Bulgarians, Morlacchi who, wanting not to leave their native lands, nor abdicate their religion, or submit to the Turkish yoke, jumped the new border or “jumped the obstacle” and took up brigandage.

Moreover – according to the contemporary Croat historian Inoslav Beoeker – they were men who embraced the military as Haidúks that is as brigands, or lent their services to the Christian

authorities who were fighting the Turks with the hope of gaining social status and the plunder which they could not have in their homeland. As it was, Christians in the Turks occupied lands were not permitted to join their military service, which was reserved only to those of the Moslem religion. Their conversion was the only way for the more humble masses to raise their social status.

The presence of Uskoks in the Venetian Territory in Dalmatia goes back to 1463, when about 50 families mostly Bosnians, guided by vojvoda Georgius de Bossina, alias Jure Daniaei [Juraj Daničić (1)], transferred themselves in Senj in order to submit themselves under the protection of the Hungarian king. Following this group were many other families from regions occupied or in danger of being invaded by the Turks. Beside Senj, these displaced people also established themselves near the fortress of Kliss, a strategically important fortress, because it guarded a pass used for transit to the Adriatic Sea from the nearby Morlach mountains, a thing which, with the presence of the Uskoks, made it unconquerable. The Turks, as a matter of fact, did not dare to attack it. Having mastered seamanship, the Uskoks became a fearful force on the seas. At the beginning they raided mainly Turkish possessions, in reprisal for raids and plunder by the same. With time and political implications things were getting worse. In the 16th century the Uskoks, protected by the Austrian rulers as signed subjects, were the only true bulwark of Christianity against the Turks, who, by land and sea, were northward bound because the European states were somewhat indifferent to what was happening on the Adriatic seas and its Balkan coast. Also when the Turks lay siege to Vienna for the first time, in 1592, were the Hungarians, Croats and Slovenes who came to her defense. The Venetians and Ragusans were mainly concerned with their commerce and were also doing business with the infidels. In the war against the Turks there were religious and economic motivations: as good Christians it was a duty to oppose their advance in order to hinder the diffusion of the Islamic religion, but to live peacefully with them it was necessary to conduct good affairs with them because the Ottoman empire at that time had one of the most powerful navy of the world.

But the Uskoks also benefited from the struggle against the Mohammedan Turks, because it justified their professional dishonesty as pirates on the sea and brigands on land. Besides, deprived of their lands and possessions, on the payroll of the Austrian rulers, by whom they were rarely paid, the Uskoks lacked any other means of support but their piracy.

Their deeds, surrounded by the auræ as defenders of Christianity, were extolled by writers and musicians.

The acts of the Christian Uskoks were counterbalancing the Mohammedan pirates, who in the 16th century were guided by their very able leader Hairudin Barbarossa. (*Comunita` Chersina, December 2006 n. 76*)

The period of lightning fights in one way or the other, involved all of the most important European states who, eager for new territories, had no qualms to get help from pirates and corsairs to reach their own goals.

Venice did not place any serious obstacles to the Uskoks until 1540, when The Senate of the Republic stipulated with the Turks the task of protecting their commerce on the

Adriatic Sea with the promise to keep their warships off the Adriatic. As a matter of fact the Uskok's raids disturbed Venice, who desired peace for conducting her commerce. However, Her behavior with them was variable: against them during the period of peace with the Turks, and favoring them during periods of hostility. An analog situation also was noted with the Turks, who made many, indirect hostile actions against the Venetian Republic by the use of Barbarossa's pirates. But the advancing infidel Turks had to be stopped, and of this pope PiusV was the spokesman for a crusade by the Christian forces against the infidels. This confrontation happened in 1571 in the seas in front of Lepanto (the battle of Lepanto) which saw the victors to be the Christian forces over the infidels.

To commemorate this victory, the 7th of October was declared the Feast of the Madonna of the Rosary. But the Turks rapidly rebuilt their navy and a year later continued their advance. Only Venice affronted this advance, as she did in the past, but in 1573 was compelled to sign the peace with the Ottoman government.

Venice, although grateful of the Uskoks help against the Turks, in order to avoid complications offered to settle them in her territories, in Istria, Senj, and near Zadar, in order for them to live a peaceful life. At first some of them accepted this offer but with time, unable to renounce a life of plunder and robberies, resumed the life of corsairs... preferably against the Turks and, at their complains, Venice alternated strong measures with tolerance and diplomacy conveying the Turkish protests to Austria, of whom the Uskoks were subjects. The situation dragged on until when, toward the end of the 15th century, the Turks went to war against Austria. At this point the Venetian Republic intervened by appointing a "Director against the Uskoks". Venice did this above all in order to conserve and confirm her absolute dominium on the Adriatic Sea which became increasingly contested, especially by Spain and Austria, in the name of the new concept which began to set hold: the freedom of navigation.

Seeing the rich booties that could be made with raids in the Adriatic, thanks to the intense commercial activity going on, a good number of hoodlums from throughout Europe converged toward Senj and coastal locations from Carlopag to Fiume (Rijeka). The gravity of the situation became so serious that even the Pope spurned Austria for the behavior of the Uskoks, who were her subjects. Venice placed a naval blockade along the whole Austrian littoral and threatened her ports of Trieste and Fiume (Rijeka), her two very important outlets to the Adriatic Sea, which menaced Venice's monopoly these waters.

However, this naval blockade hurt everybody: Venice, Austria and their commerce plus the civil population of the littoral while the Uskoks continued their piracy therefore, in 1601, Austria sent to Senj her general from Gorizia Giuseppe Rabatta with 1500 German soldiers to replace the Uskoks of that city. Rabatta, who was vested with the title of commissioner extraordinary, with absolute power, and orders to punish with death the Uskok chiefs, to imprison their subordinates in the fortress of Otociaz or sentence them to be oarsmen in the galleys and send any suspect to localities far away from the sea; thing which were carried out immediately.

