

Florian Bieber



HVAR IN THE MODERN AGE

Identity and Change
in Southeast Europe

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For Marijana and Oskar

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I stepped through the door, time seemed to move backward. A stale smell replaced the clear air and the hot sunshine, and the thick stone walls lowered the temperature by ten degrees. The mixture of chaos and order was in perfect balance. The walls were decorated with a few posters, and the beds and closets looked orderly. Yet large piles of magazines, broken cups, and rusting pots gathered in one corner. Several decades ago, the relatives of the deceased had looked through the modest possessions in the hope of finding anything of interest. There was not much to be found. Somewhere, there was a jar full of Yugoslav dinar coins. Nobody bothered to take them. The cheap tin coins looked like monopoly money.

By the time the second sister, who had lived for decades in the house had died in 1989, 1 dinar was worth so little that a year later, the new dinar replaced 10,000 old ones. The walls were decorated with calendars, some Catholic calendars, either handed out at the local church or taken from *Glas Koncila*, the Croatian magazine of the Catholic Church, of which hundreds of copies were strewn in the pile of junk. Next to the Catholic calendar was another honoring Tito's 85th birthday and his 40th year heading the Yugoslav Communist Party. The year was 1977. An older calendar from 1962 advertised the agricultural machinery of *Zmaj*, a factory based in Zemun on the outskirts of Belgrade, with socialist-realist pictures of rich wheat fields harvested by the latest tractors. A small self-made frame of shiny paper adorned a newspaper cutout of Tito, complete with a small Yugoslav flag. A more conventionally framed portrait of Ivo "Lola" Ribar dominated one of the bedrooms. He was a partisan hero and close aide to Tito from Zagreb, who died in 1943 by German forces. The picture in the bedroom is one of thousands of the same portrait, looking determined into the future or at least off to the distance. The wall that separated the rooms was made of flimsy wood laths. To seal the wall, dozens of old film posters were pinned to the wood, one over the other. "Bend of the River," a poster for this classic Western with James Stewart and Rock Hudson from the early 1950s, overlapped with "Deveti Krug" (Ninth Circle), a 1960 Yugoslav drama about the Holocaust and "Padri i figli" (A Tailor's Maid), an Italian comedy from the late 1950s with Marcello Mastroianni. The posters were not decorations but cheap wall fillers, as the two sisters had worked in the village's movie theater.

There were a few books, an old Yugoslav cooking book, a helpful guide on "How to protect yourself in the case of a war," issued in socialist Yugoslavia, a few novels, and a theater play by the Croatian writer and politician Ante Tresić-Pavičić, who was born in the next door. Another was a small children's book of songs, stories, and pictures printed on decaying paper and printed in Egypt for the thousands of Dalmatians who fled during the Second World War to the Sinai desert. The songs and stories praised the Partisans and told of the home so far away. Every scrap of paper was worth saving. Packaging from gifts and wrapping from products were

carefully smoothed out and put in the drawers of the cabinets. Newspapers and magazines—no matter whether Catholic news or the popular Yugoslav magazine *Arena*—were all carefully kept, as were buttons, tins, and anything that did not grow on the land.

Here, only a few kilometers from tourist resorts, beaches, and restaurants, two old sisters lived until the late 1980s without water—the only water was gathered in a deep cistern underneath the house. The poverty was less visible through what the sisters didn't have and what they kept. Every scrap of paper, every jar, a cardboard box with the matter-of-fact information "From: American Red Cross-U.S.A. To: International Red Cross Committee. Contents: 4 Prisoner of War Food Package No. 10. Gross Weight: 47.50 LBS," it was clear that everything was worth saving, it was not sure that it would be available to buy or that there would be money to do so.

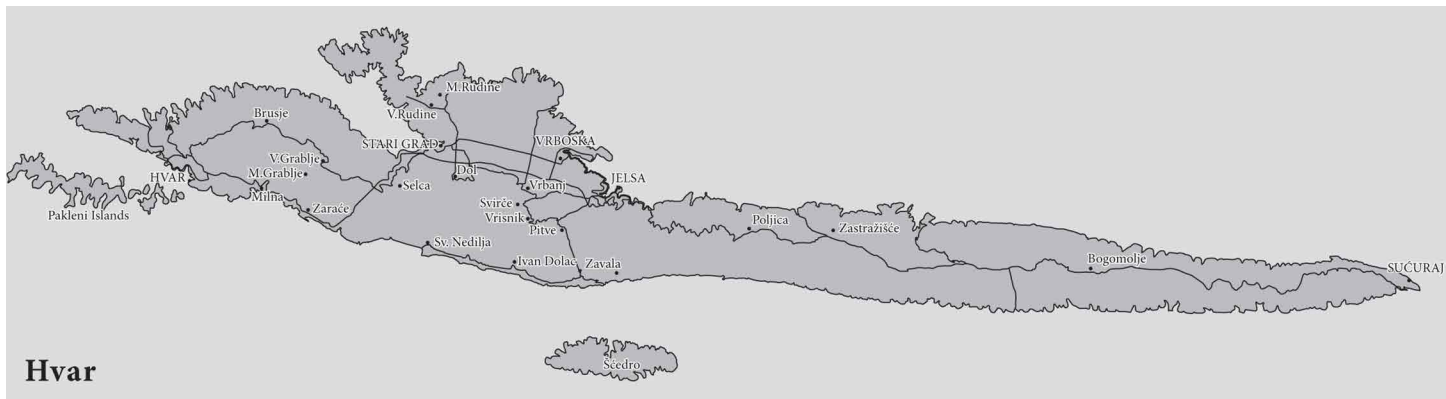
Nothing had changed in the two decades between the death of its last inhabitant and my visit to the house. Yugoslavia ended violently, and the pictures of its heroes and leaders have been thrown in the trash or at least moved to the cellar. Catholic and Communist calendars do not co-exist anymore. Socialist scarcity has been replaced by capitalist poverty—Communist heroes by nationalist ones. Yugoslav magazines became Croatian magazines. The fact that the house stood empty for nearly twenty years, as did hundreds of others, is also part of history. The villages were dying out; young villagers moved to Split, Zagreb, or just to the shore. Old stone houses became a burden. Without toilets and running water, they represented the past, abandoned, and an unwanted inheritance. First, they were inherited by a few children and maybe cousins, and after their death, the number of heirs increased, often to dozens, who left them to rot. They were left in a cocoon as Yugoslavia disintegrated, the war burned old bridges, and new tourists from Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland discovered the Adriatic for a cheap trip to the sea. Only when foreigners, like me, found abandoned stone houses and contemplated or dreamed of spending time close to the sea, renovating a ruin, did these shells with their contents reopen. This is how I began discovering the past of Hvar, a Dalmatian island. This book is a result of my discovery.

My history was the product of over a decade of research and writing, aided by many. I want to express my gratitude to the Remarque Institute at NYU for allowing me to spend a semester there to start writing and researching this book. I would also like to sincerely thank the archivists who have patiently advised me of the years from New York and London to Vienna, Zagreb, Belgrade, Split, and Hvar. Representing all of them, I would like to pay a tribute to Joško Kovačić, who helped me in the Hvar archives, who passed away in 2019.

I am also grateful for those who commented on the manuscript, particularly Mateo Bratanić, Fabian Kümmeler, Vicko Marelić, Roland Bieber, and Marijana Trivunović. This book would not have been possible without the research assistance of several students and doctoral researchers who helped transcribe documents and helped identify many sources. They include Nidžara Ahmetašević, Magdalena Byma, Tara Tepavac, Tamara Branković, Zvonimir Mandić, and others.

NOTE ON THE NAMES

Throughout the book, I will use the contemporary Croatian names for cities and places on Hvar and Dalmatia, except in quotations, where I have retained the original spelling. Historically, the Venetian variant of Italian was widely used, not just during the Venetian but also during Habsburg rule. Thus, Hvar was known as Lesina (and variants of this word, such as Liesna), Stari Grad as Cittavecchia or sometimes Pharos—its Greek name. Other towns were known as Gelsa, today Jelsa, Verbosca is now Vrboska, and San Giorgio today Sućuraj. People's names might also be written in various ways, reflecting the different languages. I generally use the most common spelling of the names.



Map 1 Map of the island of Hvar.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

*HEU FUGIUNT FLUXU NON REDEUNTE DIES,
“Alas! The days flow by like waves, never to return.”*

Inscription, Tvrđalj by Petar Hekotorović, Stari Grad

The island of Hvar stretches like a partially submerged dragon on the East Adriatic from the Dalmatian coast, some nearly 70 kilometers northward. The island's spine is a long chain of mountains stretching along the length of the island with the highest peak, Sv. Nikola reaching 628 meters. At the tail end of the dragon lies Sućuraj, a small town that overlooks the tall peaks of the Biokovo mountains on the coast, just some 5 kilometers away. The long tail of the island is sparsely inhabited, with a few villages that lie along the remote 50-kilometer-long stretch of the road linking Sućuraj with the rest of the island. In Jelsa, the island opens up to a wide fertile plain that makes the island unique among the mostly barren and rocky islands of the Adriatic. This plain is surrounded by numerous villages and small towns that dot the interior on the foot of the higher peaks and the coast. Vrboska, Stari Grad, and Jelsa are the coastal towns, whereas villages from Pitve in the East to Rudine in the West mark this fertile heartland of the island. All three coastal towns are built around natural harbors, in the case of Stari Grad, a deep and sheltered bay. After Stari Grad, the island narrows again, and the center of gravity shifts toward the open sea. Here, at the end of the dragon, lies Hvar, facing the open sea but protected by a group of small islands, the Pakleni islands, nearly at the Westernmost tip of the island.

Hvar, one of over 1,200 islands of the Adriatic, has a rich history that is deeply intertwined with the region. These islands, nearly all along the Eastern coast of today's Croatia, stretching from Istria in the north to Dubrovnik in the South, often form what seems like a protective layer and the open sea is frequently invisible from the shores of the mainland. The natural harbors provide shelter and made it the lifeline of the Adriatic for millennia for shipping, fishing, exploring the sea, and connecting Central Europe by sea to the Mediterranean and the Near East. Hvar was one of the crucial stepping stones on this shipping route, a fact that underscores its historical significance.

When one drives the old road toward Hvar from Stari Grad along the rocky spine of the island, large stone walls seem to delineate small patches of fertile land.

The walls often appear more extensive than the land they surround. One might think that the inhabitants jealously guard their small plots from their neighbors, but instead, these walls do not delineate plots of land at all but are mere repositories for the rocks found in the fertile soil. The stones are piled on these large walls to allow lavender, olives, or grapes to grow. This book seeks to create walls based on small stones, stories, and events to reveal larger structures. This book wanders through the paths of the Hora, the large plain of olive groves, lavender fields, and grapes that stretches between the towns of Stari Grad and Vrboska; it takes ships from Bremen, Rijeka, or Hamburg to the United States; it follows a tiny insect called phylloxera that traveled on these boats back to Europe and to Hvar, destroying all the vineyards. It is a book about poor, remote villages without running water or electricity until a generation ago, and poetry with Petar Hektorović penning his texts in his sprawling and never-completed Tvrđalj decades before Shakespeare. This book explores the first tourists as they wander through the city of Hvar and the thousands of islanders who joined others from neighboring islands escaping the Second World War in the Egyptian desert. How thousands of tourists discovered Hvar after the war changed the island, and how modernity and socialism were negotiated. As such, it is a history of relations, the relations of the island to the mainland. The mainland was often the Dalmatian coast, but it also included far-away centers of power, such as Venice, Vienna, Belgrade, and Zagreb.

This book is not confined to the small stretch of land. The island is the starting point and end point for this book. Still, the history of Hvar is also a history of Dalmatia, the Adriatic, Southeastern Europe, and the larger Mediterranean area. For a long time, scholars focused on the Mediterranean in antiquity or the early modern world, when it was the center of empires or exchanges that shaped the world. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean is relevant for understanding the modern world, as it “questions borderlines between east and west and north and south.”¹ The history of Hvar is just one piece of the puzzle of the history of the Mediterranean: It is not just a microhistory of an island, but the story of the island and its inhabitants’ links to the experience of Adriatic and the wider Mediterranean. The history of an island, just like the histories of towns and cities, challenges the prevalence of national histories as the dominant frame through which to read the past. As nation-states are products of modernity and their borders have shifted, such histories blind us to links across national boundaries. Instead, local and primarily urban histories have shown how questions of identity, modernity, and political loyalty changed over time.

Despite its peripheral location, Hvar has always been able to shape its fate. Islanders migrated to New Zealand, Argentina, and the United States, helped build the Suez Canal, and caught sardines off the coast of Tunisia. The island also hosted pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, Austrian scholars seeking to understand evolution, tourists from Central Europe, and Jewish refugees. Many of these linkages bypassed and ignored formal political structures, highlighting the island’s ability to negotiate, mediate, and extract from these trends.

The sea defines an island. While humans have expanded and connected islands to the mainland, water constitutes a barrier. This barrier increases the duration

and cost of travel and goods, at least in the contemporary period. It also can isolate an island from disease or other turmoil.² In the past, research on islands focused on what separates islands from the mainland, namely its isolation. From the study of plants and animals to anthropologists studying isolated communities, the island as a metaphor became conflated with islands as a real place.³ The islands' isolation is largely imaginary, and even remote Pacific islands are often connected. Thus, the sea is not only what keeps it apart from the mainland but also what keeps it connected. What might seem like a source of isolation today, a journey of several hours by boat from Split for less than 50 kilometers, linked the island to the world. During times when roads were bad, mountains were hard to surmount, and the Dalmatian coast, with few links to its hinterland, Hvar, and the other islands, were well connected. It would have been easier to sail to Venice or the main ports in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea than to reach a town in the Dalmatian hinterland. The connection via the sea creates ports with their own logic of exchange and communication. Unlike ports on the mainland, the ports on islands are not the big ports and the attached cities with their cosmopolitan exchanges.

As the Croatian and Yugoslav writer and scholar Predrag Matvejević noted, islands "are isolated by the sea and therefore left to their own devices ... the way they speak differs from the way their neighbors on shore speak to a greater extent than one might expect from the distance involved."⁴ Here, it is not the general isolation but the distinctiveness from the mainland that can set islands apart. The state is often distant and remote. News, armies, and administrators all arrive by boat, docking in the ports. They are sometimes anticipated, sometimes feared.

The combination of seeming isolation and unity gave islands a unique role in the human imagination. Islands became sites of utopias and dystopias in plays, philosophical texts and novels, including Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), and More's *Utopia* (1516) to Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719): "The island represents a framed perspective of the world; it marks out a bounded site that in turn legitimates the imposition of taxonomic categories upon that world."⁵

In *The Tempest*, the island is both a refuge for Prospero and his daughter Miranda; it is also a magical place different from the "mainland," and the unnamed Mediterranean island of the play is also the site of a colonial relationship between Prospero and his slave Caliban.⁶ In Thomas More's *Utopia*, it is not the island that brings about a utopian society, but rather, the ideal society requires the isolation of an island to survive.

As such, islands seem like the "ideal nation-state" with clearly defined borders, and the distinctiveness from others is what nation-states aspired to, but often lacked in constructing nation-states on "natural borders." Thus, "[t]he island functioned as a symbol of close community and as a synecdoche of society as a whole, while the island's insularity was also a sign of its antiquity and stood for notions of a rooted, unadulterated, original culture."⁷

This seemingly original culture can be interpreted as either "repositories of an unadulterated national culture" or as "potentially recalcitrant pockets of backwardness that needed circumscribing and, ultimately, domesticating."⁸ As the history of Hvar will show, the island was both isolated and connected. Thus, it

was far from preserving some historical essence but changed through its many connections and exchanges. As an island, it can connect not just with the closest shore but with other coastlines and islands, allowing for connections and exchanges that are not always following the next mainland. Smugglers, sailors, fishers, pilgrims, travelers, and tourists bring change and transformation. As a result, it fits the contemporary focus on the connections, not the supposed authenticity or isolation of the island.⁹

The duality of isolation and connection was captured by the UN master plan for the development of Hvar in 1968, according to which Hvar “offers the visitor an impression of remoteness. ... an island that is seemingly but not actually remote has an additional and unusual attraction.”¹⁰ The proximity and remoteness also meant that Hvar was a relatively new island.

Hvar became an island 11,000 years ago when the end of the last ice age led to rising sea levels and filled the valleys connecting it to the mainland. Becoming an island does not mean becoming a coherent unit for its inhabitants. The original islanders would have lived in a small region and were unaware of the entire island. Later populations were aware that they were on an island even if they often did not connect with all other islanders. The island’s towns and villages were only connected by road in 1970. Previously, it would have taken days to cross the island on land, and the trip would not have been fast by sea either. Other islands, Korčula, Brač, Vis, or the mainland, were often closer than other places on the island. Local identities usually supersede the sense of belonging to a single island. These strong local identities meant that, in the words of Ana Perinić Lewis, Hvar was an “island of islands.” Even if local identities might be more powerful than a collective sense of hailing from Hvar, being an islander has been a vital feature of identity and life on the island. The mainland has been and remains separate and distinct.

Hvar is also an island that was a world on itself but relied on its connection to the coast. With multiple small urban centers and extensive agricultural lands, it had both a rural and urban life that produced rich agricultural products to sustain life and urban culture to bring forth countless writers, entrepreneurs, politicians, and artists. Whereas most other islands of the Adriatic and Aegean are small and could not sustain life without support from the mainland, Hvar had a critical mass. At the same time, it does not belong to the larger islands in the Mediterranean that could provide the basis for an independent country, like Malta or Cyprus, or large islands that boast large urban agglomerations, universities, and important administrative centers, such as Sicily, Crete, or Corsica.

Hvar has a very rich historiography. As an island that has produced historians and archeologists since the sixteenth century, much has been written about the island, especially by historians from the island. There is hardly a village on the island without its own local history. These constitute an important source but are often focused on and written for the families that live in these tight-knit communities. General histories of the island are few. Grga Novak (1888–1978), a prominent archeologist and historian and later president of the Yugoslav Academy of Science and Arts, wrote a history of Hvar in 1924 and issued a revised version forty-eight years later.¹¹ This history reflects essentially the political and historiographical

trends of its time, with little focus on the island's connections and scant interest in the history of recent centuries. Other books on the island often focus only on a short historical episode or focus on the microcosm of a village or town.

Besides history books, it is tourist guides that often narrate the past. The endless number of tourist guides published on Dalmatia over the past century are like so many guides to places in the Mediterranean: history ends sometime in the Renaissance, and the picture of palaces and squares shows no people wandering the towns. When reading these descriptions, one is struck by how these places do not come to life, the concerns of their inhabitants, the smells of the markets, the politics, the movies people watch, the occasions they celebrate, and the relatives in faraway continents. All this makes Dalmatia and Hvar, like Venice or Florence, a stage for the visitor to imagine the past but ignore the present (and the past centuries). The present and its people only serve the visitor to explore the past. However, Hvar, like Venice and other such towns and places, deserves a better understanding not just of the present but also of the recent past: Partisans fighting battles, villagers planting the first lavender bushes, patrician families setting out to sea, poor villagers leaving for the Americas, and many others give the island life and show that they are more than a prop for beaches and historical buildings.

Echoing this empty stage of history, "The Mediterranean as it once was" became the slogan of the Croatian tourist board, advertising the coast, including Hvar, to the world in international media. But for all this undefined sense of nostalgia, it was never clear which Mediterranean past it evoked: Venetian, Habsburg, Yugoslavia?

This book focuses on the history of Hvar over the past 600 years, coinciding with the rise of modern Europe and in Hvar with Venetian rule after centuries of alternating powers that claimed Hvar. For 600 years, essentially, three states shaped the fortunes of Hvar, Venice for the first four centuries until Napoleon abolished the Venetian Republic in 1797. After an interlude of Austrian and French rule (through its Italian satellite state and direct rule), the Habsburg Monarchy would control Dalmatia and Hvar for slightly more than a century until the end of the First World War. The last period, the short Yugoslav century, is marked by two Yugoslav states, one a monarchy, the other a socialist federation, that lasted on Hvar for seventy years, between 1921 and 1991, with the interruption of the Second World War. The long *durée* perspective allows us to see long-term changes and continuity, from the ambiguous relations to the states that governed the island and traditions of cooperation and rebellion on Hvar, questions of identity and exchange.

Of course, the history of Hvar does not begin in the fifteenth century. Remnants of its earlier history are visible throughout the island, from the pottery found in Grapčeva špilja, a cave overlooking the open sea, to the seventy-three Greek land parcels, laid out in even plots on the *Chora* of Stari Grad, and still visible today to the Roman mosaics in Stari Grad. These are not just material remains; they inspired its inhabitants over later centuries and highlight that the linkages across the Mediterranean were not a product of modernity but existed in pre-history and antiquity.

Hvar has existed since prehistoric times, probably before it became an island. In recent years, archeologists discovered an underwater road and settlement called Soline close to neighboring Korčula, dating to 7000 BCE. Human remains bear witness to the changing landscapes before islands became islands. Sea levels rose at the end of the last ice age, flooding previously inhabited lands. Thus, much of the landscape and island that is familiar today would have looked different at the time. The neolithic population along the eastern shores of the Adriatic is named after the island as the Hvar or Hvar-Lisičići culture. The name itself is somewhat a coincidence, as these inhabitants of the Eastern Adriatic did not originate from Hvar, nor was Hvar a particular center. It was primarily thanks to Grga Novak, who first explored this culture on the island, that it carries the name. By 6000 BCE, the island's population lived in small settlements, mainly in the plain that would become the center of the later Greek colony between Stari Grad and Vrboska, where they engaged in agriculture and kept sheep. Another key settlement probably existed at the time above the current town of Hvar. Graščeva špilja was also an important prehistoric site where ceramics were found. Archeological evidence is limited but suggests that the inhabitants of Hvar were in contact with other communities in the Adriatic. Obsidian tools found on Hvar, for example, indicate that the inhabitants had contact with the Italian side of the Adriatic. By the last millennium BCE, Hvar was integrated into the larger Adriatic and Mediterranean trade networks, bearing witness to the island's crucial strategic position and would keep for shipping in the Adriatic.¹²

Greek colonization was careful and gradual but spread along the Mediterranean, including the Adriatic. In 385/4 BCE, Greek colonists from Paros, an Aegean Island, established their colony Pharos, today Stari Grad. There probably were earlier contacts with Greek city-states and even settlements, but the evidence is scant. The choice of the Stari Grad bay was no surprise, as the deep bay protects the natural harbor from all winds and sits adjacent to a large fertile plain. Besides Hvar, there were a few other Greek settlements along the Eastern Adriatic, including Vis (Issa) and Korčula (Korkyra Melaina). The colonization was a watershed in the history of the island, introducing a large population from the Eastern Mediterranean with its own traditions and social organization, introducing new farming methods, political organization, and writing to the island, and the idea of the polis, the urban center, characterized as polycentric structure, open and based on trade and crafts. Since such towns, Stari Grad, the successor to Pharos or Hvar and Jelsa, have built on this legacy. Not least, the name of the island derives from the name of the Greek colony. Pharos, the ancient Greek term for lighthouse, would become Hvar in Croatia or *For* in the local dialect.

The Greek colonists also divided up the plain, known as the *Chora* (and *Ager* in Roman times) behind the town into regular agricultural plots that remain visible today. The *Chora* beyond the city walls was one of the most extensive plains in the Greek world.¹³ Greek rule over the island was, however, not uncontested. In the words of the Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily, writing two centuries later, "the Parians ... allowed the previous barbarian inhabitants to remain unharmed in an exceeding well-fortified place, while they founded a city by the sea and built a wall about it. Later, however, the old barbarian inhabitants took offense at the

presence of the Greeks and called in the Illyrians of the opposite mainland.¹⁴ While the Greek colonizers persisted and defeated the attack, the threat emanating from the Illyrians remained acute.

The Greek colonies in the Adriatic, including Pharos, would soon become contested between the rising power of Rome in the West and the Illyrian kingdom that stretched along the Eastern Adriatic from today's Dalmatia to Albania. The Illyrians, speaking an Indo-European language, have been claimed as ancestors by Croatian and Albanian national movements in the nineteenth century. Such claims rest on dubious grounds, however. The Illyrian rulers Agron and Teuta, rulers in the middle to late third century BCE, also controlled Hvar. After the Roman Empire defeated Teuta, Demetrius of Pharos took over the island's rule around 220 BCE. At first, he resisted the Romans, but he became a Roman vassal king after being defeated. Over time, Hvar became increasingly integrated into the Roman Empire, and Pharos became a Roman city, even though probably another century had passed.¹⁵

In Roman times, the regional center for Hvar became Salona, the administrative center of the Dalmatian province. It was a flourishing city with some 60,000 inhabitants in the Early Imperial period, making it the sixth-largest city in the Roman Empire. Emperor Diocletian (284–305), himself from Dalmatia, built his place close to the city, today the center of Split, placing Hvar close to one of the centers of Roman power. When he initiated the division of the Roman Empire, Dalmatia and Hvar would become the Easternmost regions of the Western Roman Empire. For a few fleeting years, between 476 and 480, Salona became the *de facto* capital of the Western Roman Empire after the fall of Rome.

Latin took hold only after Christianization and, together with Slavic languages that arrived in Dalmatia in the seventh century, resulted in a linguist dualism that would last until the twentieth century with Venetian and Italian, as well as Croatian and local Čakavian being widely spoken. The first traces of Christianity on Hvar go back to the third century, with more evidence from the fifth and sixth centuries shaped by Salona, an early diocese, before the Slavic migration. Many small churches and chapels were built, later expanded to defensive churches. In the twelfth century, Benedictine monks arrived in Hvar from Italy via Vis and Biševo, followed by Dominicans in the next century and Franciscans in the fifteenth century. They brought libraries, centers of education, schools, arts, and charities, including hospitals.¹⁶

The Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos wrote about Hvar, Brač, Korčula and Mljet in 948–9 in his guide on how to govern for his son Romanos II. that they were “most fair and fertile, with deserted cities upon them and many olive-yards, on these they dwell and keep their flocks, from which they live ...”¹⁷ He wrote how Slavs had settled in all of the regions, “but the cities of the Romani took to cultivating the islands and living off them; since, however, they were daily enslaved and destroyed by the Pagani, they deserted these islands and resolved to cultivate the mainland.”¹⁸

There are only a few mentions of Hvar until the twelfth century, highlighting its limited relevance. The inhabitants described themselves as Narentines, named

after the region defined by the delta of the Neretva and the surrounding islands. The Slav inhabitants resisted the rise of Venice. They constituted a chiefdom that included Hvar, Brač, and Korčula, as well as the coastal strip between today's Split and the Neretva Delta. However, the island's fortune would be shaped by the greater powers competing for control in the Eastern Adriatic and the Balkan peninsular. It was a time of a quick ebb and flow of power in Southeastern Europe. Thus, control over Hvar oscillated between the rising Venetians, the Croatian kingdom, the kingdom of Hungary, and the Byzantine Empire.

Hvar is described as a commune for the first time in 1205 when a contract was signed in the town hall of the commune. Gradually, Hvar town eclipsed Stari Grad, with the bishop moving his seat there by 1249. By becoming a commune its inhabitants were *cives*, citizens, which gave them political rights and notions of equality not available to others. Communes also enjoyed judicial independence. The rest of the island and neighboring islands remained less developed.¹⁹ Between 1278 and 1358, Hvar came for the first time under longer Venetian rule. This book begins a little later, in 1420 when the Venetian Republic reestablished control after an interlude of Hungarian rule. The period marks the beginning of modernity, the creation of a stable rule that would persist for nearly four centuries.

Chapter 2

THE VENETIAN CENTURIES

The history of Venice and Dalmatia had been intimately intertwined for 800 years, from around 1000 when Venice first took control of some towns in Dalmatia to the end of the Venetian Republic in 1797—the oldest republic abolished by the youngest, Napoleonic France. The first period of direct Venetian rule lasted for sixty years between 1278 and 1358, when Hungary briefly gained control of Dalmatia under King Louis I. In 1409, Ladislaus of Naples, who claimed the Hungarian throne, sold his rights to Dalmatia for 100,000 ducats to Venice. Sigismund of Luxembourg, who held the Hungarian throne, gave Hvar to the Republic of Dubrovnik. However, Dubrovnik could not take control, and thus Venice prevailed, but it would take another eleven years for Venice to establish control over all of Dalmatia, including Hvar, in 1421.

The maritime Dalmatia that characterized Venetian lands until the end of the seventeenth century was lined with small urban centers with around 1,500 to 2,000 inhabitants, including Hvar. Many towns were on islands like Hvar, while others were sheltered and functioned like small islands.¹ Dalmatia was thus defined by the sea. The coastal areas had a Latin and Slavic urban culture distinct from the hinterland. The communes, such as in Hvar, had traditions dating back to the Byzantine Empire and the late antiquity. In this sense, they resembled Venice itself.² Venetian rule thus could not ignore existing autonomous communes but gradually incorporated them. With Venetian rule, Hvar would become an important port along the Adriatic trade routes to the Eastern Mediterranean and, with it, many visitors.

Pilgrims and Travelers

A mild wind carried Friedrich Steigerwalder's boat into the port of Hvar shortly before the evening prayer in late October 1470. He was on the journey from Jerusalem to his home in Tyrol. Entering town, he noted that

the hills are rocky and stony as not to bear any fruits. The city belongs to the Kingdom of Dalmatia and is inhabited by *windisch* [a German term for Slavs] god-fearing people. As we arrived from Jerusalem, they wanted to touch the clothes we wore at the holy sites ... In this city, every house has its mill, which is used by hand.

As the wind had changed, Steigerwallder and his fellow pilgrims had to stay in town for a few days, participating in the All Saints' Day mass at the cathedral, sharing a meal with the townsfolk, and attending a Slavic mass at the Franciscan monastery, before setting sail for Venice.³

The coming and going of traders and pilgrims, sailors and soldiers, was the foundation of the town's and island's wealth. Vinko Pribojević, a historian and monk from Hvar, observed in 1525 that Hvar "is delightful and for those driven by urban curiosity, it is an alluring scene to see early every day, how one after the other ships with people of different nations arrive. Often, I see how the port is without boats at dawn, and by the evening, it shelters ten to thirty."⁴

Friedrich Steigerwallder, servant of the Count of Tyrol, was one of many Central Europeans who visited the Holy Land in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Pilgrims like Steigerwallder were some of the first tourists to Hvar. Their primary motivation was religious, but it was also a way for well-heeled Europeans to see the world. Wealthy merchants, nobility, and clergy from Central Europe made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and often wrote down or sketched their impressions. The pilgrims who stopped on Hvar typically visited religious centers, relics, churches, and shrines and attended mass. In Hvar, the shrine at the Franciscan monastery along the shore from the port was particularly popular.⁵ They also described visits to markets, buying food, and sometimes seeking places to spend the night. However, they usually slept on the boat like their modern-day successors, the cruise ship passengers.⁶ Their accounts often exaggerated and embellished what they saw, as they seldom spoke local languages. The pilgrims' tales are thus not so much accurate accounts as insights into how pilgrims from across Europe perceived Hvar.

The preferred route to the Holy Land was the sea route via Venice. Venice maintained a network of secure harbors and supply stations up to the Levant and, at times, even trade convoys, making it the obvious point of departure. The trips were multilingual and pan-European, including German, Dutch, Slavic, and Italian speakers. A pilgrim on an organized trip would return to Venice within five to six weeks after stopping in Hvar, Ragusa, Corfu, Rhodes, Crete, and Cyprus.⁷

Transporting pilgrims to the holy land was complex. Felix Fabri, a Dominican friar from Ulm, took the trip twice, in 1480 and 1483/4. Fabri and his fellow travelers signed an agreement with the ship owner stipulating that he would provide passengers with food, drink, and protection and take them to Jaffa and back.⁸ His travelogue of the two journeys *Evagatorium* or Book of Diversions was more perceptive than others, describing the landscape and people in great detail.⁹

Traveling along the main Venetian trade routes was not risk-free. When Fabri first headed for Jerusalem, his boat hurriedly left Zadar for Hvar after the captain discovered a plague epidemic ravaging the town.¹⁰ At other times, Hvar was avoided due to the plague. In 1512, for instance, the French priest Jean Thenaud, who accompanied French envoys to Persia and Egypt following the pilgrims' route along the Eastern Mediterranean, recounts how he circumvented Hvar to stock

up in Korčula instead as the plague ravaged Hvar.¹¹ The plague would continue to affect the region until the eighteenth century due to continued exposure through trade with the Eastern Mediterranean. The last significant plague epidemic was recorded in Stari Grad in 1766 and 1768.¹²

Hvar was the inevitable stopping point for the pilgrims, as it became an important port in Dalmatia due to its location along the main maritime route. An unknown traveler thus noted in 1495 how, in the port, “a large Venetian ship that came from Syria with silk canvas, cotton, and other expensive trade goods ...” (1495).¹³ Dozens of travel accounts describe the stopover in Hvar, sometimes just for a day or two, and sometimes, depending on the weather, longer. They all docked in Hvar town. As a result, their impressions were usually limited to the town rather than the whole island.¹⁴ Fabri found the time to describe his impressions of the island only on the return trip because he, just as Steigerwallder before him, was stuck in town waiting for the wind to pick up. Arriving in late December 1483, Fabri’s curiosity led him out of town to observe nature:

We went down through the orchards and vineyards, plantations of delicious figs and olive groves. Everything that grows spontaneously is noble and emits an aromatic scent. The whole hill is covered in rosemary outside the gardens, and its tall bushes, as tall as a forest tree, cover the slopes ... Nowhere like there have I seen more noble rosemary bushes ... They smell like incense, and the flowers are sweet.¹⁵

Other travelers have also noted the strong scent of rosemary in the air.¹⁶

During his visit to Hvar, an unidentified lower Bavarian nobleman¹⁷ encountered a much less idyllic picture.¹⁸ He arrived in Hvar on June 13, 1494, which he described as a pretty town with a strong castle. Like Fabri, he observed the ubiquitous rosemary on the island and praised the excellent rosemary wine.¹⁹ But when he returned to town and was moored at the port for several days, he stumbled into a large melee: “We went to town and came to a large fight with 40 weapons, and among others, several were severely wounded.”²⁰ A fellow traveler, Baron Marquard VI, also witnessed the confrontation in town. It is unclear whether the fight was among crews of different boats or local citizens. It might have foreshadowed the conflict between the nobility and citizens that would break out sixteen years later.²¹

Another pilgrim on the same journey was Pietro Casola, a cleric from Milan who set out on the journey to Jerusalem. He did not recall any fight in Hvar but was little impressed by the town: “It looks a more important place seen from the sea than it is found to be when one is on land ... As to the buildings, I saw nothing beautiful there except the palace of the government.”²² Unlike his fellow German-speaking passengers, he could speak to the inhabitants of Hvar, yet he held a low opinion of them, observing that “the people are poor and in bad condition. Even the women are proud, so the officials do not know how to do their duty there.” Besides his poor impression of the town and its inhabitants, he noted that

other pilgrims were disappointed with the lack of provisions available in town, observing that bread came from Apulia and that “there is wine and not much else.” He was thus eager to leave as “the longer a stranger remains there, the more he lacks.”²³ However, such a dim view of Hvar appears in few other recollections of the journey. Konrad von Grünemberg, another pilgrim of the era who visited Hvar just a few years earlier in 1486 on his way to Jerusalem from Konstanz, depicted an altogether different situation.²⁴ His detailed painting of Hvar (see Figure 2.1)—he impressed more by his paintings than his descriptions—depicts a town with a busy urban life, with a market full of animals for sale: sheep, goats, donkeys, and cows. Similarly, an unknown traveler in 1472 marveled that “you can buy all kinds of things, especially wine and bread ... there is also good meat and fish ...”²⁵

Besides pilgrims, scholars and Venetian diplomats also used the route along the Eastern Adriatic toward the Levante. For them, too, Hvar and the other islands and towns along the way were not destinations but stop-off points that



Figure 2.1 Konrad von Grünemberg, sketch of Hvar (c. 1487).
© Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. St. Peter pap. 31,
fol. 11v.

were sometimes described, sometimes ignored. The Venetian diplomat Benedetti Ramberti (1503–47), journeying to see the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, described the Adriatic possessions of Venice in a rather stenographic fashion:

Legena [Hvar] is an island called Pharia or Paria by Ptolomeo and has a city with the same name, is small, but beautiful and well situated with a rather strong castle, rich and quiet, not harassed by the Turks or others ... Old Legena [Starigrad] is uninhabited and ruined. We stayed in Legena for three days for the fortunes of the sea to turn.²⁶

A similar diplomatic mission the same year brought the Flemish diplomat Cornelius de Schepper (1503?–55) to Hvar. He was in the service of the Habsburgs and was traveling back from a peace mission to the Ottoman court in 1534. Like so many others, he was stuck due to the wind, so he wrote letters to the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I., observing how busy the port was: “Between last night and today, four galleys arrived, from the Levante, Candia [Crete], Constantinople, and Corfu.”²⁷

In 1598, the famous Venetian geographer and physician Giuseppe Rosaccio (1530–1620) published a description of his voyage from Venice to Constantinople. He noted the large size of the island. Still, he remarked that “due to the harshness of the terrain, there are few inhabitants”—a misleading impression based on the more barren side of Hvar facing the open sea rather than the more densely inhabited Stari Grad plain. He rightly noted that grains were scarce, and indeed, the flour to make the bread he and Rauwolf bought in Hvar would have mostly come from Apulia, traded for high-quality wine, figs, or sardines.²⁸

By the early 1500s, the number of pilgrims had declined. The Ottoman Empire took control of Jerusalem in 1516, making pilgrimages more difficult. Some important stopping points, such as Rhodes, were conquered by the Ottoman Empire, and the wars between the Ottomans and Venice made the route less safe. Only a century later, a new group of travelers, now exploring the legacy of antiquity and influenced by the Enlightenment, would explore the Mediterranean. These travelers would also stop by Hvar, now on their way to Greece or the Levante, not as a spiritual journey but to discover the role models of the Enlightenment. Two fellow travelers who found their way to Hvar in 1675 and 1675 were Jacob Spon (1647–85), a French doctor and archaeologist, and Sir George Wheler (1651–1724), a British clergyman who traveled around Europe and the Mediterranean during his studies. After traveling through France, Switzerland, and Italy and learning about antiquity, he met Jacob Spon, four years his senior, with whom he traveled to Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. He was part of the Republic of Letters, a transnational community of intellectuals committed to sharing their ideas through letters and closely intertwined with the era of the Enlightenment.²⁹ Spon traveled to Italy, Dalmatia, Greece, and the Levante, searching for antiquities. His travelogue and the artifacts he gathered made him one of the earliest Western scholars of antiquity, making him an important source about the region for over a century.

Wheler and Spon wrote extensively about their visit to Hvar. After traveling for fifteen hours from Split, they reached Hvar, which Wheler described as in the “form of a theatre; whereof the town possesseth the place of the spectators; yet appeareth most beautiful to those that enter the Area; which is the Port ... They have beautified the Shore, on each side with a good Mole ... to conclude, it hath good Moorage and is deep enough for Ships of any rate.” Both praised the excellent wine and bread they supplied themselves with for their onward journey. However, their primary attention was not directed to the island itself, which Spon described as “rocks and barren land for rabbits and hares.” Instead, they focused on the fishing, with “sardines to waken the appetite, which they supply to Italy and Greece.”³⁰ Wheler climbed the

highest mountain, that overlooketh the Town, and was recompensed for my pains with an unbounded prospectHence, Ships, Gallies, Barques, and other Vessels are discerned a vast way off by the Watch-men, who give notice by signs to the Fort below, how many, what they are, and which way they sail ... and in a word, the situation is very agreeable.³¹

Their impression of a prosperous Hvar came toward the end of the town’s golden age.

Besides traveler accounts of Hvar, another genre offered insight into the European imagination of islands, the *isolari*—books of islands. In 1528, Benedetto Bordone (1460–1531) published his *isolario*, the first of its kind, describing 111 islands worldwide. Bordone’s book appealed to a European fascination with islands at the time. From islands evoking antiquity to newly discovered islands in the Americas, they were central to European imagination and reality. Out of this fascination, a genre emerged: the *isolari*, cartographic, geographic, and historical studies of islands.

Bordone did not visit the islands; instead, he relied on descriptions of others, going back to antiquity, including Ptolemy. While the pilgrims recalled their own, often very impressionistic, travels, Bordone founded a genre that tried to offer a systematic and more scholarly approach to the world of islands. As Venice itself was an island and its *Stato da Màr*—the name for its maritime possessions—were primarily islands, it is no surprise that the genre of *isolario* would originate with a Venetian engraver. Such a compendium of islands would have been incomplete without the islands under Venetian control, including Hvar. Bordone’s description is extremely brief, however. He notes only that Hvar “is a rich island” with some of the best sardines in the world. Nevertheless, he noted the tensions between nobility and plebeians, a division that brought a violent uprising to the island just over a decade before Bordone penned his *Isolario*.³²

Maps were central to the *isolari*. They were commonly illustrated, making them both a source of information and a central aesthetic feature (see Figure 2.2). Yet despite the centrality of the maps and geography, the authors of the *isolari* were often quite mistaken about the size of the different islands. Bordone overestimated the size of Hvar, which he considered the longest island in the Adriatic.³³ Many

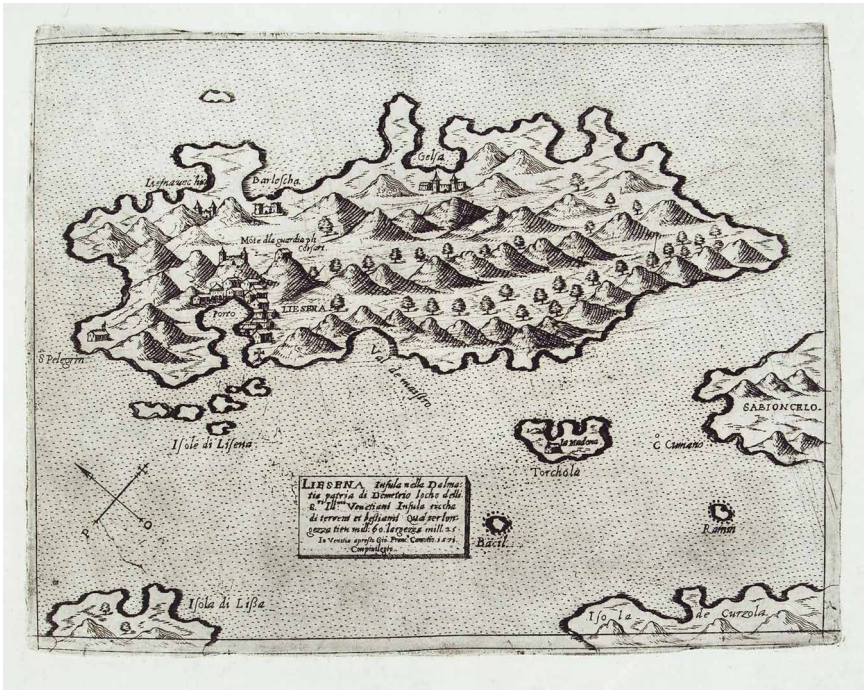
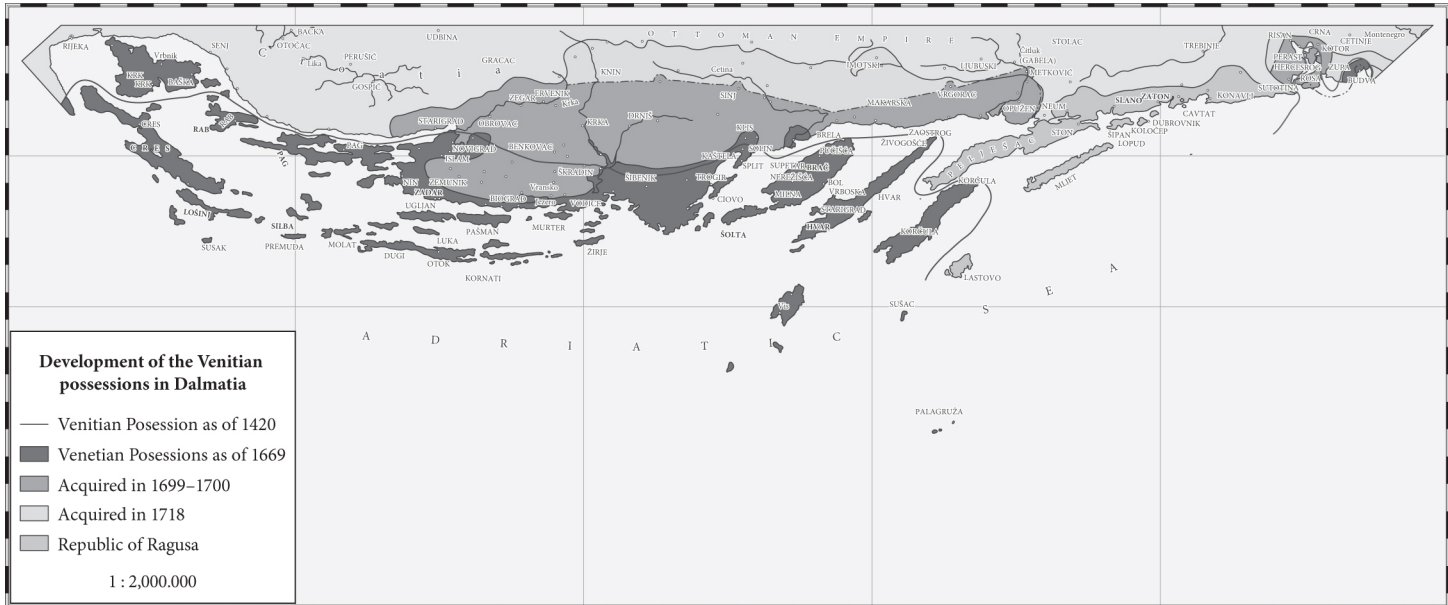


Figure 2.2 Giovanni Francesco Camocio, map of Hvar (1575). © Herzog August Bibliothek.

isolari were not much more than elaborate maps and views of the main towns. Simon Pinargenti's drawings of Venetian possessions, published in 1573, drew the map of Hvar altogether rugged, without noting the fertile Stari Grad plain, but mentioning the "mountain of the war with the corsairs."³⁴ Only two years earlier, the Ottoman navy had destroyed several towns as the inhabitants fled inland, immortalized in Pinargenti's map.

One of the most opulent and late *isolari* was published by the famous Venetian cartographer Vincenzo Coronelli (1650–1718) at the end of the seventeenth century. A Venetian and a Franciscan friar, Coronelli became famous for his globes, which he made for royal courts and wealthy citizens across Europe. Coronelli's islands include Japan and Borneo, but he equally offered rich details about the Venetian possessions, including Hvar. Coronelli's description was much better informed than those of travelers who hardly ventured much beyond the town itself. He describes the fertile plains and the mountainous lands elsewhere, noting an abundance of saffron, olives, honey, and wine. The island is "all covered in rosemary, from which essence is produced, distributed all over Europe."³⁵ He also observed the rich fishing industry and the important harbor that regularly accommodated twenty to thirty ships. Coronelli also paid greater attention to the island's inhabitants than most other observers, observing the size and number of settlements (eleven towns, with between 40 and 500 households) and the wealth



Map 2 Venetian Possessions, 1420–1797.

of many inhabitants, whom he described as “robust, lively ... [and], who are so restrained with wine that they are revolted if it is not diluted with water.”³⁶

These stories of Hvar and other Dalmatian islands and towns reached England by the late sixteenth century.³⁷ In *The Twelfth Night*, written in 1601–2, William Shakespeare imagined Viola, a young aristocratic woman stranded by shipwreck on the Illyrian shore. A spectator would not learn much about Illyria except that it is governed by a noble duke named Orsino. Illyria was used to designate the Eastern Adriatic, but it was not a place defined by a kingdom or clear region. This gave it a creative and fantastic ring like the imaginary Eastern kingdoms and countries of later literature. Some have argued that Shakespeare’s Illyria invited the audience to place it anywhere in their imagination; others maintain that Shakespearean England knew about Dalmatia and its often-used synonym, Illyria. Shakespeare’s setting might be less a utopia but as accurate as Denmark as the setting for *Hamlet* and the many other foreign locations of his other plays.³⁸

A Distant Ruler

A noble duke did not govern Hvar, be he called Orsino or any other name. Instead, the master over the island and Dalmatia was a republic: Venice. While Venice conquered its territories, the consent or a contractual relationship between its subjects and the Serenissima was important. Communes like Hvar had been used to a certain level of self-rule that could not be ignored. Based on its tradition as autonomous communes, the scope of self-rule was enshrined in a series of statutes that Dalmatian towns and islands passed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Korčula was first around 1265, followed by Dubrovnik, Zadar, and Rab in the same period, and sixty-six years later, also Hvar. The statutes combined various legal traditions, including Roman, Byzantine, Croatian, Frankish, and Venetian.³⁹ While similar in purpose, the structure and content of the statute among the communes varied and included the naming of civil servants, the basic criminal law, inheritance law, and the structure of the administration; in brief, all the features of a self-governing community, without much need for external intervention.⁴⁰ Their legal certainty helped create a sense of urban identity and pride.⁴¹ The statute was much more than just a set of rules; it set out the entire governance of the island, including a detailed description of its different regions, towns, and villages.

The original version of the Hvar statute and its copies were, so the story goes, burnt in the Ottoman raid on the city in 1571. Due to luck, a diligent Split notary living in Hvar, Pompej Cranko, had made a copy that would be published in print in Venice in 1643.⁴² The statute was composed of five volumes, the first three dating back to the initial statute of 1331 and mainly emulating the statute of the neighboring island Brač passed twenty-six years earlier. The last two volumes were enacted only 122 years later, in 1453, when Venice was firmly in control of Hvar, the year the Ottomans conquered Constantinople.⁴³

The cities sought to negotiate their terms when they came under Venetian rule. On March 24, 1420, Pietro Loredan, a senior Venetian nobleman and military commander, landed in Hvar to take possession of the island on behalf of Venice. While Venice preserved the institutions of the autonomous cities, their elites were kept apart from those governing Venice. As such, the *Stato da Màr*, including Hvar, were never equal. It was an exclusionary republic. Yet, this exclusion was not complete. There were many alliances among nobility from Venice and the *Stato da Màr* through marriage.⁴⁴

The consolidation of Venetian rule coincided with the economic rise of Hvar, exporting agricultural goods and as a transit harbor. It was also when the divide between the nobility and the commoners emerged. Before Venice took control, Hvar became the first commune in Dalmatia to close its institutions to everybody not a member of the emerging nobility. In August 1334, a council member had to be eighteen years old, and his father or grandfather a councilor in this commune: "They cannot be foreigners, bastards, children of bastards, and no other way can one join the council."⁴⁵ This decision produced tensions that ended temporarily in a fragile peace between the dissatisfied commoners and the nobility on the eve of Venetian rule in December 1418. Tensions centered over who should be the *potestà*, the governor. The nobility sought to name one of their own, whereas the commoners either sought a broader vote or, if that was not possible, him being named by Venice.⁴⁶ The *potestà* was both the executive and judiciary, representing Venice, whereas the council could select judges and other important offices. When it came to conflict between the nobility and the commoners, Venice was the arbiter, and both frequently sent their delegations to make their case. In brief, while Venice dominated, it tried to preserve a modicum of autonomy but only agreed to the demands that did not stand in the way of complete Venetian control.⁴⁷ Dealing with not just one set of demands but competing demands from the nobility and commoners, the Venetian authorities could pick and choose between the often-competing demands.

In June 1446, commoners demanded that their delegations be paid to travel to Venice to make themselves heard. The nobility sought once more that all gatherings of commoners be banned, a demand rejected by Venice. Still, the republic did impose the presence of the governor at all meetings of the commoners.

As an integral part of the Venetian Republic and its trading network, Hvar became a cosmopolitan stepping stone in global trade. Thus, as Vinko Pribojević noted, the

reputation and refined habits of Hvar arises from the contact with people of different nationalities, who stop with their boats in this city. Whatever products are brought from the rich east, what is brought from the rich Lazio [the region around Rome], what is offered by the courageous Illyria, what sunny Africa bears, what is offered by Spain, what products are exchanged from Scythia [the lands between the Black Sea and Central Asia], what is offered by happy Arabia, what is exported by eloquent Greece, can often be bought in this town.⁴⁸

The Venetian Adriatic was a communication space, a dense network of people, goods, and ideas.⁴⁹ The towns were part of a multiethnic, multi-confessional state. Over the centuries, there was a symmetry between the rise and decline of Hvar and the Venetian Republic. Hvar flourished in the first centuries of Venetian rule. Venice made Hvar one of the steps along its trading routes to the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond; its geographic position also linked it to both the Italian peninsula and the Balkans, as Pribojević noted: “Because of the proximity of the coast, the great abundance in neighboring lands, thus the wealth of our city arises from its very fortunate maritime position, because all, whether they want or not, have to participate who sail with goods in the Illyrian (Adriatic) Seas.”⁵⁰

The island became not just an important transit station, but it also was home to a diverse community of Venetians. This included a small orthodox community in the sixteenth century, who settled there due to trade links.⁵¹ Migration within the Venetian Republic included Albanian and Greek-speaking soldiers, merchants and Italian-speaking administrators, doctors, and lawyers.⁵² Dalmatians from all along the coast lived in Venice, known as *Schiavoni*, and islanders from Hvar were one of the most influential groups. Most lived in the *sestiere* of Castello, close to the arsenal. Mid-way along the Riva degli Schiavoni, an inscription hewn in stone reminds us of the presence of the islanders in Venice, announcing “Fine di stato dei abitanti della Brazza e di Lesina”—the end of the residential area of inhabitants from Brač and Hvar.⁵³ Many islanders worked in shipbuilding, particularly in the arsenal, the Mediterranean’s largest naval and shipbuilding complex. In addition to workers, traders from Hvar also settled in Venice. They amassed significant wealth, such as Petar Marinov Fazanić, who built his wealth on shipbuilding and trade, owned several houses in Castello, and had a small square named after him in the middle of the sixteenth century.⁵⁴

Besides Venice itself, Padova was an important center of learning. The university was established in 1222, one of the oldest in Europe, and it remained the only university in the Republic. It was thus the natural center to which those who sought higher education gravitated, including numerous students from Hvar.⁵⁵

Life on Hvar

Travelers and Venetian officials who visited Hvar over the centuries often differed on whether they experienced Hvar as a bustling trading post or a sleepy and remote island. Besides its importance until the mid-seventeenth century as a port, outsiders noted the importance of fishing sardines, olive oil, and wine. In 1525, Leonardo Venier and Girolamo Contarini reported to the Venetian Senate that there “is a good port in which nearly all the boats that come and go to the Levant are stopping off,” whereas “the island is very fertile, with a large amount of wine and sardines ...”⁵⁶ Another report 150 years later painted a similar picture. Hvar “has a nice harbor similar to the one in Genoa. Foodstuffs are well stocked there, and there is delicious bread and wine, next to the most varied fish, especially sardines, which are often fished here.”⁵⁷

For more than 300 years, Hvar's position was defined as a significant Venetian port, a stopping point for the merchants, and a place of agriculture and fishing. The island's inhabitants could not feed themselves—grain was always in short supply—and many agricultural products were destined for export. Hvar became one of the most important ports of Venice, exporting sheep and sheep products like cheese, wool, and salted fish.⁵⁸ Some islanders were major traders, such as Ivan Obradić Bevilaqua (1619–95) from Jelsa, who had seventeen ships trading under the flag of Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) with ports in the Adriatic and the eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁹ Local merchants often traded in the Adriatic, such as with Apulia, an essential grain source, and with Dubrovnik and the Neretva delta.⁶⁰

At times, some ship owners from Hvar, together with those from Korčula, engaged in privateering; for example, in 1585, when a ship from Dubrovnik to Ancona was stranded between the two islands, and sailors took the merchandise, leading to an intervention by Republic of Ragusa in Venice.⁶¹ Most local trading took place with the Dalmatian coast around Split, with Hvar merchants selling surplus agricultural produce there and in other Dalmatian coastal regions.⁶²

Hvar was also a religious center since the first bishop for Hvar, Brač, and Vis was named in 1147, initially based in Stari Grad and after probably 1278 in Hvar town; his realm initially included Korčula and other islands and part of the coast.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the commune of Hvar had some 10,000 inhabitants, 3,500 in Hvar town and 2,000 on the island of Vis, which belonged to the Hvar commune, with the remainder in smaller towns and villages.⁶³ A population census from 1673 shows that 6,113 inhabitants lived on the island, a bit lower than the around 8,000 of the previous century, with an average family size of 4.6. Hvar town held around a quarter of the population, followed by the three coastal towns of Stari Grad, Jelsa, and Vrboska, each less than half the size of Hvar.⁶⁴ At the time, Hvar was the largest commune in Central Dalmatia, amounting to a tenth of Venetian Dalmatia.

The towns along the island's coast were connected by sea. Only the plain that stretched southeast from Stari Grad toward Vrboska and Jelsa was lined with villages. This was the center of agriculture, described by a Venetian inspector in 1553 as "beautiful, in the most pleasant, most fertile . . . of the island."⁶⁵ He mentions the traces of antiquity and the eleven villages surrounding the plain, with 40 to 500 inhabitants.⁶⁶ Toward the end of Venetian rule, a visitor also noted, ". . . almonds, saffron, and honey in no small quantity, the flat ground also produces corn, . . . [neither] in any measure proportioned to the number of inhabitants." His list continues with aloe, palm, orange, carobs, and mulberry trees, highlighting the variety of plants harvested on the island.⁶⁷ There was a gap between Hvar's cosmopolitan port and the island's more agricultural core, where most people lived. This accounted partially for the alienation between the commoners and the nobility.⁶⁸

The municipality of Hvar was a large landowner, amounting to two-thirds of the land on the islands. It was generally available for all to use, primarily for grazing livestock and growing grains in the case of food shortages. Most of the remaining land belonged to the church, particularly the Stari Grad plain. Private land was limited to small plots, mainly near the towns.⁶⁹ Over time, it was hard

not to allow communal land to be used for agriculture, especially as wine growing was considerably more profitable than livestock. The tenants of communal lands concluded a contract known as *gracija* and had to pay the commune a sixth of the harvest. One person was granted up to 30 motika (1 motika is 435m²), but they often took larger plots, as different family members took plots of land. Once taken, and as long as the citizen worked the land, the commune could not take it away.⁷⁰

When the Venetian writer Alberto Fortis visited the island in the late Venetian period, he noted the rich agriculture and fishing rather than the importance of Hvar as a port:

The island of Lesina, though stony, and barren in the highest parts of it, contains tracts of very good land ... Hence this island is better peopled than any other in the Illyric sea, and some of its villages deserve the name of large boroughs, and exceed in number of inhabitants, many small cities ... and the people in general are employed in fishing and building barks and boats.⁷¹

Since Roman times, local agriculture had focused on wine, figs, and olives. In 1559, wine and figs made up two-thirds of the value of the island's agricultural production.⁷² Cereals, today impossible to find, were also a staple crop and, under Venetian rule, extended to rye, millet, barley, and oats. Their production would never suffice to make the island self-sufficient; flour had to be imported.⁷³

During the Venetian rule, vineyards expanded, and wine became the leading export. Contemporaries praised its quality, which was supposed to exceed the Greek wine. While some Venetian documents complained about the strong taste of nitrate in Hvar wine, the island produced more than 53,000 liters of wine in 1552, enough to export and pay for the cereals it needed. Low-quality wine was drunk locally and mixed with water as *bevanda*. People considered it criminal to drink wine that is not watered down, and drunkenness was frowned upon: "If they see somebody drunk on the street, especially children, they insult him and make fun of him."⁷⁴

Figs were another important export. They were sent to Venice either dried in boxes with wine and rosemary leaves or as fresh fruits. The abundant rosemary was distilled into oil and used with other herbs to produce *acqua della regina*, named after Queen Elisabeth of Poland (1305–80), who was also queen of Hungary and Croatia. It was one of Europe's oldest Alcohol-based perfumes and became famous when distilleries appeared in Hvar in the eighteenth century, not just as a perfume but also as a medicine.⁷⁵

Besides agriculture, fishing constituted the central pillar of the island's economy. Fish, mostly sardines, were mainly salted and sold as a staple food to naval and trading ships that stopped in Hvar. In 1525, Vinko Pribojević observed how the many bays made the island ideal for fishing, with "many traders from different places of the world come to buy fish. In trading with them, our islanders do not only gain material wealth but also some inventive craftiness."⁷⁶

In 1512, Sebastian Giustiniano, the Venetian commander in Vrboska, confiscated between 4,000 and 5,000 barrels of salted mackerel and fish, the equivalent of 500 tons of salted fish when he put down the commoner's rebellion. The large

quantity confiscated revealed the scale of local production.⁷⁷ In 1552, a Venetian administrator for Dalmatia, Antonio Diedo, reported that they produced barrels for 6,000 ducats per year to store wine and sardines, again an enormous amount. A few years later, another Venetian administrator reported that Hvar earned an annual income of 30,000 ducats from sardines, out of a total of 80,000 ducats.⁷⁸

Besides small-scale fishing, there was also larger-scale organized fishing, using nets, which developed by the fifteenth century with two to three boats catching fish by using one larger net to comb the sea. It was the commoners who generally engaged in fishing. The nets were sewn by fishermen who concluded an agreement with others and then went fishing in a company. Every year, a lottery decided who had priority for the most lucrative fishing grounds. According to the statute, the fisherman had to give the judge one of the largest and best fish from each hunt per boat. Fish had to be sold on the fish market and could not be exported without a permit, ensuring the commune took its share of the profit.⁷⁹

Alberto Fortis noted in his travels the variety of fish along the Dalmatian coast and the importance of fishing for the local economy. While fishing was important, the techniques were basic, and there were not enough fishing boats to satisfy Venice's demand for fresh fish.⁸⁰ Conflicts often broke out over fishing grounds, but these paled in comparison to the simmering conflict between nobility and commoners that broke out in 1510.

Nobility and the Commoners

In 1510, a major uprising on Hvar against the nobility highlighted the precarious social order on the island. The rebellion had its roots in a decision 176 years earlier. As noted earlier, the Great Council decided to close membership to only those families who were already represented in 1334. In effect, the council established the nobility. The council's decisions mirror the *serrata* of Venice that had occurred just three decades earlier, in 1297, when only previous councilors or male heirs of councilors were eligible for election.⁸¹

Along the Dalmatian coast, councils closed their doors and divided their communes into two, the nobility and the commoners, who were subsequently excluded. The representation was based on an increasingly stratified social structure and inequality. However, the institution's closure added insult to injury and cemented the hierarchy. The new nobility could not claim any God-given rights to justify their dominance, and unlike in Venice, they were not in control; after all, Venice had the final word. The nobility was tiny, representing around 2 percent of the population (thirty-eight families), further fueling resentment.⁸² Tensions occurred regularly between the nobility and ordinary citizens. The confrontations were kindled by the many privileges the nobility carved out for themselves.⁸³

In October 1525, the two Venetian inspectors, Leonardo Venier, and Girolamo Contarini, reported to the Venetian Senate about Hvar: "The quality and type of people of the said island ... we believe is well known ... they are quarrelsome and scandalous people, and ... a great hatred reigns between the nobility and the

plebeians.”⁸⁴ They had returned from their mission to Dalmatia earlier that year to report about the situation in the province, part of a long tradition of sending inspectors, or *sindici*, to Venetian lands to report back to the Senate.⁸⁵

The hatred and tensions they observed were no surprise. A four-year rebellion by the commoners, i.e., plebians—*popolari*—against the nobility had ended only eleven years earlier after being put down by Venetian forces. These plebians lacked political and civil rights and included peasants in the villages, small traders, artisans, and other inhabitants of the town. Some were poor and marginal, while others owned large landholdings and were wealthy, including the leader of the uprising, Matij Ivanić. The uprising was the most serious of several rebellions in Dalmatian communes during the 1510s. As chroniclers of the time report, the leaders of the rebellion of Hvar maintained contact with others.⁸⁶

The uprising began with a supposed miracle. On a dark rainy day in February 1510, as the nobleman Pavao Palladino recounted, the earth shook several times, resulting in the collapse of a church roof in which Matij Lukanić, a local priest, had slept: “At the same time, in the house of Nikola Bevilaque, a small crucifix on the wall began bleeding at the crown of thorns.” The local priest was skeptical, noting it might be just water and color. But one of the girls present insisted that “It is not a color, but blood because I put the crucifix on a cloth ... fresh from the laundry, and the whole cloth was full of drops of blood from the crucifix.” As the priest became confident that it was the blood of Christ, he took the bleeding crucifix to the cathedral and ordered the bells to be rung. Palladino recounts how he heard the bell ring, came to the balustrade on the main square, and saw all kinds of people gather, “men and women ... it was a busy day, the governor, who was in town, went to inspect the crucifix and the port was full of boats, and there were plenty of goods. Sellers left their goods to see the crucifix.” The atmosphere became increasingly anxious, as some feared that it was all a sign of the imminent destruction of the “unfortunate” island, “children as young as seven decided to whip themselves naked on the main square, continuing even when they cried bitter tears ...” The next day, people from all over the island gather on the main square in a public procession in which the priest Matij Lukanić spoke, “commoners, leave the nobility in the places where they are, don’t start anything against them, leave them in peace, be satisfied with your fate And you nobility, take care of the commoners.”⁸⁷ After the sermon, the priest began to ramble, would not eat, and went delirious, dying the following week.⁸⁸

Of course, neither did the bleeding crucifix nor are events likely to have occurred as they have been told. This prelude suggests that several of those involved had planned the uprising.⁸⁹ After the mysterious bleeding of the Crucifix, the trigger for the uprising was the rape of women by three men from the nobility. The outrage at the rape was compounded by the sense among many commoners that the nobility stood above the law. Starting in the towns and villages around the plain in the center of the island, Matij Ivanić and the other leaders of the rebellion gathered some 2,000 commoners under arms and with some thirty galleys to force the nobility to share power equally and to stop treating to the commoners differently.

The uprising first came to the attention of Venice in July 1510, when delegations from both the nobility and the commoners presented their case in front of the Senate. In response, the Doge sent an envoy, Giovanni Navagero, to investigate the situation. Venice was reluctant to intervene in the conflict between the nobility and the commoners, and both regularly vied for the favor of the Serenissima in Venice itself. In addition, Venice was in a difficult geopolitical situation after being defeated by a French army at Agnadello in 1509, which caused economic hardship and a French presence in northern Italy. The Ottoman army conquered Makarska in 1502, and other Dalmatian cities were surrounded. Thus, there were more significant threats to Venice than the uprising. It needed the commoners as soldiers and could not alienate them.

During the insurrection, the commoners sent their delegations to Venice to explain their position. As such, it was not an uprising against Venice but against the local nobility. Discussions of the Venetian authorities in June 1510 about what to do in Hvar included the chancellor, the governor of Brač, representatives of the nobility, and a representative of the commoners, whom the nobility accused of working against the interests of the Serenissima. The following month, Matij Ivanić, who would become the leader of the uprising, made his first public appearance in Venice in a hearing. Marin Hektorović, from the nobility, accused the commoners of hurting and attacking the nobility, whereas Ivanić attacked the nobility for raping women and girls.⁹⁰ Venice sent Girolamo Contarini, the commander of the Venetian fleet, to Hvar. While he arrived with over a hundred soldiers on four galleys, he appeared not to have used force but threats and declarations to try to calm the rebellion without success.

Governor Lippomano reported about the uprising on May 27, 1511, including an attack on Stari Grad with six members of the nobility killed and a gathering in Vrboska with a thousand participants, which went to the governor's palace and made their demands, including an assembly to include nobility and commoners and the same taxes for all.⁹¹

In June 1511, the Venetian navy commander Girolamo Contarini, a navy commander, wrote to a relative about his impressions of the uprising. He acknowledged that some members of the nobility from Hvar went to Stari Grad and "behaved indecently" toward some women. This led to the rebellion, with commoners taking on weapons. In an assembly, they declared, "they will not be hostages to the nobility and allow them to dishonor their families." The rebels then moved to Hvar town, attacking the houses of nobility. He noted how an agreement that both should govern equally was reached. Still, Contarini feared that this would set a precedent. After calming tempers, he sailed to Korčula, where he received the demands from the Hvar commoners.⁹²

Matters escalated after much of the nobility refused to accept the rebels' demands and fled to Trogir. They directed their request to the Venetian authorities instead. In a letter sent on August 5, 1511, eighty-two people, including twenty-two members of the grand council, the leaders of the uprising, demanded that the nobility be held accountable for "sowing discord, inciting conflict and wickedness that occurred in Hvar and is the enemy of peaceful living." Another hearing took place in August

1511 in front of the Venetian Council of Ten, responsible for security and the main governing body of the republic, highlighting the seriousness of the situation on Hvar. The speech by Matij Ivanić was described in the chronicles as decisive.