However, over two hundred Uskoks were able to escape the round-up and a number were previously transferred by the local Austrian command in the territory of the Krajina, in order to defend that part of the Austrian borderland against the Turks. When everything seemed to be finished and peace assured, Rabatta invited all the Uskoks, near and far, to surrender their armaments with his promise to grant all of them

pardon. Many accepted his invitation, returned to Senj and surrendered their arms but, during the night, Rabatta had some dozens of them hung on the castle towers, deported others, and still others were deported to fight in Hungary. Among the later ones was the valiant voivoda Juri Sucich, at some point during their march to Hungary he and his men escaped and returned to Senj. Here Rabata had him immediately arrested for desertion. On the news of his arrest, fearing that he would be eliminated in prison, all the Uskoks who were able re-entered the city, and with the help of the population, invaded the castle, captured Rabatta, cut off his head, and slaughtered his body guards. With this act the Uskoks once again became the masters of their stronghold and... Everything returned the way it was before.

The problem of the Uskoks became also a big problem for the European Powers and for the peace among them whose vessels crossed the Adriatic Sea for commercial reasons, because the Uskoks, although being Austrian subjects, paid by Austria and raiding preferably the infidels (Moslems), did not hesitate to be at the service of whoever offered the best deal, aside raiding to gain booty for themselves. We must remember that living conditions of the populace of that time, with the exclusion of the dominant elite, was extreme misery for this reason their banditry was widespread. Also, same way, crewmembers of Venetian merchant vessels did not disdain, on occasion, to pinch grain and livestock to supplement their meager and irregular salary. Beside this, the territory in question was poor of resources, the farmland was poor and stony, unsuitable for agriculture, more adept as sheep pasture which, together with the woodlands, constituted the most important resources of these places, of which benefited only the proprietors of the livestock and woods, not the common folks.

Besides, the Uskoks were able to move freely, because they were local people and as such, were able to communicate in the Venetian dialect and just as well in the Slavic dialect and had the advantage of a widespread web of friends, relatives and supporters on the islands coastlines who would tell them if there was anything that may be of interest to them. They were using easily maneuverable boats which, in order not to be detected, could easily be temporarily sunk then re-floated to continue their raids in the narrow channels and bays between the islands and the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. They preferably were active at night and during bad weather. In the 17th century the Serenissima (Venice) built boats specifically designed to fight the Uskoks but they were ineffective in part because, as we said above, the Uskoks were Austria protégées and, because of her constant fights against the Turks did not want to deprive herself of their valuable help.

The situation was getting from bad to worse for everybody during the first years of the 16th century: Austria, Venetian Republic and the population in general, as a matter of fact, while the merchants of Trieste were becoming wealthy by their salt commerce, which was produced in the salt flats of Zaule and sold in spite of naval blockades, the inhabitants of the towns of Istria itself, and nearby Muggia suffered hunger because of Uskoks incursions and because their salt producing flats were destroyed or abandoned by its workers, who were lured by higher wages offered by working in the salt flats of Trieste.

In September 1612 there was a serious incursion: four hundred Uskoks, after having crossed the Istrian massif of Monte Maggiore, plundered and set fire to many villages of in Venetian Istria.

The Venetian captain Rospo in turn gathered all the available men in Portole, Pinguento and Montona, to them he added mercenaries from Corsica who happened to be present in Rovigno and in Diagano d'Istria and with them invaded Austrian territory setting on fire and pillaging two villages. Furthermore the Venetian "Proveditore Generale" Canal unloaded Albanian troops in Fianona, set fire to the city and plundered its surrounding territory taking away ten thousand heads of livestock. And where there were no livestock they took prisoners!

During the same years numerous inlets and bays around Pola and capo Promontore, where ships going to Dalmatia and to the Quarnero were waiting for better weather, were blocked by the Uskoks who permitted no one to pass through. There were continuous hostilities, for which persons were dying like flies and almost all the towns not protected by walls were destroyed. For example, during the year 1616 the rector of Valle d'Istria wrote in the book of the deceased that 437 persons died that year during these hostilities, the same number who died during the past fifteen years. The Venetian Proveditore Generale Tiepolo said that if the fighting continues at this rate, in a short time, Istria would be totally destroyed.

Anyway, Austria and Venice did not declare openly that they were at war even though they were arming themselves for such event. Furthermore, Venice put in place a naval blockade along the whole Austrian littoral, including the gulfs of Trieste and Fiume (Rijeka). In order to effectively tighten the vise the Venetians assaulted from the sea and occupied the city of Carlobago, a city which carried the insignia of the archduke Ferdinand of Austria. By this move Austria interpreted it as an act of war, and finally declared war against the Serenissima.

According other historians what precipitated this war was the attack by the Venetian Navy against Novi Vidol, the castle of the captain of Senij, Nicola Frangipani. In reality the two episodes mentioned above were nothing other than the classic "straw that broke the camel's back" because the hostility between Austria and the Venetian Republic were dragging on for about a century, that is from the treaty of Worms (1521), which re-defined the borders between the two powers but was never effectively respected by any of the two sides therefore there were frequent clashes and incursions. One of the first episode of this long war occurred in November of 1615, when the inhabitants of Muggia and surrounding villages, having crossed the river Rosandra, invaded the nearby Austrian territory and destroyed, with the help of Venetian paramilitary, the salt producing flats of Zaule. In turn, the people of Trieste, pushing back the invaders, swarmed on the Istrian coast as far as Pola. At this point even Venice realized that she had to confront Austria in an open and declared War, un-chained on land and sea, a succession of sieges, destructions, pillage, massacres, and abductions which dragged on for the whole first half of 1600, which had the Uskoks as protagonists so much true that the "War of Gradisca", fought during those years, is also known as the "War of the Uskoks". It was a terrible blood bath! To give you an idea you just have to know that Venetian Istria, which in 1500 had about 70,000 inhabitants, 80 years later she had a little over half of that and in the Austrian County of Pisino, in the same period, its population decreased from 13,000 to 9,000 souls; booming cities like Pola, Parenzo and Citanova lost some hundreds of inhabitants.

For Austria also fought a Spanish fleet. To put an end to these hostilities, in 1617 was stipulated the Peace of Madrid which imposed Austria to remove the Uskoks and their families because it was maintained that they were the main cause of the war, to Venice to return to Austria all the territory she conquered during the war; condition which were applied to the letter.

Most of the Uskoks were interned in Croatia, a few of them remained in Istria or went to work on Spanish ships. They were mentioned for the last time in 1620 in a Venetian dispatch to the Count of Cherso, in which he mentions that a certain Nicolo` of Fiume transported with his boat, clandestinely, six Uskoks then fenced their booties. Few months later the Count signaled to Venice that they have captured and hung them all. (n.76)

- (1) A more thorough treatment is presented on page No. 134 in the book THE USKOKS OF SENJ, by Catherine Wendy Bracewell, Cornell University Press, ISBN 0-8014-2674-X

Part XX

*“War, commerce and piracy are a trinity,
which can not be separated”*

W. Goethe Faust

Aiducchi and Dulcignani

The Aiducchi were mainly ex subjects of the Sultan, fugitives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, were refugees in Venetian territory in order to escape from tyranny and persecution by the Turks.

They were involved in raiding Turkish territory and vindication for prosecutions suffered at the hand of the Turks. They were active in the 17th century, above all, in the southern area of the Adriatic Sea that is, in the zone around Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Bocche di Cattaro, Castelnuovo and Perasto. They were an obstacle for the free navigation and commerce of those people who were finally induced to fight them, because the sea for them was the most important source of sustainment. The Venetian Republic was more than happy to allow them this task, which at the end allowed her to maintain monopoly on the commerce of grain, cheese, smoked meat, rawhide from Greece and Albania.

Her prowess in fighting the pirates brought her fame and prestige beside customhouse allowances and municipal privileges, such as conservation of autonomy, to a certain degree, in the administration of justice and civics.

But the pirates with whom the people of the Bocche of Cattaro had to deal with most were the Dulcignani or Dulcinotti (both versions were used). These names were derived from Dulcigno, a city of ancient origin located at the southern extremity of the Dalmatian-Montenegro littoral. According to a legend, Colchidium would have been founded by seamen who came in the Black Sea from Colchide. In the 2nd century B.C. she was conquered by the Romans, who re-named her Olcinium, and remained under their rule for centuries, passing, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, to the Eastern Roman Empire. Then, for about a century she was governed by the Venetian Republic afterward, until 1880, it passed under the dominium of the Ottomans.

The reason for the confrontations by the population living in, and around the Bocche di Cattaro with the Dulcignani was for the fact that the town of Dulcigno was, for about one century, a pirate's cove for Turks Africans (corsairs), re-settled there by a pasha, on the second half of the 16th century. From there they made incursions against merchant shipping in the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas, as far away as Morocco. Dulcigno also became an active place for buying and selling slaves because, during times when there were no ships to plunder, they would capture persons who could be sold as slaves or held for a sizable ransom.

Another important base of the Islamic corsairs was the nearby town of Castelnuovo di Cattaro. All these activities of piracy, on which basically Islamic pirates and Christians, were fighting each other and intensified after the battle of Lepanto are rich valorous and destructive acts, depending on one's interpretation. It is impossible to describe it even minimally.

However, it may be interesting to know that one of the weapons employed in these battles, beside canons, rifles and bayonets, were the *boze de fogo* also known as "greek fire" (Molotov cocktails), which is a glass bottle filled with a flammable liquid – usually gasoline) Many were also the personality of commanders of the opposing sides still remembered by the local population but discarded from the literature. Here I am limiting to give a superficial account of deeds by members of the Mazzarovich family of valorous sea captains in service to the Venetian Republic. The story of their undertakings began with the battle of Lepanto, where distinguished themselves among the Perastini (people from Perasto) a Giovanni DeLuca (the ancient family name was this, because an ancestor head of the family was a Luca). Another valorous member of this family was Trifone Mazzarovich, born and died in Perasto in the 17th century, a captain of long cabotage who distinguished himself fighting Turks in the war of Morea. His most important exploit was that of the harbor of Karabuti, where, by order of the Captain General of the Sea Domenico Mocenigo, with a felucca (type of vessel) he went in and set fire to all the Turkish ships he could find thereby impeding them to go help the port of Khani which was under siege by the Venetians. After this action he was placed in command of three galleys of the community of Perasto, especially armed for fighting the pirates.

Another famous member of this family was Vincenzo Mazzorovich, contemporary of the preceding one, who was for three times Mayor Captain of Perasto but distinguished himself above all as a warrior in numerous battles against Turk pirates. Particularly we must remember the fact that he provided with his own means for the maintenance, weaponry, and outfitting of three military ships destined by Venice for patrolling the southern Dalmatian coast. Furthermore he had constructed at his expenses, in Perasto a town hall for the City Council and a fortress. Together with his brothers he also built a Franciscan convent with the duty setting up an elementary and a nautical school.

The activation for the defense of their own coastal area by the local people may be due also to the fact that Venetian power was on the decline for which not only Perasto, in the Bocche di Cattaro, but also other coastal cities arm their merchant vessels in order to defend themselves from the pirates and be on guard for them. For example, on the tip of Promontore, near Pola, the guards light a fire when they spotted the corsairs then these signals were repeated from harbor to harbor all along the coast warning the populace to be armed and ready.