The rebels demanded the creation of a general council with seventy to eighty representatives elected by all citizens (male, of course), irrespective of status. This was an apparent demand for general elections. How this would take place was unclear, especially considering that the different villages were far apart, and many would never travel to Hvar. So, towns and villages would elect their representatives to the council.⁹³

With much of the nobility gone and the commoners in charge of the island, the Venetian state began to worry about the continuation of the uprising and decided to send a punitive expedition in September 1512, as it increasingly saw the uprising as a threat to its authority, rather than just to the local conflict.

When Giustinian went on his expedition to Hvar, his army burnt down Vrboska, but the rebels in Jelsa defeated him in September 1512. While Venice condemned the burning of Vrboska, it retained the support of its commander, although he had to return to Venice.⁹⁴ Some thirty supposedly “moderate” commoners were brought to Venice by Sebastian Giustiniani, to isolate the “radicals” around Ivanić. However, it appears that tactic failed as they publicly sided with Ivanić.⁹⁵

On November 23, 1512, Sebastian Giustinian reported to the Senate about his intervention in Hvar at length. In front of the Doge’s Palace, Commoners protested against Giustinian, a scene repeated just a few days later. These demonstrations were probably organized by Matij Ivanić and highlighted the level of organization of the uprising, being able to take the message to Venice itself. On December 3, 1512, there was another council meeting. Ivanić once more represented the commoners, whereas the cleric Toma Griffico represented the nobility. He was particularly hated among the commoners who sought a death penalty against him at the outset of the uprising. Whereas he criticized the commoners, Ivanić focused on the campaign by Sebastian Giustinian. When the rebellion leaders called on the nobility to return from Trogir, offering them guarantees, they were rejected, as the nobility worried about reprisals.

In June and August 1513, further delegations of the commoners “spoke at length” in Venice, asking to abolish the repressive rules of the Giustinian, including the sentencing of sixty-nine islanders. The doge was non-committal in his answer.⁹⁶ Again, Venice oscillated between repression and arbitration. In 1514, the uprising escalated once more. By now, some 6,000 islanders, a vast majority of the island’s population, were under arms. The rebels took over the town of Hvar in August by sea and land after besieging it for a week. They managed to enter the gates, killing twenty-six members of the nobility.⁹⁷ Some sought refuge in the governor’s palace but were found and killed and thrown from the balcony: The “unfortunate [nobility] is not safe in the churches, nor at sea, nor in the harbor, nor in the fortress, nor in the palace of the governor.”⁹⁸

The commoners then sailed to Omiš with thirty-six boats, sails, and flags, the sound of drums, music, and arms “as if they are the masters of the sea.”⁹⁹ Their

brief victory ended in October of that year. The Doge gave the orders of the raid on the island to the commander of the Venetian forces, Vincenzo Capello. He was ordered to focus on leaders of the insurgency, to

separate 6, at most 10 main culprits ... if you can't catch them, you have the freedom to banish them from all cities and towns of our Serenissima. Because we wish and intend to preserve the island's peace and serenity and not cause bitterness, we order you to publicly declare that we are free and show our mercy to all other Hvarians.¹⁰⁰

Capello went well beyond his orders; he exiled eight leaders in absentia, cut off a hand, took out an eye from ten insurgents, and hung ten insurgents from the mast of his boat. One or several of the corpses were cut up and put on display in the different towns as a deterrence.¹⁰¹ Despite the brutality, it did not end the insurgency. Instead, it appears to have energized the insurgency that resisted on the whole island, whereas the leader Matij Ivanić and some of his fellow fighters found temporary refuge in Makarska.

Nevertheless, without the leadership, the uprising slowly fizzled out over time. Ivanić sought to rekindle the insurgency. In June 1515, he landed with an armed boat close to Sućuraj. The Venetian administrator Donado worried about a new rebellion due to the "support he enjoyed on the island" and pushed him back with five boats to the Neretva delta. A similar scenario repeated itself a year later when, once more, Ivanić tried to return by boat and was pushed back by the overwhelming force of Venetian ships.¹⁰² In 1519, he launched the last attempt to return and restart the rebellion. Afterward, most traces of him disappear, but he seems to have died in Rome a few years later.¹⁰³

Venice did impose some moderate measures that addressed some of the commoner's demands. For example, the municipal treasury would be supervised by two treasurers, one from the nobility and one from the commoners, and the knez and the two treasurers would hold the keys to the treasury. The new system did not prevent abuse by the nobility or resolve the tensions on the island.¹⁰⁴ Four decades after the uprising, a Venetian *sindico* or supervisor offered one of the best descriptions of Hvar on his travel along the Eastern Adriatic in 1553: "Among the nobility and the plebeians, there is an ancient and inextinguishable hatred, born from the desire of the plebeians have always had to be counted and admitted in [greater] number to the council to the management of the community and the government of the city."¹⁰⁵ He also noted that this division did not reflect wealth and poverty, as some of the thirty-eight noble families had become poor and wealthy traders existed among both nobility and the commoners, in particular those living in the towns: "It is quite true that both the nobles and the common people are very wealthy for the traffic they do."¹⁰⁶

The Venetian repression of the uprising did little to alleviate these tensions. The division created effects well into the Habsburg rule, starting in the nineteenth century, and left its imprint on the twentieth century.

Dalmatians, Slavs, Croats

Many passing visitors to Hvar, such as a Bavarian aristocrat on his way to Jerusalem at the end of the fifteenth century, described Hvar as a “Venetian city in Windisch land.”¹⁰⁷ When the Bavarian pilgrim used “Windisch land,” it designated a Slavic-speaking region. Using a different term, a Swiss pilgrim, traveling simultaneously, wrote of a Dalmatian “nation” in the medieval sense as a regional marker of identity. He also noted how many people he met did not speak Italian but in a Slavic language.¹⁰⁸ Hvar was linked to the broader Slavic world by language and Venice by its economy. Venice was aware of the Slavic identity of Hvar and the Dalmatian coast.¹⁰⁹

A few decades after the Bavarian pilgrim, a Venetian official found the islanders reminding him of Italians. To him,

the customs of these Hvarians are rather similar to the Italians . . ., unlike in the other cities of Dalmatia, because many of the men and women of the nobility wear clothing like in Italy, the men universally speak expeditiously in the *lingua franca*, display a good civility, which I think comes from the continued presence of foreigners who pass with their ships, with which they sail east and west, because almost all the time of the year the Venetian army passes this place, there is no wonder this city became civilized.¹¹⁰

Hvar was linked to the broader Slavic world by language and Venice by its economy. Venice was aware of the Slavic identity of Hvar and the Dalmatian coast.¹¹⁰

While predominantly Slavic speaking, Hvar was not monolingual. Venetian seafarers’ “*lingua franca*” was spoken in the Adriatic and beyond, a variant of vulgar Latin; it also incorporated Greek, Slavic, and Albanian words. In addition, Venetian was spoken in Venice and used by the administration. Furthermore, there was the Dalmatian language, a romance language spoken mainly around Dubrovnik. Latin remained an important literary language. There were also multiple South Slavic dialects spoken. Čakavian was the dominant variant spoken on Hvar and the coast. However, štokavian gradually eclipsed it as the Ottoman conquest pushed refugees from Bosnia toward Dalmatia; it was also widely spoken in the hinterland.

In this multilingual context, Hvar became one of the centers of South Slav literature, culture, and identity. The economic success and trading ties brought ideas and wealth to Hvar, creating a fertile ground for writers, scholars, and poets. As a trading center, Hvar was more advanced with the early spread of printing presses. The first press reached Hvar town in 1467, and soon, it would become a major center with some 150 presses on the eve of the sixteenth century. The presses printed in multiple languages and secured the city’s importance as a printing center throughout this early print period.¹¹¹ In Hvar, the three figures that shaped South Slav literature and culture would begin their work as the printing presses churned out pamphlets, newspapers, and books. These include a Dominican monk, Vinko Pribojević, a nobleman from Stari Grad, Petar Hektorović, and a lawyer and nobleman from Hvar, Hanibal Lucić.

In 1525, a decade after the end of the uprising, a well-traveled but little-known monk named Vinko Pribojević gave a speech to his fellow islanders, later published as “On the origin and the glory of Slavs.” From the island’s center, most likely Vrboska, he was well educated, probably in the Dominican monastery in Hvar or Zadar. The other formative experience for Pribojević was his years in Poland, which shaped his pan-Slavic ideas. Poland under the Jagiellonian dynasty (1386–1572) was a center of Slavic culture and intellectual exchange, characterized by scientists such as Copernicus, a contemporary of Pribojević. The Jagiellonian University, founded in 1364, had become an important center of European humanism by Pribojević’s time, where Slavic identity was hotly debated.¹¹² They resonated in Hvar and other places on the Dalmatian coast, shaped by the humanistic influence of Venice and the Ottoman threat of conquest.

While Pribojević emphasized Slav unity and the importance of Hvar and Dalmatia for Slavs, he gave his speech in Latin. The speech was directed at the Latin-speaking elite of the island, the nobility, the educated townspeople, and the Venetian administrators. It also allowed him to speak to the wider humanist Europe in his treaties, as he intended.¹¹³

His speech and the subsequent text broke with medieval traditions, making it a pioneering text in the history of Dalmatia and beyond.¹¹⁴ While many of Pribojević’s claims about the origins of the Slavs were wrong, they shaped intellectual views of Slavs across Europe for centuries. His ideas could be described as being proto-nationalist, i.e., promoting the cultural unity of the Slavs. He identified “as a Dalmatian, and therefore as an Illyrian and finally as a Slav.”¹¹⁵ He also acknowledged his political association with Venice and the importance of the commune, thus a civic type of identity, as well as regional and supranational identities. In brief, being Slav was important, but only one aspect of a multi-layered identity Pribojević staked out.

To emphasize the unity of Slavs, Vinko Pribojević borrowed names from antiquity, such as Illyrians and Dalmatians. He lamented the difficult position of the Slavs, lacking kingdoms and empires of their own, at least in the Balkans, and borrowing from antiquity allowed the Slavs of the present to bask in the glory of antiquity.¹¹⁶

Pribojević broke with the dominant argument that Slavs had migrated to the Balkans in the sixth century and instead claimed they were an autochthonous population whose ancestors included Alexander the Great and Roman Emperor Diocletian, as well as populations from antiquity, such as Illyrians, Vandals, or Goths. This myth of origin Pribojević promoted fits into the narrative of modern nationalisms, concerned with highlighting their link to antiquity and a claim to a particular place. He does both by locating the origin of Slavs in Dalmatia and the Balkan peninsula and in times of antiquity.¹¹⁷ This assertion allowed him to enhance the historical importance of Slavs and laid claim to key historical figures; it also associated Slavs distinctly with the Balkans, trumping claims of other empires and peoples.

His claims were already challenged during his lifetime. The Ragusan historian Ludovicus Tubero (1459–1527) acknowledged the migration of Slavs to Southeastern Europe in the sixth century and the gradual imposition of language



Figure 2.3 Giovanni Francesco Camocio, sketch of Hvar (1575). © Herzog August Bibliothek.

and customs on the local population, a historically more accurate account. He notes the importance of Latin as the original language of Dalmatia and the persistence of “maritime Latin Dalmatians.”¹¹⁸ Despite these challenges, Pribojević’s claims to antiquity would circulate for centuries.

Pribojević’s importance was thus less due to his accurate historical account, but for popularizing the terms Illyrians and Illyrianism.¹¹⁹ It was first used in the late fifteenth century, nearly half a century earlier. The term Illyrian would be intrinsically linked to Croat and Yugoslav identity until the nineteenth century. He used Illyrians to describe both Dalmatians and Croats as the core population.¹²⁰ He also gave particular weight to Dalmatia, the central place, due to its “position and fertility, ... good attributes of its inhabitants and their laws and customs.”¹²¹ His understanding of what constituted Dalmatia extended beyond the Dalmatian possessions of Venice to include both the Republic of Ragusa and the northeastern Adriatic, held by Hungary, but smaller than the Roman province, suggesting a combination of historical and demographic factors, represented by the extent of the Croatian renaissance along the Eastern Adriatic from Istria to Ragusa.¹²² Rather than Dalmatia being a peripheral possession of Venice, Pribojević imagined Dalmatia as the central place for the Slavic world that stretched to the Baltic Sea and the Urals.¹²³

Although Pribojević explicitly outlined his views of his island in the larger Slavic world and explored the multilayered identities of his fellow citizens, another famous writer from Hvar, Petar Hektorović, was less explicit in positioning Hvar

in the wider Slavic world. Instead, he went fishing. Thirteen years after his fishing trip with two fishermen, Paskoj and his son Nikola, he published “Fishing and Fishermen’s Conversations” in 1568, describing his three-day journey to the narrow canal between the neighboring islands of Brač and Šolta and back. This long poem, *poslanica*, was dedicated to his friend Hjeronom Brtučević and written in the local variant of Croatian, which he called Slavic. Hektorović was trilingual, like the well-educated nobility of the era on the island, speaking Latin, Venetian Italian, and “our language” or “our Dalmatian language.”¹²⁴

What made the text extraordinary was how it described ordinary life. It was not the life of heroes and kings, but a simple trip that, as the author leaves no doubt, took place. The realism of the initially poor catch, the conversations, and the rest stops are striking for its era, as is the respect the nobleman Hektorović gives to the two fishermen. They recite poems and folk stories and are his equal. Hektorović belonged to the minor nobility; his father fled the uprising of 1511 and once more in 1539 when an Ottoman raid of Stari Grad forced him and his mother to flee to Italy. He would later write a letter about the destruction of his mansion in the center of Stari Grad, the Tvrdalj.¹²⁵ He would spend the rest of his life, besides writing poems, to build and expand his fortified house, which he decorated with Latin aphorisms. He received his classic education on Hvar and in Split, where he met a fellow poet, Marko Marulić, twenty-seven years his senior and another of the remarkable poets of the time. He also maintained contacts with other writers along the Eastern Adriatic, including in Dubrovnik.

Pribojević had reminded the intellectual elite of Hvar that they were not just citizens of the Commune of Hvar and part of the Venetian *Stato da Màr* but also part of a Dalmatian and Slavic community. In “Fishing and Fishermen’s Conversations,” it was the simple fishermen Paskoj and Nikola who did the same in their way, showing that this awareness had transcended beyond the well-educated elite: “Come, let each of us sing to pass the time/A fair folk song so to forget our labor./ After the Serbian fashion, my dear friend.”¹²⁶ They sang the epic of Kraljević Marko, a Serbian prince and later king whose rule centered on Prilep in today’s Macedonia. When the two fishermen sang about him, he had been dead for more than 150 years, but he had become a subject of legends. The journey of the epic poem from the center of the Balkans to the island of Hvar two centuries later tells the story of how Hvar was not just connected with Venice and its possessions in the East but also how it was part of a South Slavic sphere of identity, stories, and legends.¹²⁷

Hanibal Lučić (1485–1553) was another towering figure of the Croatian Renaissance from Hvar. His play *Slave Girl (Robinja)* was not just the first Croatian, but also one of the earliest secular dramas. It is the story of the daughter of the Croatian ban kidnapped by the Ottomans combines Italian influences, references to ancient Greek drama, and folk poetry. It is also one of the few that survived Lučić’s self-criticism—he burnt most of his works. Like Hektorović, he witnessed the uprising against the nobility in 1510 and fled to Trogir and Split.¹²⁸

The Eastern Adriatic was a fertile ground for humanism and the Renaissance due to the surviving Latin culture, the symbiosis of the Roman and Slav populations, and the connection to other centers of the Renaissance, most

notably Italy.¹²⁹ The ideal of the Eastern Adriatic culture imagined by humanists and renaissance writers, such as Lučić, Pribojević, and Hektorović, was defined by links to antiquity, the Catholic church, classic humanistic education, and the proximity of Italy. It was thus part of a larger European humanist space—an Adriatic and Mediterranean zone with Italian centers of learning—and part of the larger Slavic world.¹³⁰

The humanists were patriotic, which means they were attached to their home, even if they traveled far and often found a permanent home far from their place of origin. They were attached to their hometown or island, Dalmatia, and a larger Slavic community.¹³¹

It was not Venetian influence alone, but towns like Hvar had a “cultural and communal political life of their own, based on Roman law, Roman Christianity, Latin education, an enterprising commercial spirit, and an interest in the world at large.”¹³² The link to antiquity was essential for humanists as an intellectual reference to the past, as Pribojević carefully cited in his speech, and manifested in the remains of antiquity visible on Hvar.¹³³ The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Croatian humanists originated overwhelmingly from the nobility of the Adriatic towns and mostly received their education in northern Italy, particularly in Padova. They were also cosmopolitan, well-traveled, and wrote mainly in Latin.¹³⁴

Becoming Dalmatian and Slav in the sixteenth century was thus not an act of rebellion against Venetian rule or forming a distinct South Slavic or Croatian nation. It was part of the European Enlightenment, which was multi-layered and involved local, regional, cultural, and political identities without a clear dominance.

Early expressions of a national “revival” could be found in Hvar during the last century of Venetian rule. Dominik Pavičić, for example, who promoted the concept of a “Havarskog,” i.e., Croatian people, was a priest from the village of Vrbanj who served in different parishes on Hvar and Brač and eventually settled in Split in 1750, where he died during the plague in 1783/4. He translated sermons and other religious texts into Croatian. Besides referring to Croats rather than Illyrians or Slavs, he also used the Štokavijan dialect rather than the local dialect used on Hvar.¹³⁵ These ideas of a wider Croat or Slav community were limited, even among the nobility and wealthy merchants. Their worldview was shaped by *campanilismo*, the pride in the local community to which one belonged, disconnected from more prominent political and cultural units. Often, belonging to one commune pitted oneself in conflict with the neighboring commune. These early attempts to link the local Hvar commune to larger Slavic, Dalmatian, and Croat communities were thus both shaped by the desire to validate the pride in their community in a larger context and to explore larger units of identity.¹³⁶

Borderlands

As poets and writers discovered their language and imagined their larger cultural identity, Dalmatia had become a border zone contested by the Ottoman and the

Habsburg Empire. Already in 1102, the dynastic union of Croatia and Hungary granted the Hungarian kings the title of King of Croatia and Dalmatia. As the Habsburg inherited the Hungarian crown of St. Stephen in the sixteenth century, their claim was based on a historical legacy preceding Venetian rule. The Ottoman Empire established themselves in the southern Adriatic and hinterland of Dalmatia for centuries. For just over a century, between 1537 and 1648, the town and fortress of Klis, overlooking Split and the islands, including Hvar, became the center of an Ottoman vilayet. The Ottoman conquest of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1463 and the Dalmatian hinterland, followed by tensions between the Ottomans, Venice, and the Habsburg domains, meant significant emigration from the contested borderlands. Despite tensions and wars with the Ottoman Empire, trade crossed the border. It made Šibenik and Split important ports for exporting livestock and other products from the Ottoman realm.¹³⁷

At the southern tip of Hvar, in the small town of Sućuraj, the inhabitants were within eyesight of the only other republic besides Venice, the Republic of Ragusa, which reached north from Dubrovnik to the Pelješac Peninsula. As the Ottoman Empire approached the town of Makarska in 1499, local authorities agreed with the Venetian administrators of Hvar that the citizens of the coast could flee to Hvar.¹³⁸ The city and the surrounding area came under Ottoman rule for 150 years, triggering waves of refugees to Hvar. In particular, the Southeastern tip of the island became a place of refuge. The refugees from the Ottoman conquest on the mainland have left their imprint on Hvar. While the inhabitants of Hvar, like most other islands of Dalmatia, spoke the Čakavian dialect, the refugees spoke Štokavijan, bringing it to the Southeastern regions of the island.

In his observations about Hvar, Vinko Pribojević also noted the difference between the core areas of the island and the more remote eastern part, which included “five villages, mostly settled by shepherds, who are harsher than those other inhabitants of the island. Nonetheless, some of them cultivate fields of grain and have vineyards ... These are mountainous areas settled by numerous inhabitants, endowed with physical strength and a lively spirit, and due to some inborn virtue, they are sober and avoid excessive enjoyment of wine.”¹³⁹ When Pribojević spoke these words, it was unclear whether he just thought of the wild islanders in the East or included the refugees who had settled there.

Due to the inflow of refugees in the years after Pribojević’s speech, the island’s population increased by nearly 50 percent from 5,000 to 7,100.¹⁴⁰ These new arrivals settled in the island’s southeast and were excluded from the island community. Instead, they were treated as outsiders who brought their own traditions to the island. Over time, these migrants would be called *Plamenjani*, the people from the Plame—the name given to the less hospitable stretches along the narrow spine of the island southeast.¹⁴¹

Most refugees were women and children, as men were involved in fighting the Ottoman forces along the coast.¹⁴² By 1650, Sućuraj had 300 new inhabitants who could see the homes they had fled from across the water. They lived separately from the islanders and enjoyed privileges such as not paying taxes. These privileges were granted in exchange for the men fighting in the army against the Ottoman

Empire.¹⁴³ In 1647, the Venetian general governor Leonardo Foscolo received complaints from inhabitants of Hvar, Brač, and Omiš that the refugees were a burden for the old inhabitants. The refugees were often destitute and forced to steal, increasing tensions with locals. The authorities could not ignore the conflicts, particularly as the three thousand refugees on Vis, Hvar, and Brač constituted a vital resource to fight the Ottomans. The situation was precarious as Venice was preoccupied with the war in Crete and frequent Ottoman attacks.

In response to this dilemma, Venetian authorities instructed Foscolo to provide the refugees with food and land, if some were available, without cost to the state or private owners.¹⁴⁴ Foscolo also granted them the right to select their representatives. These privileges bred resentment and opportunity as the established population sought to use them for their advantage, particularly the ability to import goods without paying taxes. Once these abuses were reported, strict rules were imposed. New inhabitants had to guarantee that the goods were for them. The refugees were primarily worried that the abuse might lead to the abolition of their privileges. This became a source of tension, and the refugees' position remained precarious. By 1664, around a third of refugees remained on the islands. While local administrators tried to make refugees pay taxes, they succeeded in preserving their exemptions. The refugees could submit an official request, usually granted, to receive a plot of land on Hvar. Numerous requests were granted in the first years, and by 1671, the Venetian administrator had set a general rule that the refugees should receive a plot of land on the island.

In 1673, the commune of Hvar decided to count the island's population. It appointed a commission composed of two members of the nobility and two commoners to oversee the census, Matij Hektorović and Andrija Vidali, and from the commoners Ivan Simunić and Petar Samohod. It was the first time that the island's population was systematically counted, with all the names of the heads of the household (usually men) and the number of household members duly noted. The census listed the refugees as new inhabitants separate from the long-established families on the island. The new inhabitants mostly worked as peasants, often for local landowners. In total, ninety families with 367 members lived on the island as migrants or their descendants, some 6.2 percent of the total 5,937 inhabitants. The majority had settled in the *plame* region between Sućuraj and Jelsa, constituting a significant population share. Later, many of these families returned to Makarska, and by the early nineteenth century, only fourteen families remained.

The migrants brought their language, dialect, and Dinaric customs, such as annual ceremonial fires, dress, and songs. Thus, two distinct populations inhabited the same lands in the eastern tips of Hvar. The refugees in Southeastern Hvar compounded the sense of difference between the islanders in the prosperous towns and villages in the center and coast of the island and the rougher inhabitants of the more remote villages.

For Venice, the "others"—those who were different, backward, and exotic—were the *morlachs*, shepherds, and traders distinct from the Venetian-speaking population on the coast. They were often viewed as backward and "oriental." The *morlachs*, as barbarians or noble savages, were a counterpoint to the European

imagination of enlightenment. Voltaire compared the *morlachs* with Icelanders, Laplanders, and Hottentots as savages guided by their instincts.¹⁴⁵ They mostly lived in the Dalmatian hinterland but were also observed as seasonal herdsmen on the islands, including Hvar. The refugees' different language and customs, as well as the rougher conditions in the Southeastern villages, made them the *morlachs* of Hvar, separate from the urbanized multilingual town dwellers.

Besides the inflow of refugees and the acute awareness of their vulnerability to the Ottoman Empire, raids and piracy reminded the islanders of their place at a border. Piracy had long flourished in Dalmatia. This was the product of a long coastline with many coves and hiding places. As different powers had competed over the shore, they used and encouraged pirates for their political ambitions, not unlike the (in)famous golden era of piracy in the Caribbean. The Uskoks were the most prominent Adriatic pirates, who first fought from Klis, the fortified town above Split, and after their displacement, from Senj, against the Ottomans on behalf of the Habsburgs. The Uskoks also threatened the Venetian positions on the Dalmatian coast south of Hvar. The Venetian official Filippo Pasqualigo told the senate in 1614 that it was hard to rein in the Uskoks. They were particularly active in Brač, where there was a trade with slaves captured in Ottoman lands. Rather than just an outside threat, locals collaborated with the Uskoks. In 1586, Venetian authorities discovered that Francesco da Bruzza, a Venetian official on Hvar, was an Uskok spy who informed them about the cargo of the ships docking in Hvar and whether they carried Ottoman goods.

Between 1520 and 1617, the century was characterized by repeated Venetian-Turkish conflicts in the Adriatic. There had been earlier attacks on Hvar, particularly several Ottoman raids on the town of Sućuraj in 1526 and 1539. The most consequential Ottoman raid on Hvar took place in August 1571 was not unexpected. It was led by Kılıç Ali Paşa, "the grand admiral" of the Ottoman navy. He, like many other soldiers in the Ottoman army and navy, began as a slave—a Christian captured by Ottoman pirates from Calabria. After converting to Islam, he worked his way up first among pirates that supported the Ottoman conquests and later achieved recognition by the Ottoman Empire. Kılıç Ali Paşa's fleet of seventy-three boats sailed up to Hvar, forcing the inhabitants to flee to the castle overseeing the town. Hvar, unlike other important port cities, lacked an all-encompassing city wall and was thus more vulnerable. The ships sailed around the island to attack Stari Grad, Vrboška, and Jelsa, burning the towns and enslaving a few inhabitants. In Jelsa, some locals fought back. Altogether, most of the 5,000 inhabitants fled the towns and took to the hills in the island's interior. Meanwhile, the Ottoman forces appear to have also destroyed some inland villages and kidnapped people from the interior of the island. The towns were plundered, burnt, and heavily destroyed, and around fifty people were killed in Hvar itself during the Ottoman raid.

The attack of 1571, together with other raids on Venetian Dalmatia, was a prelude to the decisive Battle at Lepanto on the coast of Greece a few months later. It pitted the Ottoman navy against the Holy League—Venice, Spain, the Habsburg Monarchy, Genoa, and other Italian duchies in a rare moment of unity. The

Ottoman navy, despite the crucial contribution by Kılıç Ali Paşa, was resoundingly defeated. It was a turning point as the Ottomans had not suffered a significant defeat for two centuries and ended the unchallenged dominance of the Ottomans in the Eastern Mediterranean. After the battle of Lepanto, the Ottoman Empire no longer threatened Venetian dominance in the Adriatic. However, the battle also marked the decline of Venice.

The slow decline of Venice was not yet perceptible, but Venice had reached its economic peak already in the late thirteenth century, when it was the most prosperous city in Europe. By the fifteenth century, it remained a financial and cultural center when Hvar became part of its *Stato da Màr*, but the sources of its wealth were drifting away. Vasco da Gama's circumnavigation of Africa in 1498 and Christopher Columbus opening trade routes to the Americas meant that Venice no longer held the same central position in global trade.

Even after the direct threat of an Ottoman raid receded, the wars between Venice and the Ottoman Empire affected the inhabitants of Hvar. Hvar was obliged to provide the boats and crew to fight the Ottomans. In 1716, the boats were sent to the Neretva delta to prevent the Ottoman navy from threatening the islands again. Many sailors died, though not in battle, but rather due to "the bad air that desolated them."¹⁴⁶ It was not the air that killed them; it was the little parasite carried by mosquitoes in the swampy waters of the Neretva River. However, the term used in Italian was bad air, *mala aria*. Malaria had been a severe disease all along the Dalmatian coast, along rivers and swamps. Deforestation, primarily due to shipbuilding, resulted in soil erosion and landslides. It destroyed fertile fields and transformed some coastal areas, such as the shallow part of the bay in Jelsa, into a swamp, which became a breeding ground for mosquitoes that spread Malaria. In the eastern Adriatic, the Neretva delta was the worst hit area, as the crew on the two boats from Hvar experienced. The region would acquire the nickname "damned by god" due to the threat posed by Malaria.

After the Neretva defeat, the commune of Hvar successfully freed itself from further contributions to the war in exchange for a payment of 30,000 ducats.¹⁴⁷ It would be the last Venetian war in which Hvar contributed soldiers, boats, and money. The last war with the Ottoman Empire for Venice ended in 1719 with the Peace of Passarowitz (today Požarevac in Eastern Serbia). Venice lost its possessions in Crete and the Peloponnese but gained some small Ottoman regions in the Dalmatian hinterland. During the war, the Habsburg Monarchy consolidated itself and emerged as the main rival to the Ottoman Empire. Venice's importance in the Eastern Mediterranean declined, with it, Hvar's significance.

The Decline of Venice

The recovery from the Ottoman raid was slow. It would take thirty-nine years to reconstruct the most iconic symbol of Hvar's importance for Venetian trade, the arsenal, first built in 1292. Only in 1611/2, under Venetian governor Petar Semitecolo's authority, was the arsenal rebuilt. Semitecolo left a strong imprint on

the city, reconstructing the damage from the Ottoman raid and confronting the tensions between commoners and the nobility by modernizing the administration. Semitecolo required the nobility to spend at least six months in their house in Hvar town to ensure a critical mass of the population in Hvar town and the functioning of the council. This put him on a collision course with the nobility, who often did not live in Hvar town. Most fertile lands were in the Stari Grad plain or the neighboring island Vis. Correspondingly, much of the nobility had their primary residences elsewhere, closer to the lands they owned: some, like Petar Hektorović, built theirs in Stari Grad, others on Vis.¹⁴⁸

Under Semitecolo's rule, the rural population gained better representation in the commune. It addressed other long-standing grievances, culminating in a local peace treaty between the nobility and the commoners signed in 1611. An inscription on the reconstructed arsenal reads "ANNO PACIS PRIMO MDCXI," the first year of peace, 1611, evoking the agreement he brokered. The council passed the resolution stating that

the never-ending misunderstandings between the nobility and the ordinary people brought this miserable and unfortunate town into such a disastrous position that besides the waste of public and private money, many public buildings collapsed, some of the most fertile lands were abandoned and laid to waste, lost were some of the most fertile plants, that it brings tears to the eyes of not only the owners and interested inhabitants but also the foreigners who are visiting our island.¹⁴⁹

By the time Semitecolo returned to Venice in 1613, he had resolved the long-standing dispute and reformed the island's budget. One of his supporters and associates was Giovanni Francesco Biondi or Biundović, Venetian diplomat from Hvar, reported to the Senate in 1611 about the effort to end the conflict between nobility and ordinary people. Biondi was a striking figure in his own right and showed that by the sixteenth century, islanders made their careers elsewhere. He was born in 1577 to a minor noble family of modest means, which allowed him to study in Padova and enter the diplomatic service. After a posting in Paris, he left the service and moved to England. Here, he became a freelance diplomat, negotiating marriages (without much success) and ultimately becoming a double agent for England and Venice. His fame resulted not from his diplomatic career, but from his writing. He wrote several chivalric romances and a history of the War of the Roses, published in Italian and translated into English and other languages.

The construction of a theater on top of the arsenal embodied the significance of cultural life in Hvar. Initially, the space above the arsenal served for storage, but it was transformed into a theater later in the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁰ Once it opened, the theater became an important cultural center for the island and a rarity across Europe. The theater could build on a long tradition of performances in public squares and plays written by local Renaissance writers. It was a civic and cultural institution built on top of a military structure—similar to later buildings

in Dubrovnik and Zadar. It was among the earliest European public theaters. There were generally few public theaters in Europe, including only one in Paris in the mid-sixteenth century. More unusual still was the location of the theater in a small, if important, port town rather than a capital or large city.¹⁵¹

In Hvar town, all the important cultural sites were just a few steps away, in the theater, the cathedral, the governor's palace, and the square that connected all three buildings. Music would be played in the cathedral, secular music in the Rector's palace, and on stage in the town square. The close cultural ties with Italy shaped the music and theater. *Euridice* by Jacopo Peri, one of the first operas, was presumably performed in the early seventeenth century, as inventory books from the cathedral suggest.¹⁵² The cathedral gained a more significant cultural significance when the theatre was built. In 1614, Tomaso Cecchini (1583c–1644), a prolific Veronese composer, was sent to Hvar from Split, where he would remain the musical director of the cathedral until he died in 1644.¹⁵³

Besides theater and music, the carnival was a popular source of entertainment. Grifiko Bertučević wrote in a letter from Hvar in early 1711 in anticipation of the upcoming carnival that "Here in Hvar operas and ceremonies will be given, (...) and there has already been much rumor about these and about the masquerades to be offered as well."¹⁵⁴ The following year, the carnival included competitions and acrobatic games. Those in attendance included the town folk, Venetian sailors, and traders. After all, the Venetian fleet was spending the winter in town, and the events in 1712 were performed in honor of the Venetian commander Marino Capello. Starting in the sixteenth century, noblemen would have organized dances and feasts with musical performances in their palaces.¹⁵⁵

The rich cultural life represented by the theatre could not compensate for Hvar's economic and demographic decline. By 1740, the population of Hvar had dropped to 5,973, with Hvar and Stari Grad nearly equal in size and accounting for a third of the population. Towns like Jelsa and Vrboska declined by a quarter, probably due to diseases like malaria. Sućuraj halved, primarily due to emigration, including the return of migrants to the Dalmatian mainland.¹⁵⁶ This decline was reinforced by the shift of the main arsenal from Hvar to Korčula, and the winter port for the navy moved to Kotor in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁵⁷ From a prosperous trade city, Hvar increasingly became a provincial backwater. As the significance of Hvar town as a Venetian port declined, the center of gravity shifted to the agricultural plain, home to nearly two-thirds of the population and Stari Grad became the largest town. The relevance of the island compared to the rest of Dalmatia also declined: by 1779, it made up only 2.8 percent of the Dalmatian population, down from a tenth a century earlier.¹⁵⁸

In the last decades of Venetian rule, a bishop from Zadar, a doctor from Split, and a writer from Venice crossed paths in Hvar. All three were concerned with modernization and overcoming the region's decline. In November 1785, Ivan Dominik Stratiko (1732–99) arrived in Hvar. Stratiko was not any visitor but the new bishop. He embodied Venetian diversity. Although of Greek origin and educated in Italian, he identified as Illyrian or Dalmatian and wrote in Croatian.¹⁵⁹ Expectations were high in Hvar when he arrived.

Nobody seemed to have expected him more eagerly than Julije Bajamonti (1744–1800), the local doctor, twelve years his junior. At the arrival of the new bishop, he proclaimed in anticipation, “The time of light (or enlightenment) has come! Startiko is in Hvar.” Bajamonti had arrived earlier that year as the island doctor in Hvar and longed for an intellectual peer and outsider like him. Bajamonti was a disappointment as the local doctor, including for the lady who hit him at the Hvar town market, and the pharmacist who claimed that he was not prescribing enough medicines.¹⁶⁰ A few years later, he would acknowledge as much himself: “few diseases, few funerals, few prescriptions, and few blood draws, one can indeed believe that there is no doctor or that he does not do his job: and precisely the people of Hvar have believed this and ... thus must have regarded me as a usurper and a thief of the medical profession.”¹⁶¹ Bajamonti—born in Split and educated in Siena and Pisa—did not care much about being a local doctor. Instead, he played the organ in the cathedral, participated in the amateur theater group, recorded the weather, studied the Renaissance writers of the island, documented its history, wanted to modernize agriculture, and was interested in the Illyrian language, although he was Italian-speaking. A friend of Casanova who enjoyed his company, Hvar bored Bajamonti quickly. In brief, he represented the Enlightenment in the wrong place.¹⁶² It was thus unsurprising that his speech would raise some eyebrows among the local elite and beyond, as he exclaimed, “My learned Bishop will bring the face of reason even among the simplest of this people and will give trust to novel opinions, beautiful inventions.”¹⁶³

In his speech, Bajamonti describes the superstitions of the ordinary population of Hvar, noting that “superstition and hypocrisy take the mask of piety. Fairies and demons usurp the belief in the Almighty ... the most unbecoming ceremonies are observed with serious commitment.”¹⁶⁴ In addition to these traditions he criticized, he also described local religious traditions, particularly the Easter procession known as “Za križem.”¹⁶⁵ The procession was linked to the incident in 1510 of the allegedly bleeding cross precipitating the peasants’ uprising. Documented since 1658, the procession occurred annually between Vrisnik, Vrbanj, Svirče, Jelsa, Vrboska, and Pitve parishes. Processions begin simultaneously in all six Parish churches and follow a 25-kilometer route connecting them.

His goal was not to describe local traditions, however, but to criticize them as backward to make his case for modernizing Hvar. Bajamonti and Stratiko were interested in modernizing the region’s society and economy. Stratiko had been previously involved in several associations to advance the region’s agriculture, as Bajamonti surely knew.¹⁶⁶ He thus argued for reforming agriculture that could not keep up with the growing population:

Although these islands are mostly stony, they have extensive stretches of plains suitable for easy work; is the mildness of the climate favoring the products. But how much could nature here be improved by industry! Besides, these seas are well populated by fish, but since fishing was more prosperous here in the past, the need for it to be reinvigorated is too evident. Therefore, most Illustrious

and Reverend Monsignor, you shall promote the mother art of agriculture and fishing ...¹⁶⁷

He also pointed out the problems of the island's infrastructure; there were no roads connecting the different towns of the island, but only some paths in bad shape, mirroring the situation throughout Dalmatia "They are also mountainous, rugged and steep: the difficulty of the project required the commitment of great effort."¹⁶⁸

This was not the deference and praise expected from such speeches. Rather than offering a romantic picture of Hvar, Bajamonti reflected critically on the island's situation and spoke with unusual candor. Many saw his speech as inappropriate. The speech circulated as a printed pamphlet in Dalmatia, as did the critical responses, including by a Franciscan monk in Dubrovnik, who was outraged by the disrespect toward the bishop.¹⁶⁹ However, Stratiko appreciated it. Years later, he wrote, "I like the speech that Doctor Bajamonti held because he—sparing me praise for virtues I do not have or for things I did not perform—without flattering oratory warned me of what I would check in practice."¹⁷⁰ Indeed, Bajamonti and Stratiko became friends during their time on Hvar.

During a tour of the island, Stratiko stayed in the village of Bogomolje, where he wrote his impressions to a friend in Siena on May 24, 1786: "I am traveling on my pastoral visitation to such inhospitable places, on such horrible roads, with passions so far away from Italian customs that it is unimaginable."¹⁷¹ He noted, "I don't know why writers looking for examples of barbarism always mention Canada or Madagascar when these very close islands from so much greater proximity hold the same case."¹⁷²

Stratiko discovered these European "barbarians" in Eastern Hvar, among the *abitanti nuovi*, the arrivals from the mainland that had been living on the island for decades, if not centuries. This mirrored the larger discovery of the European savages and the parallel process of European enlightenment that saw in Europe's East the noble savage mirror to reaffirm the advances of Western Europe.¹⁷³ Unlike Italian and other writers, Stratiko hailed from Zadar and thus would have grown up seeing *morlachs*, who visited the town. Nevertheless, the difference between the villagers and the urban population was insurmountable, "the peoples from the ... mainland are not the least interested in cities, and rarely go there, thus they have nothing in common, not a language, not belief, not clothing, not the rules of an urban society."¹⁷⁴

Nobody contributed more to spreading the idea of the savage *morlachs* than Alberto Fortis (1741–1803), who was linked to Stratiko not just by this notion of the noble European savage but also through Bajamonti who befriended the Venetian writer during his visit to Dalmatia. A writer and naturalist, he traveled the eastern Adriatic in 1770. His history of Dalmatia, published four years later, was commissioned by the Senate of Venice to outline the economic opportunities in Dalmatia. It also offered insight into how Venetians viewed their possessions in the eastern Adriatic.¹⁷⁵ His book was widely popular and translated into German, French, and English. It coincided with a generally increased interest in Dalmatia in the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, while the book

reflected the Venetian imperial perspective, it also shaped European views of Dalmatia. His viewpoint of Dalmatia also foreshadowed the colonial lens of European powers.¹⁷⁶

Fortis' book paid less attention to Hvar and the other islands, as they were less exotic and better known than the Dalmatian hinterland that Venice had only acquired in the previous century. Hvar was "tolerably well inhabited," but "[t]he harbor, though is well covered, and spacious, is little frequented at present, and the inhabitants are poor. The *Lesignani* [citizens of Hvar] are civil to strangers. However, they are said to live in no good harmony among themselves."¹⁷⁷ He praised the intellectual environment, noting that "passions are alive and fierce in this climate; the imagination is both agile and strong, capable for flight, inventions, creation."¹⁷⁸

Toward the end of his time as the island's doctor, in May 1790, Bajamonti wrote a long letter to Fortis describing his experience. Despite his earlier criticism of Hvar, he turned out to be somewhat nostalgic about his time on the island:

The best and most beautiful thing I can write to you about Hvar, and for which I have stayed here up to now, despite various reasons for which I could have left much earlier, is whatever makes the stay more horrible and sad, also makes it dear and delightful ... how much this divine sentiment is more naive and more alive in small lands than in great capitals: and reflecting upon this fact you do not find it strange that I preferred this retreat to numerous societies, and now feel great pain in leaving.¹⁷⁹

The simple life on an island proved to be Bajamonti's attraction, where "you can live ... without keys or locks."¹⁸⁰

He appreciated the isolation and the quiet about Hvar. Yet, he lamented the decline of Hvar, which embodied Dalmatia more broadly, as he thought, "modern Dalmatians are more barbarian and frivolous or surely less educated and surely less important than our ancestors."¹⁸¹ As the Venetian ships no longer stopped in Hvar and great writers appeared to be a phenomenon of the past, Hvar was just a general symbol of decline. At the same time, the trade had stopped, and the port was deserted, "so goodbye Scythia, goodbye Arabia, goodbye ... Greece, goodbye the other beautiful results of the last trade."¹⁸²

Unbeknownst to Bajamonti, Stratiko, and Fortis, tremendous changes lay ahead. Less than four years later, the French Revolution would trigger events sweeping away the Venetian Republic. As Venetian power declined, the Habsburg Monarchy took increasing interest in the Republic and its possessions in Dalmatia. An anonymous Austrian diplomat surveyed Dalmatia in 1775/6, after spending considerable time in the region. The diplomat in the service of Maria Theresa emphasized the diversity of landscapes in Dalmatia, between "Morlacchia, the hinterland," the coast, and the islands. To him, the hinterland held most interest, rather than the islands.¹⁸³ This reflected the declining importance of islands such as Hvar as major stops for global trade and Habsburg's focus on the mainland rather than maritime possessions. After all, the monarchy had developed as a landlocked empire with small outlets to the sea with naval ambitions gradually

emerging in the mid-eighteenth century. His observation that only 3,500 soldiers were defending all of Dalmatia, with one hundred soldiers on all the islands, highlights how weak the Venetian hold on Dalmatia had become. He also noticed that the “army is insufficient for use, inept, lacking discipline, administration and military spirit.”¹⁸⁴ The fleet was small and far from Hvar, in Kotor, which would also become one of the main Habsburg naval bases in the next century.

For the Austrian diplomat, the inhabitants of Hvar were rather conservative and stuck to their traditions. At the same time, he took a distinctly negative view of Venice itself and its influence, noting that “Their frequent stays in Venice have spoilt them.”¹⁸⁵ He goes on to note that the “Italian habits,” such as lying, indiscretion, and treachery, are widespread and observed the fragmentation amongst the inhabitants, with “dissent between nobility and nobility, among nobility and citizens, and citizens and farmers ...”¹⁸⁶

The Habsburg Empire had increasingly become a competitor in the Eastern Adriatic to Venice. It thus had eight consuls along the Dalmatian coast on the eve of the French Revolution, including one on Hvar.¹⁸⁷ However, by the late eighteenth century, revolutionary France was the ascending power that took interest in the Dalmatian coast. French warships and privateers began controlling the Adriatic by 1796. Not only were several Venetian and Austrian ships stopped and plundered by pirates, but they also began raiding coastal villages and towns.¹⁸⁸ As France and its ambitions came closer to Venice and its Dalmatian possessions, the Venetian authorities began fearing the rising French influence; at the same time, some Dalmatians became increasingly dissatisfied with Venetian rule. In the 1770s, locals in Hvar, Brač, and Korčula began opposing Venetian taxes, so the Venetian administration decided not to impose new ones for fear of further inciting resistance.¹⁸⁹ In 1797/8, Dimo Stephanopoli (1749–1821) and his nephew Nicolo traveled to Greece on behalf of Napoleonic France, officially to collect flora but actually to describe the inhabitants’ attitudes about revolutionary France. They landed in Hvar during their travels, disguising their French origin and emphasizing their Greek origin. They found two local Greeks who had settled in Hvar town and offered them accommodation. After two quiet nights as guests of these Greeks, a group of “Slavs” threatened the visitors, knowing of their French origin and having heard false rumors that Napoleon’s army had sacked Venice and massacred its population. Their travel account appears somewhat embellished, with a mob charging for the two and their aides. They were all hiding outside town but tried to reach the boat. Niccolo claimed to be shocked by the mob violence, which occurred despite a 150-man garrison. In the house of a nobleman, Niccolo seeks refuge in the middle of the night, where he prepares his weapons and writes to the town administrator (procurator) that

Five Italians, which are in this commune, have been attacked by a band of bandits, who arrested one, that others were forced to flee not to meet their fury. remember that being French, they will perish as French, but know that the great nation will make you pay ... Bonaparte, the general heading of the army of Italy, being his fellow citizens and patriots, after hearing news of our accident, to

satisfy the death of the five French, he will make your city and island settlements a deserted place, and, if possible, he would submerge it in the sea, and to forever lose the name of Lesina.¹⁹⁰

This was a severe threat as Napoleon's army marched through Italy. Yet, Napoleon would neither destroy nor march into Hvar; French rule would only begin in 1805, eight years after Napoleon extinguished the Venetian Republic.

When the flag of San Marco was lowered in Perast in the bay of Kotor, as the Venetian Republic had been abolished, a Dalmatian captain is supposed to have uttered, "Ti con nu, nu con ti," "You with us, we with you."¹⁹¹ This nostalgia for Venice is not without its irony, considering that Venice ended with a whimper, having been on a long period of decline. Its rule of Dalmatia ossified many social structures that would make agricultural reform difficult and make the region one of the poorest in the Habsburg Monarchy.

Transition Time

The turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century saw the rapid succession of rulers over Hvar. The two decades between May 12, 1797, when Napoleon ended the Republic of Venice, and the summer of 1815, when the European powers defeated Napoleon, were marked by instability and different authorities seeking to leave their mark on Hvar. Hvar, and most Venetian possessions, would first become part of the Habsburg Empire by the end of 1797 as France and the Habsburg Empire signed a short-lived peace agreement at Campo Formio. After eight years, Hvar was assigned to the Kingdom of Italy, a French vassal. Finally, in 1809, it became part of the Illyrian Provinces, which lasted no more than four years for Hvar, followed by British military occupation, only to return to Habsburg rule.

Such times when questions of statehood, political power, and loyalty are shifting are great accelerators. New ideas and influences emerge, and old established certainties are challenged. Of course, not everything changes, and these ruptures are often accompanied by continuity. New rulers found established social structures and economic difficulties, and even the ambitious and revolutionary, such as Napoleon France, saw their plans stymied by reality and local resistance.

When the Habsburg forces entered Dalmatia in July 1797, they were welcomed at first. This was because they were not the revolutionary French who had abolished the Venetian Republic. There were few revolutionaries in Dalmatia who would have supported Napoleon. Furthermore, inclusion in the Habsburg Monarchy also linked the Slavs of Dalmatia with those in the Empire, represented by the Habsburg general of Croatian descent, Matija Rukavina, who entered Zadar with his troops in the summer of 1797 and received a welcome by the local inhabitants.¹⁹²

Much remained the same from Venetian rule. The Austrian monarchy refused to unite Dalmatia with Croatia and Slavonia, a separate kingdom ruled in union with Hungary. The Habsburgs ruled indirectly through the local communes, not fundamentally altering the local balance of power. While local councils

continued their work, the main change was that the governor was replaced by a *superiorità locale*, composed of an administrator and two assistants representing the Austrian rather than the Venetian authority.¹⁹³ Austrian administrators tried to reform the laws and administration, introducing Austrian laws that modernized the Venetian legal system. They also began road works and reform of church structures. A few new schools were opened during this period, including a seminary in Hvar. Yet, there was resistance even to these modest reforms by the local and regional elites.

Despite being the most populous Dalmatian island, with 12,416 inhabitants, Hvar remained a relative backwater as most attention shifted to the coast. The French traveler Jacques de Concine visited Hvar in 1804 and depicted an island in decline. He remarked on the abundant sardines, but there was only enough olive oil for four months and cereal for three months. While rosemary, figs, almonds, and the Dominican monks making wine were mentioned, all this did not resemble the important trade post the island was two centuries earlier.¹⁹⁴

Dalmatia was ruled from Zadar, primarily by military governors, including the Feldzeugmeister Thomas Brady, an Austrian general of Irish descent.¹⁹⁵ His aide, Hieronymous Franz Xaver Rödlich, would later publish his plan for the development of Dalmatia, including road construction that would only begin under French rule, new agricultural methods, and education, as he attributed the population loss to “superstition, absurd and silly traditions, wild and raw habits, and deep ignorance ...”¹⁹⁶

Rödlich was clearly impressed by Hvar, singling out its beauty:

In general, the view of this island and the buildings constructed in Italian style, light by moonlight at night, offers a perspective like an amphitheater, which is unique. The port itself, given the shape of a complete basin by nature and culture, is spacious and adorned with a splendid wall of larger squares, which are used to frame it and extend to the equally nice large city square. Lesina would be, in my opinion, for the company of enlightened and educated people, fed up with the bothersome and exhausting everyday business, easily offer all that which will make their stay pleasant and would cheer up and sweeten the rest of their lives.¹⁹⁷

While he also noted the local agriculture, including rosemary, aloe vera, and Queen’s Water, mentioned earlier, he anticipated the attraction of Hvar for tourists. This does not mean he ignored the island’s difficulties, such as the lack of fresh water and the inaccessibility in winter due to the wind.¹⁹⁸

With Europe at war, an earlier description of Dalmatia appeared more pertinent, published in Vienna one year after Venice came under Habsburg control. It praised the “warrior spirit of Dalmatians, which makes them the best soldiers, with which they forget their fatherland and engage in the military service.” It also notes how the inhabitants “speak a Slavic dialect and are loyal to any government that rules them with gentleness.”¹⁹⁹ Striking in this description is not only the importance of Dalmatians as soldiers, which Venice had already used, but also

how notions of fatherland were divorced from military service and language from the government.

The Austrian rule of Hvar ended in 1805, as the Habsburg Monarchy lost Dalmatia to France in the Peace of Pressburg. French rule was a short interlude, lasting only eight years. However, it left a strong mark on Hvar. At first, the rule was indirect, with Hvar belonging to the Kingdom of Italy, a vassal state controlled by France. Established in 1805, it was administered from Milan, with Napoleon as its king. While France had gained Hvar and the rest of Dalmatia in a peace treaty, it was restrained by its two main adversaries, Britain and Russia, which challenged French control of the Adriatic.

Before taking control of Dalmatia, France had limited interest in the region. Dalmatia began to matter for two reasons: the Ottoman Empire and the wider Mediterranean. In 1809, Napoleon noted that “Dalmatia ... is the foremost interest of France ... because we have ambitions in the Mediterranean, because we have the ambition to maintain the independence of Turkey ... and so we can influence matters in Constantinople only through Dalmatia and thus our main and even our unique interest in all this is that.”²⁰⁰

This French ambition in the Adriatic was quickly put to the test. Even before France could establish its authority, the Russian navy entered the port of Vis on March 30, 1806. The French administration was only slowly being set up in Dalmatia. The Russian delegation demanded the local representative, a judge, and his aide to surrender the island. After they refused, the navy shelled the town and plundered their houses, who had meanwhile fled to Hvar. Afterward, the Russian navy shelled Hvar without entering the town and took over Korčula for a month.²⁰¹ Hvar and Vis were frequent targets of Britain and Russia, which both saw the islands, particularly Vis, as strategic points to control the Adriatic. In March 1806, Chevalier de Tinseau, a French military engineer and royalist who had fled to Britain, advised the British government to take charge of Hvar or Vis to disrupt French rule. He favored Hvar, which was larger, had a better port, and could more easily support British soldiers.²⁰² Pirates from the Boka Kotorska, backed by Russia a year later, launched a naval assault on Stari Grad in 1807, and a Russian attack on Hvar town ensued in 1807.²⁰³ The Russian navy placed cannons on the little islet in the harbor Gališnik and shelled the town for four days, imposing heavy damage on the town, including the loggia. The attempt to take control led to a battle between French units and the Russian troops, leaving around 300 Russians dead and 100 imprisoned.²⁰⁴

The Russian vessels hoisted the flag of St. Mark next to the Russian flag to evoke the memory of the Venetian Republic, which secured them some local support. When they occupied several towns around Split, locals came to their assistance and attacked French soldiers. While eventually, French units suppressed the uprising that threatened to envelop the coast, the episode highlighted that French rule was far from popular.²⁰⁵

As the French administration incorporated Dalmatia, Lujo Matutinović (1765–1844) completed his memorandum for the French Emperor on the history, politics, and military matters of Dalmatia, Istria, and Albania. He was born in

Corfu—then part of the Venetian empire—to a Venetian captain, and a mother from a well-regarded Hvar family. After joining the Venetian Naval Academy, he joined expeditions to North America, North Africa, and across Europe.²⁰⁶ In his memorandum, he paints a favorable picture of Hvar, noting how the convenient position of the harbor for ships from Venice, the Levante, and Trieste. For Matutinović, Hvar was the better port than Korčula where Venice shifted its main port, as it remained accessible with different winds, yet mournfully notes the consequence of this shift: “The town of Lesina counts only 1000 inhabitants, with most houses being in ruins, which continue to waste away.”²⁰⁷ For Matutinović, Hvar could become an essential base for the French navy on the coast, but it did not recuperate its former position. Not only had the importance of the trade route from the Levante to Venice lost its significance, but the constant wars of France under Napoleon further disrupted even local trade in the Adriatic.

The region was administered by sometimes conflicting French military and civilian administrations. The first civilian governor of Dalmatia was, ironically, a Venetian, Vincenzo Dandolo, an accomplished chemist and agriculturalist of his era. Despite hailing from the city that had ruled Dalmatia for four centuries, he sought to modernize the region and end the medieval stagnation, as he saw it.²⁰⁸ Dandolo’s approach to Dalmatia was based on the concept of modernizing reforms that sought to transform the region beyond just being a place of strategic military significance for France.²⁰⁹ This included giving a greater role to the Croatian language, including a bi-lingual newspaper, published in Zadar, *Il Regio Dalmata—Kraglski Dalmatin*, the Dalmatian Kingdom. Considering low literacy rates and the lack of a standardized Croatian gave the paper a limited reach.²¹⁰

Marshal Marmont was the dominant military figure in Dalmatia. Auguste de Marmont, from minor French nobility, was the army commander who took charge of Dalmatia in 1806 and stayed until 1811. Marmont also learned Croatian in the Ragusan variant and tried to introduce a Slavic official language, with the challenge that the Slovene spoken in Ljubljana and the northern areas of the provinces differed substantially from the Croatian he had learned in Ragusa.²¹¹ Dandolo and Marmont were both reformers and rivals, primarily due to their ambition.

An important project of the French rule was the building of new infrastructure. The French roads, or the “Marmont Roads,” would become one of the most visible features of French rule. When the French administration took over, only one public road led to the Austrian border close to Knin.²¹² The lack of infrastructure was no surprise. As a maritime empire, Venice had little interest in building roads between the towns of Dalmatia. The extensive road construction best exemplified the French administration’s shift from the sea to land. Now, the French administrators built roads to link Dalmatia to the Ottoman Empire and the region to the rest of the Illyrian Provinces and France.²¹³

The other transformation of Dalmatia was creating a modern state with laws and administration. The new legal system incorporated French and earlier Venetian and Austrian laws.²¹⁴ Another source of modernization was the abolition of many of the privileges the nobility had long enjoyed. The grand council and

the commoner's assembly were abolished, and the old statute and municipal autonomy ended. Nevertheless, members of the nobility dominated the Hvar municipal council and thus were able to retain their influence. The reforms also had little impact on village life, and the precarious position of most farmers did not change. Many of the modern French laws were never implemented in this faraway province.²¹⁵

Nevertheless, farmers became owners of their land. They only had to pay taxes to the French authorities, no longer to the previous landlords, often the church or the nobility. Infrastructure and modernized agriculture would highlight two recurring themes Dalmatians demanded from the Habsburg rulers in the subsequent century.

Unlike during the Venetian rule or the short-lived Austrian rule, the public administration became a serious presence on the island during the French rule. This meant the Italian language would increase in importance. While the Illyrian Provinces would also recognize Slavic, the French administration primarily used Italian in Dalmatia. The light administrative touch of Venice and Vienna had meant earlier that the official language had little direct consequence.²¹⁶ The French authorities also established a new public school system with gymnasia in seven towns. In Hvar, Bishop Stratiko's seminary, founded during the Austrian rule, became a gymnasium, teaching a curriculum focusing on language (French, Latin, and Italian), history, and mathematics.²¹⁷ Croatian, while recognized, was not taught in schools, reflecting its lower position at the time and the lack of standardization.²¹⁸

A challenge that would bedevil Habsburg rule over the coming century was how to fund the modern state administration in an area that was poor and lacked the resources to sustain itself. Neither France nor, later, the Habsburg Monarchy was eager to fund their new possessions, leaving a chasm between imperial ambition and local realities. For the municipality, the most important source of income came from the land it owned, namely from citizens paying for municipal land use. The municipal doctor, the only one on the island, cost more than the income from land in Hvar town and Sućuraj, forcing the administration to cut his salary from 2000 to 1400 francs.²¹⁹ Thus, the French administration was too ambitious and expensive for the relatively poor Dalmatian municipalities such as Hvar, which could not generate enough income to fund the doctors, teachers, and administrators.²²⁰

In addition to language and schools, the modern state had administrators, soldiers, and policemen. The French administration included some 2,425 police officers in 1807 to secure the province, including 466 posted on seven larger islands, including Hvar. Nearly two decades later, under Austrian administration, the number of policemen was half, 1,297, even though the population of Dalmatia had grown substantially since.²²¹ The massive police presence during the French rule was partly linked to the uncertainty and threats to French rule in the region, both from hostile powers and the population.

Indeed, as noted above, many Dalmatians were hostile to French rule. Overall, there was a divide between Francophiles and Austrophiles. According to an Austrian source, the cities were seen as more Francophile, and the countryside

was more supportive of Austria: “the common people are ... for Austria, and so are some merchants.”²²² The opposition to French rule was also fed by the rigid tax policy to fund the new administration. In brief, this first encounter with a modern state triggered resistance among many Dalmatians, and not just among the former nobility who feared losing their privileges. The weak grip of French rule became apparent during a war with Austria in 1808. The Austrian army marched into Dalmatia and local uprisings overthrew local French authorities, eagerly awaiting Austrian units and gathered local volunteers to fight with the Habsburgs. In August 1809, Split was no longer in French hands and Austrian units took Brač. Hvar would be one of the centers of local resistance to the French rule. Locals volunteered to join the Austrian side, and there were multiple attempts to take over the local authority. An attempted uprising in Stari Grad on June 23, 1809, planned by Jerko Botteri and Vinko Politeo, was suppressed. Unrest broke out in Hvar town on 10 and 11 August, but also failed. The most serious attempt took place in Stari Grad on 16 August. The rebellion spread to other towns as the insurgents raised the Austrian flag in Stari Grad.²²³ From there, around 1,000 peasants marched to Hvar town ostensibly to get rid of the French, although these had left five months earlier, in March. The anarchy was like 1797 when Venetian rule ended. It subsided after some private houses were damaged and the municipality served the rowdy villagers some food. Matters calmed down as the town sought for Austrian help from Split, and they sent a ship under command of Captain Lehenstein to take control of town.²²⁴

Elsewhere in Dalmatia as well, the Austrian army, supported by local uprisings, was successful in taking control. However, as the Habsburgs were defeated by Napoleon in Aspern and Wagram in the vicinity of Vienna, the French loss of control over Dalmatia was temporary. It highlighted, however, that French rule was deeply unpopular. The treaty of Schönbrunn signed in October 1809 did not just return Dalmatia under French control, it also rewarded France Istria, Carniola, parts of Tyrol and Trieste, leaving the Habsburg Monarchy landlocked. The insurgents were arrested and sentenced, and Illyrian Provinces provided a second attempt of Napoleons France to govern and transform Hvar and Dalmatia.²²⁵

In practice, not much changed when local authorities found out in March 1810 that they were no longer part of the Kingdom of Italy, but part of the Illyrian Provinces. They simply lowered the kingdom's flag and replaced it with the French tricolor.²²⁶ Dalmatia became a *département* and later a province that was autonomous but linked to France, with French laws applying in Hvar as they would in Corsica or Brest.

The Illyrian provinces borrowed their name from the Roman province *Illyricum* and drew on the continuity that Pribojević had evoked nearly three centuries earlier. Initially, the region was tri-lingual, French, Italian, and German, and in 1811, it also introduced Slavic. There was of course no singular Slavic language at the time, but the French administration sought to promote a Slavic language and historical narrative, which included the publication of an Italian-Illyrian-Latin dictionary by Jakov Stulli.²²⁷

Overall, the recognition of Slavic was of greater importance in Ljubljana and the regions that had been less shaped by a Venetian tradition. The dominance of Italian among elites and the perception of French officials meant that Italian would be the prime language on the coast. Marmont considered the inhabitants of the Dalmatian cities to be “nearly entirely Italian.” This does not mean that he considered the Italians superior to the Slavs. Instead, his view of these “Italians” was rather negative: “they live miserable, although full of vanity and pride, some occupy small jobs or engage in some small business; others cultivate a small inheritance which consists of vineyards and olive trees. In general, there is not much good to be said about these transplanted Italians; Venetian corruption has left deep traces on them, and venality in all things ...”²²⁸ Overall, the French administration primarily relied on the Italian-speaking elite of the coast. For example, the French vice-delegate for Hvar was Toma Grisogono from a prominent Dalmatian family, originally from Greece.²²⁹

With the establishment of the Illyrian Provinces, Lujo Matutinović updated his memorandum for the French administration. Little changed from his 1806 observations about Hvar, the bad condition of the fortress, and the decline of the population.²³⁰ He echoed observations by others about the fundamental structure of local agriculture, with “[t]he production of Hvar consisting of oils, wine and excellent figs, but it not cultivating and thus lacking flour, it is obliged, like all the other Dalmatian islands to receive its subsistence from outside.”²³¹ Interestingly, he also lists prominent local figures which a French administration could count on, which include the reliable and the revolutionary. For Hvar, he mentions three personalities: Juraj Bučić, or as he calls him George Buchich, a judge based in Zadar whose integrity Matutinović highly praised, Ivan Krstitelj Machiedo (known as Titta), hailing from a prominent family and a successful lawyer. For him, he could be the “governor of a kingdom with his talents, integrity, incorruptibility.”²³² Indeed, Machiedo would provide important legal advice to the French administration, including on agricultural reform. Finally, Matutinović praised “the young Gazzari” as “one of the best-known advocates of Illyria”, but his traces are less tangible than the others. While the French administration suffered from a lack of funds, both due to high costs of constant warfare and ambitious state-building, the Illyrian provinces could incorporate diligent civil servants, reforms, and revolutionaries.

Some Austrian observers noted that with the establishment of the Illyrian provinces, French rule became more oppressive: “After three years, Dalmatia fell under the direct rule of France and became a colony of this empire.” No adequate payments, repression, violence, and forced conscription, the best posts taken by French, “poverty and repression ascended to the throne.”²³³ Of course, Austrian diplomats would have their reason to dismiss French rule; nevertheless, its diplomats assessed French rule with some nuance and free of an ideological prism.

The French administrators continued tinkering with the organization of the provinces, and the administrative borders of the Illyrian provinces were redrawn in 1812, not long before they would be lost. Hvar became its own district, the smallest in terms of population, only 13,817—around 9,300 lived on Hvar and the rest on Vis.²³⁴ When Hvar became autonomous, it was subdivided into smaller

municipalities, each with its mayor for the first time. This broke up the island's unit and, with it, Hvar town's dominance.

Altogether, Dalmatia had just over a quarter of a million inhabitants in 1809 (256,865), and the high growth rates concerned decision-makers about supporting the population. In 1809, there were 9,458 births and 6,479 deaths, meaning the population was increasing by around 3,000 inhabitants per year or more than 1 percent. Moreover, the number of births was nearly twice as high as deaths, 416 births and 224 deaths (105 marriages).²³⁵ The local newspaper thus speculated that Dalmatia would double in size within around sixty-four years. The estimate proved, as such demographic speculation does, widely off the mark.²³⁶ Such high growth rates gave French attempts at modernizing the economy of Hvar and the rest of Dalmatia additional urgency. Agriculture was a priority for the French administration to secure the region's self-sufficiency. Many food products were brought to the island by boats from the Western Adriatic. These supplies were precarious as Russians and British navies and pirates sought to disrupt this trade.²³⁷ Some pirates received British authorization to disrupt the trade. Still, many just seized the opportunity of weak French rule and nearly continuous warfare to expand their reach. Thus, in February 1808, the municipality of Hvar required a permit to resell food products that arrived by boat to prevent speculation in case of shortage.²³⁸

The center of black marketeering in Adriatic was Vis. Starting in 1808–9, Vis gradually came under informal British control, with British privateers, often from Sicily, setting up their camp on the island. In brief, the sea border between France and Britain extended to French Hvar and English Vis. From here, British goods would be smuggled to the rest of Dalmatia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Habsburg Monarchy. Britain actively encouraged smuggling to ensure that British products could enter the European market, from which Napoleon had sought to ban them.²³⁹ Vis grew dramatically in those years from 4,000 to 11,000 inhabitants, with traders from the rest of Dalmatia and other regions settling on the small island.

The French administration struggled to control the smuggling. With many secluded coves, avoiding the ever-growing French presence was easy. Even the threat of the death penalty could not deter many from trading with Vis. A British captain noted that within less than two months over the summer of 1811, some 417 boats arrived and 523 left, bringing wine, sugar, coffee, pepper, salt, oil, and vinegar to Dalmatia and importing grain, livestock, and wood.²⁴⁰ For boat owners on Hvar, it became a significant income. They broke the restrictions to bring goods from Vis to the mainland, often under the cover of going fishing.²⁴¹

When Napoleon ordered a decisive invasion of the island, his Italian viceroy, Eugène de Beauharnais, was skeptical, illustrating the challenge:

It will not be hard to take a unit there and take over, but it will be hard to supply them. ... Surely, your Excellency knows that on the day we take control of Vis, the English will take Korčula, and we expel them from there; they will move to Mljet, etc. As the Dalmatian coast is full of islands with excellent harbors, it would take a lot of armed forces to defend the islands.²⁴²

Despite his viceroy's reservations, Napoleon ordered the invasion, leading to the first of several sea battles in the waters between Hvar and Vis. The battle in March 1811 turned into a major defeat for the French navy. The main French ship was destroyed, two other captured, and the French fleet fled to Dubrovnik. In effect, Vis ceased being under French control, and Hvar was now standing at the frontline between the two major maritime forces.²⁴³ In June 1812, an Austrian newspaper reported rumors that the British navy had conquered Hvar and Korčula, showing France's increasingly precarious grip on the Adriatic islands.²⁴⁴ French rule would take another year to end on Hvar.

In 1813, the British forces gradually pushed out the French administration from the islands. By November, they also took control of Hvar. On November 9, 1813, a joint British and Austrian invasion, led by Captain Sir William Hoste, took over Hvar.²⁴⁵ The French soldiers in charge of the two forts overlooking the city have been able to defend the city. However, a captain from Vis named Knezevich convinced the soldiers to surrender. As the Austrian newspaper reports, "Through influence and smart work, he managed to convince the garrison eighty-two soldiers of Italian and Hvar origins to surrender."²⁴⁶ The British rule over the islands would last until the summer of 1815, ending the nearly two decades of war and political uncertainty on Hvar.

Chapter 3

THE AUSTRIAN CENTURY

The Austrian century followed nearly two decades of rapidly changing states that ruled over Hvar following the end of the Venetian Republic by Napoleon. Stability and continuity were the self-ascribed features of the Habsburg Monarchy. Yet, its control over Dalmatia was evidence of the fluidity of the Empire that shifted Southeast as it weakened in the West. For Hvar, the Austrian century was divided into two marked periods. The first five decades were marked by neglect and attempts by the Habsburg monarchy to administer the status quo from the late Venetian period. The turning point was the 1860s, which ended the absolutist period and brought about the emergence of political life and parties in Dalmatia. This also meant the rise of identity questions, perceived mainly as a choice between being Italian, Dalmatian, or Croatian, narrowing down further in the subsequent decades. Also, in economic life, the 1860s ushered in an economic boom from wine growing to large fishing networks to tourism. The period brought prosperity and change to the island. By the end of the Habsburg rule, modernization, overpopulation, and the devastating disease for the vineyards, phylloxera drove thousands overseas. It meant that the end of Habsburg rule was associated with crisis and decline.

The Forgotten Province

After having traveled far and wide throughout Dalmatia, its new governor, Wenzel Vetter Graf von Lilienberg, reported to the Habsburg Emperor Francis I. in 1834 that Dalmatia is a “diamond in the rough which has been treated throughout many generations as common rock, can be fashioned into a cut diamond . . .”²¹ This rough diamond was largely unknown in Vienna. Habsburg Dalmatia included Dubrovnik and the Bay of Kotor, two of the province’s four regions, in addition to Zadar and Split. Hvar was part of the Split region and formed an administrative unit with Vis, reflecting the long-standing close ties between the islands. Zadar remained the province’s administrative center, including the seat of the government and the highest courts.

Lilienberg’s message to the Emperor was that Dalmatia was neglected but had great potential. Neglect and the potential of a rough diamond would become

recurrent themes of both representatives of the monarchy, underlining the Venetian decline and Habsburg ambition, as well as by Dalmatian politicians and intellectuals who criticized the failure of the Habsburg Monarchy to modernize the province.

Lilienberg was not the first nor the last Habsburg ruler over Dalmatia to travel and study the region. Emperor Francis I himself toured Dalmatia in 1818. While these travels had a representative and ceremonial dimension, they also served the emperor and his entourage to learn about the lands under his rule. On his journey, he was joined by Joseph Marx Freyherr Von Liechtenstern, a pioneering geographer and statistician who established the statistical office in the Monarchy. Von Liechtenstern wrote of Hvar as one of the most pleasant places to encounter: "The nature of the land on the island, the housing built in Italian style, offer a sight from a close distance and in the bright light of the moon that is unique and particular for the town of Hvar and its surroundings."² The reality was far less romantic. The Napoleonic wars and bad harvests had led to famine on Hvar. The year he visited Hvar, ninety-four people died of hunger in Vrboska alone. The hunger had worsened due to the crop failures and the year 'without a summer' because of the eruption of Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies in 1815. In addition, the plague continued to threaten Dalmatia. One of the last severe outbreaks of the plague began in 1812 in Constantinople and quickly spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, claiming over 300,000 lives. By early 1815, it reached Dalmatia, leading to a significant outbreak in Makarska.³ While the plague did not reach Hvar, it was within sight of the island, and the closed border and thus limited trade with the Ottoman Empire worsened the difficult situation. Even after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the situation in Dalmatia remained precarious. The province could not produce enough food to feed itself. In 1828/9, some 3,552 inhabitants of Hvar, more than a third of the island's entire population, had to rely on food aid to survive. Some families needed support for months, but in some places, such as Vrboska, families required assistance all year around to survive.⁴

At the time it was integrated into the Habsburg Empire, Dalmatia was a mostly rural region with a few towns, and throughout the nineteenth century, even the biggest towns remained small. At the advent of Austrian rule, Split was the largest city with 6,739 inhabitants, followed by Dubrovnik and Zadar. Hvar was the eighth-largest town in Dalmatia, with some 1,137 inhabitants.⁵ The population gap between towns and villages was often insignificant. For example, the village of Vrbanj had 858 inhabitants, which was not much smaller than the towns on the coast, such as Hvar, Jelsa, or Stari Grad. Taking an inventory of their new lands, new Austrian rulers also recorded a few cows, 243 donkeys, 31 horses, and 190 small boats on the island, all suggesting a relatively modest state of the island's economy.⁶

The crisis during the post-Napoleonic years was thus not solely a product of Venetian decline but the consequence of decades of war. Lilienberg also remarked on the island's uncertainty during the first decades of the century: "A picture of eternal change, eternal instability, of different tendencies often returning and constant mixing of the inhabitants and intruding foreigners."⁷ Rather than

interpreting Venetian rule as a steady and stable period, he argued that the wars against the Ottomans contributed to the physical and moral decay. His pessimistic view of the Italian and French interludes was biased by the effort to legitimize Habsburg rule, particularly the conservative, stability-oriented policies of the Metternich era.⁸

Such an image would persist for decades to come. Despite its inclusion in the Habsburg Monarchy, Dalmatia was seen by many in Vienna and beyond as remote and exotic. In 1846, Francesco Carrara (1812–54), an archaeologist from Split, quipped that “[i]n Europe today, one speaks of Dalmatians like people who live beyond the columns of Hercules ... studied by those who study the geography of Haiti, Greenland, and Malaysia ...”⁹ The atmosphere was also repressive. Carrara’s book about Dalmatia was censored for mentioning the French rule in a positive light for attempting to drain the swamps in Dalmatia.¹⁰

In the late 1820s, Franz Petter, a minor Austrian administrator posted in Dalmatia, visited Hvar. His impression was rather gloomy: “The stay in Hvar holds no attraction for foreigners. I was only there for three days, but on the third day, as there was nothing left for me to see, I felt greatly bored. One speaks overall Italian. It is supposed to be very provincial in mentality.”¹¹ The scars of the decades of the Napoleonic wars and decline during the late Venetian period were still visible, as he observed the dismal state of the Loggia, still destroyed by the Russian bombardment two decades earlier, and many of the grand patrician houses on the main square laid in ruins. Petter estimated that a third of all homes were in disrepair. While it might have been lively and rich in Venetian times, “now the town is completely impoverished, depopulated by the plague and abandoned, and is a pitiful picture.”¹² While Hvar might have appeared like a declining backwater during the first decades of Austrian rule, its economic and social life was far from the image that Petter projected.

In the Adriatic, shipping flourished after the end of the Napoleonic wars. In Dalmatia, between 1814 and early 1818, 101 ships received permits for long-distance sailing and 775 for Adriatic shipping.¹³ Hvar retained some importance, as the main shipping route from the Mediterranean to the upper Adriatic passed through the sheltered passage between Vis and Hvar.¹⁴ This meant boats passing sought shelter in the protected port if the wind turned.¹⁵ While an Austrian study noted in 1819 that Stari Grad had a better-protected port, it was less conveniently located along the shipping route as Hvar town, where “Austrian warships receive food ... and message sent there from Split.”¹⁶ Overall, Hvar was less important for the navy but became significant for commercial shipping.¹⁷ In the early nineteenth century, the entire island was one of the vital shipping centers of Dalmatia, with more ships registered in Stari Grad than in the Dalmatian capital, Zadar or Split, a much bigger city.¹⁸ Nevertheless, trade remained difficult between Dalmatia and the rest of the Habsburg Monarchy, as the authorities imposed a 2 percent customs tariffs on goods traded with Dalmatia.¹⁹

Social and cultural life was also vibrant on the island. It involved dances, music, coffee houses, and bars. In Hvar town, the local elite founded *La società del casino di Lesina* in 1799. The society established a coffee house in the Loggia on the *Pjaca*,

the main square. In the cafe on the ground floor, men played cards; upstairs was a reading room. In addition, it organized lectures, dances, concerts, and lotteries.²⁰ While the *Società* and their coffee house in the Loggia was for the elite, *Krčmas*, local pubs, were for everyone to go for a drink. Drunkenness, however, was frowned upon. Big village and town festivities, *Fjera*, occurred on saints' days. Sv. Ante (Saint Anthony) on June 13, for example, marked the beginning of summer, and swimming was only allowed after that day.²¹

In 1803, the *Società del Teatro* was established to run the communal theater, which had existed since the seventeenth century and was rebuilt after being devastated by a fire in 1799. The most active period for the theater was the carnival, with some thirty-six performances in 1819 during the carnival season.²² Throughout the difficult post-war years when money was short, traveling actors performed in the theatre, although they sometimes had to be paid in sardines; the best seats were nine sardines, the cheapest three. The repertoire was broad and included everything from puppet shows to operas, dances, plays, and concerts. Some pieces were performed by the local amateur groups, which included prominent members of the Hvar society. Other, more professional shows were performed by touring Italian groups. The performances included *Antigone* in honor of the Emperor's birthday in 1823; a decade later, in 1836, it featured the *Moreška*, a popular sword dance from Korčula, evoked a conflict between Moors (or Turks) and Christians.²³ Operas such as Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermor* in 1839 and *L'elisir d'amore* and *Norma* by Bellini two years later were also performed.²⁴ Altogether, cultural life in Hvar town remained lively despite the small size of the town.

Cultural life was dominated mainly by the established elite, drawing on their privileged position from Venetian times, based on extensive land holdings. At



Figure 3.1 Fedor Karacsay, Hvar (1836). © Austrian National Library.

first, Austria interfered little with the existing social and political structures, as it relied on Italian-speaking elites, both from Dalmatia and even more from Lombardy-Venetia, with prosperous commercial and educational centers such as Padua, Verona, Milan, and Venice. In the middle of the century, Francesco Carrara observed there were only around 16,000 Italians in Dalmatia, mainly from Venice and living primarily on the islands, noting that besides Zadar, Hvar had the largest share, where “they form the most cultured class of the kingdom.”²⁵ Distinguishing between the wider Italian cultural and linguistic influence and the much smaller number of native speakers was hardly straightforward, but Carrara’s estimate matches others that put the total number of native Italian speakers at 3.4 percent to 7 percent of the population in Dalmatia at the time.²⁶ Of the rest of the islanders, Carrara wrote that they “speak the worst dialect with a bad pronunciation ...”²⁷ In 1843, Mate Kovačić wrote to Ljudevit Gaj, an early nationalist activist and the linguist who standardized Croatian, about how some Croatian patriots from Vis were trying to learn Croatian as spoken elsewhere, “which the islanders managed surprisingly well.”²⁸ Such sweeping judgment reflected his elitist perspective and the difference between the variant of Croatian spoken on the islands versus the mainland. The inhabitants of Hvar, spoke the čakavian, unlike štokavian, the dominant dialect on the mainland, which became the basis for the standard Croatian and Serbian languages.

It also reflected the bad condition of the region’s schools. In Dalmatia, a rudimentary educational system emerged during the two decades of the first Austrian and French rule, including a gymnasium in Hvar. Still, most of those structures were in bad shape when Austria took over.²⁹ The main challenge was the lack of teachers and textbooks. There were too few primary schools, including on Hvar, and no higher education at all in Dalmatia.³⁰ The conditions were far from optimal; some teachers were illiterate peasants, and some classrooms were used for another purpose, so one contained three large wine barrels.³¹ The first school building on Hvar was opened in 1825, taught only in Italian for boys, and was initially housed in a private home. The first religious school for girls did not open until two decades later.³²

The language of instruction remained Italian at first, as had been during the brief French interlude. Italian opened opportunities for the better-off families to have their children educated in Split and later in Italian-language universities of the monarchy, such as Padua. A change occurred only in the middle of the century when young Dalmatians started attending German-speaking universities in Prague, Graz, or Vienna. This reflected a gradual shift away from Italian language dominance in Dalmatian intellectual circles.³³

A similar evolution was seen in education, where primary schools taught in Italian excluded poorer children, e.g., peasants, most of whom did not know the language and would, therefore, remain illiterate. Gradually, schools became bilingual, offering instruction in “Illyrian.” i.e., Croatian. In 1838/9, there were fifty-five primary schools in all of Dalmatia, with forty-two offering bilingual instruction. Gradually, the number of Croatians taught increased so that a decade later, under the influence of the revolutions of 1848/9, twelve schools taught

exclusively in Croatian, eighteen in Italian, and 127 in both languages.³⁴ This shift would prepare the linguistic shift in society three decades later across Hvar and the rest of Dalmatia.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Italian remained the dominant administrative language, but “Slavic” or “Illyrian” was commonly used at the lower level and in oral interaction with the population. Thus, public pronouncements were bilingual, and the official use of Croatian was standardized in 1820.³⁵ The incremental emergence of Croatian as a language used in school and public administration did not translate into a strong national movement; on the contrary, the Illyrian movement, the predecessor to the Croatian and Yugoslav national movements, was weak on Hvar during the 1830s and 1840s. This was partly due to the lack of an educated middle class and a strong orientation toward the Italian language and culture among elites.³⁶ Among the wider population, there was little awareness of the national self-identification of the educated elite, reflected in a trip of three leading South Slav intellectuals to Dalmatia in 1841. Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, Ljudevit Gaj, and Antun Mažuranić traveled together from Zadar to Korčula to “discover the nation.” Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864) established the modern Serbian language. Ljudevit Gaj (1809–72) was the child of German immigrants to the north-western regions of Croatia, who standardized the Croatian language and became a key activist of the Croatian and Illyrian movements. Antun Mažuranić (1805–88) was a writer and influential promoter of the Illyrian movement—the precursor to the Croatian and Yugoslav national movement. According to the story, potentially apocryphal, they encountered an old man in Orebić, a small town on the Pelješac peninsula, who patiently answered their questions while smoking in the street. First, they asked him who he was, to which he responded that he was a Dalmatian and spoke “naški” [ours]. When Mažuranić tried to get a more precise answer, he specified “Slavic.” Karadžić followed up and asked him if he knew Serbian, which he declined. Vuk replied, “Do you understand me when I speak.” When he responded affirmative, Karadžić said to Mažuranić, “Did you hear this?” Mažuranić was unsatisfied and probed further, “My friend, have you heard of Croatian?” The villager must have been puzzled by these inquisitive strangers and spoke: “Of course, why wouldn’t I? That is it, why didn’t I think of it right away: we are Croats, and we speak Croatian.”³⁷ In Pelješac, like on Hvar, identity was being molded, and locals often did not place themselves in predetermined identity categories. In this exchange, the main choices were based on the language, which was in the process of being standardized. The terminology Croat (and Serb) was not ubiquitous in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the language was sometimes described as Slavic, Illyrian, or just “ours” “naški.”³⁸

The seeming stability of the conservative order was shattered by the revolutions that swept much of Europe in 1848–9. The rise of liberal and national movements in Austria, Hungary, and Italy raised the hope of ending the conservative era that began in 1815. In Venice, for some seventeen months, the Republic of San Marco emerged as an effort to restore the Venetian Republic. The short-lived republic was already a distinct Italian national project. Rather than the pre-national *Serenissima*, the new Republic saw itself as part of a unified Italy. In March 1848,

the republic called on Istrians and Dalmatians to unify with Venice: "Citizens of the maritime and terrestrial Venice, compatriots from Istria and Dalmatia ... we could regain this national freedom, this homeland which has been usurped and which we know how to defend with persistent courage." While evoking the old republic, the proclamation "Viva San Marco! Viva la Repubblica Veneta! Viva L'Italia!"³⁹ Was not a call for a restoration of the old Venetian Republic but a new Italian Venice. As such, the revolutionary Venice had little to offer to multinational and multilingual inhabitants of Dalmatia, especially for the Slavic population.⁴⁰

For that reason, Niccolò Tommaseo (1802–74) discouraged Dalmatians from supporting the Venetian uprising. His opposition was all the more surprising, as he was part of the leadership of the fledgling Venetian Republic. Tommaseo, a prominent Italian linguist and protagonist of Italian unification from Šibenik, understood the ambiguities of identity as "in mid-century Dalmatia, the idea of supporting both the Italian and Slavic national movements, while consistently emphasizing the exceptional status of Dalmatia, was not just common, it was representative of a widespread political and cultural outlook."⁴¹ Dalmatians were not confused, but their choice reflected a strong sense of regional identity that displayed unease with the emerging national claims to the region and its population.

During the revolutionary year 1848, Hvar stayed relatively calm. The main event was the desertion of a ship from the port of Hvar, which was a wider problem for Austria in 1848. With an overwhelmingly Italian and Dalmatian crew and a strong loyalty to Venice, the navy was still a hybrid between its Austria present and its Venetian past.⁴² The ship commandeered from Hvar in April 1848 by Sergeant Marini was sunk two months later by the Austrian navy. Meanwhile, the merchant ships of the Duboković family hoisted the Croatian flag, and the Croatian ban Jelačić, who helped put down the revolution in Hungary, was honored in Stari Grad.⁴³ Dalmatia saw a period of open and uncensored political debate during the months of revolution in the Habsburg Empire, but the revolution did not catch on. In response to Dalmatia's lack of revolutionary fervor, a contemporary complained, "In the end, we Dalmatians have to complain loudly about our passivity and timidity! Our cities are not less divided than Petersburg from London. Dullness and passivity dominate all around. Do we know what one does in Split, Hvar, or Korčula in Zadar? Not at all."⁴⁴ Each town remained its little universe, with its associations and elite carrying a strong sense of local rather than national identity.

A few years after the end of the revolutionary period, a visiting German scholar painted a vivid portrait of Hvar town, peacefully going about its business in the apparent calm after the failed revolutions:

The market square, the piazza, is in many ways a central place, here the regiment stationed in town conducts its daily drill exercise, on the open side with a harbor wall, the ships returning from fishing dock and the expectation of returning fishing brothers might be a convenient excuse for a large part of the male population to walk around there from morning to late at night to either look at

the drill or look out to the blue sea. The beggars are not missing, but when the sun goes down, the beautiful world of the local celebrities comes out.⁴⁵

Only after the Neoabsolutist period ended in 1860 did political life regain its importance. With it, the distinction between supporters of Dalmatian autonomy and advocates of Croatian unification between Italian and Slav identity began to emerge gradually.

A Distant Rumble: Modernity and the Adriatic Question

Modernity arrived in Hvar with a distant rumbling of cannons. On July 20, 1866, the navies of Austria and Italy fought a crucial battle between Hvar and Vis, known as the Battle of Vis. The thunder of the cannons could be heard on Hvar and other islands nearby.⁴⁶ The war represented the larger struggle shaping the long nineteenth century between nation-states and empires. The Kingdom of Italy was established just five years earlier and sought to gain control over Italian-speaking territories of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 1866 war. The larger and better-armed Italian fleet was thus driven by the aspirations of a newly founded nation-state. It sought to take over the strategically important island of Vis, fortified by Austria after 1815.⁴⁷ By controlling Vis, Italy sought to establish its supremacy in the Adriatic and secure increased influence in Dalmatia.⁴⁸ Austria feared that the Italian navy also planned to occupy Hvar and other Adriatic towns, as the Austrian daily *Tages-Post* summed up after the victory: “The most important consequence ... is the saving of our seaport of Trieste from enemy attack, the liberation of Austrian shipping in the Adriatic, the connection of the Dalmatian ports with Trieste, securing our positions in Venice against the sea and the removal of any threat of a landing on our coast.”⁴⁹

On July 18, Italian cannon boats landed in Hvar to cut the telegraph lines connecting Vis with the mainland.⁵⁰ These lines were laid only four years earlier, connecting the islands for the first time to the mainland.⁵¹ Now, information could travel nearly instantaneously from Hvar to the rest of Dalmatia and, thus, the rest of the world. Together with the rise of the steamboat that allowed for scheduled, fast, and reliable connection to the islands, the telegraph was one of the transformative inventions of the nineteenth century. Richard Francis Burton, British explorer, writer, and consul in Trieste, wrote a few years after the battle that

A wire connects it [Hvar] with Spalato [Split] ... and, indeed, nowhere about the Mediterranean have I found this instrument of our later civilization so generally used as in Dalmatia. The principal want here is communication; those who would embark must ride for half a day over the roughest path, spanning mountains and valleys, to Lesina [Hvar] town, the only station of the Austrian Lloyd.⁵²

It was thus no surprise that the Italian navy sought to disrupt this vital communication link. Yet, not all went to plan as the official in charge, Johann

Bräuner, hid in the hills above Hvar. He took a telegraph machine along and connected it to the cable to report about the Italian attack on Vis to the Austrian navy. He would continue reporting from the hillside as the naval battle unfolded.⁵³ Bräuner was joined by Juraj Plančić, the local priest in Brusje, together with villagers, who watched the battle from a peak that offered a perfect view toward Vis:

There was such a thunder of gunfire, stronger than thunder from a summer storm. Standing atop the hill ... and the earth was shaking under my feet. The ships were covered in smoke, so the fleet could not be recognized until the wind removed the smoke. The people of Hvar were on all the hills, watching the battle with apprehension and prayer for the victory of the imperial fleet, in which hundreds of our islanders found themselves. Seeing success and victory, cheering shouts and shouts rose to the sky, all the churches rang with bells, waved the Austrian flag ... The sounds of city music and cheerful people shouting out to celebrate a magnificent success in which sons of this land played a major role.⁵⁴

There was little doubt about the islanders' sincerity in supporting the Habsburg Monarchy: the battle had brought Italian gunboats into the harbor and the navy on the horizon. Many of the sailors in the Austrian navy were from Hvar, as Dalmatians were overrepresented in the navy, reflecting the Venetian maritime tradition. Over half of its twelve commanders hailed from former Venetian lands, from Venice to Corfu.⁵⁵

The most prominent sailor from Hvar was Nikola Karković, who jumped on the Italian ship *Palestro* during the battle and took its flag, for which he received high military honors and had songs and novels devoted to him.⁵⁶ Born in Hvar in 1838, he joined the navy, became a cadet officer, and ended his career as captain of the port of Trieste, the most important commercial port of the Habsburg Monarchy.⁵⁷

The sailors of the *SMS Erzherzog Ferdinand Max*, the leading ship of the Habsburg navy, exclaimed at the sinking of the *Re d'Italia*, "Viva San Marco!"—"Long live San Marco!" This was the traditional victory call of the Venetian Republic. Venetian remained the lingua franca of the Habsburg navy and its sailors.⁵⁸ The Austrian commander Wilhelm von Tegetthoff had been trained in Venice and commanded his crew in Venetian, one of the languages used in the navy next to Croatian and German.⁵⁹ Despite this Venetian legacy, the Austrian naval victory was unexpected. Napoleon noted at the treaty of Campo Formio in 1797 when France granted the Habsburg Monarchy Venice that "Austria will never be a maritime power."⁶⁰ The unexpected victory of the navy of the reluctant maritime power over the new rising nation-state remained an idiosyncrasy. The Habsburg Monarchy lost the war against Italy and Prussia and had to cede Venice and Veneto to Italy and accept the rise of Prussia in Germany. However, the Dalmatian coast would remain under Habsburg rule for the next half-century, but now Venice was in a different state than Dalmatia for the first time in more than 400 years. During those decades, the Italian interest in the region grew. This was, in part, a recognition of the region's strategic importance in securing

an Italian-dominated Adriatic and, in part, the result of rising Italian national identity among Italian-speaking communities in Dalmatia.⁶¹

In the Habsburg Monarchy, the victory was blown to mythical proportions in the coming decades. In Dalmatia, it came to be interpreted as a military victory and a success against Italian influence, promoting the rise of Croatian identity.⁶² In 1891, Stjepan Buzolić, a priest and member of the Dalmatian parliament, viewed the battle in Croatian national terms: “From these holy tortured bones, like warm rays from the sun, will return, dear Croat brothers and sisters, everywhere the sparks of our patriotism and the glowing love for the fatherland.”⁶³ The battle thus allowed Croatian nationalists to claim the Habsburg victory for their own movement.

Some twenty-two years after the battle, Ante Tresić-Pavičić (1867–1949), a young writer from Hvar, later a politician and diplomat whom we will meet throughout this book, would write one of his early works of poetry “at the monument to Tegethoff.” The monument was unveiled in 1886 at the Praterstern in Vienna in the presence of Emperor Franz Joseph. Tresić-Pavičić did not celebrate the victory but rather mourned the Dalmatians who died:

“When you are such a fighter without a goal,
Dalmatians, how would it be to me
for you to fight for your Croatia,
For the lover and the beautiful children? ...
But unfortunately, it is the one,
Who a black future will bloom,
In the bud dies and pane.
And the glory of his enemies.”⁶⁴

The Battle of Vis embodied the major confrontation over the next half a century between nation-states and multinational empires. Within the Empire and particularly in Dalmatia, the formation of distinct national identities and movements would only gradually emerge.

Becoming Croatian, Italian, or Dalmatian

Operas, popular throughout Europe, including in Hvar in the nineteenth century, embody better than anything else confused stories of identity, with convoluted tales of lost and rediscovered family histories. They are reminiscent of the complex narratives prompting the emergence of national identities in the nineteenth century. *Des Matrosen Heimkehr* (The Sailor’s Return) was an opera by Franz von Suppé set in Hvar. Von Suppé was famous for his light-hearted operettas; he wrote thirty-one of them—he could be considered the creator of this genre. *Des Matrosen Heimkehr* premiered in Hamburg in 1885 and, despite good reviews, was not a success and quickly forgotten.⁶⁵



Map 3 The Kingdom of Dalmatia, 1815–1918 under Habsburg rule.

The story is set on Hvar in 1816, as an Austrian navy boat docks and Pietro disembarks after twenty years of service, ready to settle down. He sees how the young Niccolo is forced by the Podestà (mayor) and judge Lucio Quirino di Galli to join the navy to get rid of him, as both are in love with the waitress, Jela. Pietro realizes she is the daughter of the love he left when he was forced to join the navy. As Niccolo and Jela are in love, but the town has to provide three recruits for the navy, Pietro sacrifices himself to save Nicolo.⁶⁶

The inhabitants of the island are described as “Citizens, women, girls, children, fishermen, fisherwomen, peasants, female farmers, Morlachs,⁶⁷ Scogalians,⁶⁸ Albanians, Serbs, sailors, cabin boys, etc.”⁶⁹ While the characters have primarily Italian names, their Slavic origin is acknowledged as the islanders sing in honor of “kraljevitsu Marko,” a heroic Serbian prince Marko, subject of numerous epic poems and songs.

The subsequent ballet scene is an unexpected display of Southeast European unity. Morlachs—the supposedly backward inhabitants of the Dalmatian hinterland—dance a *kolo* to the sound of the *gusla*. “Scogalians,” a term derived from *scogli*, literally “rocks,” used to describe the inhabitants of smaller islands and, by implication, more “backward” dance, as do Albanians, Slovenes, and Serbs, each in their traditional dress. The nobility of Hvar is dancing a waltz, in a

“silent-satirical note” as the libretto notes.⁷⁰ By the end, they all danced together wildly, including screaming and shouting.⁷¹ Suppé’s imaginary scene from Hvar was nothing but operatic fantasy. Neither Serbs nor Albanians would have been living on Hvar at the time. For dramatic purposes, Hvar becomes a microcosm of the eastern Adriatic. Yet, it is a genuinely Dalmatian opera, as the choir sings about “Dalmatia our fatherland,” and the names of the local recruits from the island are Giorgio Grabusich, Spiro Zuppancich, and Rocco Zanussich, reflecting both the Italian and the Croatian identity of Dalmatia.⁷²

The focus of Suppé’s opera on Hvar was also not much of a surprise, as a contemporary noted: “It is no coincidence that the composer, who is born in the South of Austria, in Dalmatia, locates the scene and action on the island of Hvar. The loving and faithful memories he retains of his romantic *Heimat* [‘homeland’] doubtlessly were the primary motivation for picking this story.”⁷³ Indeed, Suppé was born in Split just four years after the Habsburgs occupied Dalmatia in 1819 as Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere di Suppé-Demelli. The son of a Habsburg civil servant of Belgian and Italian descent and a Viennese mother, Suppé spent most of his youth in Zadar before studying in Padua—a common choice for Dalmatians as Padua was the only Italian language university of the Habsburg Monarchy—and eventually moving to Vienna.⁷⁴ He appears to have seen himself as Italian, and his biographer noted that his success was based on the combination of “Italian and brisk Viennese style.”⁷⁵ Later, the Croatian writer Josip Barač wrote appropriately that it “. . . is hard to define the national feeling of this Belgian from Split, who shares the same fate as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather not to die where he was born.”⁷⁶

Suppé remained closely connected to Dalmatia. Local orchestras contacted him for advice on whom to hire. In 1887, an administrator from Hvar asked Suppé for advice on the vacant posts of *kapellmeister* [conductor] for the city orchestra and organist and choir director for the cathedral. The letter from Hvar did not reflect the national division that had begun to emerge in Dalmatia, which were reflected in an earlier request to Suppé from Trogir. Here, his childhood friend Antonio de Fanfogna urged Suppé for advice for the “autonomist” orchestra director who competed with the Croat orchestra. The Autonomists—proponents of a distinct Dalmatian identity separate from a South Slav national projects—were the dominant political movements but gradually came to represent those who identified as Italian. Accordingly, he was looking for a “good German,” not a Croat.⁷⁷

Suppé and his opera about Hvar epitomize the ambiguous relationship many held with the new emerging national identities. Italian and Croatian identities emerged from outside of Dalmatia. Italian from the newly unified kingdom of Italy, which started to raise the “Adriatic question” and, with it, a claim to Dalmatia. Croatian national identity was an idea that originated from Zagreb and the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, centered on Zagreb.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Dalmatians would have primarily identified with their social status due to rigid stratification between the upper classes and the peasants. It was outsiders who told them how to identify and what

to call the language; for most of the nineteenth century and until the twentieth century, many Dalmatians remained “nationally indifferent,” a term coined by historian Tara Zahra to describe the absence of a strong sense of national belonging in the Habsburg Monarchy outside the national elites.⁷⁸

The ambiguities of what it meant to Dalmatians prevailed until the 1860s, when identity politics began to shift, first among local elites. Crucially, there was a significant overlap between social stratification and linguistic differences. In 1910, the population working in the agricultural sector was 99 percent Serb or Croat, only 0.5 percent Italian.⁷⁹ Considering that in 1890, 86.12 percent of the population of Dalmatia worked in agriculture, Italians were mainly confined to urban centers and elites.

During his visit to Hvar, the German historian Freiherr von Reinsberg noted that “[t]he Inhabitants of Hvar are partially of Italian, partially of Slavic descent. Italian is the language of the educated, of trade and social interaction; a corrupted Croatian-Serb dialect is [spoken] among the lower classes and the inhabitants of the countryside.” In addition, German was increasingly spoken by civil servants and officers and could be heard from visitors.⁸⁰ Descent mattered little. Many families had migrated to Hvar during the long Venetian rule, but attributing *Italianità* to these families would confuse what it meant to be Venetian with Italian as such. Indeed, Italian speakers became core activists of the Italian, Croatian, and Yugoslav national movements.⁸¹ For example, Petar Nisiteo (1774–1886) or Petar Nižetić, the influential scholar and mayor of Stari Grad, introduced Croatian for public use in 1832 while writing in Italian himself. In 1850, he wrote in Italian, “I am honored that since my childhood I speak Slavic and cultivate that language, to honor and not to forget ... my ancestor Petar Hektorović.”⁸² Similarly, another politician of the second half of the nineteenth century underscored the ability to combine the Italian language and Croatian national identity. The mayor of Hvar, Giovanni or Ivan Machiedo (1825–1905), son of the aforementioned Ivan Krstitelj Machiedo, had a well-established Venetian background. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Machiedo family moved to the island from Corfu, another Venetian possession, marrying into an old Hvar family that had fought for Venice against the Ottomans. Giovanni’s father was the mayor of Hvar between 1827 and 1833, and his mother was the daughter of the provincial governor. He studied in Padua before becoming the mayor of Hvar. While he began his career as an Autonomist, he switched to the Croatian Peoples’ Party (*Narodna stranka*) in 1867, making Hvar the first municipality in Dalmatia to be governed by a politician who favored unification with Croatia.⁸³ His obituary noted without irony “that he was a consistent deputy, who defended the Croatian interests in the Italian language.”⁸⁴

In 1869, the Franciscan monk Petar Bakula from Herzegovina noted that people could change their nationality occasionally, just as people change their clothes.⁸⁵ In Dalmatia, where one “thinks and speaks in Italian, commands in German and listens in Slavic,” identity choices were initially complex and multiple. Some identified as Illyrians, a type of proto-Yugoslavs; others saw themselves as Croats or Serbs; another group viewed themselves as Slavic Dalmatians, distinct from Croats and Serbs. Others viewed themselves as Italodalmatians, promoting

a distinct Italian and Dalmatian identity. Others still saw themselves as Italians. Initially, the idea of preserving the Dalmatian autonomy, which could incorporate all inhabitants of the Habsburg province, encompassed both Slavic and Italian speakers. But whether Dalmatia should join Croatia and Slavonia within the Habsburg Monarchy or remain autonomous became a divisive issue among the island's political elite. The mayors of Split, Hvar, and Sućuraj suggested in 1860 that a future Dalmatian assembly should decide, assuming the proposal would be rejected. On the other hand, the mayors of Stari Grad and Vrboska supported the idea, whereas Jelsa's mayor did not take a position. The supporters of immediate unification from Stari Grad appealed less to a strong sense of Croat identity. Instead, they argued that Croats were close Slavic brothers and thereby still maintained a distinct Dalmatian (as opposed to Croat) identity.⁸⁶

Protagonists of the Autonomist movement, such as Split mayor Bajamonti, compared Dalmatians to the Swiss with different languages, but "living in the same land, rather than reuniting with their mother countries, they believed it more opportune for them to live in the same family, which the centuries and misfortunes, gave the right to consider itself a nation."⁸⁷ Like other Autonomists, he believed not just in the existence of a distinct region but also in a Dalmatian nation that had civic, geographic, and historical roots rather than affinity based on language or common descent. An essential feature of Dalmatian identity was the importance of the urban centers and the intense local identity. Thus, Dalmatians would primarily see themselves as inhabitants of Zadar, Split, Šibenik, or Hvar. This local identity grew out of the autonomy of the towns under Venetian rule and earlier. Italian influence was primarily cultural and linguistic, less political, focused on urban centers, and nearly absent in the countryside.⁸⁸ Thus, there was not a single autonomist movement. Instead, the Autonomists reflected the local, municipal identities, headed by local notables from the most respected families, such as the Botteri in Stari Grad.⁸⁹

The idea of what constituted being Dalmatian was thus unclear. Most Dalmatia intellectuals emphasized their region's diverse and multilingual character as its distinguishing feature: "Dalmatia is one of those countries destined by Providence to serve as a link between people of different stocks," a Dalmatian journalist noted.⁹⁰ Rather than conceptualizing Dalmatia as inhabited by Italians and Slavs, most contemporaries considered the region inhabited by people who spoke different and often multiple languages, separated by social class and varying cultural influences. At least until the late nineteenth century, it was possible to be a Dalmatian without participating in the larger national movements that claimed Dalmatia. In 1876, a British envoy to the Eastern Adriatic, Sir Edmund Monson, noted on the Autonomists and the relationship with the Italians that

of pure Italians, there are probably no more than six thousand in the whole of Dalmatia, but the Italian party is composed of those who maintain that the prosperity of the country depends upon the extent to which it profits by its maritime advantages and that the development of those advantages is

materially enhanced by the continued cultivation of a language not only rich in tradition and in literature, but especially the commercial language of the Mediterranean and the Levant.⁹¹

However, the historian Dominique Reill has argued that Dalmatia in “the latter half of the nineteenth century was no longer a borderland between East and West, between Slavic and Latin. Instead, it was simply another Habsburg backwater containing many nationalities, its heterogeneity no longer dynamic, but a legacy of a bygone era.”⁹² Thus, the concept of Dalmatian distinctiveness thrived on the Venetian legacy, which both the Habsburg monarchy and the new Italian state claimed for themselves. Furthermore, the social and economic backwardness made a forward-looking idea of Dalmatia difficult, as it appeared neglected by Vienna and lacked a shared political and economic vision.

The introduction of elections brought competing visions of the nation to the political level and made them increasingly salient in broader society. Initially, the franchise was limited to men over twenty-four with a certain taxable income, resulting in only around 15 percent of the population having the right to vote in 1861; the system favored urban and mostly Italian-speaking voters.

Furthermore, turnout in elections in Dalmatia was the lowest in the Austrian half of the monarchy. In 1897 and 1901, only 8 and 4 percent of eligible voters in the general voting estate participated. Only after an election reform in 1907, when universal male suffrage was introduced, did turnout increase to 54 percent in Dalmatia, still the lowest in the monarchy.⁹³ The low turnout was a product of limited political engagement, high levels of illiteracy, and the difficult economic situation.

Thus, the Autonomists won the first Dalmatian elections in March 1861.⁹⁴ On Hvar in the first elections, the Autonomists dominated, with Jeronim Machiedo representing the cities of Hvar and Stari Grad and Ivan Krstitelj Machiedo and Jeronimo Vusio representing the rural districts. When the Dalmatian assembly selected its four members for the parliament in Vienna, they chose three Autonomists, including Machiedo from Hvar, and only one representative of the People’s Party, the main party promoting Croatian national identity.⁹⁵ The restrictive franchise and low voter turnout were apparent when Luigi Lapenna was elected to the Austrian parliament in 1873 to represent Hvar, among other islands and coastal regions. With a population of over 100,000, Lapenna was elected with 104 votes to 87.⁹⁶

Lapenna, explicitly rejected any pro-Italian position:

Dalmatians of Slavic and Italian language live peacefully side by side. The question of annexation of Dalmatia by Croatia, imported from Zagreb and Vienna, divides the population into two camps ... Nationality has nothing to do with it. Real Slavic men declare their allegiance to the party of the Autonomists, men of Italian tongue and Italian education place themselves at the helm of the annexationists ...⁹⁷

Lapenna was a bad example for this claim, hailing from an Italian family from Bari on his father's side and the prominent Gazzari family from Hvar, originally from Lombardy, on his mother's side. Together with Suppé, he was one of the most prominent Dalmatians in Vienna in the mid-nineteenth century. Initially, he supported a distinct Dalmatian identity, but gradually, he and the party increasingly represented the interests of the Italian community of Dalmatia.⁹⁸

The Autonomists also sought to distinguish between the Dalmatian Slavic population and the Croats living in Croatia. For example, Domenico Gazzari, the dominant figure of Autonomists in Stari Grad, claimed Slavs on Hvar were "Harvoti," whereas those in Croatia were "Krovati."⁹⁹ The linguistic distinctions were arbitrary, as there is no difference in the terms. The purpose was to underline the politically and socially relevant distinction between Slavs in Dalmatia and Croatia-Slavonia.

The other key controversy was over language. The Autonomist movement oscillated between supporting bilingualism and Italian only. Its historical dominance and its association with culture gave it primacy. As late as 1870, newspapers complained that primary schools were in "the hands of incompetent teachers, who got jobs through a formal test just to receive an income. Most teachers are completely unable to speak Serbo-Croatian, so the poor peasant children were unable to understand the words of the teacher due to Italian instruction."¹⁰⁰ The language of instruction was undoubtedly not the only reason for low literacy rates. In Dalmatia, around 73 percent were illiterate at the end of the century.¹⁰¹ Italian was initially the dominant language of the elites and administration. This remained the case even though Croatian/Serbian language instruction had become more common in schools. However, the language preference began to shift. In 1869, the Austrian Minister of Education, Leopold Hasner, reformed the school system and supported using "Slavic languages" at the gymnasium in Hvar.¹⁰² In 1870, the Dalmatian assembly granted Croatian equal status to Italian, and in 1883, both came to be recognized as equal official languages in the province.¹⁰³ On the other hand, the emerging Croat and Serb movements favored Croatian or Serbian to replace Italian as *lingua franca* and thus took a less favorable view of bilingualism.

Most importantly, the social structure of the autonomist movement was urban and based on the upper middle class, like other liberal parties of its time. It could not address the poverty of the countryside and, in the tense relationship between landowners, most of whom were Italian-speaking and the Slavic-speaking peasants, they took sides with the former. When a farmer was elected to a local council in Šibenik, a columnist for the autonomist *Il Dalmata* wrote, "Poor and deluded countrymen! Your place is not on councils, in civic bodies; the wretched politics practiced today are harmful to your naturally honest character ... in the fields, that is your place; there you are king."¹⁰⁴ Yet the farmers would not heed such condescending advice.

The Autonomists were increasingly challenged by the People's Party promoting Croatian language and identity. Tensions ran increasingly high between the two parties, particularly during elections. The army had to be sent to several Dalmatian towns to restore calm. Both sides accused each other of irregularities.¹⁰⁵

For example, during the 1870 elections, the Autonomists in Hvar were charged with instructing the telegraph office not to forward complaints to the electoral authorities about irregularities from Vis. The election of Autonomist Lapenna's election was still canceled, but he was re-elected in a by-election the following year.¹⁰⁶

Despite such manipulation, the political influence of the Autonomists was shrinking. The Autonomists supported the 1867 *Ausgleich* between Austria and Hungary, which placed Dalmatia in the Austrian half of the Monarchy, whereas Croatia remained under the Hungarian crown. This decision made any future unification between Dalmatia and Croatia unlikely. The same year, the Autonomists joined the club of Italian deputies, consolidating their transformation into an Italian party. Slavic Dalmatians increasingly found no place in political life and became politically and socially marginal. Except for Stari Grad and Vrboska, support for the Autonomists declined, and the line of identity and confrontation shifted toward language and nation. As the People's Party challenged the Autonomists, some switched allegiance, such as Ivan Krstitelj Machiedo, who switched to the People's Party and after 1865–6 opposed Autonomist's positions. The Battle of Vis strengthened the People's Party because Italy became a visible threat to the monarchy and Dalmatia, but also because Italy was defeated; at the local level, the distinctions between candidates from the Autonomists and the People's Party were also far from clear-cut. While these differences grew over time, there was a lot of cooperation initially across party lines, and the distinction between pro-Croat and pro-Autonomist positions was often unclear. Hvar Autonomists thus supported the introduction of Croatian in schools in equal measure as Italian and Autonomists from Vrboska and Hvar did not support a large rally of the leading Autonomist, the mayor of Split Antonio Bajamonti, who instead welcomed representatives of the People's Party from Sućuraj.¹⁰⁷

The People's Party dominated Jelsa from the first elections onwards. In contrast, in neighboring Vrboska, the Autonomists retained power for another half a century, losing only in 1901, a result mainly shaped by the influential local priest Don Luka Lučić. Stari Grad was the center for the Autonomists on Hvar and beyond, whereas Jelsa was a center for the Croatian national movement.¹⁰⁸ The contrast between the two towns, just 8 kilometers apart, could be explained by the individuals who dominated at the local level, which was accentuated by the limited franchise and the structure of the towns. In Stari Grad, the Autonomists owed their support to aforementioned two highly respected doctors, Domenico Gazzari (1823–81) and Marko Nisiteo (1774–1866).¹⁰⁹ They were instrumental in ending a cholera epidemic that hit the town in 1855, with 500 falling ill and 200 dying.¹¹⁰ They would later clash when the liberal wing of the Autonomists fell out with supporters of a more repressive state policy. There were prominent Croat nationalist leaders from Stari Grad, including the journalist and leader of the People's Party, Juraj Biankini (1847–1928), and his colleague Ivan Vranković (1831–1900). However, both were based in Zadar, which was too distant to shape local politics.¹¹¹ Another prominent local advocate of Croatian nationalism was Šime Ljubić (1822–96), who also made his career outside his hometown. He was a scholar and teacher in Split,

Osijek, and Rijeka, a founding member of the South Slav Academy of Sciences in 1869, and director of the archeological collection of the Zagreb Museum.¹¹² During a stay in Venice, he also participated in the emerging debates about the Slavic versus Italian identity of Dalmatia, challenging the Dalmatian Autonomist Vincenzo Duplancich.¹¹³ Yet, he was also not involved in local politics. When the Autonomists were defeated in Stari Grad in local elections in 1887, it reverberated well beyond the town. The Split newspaper *Narod* (The People) devoted the cover to congratulatory messages from other towns and communes. From Hvar town came the message: "Hvar is joyful about the national victory and lends its hand in friendship to Croatian Stari Grad, who now rushes to join the circle of people's municipalities in the sign of lasting unity. Under a joint flag, our aspirations will be joined."¹¹⁴

In Jelsa, on the other hand, Niko Duboković (1834–1912) shaped the town's fate. Duboković, from a prominent shipping family, was trained as a captain in Zadar and Trieste and in his youth sailed the Black Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. Later, he settled in Jelsa, where he took charge of the family's landholdings, one of the largest in Dalmatia.¹¹⁵ As mayor for nearly half a century, from 1868 to 1912, he would transform the town. His diary is a chronicle of modernization in the late nineteenth century, describing the efforts to develop the port, including protection against the strong *bura*, a cold and disruptive wind from the coast, and creating schools. Besides local events, he took note of key information for merchant shipping, such as grain prices in Budapest, as well as world events, such as the killing of Louis-Napoléon, the son of French King Napoleon III, in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.¹¹⁶ Whereas the Nisiteos and the Gazzaris were old aristocratic families from Hvar and Stari Grad, the Duboković family were among the late arrivals originating Bosnia, who fled to the island during the Venetian-Ottoman wars. By the eighteenth century, they had fully integrated into the island society and joined the elite because of their wealth, derived from extensive landholdings and shipbuilding.¹¹⁷

These dominant personalities personified the difference between the two towns. Stari Grad had long been the dominant town on the island. Jelsa was a small settlement, and conditions were difficult in the early nineteenth century, including malaria and flooding due to the large swamp in the center of town. In 1847, it even lost its status as a municipality. While it was reinstated the following year, that decision appears to have galvanized the town to reinvent itself, leading to the construction of the port that would accommodate larger ships and drain the swamps. In 1868, the local *Società del Casino* created a national reading room and changed its name to *Narodna čitaonica*, making it the oldest library on an Adriatic island. Earlier reading rooms in Dalmatia had just opened in Zadar, Split, and Dubrovnik.¹¹⁸

The reading room or library highlights the centrality of literacy and education to the Croatian national movement. The space housed a library, offered newspapers, and regularly hosted talks and readings to promote the Croatian language and identity. The initiative came from the mayor Duboković, with support from the local elite namely captains, traders, and the emerging middle class. The opening of the reading room was a major event on the island. The ceremony was attended

by visitors from Makarska, Vis, Brač, and other towns and villages on Hvar who were brought by boat. A band played all evening, and the dance lasted late into the night.¹¹⁹ [54] The reading room was opened by the leading Croatian nationalist politician in Dalmatia, Don Mihovil Pavlinović (1831–87), who hailed from Podgora, a small coastal town close to Hvar. In his speech, he underlined the importance of Hvar for the Croatian nation:

To you, Hvar, for the history of the first of the Adriatic islands, is bestowed the glory of bringing to life the thought that will be declared in golden letters in Croatian history. It is right that in the homeland of Lučić and Hektorović, the home of the palm trees and rosemary, on the threshold of Croatianness, the wheel of the Croatian nation that is looking from the east catches fire.¹²⁰

Decades later, Juraj Carić (1854–1927), a politician of the Croatia People's Party who had written about maritime affairs, remembered the opening of the reading room: "On Hvar, the situation was not very favorable for the [national] movement ... The national movement was presented as dark as the arrival of the French revolutionaries at the beginning of the century. Echoes of the Illyrian movement came from a distance vaguely captured and, therefore, not properly understood. The villages were seduced, and the clergy was Italian." Amidst this atmosphere, only Jelsa appeared as a "Croatian" town to Carić. Of course, his view was shaped by both hindsight and the nationalist spirit of the time, but it nevertheless highlights the importance of Jelsa for the Croatian national movement on Hvar and beyond.¹²¹

The establishment of the reading room was part of the proliferation of associations and clubs on the island. These were no longer the exclusive reserve of the elite, which had long-organized casinos and reading rooms with newspapers. However, they were no longer neutral spaces of entertainment but different societies promoting competing national agendas.

In Stari Grad, the *Societa del Casino* became *Circolo Fario* in 1881 and supported the Autonomists. The theatre in Hvar, one of the oldest public theatres in Europe, was thus used both by the autonomist *Società Musicale di Lesina* and the Croatian national groups, often a conflictual side-by-side rather than a harmonious interaction.¹²² New associations represented the urban middle class, such as the autonomist *Società Dalmata* in Stari Grad. The majority of these more broad-based associations would be explicitly Croat or South Slav—no surprise considering the linguistic dominance of Croatian among the peasants and fishermen. The most active was the *Sokol* movement, which drew from similar national gymnastics associations elsewhere in the Habsburg monarchy. It established its branch in Hvar in 1910 and Stari Grad two years later. Jelsa hosted a large regional *Sokol* meeting in 1911 in the newly opened Hotel Jadran, with nearly 2,000 curious spectators (see Figure 3.2).¹²³

Many societies in Hvar town gravitated around the theatre and music, such as the Croatian Music Society, created in 1842, the Philharmonic Society in 1866, and the Croatian Tamburica Society in 1899—the tamburica is a traditional string

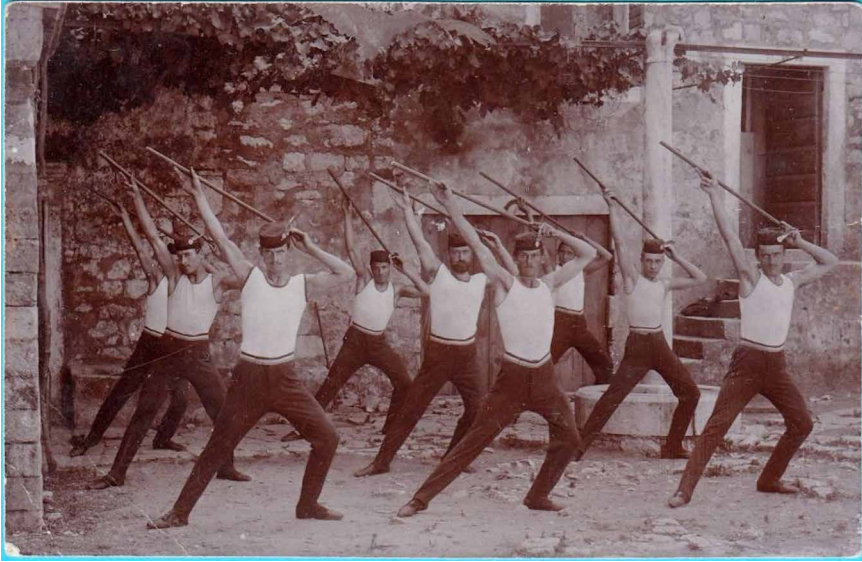


Figure 3.2 Public performance of the Sokol movement, Jelsa (1911). Pre-1914 postcard.

instrument. The Italian counterpart was the *Società Musicale Giovanni Francesco Biondi*, created in 1896.¹²⁴ In Stari Grad, two associations organized their respective national music programs, the *Hrvatska glazba*, founded in 1887, and the singing and tamburica society Hektorović, organizing concerts, performances, and dances, competing with the Italian counterpart being the *Banda cittadina* established in 1876.¹²⁵ In this flurry of associational life, the Croatian and South Slav associations gained the upper hand as Autonomists, and later Italian groups lost influence.

The nationalist contest over identity reached into the Catholic church. Old Church Slavonic was replaced by Latin during the nineteenth century for use in mass in Dalmatia. While the People's Party wanted to revive it to promote nation-building, the Monarchy worried about the rising pan-Slavic movements. In contrast, the Vatican oscillated. The Bishop of Hvar Jordan Zaninović (1840–1917) took a clear line in support, noting in a poem, “Let holy justice return / What others have alienated from us, / When from the temple of our grandfathers / Language the people were excommunicated.”¹²⁶ Relations were not easy, as the loyalty of the church leaders was torn, having had to pledge an oath to the Pope and the Emperor. Zaninović regretted the victory of Tresić-Pavičić in the elections in 1907 over Ivo Bojanić, a priest from the village of Vrisnik. Newly imposed restrictions on using Church Slavonic in 1906 contributed to the mood changing against the church, as Zaninović observed, “The spirits of the nation are perverted, it shouted and is still shouting: down with the thieving priests.”¹²⁷ The status of Church Slavonic remained uncertain until 1918, and all restrictions were lifted only at the end of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Bishop Zaninović, who hailed from a peasant family in Stari Grad, represents the ambiguity of identity well. Educated exclusively in Italian and Latin, he spoke and wrote Croatian in his local Stari Grad dialect. He admired Italian culture and Dalmatians who promoted Italian culture, like Tommaseo. Yet at the same time, he looked fondly on the Croatian national “awakeners” such as the fellow clergy Mihovil Pavlinović:

Some rebuke me for not showing great love for our people and base this on the fact that I wrote a few ‘poems’ in Italian. The truth is that I had not participated in the political struggles, but primarily because I don’t believe that it befits a humble friar and, on the other hand, because I am by nature wary of every discord and conflict. The fact that I use Italian did not bring me significant opposition from our people ...¹²⁸

The first visit of Emperor Franz Joseph I to Dalmatia in April and May 1875 became an opportunity for the leaders of the Croatian national movement to demonstrate their newly found importance. For the Monarchy, his trip symbolized the geopolitical reorientation of the Habsburg Monarchy to its Southeast after losing wars against Italy and Prussia in 1866.

Franz Joseph had initially planned to visit Dalmatia in connection with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, a symbolic gesture as many Dalmatian workers had helped build the canal. Instead, he went six years later, as tensions had been stewing in neighboring Herzegovina. Foreign Minister Gyula Andrassy worried the visit would incite uprisings.¹²⁹ During the trip, Franz Joseph I met with disgruntled Herzegovinian Christians and the young prince of Montenegro, Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš, who would rule Montenegro until 1918. It is subject to speculation whether these encounters might have been interpreted as a green light from the Habsburg side for a rebellion in the Ottoman lands.

Franz Joseph I also visited Hvar during what would become as part of his tour of Dalmatia. His arrival on the island was still a long way from the dramatic events that would transpire just a few years later: at the time, Habsburg’s control over Bosnia was, at best, a mere fancy of the Emperor. More immediately, the People’s Party instrumentalized the visit.

He traveled six weeks from Trieste along the coast to the Southernmost tip of the empire in Budva before returning along the islands northward. The Emperor reached Jelsa on May 11, 1875. The nationalists encouraged the visit to Jelsa as one of their centers of power, and the mayor ensured a particularly impressive welcome by erecting a triumphal arch with an inscription on the event. The court chronicler praised the arch for exceeding the declarations of loyalty elsewhere and said it would remain a “noble example for great sentiments” for future generations.¹³⁰ All the dignitaries addressed Franz Joseph in Croatian, a powerful signal of the shift from Italian to Croatian as the dominant language. Even the mayor of Vrboska, a stronghold of the Autonomists, addressed him in Croatian.¹³¹ The emperor gave a short greeting in Croatian, then switched to Italian, which he knew better. The mayor of Jelsa, Niko Duboković, also wrote a tribute to the Emperor on behalf of

all nationalist mayors, which was presented to Franz Joseph in Vis before his return to Vienna.¹³² When he left Jelsa, his departing ship was accompanied by salutes, “Long live the Croatian king!” clearly underscoring the national message the townspeople sought to send the Emperor.¹³³ For the mayor, the visit demonstrated that Jelsa’s inhabitants were “pure Croats, and Croats respect, kiss, and celebrate ... all those who fight for faith and homeland.”¹³⁴

Leaving Jelsa, the royal yacht *Miramar* continued its journey along the shore to Stari Grad. Another triumphal arch welcomed the Emperor, this one covered with agave leaves. As elsewhere, Croatian and Italian flags flew in competing displays of loyalty. Here, in a town dominated by the Autonomists, the visit was an important occasion for the People’s Party to emphasize the Croatian cause. Posters displayed during the visit that welcomed the emperor to the “nest of ancient Croatianess” were pulled down by the Autonomists, and street fights broke out between supporters of the Autonomists and the People’s Party.¹³⁵

The Emperor’s last stop on the island was Hvar town (see Figure 3.3). Observers were surprised by the enthusiastic welcome, including a replica of the Gloriette of Schönbrunn—the Emperor’s palace in Vienna—placed on Gališnik, the small islet in the town harbor from where the Russian army had shelled the town decades earlier.¹³⁶ The extent to which the visit cemented the link between the rising Croatian identity of Dalmatia and the monarchy became apparent as the sixty-three pro-Slavic mayors of Dalmatia came to Hvar to pay their respects to the Emperor. The seventeen Italian and autonomist mayors did not appear in Hvar.¹³⁷

The shift of power from Italian to Croatian also became apparent through Habsburg censuses. The Austrian census did not ask about nationality but instead about the *Umgangssprache*, the commonly used language. By not asking for the mother tongue, the question allowed some flexibility that would reflect shifts in the linguistic and national affinity across the empire. The census of 1880 was the first systematic monarchy-wide count of language.¹³⁸ Nationalist leaders across the Austrian half of the monarchy undertook significant efforts to promote their language.¹³⁹ Nearly a third of the island’s inhabitants indicated Italian as their *Umgangssprache*. Within a decade, the share dropped to an almost insignificant 2.76 percent (see Table 1).

This does not suggest a massive shift of language usage in a multilingual environment like Dalmatia, but rather a change of prestige and social importance. By the late nineteenth century, Croatian had replaced Italian as the language of communication, aspiration, and upward social mobility.

Table 1 Umgangssprache on Hvar and Vis in Habsburg Censuses¹⁴⁰

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Serbo-Croatian	15,655 (68.46%)	24,844 (97.16%)	27384 (98.16%)	26280 (97.68%)
Italian	7,196 (31.47%)	706 (2.76%)	487 (1.75%)	586 (2.18%)
German	16 (0.07%)	14 (0.05%)	21 (0.08%)	11 (0.04%)



Figure 3.3 Arrival of Emperor Franz Joseph I in Hvar, (1875). © Austrian National Library.

In 1884, Šime Ljubić noted that “Italian cannot be the ‘landesüblich’ [i.e., common] language ... Italian is the language of a good guest, as long as he is good ...”¹⁴¹ Italian, thus, was no longer a language commonly spoken by many Dalmatians, irrespective of how they identified, but became the language of a minority, and to make matters worse one that was becoming associated with the irredentist Italian Monarchy.

Similarly, Ante Tresić-Pavičić observed in 1906 that

In Dalmatia, Italian culture can only maintain itself as far as it helps the Croatian culture in its development. As soon as it loses this influence, it loses its ‘raison d’être’ and as to complete get lost ... If those who call themselves Italians in Dalmatia will be people with irredentist aspirations, everything will get worse; the conflict will tighten further at the expense of the Italian and Croatian languages.¹⁴²

Indeed, Italian became the language of a minority rather than a unifying bracket for Dalmatia.

Italy became more active in supporting what it saw as its minority in Dalmatia. In particular, it established *Società Dante Alighieri* in 1889 to “protect and spread the Italian language and culture across the world, reviving the spiritual ties of compatriots abroad with the mother country and nurturing love and admiration for the Italian civilization among foreigners.”¹⁴³ Its sister organization, the *Lega Nazionale*, established in 1890, organized Italian language schools and received active support from Italian consuls. Its Stari Grad branch was opened by Giovanni Botteri, who emphasized that the islanders’ ancestors spoke Greek and Latin, which shaped their customs: “But the Slavs, the next wave of settlers, destroyed the towns and built little in their place. Fortified cities had resisted the Slav invasion. It was under Venetian rule that the province received substantial numbers of Slav immigrants.” Botteri’s implication was clear: Slavs were migrants to the island rather than their original inhabitants.¹⁴⁴ These tones reflected the increasing antagonism between Slav/Croat and Italian nationalisms and mutual claims about the island’s original inhabitants. This contradicted reality as many supporters of the Autonomists, especially in Vrboska, were Slavs, and not all Dalmatians of Italian descent became Autonomists.

As tensions increased, the nationalist competition would lead to frequent conflicts, especially between youth movements. This included Croat activists throwing the furniture of the autonomist *Lega Nazionale* (see Figure 3.4) into the canal in Stari Grad. As they threw the picture of Dante into the water, they mocked the irredentist slogan “Viva Dante grand maestro” by singing “Dante, Dante grand maestro nell canale sta in fresco”—Dante, Dante, the great master will stay cool in the canal.¹⁴⁵ In Vrboska, Autonomists broke into the town hall and took down the picture of the first Croat mayor. There were regular brawls, particularly Croat activists from the villages clashing with Italian Autonomists in Vrboska.¹⁴⁶



Figure 3.4 School of the Italian Community, Stari Grad (before 1914). Pre-1914 postcard.

With the hindsight of the successful nationalist movements of the twentieth century, it is easy to dismiss regionalist or supranational movements as nationalists in disguise. This risks projecting the present or, rather, some idealized national view into the past. However, the clash between different national movements on Hvar offered little to improve the economic situation on the island, which was shaped by subsistence agriculture.

Wine Boom and Bust

Most peasants on Hvar would see their livelihood less affected by competing nationalist claims, but a little yellow-brown insect, less than two millimeters long. These little lice feed on the vines' roots. By the time they begin to feast on the leaves of the vines, it is too late. The damaged roots start to rot, and plants die. To this day, there is no cure for vines attacked by this microscopic creature. Few events had a greater impact than this little bug with a long name: *Daktulosphaira vitifoliae*. Better known by its more common name, phylloxera or "sap-sucker," it traveled from the United States to Europe in the 1860s. It was attached to plants brought to Europe to fight *powdery mildew*, another widespread disease in vineyards. While the American vines had built up defenses and were not killed by the little insect, European vineyards had no resistance. They began to wither and die, starting in the Rhône region and spreading across the continent from Portugal to the Crimean Peninsula. Devastated by an untreatable disease, vineyards only survived by importing resistant American vines and using them to graft European grapes onto them.¹⁴⁷

France had dominated global wine production until phylloxera arrived. During the 1870s and 1880s, wine production collapsed by 70 percent.¹⁴⁸ For Hvar, phylloxera was both a boon and a bane. At first, local wine production flourished as the vineyards across the continent wilted and died. However, once the insect found its way to Hvar, it would equally devastate Hvar's vineyards and shatter its booming economy with burgeoning vineyards, bustling ports, and a growing middle class, leading to decline and impoverishment.

Since Venetian times, winemaking has been essential to the local economy. However, as Graf von Lilienberg noted in 1830 during his travels as the governor of Dalmatia, winegrowing remained relatively primitive. While extensive wine cultivation existed on Hvar, including "ordinary" wines that could compete with those from Italy and France, he observed the lack of know-how and old-fashioned processing, resulting in wines with a short shelf life.¹⁴⁹ His call to invest in improving winemaking was not heeded for decades.

Despite the simple and obsolete techniques, travelers often praised the quality of Hvar wine, like Ida von Reinsberg-Dürigfeld (1815–76), one of the rare female travelers. She spent nearly two years in Dalmatia as part of her extensive journeys across Europe with her husband Otto, a retired officer of the Prussian Army. At the house of the leading Hvar Family Kasandrić, she was "served ... Prosecco from the coast that was 37 years old and exquisite."¹⁵⁰ Prosecco, or prošek, is a sweet dessert wine, similar to port wine, made from the last harvest, was the

main wine produced next to the red or white muscat of a lower quality.¹⁵¹ Experts considered these “delicious and light table wines from Hvar and Vis—with the highest alcohol level among all known wines in the world”—to compete with “the best foreign products” if production methods were updated.¹⁵² In 1843, a sixth of the island’s surface was used for growing wine, much more than in most other regions of Dalmatia.¹⁵³ A visitor in the late 1860s noted,

If one stands in the center of the island and lets one’s gaze wander, one will be surprised what an extensive terrain is covered by vineyards, from planes at sea level to the steep slopes and the over thousand feet high plateaus, where no other cultivated plant would grow. With great effort, the locals pick up the loose stones and make piles or build terraces to create a good place for the precious grape.¹⁵⁴

Already in the 1850s, another disease boosted local wine production. Oidium, a fungus that causes mildew on grapes, resulted in poor harvests and low-quality wine in Italy.¹⁵⁵ Wine production increased massively in Dalmatia, transforming most agriculture into a monoculture. Oidium would reach Hvar in 1852, revealing that the island vineyards, even if more isolated than the mainland, were not immune to disease. The vineyards on the island’s southern side were particularly badly affected.¹⁵⁶

The much larger boom began in 1867 as *phylloxera* spread in Europe’s vineyards.¹⁵⁷ The Austrian oenologist Robert Schöerer noted in 1889, “Probably no region in the world (except Algiers) has experienced such a rapid expansion of its vine growing, as Dalmatian recently. It is not long ago that the most primitive vine production prevailed.”¹⁵⁸ It became one of the most important wine-growing regions next to Bordeaux and Porto during this period.¹⁵⁹

The Dalmatian islands benefited particularly, as their remoteness initially spared them from the disease. On Hvar, every available plot of land was used to grow wine. Peasants began to cut down olive and fig trees to plant vineyards to meet the demand. In barren and rocky terrain, terraces were built to grow wine—terraces that would become one of the trademarks of the island’s topography today. By 1870, wine production dominated the economy of Dalmatia, and 5 percent of the land was used to grow grapes, proportionally more than in France¹⁶⁰ Dalmatia produced a third of all the wine of the Habsburg Empire. Within Dalmatia, Hvar, Brač, and Vis were the largest wine-growing regions, producing between 200,000 and 250,000 hectoliters, which constituted a quarter of the region’s production by the 1880s.¹⁶¹ This sounds impressive, yet when calculated based on the wine produced by the size of the vineyards, the relative yield was low. The individual plots were small, and the conditions were difficult, with little fertilizer and no modern equipment. It was a sharecropping system where peasants did not own the land, which made the growing less efficient. The agreements between the peasants and landowners were detailed and prescribed the share of the harvest the peasants had to give the landowners and what to grow. Producing wine, unlike olive oil, was demanding and required the farmers to tend to the fields all year round.¹⁶²

To produce more effectively, wine growers set up cooperatives or *zadrugas*; the first was established in 1864 in Korčula.¹⁶³ The wine business also changed long-established socio-economic structures, as traders and sailors could profit from the business and challenge the dominance of the old established land-owning families. The status of peasants improved less, but towns became more prosperous, which meant that a broader range of citizens could be educated.¹⁶⁴ In brief, the wine boom and a surge in shipping and fishing—more about this later—gave rise to an urban middle class.

The prominent captain and sea merchant Duboković bought a large boat in Korčula to organize direct wine shipping to the French port of Sète, close to Montpellier. The Dalmatian wine was sometimes further refined in France, as Dalmatian wines were considered overall mediocre.¹⁶⁵

Around half of the wine production was exported: France was the leading destination between 1870 and 1890, later replaced by Hungary.¹⁶⁶ The wine was shipped to Bordeaux and other southern French ports. Boats from Italy, Greece, France, and Austria-Hungary would dock in Jelsa and Stari Grad to load up wine.¹⁶⁷ Wine from Hvar became part of the global trade, including not just with Europe but also with the colonies, as the “heavy and ordinary red wines from Lesina, which were taken along as a trial, found willing buyers and were well paid for” in Aden, the key British trading port at the Southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula and where it was distributed to the British colonies around Indian ocean.¹⁶⁸

A hangover would soon follow the rapid growth of Dalmatian wine production when *phylloxera* reached Dalmatia in 1894. By 1908, around half of the Dalmatia vineyards had been devastated by *phylloxera*.¹⁶⁹ The growing fear on Hvar about how the approaching disease would devastate the local economy was documented by Niko Duboković, the long-time mayor of Jelsa and a leading Dalmatian merchant, in a letter to the administration in Zadar in 1906 that “Phylloxera is quickly approaching our island. ... Wine is the main product here ... When phylloxera appears on the island, it will destroy the vineyards at lightning speed because they are uninterrupted next to each other.”¹⁷⁰ In anticipation, he requested support to bring in the American grape variety, which had developed resistance to the disease.