However these piracy incursions continued: To get an idea of these just think that during the ten years 1730 / 1740 there were 28 attacks by Dulcognotti corsairs on merchant ships of Perasto, almost all of them occurring in Albanian ports where, in exchange for part of their booty, had the support of well known Turks.

In the second half of the 17th century the situation improved, after the energetic intervention of the Austrian government, who pressed the Turks to resolve this problem otherwise there would be grave retaliations, but this problem was not completely resolved until 1815 after the conquest by Austria of the Adriatic.

The history of banditry on land and piracy on the sea must not be underestimated because these, one way or the other, affected all the coastal people of the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas for a long period of time because it had also other consequences such as the, very important, shifting of large masses of people – the Morlacchi, Turkish subjects of Christian religion, Catholics and Orthodox – who were running away from the Turk / Moslem onslaught on the hinterland of the Balkan peninsula toward the coastal lands of Dalmatia and Istria. These flights were welcomed by the Venetian Republic who needed these poor people to work on her land as peasants, shepherds and soldiers however this large shift in population have had demographic changes in affected territories.

Piracy in the Islands of Cherso and Lussino

Regarding the history of piracy in the upper Adriatic and particularly in the islands of Cherso and Lussino, we may say that it is analogous to others, already mentioned localities in the Adriatic Sea. Sporadic incursions also occurred before the end of the first millennium and before the famous expedition of duke Pietro Orseolo II . We mention here the more serious episodes:

841, Saracenic sacking of Osseero,

843, naval battle around of Sansego,

848, sacking of Pola,

887, the clash of Marasca in which the doge Pietro Candiano los his life,

966, attack on Parenzo (Porec) with the sacking of her cathedral.

Beyond sustaining assaults by the pirates, as was said for other localities, the inhabitants of the islands of Cherso – Lussino were often, during certain periods, undertaking piracy themselves, or were offering refuge to pirates, testimony to this are the ruins in the small island of Palazziol, where it seems Greek pirates established themselves and where they were hiding their plunders.

In 1476, according to tradition, Narentani pirates pushed themselves as far as the bay of Cigale.

About ten years later it was the Turks turn, and pushed themselves up to S. Pietro dei Nembri, Cherso, Osseero “*prendendo li Navilli et barche nostre et danizando quelli torturando... demun captivando, et non contenti de questo, hano sacchiza`, robado et depredado diverse insule et luoghi nostril, menate vie anime et depredado chiese cum tutte cosse sagre erano in esse*” (taking our boats and equipment, damaging and wrecking other... ..,and not satisfied with this, they sacked, stole and plundered in our various islands and places, led away livestock and plundered all the sacred things from our churches) , as noted on a message to the Venetian Senate.

Follows the Morlacchi, who were often cited in the Libri Consigli di Cherso, that they landed in armed groups in the most isolated places of the island of Cherso stealing animals plundering the poor peasants, so much so that, for the security of the island, in 1509 Cherso set sup an armed brigantine and obtained from Venice artillery, ammunition and chase vessels, manned by Chersini.

In 1571 the battle of Lepanto was a serious economic and demographic crisis: the islands lacked food which should have arrived from Venice, from the Marche and from the Puglie,

decimating the residual population, already exhausted by the war, hunger and a very serious plague epidemic.

Finally, from the moment of the defeat of the Turks at Lepanto it brought a respite from pirate incursions, initiating a period of productivity.

During this period the Venetian Republic improved her land defenses building the fortress of Palmanova.

Piracy incursions did not stop completely, the Turks were joined by the Barbary pirates, who from North Africa, with the backing – as we said above – of the notable Turks of Albania were raiding as far as the northern Adriatic.

Then, the same as elsewhere, appeared the Uskok pirates, who for years and years were the Scourge of these islands of the Quarnero, this description of them will be demonstrated in a following episode. In the mid 1500 the islands of Cherso and of Lussino suffered their own and true assault by the Uskoks, confronted in the Vallone di Cherso by Venetian units. In this battle perished two Judges of Cherso and many other islanders, Ossero was destroyed and the Lussininos were set under “iron and fire”. The Capitano Generale del Mar vindicated these losses by hanging all the Uskoks which they were able to capture; to the surviving widows was assigned a fitting reward.

To forestall and defend themselves from these pirating aggressions, were provided various measures: to all the inhabitants of Cherso was imposed a tax for arming and paying soldiers guarding the city's gates. In the inlets of Cigale and San Pietro dei Nembi, which could provide refuge to the pirates, was set up a service of vigilance for signaling by lighting fires when suspected pirate vessels were spotted approaching Lussinpiccolo, Lussingrande, Puntacroce and Ossero. Castles and fortresses were built on the higher hills: in Lussingrande was erected near the harbor a massive defensive fortress and on Monte San Giovanni a lookout over the two sides of the island; in Lussinpiccolo, on Monte Calvario, which dominates a large area of the sea, was built a small castle, known locally by the name of *Vela Straza*; on Monte Bulbin and on Monte Asino were built other lookouts in order to keep an eye on the eastern side of Lussino. Other castles were built here and there as lookouts and refuges for the populace in case of danger. In spite of these precautions the two islands were devastated several times and its most important monuments destroyed. On the island of Cherso, for example, its Franciscan convent of S. Nicolò di Faresina was attacked, plundered, and set on fire several times. But the most terrible devastation of Ossero and of the two Lussini was probably the one of 1614; the assault came suddenly at night and the sacking, the destruction, the deaths, did not spare anyone.

This was happening also because Austria, of whom the Uskoks were subjects, was protecting them and this problem would not be resolved until Venice would not declare war.

The Aiducchi and Dulcignani pirates did not reach our islands even though our people were more than once involved in fighting against them. (n.77)

(1) *Writings for this article were taken from:*

- Giacomo Scotti, *The pirates of the Adriatic*, Lint., Trieste 2001
- Tullio Pizzetti, *Con la bandiera del protettor San Marco*, Campanotto, Pasiàn di Prato (UD), 1999.