Help from a different direction was sought in 1901, with the dedication of a chapel in the wine-growing village of Ivan Dolac, appealing to heavenly intervention:

To the glory of the Mother of God, this church was raised by
 Ivan Carić, of the Juraj family—Mildew and Peronospora
 destroyed the grapes from the year 1852
 It was a time of terrible hardship—the sap-sucker [Phylloxera] reached
 Zadar—The vines failed, in fear is awaited
 the downfall of the people. O people! Those who offend God
 Turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and may God Almighty
 preserve you from these three creatures.¹⁷¹

However, the plea could not avert the arrival of the “sap-suckers,” which destroyed Hvar’s vineyards in 1908. As the leases between landowners and peasants often included a clause that limited the duration of the contract as long as there was wine production, phylloxera also meant that peasants risked losing the land they worked on.¹⁷²

Phylloxera was not the only cause for the decline of Dalmatian wine production, as Frane Ivanišević, a Dalmatian deputy in the Austrian Reichsrat, insisted. Instead, there were three “enemies of the grape and wine trade: *Peronospora* [a type of mildew], the wine clause, and *Phylloxera*.”¹⁷³ He called on Austria to compensate Dalmatia for the significant loss of income due to the wine clause, part of an agreement between Austria-Hungary and Italy in 1891. The clause allowed Italian wine to enter the Habsburg Monarchy without customs, which meant Italian wine of a higher quality than Dalmatian production could enter the market at a lower cost. At the same time, France closed its doors to imports by increasing the customs for wine, so by 1892, Dalmatian wine exports had shrunk well before *Phylloxera* reached Hvar.¹⁷⁴

The government justified the beneficial import rates for Italian wine as a necessity to cover domestic demand.¹⁷⁵ Many Dalmatian politicians saw the favorable import tariffs for Italian wine instead as a deliberate attack. Deputy Juraj Žerjavić called the tariffs a “question of life survival of the Croatian people.”¹⁷⁶

Within a year, the price per barrel more than halved.¹⁷⁷ In 1893, not a single boat docked in the port of Jelsa to buy wine; the following year, only one boat was left with 130 barrels. Wine sales somehow improved at the turn of the century. Still, the overall decline triggered an existential crisis for many families¹⁷⁸ and exposed the vulnerability of monocultures to disease and changing economic circumstances.

Juraj Biankini observed in 1908, “All other wine-growing countries have other activities besides wine growing which are very profitable. Dalmatia is mainly and completely devoted to viticulture, and as a result, 80% of the population exclusively lives off the vines.”¹⁷⁹ Once *phylloxera* hit, local farmers had little resources and reservoirs to overcome the consequences, and migration became the primary way out. Between 1907 and 1910, some 13,000 hectares of vineyards were revitalized through interest-free loans and state subsidies. However, this remained well below the total amount of vineyards destroyed.¹⁸⁰

Resistant American roots were imported to graft local vines on, and new experimental vineyards were established in Dalmatia, including in Zavala, close to Ivan Dolac on the southern side. Some vine growers eagerly introduce the new American varieties to revive the dying vineyards, like Ivan Duboković Nadalini (1862–1921), son of Jelsa’s long-term mayor. He first regenerated his vineyards and then sought to promote the new technology on his lands cultivated by the 538 tenant peasants—the enormous number indicated both his wealth and the small land size of the individual peasants.¹⁸¹

Unfortunately, these measures were too little and too slow, and wine production decreased dramatically. Infected fields needed to lie fallow for a year and could only be recultivated after another year with new plants. The outbreak of the First

World War prevented any quick recovery.¹⁸² In 1917, export restrictions and the war meant that local winegrowers were stuck with their wine that threatened to turn to vinegar, with some 60,000 hectoliters unsold in Hvar and nearly five times more in all of Dalmatia, “In Dalmatia, the wine is going to waste, and elsewhere wine can’t be bought for reasonable prices!” an Austrian newspaper noted indignantly.¹⁸³ Thus, the boom of wine production on Hvar ended with a sharp downturn that would take decades to overcome.

Despite the dominance of wine, other agricultural products gained importance on Hvar. Two stand out: rosemary and a local variety of chrysanthemum. The powder of the yellow chrysanthemum flowers, known as *buhač* in Dalmatia, became a widely used insecticide worldwide in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, Rosemary possesses a long history and remained important during the Habsburg period. Josip Marinković began producing the *Acqua della Regina* made of rosemary oil in the early nineteenth century. Having sold it to the Austrian emperor’s mother in 1818, he could also use the imperial seal. Subsequently, he marketed it to preserve “Beauty, first among the natural gifts of women.”¹⁸⁵

Four decades later, Franz Unger, one of the founders of tourism on Hvar, noted that “on the beautiful and sublime island of Hvar, one can’t take a step in the surroundings of the city with the same name with the rocky and sparse vegetation without stepping on a rosemary bush.”¹⁸⁶ Branches are cut at the end of May, left to dry for over a week, and then distilled in big copper pots on improvised fires in the open. The heat makes the etheric oils evaporate, and then the steam was condensed with the help of seawater, and the oil drops in a storage container. Due to the primitive production methods, more than half of the etheric oils were lost.¹⁸⁷ Only by the end of the century, its cultivation and production had become more developed.

Following the trend of establishing cooperatives (*zadruga*), the first cooperative for processing rosemary was established in 1892 in Velo Grablje. A year later, Ante Petrić founded the local farmers’ treasury (*seoska blagajna*), a model that reached Dalmatia from Austria to provide credit to farmers. The cooperative was part of the peasants’ initiative to self-organize in the late nineteenth century. In Brusje, near Grablje, the association bought the distillation equipment and common spaces to produce and store the oil and other products.¹⁸⁸ Thus, cooperatives would jointly purchase big barrels for wine, oil presses, or distillery equipment, all of which individual farmers could not afford.

Between 1898 and 1918, sixteen farmers’ treasuries were established on Hvar. These local credit unions helped to avoid dependency on loan sharks and other debt traps. In the *konoba*, the ground-level storage space of traditional Dalmatian houses, the cooperative had its storage space, while upstairs housed the credit union and a library, a model that could be found in other villages. Decision-making in the cooperatives was democratic, and they would seek the best price in selling their products, as a local peasant later recalled: “I remember when the first production of rosemary oil was sent to Paris, payment was supposed to arrive in

three months” When it did, it was twice the amount they had received from local traders.¹⁸⁹

While these efforts helped secure survival, the collapse of wine production in 1908 accelerated the emigration from Hvar, as elsewhere in Dalmatia. The villages had grown rapidly in the late nineteenth century, but even before the phylloxera outbreak on the island, there were many more villagers than the land could sustain.

Leaving Hvar

On New Year’s Eve 1905, the transatlantic steamer *La Touraine* set sail from Le Havre for New York. This was the era of steamships that crossed the Atlantic and other oceans. On board were around one thousand passengers, most of whom were in third class. Among the first-class passengers was Ante Tresić-Pavičić, a Hvar native and well-known writer and politician. On board, he met some Croats in the third class because, as he notes, “there is no steamship which would not carry Croats across the ocean ...” Tresić-Pavičić undertook the trip to learn more about the United States and why it had become a destination for thousands of fellow Dalmatians. His new acquaintances left him with no doubt about why they left: “Misfortune! I don’t know how to pay the taxes; the children and the elderly at home are hungry. No income or earnings.” Tresić-Pavičić observed, “They all have an address on a piece of paper of somebody they know, where they are heading. If they are doing well, they will not return.”¹⁹⁰ Despite this arduous journey and the costs to pay for the journey, hundreds of thousands took their chances.

Emigration from Dalmatia was intensive and global, although the United States was a popular destination. The peak years for migration to the United States from Dalmatia were 1907 and, after a short dip due to a recession in the United States, the years preceding the First World War. This coincides with the peak of phylloxera on Hvar and the other Dalmatian islands. Indeed, the islands were an important place of origin for Dalmatian migrants.

While some more remote islands, such as Vis, experienced a more substantial emigration per capita, Hvar had the largest number of inhabitants leaving.¹⁹¹ Thus, nearly a quarter of the population left between 1900 and 1910, some 3,777.¹⁹² The worst affected town in Dalmatia was Stari Grad; Vrboska and Hvar also lost a substantial part of their population.¹⁹³ In 1903, an Austrian travel writer who visited Stari Grad lamented how there was not much to do except fishing and

Table 2 Migration from Dalmatia and Hvar¹⁹⁵

	1881/1890	1891–1900	1901–1910	1881–1910
Dalmatia	13,845	12,499	31,814	58,158
District Hvar	1,095	1,911	3,777	6,783

trading in wine as many of its inhabitants had left “to find their bread abroad. If the old Pharians would rise from their graves, they would exclaim ‘What have you done to our happy island? They would ask ‘Why?’ ‘You killed our gods, destroyed our temples, and scratched off our inscriptions? That is, thus, the effect of your much-praised new culture.”¹⁹⁴

Key to understanding migration from Hvar and elsewhere in Dalmatia was population growth. Emigration peaked as the population of Hvar increased dramatically. Hvar grew from 12,271 inhabitants in 1857 to 18,091 in 1900, an increase of nearly 50 percent in just over forty years. Other islands in Dalmatia experienced similar growth during the period. During these decades, the region witnessed a decline in death rates due to better hygienic conditions and medical treatment, while birth rates remained high. The resulting rapid population growth put enormous strains on the local economy, even without the crisis of wine cultivation.¹⁹⁶ Agricultural production could no longer keep up, and the land could not sustain the growing families.

Dalmatians began emigrating earlier in the nineteenth century, especially with the rise of the steamship. The steamship was transformative for two reasons. First, it made transatlantic travel cheap and reliable, unlocking the possibility of massive migration in the late nineteenth century. Second, it also destroyed the local boat industry, increasing poverty and causing migration: “Dalmatian sailors, known around the globe as skilled navigators, became idle as the steamship replaced the sailing schooner on high seas.”¹⁹⁷ In 1865, the Russian consul in Dubrovnik noted the immense poverty of Dalmatia: “The number of Dalmatian coastal trading vessels is declining every year, and the Dalmatian sailors are leaving their homes in large numbers for Egypt, Turkey, and Russia to look there for work and their livelihood.”¹⁹⁸ Indeed, Egypt, or more precisely, the Suez Canal, became a major destination. In Suez, Ferdinand de Lesseps, the mastermind behind the canal’s construction, proudly told the visiting Habsburg foreign minister Friedrich Ferdinand Beust how more than 20,000 Dalmatians worked on the Suez Canal and were the best workers. Even though he might have exaggerated, records suggest several thousand Dalmatians contributed to the canal’s construction.¹⁹⁹ Beust later noted in his memoirs how Lesseps’ praise for the hardworking Dalmatians was particularly noteworthy due to the prevailing view “about the population of our southern provinces,” i.e., the stereotype that Dalmatians were lazy.²⁰⁰ Many Dalmatians building the canal hailed from Korčula, Pelješac, and Hvar. Records are spotty, but more than five people from the small village of Vrisnik had gone to Suez.²⁰¹

When Emperor Franz Joseph visited the canal in November 1869, he paid a visit to the town of Ismailia, founded for workers just a few years earlier at the shore of Lake Timsah; 800 Dalmatians still lived in the town of 5,000, and some 2,000 in the larger district.²⁰² By the end of the century, citizens from the Habsburg Monarchy, overwhelmingly Dalmatians, made up 11 percent of the workforce at the canal. They were the fourth largest group after Greeks, Egyptians, and Italians—primarily working as unqualified laborers.²⁰³

One of the workers on the canal was Jakov (Santiago) Buratović, born in 1846 in Vrbanj on Hvar. After the work on the canal was finished, he eventually settled in Argentina, where he became a prominent soldier in the Argentine army, participating in the infamous *Conquista del Desierto*, the military campaign to take control of the Patagonian plains that involved mass violence against indigenous populations. He was involved in expanding the telegraph and train network in Argentina, paving the way for many migrants from Hvar to emigrate to Argentina, particularly the province of Santa Fe.

The most prominent emigrant from Hvar was Ivan Vučetić. His emigrant story was initially typical for the era. He left for Latin America at the age of twenty-six in 1884. In Argentina, he could draw on a network of other islanders to help him settle, and within four years, he got a job with the local police station of La Plata, a booming city not far from Buenos Aires. In charge of identification, he became a pioneer in developing fingerprint identification. At that point, Ivan became Juan and was, first and foremost, an Argentinian success story. He would return to Hvar for a visit in 1912, during a tour of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and North America, presenting his findings. It would be his only visit to Hvar after he emigrated to South America.²⁰⁴

Other emigres from Hvar headed for New Zealand, where the Dalmatian migrants became known as Dallies. Dalmatians mostly worked in the northern gum fields, where they stood out as there were few other non-British emigres.²⁰⁵ As for many migrants, the new life was not much easier than back home. As the poet Ante Kosovich wrote about the experience in New Zealand, “Ah, Dalmatia, I give you news of your sons,/How this wild, hard country beats them down/In the lonely hell of gumfields.”²⁰⁶ They mostly lived in small huts on the plantations, making a modest income to send back home and hoping to eventually return themselves with their earnings. One of the emigres was Ivan Bunčuga, who left his family’s vineyards in Jelsa in 1905 for the rubber plantations of New Zealand.²⁰⁷ By the beginning of the twentieth century, some 10,000 Dalmatians had settled in New Zealand. Many Dalmatians married Maoris, leading to the emergence of a whole Dalmatian-Maori cultural amalgam called Tarara, named after the Maori word for Dalmatians, a term based on the frequent and fast use of the letter “r” in Dalmatian.

Despite these other destinations, the United States dominated since the earlier phases of emigration. Some of the early emigrants settled in New Orleans, others in California. There was a significant Dalmatian and Montenegrin presence in San Francisco by the mid-nineteenth century. Many Dalmatians settled in California during the gold rush. Pajaro Valley, south of San Francisco, became known as “New Dalmatia,” imprinted with their wine production, fishing, and fig-growing traditions.²⁰⁸ Others ventured further inland, driven by the gold rush: The William Tell Saloon in Sacramento was run by John Markovich from Hvar, and his fellow islander Nikola Budrovich also ran a saloon in town.²⁰⁹ Many of these migrants were involved in trade, such as the fruit trade, or owned saloons, restaurants, or “coffee saloons,” as Anton Gerkovich and Nikola Buja from Hvar.²¹⁰ The saloons were not just places to catch a drink but also network hubs for newly arrived



Figure 3.5 Procession of Sv. Rok, Stari Grad (before 1914). © Stari Grad Museum.

immigrants, where they would find fellow compatriots who spoke the same language, get help finding jobs, and exchange news about home.²¹¹ Decades later, during his visit to the United States, Tresić-Pavičić was puzzled by the saloons to which his Croat hosts took him: “It is not a *krčma* [a bar], a *gostiona* [a guesthouse/restaurant], or *kafana* [coffeehouse], but a bit of everything. The saloon plays a big role in American life ...”²¹²

While some came to California directly with Dalmatian ships, others were part of the migration to the East Coast and then made their way overland, especially once the transcontinental railway opened in 1869. One of them was John Tadich from Stari Grad, who described the journey to the West: “Whenever our train would stop on a side-track, hundreds of Indians and their squaws, with papooses [a term to describe native American children] on their backs, would gather around the train. They were just as curious about us as we were about them.”²¹³ Another emigrant from Hvar who took this route was Anton Mazzanovich, born on Hvar in 1860 and left for the United States with his family at the age of eight. His family made it to the West Coast, where he joined the army, whereas his family were musicians and later settled in Los Angeles. He was involved in the army’s wars against the native American Apache in the early 1880s. For him, his origins in Hvar were less essential, writing in *Trailing Geronimo* that

[w]e galloped on for perhaps fourteen or fifteen miles, and then the colonel wanted to stop for a rest ... [h]ere he became somewhat personal and asked me

why I had enlisted in the army, what was my nationality, etc. I told him I was born on the island of Lesina, in a town of the same name, in Dalmatia, Austria²¹⁴

After being discharged from the army, he sold trinkets from Native Americans and opened a saloon in the small mining town of Shakespeare in New Mexico.²¹⁵ Others remained keenly aware of their origin and promoted South Slavic identity, such as Vicko Jelcic also known as Vincent Gelcich, born in Stari Grad in 1828, who had studied medicine in Venice and Trieste. As his obituary noted in 1885, "His patriotic blood tingled at the call of Garibaldi, and he left college to follow the great Liberator. When the republican army was defeated by the superior French forces, and Garibaldi was forced to flee, young Gelcich took refuge in this country ... arriving upon this coast in 1850."²¹⁶ He organized the Slavonic Illyric Mutual & Benevolent Society of San Francisco of 1857 and fought in the Union army during the Civil War.²¹⁷ After the war, he moved to Los Angeles and became a pioneer in exploring the city's oil reserves.

As thousands began leaving Hvar and other islands, villages, and towns of Dalmatia, newspapers and politicians began worrying about this exodus. The major of Jelsa, Niko Doboković, lamented their fate, noting how "it breaks my heart to see how these languishing people leave their homeland and run away to America."²¹⁸ In January 1883, an article in the Zadar daily *Narodni List*, probably written by Juraj Biankini, reflected on the exodus: "In recent times, the youth of Dalmatia has been rushing to America in huge numbers. From Stari Grad itself, up to 50 strong young men have departed for California. It is regretful that the best workforce is leaving the country, which abounds in many undiscovered sources of wealth."²¹⁹ Many saw the emigration with increasing alarm, but there was no consensus on what caused it or how to manage migration. Some saw it as a reflection of Austrian neglect, whereas official sources attributed it to the adventurism of young Dalmatian men.

In 1905, the newspaper *Hrvatska riječ*, for example, blamed the government for the poverty driving the emigration:

Our man goes into a foreign and unknown world, he runs away from starvation and does not think to where he is going. He is left to himself and his destiny in a foreign world where most of our people die in their struggle, with no benefit for himself or his household, and that is because emigration is not our national need but the need of an individual ... Will the Government help us? It cannot and will not.²²⁰

This theme was also reiterated by Biankini and other politicians and activists who blamed migration on the Austrian state for its laissez-faire policy toward migration and neglect of Dalmatia. Thus, *Narodni List* complained in July 1890: "Where are the railroads they have built? Where are the small businesses, trade, traffic, and credit institutions they have promoted? ... The people are not emigrating for ill-founded reasons or out of a wish for adventure. They emigrate due to the extremely tough hardship."²²¹

While Austria had neglected Dalmatia during the preceding decades, emigration had structural causes that were hard to steer through government intervention. High population density, little arable land, poor state of agriculture, maritime experience, and proximity to the sea contributed to the migration.²²² Besides these triggers, there were also opportunities, such as reliable ways of reaching overseas, promoted by the agents of the shipping companies and “the millions of earlier immigrants already in the United States,” as Isaac A. Hourwich noted in 1912.²²³ Their—often embellished—letters and remittances convinced many to leave. When they returned home to show off their success overseas, they encouraged others to follow their example.²²⁴

Rajmund Kupareo, a prominent priest from Vrboska, remembers his uncle’s departure as a child. His friends and family came over to wish him well and sang a song: “You stay with God, but remember me! We are parting, we are parting, may God follow you!” The Grandmother sobbed, and her aunts kept her from falling unconscious. “Why did he have to go to a foreign world? I don’t know that even today.”²²⁵ The departure was a big event, as the whole village would often bid goodbye. The trip was prepared long ahead of time, simply gathering enough money to pay for the trip took a while. Around the turn of the century, the journey to Buenos Aires cost 180 crowns. Considering the price, it took several years of saving or selling a plot of land to fund the trip. The young men would either pay back the money from their earnings abroad or give up their share of the land to their brothers.²²⁶

Once they left, communication with family would often be sporadic, as few were literate. As discussed earlier, Dalmatia had the lowest literacy rate in 1890 of the entire Austro-Hungarian Monarchy of only 16.2 percent. Most would learn to read and write in their new languages, such as English and Spanish. If they were active in the diaspora clubs and associations, they might also learn to write Croatian, but often only at a basic level. Marin Franičević, a writer from Vrisnik, captured the contacts with relatives in South America in a poem:

Two or three times a year, the mailman came to the house
and brought the leaves in a blue, skinny envelope
full of seals and stamps.
written by a brother from Los Molinos or Santa Fe
thanking God that he is well and healthy
... and it’s hard to earn some money.²²⁷

Return was a central part of immigrants’ and their family’s narrative about their life plans. During the peak migration period, being a migrant was inherently transitory. Few remained fixed in one place but moved around, and most anticipated returning. While departure was a big event, emigration was normal as young men left in their thousands. Most European migrants left for good or at least planned on not returning, Dalmatians, together with other migrants from Central and Southern Europe, on the other hand, often returned.²²⁸ A US report showed that 40 percent of the new migrants returned to Europe.²²⁹ Return was

thus not a dream for many but a reality. Overall, a third of Croats who emigrated from Austria-Hungary are thought to have returned.²³⁰

Many also returned to the United States for a second (or third time); around 7.5 percent of all Dalmatians who entered the United States between 1900 and 1914 had been there.²³¹ There were many different reasons. Initially, migrants were mostly young men who sought to bring their wives or fiancées once they were financially secure. They might also seek to identify eligible wives via relatives and correspondence.²³² Migration thus reshaped family life in Dalmatia. Women whose husbands had left for years to work in America became “grass widows” or “white widows.” They were expected to remain committed to their husband while their husbands were beyond the village’s confines and control.²³³ Others returned because they earned enough money and wanted to move back. While most planned to return, the reasons for mass returns were not always voluntary. Many returned due to economic crises, such as a downturn in 1907–8 in the United States, with many immigrants losing their jobs.²³⁴

Remittances were significant, and it was important for emigres to demonstrate their success back home. However, not visiting home or returning was often considered a sign of having failed to earn enough to afford the trip.²³⁵ When they returned, the *amerikanci*—the Americans—showed off their wealth and new social position and were treated as such by their communities: “The emigrant was wined, dined, and entertained, often until it hurt—the guest from overindulgence and the hosts from excess generosity ... Nothing was too good for the *amerikanac*, especially if he happened to be an eligible bachelor who might marry one of the unwed young ladies in the village and take her back to America with him.”²³⁶ These *amerikanci* often sought to show their difference to the locals by speaking English. Thus, English became widely spoken in some communities with many returnees. But more importantly, they brought ideas and influences from overseas that some saw as a revolutionary and modernizing spirit and others as a disruptive influence.²³⁷ It was a difficult position, between being alienated from the homeland and seeking to prove their achievements. Complete reintegration would be an admission of failure. Having lived mostly in big cities, returning to village life is also challenging.²³⁸

Over time, the reality of a return increasingly became a myth. Nostalgia for Hvar and other places of origin was strong for many. Juraj Salamunić, for example, frequently wrote to family and friends: “How is everything there in our old Jelsa ... I remember well how, in our youth, we had a lot of fun ... write me how it all is in Jelsa; many times, I wish to see our old Jelsa.”²³⁹ The nostalgia for place mixes with the nostalgia for youth. In most cases, however, it was an idealized version of the place, or as Juraj Salamunić wrote, “our old Jelsa,” not the present.

Belonging between the original home in Dalmatia and the new home in New Zealand, the United States, Argentina, or elsewhere raised many questions. In particular, the meaning of being Dalmatian, Slavic, Italian, Croat, or just from Hvar. Tresić-Pavičić was among the first to consider the impact of migration on questions of belonging when he embarked on his trip to the United States. His initial assumption that his fellow Dalmatians would identify as Croatian was

quickly disappointed. Upon arriving in New York, he visited the leading Croatian newspaper, *Narodni List*, published by Frank Zotti. Zotti was a colorful diaspora figure, originally from Boka Kotarska; he was initially a steamship agent, became wealthy in the process, and built up a migration empire in the United States, including a savings bank, a newspaper, and eventually a steamship, gaining him the moniker “King of the Croats.”²⁴⁰ The newspaper editor was a young, elegant man named Bošković, who, as it turns out, was also from Hvar. When Tresić-Pavičić shared his hope of finding the Croats migrants in America well organized in associations, Bošković slammed his hopes, “You have no idea how our people are, not how much they are scattered, with what they deal with, nor how they live.”²⁴¹

Records from Ellis Island also show the many different identities under which the migrants from Dalmatia were recorded. Of the 247 migrants arriving from Hvar between 1892 and 1915 that could be identified based on common last names and place of birth at Ellis Island, the nationality question revealed a confused picture. A bit over half indicated Dalmatian, just below a fifth Austrian, 15 percent Croatian; the rest were listed as Slovak, Slovenian, Magyars, Hungarian, or Italian.²⁴²

These multiple identities surprised Tresić-Pavičić: “There are associations for all our [*sic!*] people who do not want to be Croats, but Slavs, Austrians, Dalmatians, Primorci (from the coast), or whatever they call themselves ... Thus, in Chicago, the association *Maximilijan* mostly comprises people from Vrboska from Hvar.”²⁴³ Many Dalmatians in the United States rejected being labeled as Croats, as they had left before the idea of an overarching Croat identity emerged: “Their hatred towards Croats is furious and hardened.”²⁴⁴ In 1912, a Franciscan tried to rename a local church in Chicago into the Croatian Roman Catholic Church of St. Jerome. However, local Dalmatians rejected the new name and smashed the church windows, while community leaders insisted that “if the church is not called Dalmatian, we will not support it.”²⁴⁵ Even after the rise of national parties and the polarization of Croat and Italian national movements in Dalmatia, these were not mass movements. Besides the multiple local identities, many were not interested in connections with their homeland:

A large number feel nothing for the homeland ... I have heard from the mouth of Croats these words: “The old homeland which bore us was a stepmother to us ... The homeland is where life is good to us, and that is here ... Tell your fairy tales in the old homeland, but leave us here in peace, for this is now our home.”²⁴⁶

The family ties remained, but they often did not translate into larger national ambitions.

Not all migrants from Hvar took such a dim view of their homeland—some, such as Ante Biankini, had a strong national connection. Ante Biankini (1860–1934) was the younger brother of Juraj Biankini. Ante Biankini was an atypical immigrant, arriving at age thirty-eight in Chicago in 1898 after studying medicine in Vienna and working as a physician in Stari Grad. He hailed from a well-known family of shipowners. However, Hvar’s economic crises also affected him. The shipbuilding and fishing industry declined, hurting the family business, and after

his parents died, he and his wife, Zlata Albrecht, from a prominent family in Zagreb, left for Chicago.²⁴⁷ Unlike many who had to start fresh, he could continue working as a doctor in several hospitals and teach at Northwestern University. Within four years of arriving, he also became the editor of *Hrvatska Zastava* (Croatian Flag), a prominent Croatian newspaper. During the First World War, he would become the president of the Yugoslav National Committee in the United States and a well-known advocate of South Slav Unity.²⁴⁸

Before the late nineteenth century, most Europeans likely died not far from where they were born, including on Hvar, where most would move within the island, and few, mostly the privileged, might move to bigger cities. Suddenly, a peasant born in a small village on Hvar might live—and die—in places such as Kauaeranga Valley in New Zealand, in Rosario, Argentina, or Pittsburgh in the United States.

The islanders' global spread did not mean they ceased to be connected to the island. Migrants were able to maintain ties with multiple places, and emigration was commonly not the end of the process or just a sad loss as it is often written about, but often temporary, and ties remained intense over long distances.²⁴⁹ Many would return home, some would leave once more, and many more dreamt of returning and actively cultivated their ties to their place of birth.

While the many migrants were the most obvious example of how islanders from Hvar connected the island to the world, it was also local fishermen who left the island in search of not a new life but of fish who connected the island with the Mediterranean.

Following the Silver Streams

As Hvar fishermen set out to go to sea on a starry night in May 1875, they were joined by several Viennese journalists covering the Emperor's visit.²⁵⁰ In darkness, the three boats sailed to the small islets around Vis. Two boats set up nets, whereas the third drove the fish by a fire. In total silence, the fishermen awaited the fish because "[t]he appearance of a dolphin, sometimes a shout, any noise whatsoever is enough to cause fright in the mass of the fish and to lose it all."²⁵¹ If nothing scared the sardines, millions would arrive within one or two hours, transforming the sea around the boats into silver streams. The sheer mass of fish would make them panic, jumping on the boats and into the air. Now that the noise of the fish had replaced the silence, the fisherman "pulled [them] out often amidst stormy prayers, evoking all saints ... with great effort." On a good night, some 1,200 to 1,500 barrels could be filled with sardines; the next day was spent salting the fish and closing the barrels. In total, the catch might amount to a million or more sardines. If the catch is good, the fishermen celebrate by singing songs as they return to the port.²⁵²

The fishing trip the journalists witnessed was one of the two ways fishermen in Dalmatia have been catching sardines for centuries. The *tratta* required several boats and a large crew but could result in a large catch like the one described

above. However, it might also go empty if the sardines are scared away. The other fishing technique, *voinghe*, used smaller nets and thus required fewer fishermen. The *voinghe* took place mainly in the morning and evening rather than at night and could hope only for a much smaller catch, up to 50,000 sardines. As the stocks began to dwindle, the fishermen using the two techniques found each other in competition. A distinct class difference underscored this competition. Due to the cost of the *tratta*, such as expensive fishing nets and large crews, it was the domain of the wealthier islanders. In contrast, *voinghe* required little investment and was thus dominated by poorer fishermen.²⁵³ Often, the fishing took place far out at sea, around Palagruža, an islet in the middle of the Adriatic. The lunar cycle determines the fishing season; the peak lasts only twenty days in the late spring.²⁵⁴

Some observers had little regard for the local fishing and presumed that the islanders lacked ambition: “As soon as they complete their journey that takes just a few days, they return with the profit made, live with their family calmly and quietly, without thinking of bigger endeavors.”²⁵⁵ This condescending view underestimated the ambitious fishing network that would emerge just a few years later. A challenge to traditional fishing and merchant sailing was the rise of steamship. Steamships led to a rapid decline of sailing fleets in most places, but they survived decades longer on Hvar. Ironically, shipbuilding, shipping, and fishing by sailboat experienced a boom on Hvar in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, a Hvar shipping network developed around larger boats belonging to some prominent families that would service the Adriatic and the Levante. There were forty big ships in Stari Grad alone, with six large boats for long-distance travel. The Black Sea was a vital shipping destination for Dalmatian merchants, providing grain for the Adriatic, including the main Austrian port of Trieste and beyond.

The boom began after 1850 as a dense trading network emerged in the Mediterranean and worldwide. The biggest ship built in Hvar, the barque Demetrio Fario—a three-masted sailing ship—set sail in 1854. It sailed for twelve years before catching fire and sinking in the harbor of Buenos Aires.²⁵⁶ The ships of the Duboković family were built in the largest Dalmatian shipyard in Orebić on the Pelješac peninsula. They brought grain from the Black Sea to Hvar and took fish, stone, and lime from Hvar and Brač to the Eastern Mediterranean. Other ships, such as the *Marietta*, sailed along the coast of Africa, including around the Cape of Good Hope, sinking after twenty-one years at sea at the coast of Somalia.²⁵⁷ This success contributed not only to the wealth and rise of a widely traveled middle class in Jelsa and Stari Grad but also to a greater political and national identity, as reflected in the names of the ships. Traditionally, they evoked historical figures or pious wishes for safety, like the ship “*Fala Bogu*”—colloquial for “Thank god.” “The Yugoslav” and “Skenderbeg” were now evoking new political currents.²⁵⁸

Despite the importance of fishing, it was often not enough to feed the island. A report from 1891 highlights that it took a good wine harvest and olive oil production to pay back the debts made in bad years for fishing. The fluctuation between the different years was often significant.²⁵⁹ The sardine stocks were unpredictable, and bad years could have multiple causes, including overfishing.

Fishermen also blamed dolphins, resulting in hunts for dolphins to improve sardine supplies.²⁶⁰

The fishing grounds around the islands were also targeted by fishermen across the Adriatic, from the Papal States in the North to Puglia in the South. These competitors and more extensive fishing techniques gradually contributed to the depletion of fishing stocks. Fishing stocks declined for several decades, starting in the late 1840s, and fierce competition emerged. As a result, the fishermen from Vis blocked those from Hvar and Brač from fishing around their island, with the regional and Dalmatian authorities assessing whether such a ban should be imposed.²⁶¹ The fishermen from Hvar could eventually return to the waters around Vis, but the scarcity remained a problem.²⁶² This drove them eventually across the Mediterranean.²⁶³ These destinations were not unknown to merchants and sailors from Hvar, and ships from Stari Grad regularly traveled to Malta in the 1840s.²⁶⁴ In 1860, Tomažo Novak Jakova sailed with his small boat *Mosè* into the Greek port of Patras to sell his salted fish. He heard from a Sicilian fisherman of rich and untapped fishing grounds around Lampedusa. Unsure if the tip was just a ruse, he set out the following year to Lampedusa. He left with his crew of around seven to eight men to the unknown, and many probably thought he might never return. In Gozo, the smaller of the two main islands of Malta, the crew stocked up with water and food. Sometime in April 1861, the ship anchored in the only port of Lampedusa, an island so remote and small that it was easy to miss. The island had been claimed by the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, the year that Novak arrived, but was, in fact, closer to the coast of North Africa than Italy. Only around 700 people lived on the island, primarily workers from Malta. The fisherman and the locals reached an agreement, and within two months, the boat from Hvar filled its 300 barrels with salted fish. The ship returned to Hvar only to have the entire catch purchased by a passing Greek trading ship in the port.²⁶⁵

Another early pioneer was Juraj Maroević, who reached Lampedusa in 1864, wanting to buy fish from local fishermen. He then sold the fish in Malta during that season. Later, he expanded his business and started selling fish across the Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, and the Adriatic. Other Hvar ship owners, such as Nikola Plančić from Stari Grad, soon joined him.²⁶⁶ Such regular expeditions to Lampedusa continued for half a century. Over time, the number of boats from Hvar increased to thirty, and their range included ports in North Africa, Portugal, and Spain. The crews from Hvar worked closely with local fishermen, mainly from Sicily. For example, Novak recruited help in Trapani, on the western side of Sicily, where the barrels were prepared, and he picked up supplies.²⁶⁷ This fishing network resulted in 10,000–15,000 barrels and later even 25,000, once Spain and Portugal were included, exceeding the total catch from Dalmatia. The salted fish were sold in the Adriatic itself, the Levante, Istanbul, the Black Sea, and Galați, the port at the estuary of the Danube, and Greek ports. During the return trip, they brought back scarce products in Dalmatia.²⁶⁸ Between 1876 and 1911, Vicko Novak corresponded with 129 business partners across the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and beyond, including Alexandria, Smyrna, Noworossiysk, Galați, Constantinople, Marseille, Genoa, as well as business partners in Portugal, the

United States, and Britain. The partners include banks, companies involved with canning fish, shipbuilders, and merchants.²⁶⁹

The trade links with Lampedusa and Tunisia were just part of what kept the ports of Hvar busy and connected to the Mediterranean and Adriatic. This trade also transformed the towns. The shore was primarily reserved for loading and unloading ships. There were no beaches yet, but towns began to build promenades. In brief, the towns opened up to the sea.²⁷⁰ The busiest port was Stari Grad, with 337 boats sailing into the harbor in 1884, increasing to 914 in 1904.²⁷¹ Around 1890, an eighth of the male population on the island's northern side between Stari Grad and Jelsa worked as sailors, with the highest share in Stari Grad, where a quarter were sailors or otherwise involved in maritime trade or fishing.²⁷² One key reason was that sailors were much better paid than day laborers.²⁷³ As a result, between 1880 and 1889 in Stari Grad alone, over a thousand permits—*permesso di viaggio e libretto di servizio marittimo*—were issued, the requirement to become a sailor. Most young men in their teens would get these permits to become sailors.²⁷⁴ The prominent journalist Dinko Politeo, himself born in Stari Grad, noted that the port was a lively place, as “one boat is being fixed and getting ready, one is being unloaded, the other being loaded up, all this without a break, tirelessly, feverishly. ... In Stari Grad, one talked about Marseille, Cairo, Istanbul, Galați, Split and Šibenik.”²⁷⁵

The expedition required meticulous planning and were significant investments. The fishermen were “in social”; that is, they took financial contributions from investors who would share the risk and the profit, a system established in Venetian times.²⁷⁶ The journey took place in May and June, the best months for fishing. Vicko Novak had contacts in Sicily to find nets, boats, and fishermen. The ship from Hvar brought the barrels for the salted fish made on Hvar from wood purchased in Senj, Istria, and beyond. Local coopers on the squares of Stari Grad, Jelsa, and Vrboska made barrels for the Mediterranean fleet. Each barrel could hold around 55 kilograms of salted fish. On Lampedusa, they organized salt pans and storage facilities.²⁷⁷

A big step was establishing a fish canning factory in Vrboska in 1894 after earlier efforts failed in 1862. The factory was owned by a French company based in Trieste.²⁷⁸ By 1900, the largest share of the sardine Dalmatian production was in Hvar, nearly half, followed by Vis. Both islands produced three-quarters of all salted sardines in Dalmatia. The Dalmatian fishing industry included a total of 728 boats and 3,184 fishermen.²⁷⁹

Soon, the Hvar fishermen faced competition from Italian traders, who had easier access than those from Hvar. Some, such as Maroević, left Lampedusa, leaving the local business to a relative, Dinko Lušić. Lušić also went into large-scale sponge fishing and remained on the island until the Second World War.²⁸⁰ The Maroevićs began looking for new trading posts and explored the Tunisian and Algerian coasts. In 1881, Frano Maroević sailed into the harbor of Mahdia with his boat *Giorgio M.* Mahdia was a small town with 8,000 inhabitants, less than twice the size of Stari Grad, was populated by Arabs, French, and Italians and had just come under French rule as part of Tunisia. Several captains from Jelsa, Stari Grad, and Hvar joined him, establishing a second base. Marović built a house and salting

facility. The town boomed, and the Hvar ship owners soon started selling fish to Italian towns, from Venice to Ancona and Brindisi.²⁸¹

The Hvar fishermen hired eighty fishing boats with crews from Lampedusa, Mahdia, and Sousse in Tunisia. The links Hvar fishermen established with Lampedusa and towns on the Tunisian coast required a network of contacts and trusted interlocutors. In Mahdia, Pavao Zanković became a key person in negotiating these contacts; he learned Arabic and French besides Italian and had contacts in Lampedusa, Sicily, and Tunisia. The connections were so dense that when Frane Maroević sailed into Mahdia in May 1882, he counted nine boats from Hvar docking in the harbor.²⁸² While the Hvar fishermen competed, they mostly maintained collegial relations and cooperated. At worst, one fisher spread the rumor that the other had manipulated the scales used to weigh the catch. In 1895, seven Hvar families signed a cooperation agreement to rent shared storage facilities in Mahdia and Trapani.²⁸³ With some 45 boats involved in fishing in 1875, the sardine production run by Hvar fishermen was well established in Mahdia. In 1881, an Austrian-Hungarian consulate was established and some 11 Austrians citizens, mostly from Hvar, settled in Mahdia.²⁸⁴

While the fishing industry in Mahdia and Lampedusa was lucrative, it was also risky and difficult to sustain due to the considerable distance and competition. Whereas the catching and salting of the sardines was a joint enterprise, the sales were up to each Hvar family based on their respective networks between the Atlantic and the Black Sea. New techniques brought new risks. With the spread of canning, the sardines could no longer be transported and conserved in salt.

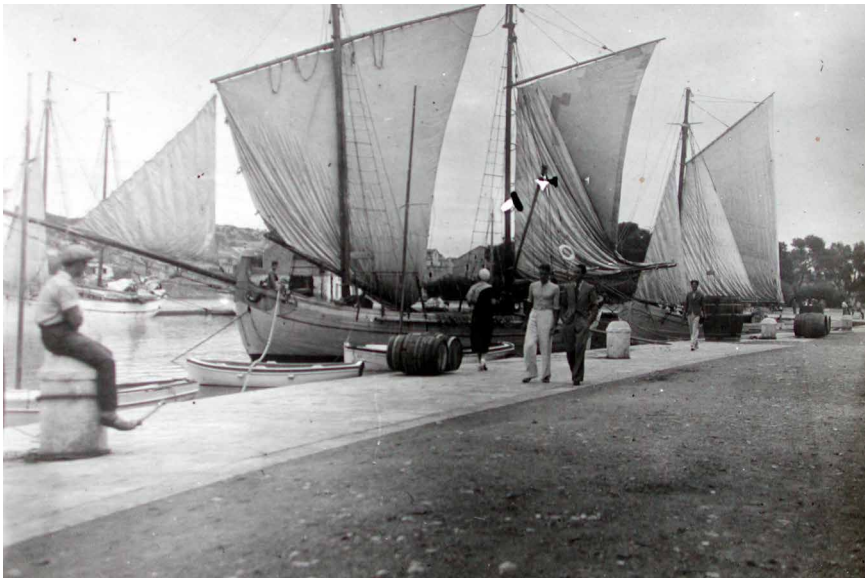


Figure 3.6 Ships on the Stari Grad waterfront (early twentieth century). © Stari Grad Museum.

Instead, they had to reach the factories faster so the fish would not turn bad.²⁸⁵ The enterprising fishermen also faced disease that could force the ships into quarantine at multiple points during the journey, and the crossings of the open Mediterranean Sea brought risks due to storms.

After the golden era in the 1860s to the 1880s, Italian fishermen gradually pushed out the Hvar traders, and the steamships eclipsed the sailboats. Due to higher costs, steamboats fostered centralization in the larger ports. In 1880, 327 sailboats and 101 steamships entered the port of Stari Grad; by 1904, it was 121 sailboats and 793 steamboats; in 1912, 41 sailing boats and 857 steamboats.²⁸⁶ In the early 1880s, Jelsa had nearly as much traffic as Split and the three primary island ports, more than twice that of Split. By 1903, Split had nearly twice as much traffic as all of Hvar.²⁸⁷

The last to remain in Mahdia was Frane Maroević, who left in 1905 after his main ship was severely damaged in a storm.²⁸⁸ The intense exchanges the merchants and fishermen established across the Mediterranean integrated them into the cosmopolitan network that ignored boundaries and capitals. After meeting Captain Niko Duboković in Jelsa in December 1874, Richard Francis Burton observed that “[m]ost of the mayors in the Dalmatian Archipelago are retired Capitaines de long cours, substantial men with large estates, who, during their voyages, have accumulated not only capital but a large stock of refinement and general information. At this point, insular Dalmatia much resembles Switzerland.”²⁸⁹

Through these exchanges, commercial transactions flourished, and ideas also traveled. Antun Gamulin Moro (1829–1909), from a prominent family, traveled with his two-masted sailboat *Santa Maria della Salute* and the *Cosmo G* to the eastern Mediterranean and became popular among the local Greek population for singing anti-Turkish songs on a gusle, a single-string instrument associated with the Balkan hinterland in Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia, and Serbia.²⁹⁰ In a poem, the nationalist activist Don Mihovil Pavlinović paid tribute to Gamulin:

Raises the tricolor in all corners of the world,
 And spreads word of the Croatian people;
 Expresses pride in his homeland,
 And demonstrates Slav integrity to all;
 So he is the Greeks’ favorite trader,
 They open their Hellenic hearts to him,
 As he awakens their national sentiments,
 That longing for freedom for Crete.
 A flock of ships would follow Moro.
 Who came from little Jelsa in the middle of Hvar ...²⁹¹

Thus, ideas of nationalism and opposition to the empires that still dominated the Mediterranean traveled and spread during this area of trade and exchange. As fishermen left Hvar for fishing trips in the Mediterranean, others, namely tourists, began arriving on the island.

Discovering the Sea

Visitors had made their way to Dalmatia and Hvar for centuries, from pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to Renaissance travelers en route to Greece. Yet, these were few, and Hvar was usually just a convenient port. Even in the early twentieth century, the British travel writer Maude Holbach noted that “Dalmatia dwells apart, in a borderland somewhat off the highway of the world’s traffic, like a shadow left by the receding tide between the sea and the shore, belonging more to the East than to the West—more to the past than to the present.”²⁹² For the Habsburg Monarchy, the sea remained alien and unfamiliar, as it “remained a continental reality, despite the exotic attraction to the sea for the urban inhabitants of the Austrian cities ...”²⁹³

Before the modern era, the sea was not an alluring place. It was threatening and uncontrollable to be kept a distance from: “The chaotic ocean, that unruly dark side of the world which was an abode of monsters stirred up by diabolic powers, emerges as one of the persistent figures of madness.”²⁹⁴ Painters, writers, and visitors discovered the Mediterranean shore in the seventeenth century as part of their discovery of antiquity: “Travelers were to retain that which dealt with humanity. Among the landscapes, their gaze would pause among the landscapes on pleasant, fertile sites, hillside, orange groves, and garlands of vines.”²⁹⁵

Going for a swim was, initially, “therapeutic,” and too much exposure to the sun would give those wealthy enough to go to the seaside a skin color associated with the working class. Seaside resorts emerged first in the late eighteenth century in northern Europe, particularly Britain, and were closely tied to the Industrial Revolution.²⁹⁶ In Mediterranean Europe, the Grand Tour took the wealthy to places that were markers of Antiquity and the Renaissance. Thus, it is no surprise that the Dalmatian coast would not figure prominently on this itinerary.

Venice was one of the places that evoked the travelers’ fascination, and those exploring the Dalmatian coast often pursued its ties to Venice and the ubiquitous Venetian lions; in essence, Dalmatia was viewed as an extension of Venice, albeit usually described as a “bad copy.”²⁹⁷ Most travelers also had a clear bias toward Italian culture, which they viewed as more “civilized,” associating it with antiquity and Venice.²⁹⁸

Some were intrigued by the multiple identities of the region, fitting for the complexity of the Habsburg Monarchy. These perspectives often exoticize Dalmatia into a semi-oriental place.²⁹⁹ F. Hamilton Jackson, for example, described the Adriatic as fusing East and West, “ancient Occidental art with the Oriental ... it was here that the fruitful union first took place.”³⁰⁰ The prominent Dalmatian politician and mayor of Split, Josip Smodlaka, expressed his resentment in 1910 to Dalmatia being relegated to an exotic place: “We have no wish to play the part of an archaeological cemetery or an ‘Indian reservation’ with the authentic Dalmatian Red Indians in their gay costume.”³⁰¹

Technology was crucial for many travelers to follow the few who explored and wrote about their journey. In the case of the Adriatic, this was the rise of the steamship, which had undermined the fishermen and merchants of Hvar. In 1838,

the newly established Austrian Lloyd established its line, connecting Hvar on the bi-monthly trips along the coast from Trieste to Kotor.³⁰² A more frequent and regular connection was established in 1853, with a steamship line from Trieste to Durres (today Albania), which lay anchor twice a week in Hvar in each direction.³⁰³

The main challenge on the land route to Dalmatia was the absence of a railway system that connected Dalmatia to the rest of the Monarchy and Europe. Thus, Dalmatia remained isolated from the growing European train networks, not without repercussions on tourism. Even beyond the railways, the overall tourist infrastructure remained weak, as even the capital of Dalmatia, Zadar, only had one hotel in the 1850s.³⁰⁴

The first request for private accommodation on Hvar was made in 1848 when Antun Tocilj Dominikov registered his inn with three rooms.³⁰⁵ The travelers who made it to Hvar during those years were not impressed. For example, the prolific German travel writer Johann Georg Kohl published his *Travels to Istria, Dalmatia, and Montenegro* in 1851. He had not much good to say as his steamboat passed the island: "Hvar is except for a few make-up patches of vineyards ... barren and naked, like a Morlock beggar."³⁰⁶ His throwaway line written after seeing Hvar from a distant steamboat hardly did it justice.

The beginnings of tourism on Hvar would come from an unexpected direction, from a Viennese botany professor. Franz Unger traveled through Europe and the Middle East to write popular reports about plants and their significance in cultural history, and he made his first visit to Hvar in 1864.³⁰⁷ The same year, he published a short note on the forests of Dalmatia and described his impression of Hvar in detail. He noted how, in ancient times, Hvar, like many other Mediterranean islands, was probably covered with pine tree forests, while during his visit, few trees remained. The need for wood and the spread of cultivation for wine and wheat reduced the forests. He concludes his notes with a call to prevent further deforestation to avoid erosion and other consequences: "May this sincere warning help the lovely island, whom I have to thank for many friendly days and most pleasant entertainment."³⁰⁸

Unger returned to Dalmatia in the following years, apparently not just due to his academic curiosity but also for health reasons. He was joined in his travels by a fellow scholar, Oskar Schmidt, a zoologist. Schmidt published a wide range of academic texts, from reports on the farming of sponges in the Adriatic to the groundhogs around Graz. Schmidt visited Hvar in the early 1850s, interested in sponges. Besides their shared interest in Hvar, Unger and Schmidt were early proponents of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, published just a few years earlier in 1859.

Schmidt also actively explored the idea of growing sponges in Hvar for commercial purposes. While he struggled with Austrian bureaucracy, he managed to set up an experimental station in Hvar and reported to the Austrian Ministry of Trade and the Economy on his advances. The failure to turn the experiment into the desired commercial success has been blamed on locals: "responsible is the ignorance and indolence of the Dalmatian population." He could not find local investors in the station, and local sponge fishers destroyed these units, presumably because of fear of losing their livelihood.³⁰⁹

In their endeavors, they were supported by the self-taught ornithologist Matteo Botteri. Botteri (just named B.) was also the host to two German biologists visiting Hvar for research on the local sea animals in 1852; they described him as a modest collector and researcher who mostly appreciated observing nature, but “who has an intensive exchange with collectors from far away countries” in numerous languages he learned.³¹⁰ After traveling around the Mediterranean, he settled back in Hvar before moving to Mexico, where he spent most of his life. Ungar befriended another local scholar, Jakov Boglić (1826–97).³¹¹ Boglić had written the first history of Hvar and was an heir to the Ivanić family associated with the peasant uprising. The other close associate of Unger and Schmidt was Grgur Bučić (1829–1911), a local meteorologist and researcher. He was one of the first to regularly measure the weather conditions and thus provided the data with which Unger identified the town’s potential for winter tourism.³¹² As a result of his measurements, there is a complete data set of meteorological measures of Hvar from 1858 to today.³¹³

Schmidt and Unger were not the only scholars visiting Hvar during those decades. Julius von Hann, the founder of modern meteorology, and Ernst Haeckel, a prominent German zoologist and early advocate of Darwin’s ideas, and later a Social Darwinist and protagonist of scientific racism, also visited the island.³¹⁴ Haeckel visited Hvar in 1871, where he was hosted by Bonagracija Maroević (1810–89), a Franciscan monk and ardent Darwinist, a combination that surprised Haeckel. In his letter to Darwin, he recounted how “this admirer and connoisseur of Goethe’s works and Darwin’s *Origins of Species*” welcomed him on his arrival on Hvar: “Isn’t it true, Professor that Darwin is right and we are all descendants of the same catarrhine monkey?” Haeckel worked with Bučić and maintained an extensive correspondence with him due to his research on local sea sponges and jellyfish.³¹⁵

The birth of tourism in Hvar was thus intertwined with the scientific networks between local researchers and Austrian and German academics. During Unger’s trip in 1866, he launched the idea to establish a sanatorium for respiratory illnesses. It took another invitation the following year to convince him that the climate made it an ideal site. His biographer notes, “The inhabitants listened to him with satisfaction, but still, the necessary money could not be found.”³¹⁶ After retiring from teaching, Unger returned to Hvar in 1868 to help establish the Hygienic Society of Hvar with his financial contribution and support.³¹⁷ As a German magazine wrote a year later:

It was on May 11, 1868 when in the place of the bishop Monsignore Dubocovic a larger number of people from all classes accepted the first plans for the creation of an association, whose task it shall be to allow sick strangers a longer stay in town to recover their health...so far, Lesina has been visited by few foreigners except for nature researchers; thus, a priority was to find a place to stay and board ...³¹⁸

The association’s founding made it in the Viennese papers that noted the future of Hvar as a seaside spa with enthusiasm.³¹⁹ Societies such as the Hygienic Society

were still a novelty; the only other one on the Eastern Adriatic was established a little earlier on, Krk and even the first tourist boards on the Côte d'Azur were established around that time.³²⁰ Tourism was still in its infancy along the Adriatic coast, and only Opatija, due to its proximity to Rijeka, was becoming an important resort.³²¹

The Hygienic Society focused on “providing foreign [*sic!*] sick persons all the means for the rehabilitation of their health,”³²² rather than the historical tourism in Italy or more leisure-seeking tourism in southern France.³²³ Its shareholders included well-known citizens of Hvar, such as the long-time mayor of Jelsa, Niko Duboković. It also included prominent autonomist individuals and supporters of the Croatian cause, one of the few associations that crossed the increasingly deep identity divide.³²⁴ The society was initially headed by prominent citizens of Hvar, including the bishop Juraj Duboković, the mayor, the head of the region (*kotar*), and the chancellor of the diocese.³²⁵ Thus, the society was not just a private initiative but reflected the island's elite. Besides Unger, who bought the first 100 shares, and the municipality of Hvar, which held the most shares,³²⁶ companies, such as the *Austrian Lloyd* and prominent citizens, including Vice Admiral Tegetthoff, the hero of the Battle of Vis, were among the shareholders.³²⁷

Von Reinsberg, writing about the future of Hvar as a tourist destination in 1868, noted that “nowhere in Dalmatia one can sleep better.” Going on to recount a tale of a traveler telling an islander, “Oh, you are from the land where one always sleeps.”³²⁸ However, without hotels, one had to rely on the legendary Dalmatian hospitality. When the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel spent several weeks in Hvar, he wrote to his wife Agnes that “one hardly believes one is in Europe, rather in Africa. Today is when the regular weekly steamer arrives from Trieste, and the whole island is awaiting it with great expectation, including us.”³²⁹

Richard Francis Burton also found Hvar remote. When he visited Hvar to explore Tor, a Greek-Illyrian tower from the fourth century BCE overlooking Jelsa, he described the challenges he faced: “The traveler will find scanty aid from steamers; he will have no roads, and he must work his way on foot through the roughest bush; he must carefully visit every height; and he must be prepared few successes and many failures. If he cannot speak Slav, he must be accompanied by one who does.”³³⁰

The first task of the society was to raise funds to establish the facilities for visitors. An improvised hotel with fifteen rooms equipped with stoves opened in time for the winter season 1869.³³¹ The opening was promoted in the Vienne daily *Die Presse*, offering entertainment, quiet, excursions, and good air: “The *Heilsgesellschaft* of Hvar, which herewith opens its first season with god[s] help], will not fail to make the stay as pleasant and cheap as possible for every visitor, irrespective of rank.”³³² To entice visitors, the association wrote to doctors and well-known citizens across the monarchy, advertising the climate, facilities, and clean water. The municipality passed several ordinances to promote tourism, such as banning beggars on the seafront or the main square and banning them from begging from foreigners, bars were ordered to close at nine, and citizens were required to keep the streets clean.³³³

However, despite the support from the municipality, tourism in Hvar was not a success. By 1872, the society was forced to abandon its improvised hotel. Guests were put up in private homes instead. Thus, tourism already relied on private accommodation, as it does today.³³⁴

By the end of the century, the difficulties led the association's president, Lauro Machiedo, to note with some bitterness that "Thirty years have passed since our society has been founded ... and now we see that in Dubrovnik, some glamorous hotels are being built ... Meanwhile, Opatija and Mali Lošinj, places worse than Hvar in climate and natural beauty, take our ideas out of our hands."³³⁵ By this time, plans did begin to materialize. The society received 160,000 Crowns from the Austrian state lottery and bought the ruined palace of the Venetian *podesta* in the center of Hvar.³³⁶ The Loggia, abandoned since Venetian rule, was part of the new complex. The society received it from the municipality in 1898 under the condition that it would renovate it. The Loggia, also known as the *Kursalon*, became foremost a coffee house for the local elite, with newspapers and a grand piano for concerts and dances.³³⁷ The local high society could be met at the rare chamber orchestra evenings; otherwise, they could be seen on Sunday evening walks at the port.³³⁸

The reconstruction began in 1896, and Hotel Elisabeth opened in 1903 with thirty rooms.³³⁹ Other smaller accommodations also opened, like a little hotel and restaurant on the main square called Bošković.³⁴⁰ In 1906, on the island of Palmižana, one of the Pakleni islands next to Hvar town, Eugen Meneghello, a teacher in Dubrovnik, converted his family's summer villa into a tourist resort.³⁴¹

With the opening of the Hotel, the society began advertising Hvar as the Austrian Madeira. The name of the hotel and Madeira were linked. Queen Elisabeth had spent several months on Madeira in 1860–1 to cure a lung disease. Thus, the name of the hotel and its association with Madeira conjured up both the Queen and the health benefits of a spa. Already in 1869, the society had received the patronage of Queen Elisabeth.³⁴²

Marketing Hvar as the Austrian Madeira and the hotel's opening did not transform the island into an instant success. Emil Bayer, the society's Vienna representative, lamented, "Hvar remained the sleeping beauty of our Adriatic, while inferior former fishing villages develop into fashionable spa resorts."³⁴³ Bayer did not only appeal to the "sleeping beauty" of Hvar but also the Austrian patriotism to care more about its Adriatic coast than the North Cape or "the hunting grounds of American Indians"³⁴⁴ The main selling point remained the supposed health benefits for all kinds of illnesses, including indigestion, anemia, nerve diseases and "illness of female sexual organs" with "hysterically minded persons."³⁴⁵ Visitors arriving in Hvar to convalesce had to visit a doctor within thirty-six hours of arriving, and there were discussions about having separate accommodations for regular visitors and the ill.³⁴⁶

The primary season for Hvar was winter: "Unfortunately, our high society still heads for the beaches of the North and Baltic Sea, not because they are convinced that it is more beneficial for the health than those at our incomparably beautiful Adriatic, but just because it is fashionable."³⁴⁷

Gradually, summer began to be discovered: During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, bathing in the sea and sunning oneself became more attractive, opening new tourism opportunities in Hvar and Dalmatia.³⁴⁸ New tourist brochures praised Hvar for visitors during the winter and advertised it as a summer destination, mentioning the clean water and the sunny weather. Gradually, the society built the infrastructure to make the town attractive, including walking paths, a tennis court, and a beach.³⁴⁹ New hotels opened on Hvar, including in Jelsa and Stari Grad.³⁵⁰

Tourism remained modest in Hvar. By 1912, only 280 visitors stayed in Hvar for up to two weeks, and 131 stayed longer. Only coastal cities, such as Dubrovnik and Split, had more visitors.³⁵¹ In 1910, there were around 54,000 visitors to Dalmatia, including 11,000 foreigners.³⁵² Observers keep noting the lack of accommodation in Dalmatia as the greatest obstacle to tourism development.³⁵³ In particular, wealthy businessmen in Vienna appear to be disinterested in investing in hotels. Emil Bayer lamented how there were few interested in buying shares of the society: “The shares turned yellow in the safe” ... despite numerous appeals, “nobody called to help this old association, whose humanitarian cause was obvious, to get on its feet, aside from the fact that this ‘Austrian Madeira’ was predestined due to its pure maritime climate, to take a leading role among Austria’s Adriatic resorts.”³⁵⁴ The society was struggling despite the hotel. Bayer wrote countless letters urging the society to work harder on its promotion. He noted how authorities in Vienna became dissatisfied with the association’s work as “it constantly wants subsidies but never does anything humanitarian or otherwise mentionable.” Bayer warned the society risks a complete failure: “I want to prove to the world that Hvar can indeed compete with Opatija, Mali Losinj, and Ragusa ... you finally have to start, if you don’t want that your endeavor from 1868, thus 36 years old, to perish.” While he might have exaggerated to secure his post, he resigned dramatically in 1905 only to continue promoting Hvar in subsequent years, and the association struggled financially.³⁵⁵

One obvious challenge was the remoteness. The journey from Vienna was long: First, there was a thirteen-hour train journey from Vienna to Trieste. The direct steamboats from Trieste or Rijeka *Austrian Lloyd* and *Ungaro-Croata* took between thirty-five and fifty-two hours. With an express steamship, the connection via Split could be made within twenty-four hours.³⁵⁶ The Lloyd politely declined all requests for more frequent stops, especially on express routes.³⁵⁷

Among the visitors to Hvar were F. Hamilton Jackson and Maude Holbach, two of the growing number of travel writers who made their way to Hvar.³⁵⁸ With the beginning of tourism, travelogues proliferated. Unlike earlier travelogues, they included specific advice for travelers. While Holbach gave a lively account of what she saw and did not hold back with her judgment, Jackson’s account was sober and focused more on Dalmatia’s architecture and art history. Neither of them was particularly impressed by the new tourist infrastructure. For Holbach, the loggia was “restored, alas! By those who knew not what they did”³⁵⁹ and the new hotel “somewhat overshadows San Michele’s Loggia, and strikes a note of rather incongruous modernity in the little town, where everything else is of the

past.”³⁶⁰ Jackson was also not convinced by the aesthetics of the *Kurhotel*, noting that in building the sanatorium, “two of the towers of the palace of the count [were destroyed], and spoiling a very picturesque composition.”³⁶¹ Holbach fondly writes of the ruined places in Hvar. In contrast, Jackson notes that Hvar “is decayed, and there are many ruined palaces of the Venetian period, some of which are fine.”³⁶² Nothing was a more consistent theme for nineteenth-century visitors to Hvar than the extent to which many palaces lay in ruins.³⁶³ This vignette, based on Hvar town rather than the bustling towns of Stari Grad and Jelsa, shaped the image of Hvar as an island in decline. The primary label Holbach seems to ascribe to Hvar is “quaint,” which is how she describes the donkey with their heavy load climbing the stairs in the center of town.

The poverty and relative underdevelopment of the region bred resentment toward the apparent neglect by the monarchy. At the turn of the century, Juraj Biankini complained in the Austrian Reichsrat, where he was a deputy for Southern Dalmatia: “For Dalmatia, ... one does nothing here in Vienna. The state does not value this delicious diamond, and the tourists who begin to visit this land strongly, especially Americans and English, mock and complain to us at the same time.”³⁶⁴

Some timid attempts had been made a few years earlier when, in 1894, the “Association for the Advancement of the Economic Interests of the Kingdom of Dalmatia” was established to promote tourism. It was led by Count Johann Harrach and was under the patronage of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. To the eyes of many Austrian travelers, Dalmatia remained an “undiscovered treasure.”³⁶⁵ It was also a victim of the internal divisions in the monarchy.³⁶⁶ The Austrian playwright Hermann Bahr joked about how the Viennese and the Hungarians traveled to Dalmatia: “The Hungarian complains, leaves, and thus concludes that Dalmatia must become Hungarian. The Viennese gets an upset stomach, but with pleasure, for he is confirmed that there is only one imperial capital.”³⁶⁷

Supporters of Dalmatian development in Vienna began describing the region as Austria’s “place in the sun.” This turn of phrase has a distinctive imperial undercurrent, echoing German foreign secretary Bernhard von Bülow’s claim in 1897 that Germany does not want to cast a shade on anyone, but “we also demand our place in the sun.”³⁶⁸ Austria-Hungary could not claim any colonies, so for some, Dalmatia became a surrogate colony:

“[P]lace in the sun” has become a *key word* for the people of Europe in our time. All strive to reach this desirable goal and exploit it for their economic development. Not in the far East or the darkest Africa is the “place in the sun” which Austria needs for its development, but in its own country, in the sunny south of our Adriatic coast.³⁶⁹

Dalmatia began drawing more attention in Vienna mainly because of anxiety over rising national tensions and geopolitical calculations. As Dalmatian politics became more critical of Habsburg neglect and Serbian and Croatian parties won the elections in May 1906, the urgency of changing policy became more apparent, and several reports highlighted the region’s poverty. After Archduke Franz

Ferdinand received a frosty reception during a visit to Dubrovnik, the region's complex economic and political situation became apparent even at the highest level in Vienna.³⁷⁰

In 1910, the government took a more long-term view of tourism development.³⁷¹ This resulted in the first strategic program to advance the region's economy, funded with 25 million crowns, focusing on improving the infrastructure and eliminating still widespread malaria. Tourism was a key ingredient to overcome the region's poverty. Richard Riedl (1865–1944), who worked in the Austrian trade ministry and was a confidant of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, wrote a report on tourism development in 1910 in which he argues for state intervention in developing tourism.³⁷² Subsequently, the report analyzes the regions of Dalmatia in detail, offering specific suggestions on how to improve tourism, from sanitation to local transport.

Riedl also focused on the difficult circumstances of tourism in Hvar. The Hygienic Society was in a deep financial crisis, with a mortgage of 40,000 crowns with a bank in Zadar and 20,000 in debt with the local bank. The income from the hotel was too small to cover even the interest payments.³⁷³ The hotel was poorly managed, requiring continuous investments and other running costs.

As earlier observers had noted, Riedl remarked on the limited connections of the island by boat. As bigger steamboats could not dock in Hvar, Riedl recommended the introduction of a steam barge for traffic to Hvar, as well as for excursions to Vrboska and Jelsa, as well as the Pakleni islands just off the city. Furthermore, Riedl recommended improving the local park, building new promenades around town, and building a new bath.³⁷⁴

His ideas and recommendations led to a new regional plan for tourism that ambitiously foresaw the building of roads and railways, the promotion of hotel construction, new shipping lines, and landscape planning along the coast. In 1909, a regional association for tourism promotion was established in Zadar. While the association was ambitious—it sought to help the construction of new hotels, including on Hvar, construct new roads, monitor hotels and restaurants, and promote tourism outside of Dalmatia—its success appears to have been relatively modest.³⁷⁵ Except for two-wheeled postal carts, no carriages or cars were on the roads in Hvar in 1909.³⁷⁶ In 1907, the Austrian government passed a major package of plans for road construction in Dalmatia, including a road from Hvar to Stari Grad and from there to Jelsa via the villages.³⁷⁷ Just before the beginning of the First World War, a port opened in Vrboska, and steamers from *Ungaro-Croata* began frequenting the port.³⁷⁸ These and similar changes along the coast made an observer note that the number of quality hotels improved, and steamboats are now connecting the coast well to the rest of Austria.³⁷⁹

The culmination of Austria's renewed interest in Dalmatia was the 1913 Adria Exhibition that was opened by Archduke Franz Ferdinand on May 3, 1913. The Adriatic Exhibition was a grand effort by the Monarchy to highlight the Austrian efforts for economic development over the past decade and to underline the "Austrianness" of Dalmatia, considering the ongoing Balkan wars in its southeast.³⁸⁰ Over the coming five months, over two million visitors would see the exhibit.³⁸¹

The exhibit offered a miniature Adriatic, including a replica of the rector's palace in Dubrovnik, the city gates of Zadar and Lošinj, palaces, a small Istrian town, and Dalmatian houses.³⁸² Far from just focusing on tourist beauty or economic interests, the exhibition was also an opportunity to project military might. The exhibit's center was the rotunda, housing the Navy's exhibit.³⁸³ The Austrian imagination of Dalmatia was apparent in the poster, as an Austrian knight on horseback holding a mermaid on his lap overlooking the Adriatic coastline. The combination of military and sexual imagery summarized the view of the region as to be protected and claimed by Austria. The ethnographic exhibit echoed this view, as it "presented the Adriatic seaboard and especially its eastern shores as a kind of frontier space in the Habsburgs' southward expansion."³⁸⁴

Most of the ambitious plans for Dalmatia did not translate into reality. The anticipated private resources never materialized, and the state funds remained modest. Ultimately, tourism development lacked crucial backing, including from the exhibition's patron, Archduke Franz Ferdinand.³⁸⁵ The next—and last—exhibit of the Habsburg Monarchy on the Vienna Prater would be much more somber. In May 1916, the War Exhibit opened. In the hall of the navy, the exhibit mocked the flyers Gabrielle D'Annunzio, Italian writer, soldier, and nationalist provocateur, dropped from a plane over Trieste, calling on its citizens to rise against Austrian rule.³⁸⁶ The effort to present the Italian action as comical was less convincing amidst the Austrian navy's defensive position by 1916. Thus, the Adriatic, an "Austrian land under the sun," had become a battlefield, and the monarchy's prospects did not look good.

First World War

On June 28, 1914, around 350 members from the Serbian Sokol movement and around 15,000 spectators commemorated Vidovdan, the mythological defeat of Serbian forces by the Ottoman army in 1389. The Sokol movement was a Slavic gymnastic organization that promoted physical fitness and the national cause and grew strong in the last decades of the Habsburg Monarchy. The event also celebrated the "liberation of Kosovo" by Serbia two years earlier during the first Balkan war. During the events, Mate Drinković, a prominent politician from Jelsa, and Grga Budislav Angjelinović, a journalist, politician, and secretary of the Croat Sokol branch, originally from Sućuraj, addressed the crowd lionizing Serbs that "avenged their Kosovo against a formidable enemy; and ... we have a much stronger enemy in front of us: the falcon is a smaller bird than the eagle, but it can fight back. We trust in our descendants, which we will raise as our falcons, will be strong enough to defeat the eagle."³⁸⁷ This was a thinly veiled threat that the Habsburg Monarchy—represented by the eagle—would face a fate like the Ottoman Empire.