Part XXI

THE BRIEF NAPOLEONIC REIGN AFTER THE FALL OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

The situation of the Venetian Republic at the end of 1700

The last few decennials of the 18th century are characterized in Europe by the French revolution and the clashes among France, Austria and Russia, who involves, among others, also the Venetian Republic. This one is undermined by her longevity, richness, socio-political organization, never seriously reformed. According to doge Paolo Ranieri, Venice was not reformable because she lacked valid leadership other than its governing patriarchal doges. As a matter of fact the city lacked a strong middle class, homogenous and well organized that could replace the doge. She had an antiquated bureaucracy, but above all, as we know, she was always only interested in her maritime commerce hence on her dominance of the seas, because of this she never bothered to constitute herself as a united territorial state and remained always as a togetherness of provinces and communes, all dependent on her. She did not bother to improve the living conditions of the people: there were no new roads; land was divided among large owners and peasants, none of them was able to get sufficient profit because the land was naturally unsuitable, wine and olives and only a small part of the land was suitable for growing cereals. Gargarin gives this as an example of this being in Cherso, but this situation was analogous along the whole Dalmatian coast, at the end of 1700 of 190,000 fields only 32,000 were cultivated or cultivable.

The situation was mainly the result of the feudal system with their large land holdings and non-essential ancillaries.

The problem was finally confronted in the 18th century with the law *Grimani*, according to which the number of fields assigned to each nobleman was limited to 300 each, to each peasant 200 and to each Morlacco (1).

The land was given free, inalienable but remained the property of the state who could take it back any time. The prohibition to transfer land caused difficulties, particularly for the Morlacchi

who were not able to earn from their fields sufficient income. Consequently they were compelled to incur usury credit with taxes and very high interest. This led to illegal and cryptic transfers of land to their creditors, who were hardly interested in the meager income which these fields produced, so left large areas of land fallow. It is a law which is still being studied and discussed. As far as international politics of that time was concerned, Venice was trying very hard to maintain disarmed neutrality from which it was decided at the end of 1700 to move back, seeing the risk of a clash between France and Austria on her territories, as expected by the Venetian ambassador in Paris. Thereby she undertook some defensive measures: a new recruiting initiative, an upgrade of her fleet's armament, and a reactivation of many fortresses.

Napoleon Bonaparte's Italian campaign and the end of the glorious Venetian Republic

The defensive measure predisposed by the Venetian Republic against an eventual French attack did not succeed to sway the aim of the young and competent general Bonaparte. Who was sent by the French Directorate with an army of 38,000 men, poorly armed and equipped, for a diversionary maneuver against Austria, who was to be confronted in a decisive manner along the shores of the river Reno, repeatedly defeated the Austro-Piemontese troops who were confronting him and entered the city of **Milano** where, **the 9th of July 1797 was proclaimed the Republica Cisalpina.**

At the same time, the pontifical ex-legations empanelled themselves in the Cispadana Republic, an event to talk about because she also adopted as her flag the tri-color white red and green.

As for Venice, for centuries a foe of Austria and subject, at the moment, to the expansionistic aims of France, her destiny was sealed by the secret talk of Leoben, in which Bonaparte and Austria divided her territories for themselves. The war which Napoleon declared on Venice afterward was a mere formality. Venice, for her defense, she could muster a contingent of 12,000 men, Slavic militia, well trained and efficient thereby formidable and feared even by Bonaparte, who obliged the doge to send them away and to eliminate her aristocratic system. To the doge Daniele Manin the only thing remaining for him to do is gather in consultation. Only 537 of the 1,218 decision makers were present at the meeting, which went forward anyway even though there were not enough members present in order to make the decisions at the meeting legally valid, the decisions passed anyway. Was decided to repatriate the Dalmatian troops and suspend recruitment of new ones in Dalmatia. In the successive meeting the Council approved it, with 512 in favor and 20 against, also Napoleon requested her set up a democratic government to replace her present, ancient, aristocratic form of government of the Republic. Thereby **the 12th of May 1797 the Venetian Republic ceased to exist.** This situation was legalized with **the treaty of Campoformido**, where the cessation of war between France and Austria was signed.



Napoleon's conquered territories; 1809 - 1814

The two powers divided between themselves the territory of the glorious, ancient marine republic.

To France was given the islands in the Ionian Sea, the Venetian possessions of Albania, the Low Lands (Holland) and the territory upstream on the left of the River Reno: To Austria were given: Istria, Dalmatia, The Bocche di Cattaro, the Venetian island of the Adriatic, the city of Venice,...

Anguished, the Dandolo ran to announce the cessation of Venice. Proposed that only the people should decide her destiny by voting either for independence or foreign yoke! The Venetians chose independence but it was not consented to be so. The treaty of Campoformido required Napoleon to cede the city of Venice to Austria but, before doing so, Napoleon the conqueror squeezed out as much as he could from the city and its inhabitants: thereby the mercantile community was obligated to buy, for a sum of 150,000 ducats a certain quantity of biscuits and salt; they were required to sell masterworks of art from the school of the merchants for the Our Lady of the Field; they took masterworks from churches, archives, art galleries; were sent to Paris the four bronze horses which embellished S. Marco basilica; they took six vessels and the same number of frigates which were stationed in Corfu; emptied the arsenal, scuttled the ships which were being repaired and smashed those which were not sea worthy; at S. Giorgio il Bucintoro they singed certain work of art in order to remove its decorative gold,... Only when there was nothing else to plunder, the city was abandoned to the Austrians, who entered it the **11th of January 1798**.

During the Austrian period Venice's importance went evermore downhill, this was also because of her proximity to Trieste, the same fate also happened to other centers, like Perasto, which were formerly thriving.