As the speeches were held in Split, in Sarajevo, events in Sarajevo would set the wheels in motion for South Slav unity to become a reality within just over four years. In the morning of the same day, Gavrilo Princip and his co-conspirators

awaited Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophia's visit. Around 11 a.m., Princip fired the fatal shots at the Latin Bridge in the center of Sarajevo.

As the news of the assassination spread in Dalmatia, flags were lowered, and the province joined the entire monarchy in mourning the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. His death provoked what seemed like genuine grief in Dalmatia, special church services were held throughout the region, including in Jelsa, as newspapers reported.³⁸⁸ Both Croat and Serb newspapers and intellectuals condemned the assassination, whereas Croatian newspapers also pointed the finger at Serbia and the idea of Greater Serbia. The Split *Pučke novine* even proclaimed that "Serbs, our unfaithful brothers have shown us that they don't wish our Croatia well" and went on to blame the Serbian intellectuals for fermenting radical nationalism.³⁸⁹ As the coffin made its way back from the Neretva Delta to Trieste by boat, demonstrations broke out in Dalmatian towns, just as they had in Sarajevo earlier, with shouts "Down with Serbia!" and protesters demolished Serb Orthodox Churches and Serb-owned houses. The unrest does not mean that anti-Serb feelings were widespread or dominant, but that there was a strong enough anti-Serb sentiment among some.³⁹⁰ The repressive state response helped to restore Croat-Serb cooperation within a few weeks. As the mobilization for war swung into gear, mass arrests began. Among them were leading politicians and writers from Dalmatia, including prominent political figures from Hvar, such as Mate Drinković, Grga Budislav Angjelinović, and Ante Tresić-Pavičić. Angjelinović was arrested for "associating with suspicious people."³⁹¹ In December, he was accused in court of high treason for his speech on Vidovdan but was eventually sentenced only to four months in jail for sharing hate against the state and other minor crimes. However, he was kept in prison at the request of the authorities.³⁹² The case went up to the high court in Vienna, which overturned the ruling and sent the case back to Zadar. By May 1915, he was sentenced to fourteen months in jail.³⁹³ Ante Tresić-Pavičić, deputy for Hvar, Brač, and Vis in the Reichsrat was interned in Maribor. While others were released under house arrest, Tresić-Pavičić remained jailed, later in Graz. Only in December 1915 the prosecution in Split indicted him for treason. The indictment was based on his support for Serbia before the war and his position that South Slavs had no future in the Monarchy.³⁹⁴ Despite being acquitted by the court, he was not released at the insistence of the military authorities. By the end of July 1914, four Dalmatian members of the Reichsrat, five members of the Dalmatian Diet, seven journalists, priests, lawyers, bankers, and professors, among others, were arrested. Altogether, 300 Dalmatians found themselves incarcerated, mostly in Maribor.³⁹⁵

Besides established writers and politicians, young intellectuals and artists like Ivan Meštrović, Ivo Andrić, and Niko Bartulović from Stari Grad, found themselves in Austrian jails. Bartulović, a fervent pro-Yugoslav journalist, worked for the Split newspaper *Sloboda*. He was sentenced to two years of internment for high treason.³⁹⁶ Oskar Tartaglia, one of the young nationalist activists, later noted that "the elite of the Dalmatian intelligencija was in the jails."³⁹⁷ This repression, more than anything else, helped to unify the Serbs and Croat elite in Dalmatia and

reinforced their joint opposition to the Habsburg Monarchy. Ante Tresić-Pavičić characterized the atmosphere in retrospect as a defining moment:

As soon as the war broke out, a storm began to eradicate all Yugoslav patriots. Howls and wails arose throughout the country, such a horror as when a plague broke out. ... What [or who] had been nationally aware, conscious, and honest was arrested, confined, imprisoned, ruined, condemned, executed, no matter whether young or old, sentenced to death through starvation; and the rest terrified, demoralized, disgraced.³⁹⁸

Thus, it was the repression of the Habsburg Monarchy that made a future of South Slavs in the empire unimaginable. The arrests at the beginning of the war were just the beginning of a stricter political control. The *Kriegüberwachungsamt* was monitoring all supposed anti-state activities, censorship was reinforced, and numerous newspapers associations were disbanded, such as most of the Sokol branches.³⁹⁹ By April 1915, some eighty-one associations, including twenty-seven Italian associations, were prohibited in Dalmatia.⁴⁰⁰ In Stari Grad, all local associations would be eventually dissolved, whereas in other towns, such as in Jelsa, many avoided closures by displays of loyalty, such as commemorating the death of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1916.⁴⁰¹

In 1914, festivities were held in Hvar, as elsewhere, to celebrate the 67th anniversary of Franz Joseph's rule. However, considering war and the increasingly repressive climate, it was no longer clear whether that support was genuine.⁴⁰² During the initial phases of the war, the Habsburg authorities saw South Slav activists as the main threat in Dalmatia. However, its attention switched to Italians once Italy entered the war on the side of the Entente in 1915. Italian navy ships blocked the Adriatic, and in June 1915, Italian ships blew up a lighthouse close to Vis and entered the port of Vela Luka on Korčula, bringing the war closer to Hvar. Towns across Dalmatia were subject to Italian aerial bombardments, which mostly inflicted minor damage, but being the first airborne attacks in history, created a sense of fear. Towns, including Hvar, also drafted plans to hide valuables from a possible occupation.⁴⁰³

Repression against Italians followed; some Italians were interned, and companies were confiscated. Some twenty families were interned from Vis and Hvar others wrote declarations of loyalty to stay in their homes. Italian in schools was also abolished, as were several Italian language newspapers banned. Italian place names were removed in 1916, and Austrian authorities monitored twenty-nine Italian associations, including three on Hvar, such as the *Lega Nazionale*.⁴⁰⁴

The reality of war meant men from Dalmatia, as elsewhere in the Monarchy were mobilized. During the first year, some 50,000 men were mobilized into the army in Dalmatia, but not all were sent to the frontline, some were busy building and improving fortifications along the Dalmatia coast. Dalmatian soldiers would fight on the Balkan fronts with Serbia and Montenegro and at the Isonzo/Soča Front with Italy starting in 1915. Already in the fall of 1914, the first soldiers from Hvar were injured, killed, or taken as prisoners of war. During the first year of the

war, over fifty were injured, nearly twenty were captured, and a dozen were killed. This toll would only increase as the war wore on.

The political atmosphere turned increasingly hostile during the war, so the Austrian authorities worried that the Dalmatian soldiers might be subject to subversive propaganda during their breaks home. Reports of Italy treating Dalmatian deserters well and letting them emigrate to the United States made the rounds.⁴⁰⁵

As many young men had emigrated to the United States and elsewhere, the rate of those called up reporting to duty was often low, but both dynamics, emigration, and war, reinforced the lack of young men on the island. This meant there was often no workforce to work the fields and cover the necessary labor in the villages. With children helping, school attendance dropped, worsening the problem of illiteracy.⁴⁰⁶ As the war dragged on and casualties mounted, an increasingly young men tried to avoid fighting in the war. Towards the end of the war, desertion became a concern for the army. By 1918, that number had increased all along the coast, with dozens in most towns deserting the army during the summer.⁴⁰⁷ Just for the village of Vrbanj, some thirty soldiers deserted after having a temporary leave.⁴⁰⁸

Overall, the war worsened the already precarious situation on Hvar. In August 1914, the authorities banned fishing beyond a mile from shore along the coast, and civilian navigation was severely restricted.⁴⁰⁹ The islands, including Hvar, were severely isolated, and their already precarious links to the mainland were further weakened. The restrictions resulted in food shortages, and the government introduced price controls on some essential foods, such as bread, in 1914. This was a particular concern in Dalmatia, which depended on wheat supplies from elsewhere in the monarchy and could not feed itself with basic food.⁴¹⁰ In August 1914, the district head of Hvar requested flour supplies from the Dalmatian authorities in Zadar.⁴¹¹ By 1915, hunger became acute in Dalmatia, as newspapers reported flour shortages, and the state supplies were overstretched.⁴¹² The sale of meat and flour was rationed that year in Dalmatia. By 1917, all towns in Dalmatia had soup kitchens, to feed the needy, 125 soup kitchens opened in Dalmatia, serving 57,000 meals per day, amounting to nearly a tenth of the population.⁴¹³ In 1917 and 1918, thousands of children were sent to Croatia and Slavonia, where food was more readily available. Food shortages worsened as people ate snails and other edible things they could find, and the shops were empty. In 1917, Juraj Biankini described the difficulties the population was facing in the reconvened Reichstag, including stories of people who died of hunger—reportedly around hundred on Korčula—and many more suffering from malnutrition:

The previous winter we made the bitter experience, how miserable a land is how heavy it has to justify itself in front of god and people when it is left without necessary means of communication. When enemy ships were in sight or storms raged in the Adriatic, Dalmatia was not supplied for days, the bread ration had to be further reduced, and, in many towns on the mainland and the islands, the poor people had to suffer from starvation.⁴¹⁴

In Stari Grad, Dinko Berković died of hunger, as the local doctor found out.⁴¹⁵ Drought during the war further impaired the recovery of the vineyards, and many sought to leave for the cities so that Split imposed restrictions on how long other Dalmatians could stay for the fear that this would bring problems to town.⁴¹⁶

Dissatisfaction spread beyond the intellectual and political elites of the island. The repression during the war made it hard to tell how much support the monarchy still enjoyed. Anti-Habsburg flyers were circulated, although those found with them would face steep fines or up to two weeks in jail. Some of those flyers warned that “[y]ears have passed that you sacrifice your precious blood for a foreign master, our jailer.” The administrator of Šibenik noted that the “lower classes ... hold conservative principles and never warmed up to the Yugoslav idea and will remain loyal as they have been ...”⁴¹⁷ This certainty was becoming more fragile, however. In July 1917, an investigating judge went to Stari Grad to interrogate more than 100 inhabitants. Some eighteen were sentenced to short prison sentences, eventually converted to financial fines. The mass disloyalty in Stari Grad was not directed against the state but the Catholic Church. For over a year, most townsfolk refused to go to church, even on Christmas and Easter. Their boycott was directed against Ivan Kuničić, the newly named vicar for Stari Grad. Some rumors suggest that he sided with the Autonomists, but more plausible, the inhabitants resented that their candidate was not named, despite multiple pleas to the bishop in Hvar. Children continued to disrupt church services by making loud noises and running in front of the church, and neither the judge nor the bishop could end the boycott.⁴¹⁸



Figure 3.7 Music group of the Sokol Association, Stari Grad (early twentieth century).
© Stari Grad Museum.

While ostensibly unconnected to the war, it showed the erosion of institutions that were the pillar of the Monarchy. The Catholic Church had found itself in a contradictory position during the war. Many of the lower clergy, as well as some bishops, supported national unity and Croatian identity while at the same time trying to stay loyal to the Habsburg monarchy. Before the war, these could be reconciled, but now, these dual loyalties came under strain.

In November 1916, Emperor Franz Joseph died at eighty-six and after sixty-eight years on the throne. His passing marked the end of an era, anticipating the end of the monarchy two years later. His successor, young Emperor Karl, sought to regain legitimacy by lifting many restrictions imposed during the first war years. This included an amnesty for most Dalmatian intellectuals and politicians arrested in 1914. Furthermore, the Reichsrat reconvened in late spring 1917. When it met in Vienna in May 1917, the South Slav representatives joined a Yugoslav club, and all Dalmatian members of parliament passed a declaration demanding self-determination, although at that point, still within the Monarchy.⁴¹⁹ During the debates, Juraj Biankini anticipated the seismic changes about to occur:

When one day our successors will read the reports of this parliamentary session, they will doubtlessly be surprised, how the big, fateful epoch in which we live, has found such small men ... The thrones and institutions, which were untouchable like a sanctuary, are shaking and crumbling; from the blood drenched battlefields of Europe a fresh, freedom-loving and democratic wind blows that announces new profound changes in the social, political and economic structures of the entire world ...⁴²⁰

By 1918, it became more apparent that most South Slav representatives saw their future outside the Habsburg Monarchy. Vienna failed to offer a tangible prospect for a South Slav unit in the Monarchy besides the Hungarian and Austrian halves of the Empire.

A day before the end of the war, the mayor of Jelsa praised Woodrow Wilson, who would be a source of hope for many Dalmatians, as well as many others who pinned their hopes on the ideas of self-determination. He also welcomed the establishment of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs—the short-lived South Slav state established in Austria-Hungary that would join Serbia in creating the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in December.⁴²¹ On November 29, 1918, the new state of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs was declared, and a new Dalmatian government was established in Split, with key Yugoslav politicians including Jerko Machiedo from Hvar.⁴²² The mayor and many islanders hoped that this not only end the war and economic devastation but also mark the future in a South Slav state. However, for Hvar, as for other large swaths of Dalmatia, it would remain uncertain.

Throughout the century of Habsburg rule, Hvar was not just firmly rooted in the political space of the monarchy, but its inhabitants became participants in the first phase of globalization. An islander born in the decades after the Habsburg Monarchy took charge of Dalmatia might have helped build the Suez Canal,

become a gum plantation worker in New Zealand, opened a saloon in the Wild West, settled in Chile, ship local wine to Bordeaux or Aden, fish in the seas around Lampedusa, study in Padua, Graz, or Vienna, and exchange correspondence with leading scientists in Europe. The island was not just a place of departure but closely enmeshed in multiple global networks: its intellectuals corresponded with their fellow scientists across the continent, merchants and fishermen built up vast networks across the Mediterranean, and politicians and journalists linked up with colleagues throughout the monarchy. Even if Hvar and Stari Grad were not the largest towns in Dalmatia, writers, scholars, and politicians disproportionately shaped the province during the Habsburg century.⁴²³ Not all islanders were equally connected or had the same opportunity. In fact, the large local inequalities remained in place, with most islanders working as peasants on other people's land, always in a precarious economic and social position.

Hvar was both a beneficiary of global trade and exchanges, such as supplying wine when the vineyards of France and Italy were devastated by disease. Yet, it was also a precarious wealth, built on one plant whose failings or loss in value would trigger poverty and mass emigration.

The rise of nationalism was another important force in the second half of the nineteenth century. The idea of a distinct Dalmatian identity failed to congeal to a national identity. This was owed to the absence of a broad social base that would allow its advocates to build support. Instead, the rise of Croatian and South Slav nationalisms on one side and Italian nationalism on the other decimated the space for a multilingual regional identity. Strong local particularities further obstructed the emergence of a Dalmatian identity. In many ways, the island was far from a coherent unit at the end of the Habsburg period. While a political unit, with Vis and ecclesiastically with both Vis and Brač, few would consider the island a shared space.

Chapter 4

THE YUGOSLAV CENTURY

The idea of a South Slav identity on Hvar emerged in the sixteenth century with Vinko Pribojević. However, the notion of a South Slav state that would include Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Montenegrins, and others was hardly imaginable before the last years of the First World War. The repression of the Habsburg Monarchy and its lack of cohesion in times of crisis made the idea of a Yugoslav state attractive among political and intellectual elites, including from Hvar. The short Yugoslav century began in Hvar, with the goal joining this state, which emerged in November and December 1918 out of the collapsing Habsburg Monarchy, Serbia, and Montenegro. The formation of the state was accelerated by Italy and its claim to the Eastern Adriatic. Thus, one might argue that Yugoslavia was born in Dalmatia. However, Yugoslavia would take several years of Italian occupation to reach Hvar. This delay also helped to preserve a positive view of this new national project for longer, as the inhabitants of Hvar avoided some of the painful confrontations in the early months of the country's formation.

“The Insatiable Venetian Lion”: The Italian Occupation

By early November 1918, it became apparent that the First World War was over. All along the Dalmatian coast, including on Hvar, excitement gripped the towns and villages, an “electric shock that affected all those who think and feel.”¹ In Jelsa, the municipality called for a celebratory march, including the mayor, the intellectual and political elite, Sokols, and ordinary inhabitants who waved Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian flags with speeches and patriotic songs. Similar events took place all over the island, where American flags were also given a place of honor, and Wilson became the most popular foreign leader. In a fiery speech, a local priest, Don Stjepan Miličić, exclaimed that “[i]n front of the loggia, where on the flagpole, throughout the centuries the flags of others were waved, symbols of slavery ... our dear tricolor is hoisted.”²

This brief burst of enthusiasm would not last. Within days, an Italian force would arrive. Officially, it was part of the Allies to occupy regions that belonged to the Central Powers. However, it also staked its claim to Hvar, together with other areas of Dalmatia, which Italy had been promised by the Entente Powers in the

Treaty of London in 1915. On November 13, 1918, the first Italian soldiers arrived on Hvar. The Italian occupation initially secured any weapons, raised an Italian flag, and took control of telephone and telegraph lines.³ The corvette captain Filippini left the boat and notified the mayor that he and his one hundred men would occupy the island in the name of Italy. A protest by the mayor was rejected. He established his office with the harbormaster and replaced the Croatian and Serbian flags with Italian flags.⁴

Following the Italian military occupation of the island in November 1918, a delegation from Hvar sent a declaration of loyalty to the crown prince Aleksander of the nascent Yugoslav state:

From these beautiful beaches of the Slavic Adriatic from Stari Grad and Hvar, the cradle of the first Croatian poet Peter Hektorović and Hanibal Lučić ... accept, Alexander, king of our blood and our language, our brotherly greetings and admiration. With the unspeakable joy of the unification ... we ... people of Hvar, occupied and oppressed by untrustworthy overseas neighbors, the insatiable Venetian Lion—They desire our souls! ... Do not let, powerful protector of ours, these perfidious pirates steal two precious stones of Hvar and Stari Grad from your crown, whose population said they would only like to live under your scepter, unified with the glorious and heroic Serbia ... Free us, unite us, that as soon as possible, we are rescued from the unjust occupation—to experience the desired day of Our Resurrection.⁵

Yet neither the nascent kingdom nor the inhabitants of Hvar could determine the island's future. That decision would be taken at the Peace Conference in Paris. Italy was offered parts of Dalmatia in the secret treaty of London signed between Italy and the Entente Powers Russia, Britain, and France in 1915. The treaty became public when it was published by the Soviet Union in 1917 to discredit the secret diplomacy of Czarist Russia. If the Soviet Union embarrassed the Entente by publicizing the treaty, Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points undermined the Italian claims by only endorsing claims if they followed "clearly recognizable lines of nationality." Along the Dalmatian coast, Italians were a small minority. On Hvar, according to the 1910 Austro-Hungarian census, the last one before the war, among the 16,340 inhabitants, only 484 declared their language of use to be Italian (2.97 percent). In all of Dalmatia, only Zadar had an Italian-speaking majority.

The competing claims by Italy and the emerging Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes put them at loggerheads. The competition was about controlling territory and persuading the allies. As the winners negotiated the map of Europe, including who would control Dalmatia, Italy had sought to enforce its control on the Eastern Adriatic, anticipating and encouraging future territorial gains. In the end, the military occupation failed. In effect, Italian rule over large parts of Dalmatia was a heavy-handed and ham-fisted approach, further undermining Italian claims and alienating the non-Italian majority.

Even before Italian boats would land on Hvar, a French destroyer docked in Hvar to test the atmosphere in Stari Grad, pro-Italian and pro-Yugoslav citizens

competed by waving banners and singing patriotic songs. The pro-Yugoslav songs, however, predominated wherever the destroyer docked on the island.⁶ A visit in December by the French warship *Somalie* was met with similar responses. Some 3,000 islanders welcomed the allied soldiers with French and Yugoslav flags and an official reception in the town hall. The French captain ended his speech with a “Živela Jugoslavija,” an apparent provocation to the Italian occupiers.⁷

Unsurprisingly, the Italian army encountered a far frostier reception. When Hvar was occupied on 13 November, opposition was significant. In Stari Grad, where the mayor asked to fly both flags but was denied, “a crowd formed, haranguing particularly by the priests ... began to sing hymns and shouts of cheers to Yugoslavia.” While the mayor deescalated the situation, the Italian commander did not permit the Yugoslav flag to be in the town hall but elsewhere around town.⁸ Either way, the symbolism of flag-raising was contentious. The Italian *Corvette captain* Francesco Filippini observed the population’s hostility to his arrival. He attributed “the pompous deployment of the innumerable Yugoslav and Serbian flags on houses, lampposts, mountain tops” to local notables being warned by telegraph of the arrival of Italians. However, he had most scorn for priests who, according to Filippini, “wandered through the crowd and frantically spread italophobic advice.”⁹ The captain believed the “current agitation is ... more artificial than natural and is kept alive only by the work of the various committees ... with the immediate illusion of each member to finally be a personality, and with the dream ... as soon as possible an influential member of the next Yugoslav parliament.”¹⁰ No doubt, the protests were organized by the local elites opposed to the Italian occupation. However, reducing it to an elite-driven process misled Italian occupiers as they believed they could influence the will of the “ordinary people.” The Italian army took a while to take complete control of the coast and the islands; thus, only in early January 1919 did the army take over Jelsa, Vrboška, and the remaining regions of Hvar.¹¹

The Italian army gradually understood it was ruling over a hostile majority. In early 1919, Admiral Enrico Millo, the military commander of the Italian-controlled regions of Dalmatia, gained the somewhat pompous title of “Governor of Dalmatia and the Dalmatian and Korčulan islands.” He had no authority in Split and large parts of Dalmatia.¹² Yet it staked the claim for a more permanent rule of the region. His understanding of Italian rule was deeply embedded in a colonial framework, as he described “our task of civilization” and Croats and Serbs as

fundamentally good as simple and primitive people. But the simple and primitive people are also extremely sensitive, suspicious, and violent in their impulses. ... It must be remembered that this is the first contact the population, as yet primitive and uncultured in its mass, has had with Italy ... We must do our best to make them see Italy as their friend and liberator.¹³

Millo’s view of the Slavic population reflects his experience as an Italian commander during the conquest of Libya in 1911. The view of Croats and Serbs as backward and primitive might have followed the logic of colonial rule, but

misjudged the population. With the emerging nation-state of Yugoslavia next door, there was an alternative, and the concept of national self-determination was well understood, as represented by the islanders waving American flags and celebrating Wilson. The Italian occupation alienated the population by offering no political space to the Slavic majority. Millo's colonial approach was not lost on Yugoslav observers. In January 1919, a Split daily published a text in English and French directed at European diplomats, calling Dalmatia "a European [sic] Tripoli"—the reference the Italian conquest of Tripoli eight years earlier would have been evident. In the eyes of the author, there is "[n]o doubt a few good Italians have been left to us by Venice, but many more have been manufactured by the mischievous Austrian bureaucratism ... Mr. Millo expected to find Italians, but he has once more been deceived ..."¹⁴

The Yugoslav authorities carefully documented all the abuses of the Italian occupation. They observed that the Italian army "exercise[d] the administration for the specific purpose of preparing the country for permanent occupation and annexation of the territory provisionally occupied."¹⁵ These included a long list, from banning Yugoslav, Croat, and Serb flags, imposing Italian as the sole administrative language, censorship, and curtailing the communication between the Italian-controlled regions and the rest of Dalmatia. Furthermore, the Italian authorities arrested prominent Yugoslavs, including Juraj Biankini, who was first placed under house arrest and later sent to jail for his opposition to Italian rule.¹⁶ Another prominent politician from Hvar detained by Italian authorities was Jerko Machiedo. Machiedo was born in Hvar and became a doctor after studying in Graz. He became a member of the Dalmatian parliament and was arrested by Austrian authorities during the First World War for supporting South Slav unity. As Italy took over Zadar, he was again detained and interned in Sardinia and Ancona. A similar fate awaited Josip Avelini, a doctor who would become mayor of Hvar in 1921 and a key tourism promoter. Despite being acquitted by an Italian court, Avelini was deported. Others were exiled, including the signatories of the abovementioned appeal to regent Aleksandar.¹⁷ Within the first two months of the occupation, some twenty islanders had been sent to Italy. While these punitive measures might have quelled protests, they did little to convince the inhabitants of Hvar that the Italian rule was anything but an occupation.¹⁸

Food became an essential tool for the Italian army to try to gain support. With the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy, traditional supply lines were disrupted. Ante Tresić-Pavičić noted in a report to the American Navy that the "islands and sea bordering regions are in a desperate situation. Hunger is menacing us with its terrible consequences."¹⁹ The Italian occupation supported the local agricultural production by purchasing agricultural products and closing Dalmatia to competing Italian products, such as Oil and Wine.²⁰ The Italian army also sought to secure support by assisting: "At first, food was used as a means of furthering Italian interests, but in the presence of marked determination on the part of the population not to accept or buy any foodstuffs which were given by the Italians as being purely Italian."²¹ The occupation forces also used the

food shortages to buy loyalty and gained allies among poor families who would collaborate for food.²²

The Italian army favored the local Italian minorities. For example, it exempted them from the curfew. They were reported walking through the towns, singing pro-Italian slogans, such as “Long live D’Annunzio,” “Long live Italy,” and “Down with the Croatian yoke.”²³ Nevertheless, Italian public life in Hvar remained marginal, and the leading Italian association on Hvar only attracted forty members.²⁴ As a result, the Italian occupation further isolated the Italian community, and Italians felt the majority’s hostility. When an Italian army commander asked a priest why the people supported an Orthodox dynasty and Yugoslavia rather than aligning themselves with Catholic Italy, the priest replied, “We do what was done six decades ago by Italy’s greatest sons, Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour.”²⁵ While this statement might reflect more the imagination of the pro-Yugoslav newspaper, the Italian occupation did advance the Yugoslav, rather than the Italian nation-building process.

Islanders eagerly welcomed Allies visiting the island. Italian soldiers were aware of the potential inflammatory effect of Allied warships in their area of occupation. In December 1918, an American ship docked in Hvar harbor, and the local Italian commanders instructed the captain to leave immediately.²⁶ When an American officer visited Jelsa the following month, the Italian soldiers dispersed the crowd while the American officers drank tea at the house of the Duboković family.²⁷ A few weeks later, another US Navy boat arrived, and three sailors landed. The welcome reception, including shouts of “Long Live Wilson!,” was once more broken up by the Italian police. An Italian soldier threatened Vinko Huljić, a prominent local townsman, to “throw you into the sea together with all other Croats of Jelsa.”²⁸

The American captain J. G. L. Pommerol described his experience during one of his visits. In Jelsa, the Italian carabinieri and sailors violently disbursed a crowd welcoming the ship to the usual cheers. During his subsequent visit to Stari Grad, no incidents occurred at first, and the Italian commander, Tannas Ovic, a former Austrian officer, claimed that “the population was almost entirely pro-Italian.” To convince the visiting captain, he was introduced to Italians on his boat from non-occupied territories, such as Brač and Zadar. The Italians were putting on a show: “Among the many Italians that were produced, for my benefit as emblems of ‘Italianness,’ two were convicts, one for forgery and the other for smuggling. Several had only been citizens of the islands since the occupation by the Italians.” Thus, “[i]t gradually dawned upon my mind that a little demonstration had been arranged for my benefit before my departure.” Between twenty and thirty shouted as he was leaving “Viva Italia.” This performance was short-lived as Croat townspeople responded with “Viva Engleska—Viva Wilson,” to which the Italian soldiers responded with “another display of gallantry, this time with raised rifles and struck women, children, and men down. A scene of indescribable violence and brutality followed.” Subsequently, twelve persons, including three priests, were arrested.²⁹

Such incidents were common and documented by the American Navy, which regularly visited the islands, including Hvar, from their base in Split.

Between late 1918 and 1921, the US Navy controlled large parts of Dalmatia, together or instead in competition with the Italian and the Serbian armies, which had both taken control of Dalmatian lands to underpin their territorial claims at the Paris Peace Conference.³⁰ Formally, its task was to supervise the Austro-Hungarian naval fleet, but the main job was to prevent conflicts between Italians and Yugoslavs. The American zone extended along the Dalmatian coast. Based in regions controlled by the Yugoslav authority, it could observe the Italian occupation: “Yugoslavs were beaten, the ration cards seized, ... Millo suppressed all personal liberties and dissolved the Yugoslav press and societies; he liquidated thirty out of thirty-three municipal councils ...”³¹

The most severe incident during Italian rule on Hvar occurred in December 1918 following the Proclamation of the unification of Yugoslavia. The local members of the *Sokol* movement looted some goods for a show from an Italian-owned shop. Italian soldiers tried to arrest one of them, Toma Novak, who was carrying pillows and made fun of the Italian king. In the ensuing chase through town, Italian soldiers came under fire, resulting in the death of one soldier. In response, they shot back, injuring several locals, including a woman. Italian authorities blamed locals for the dead soldier, but the townsfolk were convinced that stray bullets from Italian soldiers killed him, as witnesses claim to have heard, “Madonna mia! Non tirate, siamo Italiani!”—“Don’t shoot, we are Italians!”³²

Subsequently, Hvar town was placed under martial law, and a curfew was imposed. All inhabitants had to hand in their weapons, and anybody found with weapons afterward would be sentenced by a military tribunal and shot. Although the inhabitants of Hvar and Stari Grad were disarmed, some managed to bury their guns. The Italian authorities threatened that if the violence did not stop, the city would be bombed. Associations were closed, the boys’ primary school was taken over, and many important citizens were arrested, including the head of the local Gendarmerie, a Czech.³³ The Italian commander complained about the difficult situation to the American investigating the incident. What made the Italian position difficult was the hostility of most inhabitants of Hvar and the uncertainty over the island’s future. Furthermore, the Italians lacked sufficient soldiers to fully occupy the island, especially in the face of resistance. Only around 150 Italian soldiers were stationed on Hvar, whereas the entire Italian occupation force on the Eastern Adriatic, from Istria to Dalmatia, amounted to only 3,000 men.

While the American Navy was critical of Italian rule, they cautioned the Dalmatian government in Split not to intervene following the incident on Hvar. Rear Admiral William H. G. Bullard warned,

An attempt might be made to land men from the mainland to Lessina to engage in an armed conflict with the Italian troops there. It is well to remember that Lessina was included in the Pact of London as one of the islands to be occupied by Italy, so it can be assumed that they are rightfully there, at least for the time being. Whether Italy shall retain this island after peace terms are determined is a question that cannot be answered at this time.³⁴

Instead, American Navy officers were sent to investigate the incident in Hvar. They were welcomed as “the whole populace was gathered on the dock to greet us. The leading men among them welcomed us to the town, and the young girls showered us with flowers.” During the visit, two boys with two Yugoslav and one US flag walked ahead.³⁵

The behavior of the Italian army on Hvar proved counterproductive, as Pommerol concluded that

the poor fisher folk and peasants which compose 95% of the population of these islands show their sentiments by their looks, their tears, and the stoicism with which they endure oppression. The brutality of the Italians has awakened their national conscience, and it would take a great deal of force to suppress it if it can be suppressed. No opportunity is missed by the Italians to hurt their feelings. I have heard them called beasts, barbarians, and savages by the Italians ...³⁶

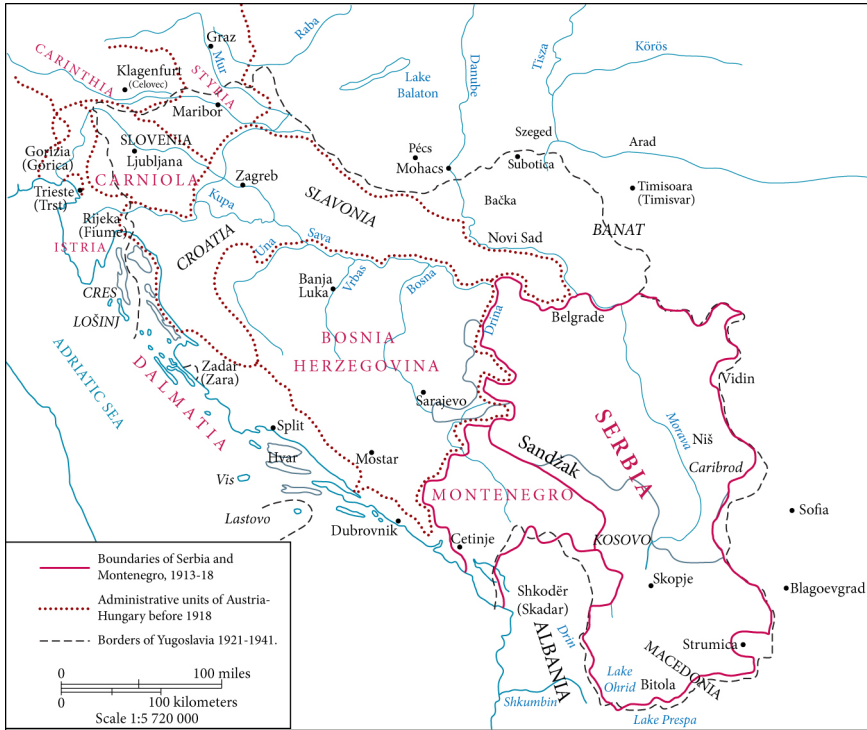
The sentiments were clear in an informal plebiscite organized in Dalmatia by the Yugoslav side in early 1919, with all municipalities except Zadar having an overwhelming majority to join Yugoslavia. On Hvar, 96.7 percent voted for Yugoslavia. Even if this was not a competitive vote, it indicated local preferences.³⁷

In March 1919, American Lieutenant LeRoy King sent a report to Archibald Cary Coolidge, who was part of the American delegation in Paris and sent to the coast to investigate the situation. From Hvar, he noted a strong Italian military presence: “There is no mistaking the atmosphere of freedom in a place like Brazza [Brač] (occupied by Serbs) and of fear in Lesina [Hvar]. Spies and gendarmes are everywhere, and foreign officers and ships are looked on with greatest suspicion.”³⁸ The “stern treatment”³⁹ the islanders received would ensure that there was no sympathy lost for Italy except for a small minority, which, as it became increasingly clear that Italian rule would not persist, became more vulnerable.

The End of Italian Occupation

By the summer of 1919, it became clear that the islands would become part of the South Slav kingdom rather than Italy. Inhabitants of Split and other visitors danced until midnight on the USS Olympia in a relaxed atmosphere as rumors spread that Italy would not get Dalmatia except Vis.⁴⁰ Among the islands, Italy focused on retaining control of Vis and Lastovo in Dalmatia and Rab and Lošinj in the north. Rijeka (or Fiume in Italian) had become a central focus of Italian claims. Italian Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino observed, “Fiume represents wealth, Dalmatia represents security.”⁴¹ The wealth of Rijeka resulted from being the port for Hungary, but now it was cut off from its markets by new borders. No matter, Rijeka became the preferred prize over the largely poor and underdeveloped Dalmatia.

A settlement became more tangible when the elder statesman, Giovanni Giolitti, returned to become Italy’s Prime Minister. He had not supported Italy’s entry into the war, and with his foreign minister Carlo Sforza, he preferred to



Map 4 Changing borders of Yugoslavia between 1918 and 1941.

establish good relations with Yugoslavia.⁴² Once negotiations began in earnest, the two sides quickly agreed.⁴³ The Treaty of Rapallo, signed in November 1920, assigned Istria, the islands of Cres, Lošinj, Lastovo, and the city of Zadar to Italy. It also established a short-lived Free State of Fiume that would become part of Italy within a few years.

Many Italians in Dalmatia realized the Treaty of Rapallo offered them less protection than during the Habsburg rule. Unsurprisingly, the Italian minority felt betrayed by Rome, and many protested against the Rapallo agreement.⁴⁴ Thus, in Hvar, the main Italian associations and leading members of the community launched a protest “with grave concern against the renunciation that the government has made for the entire Dalmatia ... the government has failed in its greatest duty towards its countrymen, leaving them in the hands of the treacherous enemy ... to be now foreign souls on their own land, at the tombs of their dead.”⁴⁵

As the Italian army withdrew, the Italians of Hvar had to make a difficult choice. They could leave for Italy, remain in Yugoslavia as Yugoslavs, or acquire Italian citizenship while retaining full residence rights. However, by offering Italian citizenship, the treaty removed them politically from Yugoslavia’s map and excluded them from key professions, such as lawyers. Thus, Felice Baylon, a prominent member of the pre-war Hvar elite, noted that this option was flawed:

“Italians of Dalmatia have the recognized right, if they wish, to become foreign in their own country.”⁴⁶ Beyond the legal protection, they were now a minority amidst a powerful and resentful majority. The decline from the dominant elite during the nineteenth century to a minority in the closing years of Habsburg rule to a marginal and resented minority was complete. Antonio Bucevich described the scenes as the Italian army left Hvar on April 18, 1921:

From Cittavecchia, I reported the most painful impression. The Italian element was disorganized and disheartened. Most, especially the young, who during our occupation became fanatics and had kept an intolerant attitude towards the Slavs, wanted to leave because they could not stay in the country without incurring the anger and reprisals of Croats ... Lesina was the only center where the Italians formed a considerable group—half thousand—but it is also well organized, disciplined, and confident that the royal government would help them even after the withdrawal. The majority of Italians was poor: seafarers, fishermen and peasants.⁴⁷

From all the islands, only around 350 Italians left, especially those who feared reprisals. However, once the Yugoslav authorities took over, the number of Italians wanting to leave increased, also from Hvar, as they were subject to pressure and discrimination. Some Italians fled to Zara and the newly acquired regions of Italy in the North East, as well as the big urban centers of Italy, such as Rome and Milan, where they received help from the state.⁴⁸ The plight of Italians from Dalmatia became a rallying call for the Italian right, who attacked the government for evacuating the zones of occupation without adequate safeguards for minorities in place.⁴⁹

As the Italian army left, people symbolically scrubbed the seafront with brooms and threw the brooms into the sea.⁵⁰ Celebrations took place throughout the island. Peasants from neighboring villages came to Jelsa by boat and foot carrying the Yugoslav tricolor, still hidden, as its display had been banned. An eyewitness reports how the flags were unfurled before the Italian soldiers embarked on the torpedo boat *Fuciliere*, which arrived to pick them up. A parting Italian brigadier purportedly shouted, “Evviva Gelsa italiana!”—Long live Italian Jelsa—to which somebody from the crowd mockingly responded “Evviva Roma Jugoslava!”—Long live Yugoslav Rome.⁵¹ Similar celebrations were held in Vrboska, where the autonomist movement remained in power the longest before the war. Here, the cannons were shot from the hill in the center of the town around the fortified Church of Our Blessed Lady, combined with the ringing of the bells of all churches, announcing “to the people the most wonderful news of freedom and the unification with the Yugoslavia homeland ...” However, it was not only a celebration but also to commemorate what the newspaper described as the Italian “reign of terror,” putting up pictures of Antun Ružević, who died during the occupation.⁵² Everybody was awaiting the steamship with soldiers and state representatives. While the boat did not make it due to bad weather, the celebration continued with visitors from Brač and other villages and lively singing, dancing,

and toasting. The celebration lasted late into the night and ended as they began, with shots fired.⁵³

The end of the Italian occupation of Hvar and other regions of Dalmatia in the Spring of 1921 marked the end of the war. The combination of repressive measures, uncertainty, and the sense of foreign and mostly hostile rule meant that two and a half years since the armistice was not yet “normality.” With it, the inhabitants of Hvar had not participated in the divisive and challenging process of the formation of Yugoslavia. The new Yugoslav constitution was passed just two months after the end of Italian rule and was contested as the main Croats rejected its centralism. Still, the tensions between the Croatian Republican Peasant Party of Stjepan Radić and the centralist parties had bypassed the zones under Italian rule. The enthusiasm for Yugoslavia was thus still genuine. It would last for several years, whereas elsewhere, these early years had brought bitterness to the political disputes that would not go away. Despite the Italian occupation, these disputes were not unknown to the islanders. During the celebrations in Hvar, Bishop Luca Papafava, and a peasant from Brusje, Petar Tudor, evoked national unity. Tudor noted, “From these just liberated shores ... we tell them ... those who raise this flag of freedom and unity will never let anyone touch it.” In contrast, Bishop Papafava evoked God to maintain unity: “We are happy ... that we experience the national unification. Pray to God that he keeps external and internal peace.” During the events, the Yugoslav general Milić evoked the battle of Kosovo, noting hopefully that “There will be Obilić [the Serbian noblemen who, according to legend, killed the Ottoman sultan Murad] in the future that will defend our flag,” whereas Jerko Machiedo praised the Serbian brotherhood.⁵⁴ Not everywhere was the welcome as smooth. In Stari Grad, the leading local communist, Pavao Vranjican, threw a rock at the teacher Petar Kunčić as he was welcoming the Yugoslav army, exclaiming, “You great Austrian [Austrijančino], it’s dishonorable for you to hold a welcome in this hour.” Vranjican was probably the first islander incarcerated by the new Yugoslav authorities but was released quickly on the same day as local villagers protested the new authorities.⁵⁵ If the speeches by bishop Papafava and Petar Tudor foreshadowed the dominant political debates in interwar Yugoslavia, Vranjican’s act of rebellion shed light on the other movement, which was a constant source of worry for the state in the interwar period, the Communist Party.

The Italian Minority in the New Yugoslavia

As the new Yugoslav state took control of previously Italian-controlled regions of Dalmatia, the small Italian minority had to make a choice. The Treaty of Rapallo allowed Italians to take on Italian citizenship, even if they remained in Yugoslavia. In total, 4,335 became Italian citizens, with 709 moving to Italy. In brief, most stayed in Yugoslavia, but now as Italian citizens. From the Yugoslav perspective, these were mostly “the remains of the former autonomists [and] those who took Italian citizenship for different interests and promises.”⁵⁶ Such claims were common, suggesting that Italians did not belong to a national minority but were opportunists.

The Dalmatian geographer Ivo Rubić claimed, “‘talijančarenje’ [‘italianising’ the opportunistic identification as Italian] on our shore is completely unrelated to any national identity.”⁵⁷ Thus, within two generations, the categories shifted from autonomists to Italian speakers to Italians and finally to Italian citizens or *optanti*, dismissed as opportunists and aliens.

According to the Italian census of Italians abroad, only 6,802 lived along the Yugoslav coast. Hvar was the third-largest region with 509 Italians after Krk and Split,⁵⁸ even though Italians made up just 5 percent of the population in Hvar town. According to Yugoslav sources, numbers were lower, i.e., just 222 Italians in Hvar and Vis, 89 in Hvar, 47 in Stari Grad, and 13 in Vrboska.⁵⁹ In addition, not all Italians in Yugoslavia opted for Italian citizenship.

Despite its small size, the Italian minority was a considerable source of anxiety for the Yugoslav state. For one, the long-standing struggle during the Habsburg rule and the Italian occupation was not easily forgotten. Second, just over a year after Italy vacated the occupied regions, Benito Mussolini was named Prime Minister. Initially, relations between Italy and Yugoslavia improved under Mussolini. New agreements regulated trade between the countries and improved minority rights, such as professional freedom and the lifting of ownership restrictions in the proximity to the border.⁶⁰ Relations worsened in the following years as Italy forged closer ties with irredentist Bulgaria and Hungary. It openly supported anti-Yugoslav groups after the royal dictatorship was declared in Belgrade in 1929, including the Ustaša movement.⁶¹

The Italians, known as *optanti*, were caught between Italy and Yugoslavia. In 1928, for example, the fascist government imposed stricter controls, including making it more difficult for *optanti* to get a passport to travel.⁶² The Italian consul in Split, Carlo Umiltà, noted that within four years, from 1919 to 1923, some 115 left Stari Grad and 300 Hvar. Ironically, during the fascist period, the number of Italians decreased despite its claims to protect Dalmatian Italians.⁶³ According to the Italian consul in Split, by 1930 only eighty remained in Hvar town and sixty in Stari Grad.⁶⁴ The Italian consul noted in 1930 that many Italians of Hvar and Vis preferred to sell their land and move to Zadar.⁶⁵ Most Italians did not leave for Italy, but overseas as the precarious economic situation was not much better in Italy.⁶⁶

While the Italian language and identity were long associated with the Dalmatian elite, by the interwar years, the profile of the Italians was similar to that of the overall population.⁶⁷ Revealingly, Ivo Rubić noted in a study about Italians in that “[a]mong educated Yugoslavs, who speak Italian, there is not one, who would allow himself to be counted as an Italian.”⁶⁸ The Italian consul in Split concurred: “the rich, ... in fact, rather those who were once rich due to the vastness of land and real estate possessions are now struggling to find a little credit for a living, ruined by the non-payment of income from land [domenicali], harassed by taxes, pressed by usurious interest, threatened at any moment by the application of the agrarian reform.”⁶⁹ A list of the eighteen *optanti* in Stari Grad from 1935 identified only two as very well off, five as well off, and the rest as either getting by or being in a difficult situation. The wealthiest two were large landowners, but others were peasants, fishermen, and former traders, some with a pension from Italy, others destitute.⁷⁰

Despite their small size and limited economic power, Yugoslav authorities monitored the few hundred Hvar Italians suspiciously. Their Italian citizenship and “Italianness” made them a potential fifth column. Moreover, the state still worried that the boundary between Yugoslavs and Italians was not firm enough. Even though Italians had lost the attraction as the language of privilege and social advancement two generations earlier, the authorities still worried that the Italian-funded schools and institutions would attract “new” Italians. For example, the gendarmerie noted in 1927 that the schoolteachers in Hvar offered financial assistance to poor Yugoslavs to join the Italian association Biondi, which led to a police investigation.⁷¹ The supposed recruitment hardly bore any fruit. The Italian school in Hvar counted only eight pupils, and nine children attended the kindergarten in 1929/30. All Italian schools along the Yugoslav coast numbered only 306 boys and 148 girls, and the 23 Italian associations had 4,177 members.⁷²

Citizens were aware of this government concern and evoked it to gain state support. In February 1924, Prošper Nadalin, president of the school council in Hvar, wrote to the educational department of the regional government in Split to request a second pre-school teacher. In it, he praised the “patriotic and moral education” preschool offered to the ninety children but also noted that the conditions were considerably worse than in the smaller Italian preschool:

The Italians in Hvar have a primary school and now in the newly fixed up building a kindergarten will open ... with money, clothing, books, and sweets they will lure children. Many poor and *nationally unconscious parents* for the love of material interests—and with the excuse that they don’t want to withhold anything from them [their children] will send them there.⁷³

Thus, a seemingly small request for a teacher is framed in the larger national struggle and how the Italian preschool might attract non-Italians and implicitly lure them away from the Yugoslav nation(s). The letter is revealing as it openly acknowledges “nationally unconscious” families, suggesting that while officially the boundaries between Croats/Yugoslavs and Italians had been firmly drawn by the 1880s, national identity was less fixed. Many might have a more pragmatic approach.

Indeed, the public administration worried that some of those “nationally unconscious” might become Italians and kept a close eye on the Italian school. In a report in 1929, the local authorities noted that “it is not known if the parents are getting paid [for sending their children to school], but people are talking about it in town that they get some reward.” As the local educational department diligently reported, the building was small but new, and each classroom featured a picture of both kings, the Italian king Victor Emmanuel III and the Yugoslav king, Aleksandar. The worry that the school would transform “the children into big Italians in whom they will squeeze out every feeling of friendship and tolerance towards our people and state” was not unfounded, as they learned from Italian textbooks, which were increasingly shaped by fascist ideology.⁷⁴

Despite the deep division between Italians and Yugoslavs based on citizenship, language, and presumed loyalty, there was considerable individual ambiguity. The retired schoolteacher Vicko Ružević came to the attention of Yugoslav authorities for having signed a declaration of loyalty to the Italian kingdom in 1930. This raised the administration's concern as he was not an Italian citizen but the father of the well-respected mayor of Stari Grad.

His choices highlight how individuals pragmatically negotiated competing demands for loyalty. Vicko Ružević had been a teacher in Rijeka during the Habsburg period but was pushed out after the war as the Italian army confiscated his flat. Returning to his hometown of Stari Grad, he requested Yugoslav citizenship based on his birth. At the same time, he was eligible to receive his pension from Italy as he had Rijeka pertinency, a type of local citizenship.⁷⁵ Being an Italian and a Yugoslav did not fit the logic of un-mixing legal identities after the war. His declaration of loyalty to the Italian throne and the government also alarmed Yugoslav authorities, especially as he was considered a Yugoslav. The explanation that he signed the oath to ensure his pension payment seemed likely, but there was another twist.

Ivan Gospodentić, a lawyer from Brač who lived in Split, was an *optant* and lost his and his wife's family money in bad investments. Vicko Ružević participated in a petition launched by a group of Italians in Split to urge the Italian bank to issue him a loan. The Italian bank in Split appears to give him a loan to repay his debts.⁷⁶ Yugoslav propaganda complained that the Split branch of the Italian bank *Banca Dalmata di Sconto*, based in Zadar, gave generous credits. However, *optanti*, being Italian citizens, could not take up a loan at a Yugoslav bank and thus had no choice but to get a loan from an Italian bank.⁷⁷ Vicko Ružević's Italian citizenship and his declarations of loyalty were based on his pension and supporting a petition to save a fellow Dalmatian. The main reason the local authorities took the matter on tactfully was that his son was a prominent Yugoslav politician responsible for fixing the municipality finances and a member of the Yugoslav *Sokols*, the association representing the affirmation of South Slav identity.

Hvar was not just home to a small Italian minority but also a borderland. Lastovo, the only Italian island in Dalmatia, lies 50 kilometers away, just behind Korčula. While the remote island was insignificant for Italy or Yugoslavia, it moved the frontier between the countries close to Hvar. Thus, the gendarmerie was concerned with smuggling and spying, the two interrelated by-products of a border area. For example, the gendarmerie suspected spying, including suspicious pigeons arriving in Komiža on Vis from the direction of Italy and departing soon after that in the same direction. However, attempts to catch the pigeons on the small island of Biševo failed.⁷⁸ A few years later, two *optanti* were arrested in Vis, Guido, and Lovro Lušić for espionage.⁷⁹

More tangible was the smuggling. Smugglers and their goods were regularly found, especially on the western shore facing the open sea toward Lastovo and the Italian mainland. The smugglers brought the goods directly from Lastovo or threw them from the weekly steamship connecting Bari and Ancona with Dalmatia.

Smugglers would pick up the well-packed smuggled goods on smaller boats.⁸⁰ Tobacco, sugar, and cigarette paper appear to be preferred goods. In November 1927, five smugglers were caught in Sv. Nedelja, with some 250 kilos of Tobacco.⁸¹

Smugglers and *optanti* were also channels of communication and information. Thus, the Yugoslav gendarmerie found out from an Italian, Antun Bibić, who moved from Hvar to Lastovo, that the Italian presence increased on the island in the summer of 1927.⁸² Yugoslav authorities could thus find out that Italy increased the number of carabinieri to twenty-four, in addition to ten soldiers and a small naval vessel in the port. The purported expectation of locals on Lastovo that the other islands would soon be occupied would seem like hyperbole.⁸³ The information traveled both ways, and the police were concerned about Antonio Sangaletti, a fireman and fascist in Lastovo who was reported to have questioned smugglers about the situation in Yugoslavia.⁸⁴

The Yugoslav policies toward the tiny Italian community highlight the anxiety of the state about its ability to control the region and ensure the citizens' loyalty to the new Yugoslavian state. However, a much more significant challenge was domestic. The peasants expected the new Yugoslav state to take care of their precarious position.

"The Agrarian Question": Rebellion and Conversion

After the war and Italian occupation, expectations of the new Yugoslav state were high. At the same time, the situation of peasants remained difficult. This volatile combination of high expectations and desperation would lead to rapid disillusion and rebellion on Hvar. Poverty and emigration had long been the result of the difficult economic situation, which was worsened by the loss of young men during the war, the lasting effects of the phylloxera, and the uncertainty of occupation. This made the peasants vulnerable to periods of drought and led to repeated famines in the 1920s.⁸⁵

Wine production collapsed during the war; in 1922, only half the quantity of wine was produced as nine years earlier in 1913. The recovery of the vineyards was slow, as there were not enough local resources available, and the state could only provide symbolic loans. Dalmatian wines lost their traditional markets, and new trade barriers made exporting difficult. Only a third of the wines were consumed in Yugoslavia, and taxes were high, so by 1928, 70–80 percent of the cost of the wine went to taxes. Finally, wine production on the island had to struggle with high transport costs, making it much more expensive than wine from the mainland. After wine, the most important agricultural product was dried Chrysanthemum, used as an insecticide. Exports peaked in 1925, but due to competition from Japan, Persia, and the United States, exports halved within a few years by 1928.⁸⁶ Lavender was first introduced from France as an agricultural plant in 1928 at the initiative of Bartul Tomičić, an entrepreneurial peasant from Velo Grablje, a village close to Hvar town. The more widespread production of lavender only began after the Second World War, when large-scale cultivation began to take shape.⁸⁷

Agricultural cooperatives that emerged in the late Habsburg period became important during the interwar years. In 1939, an association of all the cooperatives on the island was founded in Jelsa to increase the influence of producers.⁸⁸ The only type of industry on the island was the sardine factory in Vrboska, which significantly advanced the local fishing industry and became a significant employer and source of income on Hvar. Nevertheless, around 80 percent of the population lived on the land and worked in agriculture and fishing.⁸⁹

With a strong dependence on a few agricultural products, a price drop in any of the products would have a significant impact. In fact, before the beginning of the world economic crisis in 1929, Hvar was already in deep economic trouble. This only worsened during the global recession. One immediate impact was the sharp decline in the price of wine.⁹⁰ The crisis also destroyed businesses such as the traders Duboković in Jelsa. They had accumulated debts as farmers could not pay for products and owed them money. When they went bankrupt, a bank took over the debts, further contributing to the peasants' difficulties. While the bank sought not to force farmers off the land—few would be able to buy it—other lenders pushed farmers off the land, which forced them to move to the cities, such as Split, without much prospect of finding a job there.⁹¹ Another major challenge was higher taxes; many peasants were indebted and impoverished. This also compounded the image of the unfair state, which took taxes and provided a slight improvement. Hunger on the islands and in the Dalmatian hinterland was a chronic problem of the 1920s. The cost of living in Dalmatia was much higher than elsewhere in Yugoslavia.

Based on the 1931 population census, the prominent Croatian economist Rudolf Bićanić estimated that Hvar and Vis had a “surplus” population of 8,706 or 37.6 percent of the population.⁹² Such numbers were misleading, based on the assumption that the local economic structure would remain the same and ignored nonagricultural activities, such as tourism, which would become a central source of employment in the subsequent decades. However, these calculations demonstrated the extent to which, despite massive emigration, the land could still not support the population. A report by the local authorities noted in November 1925 how “misery and misfortunate dominate among the people, who except some ... are suffering from hunger, which is already affecting them considerably.” The famine once more led to increased emigration overseas: “Everyone who can is saving for the journey.”⁹³ Between 1920 and 1928, 15,000, primarily single young men, left Dalmatia searching for work.⁹⁴ According to church registers, in 1937, some 6,452 had left the island, many to mainland Yugoslavia, especially once emigration to the United States became more difficult due to the restrictive Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which capped immigrants from Yugoslavia to 671 per year.⁹⁵ Altogether, more than 200,000 Yugoslavs left for overseas and over 130,000 to other European countries during the interwar period.

The precarious situation of peasants was high on the government's agenda. In December 1918, the Dalmatian regional government reduced the financial burden and promised a comprehensive land reform. The following year, the Yugoslav government went further and decided that all landowner contracts in Dalmatia

would be canceled, and decisions favoring the landowner during the war were declared null and void.⁹⁶ Its implementation was blocked in Dalmatia until the borders were settled at the peace conference, dashing peasants' hope for a quick resolution. King Aleksander promised in January 1919 to solve the Agrarian Question.⁹⁷ Despite multiple efforts, no law was passed in the subsequent years due to a fragmented parliament and frequently changing coalition governments. The law was only passed after King Aleksandar declared a royal dictatorship in 1929.⁹⁸

Peasants faced two challenges: First, they rarely owned the land they cultivated and had to pay for its use in kind or money. Second, many peasants needed loans to survive. They often had to resort to high-interest loans with rates up to 30 percent, leading to chronic indebtedness and further emigration, especially in 1923–4 when bad harvests and droughts threatened the livelihood of peasants.⁹⁹ The gendarmerie noted the increasing impatience among the peasants. In late 1925, only a minority paid their share to the landlords, who instead had to rely on courts to secure their share.¹⁰⁰

The dissatisfaction grew as courts ignored government decisions to reduce the peasant's burden. Thus, the faraway government appeared to be taking better care than the local organs of the state, particularly the courts. Large peasant protests were held on January 8, 1922 across Dalmatia, including on Hvar.¹⁰¹ When the king was planning a visit to Dalmatia in 1923, a local suggested that "the king stays longer in Dalmatia and visits our villages so that the king can see how much the Dalmatian farmer loves him."¹⁰² The hope that the king would help the peasants was disappointed.

Hundreds of Dalmatians, especially islanders, were sentenced to jail, because many peasants refused to accept the court rulings. Barul Blašković from Vrboska, for example, was sentenced to jail for six weeks for inciting peasants not to pay their dues.¹⁰³ Tensions increased as peasants were increasingly unwilling to pay their share to the landlords, and a ditty was sung across the island: "Five centuries have already passed/that we feed the master,/and now the time has come/that we work for ourselves."¹⁰⁴ Unrest was brewing on Hvar, after the Yugoslav government decided that the court rulings should be enforced in September 1922. Some resistance was desperate, such as cutting down one's vine groves in protest. In the village of Vrisnik, the police confiscated the personal belongings of a peasant who had not paid his dues, only to have a mob storm the place where he was kept. The organizers were arrested and sentenced to two or three months in jail. The police confiscated vine barrels, family heirlooms, jewelry, and wedding bands.

The frustration with the new state proliferated, with the paper of the Peasant Party proclaiming, "We on Hvar still live in a state of fear. Freedom of assembly and movement is a dead letter on paper for us. Just as if we were under Italian occupation, and not in a state in which the government is local [domaći]."¹⁰⁵ During a gathering on Velika Gospa—the Assumption of Mary, a major religious holiday—in 1922, "a sea of farmers, who came under banners to Jelsa to participate in this magnificent event, gathered. Never had such a large number of

aware-conscious farmers gathered here in any place on the island.” At the end of the meeting, the police brutally dispersed the masses: “Jelsa looked like a state of emergency governed it ... because the gendarmes, in particularly the Vrangelovci [white Russians who after the civil war settled in Yugoslavia and joined the police], expelled the people from the streets.” The protesters gathered in the fields around town and sang songs commemorating the sixteenth-century rebel leader Matij Ivanić. A similar gathering occurred in Stari Grad the next day, the town’s patron saint’s day, Sv. Rok, with several thousand participants.¹⁰⁶

The tensions led to police reinforcement on the island. In numerous incidents, police dispersed, beat, and threatened peasants. In November 1922, the government imposed a curfew on the island.¹⁰⁷

The peak of resistance was a peasant uprising in 1924 in Zastrazišće, in the poorer southeastern region of Hvar. Toma Barbarić, previously a boxer in New Zealand, took on the two policemen who confiscated a peasant’s household and valuables. They hid in a house only to sneak out and leave at night. When three policemen returned a few days later, the villagers welcomed them with chants of “Down with the imposter king” and “We won’t pay our income.” Again, the police withdrew. For fear that the rebellion would serve as a model elsewhere, the authorities sent reinforcements from the mainland to put down the unrest. The villagers could not muster more than a few hunting rifles and old bombs. The men decided not to put up open resistance after some women had found out about the many policemen approaching. The next day, the police stormed the village, beat down the front doors of the houses, and forced all the villagers to assemble. During the raid, two villagers were killed by the police. Ninety-six peasants, including one woman, were chained and forced to walk to Stari Grad, more than 25 kilometers away. The nine leaders were sentenced to several months in jail in Split.¹⁰⁸ While the authorities blamed the unrest on a visit by an MP for the Croatian Peasant Party, the sources of the discontent were local.¹⁰⁹

While there were no further uprisings and collective acts of resistance, the dissatisfaction with the inability or unwillingness of the state to resolve the long-established grievances was tangible. The hostility of many peasants was directed not just against the state but also against the Catholic Church, the most important and established institution on the island and a large landowner. Thus, local peasants resorted to creative approaches to articulate their grievances. Before the war, dissatisfaction with the Church became tangible due to its refusal to use Croatian for services. In 1911, Anglican Episcopalian missionaries tried to take advantage of this in Sućuraj and offered the local population to convert.¹¹⁰ While these efforts bore little fruit, it was a prelude to more successful efforts in the interwar years.

Unlike elsewhere in multireligious Yugoslavia, Hvar was firmly Catholic. However, religious choices were not fixed, and the context of Yugoslavia offered choices and reasons to switch religious allegiances. On Hvar and Vis, hundreds abandoned the Catholic Church in the 1920s to signal their economic rather than spiritual grievances. In late 1925, the gendarmerie station in Hvar noted with concern how religious tensions emerged between Catholics and Old Catholics in Bogomolje and Orthodox Christians on Vis.¹¹¹ In the larger Yugoslav context, local

conflicts among members of different religions would not have been surprising. In the standard monthly reports, the police were asked to report on relations among various religious and national communities. However, the standard answer before the fall of 1925 by the Yugoslav police from Hvar was there were no problems with “tribal relations” as “members of one tribe nearly exclusively inhabit this district, and except for a few Orthodox, all are members of the Roman Catholic Church.”¹¹² These new tensions emerged in the town of Vis, where hundreds joined the Orthodox Church, whereas in the rebellious village of Bogomolje, in the remote eastern end of Hvar, dozens joined the Old Catholic Church. In both cases, poor peasants sought to renegotiate their relationship with the overbearing Catholic Church and the state through conversion. While the Catholic Church understandably saw both movements with suspicion, the state was ambivalent.

In early 1924, a former priest, Juraj-Ivo Barbarić, decided to establish a congregation of the Old Catholic Church in Bogomolje. In April 1924, the gendarmerie reported how around one hundred people had become followers of the Old Catholic Church, with the movement spreading. The report noted that they had not made a final break with the Catholic Church and remained officially Roman Catholic.¹¹³ However, an official petition of the congregation in Bogomolje to the Ministry of Religion noted that the new parish was established on May 3, 1925. The parish underscored their loyalty to Yugoslavia by emphasizing that the priest took an oath from the parishioners to the king and informed local authorities. Despite these gestures, the parish complained that the Old Catholics of Bogomolje had not been swiftly recognized.¹¹⁴

At the first meeting of the newly found believers, some eight signed up to join, expecting further conversion to be imminent. One, Fabjan Matijašević, offered the first floor of his house as the place for the first church.¹¹⁵ Similarly, nine parishioners confirmed they would support the priest, thus not requiring state support. Barbarić assured the authorities that he would provide religious instruction in school free of charge.¹¹⁶ The local authorities, however, voiced some doubts about these claims. They worried that the supporters of the new parish were in a dire economic situation and thus lacked the resources to support Barbarić. As a result, their concern was that sooner or later, the newly minted priest would have to rely on state support. Finally, the authorities on Hvar noted that several supporters were not official members of the Old Catholic Church.¹¹⁷ It is difficult to establish whether the signatories only supported their neighbor, relative, or friend or were genuine followers of the Old Catholic Church.

Throughout Yugoslavia, new parishes of the old Catholic Church emerged in the 1920s, counting up to twenty-four parishes with forty-two priests and around 70,000 believers at its peak. Official statistics from 1931 registered far fewer, around 7,000 Old Catholics in the census, most in the Sava Banovina, including Zagreb. On Hvar, only twenty-five were categorized as “other Christians,” i.e., those not Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant.¹¹⁸ The gap was mainly because many followers of the Old Catholic church presumably saw no reason to convert officially; after all, they remained Catholic. Coming from a poor and largely illiterate village, such administrative acts would have been alien and remote.

Furthermore, the conversion would have to be confirmed by a notary, a cost that would have been high for poor farmers.¹¹⁹ By October, only two appeared to have officially converted.¹²⁰

Soon, the first bishop of the Old Catholic Church, Marko Kalogjera, recognized the new parish in Bogomolje. Kalogjera was himself from Korčula and had joined the church after having held high functions in the Catholic Church.¹²¹ Unsurprisingly, the conversion in Bogomolje was much less welcome for the Catholic Church. Church officials described Barbarić as a troublemaker and, worse, a communist: “It is tragic that the apostate is using this [the support of believers] and his notorious behavior is known ‘urbi et orbi’; he is recognized as a member of the Communist Party.”¹²² The Hvar bishopric also sought to downplay the number of conversions.¹²³

The local authorities favored the arguments of the Catholic Church, noting in a report that Barbarić was spreading anti-Catholic propaganda and preaching that “all evil that comes onto the world comes from the altar of the roman catholic priests.” They also noted that his sermons were followed by thirty people, whereas “the majority of inhabitants of Bogomolje curse him and claim that he is only luring people to old catholic faith to ensure his future and those close to him.”¹²⁴ These reports delayed the recognition of the new parish, for which Barbarić probably rightly blamed the Hvar bishop.¹²⁵ The bishop’s office regularly wrote to the ministry demanding it should intervene against the Old Catholics of Bogomolje.¹²⁶

Over time, the controversy over the Old Catholics in Bogomolje died down, and the small community continued practicing their beliefs. The conversion in Bogomolje coincided with the conversion of several hundred inhabitants from Vis to Orthodoxy for similar reasons. Here, a local leader of the peasant movement, Ivan Ruljančić, aligned himself with the Radical Party to push for the rights of local peasants. The conversion to Orthodoxy sought to reduce the influence of the Catholic Church and secure support from Belgrade. However, by 1936, the Croatian Peasant Party took over Vis, and the Orthodox of Vis declined a community.¹²⁷ The converts in Bogomolje chose the old Catholic Church, and those in Vis opted for the Serbian Orthodox Church. Both saw conversion as a tool to push for change, being disappointed by the new state and the established authorities, be they church or parties. In the end, the conversion did not resolve their plight. They triggered government concern and attention but did not accelerate an end to the peasants’ dependence on landlords and their chronic indebtedness.

Land reform was only passed under the Royal dictatorship in 1930/1. In principle, the law granted ownership to those who worked the land, but with certain caveats. The peasants had to prove that they or their families had worked the land for at least thirty years. There was also a maximum size of 10 hectares, which could be increased based on the family size. The landlords received substantial compensation from the state, which severely burdened the public purse. In some cases, part of the compensation had to be paid by the peasants. The state took over the peasants’ debt through a special bank, but now the peasants owed the payments to the state, often far exceeding their capacity to pay. Thus, while it formally resolved the quasi-feudal relationship, it frequently replaced it with the peasants being indebted to the state. Moreover, the state could be more ruthless in demanding its dues than the landlords.¹²⁸

The financial authorities monitored the sales of wine and other products to ensure farmers were paying their dues. Farmers tried to avoid these checks, resulting in a cat-and-mouse game between farmers and the state. If the farmers could not avoid the inspections by delivering wine early in the morning or late at night, they would claim to be transporting it for families who owed no dues to the state.¹²⁹

It took years to implement the laws from 1930/1, mainly because the courts were overburdened. On Hvar, the decisions were primarily delivered in the late 1930s, with some made as late as 1940. In practice, many peasants had to wait for the entire interwar period, to the eve of the Second World War, until they received the prospect of owning their land. Many cases were complex. For example, in 1937, the court decided on the claim of Jakov Buratović for 18.6 hectares of land in Grablje. The owners, Šimun, living in Skopje, and Antun Ilijić, presumably brothers, claimed that the peasant had not worked on the land for more than thirty years, the government threshold. However, Buratović could show that his family had used the land since before 1878, and even if it was now listed as forest, it included vineyards. Jakov Buratović received the land, and the Ilijić's were granted nearly 110,000 dinars in compensation. However, there were also cases where claims were rejected, showing the complexity as the requirements transcended not just different political regimes but also war and disease, such as phylloxera. In November 1940, the court adjudicated the claim of Manda and Ante Bracanović from Hvar against the owner, one of the rare *optanti* Fortunato Marchi. It granted the land, some vineyards, forest, and pastures, to Ante Bracanović but rejected his wife's claim to one-sixth of the estate, as according to a statement by the owner, she only worked on the vineyard. Her father planted the vineyard, and it then failed. After the war, Ante, her husband, replanted it when he returned from military service. At that time, she had an illegitimate son and no longer lived in the family. Thus, her claim was rejected. Considering the social context, it is hard to judge whether the court did her justice, but it highlights the complexity of these decisions, which did not just have to decide on whether a piece of land was farmed by a peasant for thirty years, but the changes to this piece of land, shaped often by forces beyond the peasant's control, such as his military service or the destruction of the vineyard by phylloxera.

The "Agrarian Question," the unresolved question of land ownership for peasants, haunted interwar Yugoslavia. The solution only appeared within reach on the eve of the Second World War. In the end, only the radical policies of Socialist Yugoslavia after the war resolved the precarious position of the peasants of Hvar. In the interim, Communists were only one of the political options competing for the islanders' support.

Political Choices

The idea of Yugoslav unity had brought together political parties and many Croat and Serb intellectuals in Dalmatia before the First World War. The creation of

Yugoslavia in 1918 was the unexpectedly rapid realization of this political ambition. However, the state was tainted by the heavy-handed imposition of a largely Serb-dominated state on a much more complex web of local, regional, and national identities, legal systems, and traditions. The misfit between centralism and the pluralist reality created political tensions and facilitated its slide into dictatorship after 1929. Reducing this tension to a purely national conflict is simplistic, with Croats favoring decentralization and Serbs centralization. On Hvar, as elsewhere, peasants and thus most of the population cared about the land questions and their economic position; the nation's place in the larger political framework was of secondary importance. Similarly, the recent memory of Italian rule made the Yugoslav state an important defense against external threats.

The main party initially representing Dalmatian peasants was the Agrarian Party (*Zemljoradnička stranka*).¹³⁰ This short-lived pan-Yugoslav party emerged in 1919 and spread quickly throughout Dalmatia. The first peasant congress brought together different agrarian organizations from across the newly created state in the summer of 1920. The party's success in 1923 on the islands was linked to the fact that they were the first to organize after the Italian occupation ended, and its program had the greatest appeal.¹³¹ In Dalmatia, the party emerged as the second strongest after the conservative Croatian People's Party (*Hrvatska pučka stranka*) in the first elections.¹³² In 1924, the Gendarmerie noted how on Hvar, the "Agrarian Party is the strongest, basically all the peasants are their supporters, and they are part of *težačka sloga* [peasant unity], present in all locations. Currently, moderate elements prevail in these, but it can't be excluded that more extreme ones might come to dominate; it all depends on the solution of the Agrarian question." The report observed that intellectuals supported the pro-Yugoslav parties, the Democrats and Radicals. The Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS) (mainly in Bogomolje) was still weak, but was gaining ground together with Communist front parties (in Stari Grad, Vrbanj, and Vrboška).¹³³ Indeed, after its initial success, the Agrarian Party split over the structure of the state and how radical positions to take vis-a-vis the agrarian question. In the 1923 elections, two peasant parties ran, which split the vote and weakened the party. However, the peasant parties remained strong on the islands, with one wing led by Ante Franić gaining 37.5 percent of the vote on Hvar and Vis, and the other led by Jozo Zelić gaining 20 percent.¹³⁴ However, the increasing nationalist polarization between Croat and Serb parties weakened the agrarian parties in Dalmatia.¹³⁵ After the decline in the 1923 elections, the agrarian parties gradually lost their support and were eclipsed by the Croatian Peasant Party.¹³⁶

The HSS, led by its charismatic leader, Stjepan Radić, became the voice of the peasants and advocated for the Croat national cause. Initially, its support was limited to the pre-war regions of Croatia and did not even run in Dalmatia at the first Yugoslav elections in 1920.¹³⁷ By the time the first parliamentary election was held in Hvar and other former Italian-controlled regions in 1923, it was only partly organized. Yet, it became the largest party in Dalmatia, gaining overall 40 percent. There was, however, a clear gap between the support on the mainland and its failure on the islands. On the islands, it remained marginal, gaining only 2.7 percent on Hvar. There are different explanations for this large gap, such as the

fact that the party had not set up local chapters and the delayed integration of the islands into Yugoslavia.¹³⁸

The Croatian Peasant Party held little appeal for elites, such as large landowners, intellectuals, and the middle classes, most of whom supported pro-Yugoslav and pro-regime parties, such as the Radical Party. Still, many were pragmatic, based on their interests as landowners, state officials, and businessmen, who were willing to change their affiliation if circumstances changed.¹³⁹

The primary challenger for mass support was the Communist Party. The Communist Party on Hvar was founded in late 1920, still under Italian rule. Local committees soon followed in other towns. The party enjoyed considerable popularity during its brief legal existence in early 1921, with 167 members registered in Stari Grad alone. The founders were primarily local villagers, although in Vrboška, a returnee from Chicago, Nikola Krešić, brought ideas and books to educate future party members. The party's argument that the end of the war had not brought any liberation to the population was plausible to many peasants.¹⁴⁰ The Party did unexpectedly well in the first elections in 1920, emerging as the third-largest party in the country and in Dalmatia, where it secured 9 percent of the vote. Its appeal was like that of the Croatian Peasant Party in rejecting Serbian hegemony and appealing to the poor peasants.¹⁴¹ Soon after their electoral success, the new Yugoslav state banned the Communist party in August 1921 and outlawed any Communist activity on Hvar as it took over. This led to a drastic fall in party membership. In July 1921, half a dozen Communists were arrested by the new authorities and sentenced to a month's jail in Split. Among them was Pavao Vranjican, who had been first arrested during the incident, as mentioned earlier, at the arrival of Yugoslav troops in Stari Grad.¹⁴²

The ban, however, did not end the Party's activities. Thus, the local Gendarmerie post on Hvar observed in a 1923 report that "today the majority are either supporters of the Agrarian party or communists."¹⁴³ It remained a significant political force in elections, participating in several elections through legal front organizations, as the Alliance of Workers and Peasants (*Savez radnika i seljaka*). The party became the main opposition in Stari Grad in 1926 but lost its mandates based on a decision of the Ministry of Interior. The councilors refused to join the other parties in sending greetings to King Aleksandar, and their supporters regularly sought to disrupt rallies by the parties loyal to the regime. For example, when the writer and radical pro-Yugoslav activist Niko Bartulović sought to speak on the main square in front of Petar Hektorović's Tvrdalj, he was interrupted by shouts, "Long live the Croatian peasant and workers block!" Other such disruptions were met with a brutal response by the gendarmerie.¹⁴⁴ The state authorities knew that the Alliance was a Communist front and tried to disrupt their activities, threatening members.¹⁴⁵

Communists also joined associations, including the *Težačka sloga*. According to a police report from February 1924 in Stari Grad, "besides a small number of intellectuals ... the majority of farmers belong to the Communist Party ... the youngsters gladly visit the association *Težačka sloga*, which is today in Communist hands."¹⁴⁶ After the club members joined the 1st May celebrations that year, the regional governor decided to ban the association based on a law on public safety.

The Communist Party sought new venues to organize and establish a sports club, which was quickly banned. Nevertheless, the cat-and-mouse game between the state and the Communist Party continued.¹⁴⁷ Besides legal front organizations, the party also organized illegal cells. In the early 1920s, it organized the Communist youth known as SKOJ (Alliance of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia), with strong groups in Vrbanj (twenty-four members) and Stari Grad (twenty-two members).¹⁴⁸ In 1926, the police listed 177 Communists and sympathizers on Hvar.¹⁴⁹ Communists were regularly arrested for “spreading communist propaganda,” mostly flyers and leaflets.¹⁵⁰

The royal dictatorship was a watershed moment for politics and public life in Hvar. The assassination of Stjepan Radić, which precipitated the royal dictatorship, increased anti-Serb sentiments in Dalmatia and consolidated support for the Croatian Peasant Party.¹⁵¹ The royal dictatorship ushered in more repression across Yugoslavia, including Hvar. Communists were particularly seen as a threat. However, the police realized that the “weak economic situation ... the unresolved agrarian question, and the tax on wine” provided a fertile ground for dissatisfaction and communists. Known communists were often banned from leaving their village or town or leaving the island.¹⁵²

At first, criticism of the new regime was not visible. On King Aleksandar’s birthday in December 1929, less than a year after the dictatorship was imposed, a newspaper reported the whole town of Hvar was lit up with candles and balloons in the national colors, and all citizens participated, singing patriotic songs: “The Yugoslav, patriotic Hvar, liberated from party struggles and friction after so many years, could celebrate the big day in a dignified and nice atmosphere.”¹⁵³ Of course, this idyllic picture was essentially propaganda.

The “freedom from party struggles” meant that all political parties were banned, as were associations that had a clear national connotation, as the integralist Yugoslavism that King Aleksandar imposed prohibited any expression of “tribalism,” the term for all nationalisms that were not Yugoslav.¹⁵⁴ The police drew up lists of associations on the island to be banned. Dozens of groups closed, from Catholic Eagles to the Croatian reading room and the musical club Hektorović. Explicitly Croatian association had to disband or merge into Yugoslav groups, such as the Yugoslav *Sokols*. However, the prohibition was always incomplete. The Peasant Party and the Communist Party were relatively well-equipped for the ban. The Communist Party had been playing cat and mouse with the authorities throughout the 1920s, and the Peasant Party had also built up a dense network of associations and structures that, even once banned, continued to operate.

Support for the royal dictatorship is hard to gauge in Hvar. Still, turnout in the first elections 1931 that were boycotted by the opposition was relatively high (55 percent), especially in Jelsa, where the regime was able to coopt influential local politicians, including the mayor Juraj Duboković (1877–1953) and Mate Drinković (1896–1931).¹⁵⁵ Duboković hailed from the prominent Jelsa family, the son of the long-time mayor of Jelsa, and himself mayor between 1912 and 1936, and later president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Split. Drinković began his career as a Croatian nationalist and did not participate in the Serb-Croatian

coalition before the war. He rejected the Vidovdan constitution, but taking a pragmatic view, he participated as a minister in several governments throughout the 1920s, supported the royal dictatorship, and became the only Croat minister in the first post-coup government in 1929.

During this repressive period, Hvar also served as a place of banishment. The head of the Slovene People's Party, Anton Korošec, was exiled to the island in 1933, 1934, where he spent nearly a year before he was rehabilitated.¹⁵⁶ Within a year, he would become Minister of Interior. Not long afterward, the renowned Serbian writer Branislav Nušić visited Hvar, noting with sardonic humor, "Am I not maybe interned?" in a reference to Korošec.¹⁵⁷

Repressive measures gradually softened, and political opposition was allowed after the assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseille in 1934. Thus, elections in the next year became moderately competitive. On Hvar, Josip Berković (1885–1968), the opposition candidate supported by a heterogeneous group of parties, including the Communists, won with 62.85 percent. Berković was originally from Stari Grad but became a successful doctor and politician for the Croatian Peasant Party in Split and was briefly mayor.¹⁵⁸ Despite the regime allowing opposition candidates, the political climate was marked by fear and intimidation. The police broke up an election rally for Berković in Jelsa. Throughout the town, opposition activists shouted slogans against the police, who tried to chase them down. That evening, the police shot and killed a student, Polda Nezić, who sang election songs with a group of fellow opposition sympathizers in the village of Bogomolje.¹⁵⁹ New clashes erupted after the overall victory of the opposition across the island. Vladimir Lušić, a communist activist at the time, remembers how the police knocked on his door: "I jumped through the window at the same time and escaped. From the fields, I could see how they took people to Stari Grad; they arrested around forty."¹⁶⁰

The Communists and the Peasant Party, the two most popular parties on Hvar, were, at times, allies and, at times, competitors. In 1935, Communists and Peasant Party cooperated in local elections in Stari Grad, with their candidate, Antun Maroević, winning the elections. However, the following year, conflicts increased. Berković had little sympathy for the Communists and sought to marginalize them. Instead, he appointed members of the more conservative wing of the Peasant Party to be placed on the candidate list, resulting in a party split.¹⁶¹ The Communists, on the other hand, cooperated with the pro-government list. This unexpected local coalition had more to do with the joint desire to curtail the ascent of the Peasant Party than any ideological similarity.¹⁶²

In the run-up to the elections, the Communists became targets of renewed government arrests. Some fifteen communists were arrested in March 1936, many of whom had been arrested multiple times over the previous two decades. They were beaten in the police station and later transferred to Galešnik, a small island facing the Hvar harbor, where they would be isolated in a building that used to serve as a quarantine station for the port.¹⁶³ While some were released, many were sentenced, including Orest Žunković, who had helped Communists

after previous detentions, receiving several months prison sentence for possessing illegal Communist propaganda.¹⁶⁴

The police investigation against the communists in Hvar was not just the single largest crackdown against Communists during the interwar period on Hvar; it also shed light on the profile of the party's supporters. Most of them had initially supported the Agrarian Party and, after its dissolution, oscillated between the Croatian Peasant Party and different Communist lists. In their police interrogations, they tried to downplay their knowledge of the Communist Party and claimed to have unknowingly entered the alleged Communist plot. However, several accused outlined their path to the Communist Party. For example, Juraj Kovačević, a peasant from Stari Grad, noted how he became a member of a Communist front party in 1923 and voted either for the Communist fronts or the Croatian Peasant Party. He eventually joined the HSS, notably while the party was still officially banned "as it is the best way to promote Communism."¹⁶⁵

The main suspect, Orest Žunković, was an exception among the peasants and few craftsmen. Žunković was born in Brno, now in Czechia, and initially returned after being captured on the Eastern Front during the war. He later joined his father, a Yugoslav soldier in Maribor. After studying medicine in Graz, he moved around Yugoslavia as a doctor, ending up in Jelsa, Bogomolje, and eventually Hvar as the official doctor.¹⁶⁶

Žunković became active after the death of his wife in 1934, noting that "[a]lready for some years, I am reading Marxist and general leftist literature. I became a communist around two years ago because I saw no social justice in the current social order." He built up a local network of sympathizers. The connections to other Communists beyond the island were rather coincidental. For example, he told his police interrogators about meeting Bernhard Wiesenfeld, a visiting engineer, with a group of Austrians at Hotel Park. Once he found out about the shared communist orientation, he gave him several hundred copies of Communist propaganda materials, raising some questions about the spontaneous nature of the encounter. Žunković claimed not to belong to any formal party structures, which might have been a way to protect the party, but also revealed that the party had been organized in small cells to avoid large-scale arrests in case one cell is discovered.

After five months in jail, Žunković was released already in 1936. The police sought to prevent a welcome reception, but despite delays, some 300 people awaited him upon his return. As the police noted, these were 'mostly women and children, communists, "filo-communists," and supporters of Maček, the leader of the Peasant Party. Although the event remained calm, it highlighted the broader social resonance and support for the party.¹⁶⁷

The last Yugoslav elections underscored the decline of the regime's support. Despite considerable pressure on the opposition, the Yugoslav Radical Community (*Jugoslavenska radikalna zajednica*) could only win a modest victory, gaining 54.09 percent in Yugoslavia, but being defeated in many parts of the country. On Hvar, the United Opposition ran unopposed with Josip Berković at its helm.¹⁶⁸ The election results highlighted how the country became divided.

Tensions increased between Peasant Party supporters and communists and between the victorious opposition and supporters of the JRZ, which came to be associated with police repression and the royal dictatorship. Peasant party supporters went to JRZ supporters and shouted, "Who voted for the JRZ has no space in this county." Associations, from football clubs to reading rooms, split into two. At the same time, the Communist party began actively setting up an infrastructure, including raising money to build local cultural centers in villages, mainly where they had a strong following, such as Vrbanj and Pitve. Communists also established sports clubs on the island, including football teams.¹⁶⁹

In local elections on Hvar in April 1940, three parties competed: the dominant Croatian Peasant Party, the pro-Yugoslav JRZ in Hvar, and the Party of the Working People, a Communist front, in four municipalities. By now, the Peasant Party dominated as they were in charge in the newly created Croatian banovina established in 1939 that included Hvar. Voting was public, and the voting age was twenty-four, giving the Communists a disadvantage. Nevertheless, the Communist party won an absolute majority in Vrboska (51.3 percent), 26.6 percent in Jelsa, 30.72 percent in Stari Grad, and 19.65 percent in Hvar.¹⁷⁰ During the elections, the mayor called in the Peasant Defense (*Seljačka zaštita*), the paramilitary unit of the Croatian Peasant Party from the nearby village of Dol, to stop Communists who had caused several incidents in town. Mirroring the use of Spanish troops in Morocco by Franco against the leftist government during the civil war, the Peasant Defense and later the village gained the nickname "Moroccans" (*marokanci*).¹⁷¹

To prevent the Communists from taking over Vrboska, the authorities called for new elections. The reinforced police station received orders to "patrol through the village of Vrbanj daily, which is the pivot and hotbed of communists and communist propaganda in the entire municipality."¹⁷² In repeated elections, the Peasant Party narrowly won after a local priest organized transport of voters from the Sv. Nedelja, on the Southern side of the island, and polling places closed early to prevent voters from Vrbanj from casting their vote.¹⁷³

Politics in most of interwar Hvar was thus a three-way competition between the Croatian Peasant Party, the Communists, and parties linked to the Yugoslav monarchy. The latter could draw, at least initially, on some strong pro-Yugoslav sentiments, loyalty to the state, and pragmatism, especially among elites who saw the other two main competitors, the Croatian Peasant Party and the Communist Parties, as threats to their power and prosperity. While illegal, the Communists could gain influence through various fronts and by supporting opposition candidates. Thus, the strength of the Partisans during the Second World War was grounded in the strong showing of the Communist Party.

Yugoslav Choices of Hvar's Intellectuals

Support for Yugoslavia did not exhaust itself in political parties. Associations often reflected the social and intellectual support for Yugoslavia and other political ideas most pertinently. From the *Sokol* movement discussed in the sections on



Figure 4.1 Funeral of Juraj Biankini in Stari Grad (1928). © Stari Grad Museum.

the Habsburg period, new groups sought to give the new state grassroots support. One important group in which intellectuals and politicians from Hvar would take a prominent role was *Jadranska straža* (Adriatic sentinel, JS). *Jadranska straža* was a pan-Yugoslav association to promote the protection of the country's interests in the Adriatic. It modeled itself after similar European associations, including the British *Navy League*.¹⁷⁴ As an explicitly pan-Yugoslav group, it focused on national unity, the Italian threat, the underdevelopment of the coast, and the need to defend the Yugoslav Adriatic.¹⁷⁵ It supported the expansion of the navy and promoted the development of seaside tourism under the motto "For the Adriatic—to the Adriatic." The larger chapters opened hostels for youth members along the coast, including the Zagreb chapter in Jelsa. With five guest houses along the coast, the JS accommodated around 3,000 guests for more than 40,000 overnight stays, making it an important part of interwar Adriatic tourism.¹⁷⁶

While it later spread across the country, it was established in 1922 in Split by intellectuals and politicians from Dalmatia, including Juraj Biankini, Ivo Tartaglia, and Silvije Alfirević, a pre-war supporter of Yugoslavia. The JS increased membership with the establishment of the royal dictatorship, rising within a decade from 40,000 members to 180,000 in 1939, making it the largest organization in Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁷

Two critical supporters of the Yugoslav idea from Hvar, representing two generations, took a central role in the organization. Its first president was Juraj Biankini, who, as discussed earlier, was a prominent Dalmatian politician in the Habsburg monarchy during the decades before the First World War. He took on

key functions in the transitional authorities after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy and briefly served as Deputy Prime Minister. Biankini represented the older generation of pro-Yugoslav politicians and had been an architect of Serb-Croat cooperation in Austria-Hungary.

The movement's key ideologue was Niko Bartulović (1890–1945), forty-three years his junior and also from Stari Grad. He belonged to a more radical younger generation, not active in Austria-Hungary but was a young journalist sentenced to jail by the Habsburg Monarchy at the beginning of the war. Bartulović and Ivo Andrić who would become a diplomat and a Nobel Prize-winning writer became friends after the two met in the Split prison in August 1914 and were first transferred to Šibenik and later to Maribor, where both remained in jail until 1917. After the war, they co-founded with others the literary journal *Literary South* (*Književni jug*) in Split, focused on forging South-Slav cultural unity.¹⁷⁸ Bartulović became an adamant supporter of an integral Yugoslavia and supported the nationalist and proto-fascist Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA, *Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista*). Moving to Belgrade, he wrote in Cyrillic and rejected the Croat national identity. As the central ideologue of the *Jadranska Straža*, Bartulović described the need to make the sea available for everybody: “As soon as [roads leading to the sea] are [built], the sea will be the property of Šumadija and Vojvodina [regions respectively located south and north of Belgrade], just as it is for the coastal regions of Dalmatia ... To create a maritime mentality ... means to create an honest conviction that continental interests cannot be secured without maritime [interests].”¹⁷⁹ Bartulović was disillusioned, however, with his fellow islanders. In his autobiographical novel *Na prelomu*, the revolutionary returns to his hometown on Hvar to be disappointed with the lack of nationalist fervor among his fellow islanders.¹⁸⁰

Jadranska straža shared the integralist Yugoslav idea that Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs constituted parts of the same nation and were thus loyal to the foundational principles of the new Yugoslav state, in particular during the period of the royal dictatorship, supplemented by the “maritime awareness.”¹⁸¹ In the words of Barulović, “[T]he sea and the coast are not the special property of Dalmatia, but a gate for the whole state. This is a window to the world, the lungs with which the state inhales free air.”¹⁸²

Gradually, disillusionment with the Yugoslav idea spread among the organization's ranks, especially since the regime displayed little interest in developing the coast. *Jadranska Straža* is one example whereby intellectuals and politicians from Hvar, as elsewhere in Dalmatia, strongly supported the Yugoslav project. These included some whose support was less for an integralist Yugoslavia but who viewed it, at least initially, as the best statehood framework for their island.

Ante Tresić-Pavičić, the prominent writer and politician, represents this choice. After the war, he joined the diplomatic service even before Hvar was formally integrated into Yugoslavia and was first named Ambassador to Madrid in 1920. Upon taking on his new diplomatic post, he gave a final speech to his electorate (he was elected as a member of the Austrian parliament before the war) on Brač—Hvar was still Italian occupied. In it, he supported a solution to the

agrarian questions, including land ownership for the farmers. However, he also opposed violent and illegal solutions to the risk of leading to anarchy or civil war and complained about separatist tendencies and those spreading national tensions.¹⁸³

When he was named ambassador to Washington in 1922, he experienced difficulties with the Croat diaspora, which boycotted him as a representative of the much-resented Yugoslav regime. During a visit to Chicago, he claimed that Serbs welcomed him, but not Slovenes or Croats. Conversely, Belgrade was unhappy about the contacts he tried to establish with the Croat diaspora, highlighting the dilemma he faced at the time. Gradually, he became disillusioned with Yugoslavia and returned to support Croatian nationalism and statehood.¹⁸⁴

Others, like Bartulović, endorsed the Yugoslav project and rejected Croatian nationalism, such as Sibe Miličić (1886–1945), who spent most of their literary career in Belgrade but maintained his intellectual and personal links to Hvar, where he was born and had spent most of the Second World War, in his place of birth, Brusje. He joined the Partisans in 1943 and left for Bari, with many others fleeing the German occupation to follow the Italian armistice. He disappeared mysteriously when returning from Bari to Vis in 1945. For him, Hvar was a recurring metaphor for personal isolation and insularity. The island is thus both a pleasant and, at times, harsh microcosm.¹⁸⁵

These brief biographies highlight the strong support the Yugoslav project enjoyed among intellectuals from Hvar, who committed themselves to the project in various ways. Just like the *Jadranska Straža*, their trajectories also highlight the tensions and political reality of Yugoslavia entailed in the 1930s. Subsequently, they supported different state projects and found themselves on different sides during the war.

The Beginning of Mass Tourism

In September 1938, a journalist wrote about the transformation of Hvar through the eyes of Barba Morko, a nearly ninety-year-old sailor who began sailing at the time of the Battle of Vis in 1866. Barba Morko had witnessed the decline of the sailing fleet, the arrival of the Italian army, lost family to the Spanish flu, and was supported by a daughter in Portland. By the end of the Interwar period, he witnessed the connection of the island by road and the rise of mass tourism.¹⁸⁶

The First World War had destroyed much of the humble beginnings of the tourism industry. It brought transportation and tourism along the Adriatic to a standstill. Steamers transported troops, not tourists, and the hotels stayed empty. In 1923, tourism had still not recovered to pre-war levels. If Hvar had dominated tourism on the Dalmatian islands before 1914, now tourism boards and hotels began to spring up elsewhere.¹⁸⁷ The Hygienic Society, which had promoted tourism with varying degrees of success before the war, was in terrible financial shape and forced to sell its hotel. Milan Čanak, the owner of Hotel Royal in Zagreb, bought it for 250,000 crowns. Other investors and the state took over developing



Figure 4.2 Hvar: The port in front of the arsenal (1928). © Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb.

the emerging tourist industry on Hvar and along the coast.¹⁸⁸ The uncertainties and instability of the interwar years took their toll on the re-emergence of Adriatic tourism. As a business newspaper noted in 1931, the previous seasons had been bad due to “currency troubles in Austria and Hungary, a steamer accident ... diplomatic tensions ...”¹⁸⁹ During the 1930s, the number of tourists began to grow again and included also Yugoslavs. City dwellers followed the European fashion of going on excursions to the countryside. Thus, it would be the inhabitants of Split who would visit Hvar and the other islands.¹⁹⁰ In 1927, for example, Yugoslavs were the largest group of visitors to Hvar, followed by Germans, Austrians, and Czechoslovaks.¹⁹¹

The best years for Hvar tourism were 1936–7, which saw 60,000 nights spent by tourists on the island, filling all the hotels and private accommodation. Tourism spread with the opening of new hotels. In the spirit of the times, Hotel Queen Elisabeth became Hotel Palace—as it is known today as well; Three more hotels were opened in Hvar during the 1920s. Hotels and tourist organizations began operating in other towns on the island, including Hotel Madeira in Vrboska. Jelsa saw the establishment of the first Yugoslav yachting club in 1937.¹⁹² The hotels in Hvar town hosted together around 1,800 guests in 1930, just over half of the total number of guests on the island. Thus, many tourists relied on private accommodation, with some forty-four private rooms offered in Hvar town.¹⁹³ In 1927, Hvar built a public beach bath out of marble, with shower cabins and a restaurant. In addition, hotels began offering a complete entertainment package with swimming competitions, rowing, tug of war, and evening dancing.¹⁹⁴

Whereas tourism had been focused on Hvar town, other towns became alternative tourism centers. By 1934, Jelsa emerged as the most important tourist destination on the island, beating Hvar in total overnight stays, some 8,185 in July 1934. What contributed to the development of tourism in Jelsa was not just the hotels and private rooms but also the aforementioned home of the Adriatic Sentinel, the *Dom Jadranske Straže*. An article from 1927 noted that the contrast was stark with Jelsa before the war, with “swamps, no waterfront and with endemic malaria.”¹⁹⁵ Indeed, transforming the swamp in the town center into a park meant that Malaria became nearly extinct. By the early 1920s, only 2 percent of deaths in Hvar were caused by Malaria compared to 60 percent in Metković, in the swampy delta of the river Neretva.¹⁹⁶ In 1938, a journalist took the bus journey from Stari Grad to Jelsa, a half-hour journey that was a novelty as the road connecting the two towns and the villages in between had just opened. The bus quietly drove along the new route, just from time to time blowing the horn to drive away donkeys and flocks of sheep. Once the bus arrived from the more sleepy Stari Grad in Jelsa, the journalist remarked, “[e]ven if Jelsa is busier, livelier, full of foreigners, you would not say that Jelsa is prettier.”¹⁹⁷ Day trips also brought tourists from Split, who spent 30 dinars on an all-day excursion with the steamer “Bled” to Jelsa, Vrboska, and Stari Grad.

With tourism also came the movie industry. As Europeans discovered the beach and the sea, images of the Mediterranean became evocative. In 1937, the German-Yugoslav co-production *Die Korallenprinzessin*, the Princess of the Corals was filmed on Hvar.¹⁹⁸ It told the story of a small, poor fishing village living of Corals. The filming brought glamour to the island, not least its main star, Ita Rina—born Italina Lida Kravanja in today’s Slovenia—was an international movie star in the late 1920s. The film crew brought over 200 extras and a Jazz Orchestra to the Hvar beach.¹⁹⁹ Without any local corals, Hvar served as a background for the movie, which was also filmed and set on a different island, Zlarin, off the coast of Šibenik, known for its coral fishing.

Tourism thus became an engine of social change and modernity in Hvar. The economic transformation that began in the interwar period was framed in its benefits for tourism, such as the construction of an electricity and water system. A major plan to develop “passive regions” covering Hvar was funded in 1929, clearly as part of the activism of the early phase of the Royal dictatorship. This included the road between Stari Grad and Jelsa, a water supply system, and the development of Stari Grad, including beaches, planting trees, and improving tourist infrastructure.²⁰⁰ The first telephone connections were opened in 1933 by the regional governor, talking to the mayors of Split, Hvar, and Stari Grad.²⁰¹ The electrification took longer. By the eve of the Second World War, two unreliable diesel-powered stations provided electricity only for Hvar town and Stari Grad. Yet, the generators often broke down, and Stari Grad was without electricity for two months. As a local newspaper noted, this was bad for tourism, and efforts to connect the island to the mainland power grid were contemplated.²⁰² Only on the eve of the Second World War, in 1939, would the road connecting Hvar, Stari Grad, and Jelsa, as well as the smaller inland villages, be completed. It thus, for the first time, linked the main localities of the

island, creating an island rather than just a town that often was easier to reach by sea than by land. Quick steamers, often manned by sailors from the island, connected the island directly to Split, Rijeka, and Zadar.²⁰³

The infrastructure did not just serve tourism, but it was tourism that justified these investments. Furthermore, tourism and infrastructural improvements were fused as a new vision of modernity. Writing for the Split newspaper *Nova Doba*, Bogdan Tudor noted how Hvar was developing in “American speed,” transforming itself from a “provincial nest” “living ordinary peaceful patriarchal life” lacking the resources to change the situation as the budget in this “golden age” was just meeting administrative needs.²⁰⁴

The golden age would not last. The rise of Nazi Germany became increasingly noticeable. As Austria and large parts of Czechoslovakia were annexed to Germany in 1938, the number of tourists dropped. As currency controls were imposed, tourism spending declined sharply. In September 1940, the tourist board noted somewhat surreal that there had been a “disastrous drop of the number of foreign tourists.” Considering that the World War had begun a year earlier, and Germany waged an aggressive war, these concerns seem banal and nearly cynical.²⁰⁵

Interwar Yugoslavia as a state proved ill-equipped to address the challenges society faced. These were social, economic, political, and national. The unwillingness of the monarchy and the Serbian elite to accommodate the population’s diversity and engage in serious economic and social reforms continuously deprived the state of its legitimacy. Local dynamics in Dalmatia highlight that the emerging Serb-Croat, centralist-federalist dichotomy did not solely consume interwar Yugoslavia but that other issues crucially shaped its inhabitant’s political and identity choices, on Hvar it was the question of land reform that dominated. The idea of a Yugoslav state and nation attracted support among parts of the elite. Still, most peasants increasingly felt alienated as it struggled to improve their economic position.

The Second World War

The Second World War lasted three and a half years on Hvar, from Spring 1941 to Fall 1944. While this was much briefer than elsewhere, it profoundly shaped the island and can be divided into three distinct periods. The first and longest phase was characterized by Italian occupation from April 1941 to the armistice between Italy and the Allies in September 1943. The second period was the brief partisan rule until January 1944, followed by the final phase of the war, when the German Wehrmacht and SS occupied the island until September 1944. Afterward, the war was effectively over on Hvar, but the transition to post-war would take another couple of years until the last refugees returned in 1946.

The phases of the war were not just marked by changing occupation forces but also by a gradual escalation of violence. During the early stages of the war, the Italian occupation was seeking to minimize local resistance, but as partisan activity picked up, so did violent repression. Once German military rule arrived, the island was a war zone, and thousands of islanders fled to Italy and Egypt.

During the war, Dalmatia and Hvar became part of competing state projects, each with hierarchies and loyalties. The Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) formally took control of Hvar but was more of an absent landlord. Instead, Italy extended its military control. Both were weak and competing rather than cooperating. The NDH lacked the military authority to execute its brutal vision of a racially defined Croatian nation-state, and the Italian army lacked the institutions and legitimacy to include Hvar in its Adriatic empire. Later, the German occupation was a military occupation of the declining Third Reich. The Četnik movement was royalist and pro-Yugoslav but also steeped in Serbian nationalism. While many islands had supported the Yugoslav state, the Četniks offered very little to non-Serb supporters of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav government in exile, based in Egypt and later in London, was weak, and while it commanded some support, its influence was never strong, and its support to the Četniks undermined it. This left the Partisans on Hvar, whose idea of a federal communist Yugoslavia seemed utopian and their odds of success were slim in 1941.

Before the war reached Hvar, it had already transformed the island; the hotels were empty, and the wine harvested would not find buyers, but overall, life remained less touched than elsewhere in Europe until April 1941, more than a year and a half into the war. Of course, the war was not just distant but manifested itself nearby. In January 1941, an Italian battleship was stranded in Milna, a hamlet close to Hvar, after encountering a British naval vessel. Fishermen also repeatedly found floating mines.²⁰⁶ Domestically, the war loomed increasingly large. In March 1941, communist sympathizers wrote on the walls of Jelsa, “Down with the Imperialist War” and “We want an alliance with the Soviet Union.”²⁰⁷ The state also prepared for the war, including instructions for local authorities on how to respond to an assault by parachutists.²⁰⁸

The war coincided with the establishment of the Croatian Banovina in 1939, established in the Cvetković–Maček Agreement, which sought to accommodate Croat demands for greater self-rule within Yugoslavia. The agreement was widely popular, including on Hvar. On Hvar, some had supported a more centralized Yugoslavia, but more importantly, the Communist Party was strong and rejected the agreement.²⁰⁹

Italian Rule and the Independent State of Croatia

The invasion of Yugoslavia began on April 6, 1941, after the government that joined the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan was overthrown in a coup. German, Italian, and Hungarian forces attacked the country, intending to dismember it and bring the territory under complete Axis control. The Yugoslav army was ill-prepared and quickly collapsed. Even before Yugoslavia capitulated, the “Independent State of Croatia” (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) was established before Easter 1941. As the news spread, people gathered in the main squares to find out more about the news. In Hvar town, Maks Kranjčević, who had recently moved to the island as a barber’s assistant, climbed on the balcony

above the arsenal on the town square and addressed the crowd, praising the Ustaša movement for destroying Yugoslavia. While a group of Communists quickly chased him away, Ustaša rule was about to begin. The Split Daily *Novo Doba* published a report about enthusiastic support for the new state from Hvar on April 19, 1941:

The entire population of the island of Hvar received the proclamation with the greatest enthusiasm free and independent State of Croatia ... On the first day of Easter, the city band passed through the city's streets playing patriotic songs while the citizens gathered in front of the Hrvatski Dom, where the portrait of the *poglavnik* (leader) Dr. Pavelić received a place of honor. Mayor Marin Kovačević gave a speech that joyfully announced that Croatia has risen to a new life and to be a free and independent state.²¹⁰

Nearly twenty years to the day, after Hvar had joined Yugoslavia after the Italian troops left on April 18, 1921, many welcomed the NDH with similar enthusiasm. At this point, support for an independent Croatia was high, even if the Ustaša movement enjoyed little support. Ante Pavelić and the Ustaša led the NDH because the much more popular Vladko Maček, head of HSS, refused to become head of a German puppet state. In Stari Grad, the inclusion of Hvar in the new Croatian state was celebrated on the square in front of the palace of Petar Hektorović with a speech by a local school teacher who proclaimed, "God is in heaven, the *poglavnik* in Zagreb, and I am here!"²¹¹

The Italian army arrived on 23 April, establishing its garrisons in all major towns on the island. At first, restrictions were limited, including on night fishing and leaving the island.²¹² The arrival of the Ustaša administration and Italian military occupation in short succession underscored that the war led by Italy, Germany, and its allies against Yugoslavia in April 1941 was not based on a detailed plan. Instead, the dismemberment of the country was rather piecemeal and improvised. Mussolini never gave up taking control over Dalmatia despite agreements with Yugoslavia in the 1920s. On April 24, 1941, Count Ciano, his son-in-law and foreign minister, noted, "In Italy, too, there is strong propaganda in favor of the acquisition of Dalmatia, carried out by the usual agitators. To be pro-Dalmatian is a profession for many. Nevertheless, we have prepared two solutions: one that involves a continuous stretch of territory from Fiume to Cattaro, and one limited to historic Dalmatia."²¹³ Both envisioned Hvar in a future Italian state, leading to tensions between the NDH and Italy over Dalmatia even before the war had ended. Ciano, challenged by German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop that Dalmatia was overwhelmingly Croatian, responded "we are not claiming Dalmatia on ethnical grounds, but in virtue of the principle of living space and because, over and above any secondary consideration as to the present population of Dalmatia, there are historical, cultural and political reasons which make Dalmatia as dear to the heart of every Italian as any other area of the national territory."²¹⁴ Ciano revived the arguments Italy had made during the First World War, enriched with references to *Lebensraum*. In Dalmatia, the new Italian civilian governor, Athos Bartolucci,



- Internationally recognized borders (as of 1941)
- Axis borders in occupied Yugoslavia (between 1941–1943)

Map 5 Occupation and partition of Yugoslavia, 1941.

advocated for a single Dalmatian district under Italian rule, including the northern Adriatic islands of Rab and Pag, and for all Slavs who arrived after 1918 to leave.²¹⁵

The borders were eventually settled on May 18, 1941, leaving neither side satisfied. Italian control over formerly Yugoslav lands was a complicated patchwork. In Dalmatia, the Governorate of Dalmatia (*Governatorato di Dalmazia*) included the coastal region between Zadar and Split, the bay of Kotor, and most islands but excluded Hvar and Brač. The NDH included most of the pre-war Croatian Banovina and Bosnia and Herzegovina and was divided into a German and Italian military occupation zone, running along the center from the North to the Northwest to the Southeast, securing the coastal areas to Italian military control.

Hvar fell in Zone 2, stretching from the coast inland, where Italy assumed military and most aspects of civilian administration. All Ustaša forces had to be dissolved, and the competencies of the NDH were restricted.²¹⁶ Thus, Hvar would be officially part of the NDH, but its link to the newly created Croatian nation-state was tenuous. The new borders cut across existing communication lines and connections, leaving Hvar disconnected from the main port of Split.²¹⁷ Instead, Hvar was now administered from Omiš, a small town south of Split. Initially, the

Ustaša sought to build up their structures on the island, including a camp under the command of a local teacher, to intern political opponents. The Italian army quickly revered these measures. In Stari Grad, some pro-Yugoslav nationalists reported Ustaša youth to the Italian army for having guns.²¹⁸ Italian troops increasingly ignored the Ustaša authorities and demonstrated who was in charge. When the Italian force prohibited flying the Croat flag on the main square in Hvar, all the Ustaša authorities could do was to complain to the Croatian Ministry of Interior. In early October 1941, an Italian army unit closed the offices of the cultural association “Ante Stračević” in Vrbanj, set up by the Ustaša to build local roots. At times, there were confrontations between the two, for example, when Italian soldiers and some civilians were stopped in Jelsa after the curfew imposed by Ustaša. Despite the Ustaša shooting in the air to stop the cars, they continued, showing how, in this power play between the two parallel authorities, the Italians remained dominant.²¹⁹

The authority of the Ustaša was further weakened by its limited support on Hvar. Before the war, the Ustaša movement had been irrelevant.²²⁰ Now, sympathizers and supporters of the Ustaša were primarily from the right wing of the HSS. On Hvar, Josip Berković, the local deputy, was the most prominent HSS member to support the Ustaša. Other HSS members joined the Yugoslav government in exile. Again, others joined the Partisans. At the end of 1942, some flyers circulated on Hvar that suggested the HSS would take over at the end of the war.²²¹ However, such a prospect was never likely as the party had fractured into three mutually exclusive political projects.

While the new authorities were able to draw on these HSS structures to fill some posts, most offices had to be filled by Ustaša supporters who were not from the island.²²² The local representative of the new state thus came from outside. From the start, this alienated the new Ustaša rule for the citizens, as mayors since the first elections of the 1860s had been from the local communities.

The militarized police units of the NDH, called *Oružništvo*, were also struggling to operate. The five units, with some twenty-eight to thirty-eight officers, became easy prey for Partisans. As a result, Italians appeared to have lost confidence in the units, disarmed them in Stari Grad and Jelsa, and only rearmed them after intervention by the Ustaša leadership. Other representatives of the Ustaša state, such as the treasury guard, were under pressure from the partisans, often attacked, disarmed, and in general vulnerable.²²³

The NDH, with its weak institutions and limited local support on Hvar, was thus unable to command substantial authority. This became visible when it sought to recruit soldiers to join the army. In September 1941, the authorities called up people who had begun their military service in the Yugoslav army and had returned home after the war. However, of thirteen called for duty, no one showed up. The task was undoubtedly difficult because they would not serve on Hvar, and the Italian military did not encourage recruitment. Many worried about being sent to fight either armed resistance groups or sent to the Eastern Front. The local authorities notified the regional headquarters that “... the work of our organs is completely disabled ..., and the Communists develop their action freely and spread poison to

the surrounding villages.” The Partisans made it clear that those joining the army “will be considered enemies of the people’s liberation struggle and will be given the deserving reward.” By October 1942, the authorities of the Ustaša gave up calling up recruits in the coastal areas under Italian control.²²⁴ Renewed efforts in 1943 failed miserably. In March, a Ustaša delegation arrived in Jelsa to inspect the health of potential recruits, and only one man who was unfit for service showed up.

In February 1943, the Communist Party in Stari Grad concluded that the Ustaša movement lacked organizational strength. Few still believed in it, as many former youth sympathizers joined the Unified League of Anti-Fascist Youth of Yugoslavia, the Partisans’ youth movement.²²⁵ By mid-1942, many Ustaša supporters had left for Zagreb, Omiš, and Dubrovnik.

The main military force on the island was the Italian army. In December 1942, there were 240 Italian soldiers on the island, mainly in Stari Grad.²²⁶ However, it lacked local support, as it could not rely on the Ustaše, and the Italian minority lacked the size to offer meaningful support. The Italian army provided better food supplies to Italians and members of the fascist youth, and many Italians welcomed the arrival of the Italian military, but this alienated them further from the overwhelming Croatian majority.²²⁷ Overall, the Italian army was aware of its limitations and sought to avoid antagonizing the island’s Croat majority.

Communist Resistance and the Rise of the Partisans

Until the German invasion of the Soviet Union, which started in June 1941, there was no organized resistance, even if the Communist Party, with 500 members and sympathizers, strongly opposed the Italian occupation. With its experience in underground activities, it was well prepared. The party aimed to provoke the Italian army, which initially avoided repression to prevent an escalation.²²⁸

The Communist Party prided itself on the reputation of “our island [Hvar] ... as a communist nest.”²²⁹ At the same time, it evaluated its position critically, noting in September 1942 that it failed to recruit young people, poor peasants, and the urban proletariat, resulting in too many middle-class peasants in the party.²³⁰ By October 1943, the party on Hvar had 104 members and 572 sympathizers, mostly in villages and in Jelsa rather than in Hvar town or Stari Grad.²³¹

The first visible signs of resistance began in September 1941, with communist graffiti in Dol. The incident showed how the Italians initially prioritized avoiding confrontation with the islanders. The NDH authorities arrested several villagers for the graffiti, but the Italian army requested evidence of the guilt of those arrested. The Italian Captain Ferrari even went to visit the families of those detained and then ordered their release. He also prohibited the Ustaše from investigating “any political crime, no matter how big, without his prior approval and that no political suspect should be arrested no matter what he or she did.” The Ustaša commander assumed that Ferrari did not release them due to their innocence but “for the sake of the sympathy of the broad masses, i.e., communists and Yugoslav nationalists, of whom there are enough in the area.”²³² For the Italians, keeping

peace was a priority, and they did not care much about political loyalty. The Italian commander's hope to diffuse the underground movement by drinking wine with suspects would soon be disappointed.

In October 1941, eighty to a hundred people demonstrated in Vrbanj, shouting slogans such as "Down with bloodthirsty Hitler, Mussolini, Pavelić, down with the fascists" and singing communist songs. After the demonstration on the village square, the protestors urinated on the cross on the square. The investigating Ustaša official identified some twenty-two men and ten women who participated. Despite the list of suspects, including names of "dangerous communists" and "women leaders" and pupils from the vocational school in Jelsa, which is apparently "infected with communists," the authorities could not hold anyone as there was no conclusive evidence or confession on who participated in the protests. This left the Ustaša commanders helpless as long as the Italian military blocked any more repressive measures and local communities remained closely knit.²³³

The anniversary of the Russian Revolution served as another opportunity for the Communist Party to undermine the Ustaša. The emerging center of resistance was the village of Vrbanj, which had a long tradition of rebellion, going back to the uprising of 1511. In the village, some Ustaša were chased away by a crowd, and a few days later, a group of ten young communists disrupted a meeting of the Ustaša youth. On the eve of the anniversary, communist activists lit up fires around towns all over Hvar, and on neighboring islands, with fires visible from the mainland and neighboring islands. In Vrbanj, Communists put up several Communist flags, including on the church tower.²³⁴

As Communist resistance spread, the first partisan groups emerged in September 1941, when some five members of the Communist Youth (SKOJ) and deserters set up camp in coves and fields of the island.²³⁵ The first Partisan unit, named after Matij Ivanić, was formed in June 1942. To join the unit, however, fighters had to bring their weapons, as the units did not have the means to equip them.²³⁶ Conditions were often difficult, and the Partisans were at least poorly equipped; "a good part of them are completely barefoot without shoes."²³⁷ One of the first acts of the Partisans was to publish regular reports based on news gathered from a radio hidden in a cave close to the village of Pitve. These would be read to the mostly illiterate population at meetings.²³⁸

In May 1942, some seventy to eighty Partisans took over the NDH police unit in Bogomolje, confiscating all the weapons. Two months later, they destroyed the post office in Bogomolje and disarmed the police station in Vrbanj. A spectacular raid on the sardine factory "Neptune" in Vrboska in August 1942 put the Partisans on the map. The biggest heist was in sardines. The Partisans stole 3.6 tons of Sardines in cans and 2.4 tons of oil. In other operations, the Partisan units also raided tax offices, stealing money, gold, typewriters, and guns.²³⁹ At this point, the southeastern stretch of Hvar between Jelsa and Sućuraj was largely Partisan-controlled. A map sent by the regional office of the NDH to the Ministry of Interior in Zagreb marked the entire region as controlled by the "Hvar Partisan movement."²⁴⁰

Other operations by the Partisans included removing bell clappers in churches, breaking into Ustaša offices and vandalizing them, cutting telegraph lines, and attacking and humiliating collaborators, such as forcing the Ustaša imposed mayor of Stari Grad Luka Radonić to walk barefoot through town.²⁴¹ The Partisans also killed alleged collaborators and spies, such as Fran Dužević in the village of Dol, who, according to a Partisan report, “was so much hated by the local population that no one wanted to bury him.”²⁴² Whether this or the pressure of the Partisans is responsible, it shows the significance of the Partisan movement in the rural areas of Hvar. Most inhabitants were forced to manage their everyday lives, as Vinko Ružević, at the time a young boy in Stari Grad, recalls, “in town were Italian soldiers, in the forest Partisans and we had to manage a cohabitation to survive.”²⁴³

By July 1943, some 350 islanders had joined the Partisans, often recruited from people who refused the recruitment orders. Units from Hvar also joined the larger Partisan forces fighting on the mainland in the Biokovo mountains, visible on a clear day from the island. However, most Partisans were motivated to defend their houses and families. They were thus deemed as not sufficiently motivated by the party to take part in actions further away from home.

In July 1942, local Ustaša authorities concluded, “We do not have the strength to oppose, and the Italian forces are not taking more radical measures to prevent them. The weak economic condition, hunger, the behavior of the Italians towards the citizens, and propaganda contribute to the fact that communism is spreading more and more to everyone and is gaining more and more supporters every day.”²⁴⁴ The position of Hvar at the fringes of the NDH and the Italian rule put it in a marginal position, cutting it off from trade links and supplies.

The Ustaša realized that hunger played into the hands of the Partisans: “On Brač and Hvar, famine is already widespread ... If we don't help soon, we will lose the sympathy of the whole region, and communism will celebrate.”²⁴⁵ In December 1941, protests erupted in Hvar, as elsewhere, to voice frustration over the lack of food. In the protest in Hvar, some 300 women participated.²⁴⁶ The Ustaše, the Italian army, and the Partisans vied to provide help and gain support among the population. The Communists established *Crvena pomoć*—Red Help—to assist families of sympathizers in need. The Partisans also stole food and distributed it among those in need. The NDH set up a food supply system. Still, the situation did not improve significantly, as a report in April 1943 noted, “Only in the town of Hvar 40 people ... suffer from hunger with swollen head and limbs, they gradually lose consciousness every hour death is expected. It is even worse in the villages.”²⁴⁷ The Italian army also distributed food, depriving families seen as supporting the Partisans of food aid. The NDH, however, saw this assistance as competition, fearing that it would have locals favor the Italian army over them. Some children went to the Italian school, which had its own kitchen. NDH authorities worried this would entice islanders to become Italian for pragmatic reasons, similar to the fear of Yugoslav authorities a few years earlier. As a remedy, the local authorities demanded that Croatian schools also have kitchens to avoid losing out to Italian schools.²⁴⁸

Increasingly, the local population relied on a barter economy. As a Partisan report in January 1944 noted, “people of the island managed to salt a part of the fish, ... and the people were exchanging fish for figs, carobs, oil, tobacco, etc.”²⁴⁹ Thus, hunger and scarcity further pushed islanders toward joining the Partisans.

The Italian army briefly withdrew from its main base, Stari Grad, in August 1942 but returned after the communists organized a large demonstration with 300 participants. The Italian military arrested seventeen people upon its return. This marked a turn toward a more repressive strategy. In the fall, the situation deteriorated with searches, shootings, and arrests in villages and a shoot-out with Partisans close to Jelsa. An Italian soldier died from his wounds, and the Italian commander in Stari Grad, Fabio Minutella, was ambushed. In response, he organized a punitive action, including 400 black shirts with heavy guns and tanks sent from Split, to search the villages Dol, Vrbanj, and Vrboska for Partisans. The forces moved out on January 3, 1943, toward Dol. After heavy attacks against the village, they marched into Vrbanj, the central place of resistance, where they noticed slogans painted on walls such as “Long live Stalin,” “Long live Tito,” “Long live communism,” and “Down with Italy.” Just a few days earlier, on 1 January, the NOO had organized a meeting with 400 participants in the village, highlighting the strength of the Partisan movement. In response, the Italian unit began burning down houses of people who had joined the Partisans, arrested around ninety people, and shelled Vrboska. Seven villagers were killed that day, and the “Blackshirts” left a message on the wall: “We treated you well, but you shot us in the back. This is your punishment. Who is a Partisan and who supports them is a renegade and our enemy. Communists and supporters of communists are our enemies.”²⁵⁰

Burning the villages was the single most significant act of retaliation on the island. In Vrbanj alone, half of all families became homeless, and all except ten houses in the village were entirely or partially destroyed. The Italian forces also confiscated or destroyed the local wine and oil reserves.

In response, a group of islanders in the NDH, including Josip Berković, now the NDH’s ambassador to nominally independent Slovakia, created a committee to assist the victims of the Italian action, gathering food and clothing donations.²⁵¹ The committee’s efforts underscore the NDH’s impotence on Hvar and the increasing conflict between the two nominal allies. The NDH authorities, which had demanded harsher reprisals during the early phases of the war, now opposed the operation, as they—correctly—assumed that it would drive villagers into the hands of the Partisans. In the village, the NOO assisted those who had lost their homes. They also clashed with the village priest, whom they suspected to have planned to expel the Partisans from the village after the Italian raid.²⁵² In a call released by the Partisans to “patriots of the island of Hvar,” they called for assistance in the second winter of the war, appealing to the “proud history” of the island and the struggle against the three “greatest evils” known to mankind: “war, hunger, and fascism.” This appeal was indicative, as it framed the struggle exclusively through the island’s perspective. Neither Croatia, Yugoslavia, nor Communism is mentioned.²⁵³

The Italians responded in flyers dropped by the air force, justifying the operation as “this is war!” and mocking the Partisans, claiming that “they all ran away like rabbits from the hunters.” It ended with an appeal to throw the Partisans out of their villages and inform the military authorities.²⁵⁴ Although the Communist Party thought that these appeals had little impact, the Partisans stopped attacks to avoid further Italian retaliation.²⁵⁵ After the retaliatory action against the three villages, the Italian army also sought to fight the Partisans in their stronghold in the eastern part of the island. However, the Partisan forces could withdraw on time, and the Italian troops just encountered elderly villagers.²⁵⁶

Amidst the declining authority of the Italians and the NDH, the Partisans built their institutions. In the summer of 1942, the first National Liberation Committees (*Narodnooslobodilački odbori*, NOO) were set up on Hvar, the first in Jelsa in August. At the same time, an island-wide NOO was established with councilors responsible for food and health. By the end of the year, local sections were established in twenty-two towns, villages, and settlements around the island, making them among the best organized in Dalmatia. Local chapters were more active than the island-wide NOO, reflecting that the island and, with it, the Partisan movement remained fragmented.

Three goals of the NOOs were to “bring together all people’s forces in a unified front, in terms of the armed struggle, the mobilization and supply of volunteers to fight against the foreign occupier and its domestic supporters and in the direction of a provisional government.”²⁵⁷ These were the institutions of the Partisan movement that acted like the government in the liberated territories.

They taxed farmers and fishermen and helped fund the Partisan forces.²⁵⁸ Roughly a quarter of the funds of the NOO came from raids, another quarter from taxes levied, and the rest from voluntary donations, loans, and other sources. Most of the income, some 90 percent, went to fund the Partisan forces, and the rest supported victims of the occupation and the poor.²⁵⁹ The Communist Party and the NOO also organized work actions to help poorer families, such as a nighttime harvest of the vineyards, where some 250 villages harvested large quantities of grapes in one night in September 1942.²⁶⁰

The Communist Party dominated the committees but undertook considerable efforts to incorporate others. Among 116 members of the NOO in late 1942, some 116 were Communists, 23 were affiliated with the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), and 30 were with the Yugoslav People’s Party (JNS), the dominant royalist party during the 1930s. Despite these concessions, it was clear that Communists dominated all committees.

In February 1943, the Communist Party branch in Stari Grad noted that there was feeble support for the Četnik movement; the few who did support them represented “nearly nothing.” They were distinguished from the most amorphous category of “Yugonationalists,” which they saw as supporting the NOO overall. The biggest challenger remained the HSS. The Communists noted the need to bring former HSS sympathizers on board while at the same time “destroy their organizational structure now.”²⁶¹ When the slogan “Down with the degenerates from HSS” was

painted on the walls of Vrbanj in late 1943, the local committee ordered it to be erased, as it implicates party supporters and not just the “reactionary leadership.”²⁶²

In September 1943, a conference of HSS members took place in Jelsa to commit themselves to the Partisan struggle. Their resolution condemned the party leadership and argued that the legacy of the party founder, Stjepan Radić, would be best served in joining the national liberation struggle. The bulk of the party’s members joined the Partisans and the presidents of several local party branches and associated organizations supported the Partisan movement.²⁶³

The concern of the Communists remained that the NOO was not yet acting like a new state authority. They attributed it to “reactionary forces,” especially in Jelsa, Hvar, Stari Grad, and Zastrazišće, but also to the lack of skill, “in general the organizations of the peoples’ government in the district have not yet become peoples’ organizations.”²⁶⁴ In Zastrazišće, the NOO was disbanded, as it was deemed no longer reliable, also showing how the party was not always in complete control over these local authorities. The first elections for the NOO in Dalmatia were held in Gdinj in 1943, one of the centers of Partisan activity. Among the 620 inhabitants of Gdinj, 102 fought as Partisans.²⁶⁵

By the summer of 1943, Italian and Ustaša’s rule over Hvar had largely collapsed. Noting that the island had become the “land of everybody and nobody,” the NDH control limited itself increasingly to the ends of the island, Hvar and Sućuraj.²⁶⁶ Tellingly, Ivan Pavlović, an NDH commander who participated in the anti-Partisan operations in the eastern part of the island with the Italian army in 1943, described the population of that area as “one of the most neglected areas, more savage than civilized. They recognize no one, least of all their country, while they only know about the rebels. They have no idea who is a Croat and what the Croatian state is.”²⁶⁷

It was during this period, as the Italian hold over Hvar began to crumble, that the island, together with other places along the coast, became unexpected places of refuge for Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

Jewish Life on Hvar

For a few months in the winter of 1942 and spring of 1943, hundreds of Jews would make Hvar their temporary home, seeking protection from deportation and death by Germany’s ally Italy on the territory of the rabidly anti-Semitic “Independent State of Croatia.” Hvar and other towns and islands along the Adriatic coast became an unexpected refuge for many Jews. Their fate, however, hung in the balance. The journey of Croatian Jews toward safety through Hvar in 1943 highlights the strange nature of alliances and statehood during wartime.²⁶⁸

Before the war, there were only six Jews on Hvar, and there was no traditional Jewish community.²⁶⁹ After Germany and its allies had dismantled Yugoslavia, the fate of Jews varied greatly, depending on who was in control. Jews fared worst in the regions under direct German control, whereas its allies had some leeway in their policies toward the Jewish population in the areas they controlled. By the time of

the war, Italy had enacted a range of anti-Semitic policies and laws. Nevertheless, their position was still far better than in territories under Nazi control.²⁷⁰

Italy's policy toward Jews in Yugoslavia was shaped by its rivalry with Germany and conflicting views on the treatment of Jews within the Italian state. Some Italian officials also had little sympathy for Jews. The governor of Dalmatia, Giuseppe Bastianini, an early fascist party member, enforced the mainland racial laws.²⁷¹ During the first year, some Jews who fled to safety in Italian-controlled areas were deported back to regions under complete NDH control, and Italians were at least complicit in the Ustaša crimes. Nevertheless, Jews fared much better in areas under Italian control, as the anti-Jewish laws of the NDH passed by the Ustaša upon coming to power were only enacted in the German area of influence.²⁷²

As a result, many Jews living in the German-controlled part of the NDH began moving southward.

On July 24, 1942, the NDH concluded an agreement with Germany on turning over Croatian Jews and would pay 30 marks for every Jew transported to a concentration camp.²⁷³ After the experience with Ustaša brutality in the first months of their rule and the understanding that Jews would be killed if handed over to Germany, many Italian army and civil administrators were weary of permitting the deportation of Jews. Thus, opposition to deportation and mistreatment of the Jewish population was based on a concerted effort, but "[f]rom that moment the spontaneous, underground rescue activity of the lower grades of the Italian army was transformed into a regular diplomatic action."²⁷⁴ Luca Pietromarchi, a senior Italian diplomat, noted that "Handing them [the Jews] over means to condemn them to extermination. Italy and the Army must avoid the shame of making themselves accomplices in such wickedness."²⁷⁵

The Italian authorities decided to move the Jews to designed sites on the coast in response to the uncontrolled influx of Jewish refugees from other parts of the NDH. Still, they had not decided whether to reject or collaborate with Germany.

As the German pressure for deportation mounted, the Italian authorities began evacuating Jews who had fled from German-controlled regions of the NDH, including the Švarc and Eskenazi families, David Pardo, as well as other Jews from Mostar. The Jewish community thus told all Jews to gather at the railway station, from where they were taken to Metković. The Italian authorities organized Dalmatian sailboats and *trabakuls* to bring them to Hvar and other places on the coast.²⁷⁶

Italian tactics infuriated German officials, particularly Siegfried Kasche, the German ambassador to the NDH. In a telegram on November 20, 1942, he noted that "The Italians intend concentrating the Jews on several small islands ... The Italians also reject every attempt made from the Croatian side to interfere or collaborate in carrying out these measures."²⁷⁷ By late December 1942, altogether, 2,557 Jews were interned by Italian authorities in a series of towns along the coast under Italian military control, from Kraljevica in the north to Fort Mamula, at the entrance to the bay of Kotor, in the south, with 365 on Hvar.²⁷⁸ Most of the Jews

on Hvar came from Bosnia, thirty-two from other places in Yugoslavia, and a few from Prague, Vienna, and Hungary.

On the island, they were put in the empty hotels, primarily in Hvar town or in private homes. Some were accommodated in Jelsa, such as the Eskenazi and Švarc families at first and in Stari Grad, where David Pardo went. The Eskenazi family was first put up in an abandoned hotel in Jelsa in late 1942.²⁷⁹ Andor Mathé remembered how “free movement was limited, and we were forbidden to meet with locals.”²⁸⁰ Food was provided by the Italian army: sugar, flour, pasta, parmesan cheese, and jelly. However, reports from a Jewish aid agency noted that the food was limited and monotonous.²⁸¹

Lea Abinum, a 29-year-old woman from Sarajevo, felt constrained in this environment and tried to get herself sick so that she would be taken to Split to hospital.²⁸² The curfew brought David Prado into trouble. He and his friend Iso Veliki were accommodated by Šjora²⁸³ Mare in Stari Grad. They had to report to the local carabinieri in the morning and evening to ensure they would not skip town. However, one afternoon, he decided to walk the ten kilometers to Jelsa, where some Jewish friends were interned. However, after four hours of hiking to Jelsa, it was too late to return before the curfew, and instead, he decided to stay, drink, and dance late into the night. At 3 am, an Italian patrol arrested him and took him back to Stari Grad, where the commander awaited him. After being put into an improvised jail overnight, he was released the next day.²⁸⁴ This relatively lax punishment shows how the Italian authorities sought to control the Jewish population but were less interested in punishing them.²⁸⁵

The islanders must have been surprised to host hundreds of Jews suddenly, yet they were mostly fellow Yugoslavs or Croats and would not have been very different from the profile of visitors to Hvar during the interwar years. David Pardo remembers that although they were not supposed to socialize with the population, they enjoyed a glass of wine with their hosts and the hospitality of other townspeople. They broke the curfew to have dinner with the family, who had some polenta, warm goat milk, and wine. Pardo recalled how he was welcomed by local Starigraders, who inquired about his journey and his family.²⁸⁶ In Stari Grad, Jews had to gather firewood for the carabinieri in the forest, where locals were not allowed to go; David Pardo recalled collecting the fruits from the Strawberry tree for his friends in town. Later, he would receive some potatoes, as the captain told him, “You know, for us, we consider you to be locals from Stari Grad.”²⁸⁷ Josip Druker’s family from Sarajevo exchanged some of their produce with the local fishermen against freshly fished sardines in Hvar town. He also remembers romantic relationships with Jewish girls, including his sisters with Vinko and Tonko from Hvar.²⁸⁸

Albert Eskenazi remembered the supportive hotel owner Tonci Maričić, “who gave us everything. He left us alone to organize ourselves and solved all the problems. The Italians paid for this, but it was important how he treated us.”²⁸⁹ Josip Drucker also had fond memories of Hotel Overland in Hvar town: “The

owner of the hotel and her husband ... were so good that they treated us as if we were their paying guests."²⁹⁰

The welcome of islanders was not a surprise. Anti-Semitism had not been prominent in Dalmatia; there was little reason not to talk to fellow citizens. Even though Yugoslavia had dissolved, and new borders and citizenship imposed, the Jewish refugees and the islanders shared the same language and understanding of where they came from. If anything, the protection by the much-hated Italian occupiers could have put the Jews in a vulnerable position. However, the life of Jews on Hvar was regulated, and they were interned. Thus, the protection of the Italian army did not seem like a particular privilege, even if it would save their lives.

At one of the hotels in Hvar, a group of Jews put on a show, including for the Italian commander, who provided a barrel of wine for the occasion. The show included songs and dances from different countries. After announcing Radio Hvar, Radio Rome, Radio Budapest, and Radio Berlin, the performers sang songs in the language of the respective country or, in fact, something close to it. The Spanish performance was, in fact, in Ladino, the traditional language of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain and Portugal, and the Radio Berlin was in *Yiddish*. The next day, a boy and a girl were missing. While they found a blood-stained piece of clothing at the beach, and the official story was suicide due to unhappy love, it turned out that the two had fled to join the Partisans. The entire show was a distraction to allow for their escape.²⁹¹



Figure 4.3 Young women from Hvar repair the town after Italian occupation (1943).
© Museum of the City of Split.

They were not the only ones to join the Partisans. Rahela Samokovlija from Mostar was already a member of the Partisans before coming to Jelsa. However, after a sister with a child found out that she was a member of the clandestine young Communists, she burnt all the evidence just in time before an Italian army search.²⁹² Several Jews created a “People’s Liberation committee,” and some fifteen young Jews escaped internment to join the Partisans.²⁹³

The stay in Hvar turned out to be brief. Between May and July 1943, all Jews under Italian control were sent to Rab, an island in the Kvarner Bay. The concentration camp Rab embodied the best and the worst of Italian occupation. While it was a place to save Jews from extermination by Germany in the East, it was also a camp in which the Italian army incarcerated Slovenes and Croats with a high death rate.²⁹⁴ After the fall of Mussolini and the Italian capitulation, the Italian soldiers withdrew from Rab, leaving the Jews to their own devices. Some were taken by small boats to Italy, and most were evacuated by the Partisans. Still, some, mostly the elderly and sick, stayed on Rab, and nearly all were discovered after the German capture of the island and deported to Auschwitz.

Not long after most Jews left the Dalmatian coast, thousands of islanders became refugees, finding themselves in Egypt. Yet their fates were intertwined, not just as refugees but as refugees fleeing together to Egypt. Altogether, some 300 Jews reached refugee camps in Egypt. Some used the proximity to Palestine to start a life there.

The Partisan Interlude and the Flight to Egypt

The collapse of Italian rule in the Eastern Adriatic began before Fascist Italy signed the armistice with the Allies on September 3, 1943. Since the fall of Mussolini on 25 July, the army was in disarray. By mid-August 1943, the Italian forces had withdrawn from most towns and villages on Hvar, leaving only units in Hvar and Sućuraj, with the rest of the island under Partisan control. The Italian units disarmed the Ustaša police units when evacuating, as they anticipated the arms falling into Partisan hands.²⁹⁵

One day after the Italians left Stari Grad, the Partisans took over, lowering the NDH coat of arms and destroying the pictures of Pavelić. The departing Italian army took their boats and destroyed others, creating significant damage. With the capitulation, all Italian supplies and the local Ustaša units fell into Partisan hands in Sućuraj and Hvar: “As soon as the Italians [in Hvar] reported surrender, six armed Partisans entered the town along with huge manifestations of the population. Everyone hoisted Croatian flags with a five-pointed star, except for the priests, who used only Croatian flags, but the Partisans later added a five-pointed star.”²⁹⁶

As part of establishing the new authorities, the elections for the local councils of the NOO were held in December 1943. Some 5,998 islanders voted for the councils, a high turnout of 91 percent. There were often more candidates than

slots, so there was some choice for voters (for example, in Hvar town, there were twenty-two candidates for seven places).²⁹⁷

The new authorities also persecuted alleged collaborators. In a high-profile case in January 1944, a military court in Hvar tried ten people for espionage for the NDH and the German army, as well as gathering weapons to be used against the Partisans. Of the ten, seven were sentenced to death and executed by firing squad, whereas three were found innocent and freed. Among those executed were a priest, Jakov Račić, and a nun, Kornelija Horvat, based in Jelsa.²⁹⁸

Altogether, during the war, the Partisans executed forty-five people on the island. Most of those executed were accused of espionage, some of collaboration with the occupying forces, others of theft or joining Ustaša or NDH, murder, and denunciation. In addition, Partisans had a list of fifty-three they accused of having committed war crimes.²⁹⁹

Ustaša forces raided Sućaraj in September 1943 to prevent Partisans from disrupting traffic along the coast between Makarska and Metković. After the successful raid, the Ustaša unit returned to the mainland, leaving the island in Partisan hands.³⁰⁰ However, the Partisan victory turned out to be short-lived.

German units quickly began taking over, motivated by the fear of an Allied landing in the Balkans. Over the Fall and Winter of 1943–4 the German army units occupied the Dalmatian coast, with a growing group of refugees moving towards Hvar and Vis. The refugees included Communist sympathizers and Partisans, with their families, but also others who feared German reprisals.