Ceased to exist with the fall of Venice and the Austrian occupation the 845 libraries, together with those of the friars and nunneries with their incommensurable patrimony of volumes and of culture: 40,000 were the volumes removed from the bookshelves of the Camaldonesi di Murano; 30,000 from those from the Somaschi alla Salute, as many from the Domenicani alle zattere; 6,000 those from the Minori Conventuali ai Frari ... and the list of these robberies is not complete!

In 1805 Austria, was defeated by Napoleon at Austerlitz, lost the island of the Quarnero which were then united to the Regno d'Italia, governed by Eugenio Beauharnais. With the defeat of Austria at Wagram, which then followed the Peace of Schombrunn (1809), even the islands of the Quarnero were consolidated with the Illirian Provinces, with the capital being Lubiana, which included Dalmatia, Istria, the Croatian littoral, Carniola, the County of Gorizia and Gradisca, Trieste and part of the Carinzia. Their life lasted only until 1813, when their territory returned once again to Austria - consequences of the Napoleonic government! the passage of Napoleon over our lands was from 1796 to 1813: 17 years!

We already spoke of the desert left on our lands by the passage of Napoleon, but he left also a positive imprint? Napoleon was an ingenious son of the French Revolution who brought his principles of liberty and equality wherever he went and brought total change on the political and social structure all over Europe. In particular, aside from some local differences, we may say that during the Napoleonic period were introduced some innovations and an acceleration of the process on the social evolution already under way. Is the case of the father-figure class, which was already beaten as a ruling group during the Venetian period and began turning toward "major players" persons professionally and intellectually prepared, like doctors, jurists and land surveyors. Napoleon abolished the distinctions between nobles and the rich middle class. In a short time it raised a sense of common belonging – of nobles and rich bourgeois prepared – for the higher class of the community.

Another manifestation of this new spirit of equality introduced by Napoleon was the obligatory military service, while under the Venetian Republic only the general populace was subject to the draft, the nobles were exempted or served as paid officers. Furthermore, in the maritime service there was greater opportunity for career advancement while in the army the promotions were favored to those who could read and write. The religious orders and confraternities were expropriated of their holdings which were then held by the Communes who then leased it. Were abolished the ecclesiastic tithe, paid as favor to the bishops...

New Italian schools and roads were built, rationed cutting the forests, initiate the tutelage of water resources. But the most important thing was the introduction of the **Napoleonic Code**, which became effective the 21st of March 1804 and was such an important document as to be incorporated in the Italian civil code of 1865. With it was abolished the network of the old regime, of the feudalism, of the absolutism for creating a mostly middle class society, secular and free in which was consecrated the rights of equality, security and property that belonged to all its citizens.^(n.78)

(1) The Morlachi were in the military service of Venice in the second half of the 16th century and in the first 20 years of the 17th and who were searching a settlement which was stable and permanent.

THE AUSTRIAN PERIOD

From the fall of Venice to the Italian Period

The Austrian Government before and after the Austro-Hungarian one on Istria, Dalmatia and the islands of the Quarnero sea, lasted more than one hundred years (1797 – 1918 and, even if not being as long as the Latin and the Venetian periods which preceded her, left a deep cultural imprint in our birthplace. Our older people still remember their parents and grandparents, born and raised during the Austrian period, talk about her time as an orderly period. Therefore is better for us to go over this part of our history here.

The Austrian Empire came into being as a hereditary monarchy in 1804, when Napoleon Bonaparte with his victorious campaigns, conquered and annexed to France a sizable part of Europe, then planned her reorganization. He suppressed, among other things, the Holy Roman Empire, and Franz Joseph of Hapsburg became King of Austria, anyway he did not want to renounce his title of Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire; two years, after the pact of allegiance with Bonaparte, suggested by prime minister Metternich, and after the wedding of his daughter Maria Luisa with the emperor of France, he renounced it.

Ten years later, the great European powers, that is, Russia, Great Britain, Prussia and Austria, allied against Napoleon, after having him repeatedly beaten in Lipsia (1813) and Waterloo (1815) and banned him on the island of Elba, held a congress in Vienna for the restoration of assets taken previously by the by Napoleonic forces.

The reality is that it is impossible to turn back the clock therefore there was not a proper and true restoration and the Europe that resulted from the congress held in Vienna reveals that Austria received back all the territories received by Napoleon in Leoben and Compofornido, including Lombardy and the territories belonging to the marine Republics of Venice and Ragusa.

To the House of Savoy was restored the kingdom of Sardegna in addition to the province of Liguria, which formerly was part of the marine Republic of Genova. The dukedom of Parma and Piacenza was assigned to Maria Luisa of Austria, daughter of the emperor of Austria Francesco I. The granduchy of Tuscany was given to Ferdinand III of Hapsburg - Lorena, the brother of the emperor of Austria; and the Pontifical State, naturally, was given back to the Pope. Therefore the restitution designed by the Congress of Vienna, in particular, concerned Austria and her family and brought the definite end of the glorious Marine Republic of Venice, Genoa and Ragusa. Cherso became part of Austria's Illyrian Kingdom which included Carniola, Carinza, Dalmatia and the Austrian littoral which included Gorizia, Trieste, Istria, Fiume and the Quarnero islands territories which, aside their name, in reality were always administered directly by the Austrian central government until its fall during WWI and the end of her empire in 1918.