As the evacuations began, in late November, Fitzroy Maclean arrived in Hvar. Churchill sent Maclean to establish contact with the Partisans and Tito, as it became clear that they were Yugoslavia's most important resistance group. He was based in Tito's headquarters in Bosnia but made his way to the coast to secure crucial British supplies. As he arrived on Hvar, the German army was closing in on the last Partisan strongholds on the coast. It was clear for Maclean that the German advance would soon take over the island: "For the Partisans to make a stand, either on the coast or on the islands ... would be to flout the first principle of guerrilla warfare, and, to my mind, could only end in disaster."³⁰¹ On the other hand, losing control of the islands would cut the Partisans in Bosnia off from essential supplies.

Coming from the battlefields in the Bosnian mountains, Maclean was struck "by the Mediterranean day, typical of Dalmatia and very different from the bleak, wintry weather which we had left inland" where "the people of Hvar did their best to make my stay agreeable. Speeches were made, health's drunk and bouquets presented by small, squeaky anti-Fascist children, and there was much talk of victory and liberation. But the military situation scarcely justified much rejoicing, and through all the celebrations there ran an undercurrent of anxiety."³⁰² It was during this visit that Maclean recognized the importance of holding on to Vis, which would become a crucial base and put Hvar on a de facto frontier between Axis and Allied armies over the next year.

In November 1943, the Partisans created the Central Refugee Committee (*Centralni odbor zbjega* COZ) in Vrboška. It also included other opponents of the

Ustaša regime and incorporated key mass organizations, such as the Antifascist Women's Front (*Antifašistički front žena*, AFŽ) and the youth movement (*Ujedinjeni savez antifašističke omladine Jugoslavije*, USAO). Being responsible for governing the refugees while they were displaced, it was organized into administrative sections dealing with issues such as education, health care, and culture.

Not just people were evacuated from Hvar, but also art. In the refectory of the Franciscan monastery of Hvar hung a large painting of the Last Supper, attributed to different Venetian masters. The painting and others were taken by boat first to Vis, and just like the refugees to Italy, to return only at the end of the war. The evacuation of the painting was urged by a gathering of Dalmatian intellectuals—writers, artists, composers, and architects—who met in Hvar to support the Partisan effort. They included the German expressionist Rudolf Bunk, who fled to Yugoslavia from the Nazis and the well-known Croatian composer Josip Hatze who chaired the meeting. They found themselves on the island for the same reason thousands of others escaped. In their declaration, they linked their resistance to the history of Hvar, including the rebellion of Matij Ivanić, the Panslav ideas of Pribojević and the poetry of Hektorović and Lučić.³⁰³ It would be the first meeting of artists and intellectuals supporting the Partisan effort and reflected the effort of the anti-fascist movement to provide a broad cultural and literary infrastructure in the areas under its control.³⁰⁴ The ink was not dry on the declaration, as the artists faced either joining the Partisans to fight or continuing their flight.

From Hvar, the next stop was Vis: the island was held by the Partisans, with British military assistance. As the island was transformed from a sleepy fishing community to a military outpost to defend against German dominance, the refugees, as well as the civilian population of Vis, had to find a new temporary home. The first stop was Allied-controlled southern Italy. However, there were no facilities to house the tens of thousands of refugees, and the frontline was too close. Thus, the British proposed evacuation to Egypt, where military camps were available.

The mass evacuation of so many islanders was a source of considerable tension. Many had never left the island before and now found themselves in the Egyptian desert. In the coming months, rumors would often spread in Hvar and the other places from which the refugees had fled that they were starving in Egypt. In addition, many Communists fled Hvar, worried about German reprisals. The local Communist Party assessed that some 70 percent of the newly elected NOO members from the central and eastern parts of the island fled with the refugees and 116 of the 158 party members. Despite this opportunity for the “reaction”—as all opponents of the Communists were called—they could not mobilize mass resistance.³⁰⁵

Altogether, just over 40,000 Dalmatians (and a few from other parts of Croatia) fled for Italy, and most of them were later transferred to Egypt (39,647), while the rest remained in Italy. These refugees amount to just below 10 percent of the entire population of Dalmatia, and considerably more from the islands and the central Dalmatian coast.³⁰⁶ Altogether, 29.2 percent of Hvar's total population fled, some

2,989. With such a large share of the population of Hvar moving to Egypt, it was as if the island continued its existence in part in the Egyptian desert for the next two years. Among the refugees were numerous intellectuals from Hvar, such as the poet Marin Franičević.

The main camp, El Shatt, became a “city with streets, house numbers, schools, hospitals, clinics, post offices, theaters, choirs, football teams and sports clubs, a cemetery and churches.”³⁰⁷ It grew steadily in the first months to include a total of five sub-camps, each constituting a little town of its own. At its peak in January 1945, some 24,771 refugees lived in El Shatt. This made it the second-largest Dalmatian city after Split and just slightly smaller than the city of Suez, which was just some 10 kilometers away. Others found shelter in Tolumbat, 20 kilometers east of Alexandria, and Khatatba in the Nile Delta.

The arrival in El Shatt was a shock for the refugees. Camp life was harsh, with high temperatures during the day and freezing desert nights. Neven Bogdanić from Stari Grad recalls, how we “quickly got used to the new environment, the cold nights and the unbearable heat ... in the desert nowhere, even though [we] were caught by the nostalgia for the Adriatic Sea, the peace and quiet of its bay, the scent of sage, lavender, rosemary, pines and the gentle Dalmatian landscape.”³⁰⁸ The desert wind the refugees called *Gibli* that covered everything in sand, left a lasting impression on the refugees. From island communities shaped by agriculture and the sea, the Dalmatians found themselves in the desert without vegetation in an improvised urban setting few had experienced.³⁰⁹

Upon arrival, refugees were grouped by their villages of origin and assigned to tents that mostly kept villages together. Families shared tents, but often also had to share them with strangers or at least nonfamily members.³¹⁰ A. Tegla Davies, who worked for the Friends Ambulance Unit, described the modest life in the tents: “Each tent has ... items of home-made furniture improvised out of wooden boxes and pieces of timber ... For the most part they are kept spotlessly clean, although the same care is not always extended to anything outside their living quarters”³¹¹

At first, the camps were run by the British *Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration* (MERRA), on May 1, 1944, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) took over. In effect, the British Army guarded the camps, while welfare and food supplies were administered by UNRRA and humanitarian organizations. The Partisan-led COZ managed the camp life and built up an extensive organization that permeated all social life. While a sense of idleness often marked other camps, El Shatt was busy. Cultural life began as soon as the refugees arrived. Within weeks of their arrival in March 1944, schools began to operate, newspapers were published, and theatre groups and choirs were set up. In addition to singing Yugoslav songs, the choir immediately learned to perform *Yankee Doodle* and *Pack Up Your Troubles* next to communist and traditional Dalmatian songs such as *Partizanka* and *Marijana*, giving concerts to American and British soldiers.³¹² Soon afterward, the repertoire included the national anthems of the Allies and an ever-increasing number of British, American, and

Russian songs. There were approximately three to four cultural evenings in all districts of all camps each month, some attended by up to 1,000 people.³¹³

An important part of entertainment was soccer and sports in general: there were some eight sports clubs, with 1,241 members, in June 1944.³¹⁴ The most legendary game was a visit by the Split soccer club *Hajduk* on May 11, 1945, less than a week after the end of the war. In front of 8,000 spectators, *Hajduk* played against the camp club *Jedinstvo*. Even though *Hajduk* won 4:0, the internal COZ report noted large celebrations and a cheerful evening.³¹⁵

The educational system included kindergartens and daycare, primary and secondary schools, and adult education, including learning, reading, and writing for a largely illiterate community.³¹⁶

Andro Štambuk, a priest from Brač who worked at the bishop's office in Hvar before the war, became a leading figure at El Shatt. He kept the books on baptisms, deaths, and weddings, joined the COZ to coordinate the religion section, and was also in charge of education with another COZ official. In October 1945, he became the president of the COZ. Upon his return, he would conflict with the new Communist authorities. Still, he noted no obstruction to religious education in the camp, and children had religious lessons once a week.³¹⁷ The small old Catholic community from Bogomolje also made its way to El Shatt.³¹⁸ A larger number of



Figure 4.4 Refugee women washing clothes in El Shatt, Egypt (1944). © UN Archives.

church officials of the Hvar bishopric joined the refugees. In the camp, they formed parishes with improvised churches in tents, each named after a saint. The most important religious event was the historical Easter procession “Za križem.” Just before Easter 1944, the refugees found out that the procession had been banned by the German occupation and decided to hold it in El Shatt. The cross bearers were chosen from the same villages, and “we went in the same order as at home; we sang the same songs,” a participant recalled.³¹⁹ Five stations of the cross were dinner messes, and the sixth altar was placed in the Saint Joseph church. Altogether, some 8,000 believers and numerous British and American officials participated.³²⁰

Refugees stayed in touch with relatives and friends back home was through letters. Thus, in April 1944, Marija Tresić Pavičić wrote to her sister Margarita back in Vrbanj, urging her to “write everything that is from there, because we are curious to know because there is always something new there.” In another letter, she wrote about her life in the camp: “I’m alive and well, thank God, so far I’m not hungry, I’m not naked, we got clothes and shoes, I’m satisfied, I’m where my late father [presumably building the Suez Canal] was, we’re all from Vrbanj together, and there are 18–20 in a room, and where I am there 19 of us.”³²¹

In addition to letters, the refugees learned about events from back home through wall newspapers and the daily *Naš list*. Besides, COZ printed a range of other periodicals and other publications, including Partisan songs and school textbooks.³²²

The British and American aid workers and UNRRA staff repeatedly noted their admiration for the resilience of the refugees in the camps. For example, William B. Edgerton, writing to his wife from the camp, stated “I must not give the impression that these people have managed to create a little paradise here on the desert with their resourcefulness ... Their extreme lack of everything ... only makes what they do accomplish more impressive, standing as it does against such a background.”³²³ An UNRRA report from 1944 came to a similar conclusion, noting the “high pitch of enthusiasm which the refugees maintain.” While far removed from Yugoslavia, the connection remained strong, as they “are a piece of Yugoslavia transplanted to the Egyptian desert until such a time as they can go back to Yugoslavia.”³²⁴

Some observers took a more critical view of the efficiency and ideological control of the COZ. Samuel Yoder, a doctor working for the Mennonite Central Committee, noted, “[i]t gave one an eerie feeling to see this totalitarian system gradually taking over and regimenting the lives of the people.”³²⁵ Indeed, there was opposition to the Partisans in El Shatt, and not all supported the new Communist-dominated authorities. These included some who were taken to camps against their will. The largest group among them was from Vis, as the entire civilian population was evacuated as the Partisans and the British used the island as their base. Some former civil servants felt duty bound to the state, and “most were surprised at the idea that Royalists were automatically the enemies of the Partisans and vice versa.”³²⁶ Others were taken to Egypt against their will, as they were seen as a security risk back home. Finally, some were also discouraged by their experience in

the camp and, in the eyes of the COZ, “lack consciousness and do not have strength to endure.”³²⁷

Opponents of the Partisans were given a chance to leave for another camp, El Arish, where non-Partisan Yugoslavs were housed.³²⁸ After the first wave of refugees left, there was still some dissent, as Yoder recalls, but no longer any open opposition:

Sometimes there was complaining, subdued and careful, of course. There was the day of the election, for example. It was done in the open by a show of hands; there was one candidate for each office. Intelligent dissenters seemed to know that it was a farce. There were a few avowed Royalists, but most of them had long since been banished to another camp. Some others styled themselves democrats; they were not popular with the governing committee.³²⁹

Those who wanted to leave could do so if they had political reasons or relatives overseas, which most Dalmatians had due to the earlier emigration. Once they expressed their desire to go, they were often subject to being pelted with stones and called “Četniks.” The Committee also prohibited refugees from leaving when they had close relatives back home in Yugoslavia: “We will consistently stand on the position that neither women nor children of our fighters can be allowed to be lost to our enemies.”³³⁰

The requests to leave reveal a considerable pluralism of political affiliations. In a list of seventeen people who were taken against their will from Hvar and who in 1945 did not want to return, there was the Pavičić family, with four members, all giving different reasons. Ivan was declared a Yugoslav nationalist, Nada, a supporter of the Croatian Peasant Party, and Šibe and Marica were listed as undefined nationalists and supporters of the Yugoslav Radical Party. Five others were considered Ustaša or supporters, twelve supporters of the HSS, two Yugoslav nationalists, two Četnik supporters, four generic nationalists, and a certain Jure Miletić from Svirče was noted as a member of all parties.³³¹

When reviewing the biographies of those seeking to leave, as recorded by the COZ, it is striking that many who had identified with the HSS before the war now described themselves as Yugoslav nationalists or pledged their support for the king. Since leaving the camp was easier with a political motivation rather than just hoping to seek a better future overseas, many might have invented or embellished their political motivations.

The Partisans also kept track of all opponents even if they did not seek to leave the camp. Among those from Hvar, it included both alleged Ustaša sympathizers and royalists.³³² For example, Petar Ružević, a lawyer from Stari Grad, was accused of being a secret organizer of the opposition in the camp with a Yugoslav nationalist and Četnik sympathizer.³³³ The snapshot of political and personal opposition to the Partisan control in the camps suggests that while the Partisan authorities enjoyed the overwhelming support of the refugees, there was opposition. This opposition was often diffuse and mixed personal with political convictions. The clear distinction between support for the Croatian Peasant Party or its political opponents, centralist parties, was far more diffuse in the local context.

Besides those who sought to leave the camp and not return to Yugoslavia after the war, most anticipated the end of the war and the imminent return with excitement: “we will build, with song and music, a new, happy, free, democratic federal Yugoslavia”³³⁴

Naš list published a letter by Ante Bojanić written upon his return to Hvar “I returned to Hvar. We must be with the people. You, who have gone over the sea, don’t forget for a moment that you are part of the people who astonish the world with their fight. When you return, bring a beam of unending love for the ... place you had to abandon.”³³⁵ After all, most had been separated from families, including husbands who were fighting in the Partisans. The UNRRA observed how “Jugoslavs were returning home to do a job. The farmers were keen to get home to do the spring sowing; the fishermen know that schools of fish travel down the Dalmatian coast at this time of year.”³³⁶ However, this excitement quickly gave way to frustration: the repatriation came to a standstill after the first ten transports between April 11 and July 18, 1945 brought 18,985 back, more than half of all refugees and most from Hvar.³³⁷ Only by March 1946 were all refugees back in Dalmatia.³³⁸

German Occupation and Partisan Victory

While thousands fled Hvar from the German troops, the rest of the population was exposed to the eight months of German occupation, ending in September 1944. In the summer of 1944 of the population of Hvar, Vis, Brač, and Šolta around 30 percent were in Egypt, 20 percent either volunteered (1/3) or were mobilized (2/3) into the Partisan forces, and around 10 percent of the population was deported by the occupiers. Thus, less than half of the pre-war population lived in their homes. The number of those who joined the Croatian Home Guard, the army of the NDH, and the Ustaša movement was only 196 (less than 1 percent of the population), showing how unattractive this option was. The number of those who joined the Četnik movement (140) was not much lower. The Partisans also took track of the losses on the four islands, including 191 civilians killed by occupiers, 169 Partisan soldiers, as well as eighty-nine alleged spies and criminals executed by the Partisans.³³⁹

The German occupation was violent yet incomplete. Partisan units could operate in the island’s interior and rely on support from the population. They were assisted by the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), both engaged in covert operations in Nazi-occupied Europe. Neighboring Vis was a key supply base for the Partisan forces. It offered a safe refuge for Tito after he had to flee his headquarters in Drvar, Bosnia, after being encircled in *Operation Rösselsprung* by German and NDH forces in May 1944. From Vis, OSS and the SOE operatives organized raids on neighboring islands, including the destruction of a German patrol on Hvar. In addition, Hvar was part of the communication line to the mainland.³⁴⁰

German units were too small to establish control effectively and were unwilling to work with the police forces of the NDH on Hvar, which were feeling

“abandoned, powerless and lost.” In effect, NDH control over Hvar by 1944 was just nominal. There were continued raids by both Partisan forces and shelling by Allied warships. A raid in March 1944 showed the weakness of the German troops. A joint operation of British and Partisan units from Vis landed on Hvar to attack German units. The German forces were pushed to the Eastern part of the island, leaving the Partisans briefly in control of the entire western region of Hvar.³⁴¹ A German private captured by Partisans in March 1944 on Hvar, recalled the brutality of the fighting: “The Partisans poisoned the wells and the wine vats. Even the oranges were poisoned ... You should have seen the SS at work. We found four SS men hanged, and then the SS took countermeasures to revenge them.”³⁴²

The German forces retook Hvar in April, but their hold on the island remained tenuous. In the coming months, the German troops were once more driven toward the Eastern part of the island. The extent to which the Germans came under pressure from the Partisans became apparent on May Day. Some thirty-four young Partisans confronted a German patrol between Gdinj and Bogomolje, killing six of the eleven Germans. Between Vrbanj and Stari Grad, a German army convoy was blown up by an anti-tank mine, killing or injuring fifteen soldiers. At the same time, over 360 fires lit up all over the island, and several hundred participants participated in rallies in Hvar and Vrbanj.³⁴³ British army raids also continued with Partisan support. For example, in July 1944, a British unit attacked a German patrol close to Bogomolje, killing eight and taking seventeen prisoners.³⁴⁴ Relations between the British and the Partisans were often difficult, as a report of the British army noted, “it is quite impossible to work with the Partisans when they are using their guerilla tactics. They do not know where their men are and they withdraw immediately [when] any shelling or mortaring starts.”³⁴⁵

In the summer of 1944, the Partisans organized theatre performances in several towns on the island, spread the news through radio and loudspeakers, and organized around ten mass meetings in August alone. In places under German control, “slogans should be written to show the enemy the fearlessness.” Partisans produced a local newspaper, *Otoci u borbi* (Islands in battle), and set up wall newspapers to inform villages.³⁴⁶ In addition, Partisan-run schools operated on Hvar and other islands, often in close proximity to German garrisons.

In July 1944, the local Partisan authorities began evoking more explicitly a post-war vision of a democratic federal state of Yugoslavia with Croatia as a republic and led by Tito rather than the king.³⁴⁷

As the Partisans established their authority, collaborators were targeted. This included women accused of having had sex with German soldiers who were arrested for “conspiring with the occupier,” as was the case of four women in Jelsa after the withdrawal of German units. Others who had collaborated were considered “enemies of the people” and sought after in flyers. Most would leave with the departing troops to seek protection on the mainland. Despite the desire for retribution and executions of alleged collaborators, in April 1944, the leadership of the Communist party noted that unlike in 1941, “we should not liquidate, arrest and force people to carry boards [with their alleged crimes]” but instead “now that

we are creating a state, the question of arrests, execution, etc. has to be the subject conscientious questioning and investigation.”³⁴⁸

A trial in August 1944 for manslaughter shows how the new authorities maneuvered carefully between ideology and the local context. On an evening in April 1944 in the village of Zastrazišće, Antica Mateljan and her sister Matija Fistanić got into a fight over what to prepare for dinner after a long day in the fields. As they struggled, Antica pushed Matija to the ground, killing her. Arrested the next day, the new Partisan authorities put her on trial. The dead sister and her husband had taken in Antica thirty-two years earlier after her husband died in the United States. The conflict came to a head as Matijas’s husband Bartul promised to divide the property between the two sisters. Antica’s five children would eventually inherit it all because he and his wife had no children. The children had joined the Partisans and neglected to work on the land, so the victim threatened to betray them to the German army. In the eyes of the judge, “she was a political enemy, but her self-interest dominated ... [in] using the occupiers just to get rid of Antica and her children.” Small quarrels and “*dišpet*,” a local term for stubbornness, came to a head in April 1944 with Matija’s death. While the victim was threatening to collaborate with the Germans and the children of the accused were Partisans, the court still found Antica guilty and sentenced her to two years for manslaughter.³⁴⁹ The case underlines how questions of collaboration played into intra-family feuds and often had few political connotations. The courts were aware of this and decided not to follow a purely dogmatic line.

Relations between Partisans and the church were also complex during the war. While some of the clergy collaborated, and early actions of the Partisans targeted the church, they recognized the importance of not alienating believers. In June 1944, for example, the party decided to remove Communist slogans from church walls and ordered the return of the clapper for the church bell in Dol.³⁵⁰ Priests also participated in the elections to the NOO, and in the town of Hvar, the bishop himself voted. Several local NOO councils included priests. At the intervention of the Bishop of Hvar, Mihovil Pušić, priests were “granted supplies and food in the same proportion as other employees and workers working at National Liberation Committees.”³⁵¹

Nothing reflected better the complex relationship between the Partisans and the Church than the funeral of Jakov Tabak, a Partisan from Pitve. As the Partisans could not commemorate in the open for fear of reprisals, they decided to commemorate in the village church, but “of course without the priest, as Tabak was not a believer,” as Marin Franičević, a writer and Partisan from Vrisnik, remembered. Most villagers who attended the funeral were believers, and the Partisans gave the Catholic ceremony a twist “with the necessary respect.” Following some recitations, the community sang Partisan songs in the church and the “International” in front of the church. The church thus became a site to conduct the rites associated with religion but with its own secular and communist interpretation. Yet the whole commemoration was not rebellious; the respect for the church was mentioned repeatedly in the account.³⁵²

As the control of Hvar by the Partisans increased and the German hold of the island declined, three Partisan brigades set out from Vis in mid-September 1944 to liberate the three adjacent islands, including Hvar. The German units on Hvar were already withdrawing, as they were needed in Srijem, west of Belgrade, to protect the retreating Wehrmacht. The German unit sent to assist was busy plundering Stari Grad. In a confrontation with local Partisan units and the brigade sent from Vis, the German unit was quickly defeated with the assistance of allied ships and planes, and the remaining German forces withdrew, holding on to just Sućuraj. Of the 400 German soldiers, at least twenty were killed, and fifty-five were taken prisoners. Sućuraj remained under German control, as it was strategically important to prevent landing on the coast and protect the shipping route along the coast for the Axis. To secure Sućuraj, nearly all its inhabitants, a total of 358, were deported to the mainland. Already earlier, the German army had deported dozens of men from other towns to the mainland.

The battle for Sućuraj in the second half of September 1944 was the largest armed confrontation on Hvar during the war. Two units of Italian soldiers who joined the Partisans, named after the Italian communist leader who died in Mussolini's jail in 1937, Antonio Gramsci, joined the operation. After heavy fighting, the departing German troops mined the municipal building, which blew up, in the words of the departing commander Rudolf Gertler, in a "firework over the Adriatic that, due to its size, wonderful colors and variety, would turn any peacetime pyrotechnician pale with envy."³⁵³ With this last act of destruction, the German army left Hvar on September 21, 1944.

Less than ten months after evacuating Hvar, the Partisans returned to the island triumphantly. In October 1944, the Nation Liberation Front of Dalmatia held its first conference in the arsenal of Hvar; the walls were covered with large portraits of Tito, and Vladimir Nazor, a leading Croatian communist from neighboring Brač, and a red carpet was painted onto the town square.³⁵⁴

Yet, the war was not over for the islanders. Not only did fighting continue in Yugoslavia until May 1945, but some 2,000 islanders had joined Partisan forces fighting on the mainland.³⁵⁵ Overall, a sixth (2,124) of the island's population took up arms in the Partisan movement, and 415 died, or 3 percent of the population.³⁵⁶

Even if the Partisans regained control of Hvar by late September 1944, the challenges were enormous. There had not been a functional state for over three years; more than a third of the population was displaced, the fields had been abandoned, and most of the food supplies had been plundered or destroyed. German forces had confiscated large quantities of wine and olive oil.³⁵⁷ The immediate threat was hunger. A British report in August 1944 noted that some people had died on Hvar due to hunger and food supplies were running low. Between April 1941 and November 1944, some 2,120 people died of starvation on the Dalmatian islands; between mid-October and December 1944 alone, around 1,200 starved to death in Dalmatia.³⁵⁸ According to a UN report, 55,000 people were ill due to malnutrition.³⁵⁹ On Hvar, one-third of the population relied on food aid in December 1944, with the Communist Party noting that "food is our Achilles heel."³⁶⁰

Thus, the first challenge was to restart wine and oil production, so islanders were mobilized to work service. Another challenge was food supplies from the mainland, such as grain, as many boats had been destroyed in the war. While some islanders sought to travel to the mainland to secure supplies, the authorities were worried about black marketeering: "We will not put the brakes on the personal initiative in trade, but we will allow it to cross certain boundaries as we know that this will directly hurt the poor."³⁶¹

In addition, there was the destruction of houses and public buildings. Throughout Dalmatia, around a tenth of the population was homeless. On Hvar, Brač, and Šolta, some 1,314 homes were burnt during the war, mostly in Vrbanj and Sućuraj, and in addition, 1,939 were plundered during the German occupation.³⁶²

No war had affected Hvar as much as the Second World War. Violence and destruction shaped not only the island, but also the competing demands for loyalty and support. The Italian and German occupiers, the Ustaša state, the rising Partisans, and fading royal Yugoslavia forced islanders to choose sides. While some collaborated with the occupying forces, and some supported the old Yugoslavia, the overwhelming majority supported the Partisans, who were the only group that had a substantial local infrastructure. The Communist Party and the Partisans were part of a larger Yugoslav movement, but the reasons for joining were mostly local, as was their structure and leadership. The challenge for the new Communist authorities was to transform the legitimacy it generated through its military success into governing Hvar and addressing not just the immediate challenges at the war's end but also the structural underdevelopment and poverty.

After the Liberation: Reconstruction and the Consolidation of Social Yugoslavia

Soon after the end of the Second World War, an unusual visitor arrived in Hvar town on the state yacht *Partizanka*. Greeted by a crowd, he addressed them after kissing a child: "I thank you for your welcome. The victory of the Red Army and the Yugoslav Army are a guarantee that this little pioneer will be well."³⁶³ The visitor was no Yugoslav official but Ilya Ehrenburg, a Soviet journalist and writer. Ehrenburg was Stalin's loyal propagandist and a prolific journalist and writer. In the fall of 1945, he traveled across Eastern Europe to write about the desperate conditions, the destruction caused by the war, and, from his vantage, the hopeful prospects of the communist takeover. Ehrenburg was given a prominent welcome throughout his visit, and the leading newspaper in Dalmatia, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, breathlessly described his journey when he reached Dalmatia in late October 1945. He noted the poverty and destruction, with "whole districts transformed into deserts."³⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Dalmatia was for him superior to the French Riviera, without casinos and luxury hotels, as "in Dalmatia everything is natural, its people are not cheerful on command, the nature is beautiful, without any make-up."³⁶⁵

In Hvar, he reflected on the Slavic Renaissance and Hanibal Lučić, “Romanesque monasteries, gothic churches, renaissance castles next to modest fishing villages and here and there are some villas of Zagreb traders.”³⁶⁶

As Ehrenburg visited Hvar, the front lines of the Cold War began to take shape, and Yugoslavia was a frontline state on the Soviet side. The Adriatic was one of the first hot spots of the Cold War as Yugoslavia confronted the Western allies with its claim to the port city of Trieste and by supporting the Communists in the Greek Civil War. At the time, Yugoslavia was the most loyal follower of Stalin. The Communist Party was firmly entrenched and sidelined all political opponents. However, within less than two years of his visit, Stalin would sever ties with Tito to bring about a more subservient government in Yugoslavia. Instead, his decision helped create a distinct Yugoslav path shaped by carefully balancing East and West.

None of this was yet imaginable in the fall of 1945. Not all refugees who found temporary shelter in the Egyptian desert had returned yet. Villages had been destroyed, and much of the land had not been tended for years. Hvar could not feed itself and relied on crucial food supplies from the mainland, which were difficult to come by due to destruction on the mainland and limited transport links. Agriculture on Hvar had collapsed. Throughout Dalmatia, the number of cultivated vineyards declined by a third during the war, and the production dropped by half.³⁶⁷

In January 1946, Paul Unger, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) representative for Dalmatia, visited Hvar. Previously, he was stationed in El Shatt with the refugees from Dalmatia and joined them in Yugoslavia in 1945.³⁶⁸ UNRRA was set up to assist in reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in 1943. While UNRRA and the Yugoslav authorities cooperated, there was friction over the aid distribution. Thus, the Communist Party worried that if UNRRA would distribute the aid, it would weaken the government’s authority. It thus even considered refusing the aid.³⁶⁹ However, the Yugoslav government negotiator and prominent Croatian economist Rudolf Bićanić was able to secure significant autonomy in the aid distribution to the Yugoslav authorities, which meant that UNRRA was mostly bringing the supplies to the country and monitoring the distribution and reconstruction.³⁷⁰

Unger’s visit was a rare snapshot of Hvar’s living conditions in the immediate aftermath of the war. Unlike Ehrenburg, his visit was not a propaganda tour, but a sober, bureaucratic look at the war’s impact on the island. The population of Hvar had declined by nearly 20 percent during the war. The war also left much of the infrastructure in tatters; around 60 percent of all fishing boats were destroyed, 30 percent of the vineyards were devastated, the remainder suffered from disease, most beehives were ruined, and neither the two canneries nor the oil distilleries for lavender and rosemary were operating.

The food supplies were secured through local cooperatives, where “everyone draws food ... there are no private shops.”³⁷¹ A British officer in Split noted in early 1945, “The food problem overshadows every other subject.”³⁷² While the population was not suffering from hunger, the situation was dire as much of the subsistence agriculture was destroyed. A drought in 1946 worsened the situation, especially on

the islands and coast.³⁷³ In April, Paul Unger noted how “all conversations about local conditions are prefaced by the querulous ‘ako bude kiše ...’³⁷⁴—if it will rain. Hvar and Sućuraj were among the worst affected by the drought, and cistern boats that provided water before the war were either destroyed or lost. As a result, Yugoslav navy ships had to supply the islands from the mainland with water.³⁷⁵

By mid-1946, conditions had improved, as another UNRRA official, Frances Frazier, observed when she visited the island to study the local diet. Most islanders had access to locally grown vegetables and fruits, and many refugees brought back clothes from Egypt. She noted how everyone ate bread, and most drank goat milk, which became an essential source of nutrients during the war. All the adults drank diluted wine. Fish and greens were eaten by around half, and other foods such as eggs, meat, and pasta were rarer.³⁷⁶ While the islanders were no longer starving, health care was nearly nonexistent. There were only two doctors on the island, both were way beyond retirement, respectively. Two small health centers cared for patients, but there were no trained nurses and limited medical supplies. There was only one working truck on the island, so getting to the doctor was often impossible, as “a sick man can’t travel on a donkey.”³⁷⁷ Even three years after the war, the British Consul in Split, D.S. Cross, observed that food shortages remained a problem. The local party secretary told him that “the food situation on Hvar is very difficult, and if it were not for fish, which is plentiful, there would not be enough to eat.”³⁷⁸ Many islanders relied on parcels of food and clothes from family overseas. However, the authorities began levying duties, and many reported that the parcels arrived half empty, with someone along the way taking their cut.³⁷⁹ Some emigrants did not just send parcels but also returned to Yugoslavia. However, this return was potentially disappointing. The British consul reported how returnees from Australia and New Zealand would ask him just after a few days to go back. He recounts another returnee shouting at the docking boat with returnees arriving in English: “You’ll soon be sorry you returned.”³⁸⁰

An essential part of the reconstruction was work actions. These work actions were supposed to be voluntary, but there was a certain level of coercion. Young communists might be expelled, as happened on Hvar, when they refused to help construct rail tracks in Northern Bosnia. Volunteers from Hvar participated in building the Brotherhood and Unity highway between Zagreb and Belgrade. The enthusiasm for working far away on the mainland was limited. In contrast, there was considerable support for local work actions on Hvar, like building sports facilities, fixing roads, and electrification, as the benefits were tangible, and it allowed the volunteers to take care of their fields. In 1949, the call-up rate in comparison to the plan was 76.5 percent on Hvar, higher than in neighboring islands.³⁸¹

Beyond reconstruction, the new socialist authorities transformed the region’s economy. In Hvar, as elsewhere, agriculture was based on relatively small plots of land, and most peasants barely subsisted on their land. The notion of socialist modernity sought to overcome this chronic underdevelopment. Thus, in 1946, *Slobodna Dalmacija* exclaimed that “Our region [Dalmatia] is not a passive area—this is a prejudice that the peasant ‘advocates’ promoted for centuries, to kill any

ambition for rational agricultural production among our peasants.”³⁸² The notion of “passive regions” had a long history as a term for areas that lacked economic means to sustain themselves.

The first step of the socialist authorities was to complete land reform that began during the interwar years. By 1941, only two-thirds of all land tenure relations had been resolved. A new law passed in August 1945 settled the issue. It transferred all land from the previous owners to the peasants who worked it without the long-drawn-out court procedures that had delayed the process in interwar Yugoslavia. In total, 37,011 families registered under the new law in Dalmatia, affecting around a quarter of the population of Dalmatia, in particular on the islands, including Hvar and the coastal regions. Through the land reform, 1,743 hectares were transferred to new owners on Hvar. It was the fifth-largest transfer of land in Dalmatia.³⁸³

Another feature of post-war agricultural reform was the creation of a centralized sale and purchase system for all peasants. Established in 1945, it bought up the peasants’ produce and provided them with the required goods for agriculture. While seeking to reduce the peasant’s dependence on private traders and to remedy the post-war shortages, it created a monopoly. This trading company, called *Zajednica* or Community, made profits when it bought from the farmers and sold them products. Some peasants managed to produce additional wine and sell it on the market; however, in response to such “capitalist tendencies,” the tax on wine sales was increased, as were the mandatory quantities of oil that had to be sold to the *Zajednica*.³⁸⁴ This model was unpopular among many farmers and was openly criticized by the early 1950s as its “one and only goal is profit and does not take good care of the supply of the members of the collectives with goods.” As it was inefficient at supplying peasants, they had to travel to Split and other coastal cities to buy staple foods that were scarce on the island, such as potatoes.³⁸⁵ By 1951/2, this system was abandoned, resulting in a decentralized system.³⁸⁶

Beyond agricultural reform, the modernization approach of the Communist authorities placed a strong emphasis on education, both to deal with the legacy of the war and the more structural lack of education. In December 1945, the Partisan gymnasium opened in Hvar, one of three in Croatia, for children who missed years of formal education due to their participation in the national liberation struggle.³⁸⁷

In addition, the new authorities organized literacy campaigns, targeting more than half of Dalmatia’s illiterate population. However, in 1947, the party complained that there were only two courses for twenty-five people on Hvar to learn reading and writing. At that point, around a tenth of the population of Hvar and Vis, some 2,091 inhabitants were illiterate, nearly 90 percent above fifty.³⁸⁸ By mid-1947, the large literacy campaigns were ending. The campaigns were marred by high dropout rates—around a third in Hvar—as many left the courses to go fishing or work in the fields.³⁸⁹ Nevertheless, due to massive literacy campaigns, the number of illiterate citizens halved in just three years in Croatia.³⁹⁰

The consolidation of Communist rule occurred without much resistance. As a British observer noted, “although there is a great deal of grumbling against the

Partisans, the majority of people recognise that no other government could do better than they after the experiences Yugoslavia has been through.”³⁹¹

The Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) was shattered during the war with conservatives often supporting the Ustaša movement and the left-wing of the party joining the Partisans. On Hvar, few other parties were relevant in the run-up to the war. Some had remained loyal to the Yugoslav authorities, including King Petar II., who was in exile, their number was small. As a result, there was little opposition in Hvar. The intelligence service of Communist Yugoslavia, OZNA (*Odjeljenje za zaštitu Naroda*, Department for Protection of the People), closely watched developments. In May 1945, it noted that there was no opposition in the island’s eastern regions and no strong opposition in Hvar town and Stari Grad, but in Jelsa, “the reaction reared its head.” The challenges it focused on were supporters of the pre-war parties, particularly the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) and so-called “Yugo-nationalists,” who supported the king and the interwar state. In Jelsa, the threat lay with “a group of reactionary HSS members, who seem to be operating in an organized manner on the island,” In the village of Brusje, they reported on a group of royalists who criticized the authorities for sending villagers to restore vineyards in Stari Grad: “You will ruin your vineyards, and it is not set that one day you will not answer when our fighters return.”³⁹² The exchange underlines that the main issue was less political opposition but resistance to the labor actions that took people outside their village, even if it was just one town over.

The marginalized Yugoslavia opposition struggled to organize, and at the first post-war elections in November 1945, there were no challengers to the People’s Front. Before the elections, the Communist Party calculated the expected support for the People’s Front in different regions of Croatia based on regional support for the Ustaše, support for the Partisans, and the level of political engagement. Based on this assessment, Dalmatia was considered the most reliable region. Indeed, in the elections, support for the People’s Front was exceptionally high in Dalmatia. In Hvar, turnout was 98.2 percent, and of those, 97.8 percent voted for the candidate of the People’s Front. The average turnout in Croatia was 91.77 percent, and support for the People’s Front stood at 91.52 percent.³⁹³ While the party consolidated its power, its biggest challenge would come from within.

Collectivization and the Tito-Stalin Split

On June 28, 1948, the British Consul in Split, D.S. Cross, visited Hvar. During his visit, he was struck by how he was for the first time not followed nor had his papers checked, and “there were few police visible, and I saw no soldiers anywhere except in the town of Hvar.”³⁹⁴ The timing of his visit was ubiquitous, and he could not have known what happened simultaneously in Bucharest. At its third meeting, the Cominform, the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties, had decided at Stalin’s behest to expel the Yugoslav Communist Party and thus make Yugoslavia an outcast in the Communist world. Stalin expected a quick end

to Tito's rule and a party coup to bring the country back in line. However, neither would happen, and Tito would outlive Stalin by nearly three decades. The conflict that excluded Yugoslavia from the Communist block brought about a geopolitical realignment and a gradual opening of the country. While it was a coincidence that Cross was not followed by the police that day in 1948, it anticipated the thawing of relations with the West.³⁹⁵

Initially, the Communist authorities became more repressive, and Yugoslavia suffered from being isolated by the Soviet bloc. Cross noted how the food situation deteriorated: "Except for bread, all food is scarce. Eggs are nearly unobtainable, fat is unknown, and olive oil comes only from France. Fish and meat are at present a rare luxury."³⁹⁶

After the break with Stalin collectivization also gather pace. The collectivization began in 1948, with the establishment of Peasant Worker Collectives (*Seljačke radne zadruga*, SRZ). In 1948, some 259 were set up in Dalmatia, 17 in Hvar, encompassing 17 percent of households on the island.³⁹⁷ The British consul reports how some peasants were arrested and beaten in jail for refusing to bring their produce to the cooperative.³⁹⁸ Throughout Dalmatia, people's committees were formed to ensure that the land redistribution and other aspects of the five-year plan were implemented.³⁹⁹ The SRZ were collectives with jointly owned land, and the peasants became workers in this larger collective, following the Soviet model. The Communist party deliberately used the familiar term *zadruga*, evoking preexisting cooperatives, to make the notion of collectivization more acceptable to peasants.⁴⁰⁰ For all the similarities to the Soviet collective farms—the kolkhoz—not every collective required the peasants to surrender their ownership rights, and some allowed farmers to leave the collective after three years.⁴⁰¹ Ironically, only after the break between Stalin and Tito did the pressure mount to collectivize the farms. This was to prove that Yugoslavia had not deviated from the ideological purity of the Soviet system and to increase Yugoslav agricultural output in the light of the country's isolation. Furthermore, the acceleration followed the logic of Yugoslav agricultural reform after the war. In 1949, the number of collectives increased five-fold in Croatia over one year. Nevertheless, even at its peak, collectives owned less than 13 percent of all land in agricultural use in Croatia, a share much lower than in other republics.

On Hvar, the first agricultural collectives SRZ were established in late 1947, including the "Matija Ivanić" Collective in Sućuraj with some nine households and the "1. Maj" Collective in Rudina with 19 households.⁴⁰² Over a year later, the collective "1. May" complained that despite being well-established and, it could not get access to credit, underscoring the limits of collectivization.⁴⁰³

In the small village of Zaraće—a mere seventy-seven inhabitants in 1948—the entire village joined the collective SRZ. This collective decision was taken as evidence of how the villagers "follow the path on which the CP leads us."⁴⁰⁴ When the first tractor arrived on the island, a newspaper reported on "how the tractor made our work easier" for the collective farm "The peasant uprising" (*pučki prevrat*), which included seventeen families led by two communists established in late 1948. The members of the collectives went "fishing at night, working the

land during the day.”⁴⁰⁵ That such ambitions were not realistic was often quickly apparent. Few of the new collectives had any concrete plans beyond getting equipment, such as an oil press in Zastrazišće or fig packing in Bogomolje: “The plans of the associations in Hvar are not very realistic, as they are not based on real possibilities of Hvar collectives.”⁴⁰⁶ Thus, the limited collectivization of agriculture provided few benefits, as the collectives were still relatively small, considering the small size of land and villages, and lacked the resources and know-how to develop beyond simply combining the pre-existing activities.

Collectivization was also far from voluntary. High taxes and political pressure pushed many peasants to join the collectives, and many Party members who were peasants were not eager to join the Collective farms. The combination with the mandatory sale of the produce and high taxes on private land led to increased dissatisfaction with the new regime. Throughout Yugoslavia, the experiment with the SRZ failed, as the collectives “lacked sufficient land, leadership, and labor, with no improvement visible on the horizon. The local cadres had made a mess of the implementation out of either ignorance, willful misinterpretation, or downright subterfuge.”⁴⁰⁷ The regional party conference for Dalmatia singled out Hvar, together with a few other municipalities, for having made “political mistakes” in setting up the collectives by not offering a good political explanation and instead simply insisting that “the high-ups in the district ordered it.”⁴⁰⁸ By 1953, most collectives were disbanded.⁴⁰⁹

Yugoslavia’s expulsion from the Cominform also led to increased political repression. A climate of fear descended throughout Yugoslavia as the party sought to identify and arrest Stalinists while at the same time pursuing rigid communist policies to disprove Soviet accusations. The British consul reports how Dalmatia abounded with rumors in the summer of 1948 and party officials faced arrest for alleged anti-Titoist positions.⁴¹⁰ Quickly, the Yugoslav authorities set up a prison camp on the two northern Adriatic islands of Goli Otok and Sv.Grgur. Both could not have been more different from Hvar: the small islands were uninhabited and barren, lying in the windswept canal between the mainland and the island of Rab.

Between 1949 and 1956, some 16,101 prisoners served long sentences on the islands, often working in quarries.⁴¹¹ Most of the prisoners, however, were not from Croatia. Of the more 16,000 alleged and real Cominformists, only 2,588 were Croats.⁴¹² Being suspected of following Stalin’s line or even being arrested and sent to Goli Otok often required little more than the suspicion of the party based on denunciations or being associated with suspicious individuals. Only a few on Hvar would be arrested and sent to Goli Otok; as the party meeting noted in 1951, there were just a few cases of “Cominformist conceptions or individual open actions.” However, the party noted that the straightforward claim that “there is no Cominform among us” was misleading, as it “requires constant political work.”⁴¹³ This climate of mutual recrimination and uncertainty created fear, especially within the party during those years. The Hvar branch of the People’s Front had to clarify that a certain Andrija Pavičić, who was accused of being a *Cominformist*, had the nickname Čubre, as it created confusion among villages as there are several people with the same name.⁴¹⁴

By the early 1950s, the perceived threat by *Cominformists* had receded. Stalin died in 1953, and at the same time, Yugoslavia received crucial support from the West. It was clear that Yugoslavia had weathered the confrontation. By 1956, Goli Otok was closed as a prison for political prisoners, and Destalinization in the Soviet Union led to a rapprochement with Yugoslavia.

Whereas the actual and alleged conformists were the main threat from *within* the party after the split with Stalin in 1948, the main danger to party dominance outside the party was the Catholic Church. The church was the only organization left on the island that could challenge the complete control of the new Communist authorities: "In general, on Hvar, the clergy spread the news through the people that our authorities are against God and that they don't love the church."⁴¹⁵ The response of the priests to the new authorities varied greatly, as captured in the reports of the secret police. While some, like Dinko Bertarelo from Svriće, called on young people "better not to deal with politics and stay calm," others were suspected of meeting "reactionary organizers."⁴¹⁶ Relations were complicated with the bishop Mihovil Pušić. These became visible over ceremonies celebrating the war's end and the fallen soldiers.⁴¹⁷

At the elections, some priests voted for the People's Front; others abstained, including in Hvar town and Brusje. Later, Juraj Dulčić, the canon in Hvar, noted that it had been a mistake to boycott the elections "because we misjudged the strength of the People's Front, the extent to which it has taken root among the people. We were divided on whether to participate in the elections and ultimately, the position not to go prevailed."⁴¹⁸

In 1952, Božidar Novak, president of the National Front on Hvar, saw the church as the protector of all state enemies: "be they the remains of the Mačekists [i.e. supporters of former HSS-leader of Vladimir Maček], or the JNS [Yugoslav National Party, i.e. royalists] and, in some cases, Cominformists hide their activities behind religion and the church, and they are helped in this by some priests."⁴¹⁹ Of course, the notion that the church would support Stalinists was absurd but highlighted the central importance the Communist authorities attributed to it.

Especially in villages and small towns, the Church was an important center not just for religious but also social life.⁴²⁰ "The ideological battle is harder in the village because of conservatism, and success depends above all on the activities of the communists."⁴²¹ Paradoxically, villages might have been the more conservative with a prominent church, yet, it was often here, among the poorer peasants, that the Partisan movement received most support. It would thus be wrong to assume that the party was inherently disadvantaged in the villages, but they were an important place of contestation.

Thus, from the party's perspective, it was essential to weaken the church. In addition, collaboration with the Ustaše regime tainted the church in the eyes of the authorities. The key figure in this conflict was the archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac. After he took a strong anti-communist line after the war, he faced a trial for collaboration in 1946, for which he received a jail sentence of sixteen years. The sentencing was a public event throughout Croatia, and in Hvar, some 300 people gathered to hear the verdict.⁴²² Both party and church sought to force people to

choose sides. Pope Pius XII forbade Communist Party members access to the sacrament. On the other side, the Communist Party excluded party members, including Hvar, for public displays of religiosity (including their family members).

In the late 1940s, priest associations emerged that sought closer ties to the authorities and rejected the more confrontational course of the church leadership. Soon, they would receive government support to weaken the more conservative bishops. In November 1952, there was the initial gathering in Vrisnik to form a priests' association on Hvar, including priests from several villages. They were inspired by a similar association founded in Istria and Brač. Besides the desire to work with the authorities and reject claims of church repression, social security for priests was another important theme.⁴²³ By 1952, most priests in Istria, Slovenia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina had joined these associations.⁴²⁴

The associations were an open challenge to the bishop's authority and the church hierarchy. In response, the Bishop of Hvar Mihovil Pušić condemned the associations and suspended the priests who had joined. Later, he excommunicated its members, the first to do so in Yugoslavia, which led to an escalation of church-state relations on Hvar. Throughout the island, the local branches of the National Front, the leading mass organization, organized meetings against the bishop and his decision, with 800 participants in Hvar and 500 in Stari Grad. In Bogomolje, which had seen an Old Catholic Church movement during the interwar years, the villagers demanded a return of their expelled priest. They boycotted the services of the newly appointed priest. In Stari Grad, the local priest Dinko Bučić opposed the bishop's decision and expressed his support for the priests' associations. The bishop refused to meet the different local delegations, whereas the Socialist Alliance accused him of trying to sabotage church-state relations and of working with reactionary circles in Italy.⁴²⁵

The formation of the priests' association came at a time of tense relations between the Church and the state, and bishops, including Pušić, were regularly described as "traitors," "enemies of the people," and collaborators in public.⁴²⁶ For the decision of Bishop Pušić to suspend and later excommunicate priests, he was put on trial, accused of breaking the law on religious communities. The sentence was a symbolic fine of 40,000 dinars (approx. 60 USD).⁴²⁷ Eventually, the associations came to co-exist with the Church hierarchies but did not serve as the primary conduit between the state and the church. Instead, relations with the official church institutions gradually improved, even if mutual suspicions remained strong.

Thus, in 1961, the municipal committee on the question of faith noted that the clergy had been less involved in politics, that is, confrontation with the authorities. At the same time, it was concerned about the church's focus on youth groups, "in one word, the clerics are again outside the church to fight for the young." The strength of the church varied greatly. In strongholds of the party, such as in Vrbanj, the church had only a small committee of laymen, whereas in other parts, the church infrastructure was stronger. In Stari Grad, for example, there were several choirs and two fraternities with sixty-two members. Two hundred children also visited the Sunday school.⁴²⁸

While the church might have posed an institutional challenge to the party, increasing disinterest was the biggest threat to party discipline and commitment. The support for the Partisan movement during the war did not automatically translate into party support in post-war Hvar. Throughout the socialist era, the party complained regularly about the lack of party discipline. This was visible in the Youth organization. With the end of the war, the reason for many to actively engage in politics disappeared. The Socialist Youth (SKOJ) noted how, after active engagement in the war, the youth organization, *Narodna Omladina Hrvatske* (NOH), was falling into “passivity and self-satisfaction.” By 1949, membership was nearly universal, with 97 percent of youth on Hvar in the organization. However, the main reason was the advantages for members, like a better choice of schools and student housing.⁴²⁹ Membership in the Communist youth organization SKOJ was much more selective, just like in the party itself. On Hvar, only 17 percent (245) of all youth were members, similar to other islands. Tensions arose between members who had joined before the war and new members of the Communist youth. The “old” members were reluctant to accept new members who lacked wartime credentials and had not “earned” membership. These conflicts were often described as “sectarianism” and were particularly pronounced in Hvar. Tensions persisted throughout Yugoslavia in this struggle between transforming into mass organizations and a more elite group who had earned their membership during the time of illegality.⁴³⁰

In 1950, Brač and Hvar were singled out as the worst of all Croatian party and youth committees. The island youth were less interested in party structures and worked only as much as they had to. Young women left the organizations to get married, and agricultural work took priority over party activism. Although on Hvar in 1948, there were thirty-six clubs for young people with 895 members (out of a total of about 1,300 members of NOH), the work of those circles was “very bad,” and key towns had no clubs at all. Educational programs such as Peoples’ University, i.e., public lecture series, were more popular. The Peoples’ Front also adjusted and organized fewer mass meetings that involved the entire village but instead fostered small meetings to discuss local problems.⁴³¹ Furthermore, young islanders were rather interested in joining nonparty associations, such as sports and music groups; in addition, the Church also organized its youth groups.⁴³² Efforts by the party and the national youth to use the sports groups to discuss politics were vehemently opposed.⁴³³

An important aspect of island life was the construction of local cultural and social centers known as Home of Associations (*Zadružni dom*); in Hvar, some five such communal centers were under construction in 1948.⁴³⁴ In Vrbanj, the new *dom* was deemed one of the nicest on the island, “in it today peasants gather after an exhausting day of work to read the newspapers, play chess, take part in movie screenings or shows of their theater company, or just to discuss anything, and often about how hard they once lived.” It became the cultural and social center in the village, with a reading room where fifty to sixty people gathered every evening and

local associations met.⁴³⁵ Vrbanj was probably exceptional, becoming an exemplary Communist village after the war. Having been the most heavily destroyed village during the war and with many villagers who joined the Partisans, it became a showcase for post-war reconstruction. Over the first post-war decade, 100 million dinars were invested in the village, and most houses were repaired. Besides the *dom*, there was a first aid station, a shop, and an agricultural cooperative. It was also one of the first villages connected to the electric grid in 1950: "In the morning, we looked at Vrbanj. We strolled through the neighborhood of the new and reconstructed village, which, in a short time, was restored by its hardworking inhabitants ... we noticed the red roofs of the restored Vrbanj and the large five-cornered stars that the republic imprinted on the gray rocks and yellow walls of this place ..."⁴³⁶

The centers were a meeting place and provided a shared space (outside the church or local bars) for associational life, which remained lively in the first post-war decades with numerous youth groups, soccer, swimming and sailing clubs, theater and dancing groups, choirs, and orchestras.⁴³⁷ By the 1960s, as tourism took off and alternative entertainment increased, associations markedly declined, and many village reading rooms were closing.⁴³⁸

An integral part of rural transformation was the spread of cinemas. Before the war, there were only seventeen movie theaters in all of Dalmatia and none on the islands; by 1951, there were forty-four, including plans for open-air theaters in Hvar and other tourist places. Before the war, only 5 percent of the population went to the cinema, whereas by 1951, every inhabitant went around twice yearly.⁴³⁹ At the end of the decade, six movie theaters operated on the island. Even villages would get their own movie theaters, which regularly screen movies.

The movie program was widely varied, reflecting the international cultural influences that reached into small villages. For example, the movie theater in Vrbanj would play various movies, from American westerns to Italian dramas. In 1958, the movie theater was one of the best equipped in Yugoslavia, with cinemascope projection and 285 seats.⁴⁴⁰ In the era before television's rise in the late 1960s, movies provided powerful access to the broader world.

In the 1950s, the transformation of the villages and the prevalence of agriculture resulted in a stable number of inhabitants of the villages. Only in the 1960s, as tourism took off, did the population of the villages decline rapidly. All the towns increased in size, most dramatically Hvar town, which grew by 583 inhabitants in a decade between 1961 and 1971, an increase of nearly a third. At the same time, the population numbers in smaller villages collapsed. In Zračće, of the forty-five inhabitants, only one remained. In 1973, a journalist reminisced about visiting the village after the war, a Partisan den, now abandoned: "One house after another is closing its green shutters" and leaving for Hvar.⁴⁴¹ This trend of dying out seemed like the fate of other villages whose populations declined drastically. Even larger villages, such as Vrbanj, lost nearly a fifth of its population in a decade.⁴⁴² This shift was indicative of the significant transformation on the island as tourism began to eclipse the traditional way of life based on agriculture.

Tourism as the Generator of Modernity

In 1971, Ivo Runac, president of the municipal assembly, proclaimed that “[t]he tourism industry are our factories.”⁴⁴³ Comparing hotels to factories might initially odd, as hotels provide leisure rather than work, lack chimneys, and are so different to factories, yet it was an appropriate metaphor. In socialist Yugoslavia, the factory was an essential expression of modernity and economic transformation. While Hvar had some modest industries, a few canneries, and a button factory, by the early 1970s, tourism came to dominate the economy and society of the island. It emerged as the central identity of the island, around which its relations with the mainland—Croatia and Yugoslavia—developed and served as the engine of transformation on the island itself. The fact that the meeting of the municipal assembly was held in a hotel indicated how the central place of political and social life moved to the hotels.

Already in 1961, well before the Yugoslav tourism boom began and at a time when most islanders worked in agriculture, the municipal assembly saw the island’s future through the lens of tourism: “Tourism will become the economy of Hvar entirely, the island of Hvar has to be looked at a unique touristic place ... This is how to look at the island of Hvar; this is how the municipality’s inhabitants should think about their island.”⁴⁴⁴

Tourism did not just become the primary source of income and employment on the island, but it more profoundly reshaped Hvar within just a few decades. It transformed a poor island with limited infrastructure into a wealthy municipality in Yugoslavia. By integrating thousands of islanders into the tourism industry through employment and private businesses, the benefits of tourism were spread widely. Tourism also integrated Hvar into Yugoslavia and global flows of people, as well as cultural and social influences. Tourism also became the leverage and argument of authorities on the island toward the Yugoslav state for investments and support. In brief, tourism shaped the island’s transformation, in the context of Yugoslav socialism. For Yugoslavia, tourism became an essential part of its vision of socialist modernization.

The tourist boom began in the 1960s, but the first tourists returned to Hvar already shortly after the end of the war. Tourism might not have seemed like a priority in the aftermath of the devastation of the war and hunger and hardship on the island. In 1946, restoring the tourism infrastructure became a priority of the new authorities. Before the war, tourism had already generated 20 percent of the income in Dalmatia and more than half in tourist centers, such as Hvar, making it an essential economic sector. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, the leading daily in Dalmatia, proclaimed in 1946 that “Hvar will soon again become one of the most frequented tourist centers on the Dalmatian coast.”⁴⁴⁵

The turning point for tourism was 1959. That year, the hotel company “Hvar” was established, bringing together the three existing hotels in Hvar town, *Palace*, *Dalmacija*, and *Slavija*, with 450 beds.⁴⁴⁶ The merger allowed for coordinated tourism development. The new director, Tonko Domančić, would become a

defining figure for Hvar tourism for most of the Socialist time. After managing the hotels until 1974, he became the mayor of Hvar until 1982.

In the 1957 five-year plan for the municipality, tourism was not yet foreseen as the main priority. Still, it did identify the need to improve the infrastructure, such as electricity, water, and roads, to advance tourism. Only in 1961 did tourism feature prominently in local plans, and it resulted from a Yugoslav program to encourage tourism through credits.⁴⁴⁷ Already then, most guests were foreign visitors, 40 percent in 1959: "The orientation towards foreign tourists on Hvar is more than justified as are all efforts made in this direction, but this does not mean that one does not have to consider our average person, for whom there is also place under the wonderful Hvar sky, on the beautiful beaches and the famous Pakleni islands."⁴⁴⁸ However, the Hvar hotels were not yet prepared for Western tourists, and a journalist inspecting the hotels found much to criticize, including limited choices in the restaurant, bad service, and rooms in poor condition.⁴⁴⁹

Mass tourism in Hvar was part of a broader European trend. The post-war economic boom in Western Europe and the rise of a welfare state providing extended holidays increased the demand for sea, sun, and sand. Millions of Europeans flocked to Spain, Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia. At first, Yugoslavia was lagging behind other Mediterranean destinations. In 1964, it comprised only 2.3 percent of European travel, and the 2.27 million visitors were only a quarter of those visiting Spain or a third of tourists to Italy.⁴⁵⁰ This was mainly due to the patchy infrastructure, including the limited service sector. By the mid-1960s, this began to change. 1965 a Yugoslav headline read, "Europe is rushing in a bikini to the Adriatic."⁴⁵¹ In the early 1960s, Yugoslav citizens were allowed to travel abroad, and foreign tourists could travel to Yugoslavia with few restrictions. For the UN Global Year on Tourism 1967, Yugoslavia abolished visitor visas.⁴⁵²

Between 1956 and 1970, the share of tourism in the economy of Hvar doubled every five years, beginning with 4.6 percent in 1956 and reaching 39.7 percent by 1970.⁴⁵³ As mass tourism began to reach Hvar, there was a hotel boom. The first post-war hotel was built in 1963, and between 1960 and 1973, the Hotel group Hvar increased its capacity tenfold. In 1967 alone, five new hotels opened: two in Hvar, one each in Vrboška, Stari Grad, and Sućuraj. The modernist architecture of the new hotels became an important visual representation of the modernizing ambition of socialist Yugoslavia. All along the coast, dozens of large hotel complexes opened their doors during the peak years of Yugoslav tourism. They were often cascading terraces that followed the slope of the hillsides towards the sea, such as Hotel Amfora in Hvar town. Amfora was the largest hotel on Hvar, with 380 rooms, making up around a third of all rooms of the Hvar Hotel group. The spacious buildings were often built directly next to the sea and separate from the historical towns, such as Hotel Arkada in Stari Grad or Hotel Genex in Jelsa. Older hotels located closer to the town centers in historic buildings, such as Hotel Jadran in Jelsa, fell into disuse. Only the historical Hotel Palace in Hvar town, the first large hotel on the island, retained its place as the most prominent hotel, even if it lacked the modern comforts tourists began looking for, such as easy access to the beach and a swimming pool.

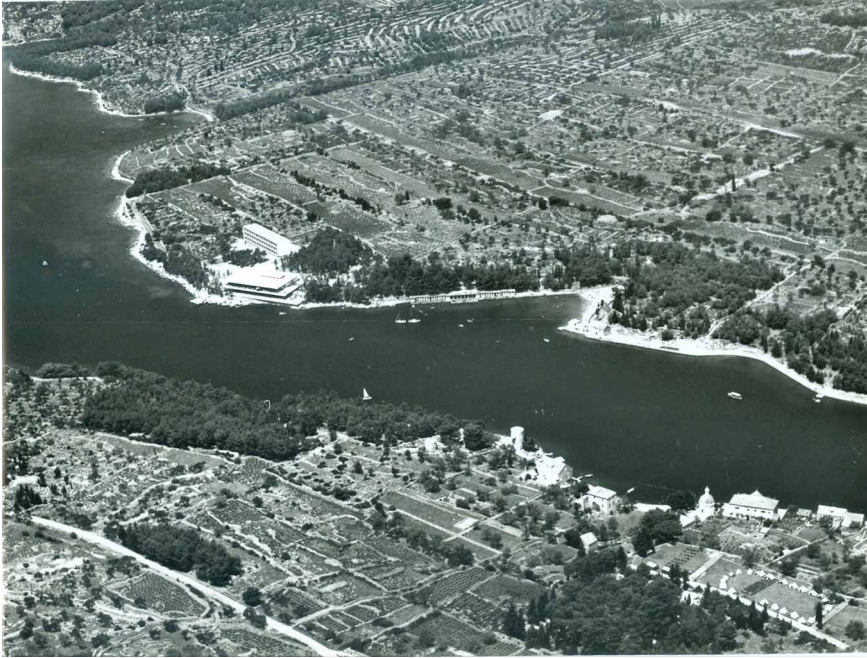


Figure 4.5 Hotel Helios, Stari Grad (1964). © Stari Grad Museum.

The hotel boom relied strongly on domestic credits. As a socialist country, foreign investments remained exceptional, and self-managed hotels had few resources to increase capacities independently. The building boom began in the 1960s when the state encouraged granting credits for investments in the tourism sector. However, by the early 1970s, the interest payments on the credits ate up nearly 30 percent of the profits of hotel group. As a result, the company lacked the means to expand further.⁴⁵⁴

The share of foreign guests increased steadily in the hotels from 61.2 percent in 1960 to 78.4 percent in 1973.⁴⁵⁵ Within a decade, from 1955 to 1965, the number of visitors to the entire islands quadrupled to 665,000 overnight stays, and by 1967, foreigners exceeded Yugoslav visitors. With foreign tourist numbers growing by 30–40 percent per year, domestic guests dropped, primarily due to increasing prices.⁴⁵⁶

Most tourists to the Adriatic came from Germany, Austria, and Italy. This trend was similar in Hvar. The only large number of tourists from Communist Europe came from Czechoslovakia, which was already an important country of origin during the interwar years. They were able to return after the thaw between Yugoslavia and the Soviet bloc in the mid-1950s. However, in August 1968, some 800 Czechoslovak tourists were stuck on Hvar after the Soviet Union invaded their home country to crush the Prague Spring. The municipality joined the broader Yugoslav solidarity with the Czechs and Slovaks, offering the stranded tourists free

accommodation and health care.⁴⁵⁷ Even if Czechoslovak tourists later returned to Yugoslavia, Western tourists were more important for Hvar as they had more hard currency to spend.

Nowhere was the dependency on tourism greater than on Hvar. By the mid-1970s, the three hotel companies employed around 800 people all year around, double in peak seasons.⁴⁵⁸ By 1980, 56.6 percent of the labor force worked in tourism, the highest rate in Dalmatia; the rate in other highly developed destinations, such as Dubrovnik (29.7 percent) and Makarska (38.7 percent), was considerably lower. This made Hvar more prosperous than other islands: the island's social product per capita was double that of other islands. Nevertheless, it was still lower than Split and the Croatian average.⁴⁵⁹

One might assume that tourism in a socialist country like Yugoslavia was planned top-down and state-controlled. However, tourism development on Hvar, as elsewhere along the Dalmatian coast, was as much a bottom-up process, with private citizens renting their rooms and local hotel companies investing in new hotels. While federal and republican authorities were crucial in setting the framework for tourism, from building the Adriatic highway to facilitating travel to Yugoslavia, tourism on Hvar developed based on local initiatives. Ironically, the only serious attempt to plan and integrate the tourism development in Dalmatian came from the UN—and failed.

With record numbers of sun-hungry tourists discovering the country every year, the government sought help from the UN to develop a more comprehensive development plan for the Adriatic. The result was a series of UN missions, culminating in the UNDP project "Southern Adriatic" to transform the coastline from Split, including Hvar, to the border with Albania. In addition to the larger plan, Hvar was one of the few places where the international experts developed a local plan to transform the island's tourism.

The project was overseen by the prominent Polish architect and urban planner Adolf Ciborowski, who had contributed to the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw and Hannover. He was known in Yugoslavia for planning the rebuilding of Skopje after the devastating earthquake of 1963. His Yugoslav counterpart was the architect Miro Marasović, and several international consultancies were involved, a total of 100 international experts.⁴⁶⁰ The plan for Hvar was authored by the Urban Planning Department for Dalmatia in Split and Shankland, Cox and Associates, a London-based consultancy.⁴⁶¹ The overall project received over 1.1 million dollars in funds from the UN and 1.8 million dollars from the Yugoslav side.⁴⁶² The different visions of such a plan, including experts from the Communist block, West, and Yugoslavia, became apparent in a critical appraisal by the Polish Architect Juliusz Wilski. For the Polish team, the regional plan would link a national to a local plan and was meant to be implemented. For him, Yugoslavia saw the plan merely as "an offer for state and private investors."⁴⁶³ The ambitious plan included everyone from the federal government to the republican authorities and municipalities and sought to provide a roadmap for drastically increasing tourism. Ironically, such large-scale planning, crossing republic boundaries, was unusual for Yugoslavia.⁴⁶⁴

The master plan warned against mass tourism, as earlier UN reports had done. Thus, it suggested limiting the number of cars on the island, as car tourism was still relatively new. In the 1960s, there was only a regular car ferry between Drvenik and Sućuraj; the regular Stari Grad-Split ferry began operating only in 1968. Otherwise, ferries connected Split with Hvar, Stari Grad, Jelsa, and Sućuraj.⁴⁶⁵ It also rejected the construction of an airport. Instead, the planner foresaw regular high-speed boat connections to Split. Still, it sought to preserve the impression of remoteness: “An island that is seemingly but not remote has an additional and unusual attraction. When the visitor approaches the rocky coast, enters one of the enclosed bays, and sees a compact town with the mountain behind it, he feels he has arrived somewhere special.”⁴⁶⁶

While ostensibly seeking to limit mass tourism, it was also radical in the number of tourists it envisaged in the coming decades: some 43,000 tourist beds would be available by 1990, half in hotels, followed by private accommodation, camping, and holiday homes. The most extensive development of tourist settlements would be on the Kabal peninsula, the northern side of the bay of Stari Grad.

Maybe even more ambitious than the fivefold increase in tourism was the plan to nearly triple the population of Hvar to over 30,000 inhabitants by 1990. Hvar, Jelsa, and Vrboska would triple in size, whereas Stari Grad, where the planners saw the most significant potential for growth, would increase its population nearly fivefold from 1,450 to 6,800.⁴⁶⁷ According to the plan, Stari Grad should be the main commercial center, and Hvar should be the main cultural and entertainment center.⁴⁶⁸

The most detailed local plans foresaw the creation of a new tourist town in Milna, just outside Hvar. Milna was a new seaside village resulting from tourism and migration from Velo and Malo Grablje, two villages just a few kilometers away. They were not located at the seaside and had been the center of the island's lavender production. This mirrored a trend throughout Hvar, where inland villages developed their seaside settlements. These were often improvised settlements without much urban planning in which villagers built their seaside summer homes, usually one floor at a time, which they could rent out or inhabit during the summer. In 1970, only one old man, the “king of lavender” as he called himself, stayed behind in Malo Grablje, warning against the risks of tourist life, making boys and girls “soft” and bringing “sin and vice” to the village. The few inhabitants of Velo Grablje, a few kilometers up the road into the hills, were also worried about their village dying out and placed their hope in the UN project. The UN plan proposed transforming Malo Grablje into a tourist village with promenades and accommodation. The plan was reminiscent of the transformation of the Montenegrin fishing village Sv. Stefan to a hotel in the 1960s.⁴⁶⁹ However, that transformation never took place, and even today, most houses in the village are in ruins, except for a small restaurant.

While some, like the inhabitants of Grablje, had high expectations of the plan, others were more concerned. The plan for Hvar was presented to the municipality

and the hotel companies in June 1968, and public consultations were held in Hvar, Stari Grad, and Jelsa.⁴⁷⁰ At the launch, the Yugoslav daily *Politika* reported the concern of citizens for being excluded from the planning and for fear of losing their lands, which might be expropriated.⁴⁷¹ Additional critique came from the Centre for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Hvar. The center was led by the prominent historian Niko Duboković Nadalini. He criticized the plans for not paying attention to cultural heritage and proposed that hotels contribute to maintaining cultural heritage sites.⁴⁷² Duboković noted that “if the monuments of the Nile can be protected, and now Venice, ... then also our cultural heritage can be preserved.”⁴⁷³ Despite these misgivings, the municipality adopted the plan for Hvar in June 1969.