The succeeding emperors during the Hapsburg period of 1804 / 1918, whom we are taking in consideration, are Francesco I, his son Ferdinando I and, after his abdication, Francesco Giuseppe (Franz Joseph). Who had the minor political relevance of the three, was undoubtedly the second, physically weak, and strongly influenced by Metternich; because of the length of his reign – 68 years – Francesco Giuseppe surely had the major relevance, which marked the passage between two historic epochs, from the despotic of the middle age to the constitutional one, to the one of universal suffrage. For education and for character Franz Joseph was a solitary and detached man whose life was totally immersed in the affairs of the empire which he headed, comprising 12 nationalities, often fighting among themselves, and present within the empire, according to the percentages which follow:

German, 23.9%
Hungarian, 20.2%
Czech, 12.6%
Polack, 10%
Ukraine, 7.9%
Romanian, 6.4%
Croatian, 5.3%
Slovak, 3.9%
Serbian, 3.8%
Slovene, 2.6%
Italian, 2.0%
Serbian-Croats in Bosnia, 1.2%

For conservation of order in her far-flung empire and to control her borders, Franz Joseph had one of the largest and most powerful army in the Europe of that time; had a territorial militia and a national guard, all excellently equipped and fully armed. Was said that her royal imperial army was unshakeable, serious, prepared, mobile, disciplined, faithful at the regulations but capable of making autonomous decisions at all levels, thanks to accurate, tough and constantly practicing, with very strict discipline and clearly explained to the soldiers in their own native language. Their supreme commander was the emperor.

At the beginning, the government was centralized, conservative and reactionary; the culture and native language of her various subject nations was respected but judicial equality did not exist nor individual liberty. To administer properly, her territory was divided in “diets” (diets or legislative assemblies) who had their own representatives with the duty of illustrating and discussing local problems during the assembly of the council in Vienna, in addition of being intermediary between the various ethnic groups of the empire and the dominant German faction. The various states did not like the lack of liberty therefore malcontent began to surface in writings, secrete societies, many in town squares, and even open revolutions. The Hungarian one occurred in 1848 in the port of Kossuth resulting in 1867 compromise with the nobility which led to the aggregation of the Hungarian kingdom with the Austrian empire in order to form a single politico-military entity, denominated the Austro-Hungarian empire, but with an internal political system and a separate administration. This compromise pacified the Austro-Hungarian rapports. But also other nations were going to claim their own national identity other than the constitutional governments. In Italy this movement led to the three wars for independence and to WWI or 3rd war for independence, with which the Italians were finally united in the same territory.

The culture of the Austrian empire was diverse because of the nations which composed her but also had a characteristically uniting imprint, which was known as mitteleuropea (Central European), it developed particularly in Austria, Bohemia, Italy, birthplaces of great artists, writers and thinkers whose work was expressed principally in architecture. Hungary and the Slavic countries were left out of this cultural ferment, with the exclusion of Budapest. The official religion of the empire was Catholicism, practiced by 77.2% of the population, but were tolerated also other religions, represented by the following minorities: protestants, 8.9%; orthodox, 8.7%; Hebrews, 3.9% and Moslems, 1.1%.

At the beginning the economy of the empire was mainly based the agriculture of the great Hungarian plains, of the Danube valley, and of the commerce for which this river was the principal artery. Minor resources, mainly local, were the raising of livestock and grazing. During

the second half of the 19th century, in Austria and Germany, but also in the other large cities of the Empire – like Milan, Trieste, Prague, Budapest, Krakow – industries began to develop, which brought a notable grade of general well being which led to an increase of the population from 21 millions in 1805 to almost 50 millions in 1910, concentrated mainly in the cities.

The standard currency of the Austrian empire was the florin, which in 1892 was substituted by the Austro-Hungarian crown. In the same period there was a great evolvement of the letters and arts, for which Vienna was the epicenter. This splendid capital of the empire, with more than one and a half million inhabitants, one of the most populous city in Europe in those times, beyond being the commercial and cultural center (we should not forget that some of our grandfathers studied in her university!) was also a political and entertainments center; famous were the concerts, the musical operas, the balls events which were held.

The industrial expansion brought on the emergence of a new social strata, a middle class of entrepreneurs, socialists and liberals, who attracted the sympathy of the well-to-do and who, gradually, substituted the old aristocracy.

All this signaled the end of large centralized empires. (n.79)



Franz Joseph Emperor of the Austrian empire from 1848 to 1916



Austro-Hungarian Empire

THE KINGDOM OF ITALY From the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the end of the First World War

The island of Cherso belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire from 1797 to 1918, excluding the Napoleonic period (1805 – 1814), about one century, and her government was for a long time remembered by her people as leader of an orderly country. At the end of 1800 this empire is at the maximum of its territorial and human expansion because it encompasses an area of 680,000 square kilometers and 50 millions of its inhabitants were of various races, religions and traditions, of different cultures. The official language is German – which generally everybody knows – but who also speak another language, the one of the country to which they belong, as a matter of fact there were 13 the actual countries which made up the Austro-Hungarian empire: Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia (Vojvodina), the Italian regions of Trentino-Alto Adige, Venezia Giulia and Friuli Orientale, parts of Montenegro, Romania, Poland and Ukraine. This plurality makes it difficult to govern the empire.

Furthermore, this situation gets more complicated with the birth and development, in various countries belonging to the empire, of a nationalistic spirit, which inspires some what, in all the subservient countries independence movements and insurrections. The widespread and multitude of people making up the empire, which denoted her power and importance, were therefore also the cause of her decline and dissolution, together with the emerging power of Prussia and because of problems of an international character like the one in the Balkan area, where the Ottoman empire in a crisis favored the struggles for the domination of areas belonging to Austria and Russia. To maintain equilibrium, the Austro-Hungarian empire looked for outside help, to a complicated system of allegiances with other powers against an eventual Russian attack; internally she was trying to respond to requests for independence and liberty coming from various subject countries conceding certain constitutional liberties. The above mentioned allegiances were the “Dual Allegiance”, stipulated with Germany in 1879, with whom, in 1882, the kingdom of Italy united – and there were talks of a “Triple Allegiance” – and in 1908 Bosnia-Herzegovina joined – thus forming the “Quadruple Allegiance” – and remained in effect until the First World War started. In Italy this historic period came to be known as the “Risorgimento” (Resurgence) which had its origin after the 1815 Congress of Vienna, where the representatives of the victorious powers against Napoleon met for distributing pre-Napoleonic assets, this distribution act was called “Restaurazione” (Restoration).

To express their own liberal, constitutional and national aspirations the Italian patriots then began secretly to unite around liberal and daring men, like Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi, prince Carlo Alberto of Savoy, Camillo Benso of Cavour and others. This was the period in which – through secret societies, many revolutionaries and actual wars – the Italian peninsula, composed of many city-state

fiefdoms dependent – not only on the Austro-Hungarian empire – but also on various other princes, constituted themselves as a single state, on its own territory and headed by a single ruler and this is when the residents of the Italian peninsula gained their own identity of being *Italians*, that is of a people having the same religion, language and culture.

We are talking about a process of acquiring a national identity, a process which every people must go through, and which the Italians had lived for more than a century and now are trying and must surpass in order to gain their identity as European citizens. Other populations in the world – even in Europe – are only now coming to grip with the aforementioned process of acquiring their own national identity.

This process – of being independent of foreign rule and of the unification of the territories of Italian culture – was carried out with the revolutions of 1820/21, 1831 and 1848/49, the three wars led by the princes of the House of Savoy, the expedition by the Thousand of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the first world war and the expedition to Fiume (Rijeka) by Gabriele D'Annunzio, of which we studied in school and of which we will be able to delve deeper in few moments.

At the end of the First World War, with the assignment to Italy of Trentino-Alto Adige, the cities of Trento, Trieste, Zara, Istria and the islands of Lagosta, Cherso, and Lussino, thereby completing the unification of the territories under a single sovereign where the official language was Italian. The Italian language city of Fiume and the Dalmatian coast were awarded to the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovene – the future Yugoslavia – For this the Dalmatians were demonstrating en masse to be to joined to Italy, also for the reason that Italians in these territories began to be subjected to reprisals, although there were laws in place for the protection linguistic minorities. According the historian Federzoni, The number of Dalmatians who emigrated to Zara (Zadar), in the nearby islands assigned to Italy and on the coast of the Italian peninsula which fronted Dalmatia, was 50,000; according to others it was a lower number. The movements for Fiume to join Italy had various motives. Fiume was one of the pearls of the Austro-Hungarian empire; under Hungarian control since the 18th century, free port since 1717, outlet to the sea, together with Trieste, and the inlands of the empire, in particular of the large cities of Prague, Budapest, Belgrade and Zagreb, with their important railroads terminals, was contested by the Italian kingdom and by the one of the Serbs, Croats and Slovene on the basis of the language spoken: mainly Italian in the city and Croatian in the surrounding villages; was assigned to Italy only after the undertaking by Gabriele D'Annunzio. Cherso was officially annexed to Italy in November 1918 when the royal ship “Stocco”, amid large festivities docked in Cherso.

The First World War

Of all the happenings I mentioned above, the one of which I feel this is the occasion to ad to, is the First World War, of which this year is being observed the 90th anniversary. As I aforesaid, it was the fourth war for the independence of Italy, because with her was completed the unification of the Italian national territory. But the war has not accomplished only this. It was justifiably defined “World War” and “Great” because, gradually, 28 nations were involved and I must say it was a massacre, because 37 million persons, 10 millions of whom were civilians lost their life. Could it have been prevented? according to some historians yes.

It began because of the progressive tension among the European powers caused by internal and external factors in Europe. The internal factors were the birth of a nationalistic sentiment and the consequent separatist movements in the countries making up the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the external ones were the expansionistic aims of the European powers in Africa and Asia: the French occupation of Morocco, the German attempt to maintain its independence; the annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire; The Italian war against Turkey for the annexation of Libya and the region of Tripoli. All this brought to a crisis the delicate system of allegiances which was able to maintain certain equilibrium among the European powers.

In this climate the attempt on June 28 1914 on the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Throne Francesco Ferdinando (Franz Ferdinand) and his wife, in Sarajevo, was the spark which brought WWI. Both the Austrian government and public opinion were to blame on the attack in Sarajevo even though the judicial counsel sent there by the Austrian Minister for External Affairs wrote in his report that he has not found any responsibility by the Serbian government for the murder. Nevertheless Austria sent to Serbia an ultimatum asking to suppress the subversive movement rising in her country and accepting the collaboration of the government imperial organs. Serbia answered that she will be pursuing and prosecuting those responsible of anti-Austrian propaganda but without the collaboration of imperial government functionaries, which would be a violation of the Constitutional laws which regulates penal rights.

Thereafter, in July 28 1914 Austro-Hungary declared war against Serbia. Italy declared her neutrality but the following year, in 1915, joined the war after secretly entering the Triplicate accord with England, France and Russia in exchange of the promise, in case of victory, her irredentist territories.

While the war was raging two important facts occurred: the death of emperor Franz Joseph and the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

I will not delve in describing the numerous and bloody battles, eleven of which were fought along the rive Isonzo. At the end Austria was defeated and Italy received the promised territories: the 3th of November 1918 the Italian army entered Trento and Trieste and the following day Italy and Austria signed the armistice.

This brought to an end the age of the empires.

But the winners and losers were exhausted... cities were destroyed, farms lay fallow, the industries shut down also for the lack of proper manpower. The unemployment and the misery of the masses was a breeding ground for socialist movements of the 20th century, which eventually gave rise to Nazism and Fascism. (80)

Carmen Palazzolo Delbianchi

TO BE CONTINUED.

(This story is a translation from a continuation of Italian language installments published in the quarterly journal COMUNITA` CHERSINA. Additional parts to this story will be inserted as new issues are published) - translated by John Bunicci