While the plans were extensively discussed in different regional, republican, and municipal bodies, there was little effort to explain them to the broader public. The planners were disappointed when only a few islanders showed up at an exhibition in Hvar, few understood the meaning or implications of such a plan.⁴⁷⁴ Considering how little of the plan was ever implemented, the inhabitants of Hvar were probably right for ignoring the plan and the exhibition.

The costs of implementing the plan would have been astronomical for Yugoslavia. The investments in tourism on Hvar required would have amounted to 149 and 17.5 million USD invested in the infrastructure.⁴⁷⁵ It is not without irony that the global planners recommend to the socialist authorities that to implement the plan, “[t]he powers of nationalization and expropriation should be widely used by the Commune to ensure that land allocated for major developments in the Master Plan is available at the proper time.”⁴⁷⁶ The state lacked the ability and willingness to expropriate land and the resources to pursue the plan.

The plan that never came true was a curious mixture of ambition and acknowledgment of environmental and urban constraints. It sought to limit the number of cars, prevent mass tourism, and call for careful urban planning that integrated new hotels and tourist offerings into the existing urban texture. In contrast, the goal to triple the population and quintuple the number of tourist beds contradicted these goals. Overall, it also overestimated the ability of the Yugoslav state to engage in such a massive development project.

The lack of funds and the absence of structures that could straddle the fragmented nature of the Yugoslav administration caused the plans to gather dust and soon be forgotten. The prominent architect and urban planner Vladimir Mattioni noted in retrospect with some exasperation, “How is it at all possible to spend nearly seven million dollars and not to implement anything of it is hard to understand for a rational mind, let alone explain.”⁴⁷⁷ He attributes this failure to “arcadian” socialist self-management. The fact that even local plans, such as the one for Hvar, were not implemented suggests that the failure cannot just be attributed to the complex decision-making structures and republican rivalries. Instead, at the local level, tourism developed more organically, and no single actor, the municipality, the hotels, the republic, or the state, had the resources and ability to push through such a comprehensive plan. The sheer cost and the scarcity of money, especially as Yugoslav and Croat authorities remained reserved to seek

funding from private investors, made such a plan just a wish list, as the Polish expert had observed.

Instead of the rapid population growth planned, the number of inhabitants would decline and stagnate in subsequent decades. Similarly, the ambitious number of tourist accommodations would remain a pipe dream. By 2021, the official number of available tourism beds was only half that of the plan, 22,220.⁴⁷⁸ Furthermore, the plan proposed a decisive shift away from private accommodation, which continues to make up more than half of all beds. The preference for hotels highlighted that the UN experts had a greater preference for planned and centrally controlled accommodation than Yugoslav reality permitted.

Nevertheless, the plans did leave traces. The spatial planning for Hvar originated with the UN plan, which resulted in local urban plans that sought to manage the largely unplanned construction in the initial years of the tourist boom.⁴⁷⁹ However, its overambitious expansion plan made it unrealistic, and by 1975, the municipality drafted its own revised plan for the entire municipality.⁴⁸⁰ What the plan put on the agenda was the emphasis on environmental awareness and the development of a tourism infrastructure that sought to either preserve existing urban structures and landscapes or at least blend in. Some aspects were implemented, such as the Stari Grad ferry port and a new road linking the main towns. Furthermore, the plan had rejected the construction of an airport on the island, which, despite some attempts, was never built, limiting mass tourism flooding the island.⁴⁸¹

Overall, the attempt to create a master plan for tourism and urban planning on Hvar failed. This demonstrated that development and modernity on Hvar, as elsewhere along the coast, were based on the interaction and interests of multiple actors: local restaurant owners and islanders renting out rooms and flats, different hotels, the municipality, and the state authorities, with no single one of them being able or willing to dominate.

“Zimmer Frei” and Yugoslavia’s First Disco

The typical image of tourism in Yugoslavia, represented by brochures, postcards, and ads, was that of modernist hotels that shaped bays and coves, including in Hvar. However, tourism in Yugoslavia was unthinkable without its humbler counterpart, private rooms or later apartments. In Yugoslavia, these became known colloquially as “Zimmer Frei,” the German terms for free rooms. These were written on the ubiquitous signs hanging on doors and held up by locals at the ports as foreign visitors arrived. Initially, they were improvised rooms, sometimes in living rooms and kitchens, to make a few German Marks from tourists. Over time, many built designated rooms or apartments for tourists.

As elsewhere in the country, socially owned construction needed to catch up with demand for accommodation. Instead, private accommodation propelled tourism forward. For Socialist Yugoslavia, private accommodation presented a challenge. Not only would the profit not go to socially owned companies but to

private individuals, which went against the logic of the socialist system. There was little choice in practice, as tourism would have been much more modest had it not been for the thousands of private rooms. These private businesses rode on the wave of the broader liberalization in Yugoslavia that prevailed in the late 1960s after the more pragmatic liberals won the intra-party power struggle, epitomized by the dismissal of the hardline Minister of Interior, Aleksandar Ranković, in 1966.

The owners of rooms and apartments could set the prices freely, which were generally lower than hotels.⁴⁸² The state did not just tolerate private accommodation but actively supported them. In 1966, credits were increased to one million dinars for families to equip their houses for tourists, that is, to install water and electrical goods and purchase furniture. The credits were not just a crucial stimulus for tourism, they also provided a major modernization boost, as within five years, credits of 1.25 million USD resulted in 200,000 additional accommodations for tourists in Yugoslavia, mainly on the Adriatic.⁴⁸³ This was not just crucial financial support for the many cash-strapped families seeking to join the “Zimmer frei” business but also signaled that private investments in tourism are welcome.⁴⁸⁴ Even *Komunist*, the official party organ, openly endorsed the role of private entrepreneurs in tourism: “We have needed much time to realize that without private tourist enterprises, it is impossible to develop such an important economic branch as tourism.”⁴⁸⁵ Zvonko Jurišić, the secretary of the inter-municipal party conference for Dalmatia, concurred, noting with a wink to Communist dogma that of all the private entrepreneurs, “so far no one has become either an industrialist, a large landowner, a merchant, or the owner of a steamship company.” He discounted—somewhat disingenuously—that the private initiative would not threaten socialism, as “personal work is not equivalent to capitalism. In any case, the consequences for the further development of Dalmatia could be great.”⁴⁸⁶ This was, of course, the crux of the matter. The rapid growth of tourism was only possible through private rooms.

Tourism in Hvar did not just rely on private accommodation but also on a whole range of private businesses, from excursion boats to bars, restaurants, and souvenir stalls. Thus, tourism became an important driver of small-scale private companies, providing substantial income for many islanders. In 1968, there were twenty-seven privately owned restaurants, cafes, and bars on Hvar.⁴⁸⁷ The number continued to skyrocket; in 1974, there were 450 private enterprises in the tourism sector, including hotels, bars, shops, and restaurants, as well as 2,000 households renting rooms and preparing meals.⁴⁸⁸

The main critique of the island’s authorities was not focused on the private business but on how they dodged the rules. Low taxes and unregistered guests meant that many renting out rooms paid few taxes to the municipality.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, some of the private businesses were not registered at all or in a different municipality, thus depriving the municipality of its income in taxes; as the president of the municipality lamented, “[t]he problem of wild business on our island is getting worse by the day.”⁴⁹⁰ This resulted in “wealthy people in poor municipalities.”⁴⁹¹ The image of wealthy islanders was misleading according to the mayor of Hvar, Tonko Domančić: “Islanders in Yugoslavia are perceived as rich

people, who milk the visitors for a few months and then live the rest of the year like gods. This would be funny if it weren't tragic."⁴⁹²

Authorities were also concerned that the private business offered low-quality products or might cheat tourists.⁴⁹³ When a group of ten tourists was charged 360,000 dinars for dinner, the price of a tourist menu at Hotel Palace was 5,000, and the journalist joked that the lobsters eaten must have been the size of small whales.⁴⁹⁴ That year, some 113 private restaurants, bars, shops, and stalls were subject to inspections, which found cases of "too high prices," not paying taxes, or employing more people than allowed.⁴⁹⁵ Many of these infractions resulted from the relatively restrictive rules for private enterprises in Yugoslavia, which limited the number of employees. In the late 1960s, on the Adriatic, a private business could only employ three workers, and renting rooms was only allowed with household members participating to avoid creating privately owned hotels. Even after the boom years of new hotel construction, in 1974, two-thirds of all beds on Hvar were in private hands. In the coastal towns, there was hardly a home that did not rent out a room.

Private initiatives also paved the way for new types of entertainment. In 1964, "Amfora," a new kind of establishment, opened on the seaside promenade in Jelsa, which baffled local journalists: "The place was bare, set in an old distillery, reminding me of the typical Dalmatian konoba," the ground floor of houses where families stored their produce. There were only some rough chairs and all drinks, from cognac to Pepsi, cost 600 dinars. As the skeptical reporter noted, "It was hard to find a place in Amfora, with the music playing 'just modern rhythms.'"⁴⁹⁶ This strange place became famous as the first disco in Yugoslavia. It was the brainchild of Petar Ivulić, known as Pero Francuz, Pero the French. After living in Paris where discos were becoming popular, he opened one in Jelsa, which initially caused a scandal in the small town.⁴⁹⁷ Amfora and other discos and bars in Jelsa were particularly popular among French tourists, and Jelsa acquired the nickname "St. Tropez in the Adriatic."⁴⁹⁸

The success of Amfora triggered a "disco mania in Jelsa with new bars with beat music and dancing opening, including another bar called Limunjere as well as one in a basement organized jointly by industrial agricultural combine Sarajevo and the local cooperative."⁴⁹⁹ By 1970, the fortress above Hvar town also hosted a disco next to a bar and restaurant. The idea quickly spread in subsequent years, with clubs opening in other coastal towns, as well as in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Ljubljana.

While in the 1950s, the authorities worried that tourists might be disturbed by the noise of fishermen coming back to the port early in the morning,⁵⁰⁰ twenty years later, the discomania and the tourists became a potential nuisance. A nightclub in Hvar triggered heated debates in the town council. Located in a narrow street in the old town, its noise disturbed the local inhabitants. The police could do little unless there was an incident, and the club owner justified himself by claiming that he closed the doors at midnight but could hardly kick out the tourists if they wanted to stay. Part of the problem was the seriously understaffed police; only twelve for the entire island in 1972, down from thirty-eight in 1954. While Hvar

might have been an attractive tourist destination, few police officers were willing to relocate to the island, especially due to housing shortages.⁵⁰¹ In addition, it also ran short of inspectors and judges. However, it was also clear that for all the emerging problems with tourism, there was no willingness to do anything that might alienate tourists. Tourism was too important.

Nightclubs and bars also changed social relations and society on Hvar. The bars, clubs, and restaurants were open to foreign tourists and locals. Thus, the island's youth had access to summer entertainment, which has unimaginable for their parents. This change is captured by the Yugoslav movie "Lito Vilovito," primarily shot on Hvar in the summer of 1963. It follows the summer adventures of a group of young men who try to seduce female tourists. The young, handsome, and suntanned Dalmatian men and their attempts would become legendary in Yugoslav popular culture, known as "galebovi," or seagulls, for catching fish or "ribe," the slang for women. As with other Mediterranean Casanovas, these young men would challenge conservative social norms. However, as their romantic and sexual encounters were with foreign women, society could look the other way.⁵⁰² In the center of "Lito Vilovito" is the relationship between May, the single French woman visiting Hvar, and Pjero. He knew French, whereas the other men spoke a comical mixture of German, Italian, and Croatian. Nevertheless, their relationship was doomed due to misunderstandings, social expectations, and the apparent temporary nature of the courtship. With jazz bands and dancing, young women, old widows, and porters accosting the arriving steamship to calls of sobe, camera, and Zimmer, the movie opens a window to the boom days of tourism. A quarter century later, the renowned Yugoslav director Lordan Zafranović returned to the topic in his 1988 movie, also filmed on Hvar "Haloah. Praznik kurvi." Aloa: Festivity of the Whores.

In addition to relationships between locals and tourists, nothing challenged conservative social mores like nudism. Nudism became popular across Europe after the war as millions of nudists in Germany and France were looking for holiday destinations where they could spend their leisure time naked. Nudism was not allowed in conservative Spain and Italy so that Yugoslavia could seize this lucrative market. Indeed, starting in the early 1970s, nudism became an essential part of Yugoslav tourist offering, with twenty-five resorts, camping grounds, and hotels, as well as forty beaches, all along the coast from Istria in the north to the famous nudist resort at Ada Bojana, at the border to Albania. Initially, these beaches emerged spontaneously, especially as many bays and coves along the coast, including on Hvar, offered privacy. By 1973, an estimated third of all tourists to Hvar were nudists, concentrating on three nudist beaches: two were on the Pakleni islands close to Hvar town—Jerolim and Stipanska—and one on Zečevo, a small island close to Vrboska.⁵⁰³ At first, the municipality was unsure what to do about the nudism. By 1972, the two islands had become nudist beaches not by design but rather as a "tradition" as Ante Hančević mentioned in a municipal assembly session. However, others were worried that nudism would spread and "happen" at other beaches. There had been incidents on other Dalmatian islands where nudists were attacked with stones by conservative bathers. In the end, the local community

of Vrboska decided to legalize the nudist beach on Zečevo under the condition that it would be banned elsewhere.⁵⁰⁴ Social norms began to change over time, but most nudists were foreigners.⁵⁰⁵ In 1980, a nudist camping ground opened in Vrboska with the inspired name “Nudist.” However, as other Mediterranean countries became more tolerant toward nudism in the 1980s, the advantage of Yugoslavia declined.

The challenge for tourism was how to accommodate local visitors to provide leisure and recreation for Yugoslav citizens as part of the socialist modernity and foreigners, who brought in more money. At first, socialist Yugoslavia focused on tourism for its citizens, but by the 1960s, all attention had shifted to foreign visitors. In 1968, the writer and journalist Miljenko Smoje lamented that in Hvar, “just the leftovers are thrown on the local market.”⁵⁰⁶ With all efforts on the international market, the island’s tourism industry undertook no effort to cater to Yugoslav tourists, and prices were too high for local visitors.

Returning to its origins as a destination for winter tourism in the late nineteenth century, Hvar began catering to Yugoslavs primarily in the off-season. By the late 1950s, Hvar would become famous with a unique advertisement gimmick.⁵⁰⁷ If there was snow, fog, or the temperature dropped below zero, accommodation would be free that day, and if it rained more than three hours during the day, the room would be half-price.⁵⁰⁸ This offer would cement the image of Hvar as the “sunniest island,” and only exceptionally, the hotels had to live up to their promise. In the winter of 1968, only one night was free, and two were half-price, a good deal for the hotels, which received a lot of media interest.⁵⁰⁹

In winter, only around 15 percent of the visitors were international. Winter tourism was the domain of the hotels, which could provide central heating by the late 1960s. Smoje observed winter tourism catered to well-educated retired intellectuals, who were “walking along the seaside promenade, awaiting and observing the steamships, buying newspapers and in the evening, watching a bit of TV before going to bed.”⁵¹⁰ Many prominent Yugoslav intellectuals visited the island, including the Nobel-prize-winning author Ivo Andrić and the famous writer Branko Ćopić. When Andrić first visited the island in 1962, he remarked that if he lived on Hvar, “I would write less. Here, one can relax without interruption.”⁵¹¹ However, there was little to do on Hvar in the winter, making it more a “storage” for pensioners’ than a proper resort.⁵¹²

Winter-time tourists from Belgrade created an important Yugoslav bond. In 1969, Tonko Domančić, underscored this link: “The people of Hvar and Belgrade have been connected for more than twenty years. Only when the Belgraders come do we believe the real season has arrived.”⁵¹³ The link extended even to the religious realm. In 1969, when the bishop of Hvar Celestina Bezmalinović led the service for the epiphany, he noticed a few Orthodox visitors in the church, recognizable by using three fingers to cross themselves. Subsequently, he offered to lead a church service for Orthodox Christmas. The next day, some 150 Serbs would partake in the mass, primarily pensioners from Belgrade, who were spending the winter in Hvar.⁵¹⁴

Winter tourism continued into the 1970s, but it gradually declined. Hvar remained less well connected in winter, and the strong winds and rough seas could jeopardize the limited connections. Despite ambitious plans, the cultural offerings remained limited. The main cultural events continued to be in the summer, such as the Hvar Summer Festival, which began in 1961, the Hvar Theater Days, which started in 1971, and the Hvar Festival of Amateur Theater, which took place since 1957.

The Croatian Spring

Tourism changed social norms, transformed society, and raised questions over power and economic influence within Yugoslavia. Adriatic resorts like Hvar brought in large amounts of foreign currency. In 1967, 61.2 percent of all tourist accommodation was in Croatia; in 1975, 77.9 percent of foreign tourists went to Croatia.⁵¹⁵ The economic benefits for Yugoslavia were crucial, as the net income from tourism was 276.6 million USD in 1972, which would triple in subsequent years. As a result, tourism revenue covered more than a third of the annual trade deficit of Yugoslavia during the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s. The Adriatic coast thus became a central piece of the Yugoslav economy.

This benefit was also a source of grievance. By the late 1960s, many in Croatia criticized the existing system for exploiting the republic. They alleged that the hard currency earned in Croatia did not benefit the republic as much as it should. Instead, the center siphoned much of it and redistributed it to poorer republics, such as Macedonia and Montenegro. Second, Belgrade companies were accused of taking advantage of the burgeoning tourism business to the disadvantage of local hotels.⁵¹⁶

A prominent case involved the Belgrade company *Genex* in Jelsa. *Generalexport*, its full name, was one of the Yugoslav economic giants. This Serbian company became one of the largest foreign trade companies in Yugoslavia, specializing in trade with the Soviet Union. In the late 1960s, it began investing in tourism, including Jelsa. *Genex* invested in the local hotel company “Jelsa” to build the *Genex* hotel complex that opened in 1969, adding multiple bungalows and buildings in subsequent years. *Genex* funded the construction with credit from a Split-based bank. In addition, a Belgrade company was selected to build the new hotel without a tender. Furthermore, *Genex* monopolized the sale of hotel rooms through its travel agency *Yugotours*, as well as the sale of cigarettes, alcohol, and souvenirs. As a result of the credits, the hotel was making a loss, which allowed *Genex* to siphon off profits. This investment became a central focus of a report commissioned by the Croatian parliament to investigate controversial investments. The municipal assembly joined the Croatian parliament in calling for a change to such practices, which also affected other Adriatic resorts.⁵¹⁷ The complaints about the exploitative behavior on *Genex* resonated on Hvar, less because the investor was in Belgrade but because there was a sense that any investor from the mainland might not have local interests at heart.

The tensions in Yugoslavia were not just a conflict between Croatia and the federal center; they also divided the party, including Hvar. In the summer of 1971, the secretary of the municipal administration, Miho Mihovilčević, was removed from office in a stormy session of the municipal assembly after being accused of multiple offenses. He had earlier reported how the public administration of Hvar had to reject both “bureaucratic ideas” and “anarchosocialist” approaches. These “anarchist tendencies” were a thinly veiled critique of the mass movement that became known as the Croatian Spring, which channeled both liberal and nationalist demands.⁵¹⁸ On Hvar, there were few cases of “political crimes” despite the increased tensions. In 1971, there were six incidents where perpetrators were sentenced to prison sentences, mainly involving “chauvinist songs” or “expressing nationalist intolerance.” The police report also noted intense “enemy activities,” even if mostly seasonal workers from the mainland were blamed for them.⁵¹⁹

The official responsible for the report, Mihovilčević, was accused at the peak of the Croatian mass movement, of criticizing the Croatian leadership, getting into fights with other party members, accusing people of being Ustaša and interfering in the population census. The 1971 census was a sensitive moment as it coincided with the peak of the Croatian Spring, where the question of national identity became important. It was implicit in the accusation that he had encouraged people to identify as Yugoslavs.⁵²⁰ No matter his efforts, in the census results, 95.8 percent of the population of Hvar identified as Croats, and just 260 or 2.3 percent identified as Yugoslavs.

Mihovilčević’s dismissal would be short-lived as the Croatian Spring ended abruptly after Tito intervened, and the Croatian party leadership had to resign. A far-reaching purge of the party and many organizations followed. *Matica Hrvatska*, a historic cultural institution, was closed down, and the media scene was purged. One of the most prominent victims was Božidar Novak, the director of *Vjesnik*, the most important Croatian daily. Novak was among the most notable figures from Hvar in socialist Yugoslavia. After joining the Partisans in 1942, he studied journalism and became the editor-in-chief of *Slobodna Dalmacija* shortly after the war before moving to Zagreb. Novak was not arrested but was banned from working as a journalist. Thus, until the end of Communist rule, he returned to Hvar and researched the history of fishing in Hvar with the support of a friend from Hvar, the prominent archeologist, historian, and president of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, Grga Novak.⁵²¹

The purges reached Hvar in late December, when Ivo Runac, the president of the Municipal Assembly, had to resign for “promoting nationalism.”⁵²² Several other leading Communist officials were forced out, accused of not taking action “against nationalist elements that openly worked against the League of Communists, self-management and the construction of a socialist society.”⁵²³ The following year, an extraordinary municipal party conference took stock of the Croatian Spring and identified the party’s weakness on the island as a problem, with young people disinterested in the party and some mostly unidentified “excesses,” including a teacher distributing “enemy propaganda” at school. Over the subsequent years, ten

teachers would be dismissed for “their behavior and way of life, particularly their religiosity.”⁵²⁴ However, altogether, it was noted with some satisfaction that “[i]n Hvar nationalism and chauvinism did not grow strong roots because of the decisive opposition of the members of the SK and citizens which were disqualified for this as being unitarists.”⁵²⁵ The period after the crackdown on the Croatian Spring was characterized by increased ideological fervor, including reinvigorating the cult of the Partisan victory. In 1976, Ivo Splivalo, the president of the Committee for Nurturing and Developing of the Revolutionary Tradition on the island, noted that in addition to all the monuments and commemorative plaques put up, there was a need for additional efforts to commemorate all the important sites of the Partisan struggle.⁵²⁶

Through monuments, the memory of the Partisans became an essential part of both the visual culture and a physical site where significant anniversaries would be commemorated. The Partisan success was a central source of legitimacy for Socialist Yugoslavia. On Hvar, the tourism boom eclipsed the party. The Communists could claim credit for the booming mass tourism, but tourism overshadowed party and ideology. The driving force on Hvar was no longer the party or the memory of the Second World War but the all-encompassing tourist industry, particularly the hotel company “Hvar” at its core. The party stopped all activities between May and November because everybody was too busy with tourism. Party and municipal council meetings took place at hotels, becoming centers of associational life. Clubs



Figure 4.6 Tito visiting Hvar (1965). © Muzej Jugoslavije.

and associations met in the hotels, which provided rooms, and the Socialist Youth used hotels for their social spaces, such as bars and disco clubs, as well as for chess and sports.⁵²⁷ The most powerful organization was no longer the party but the hotel. The hotels also provide an essential asset in the larger Yugoslav context. Therefore, the hotel director Tonko Domančić described how he got the Hvar pioneers to go to Belgrade because he provided the Belgrade pioneers with rooms on Hvar.⁵²⁸ When Hvar was crowned the tourism champion of Dalmatia in 1967, *Slobodna Dalmacija* portrayed Domančić as the person most responsible for the success. Domančić explained this success by observing how “[i]n a tourist town everything is strongly connected,” urban planning, police, and local administration have to work together with the hotel: “We pay for police officers from the interior to keep the peace at night.”⁵²⁹ As the mayor of Hvar, Dušan Marić, noted in 1976, “Tourism for Hvar means life.”⁵³⁰ Thus, tourism, rather than the party, was at the center of the transformation of Hvar. This transformation had shifted people’s livelihoods away from traditional agriculture.

Of Lavender, Wine, and Fish

Agriculture and fishing rapidly declined after being the backbone of Hvar’s economy for centuries. While this was part of the European and Yugoslavia shift from agriculture to industry and services, it occurred particularly fast on Hvar. Nevertheless, agriculture remained important, especially as most people would have some plots of land to supplement their income from tourism or public administration jobs. In addition, a modest industrial sector emerged with canneries and a button factory.

In the 1950s, agriculture and fishing were still the dominant activity. In planning the economy, the local authorities focused on modernizing agriculture, such as updating the sardine factories. According to local authorities’ planning, “in this area [Hvar], agriculture will be the main economic activity.”⁵³¹ However, in just twenty years, the share of the population working in agriculture declined nearly threefold. The decline as part of the island’s economy was even more drastic, as agriculture remained less efficient than other sectors. It declined from 79 percent in 1956 to 31.5 percent in 1975 and 10.8 percent in 1980. As part of the decline, many fields were abandoned and became overgrown.

The sharp drop in agriculture had multiple causes. A 1989 report for the municipality noted that agriculture was inherently insecure, “in agriculture, a lot depends on the ‘will of god,’ thus the lack of protection of farmers and their harvest is an important characteristic.”⁵³² This sharply contrasted with the security employment provided, especially in the tourism sector. The limited technical equipment and low prices further rendered the sector unattractive. Measures to help citizens, such as price freezes, especially during the 1980s, hurt farmers. Furthermore, agriculture also enjoyed lower social prestige: “The farmers on the island are seen as second-rate citizens, and agriculture as an unattractive profession.”⁵³³ As a result, the share of the population involved in agriculture was



Figure 4.7 Wine harvest (mid-twentieth century). © Udruga Pjover - Velo Grablje, Hvar.

aging. By the mid-1970s, 78 percent of the farmers were above forty-five years old, and only 2 percent were under thirty. Younger people born after the war were seeking employment elsewhere, and it was mostly their parent's generations who had become farmers before the rise of tourism.⁵³⁴ Over time, a new type of agriculture emerged. Mixed households included family members who usually worked in tourism and spent part of their time in the fields. Their "social standard is much better than the standard of a pure worker ('proletarian') household" because it needed less money for food.⁵³⁵

The two most important branches of agriculture were wine and lavender. Whereas wine had long been the dominant product of the island, lavender spread across the island, especially in the more arid hills. The land used to produce wine halved between 1939 and 1973 from 3,000 to 1,248 hectares, at the same time, cultivation of lavender grew from just 4 hectares to 720 hectares. Besides lavender and wine, other plants were grown, but mainly on a limited scale for private consumption or some modest sales. There were, for example, some 120,000 olive trees on the island, but the production of olive oil was not commercially significant.⁵³⁶

After the end of the collectivization of farms and the mandatory harvest sale, farmers on Hvar could operate independently, and agriculture remained private. Nearly 90 percent of the land and 80 percent of the agricultural sector were privately held in small plots. Due to the small field size, cooperatives remained important on Hvar. The island had the most developed system of cooperatives in Dalmatia. Due to the failed experiment with collectivization, cooperatives were not involved in growing crops but in processing.⁵³⁷ There were high expectations

that the new legal system regulating the self-management system in the mid-1970s would create a firmer bond between cooperatives and farmers. Still, in the end, the challenges were unresolved and cooperatives contributed little to modernizing agricultural production.

Traditionally, wine production has been the backbone of Hvar's economy. Initial efforts by the new Socialist authorities focused on restarting viticulture after decades of crisis. In the first post-war years, three-quarters of the population was involved in wine growing, making up 90 percent of the agricultural production. However, the harvests after the war were considerably lower than before the war. The reasons were the drop in land used as vineyards due to destruction and neglect during the war. In addition, the socialist work actions on the island and beyond resulted in labor shortages in the post-war years. The attempts to increase harvests through collectivization and competition between the collectives yielded some results.⁵³⁸ However, after collectivization was abandoned, the focus was instead on creating a new production system with cooperatives and wineries buying up the grapes from the individual producers.

The cooperatives and the wineries never acquired larger tracts of land but bought the grapes from hundreds of farmers. The small plots meant they often could not be worked on with machinery, and the farmers lacked the resources to invest in modernizing the grape growing and harvesting. As a result, the production costs of wine were relatively high. A report on the wine production on Hvar in the early 1960s noted that producing a liter of wine on the island cost 35–50 dinars, much higher than the Yugoslav average of just 20–25 dinars. As a result, the wine was not competitive in the domestic and international markets.⁵³⁹

Another challenge was quality. In the 1950s, most vineyards were planted in the early 1920s, making them nearly twice as old as they should be, and “primitive production methods” resulted in low-quality wine. Furthermore, farmers tended to sell the lowest quality grapes to the wineries and keep the better-quality grapes for themselves. However, the individual wine production was of low quality, resulting in 2,000 tons of unsold wine.⁵⁴⁰ In 1961, only a third of the wine produced on Hvar was made in the winery; individual farmers produced the rest. The focus was thus on discouraging farmers from producing their wines and shifting the wine production to modern wineries.

Over the following decades, wine production did indeed shift to wineries. The famous Yugoslav architect Stanko Fabris built the largest winery on the island in Stari Grad between 1949 and 1952, symbolizing the importance of wine production on Hvar. Wine production in the large wineries did not encourage the development of more refined wines or local grape varieties. Bogdanuša, an autochthonous grape variety used for making white wines, was initially replaced by the lower quality Kuč grapes. The most prestigious wine was red wine, made from the grape variety Plavac, produced on the steep slopes of the Southern stretch of the island and sold as Faros Wine.⁵⁴¹

The fields remained small, often shrinking, as inheritance tradition meant that the children received an equal share of the plots of land. In the Stari Grad plain, the most fertile land, the average plot was only 15–25 meters wide, often preserving

the land division from the times of the Greek colony. The average field size in 1973 was only 1300 square meters. Small plots, low prices, limited mechanization, and the alternative of finding work in the tourist sector meant many gave up growing grapes. The share of the arable land used for vineyards declined to just a third in the 1980s, and many fields, especially outside the Stari Grad plain, were abandoned.⁵⁴²

The dependence of winegrowers on the wineries became a source of tension during the economic crisis. In 1989, it resulted in a farmer protest called the “happening of the Hvar peasant” (*dogadjanja hvarskog seljaka*). The term happening of the people (*dogadjanja naroda*) had been used to describe the mass rallies of Serbs in Kosovo, Serbia, Vojvodina, and Montenegro in support of Slobodan Milošević and Serb nationalism. Using the term for the protests placed them in the larger context of continuous politics in late Yugoslavia. The peasants themselves evoked Matij Ivanić, the iconic figure of the 1510 Hvar uprising, who gave them legitimacy, as the Partisans had evoked Ivanić. For several days, they blocked the entrance to the wineries.⁵⁴³

The protests triggered local authorities to reconsider their policy, as they sympathized with the plight of the farmers and had long criticized the wineries, for their lack of interest in modernizing viticulture. While dressed up in the language of socialist self-management, it criticized the producers for not being interested in reforms and providing tax incentives for farmers and access to modern machinery, resulting in a “stronger and market-oriented agricultural production.”⁵⁴⁴ Such reforms were quickly sidelined by the larger Yugoslav crisis. As a result, some of the large wineries collapsed. The large wineries in Stari Grad and Jelsa closed down by the 2000s and were replaced by smaller private wineries focused on producing high-quality wine.

The only produce that could challenge the monoculture of wine production in Socialist Yugoslavia was lavender. During this period, it would become the island’s iconic plant. Lavender was relatively new to the island. It was introduced in the 1920s, and after the war, it began spreading all over the island. By the 1950s, more than 90 percent of Yugoslav’s lavender production came from Hvar. Whereas tourism marketing used the images of lavender in their advertisement, it was not for aesthetic reasons that lavender experienced a boom in the post-war years. In good years, the oil could fetch high sums that made some farmers rich.

A villager from Velo Grablje noted that while they were first laughed at for planting lavender, the village became rich due to lavender, “we eat luxury food, we have villas in the village. Many have fixed their houses; others have built new ones ... people are changing. Now they also want electricity ... Once, the girls from Grablje were different. Today, they are ashamed that they bought shoes for 2000 [dinar]. They need to have shoes for 5 or 6 [thousand].”⁵⁴⁵ As other islanders saw how many peasants made good money from lavender, it spread, as an observer in 1957 noted,

the island is like a ship—quickly everyone knew what is going on in a village. The inhabitants of the central and eastern part of Hvar pass by Grablje daily.

And when they see with their own eyes how the stone roofs are being replaced with red tiles, when these poor villages started having ovens, parquet, expensive furniture, clothes, etc., islanders began to whisper about lavender.⁵⁴⁶

In 1956, the island produced two tons of lavender oil, or around 100 to 200 kilograms per household, in Velo Grablje. In the village, some families earned around 600,000 dinars [approx. 17,000 USD in 2024] from lavender.⁵⁴⁷

However, the high price was not guaranteed, and there were several cycles of crisis and upswings. Nevertheless, lavender production was overall booming, especially in the island's heartland of Brusje and Grablje; nearly everyone was involved. In 1973, *Slobodna Dalmacija* reported that during the harvest season, "old and young, even school children go to the Hvar hills early in the morning to harvest lavender flowers, which are immediately distilled in some twenty steam boilers of the cooperatives into lavender oil."⁵⁴⁸ The harvest began in late June and could last until August, as it was cumbersome in the steep fields where all the bushes had to be cut by hand and carried in large bags to the distillery, sometimes with the help of donkeys. 110 and 150 kilograms of lavender flowers were needed to distill a liter of lavender oil. A French visitor in the 1960s noted how the lavender changed the landscape: "In this area, a new landscape is now in place, where lavender, as far as the eye can see, descends all the slopes to the dry valleys that limit them."⁵⁴⁹ In the rocky landscape, stone walls have emerged to create small plots and remove the stones from the land to plant lavender (see Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8 Lavender harvest, Grablje (mid-twentieth century). © Udruga Pjover - Velo Grablje, Hvar.

Most of the production was exported to France and the United States. European lavender production was dominated by France with 100 to 120 tons of oil, followed by Yugoslavia, in practice Hvar, with 5 tons, and then Italy and Bulgaria. At its peak, the lavender production in Hvar amounted to 10 percent of the global output. The prices and demand depended mainly on the French harvest. If the harvest in France was bad, demand for lavender from Hvar increased.⁵⁵⁰

A new boom began in the 1980s when prices rose again dramatically. However, the decentralized nature of the production, with some fifteen distilleries and ten agricultural associations, meant that the producers were undercutting each other while jointly holding a near monopoly on Yugoslav production. The fragmentation also made it hard to increase the quality to remain competitive in the global market, the destination of four-fifths of the Hvar lavender production. Consequently, the individual producers no longer benefited as much from the price increases as they had decades earlier.⁵⁵¹

Lavender and tourism were both complementary and competing. The lavender fields helped to promote Hvar as a tourism destination, and tending to the lavender fields is less work-intensive than vineyards. No article in the travel sections of Western newspapers during the 1980s would miss out on “the fragrance of the purple-blue lavender flowers” and the “hillsides blanketed in lavender.” Nevertheless, the lavender harvest occurs mainly from late June onward, just as the tourist season is taking off.⁵⁵² In the late 1980s, more than half of the fields fell victim to fires. The lavender fields can quickly burn in dry, hot summers with their relatively dry plants. Furthermore, the distillation process was still based on many small and very much improvised distilleries. This meant there was little oversight over the quality, which made the process inefficient.⁵⁵³

While tourism would collapse during the war years, the lavender production would continue until the end of the century. However, devastating fires in 1997 and then even more destructive in 2003 would destroy most of the lavender fields on the island. 125 households lost a quarter of a million lavender plants in the fire. The lavender was only gradually replanted in subsequent years, but the boom years, when hills around Grablje and Brusje were covered in lavender fields, ended.⁵⁵⁴

Unlike lavender, fishing had been a central part of the island's economy for centuries. In 1948, Tonko Šoljan, a native of Hvar and director of the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries in Split, and a team of scientists mapped out the fish stocks in the Southeastern Adriatic. They kept careful records of the fish they caught over thirteen months on the M/S HVAR. They thus established a snapshot of the fishing stocks before large-scale commercial fishing in the Adriatic.⁵⁵⁵ Overfishing in subsequent decades led to a collapse of fish stocks in the Adriatic and contributed to the decline of fishing on Hvar. The industrialization of fishing, to which the Hvar-fishermen with their nineteenth-century fishing expeditions to Lampedusa were forerunners, also meant that individual fishermen and small-scale fishing were increasingly marginalized.

The limits of fishing became apparent in 1953 when the economic council of Hvar gathered all island fishermen to discuss the limited stocks, including regulated times when who could fish. The discussion focused on limiting fishing to avoid depleting the stocks. The scarcity led to conflicts with fishermen between different towns, often competing over fish stock from the same areas, such as between Sućuraj and Drvenik or Jelsa and Makarska.⁵⁵⁶ Despite these challenges, there were still enough fishing grounds to consider expanding the fishing industry. The most fertile fishing grounds lay especially around Hvar town in the Pakleni islands and the peninsular Pelegrin at the west-most tip of the island, as well as out in the Adriatic Sea, around the islands of Sušac and Palagruža, leading to plans to build a new cannery in Hvar town. In 1954, 600 tons of blue fish, such as sardines, were caught by local and foreign, primarily Italian, fishermen.⁵⁵⁷

The sardine factory in Vrboska, built in 1894, processed 100 tons of fresh fish annually, exporting most canned sardines to the UK, France, and Germany. In the late 1950s, it employed around a hundred people but was in dire need of modernization, as it lacked equipment for canning efficiently and had no cooling facilities.⁵⁵⁸ The importance of the canneries in the 1950s is evident when considering that in 1957, the three top hotels had generated a total of four million Dinars in profits, while the three sardine factories in Hvar, Vrboska, and Sućuraj made profits nearly five times larger, nineteen million dinars.⁵⁵⁹

In the fishing industry, there was a clear division of gender roles. Whereas it would be men who would go out fishing, the processing of the fish was seen as a woman's job. As a result, most of the employees in the cannery were women. The factory bus would pick up women from the neighboring villages to work in the factory. The sardine factories on Hvar, as on other islands, thus became a significant generator of social modernization, as they provided a workplace for women outside the home for the first time and allowed women to generate income independently. This was important, as in 1971, around two-thirds of all women of working age remained outside the formal workforce on the island.⁵⁶⁰ At the same time, the factories reflected the still prevalent patriarchal realities, as men usually managed the factories. Nevertheless, the factories provided a strong community for the women who worked there.⁵⁶¹

Before the construction of hotels in Jelsa and Stari Grad, the cannery was the most important employer in the island's central region. Despite efforts to keep the canneries working, the remaining two in Vrboska and Sućuraj closed in 1972 and 1971 as they were making losses. Instead, fishermen catching bluefish would have to take it to a different cannery on the mainland.

By 1969, fishing declined so that a journalist could not find fresh fish at the market, not even frozen fish, and only one professional fisherman.⁵⁶² By the 1980s, only a few professional fishermen were left on the island. As stocks declined, hotels did not try to buy fish supplies from individual fishermen. Serving fish was too complicated for the hotels, which preferred serving simpler and cheaper fare. Marko Bibić Haloc, one of the last professional fishermen, also remarked how few islanders were willing to venture into professional fishing, as it required many days

and nights at sea. Bibić claimed, for example, to have spent 360 day of a year out on the sea:

It is the time of not working. The cult of not working means nobody can get people to work. Some are 30 years old and are sitting in the cafe all day people live well ... but look at our village. Before, there was everything there, and now there is not even a dog. Everyone left to the two/three places at the sea.⁵⁶³

Similarly, Tomo Damjanić, a fisherman from Vrboska, pointed out that one could make considerable money fishing, but few wanted to do the hard work: “A fisher does not have working times; you have to be a fisher all the time. In summer, I boat tourists around during the day and go to the sea at night.”⁵⁶⁴

Like other types of agriculture, fishing died out as a profession due to tourism. This is a paradox, as the demand and price for fish went up due to tourism. At the same time, the hard work of fishing combined with the availability of many jobs in the tourism sector contributed to the decline of fisheries on Hvar. In the end, a few fishermen, often working part-time, could supply enough to the private restaurants that would-be buyers of fresh fish.

Connecting the Island

Like other islands, Hvar suffered from a weak infrastructure that became apparent as tourist numbers rose. Since the mid-nineteenth century, islanders complained about the isolation from the mainland as ship connections remained limited. Thus, socialist Yugoslavia inherited a very uneven infrastructure. A central promise of the socialist authorities was a functioning infrastructure.⁵⁶⁵ Drawing on voluntary labor, Socialist Yugoslavia built important roads to connect the country. For the Adriatic, the key project was the Adriatic highway (*Jadranska magistrala*), which connected the entire Adriatic coast by road from Slovenia in the North to the Montenegrin-Albanian border. The last stretch was opened in 1965 thanks to World Bank funding. The highway made Hvar easily accessible by car from Central Europe. As tourism began to develop and, with it, the notion of modernization, Hvar urgently needed to upgrade its infrastructure. The island lacked electricity lines to the mainland, making electricity from gasoline generators expensive and scarce. Water mostly came from cisterns and was often limited during the summer. The towns were not connected by road, making it often faster to travel to the mainland than on the island. The British consultants for the UN project to develop Hvar noted wryly that the small number of cars on the island—just 232 in 1966—resulted from poverty and “donkeys and boats’ greater usefulness.”⁵⁶⁶ In the late 1960s, the road infrastructure was modest, and just 11 of the 80 kilometers of road between Hvar and Sućuraj were asphalted; the rest were gravel roads. The primary way of getting around was by bus, but also here, the network was not very dense, with three buses per day from Hvar to Stari Grad in the summer, two

in winter, and one a day to Sućuraj. Only in 1970 was the road between Jelsa and Sućuraj fully asphalted, marking the island's integration. Now, one could travel from one end to the other of the island in around two hours.

Much of the infrastructural improvement did not come from the state but from local initiatives and contributions. This entailed local volunteers working to improve the infrastructure and financial contributions. Crucially, these were bottom-up initiatives, often supported by local referenda. They embodied both the logic of the self-management system of Yugoslavia and the reality of a cash-strapped state that lacked the resources to address all the local needs to modernize the infrastructure rapidly.⁵⁶⁷ On Hvar, numerous such initiatives took place during the socialist period. Some just involved financial contributions, like the electrification of the villages, which was funded by contributions of inhabitants and a tax on wine sales of 5 percent in 1959.⁵⁶⁸

Local referenda frequently decided on projects and support for their realization, such as a local assembly in Vrboska with 150 participants to support the construction of a water supply pipe from Jelsa to Hvar.⁵⁶⁹ Local initiatives could not remedy the most significant infrastructure challenges. The island depended on connections to the mainland even more than the links on the island itself. Hvar was connected to the mainland electricity grid in 1959, but a steady water supply and good boat links would bedevil the island's development throughout the socialist period.



Figure 4.9 Jadrolinija boat docking in Hvar (1970s–1980s). Photo by Petar Otoranova.
© Muzej Jugoslavije.

The biggest challenge was the boat connections to the mainland. Jadrolinija became the *bête noire* of Hvar's tourism industry. The company was established in 1947 and monopolized all Adriatic passenger transport. Hotel managers complained about *Jadrolinija's* lack of reliability and frequency. In the eyes of islanders, *Jadrolinija* appeared to strangle Hvar and be just the latest example of mainland neglect for the islands' needs. Thus, the dissatisfaction with the shipping company revealed a much more profound sense of isolation and dissatisfaction with the mainland and its government. Tourists and locals often had to endure long waits for a ferry. In 1967, an observer noted at the car ferry between Sućuraj and Drevnik, "[w]aiting for a ride, time is not counted in hours, but in days."⁵⁷⁰ The regular meetings between the island's tourist managers and *Jadrolinija* could not resolve the issue, and one of the boats connecting Hvar with Split got the nickname "trouble" (*nevolja* in Croatia), a wordplay on its name "Novalja" (a town on the island of Pag).⁵⁷¹

Next to limited boat connections, the second largest infrastructure challenge was water. The "island is thirsty" was a recurring theme throughout Socialist Yugoslavia. As one of the few Adriatic islands, Hvar did have its sweet-water sources, the main one close to Jelsa, but these were insufficient to support the needs of the inhabitants and the increasing demands of tourism. As part of the work on the local water network, the Yugoslav army dug a tunnel connecting Pitve with the Southern side of the island. With its length of 1.4 kilometers, it was the longest tunnel in Yugoslavia at the time. However, the local network was insufficient to accommodate the growing tourism industry. Thus, the president of the municipal assembly, Dušan Marić, identified water supply as one of the most pressing issues for the island's development in 1976.⁵⁷² By the mid-1980s, the project gained momentum, as a local referendum supported contributions from citizens and companies for the project that would cost some 1.4 billion new dinars.⁵⁷³ The pipeline connecting Hvar to the coast via Brač was finally completed in 1987, with big celebrations in Hvar.⁵⁷⁴

The limited water supply and ferry connections restricted tourism development. In retrospect, they might be considered a blessing in disguise, preventing the massive development envisaged by the UN-sponsored plan for Hvar and the Southern Adriatic. As with many other infrastructural projects for Hvar, the main argument was tourism, while islanders doubtlessly benefited from the steady water supply, bringing down the cost and providing water for agriculture, the central justification for the project was tourism.

No matter how invisible it becomes, infrastructure is obvious in its absence once established. The lack of water, the limited boat connections to the mainland, and the few roads became highly visible during the socialist period. Some had already shaped relations between the island and state in earlier periods; in particular, boat connection had been a central theme since the emergence of scheduled steamboat services.

Infrastructure is inherently more challenging for an island like Hvar than most localities on the mainland. Unlike a train or bus, a ferry line requires significant investment and high maintenance costs. It also cannot easily overcome distance.

The forty kilometers between the island and Split take at least an hour (by high-speed catamaran) or two hours (by ferry), whereas, on land, that distance could shrink from a long foot or donkey path to a road or a highway where this distance is just a short drive. Other infrastructure, such as water and electricity, required more significant investments and more complex technology than on land. As a result, isolation remained a theme for Hvar, even after it became a top tourist destination.

Isolation has been a theme in self-perception since at least late Venetian times, showing how these legacies shaped the island's position throughout different political regimes. However, Socialist Yugoslavia established different expectations, shaped by the promise of socialist modernity and openly endorsing a more participatory approach. Much of the infrastructure relied on the participation of citizens. They were not passive subjects of state policies, but in all the projects, they actively participated. The roads on the island were built mainly with both the financial contributions of its inhabitants and the free labor provided. Local referenda gave these projects additional legitimacy. While free labor declined as a central feature of infrastructural projects during Socialist Yugoslavia, financial contribution remained essential.

Yugoslav Reflections

While Hvar was nothing like Yugoslavia, some of the dilemmas of the larger country echoed on the island. Cooperation and cohesion of the island were crucial challenges, and some failures to unify the island foreshadowed the dissolution of the state to which Hvar belonged.

The island was divided. Its long spine stretching from Sućuraj to Jelsa had a long history that diverged from the rest of the island as noted in previous chapters. Several waves of migration from the Dalmatian coast and hinterland, close ties to the coast, and a different dialect shape the region. In Sućuraj, the prevailing dialect is štokavian, the standard variant of Croatian. In contrast, the rest of the island speaks čakavian, the coastal dialect spoken on most islands and Istria. There was also an economic gap, which increased despite efforts and the strong interest of the socialist authorities in promoting the region's development. After all, the Partisans enjoyed strong support there during the war. The authorities took the development of poorer areas more seriously than previous political regimes, as noted in 1948: "The southern part of the island has no land links to the rest of the island and is thus cut off economically and culturally from the western part of the island. All former 'anti-people' regimes did not consider the needs of this region. They kept the people of this part of the island in darkness, separating it from cultural life, as they could thus exploit it more easily."⁵⁷⁵

Even more than a decade after the end of the war, the island was far from being unified. It could take three days to get from the villages in the Southeast to Hvar town, and the sea route was often closed, especially in winter, due to storms. The alternative was a one-day hike on goat paths to Jelsa, making them more isolated

from their municipal center than anywhere else in Yugoslavia⁵⁷⁶: “Hard to believe, but it was true that it was easier to get to Sarajevo from Sućuraj than to the center of its municipality [Hvar].” Thus, the Southeast oriented itself towards the coast, “in Sućuraj, only the legs are standing on the island, but the head and the body are resting on the Makarska coast and the Neretva delta.”⁵⁷⁷ As tourism began to boom, many in the region expected that the development would also reach the Southeast so that “Hvar will become a tourist island in the true sense of the word.”⁵⁷⁸ Despite these hopes, the lack of concern for the southeastern regions of Hvar was visible in the UN Plan. It offered a comprehensive plan for developing the Western part of the island, stretching from Hvar to Jelsa, but completely ignored the East.

When Miljenko Smoje visited Bogomolje and Gdinj in 1970, he saw villages dying. Bogomolje’s population had dropped in just over forty years from 1,100 to just 300. The local government had no money, so even the streetlights had to be turned off.⁵⁷⁹ The population census in 1971 revealed that the population had dropped drastically in the region from 2,508 to just 1,915 within a decade.⁵⁸⁰

In a stormy session of the municipal assembly in 1972, a representative from Gdinj lamented that young people were leaving: If “this development [water supply] cannot be achieved in the current municipality, maybe it can be done elsewhere,” which was understood by the mayor as a call for secession: “this means you are demanding a secession from the municipality of Hvar!” The representatives from the island’s southeast hardly considered seceding but just sought help from outside to provide them with water. The municipal secretary, Ante Hančević, took a sober line: “It is a fact that society develops and that some regions are stratified, and people go where it is better. This is the situation in our lower part of the island; people leave for Hvar, Jelsa, or Stari Grad ... The emigration from the village to town cannot be stopped.”⁵⁸¹

The only hotel in Sućuraj recorded losses for years, partly because it had taken over the land and obligations from the cannery that had closed. In 1972, the local fish restaurant was closed, and of the town’s entire population, only sixteen were regularly employed. A reporter visiting in 1973 noted that for International Women’s Day—an important event in Yugoslavia—a dance was organized for only three women. The number of pupils and the youth dropped so that a local inhabitant sardonically noted that today, “our youth is active in New Zealand.”⁵⁸² Within the next decade, matters marginally improved. However, the situation remained challenging, especially in the villages. Jakov Ćurin and Budimir Borić, who helped maintain the road, explained to a journalist why the region was called Metohija: “Here [in Metohija] is the mind, in Hvar the money ... all intellectuals of Hvar are from Metohija, but they are running to where the municipality is. Here, nobody stays.”⁵⁸³ Metohija refers to church lands, as the church had owned most of the land before the land reform. However, the prime association was no longer church land but Kosovo and Metohija, the dated Serbian term used to describe Yugoslavia’s poorest and least developed region.⁵⁸⁴ In 1986, the emigration of Serbs from Kosovo had been Yugoslav news as the two men sought to explain their plight in a terminology that would be recognizable in the Yugoslav context.⁵⁸⁵

It would take more serious protests to push the island's authorities into action. Local groups were established in Zastrazišće, Gdinj, and Bogomolje that demanded the villages be connected to the new water system from the mainland. They threatened to go on strike if they did not get water access. The island's League of Communists saw this as a severe threat, condemning these groups for "anarchy, rejection of authority, disregard to the constitution ..." While these groups were self-organized, the authorities condemned them for acting "unacceptable and inappropriate in our democratic and socialist self-managed system." Without a sense of irony—not realizing or being willing to admit that the protests were in the best spirit of the rebellious history of villages—the authorities noted that the revolutionary credentials of the Eastern part of Hvar were beyond reproach, as "the great contribution to the revolution nobody can question." The protests were not isolated but part of a larger protest wave gaining momentum across Yugoslavia, reaching from Kosovo to Hvar.

For all the condemnation of "disinformation" and "unnecessary, unhealthy socio-political situation" by authorities, the local activism triggered a serious effort to deal with the region's problems, observing that "the population in this region lives in difficult circumstances and considers it to be their right that in terms of development, the gap to the rest [of the island] is reduced."⁵⁸⁶ Based on a party proposal, the municipal authorities accepted the plan with the clunky title "social contract for the faster development of the insufficiently developed regions of the municipality of Hvar."⁵⁸⁷ This new approach focused on developing tourism, even with limited resources. A regional development fund was also proposed to include money from the municipal budget, company contributions, and all the money earned from tourism taxes in the eastern part of the island.

However, these efforts had little effect, and one of the pillars of the municipal project failed in 1988. The municipality had proposed that the agricultural cooperatives should set up a joint regional agricultural cooperative to become more efficient and have more resources. However, the workers in three cooperatives voted against the plan.⁵⁸⁸ Ivo Dominis, a municipal official, noted with some resignation that "we repeated an old typical Yugoslav mistake, we write nice plans and programs that nobody can implement."⁵⁸⁹

The second reflection of larger Yugoslav dilemmas on Hvar was the failed effort to create a unified hotel company. The hotels on the island were initially built and managed by several companies, *Hvar* in Hvar town, *Helios* in Stari Grad (see Figure 4.5), *Jelsa* in Jelsa, and later *Adriatic* in Vrboska. This was part of the broader Yugoslav trend: most hotels were self-managed or part of a local group based in one town. Following the self-management logic, hotel groups were subdivided into several smaller units. For example, the Hotel Group *Hvar* was comprised of twelve subunits in 1974, all enjoying substantial autonomy.⁵⁹⁰ The hotels in Jelsa and Stari Grad began cooperating with other Yugoslav companies rather than the dominant hotel group in Hvar town. *Jelsa* joined forces with the Serbian company *Genex* in the late 1960s, as discussed earlier, and *Helios* partnered up with *Dalma*, a large Dalmatian conglomerate in Split.⁵⁹¹ The fragmentation of the hotels remained a key concern for municipal authorities, as this made planning

for tourism challenging, and coordination remained very weak. In addition to the four hotel groups, private accommodation was never fully integrated.⁵⁹²

Only by the 1980s did the insistence on integrating the different hotels bear fruit. In the summer of 1981, the three hotel groups, the Hvar winery and the local branch of *Dalma*, established what was called the self-management system, an association in which development, sales, and procurement would be jointly managed under the name of *Sunčani Hvar* (Sunny Hvar).⁵⁹³ In effect, the companies formed a federation with minimal competencies. Workers could decide whether to operate independently or join a larger company within these units. This loose cooperation was still not enough for municipal authorities. Ivan Dominis, who oversaw the island's economy, promoted the closer integration of the hotels. He attributed the resistance to the traditional rivalry between the towns and a strong sense of local patriotism.⁵⁹⁴

Nevertheless, in early 1986, most workers of all four hotel groups voted to form a closer joint company composed of all the hotels on the island.⁵⁹⁵ However, this joint company was not to last. In 1989, it unraveled after a series of referenda in which the workers from the hotels in Stari Grad, Jelsa, and Vrboska voted by a large majority to restore their earlier status as independent hotels. Only the workers in Hvar town decided to remain, shrinking *Sunčani Hvar* to the main tourist center. The disintegration of *Sunčani Hvar* came about after the management produced a plan for a centralized company. From the management's side, the benefits were obvious. It managed to modernize several of its hotels during the short time it operated, even during the crisis period of the 1980s.

It was easy to reduce the vote against the joint company as evidence of small-town rivalry or a power struggle, especially as the decision did not appear to make economic sense, as one observer noted that "the worker in Hvar tourism is not just a homo economicus, but also is motivated by different prejudices and emotions."⁵⁹⁶ However, the staff's incomes shrunk compared to the boom years due to high inflation and the general economic crisis in the country. Thus, the joint company was associated with the crisis years. More importantly, the plan of a unified company created concerns that the different hotels would lose their identity and their ability to make their own decisions; as Jurica Beroš from Stari Grad worried, the "current self-management units would lose their legal independence, their right to independently dispose of their property and the name itself which is not just affirming themselves on the market, but which also means something for the people." Similarly, Rino Grgević from Vrboska observed the workers were "not ready to lose the identity of 'Adriatik' ... [and] were asking why they should not be their own masters?"⁵⁹⁷

Even in Vrboska, the smallest hotel, which only comprised 7 percent of tourism income, 87 percent of workers voted to leave *Sunčani Hvar*. In the end, the project of a joint hotel company was seen as a top-down political project that could not convince the workers. The dissolution of *Sunčani Hvar* on the eve of the dissolution of Yugoslavia probably made little difference to the fate of tourism on the island. Still, it underscored the challenge of self-management to hold together. As Grgević

remarked, “That is how an independence vote becomes possible, even if we are not capable of good independent work.”⁵⁹⁸

Over the following years, between December 1990 in Slovenia and March 1992 in Montenegro, voters in five of the six Yugoslav republics voted whether they wanted to establish their own independent country or remain in Yugoslavia. The parallels between the fate of *Sunčani Hvar* and Yugoslavia are apparent. Of course, the hotels on *Hvar* had no Milošević or local ethnic entrepreneurs making territorial claims. Still, the logic of centralization versus units that sought to keep their local identity was as much a dilemma in *Sunčani Hvar* as in Yugoslavia.

The Crisis Years

The 1980s were increasingly marked by talk of “crisis” and the need for “stabilization.” The crisis of the 1980s was originally hardly existential for Yugoslavia. However, the combination of the economic crisis and the fact that the socialist system could not resolve these economic and social difficulties provided a sense of stagnation. As Prošper Barišić, head of the party on Hvar noted, “for socialism there is no greater danger than stagnation and the loss of perspective.”⁵⁹⁹ The eighties showed the limits of the socialist system that had provided for the island’s rapid development in the previous two decades. As Hvar prepared to celebrate its 120th anniversary of organized tourism in 1979, the Yugoslav crisis became increasingly apparent. No new hotel had opened since 1976, and high interest rates made it impossible to finance new ones. As a result, tourism stagnated, and unemployment increased. In addition to the high costs, the lack of sufficient water and ferry connections restricted the continuation of the boom years.⁶⁰⁰

Tito’s death on May 4, 1980, triggered a public outpouring of grief throughout Yugoslavia, also on Hvar. *Slobodna Dalmacija* quotes Toma Buzolić, a local party member since 1925, “we lost the biggest son, biggest fighter and creator of our new, happy Yugoslavia. The loss is irreplaceable.”⁶⁰¹ Long lines formed to sign the book of condolences in Hvar town, including many tourists, who signed in German, Dutch, and Czech. On the funeral day, “everything was deserted as if the island was hiding behind the shutters. On the streets and markets of the island’s towns, there was nobody.” Everyone was watching the funeral on television.⁶⁰² While the island’s economic transformation had been astounding during his thirty-five years in power, Tito had only visited Hvar thrice (see Figure 4.6).⁶⁰³

His death revealed many of the structural weaknesses of the Yugoslav system: a high debt, a stagnating economy, and a declining legitimacy of the Communist Party. As tourism had shifted the center of gravity from the League of Communists to the hotels, the party complained throughout the socialist period about insufficient support, and this became more apparent in the 1980s. By 1987, the membership had dropped on Hvar for the first time since 1956, and many were leaving the party. Several party units had not accepted new members in years.



Figure 4.10 Hotel Adriana, Hvar (1970s–1980s). Photo by Petar Otoranova. © Muzej Jugoslavije.

The explanations for leaving reflected the broader crisis. Some saw membership just as an obligation. Others stated that they got everything from society and thus saw no need to remain in the party.⁶⁰⁴ In the villages, there were more exclusions from the party than new members, including in traditional strongholds such as Vrbanj. The main reasons for exclusion were the religiosity of a member or their close family, passivity, or not paying their dues. By the mid-1980s, it was an aging party, with nearly half older than forty-five. It was also still a predominantly male domain, with women making up just over a quarter of the 822 members. The party branch at Farosplastika, a small button factory in Stari Grad, observed in 1988 that the “moral character of communists ... is currently at the lowest level since the existence of the Communist Party.” For them, a change required a new elite to “burn the heaps of utopian papers which norm everything but resolve nothing.” Similarly, another party committee in Stari Grad lamented that “unfortunately, many accept duties without any sense of responsibility,” calling for purges as the party had opened its door to everyone so that both “its friends and enemies have found themselves in the party.” Another local party group from Hvar saw the party just as a “ruling party, a party that wants to be a force and power above society,” rather than be guided by a program.⁶⁰⁵ These sobering assessments from within the party highlight the profound loss of legitimacy of the League of Communists.

The crisis years were marked by economic stagnation, inflation and shortages, and a social crisis. The public perception focused on the youth, who was seen as “in crisis.”⁶⁰⁶ Throughout Yugoslavia, the youth of the 1980s had grown up with limited prosperity and in a relatively open society. The hardships of their parents as farmers were remote, as were the ideological rigors of early Yugoslavia and the Partisan warfare. In Hvar, the generational divide was particularly pronounced, as the island had transformed more rapidly than other parts of Yugoslavia. Tourism brought higher living standards and disposable income, but many islanders suffered during the long winter when the island was isolated, and there was little to do. In the early 1980s, a report for Central Dalmatia noted the rise in crime among the youth, not just in the urban center Split but also in smaller towns, including Hvar.⁶⁰⁷ At a party meeting in 1982, the position of young islanders became the central concern, as crimes committed by youth had increased three-fold, in particular among 14-16-year-olds. Some delegates blamed the parents, others blamed the economic crisis, and some blamed the party for not working with young people. Furthermore, drugs became part of the worries, with estimates of some sixty drug addicts on Hvar.⁶⁰⁸ Drugs became more available and were seen as a broader problem in Yugoslavia.⁶⁰⁹ There were 542 unemployed young people in 1988, and few had prospects. In brief, tourism was no longer sufficient to address the island’s employment needs.⁶¹⁰ A local survey revealed that young people mostly lacked meeting spaces, especially in winter.⁶¹¹ Unemployment, drugs, and the decline of societal life were part of the sense of malaise in the 1980s.⁶¹²

Many disaffected young islanders would have listened to the legendary Sarajevo rock band *Bijelo Dugme*. In 1986, the band released their song “Spit and Sing Yugoslavia” (Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo) with the prophetic lyrics “Yugoslavia on its feet/Sing so they can hear you/Who doesn’t listen to the song/They will listen to the storm.” It began with a rendition of the legendary partisan song “Padaj silo i nepravdo” (Fall, (oh) force and injustice) that celebrated Matij Ivanić. The song from Jelsa predated the partisan movement and became a popular protest song throughout Dalmatia.⁶¹³ For *Bijelo Dugme*, the song was sung by a children’s choir and the Partisan legend Svetozar “Tempo” Vukmanović. While the music of *Bijelo Dugme* was popular, as was its message of affirming Yugoslavia, the reference to the partisan struggle, which had been celebrated and institutionalized throughout the decades of Socialist Yugoslavia, could hardly succeed in re-legitimizing the state in the crisis years of the 1980s.

As the Yugoslav crisis deepened, it was also increasingly felt in Hvar. Hvar was, in many ways, a Yugoslav tourism island. While most hotel guests were foreigners, many Yugoslavs spent their holidays on the island in private accommodations, including in the many holiday homes. Furthermore, most of the nineteen company holiday resorts, known as *odmaralištas*, were owned by Serbian companies. In addition, the city of Belgrade ran a large holiday center for children with some 400 beds overlooking a bay close to Jelsa. The holiday center worked all year and was a formative experience for thousands of Belgraders.

Jelsa, in general, was popular among tourists from Serbia, and in 1985, Serbian visitors prepared a Serbian bean soup in a large military cauldron during the traditional wine festival.⁶¹⁴ Soon, such a gesture would become unimaginable as tensions in Yugoslavia grew. A bar fight could quickly get nationalist connotations, as a major brawl in a fancy restaurant overlooking Hvar in the summer of 1988 demonstrated. Fighting broke out in early August at close to 4 am. A group of customers from Belgrade got into a fight with the owner. According to a report by *Slobodna Dalmacija*, the group from Belgrade demolished the restaurant, and afterward, the cars outside with license plates from Split, Ljubljana, and Čapljina (in Herzegovina). In response to the brawl, there was a local uproar with threats against the Belgraders, who were escorted off the island under police protection.⁶¹⁵

Tensions had risen as economic and social grievances were increasingly framed in nationalist terms, especially by Slobodan Milošević, the dominant figure of the Serbian League of Communists. Until 1990, the interethnic relations between Serbs and Croats in Croatia were good. While most Serbs in Croatia lived in the big cities, there were regions, including in the Dalmatian hinterland around Knin, where Serbs were a majority. The tensions emerged first in these poorer regions, fueled by the Serbian leadership. By 1989, there were increasing incidents throughout Dalmatia and, in the eyes of officials, these “nationalist attacks and the situation [develops] at the expense of the unity and the centuries of harmony of the Serb and Croat people in Dalmatia.”⁶¹⁶

When two islanders were running the Hula-Hula night club, despite lacking the correct permits, *Slobodna Dalmacija* noted that “not all abuse of citizens on the Dalmatian coast is based on ‘national background.’”⁶¹⁷ This throwaway comment indicates how such interethnic incidents had entered general awareness.

The local authorities tried to defuse tensions and declared that “interethnic relations have never been a problem on the island. The island of Hvar is forever known as an open island, confirmed by the fact that it has been engaged in 120 years of organized tourism.”⁶¹⁸ The statement revealed how much the Yugoslav crisis encroached on the self-image of the island as a place that welcomes visitors from anywhere. Janez Lučić Lavčević, the municipal party president, proudly noted that in 1989, there had not been any national incidents on the island.⁶¹⁹ A meeting of the Veterans’ Association (SUBNOR) on Hvar the previous year concluded that “during the tourist season, the territory of Hvar remained outside the political battles on national grounds. There were no serious nationalist incidents during the season.” However, they expressed concern about nationalist rhetoric emanating from Belgrade but defended the Yugoslav People’s Army from those who “drag it in the mud.” In places like Hvar, the Army’s reputation is more than symbolic: It helped extinguish wildfires that often raged during the summer. It was still unimaginable that the same army would drop bombs on Hvar just two years later.⁶²⁰

In September 1989, the leading municipal officials, Nevenka Aljinović and Ivan Dominis, colloquially stated that “tourism and nationalism cannot go

together. Hvarians don't give a f*% about nationalism; they care if the bill has been paid."⁶²¹

The atmosphere shifted in Croatia in 1990 as elections and the future of Yugoslavia dominated the agenda. There was no strong movement to push for multiparty elections in Croatia. Instead, local initiatives focused on issues such as the environment. For example, in Stari Grad, the "Green Initiative" was formed to raise awareness of environmental issues, focusing on pollution in the area and the need to build a modern trash dump.⁶²² In January 1990, the Yugoslav League of Communists collapsed, and other parties were legalized the following month. The first multiparty elections were scheduled just two months later. Thus, parties had little time to set up and define their profile. The elections took place under the shadow of increasing Croat-Serb tensions and the power grab by Slobodan Milošević.

Hvar mostly mirrored the larger party landscape in Croatia. Next to the League of Communists, now the "Party for Democratic Changes," a local branch of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) was set up, the nationalist conservative party led by Franjo Tudjman. Ahead of the elections, the outgoing president of the municipal assembly, Nevenka Aljinović, called on all parties to hold a correct campaign "in which the interests of the island must be above party interests."⁶²³ In the end, the main campaign topics had little to do with local concerns.

Despite the island's relatively small size, all leading party candidates campaigned on Hvar. The largest crowd, several thousand, gathered when Tudjman arrived on a hydrofoil boat and spoke from the terrace above the Arsenal in Hvar town. He promised that the new government would decide "whether to live in a union [i.e., Yugoslavia] that has been hurting Croats for seventy years. If an agreement is impossible, everyone should go to Europe alone." The local candidate struck a more moderate tone "on Hvar, nationalism was never characteristic. The island was Europe during the Renaissance, and under an enlightened leadership, there is no reason it cannot be today."⁶²⁴

The League of Communists also campaigned heavily on Hvar. Their campaign focused on how Hvar had changed under communist rule. The local candidate Duško Kalogjera explained how "the lives of the inhabitants of Hvar has changed fundamentally ... today the inhabitants of Hvar live according to a standard that it is not just the envy of many just in our country, but also in other parts of Europe." The writer Jure Franičević Pločar more poetically described the transformation of the island during socialism: "[T]here are countless stone witnesses on Hvar on the hard work life on the scant land, where the flower of the youth went to the far lands over the ocean for bread, luckily today's generation doesn't have to do this because they are largely employed on the island."⁶²⁵ These appeals to past achievements did not succeed, and HDZ won a resounding victory in national and local elections.

The new HDZ authorities renamed streets and returned statues, most notably of Niko Duboković Nadalini in Jelsa.⁶²⁶ In addition, it also raised the question of partisan crimes during the war, a sensitive topic on Hvar due to the strong partisan

tradition.⁶²⁷ Besides identity politics, it could do little to improve the economic situation. Relations with opposition parties quickly deteriorated, and all parties began posting their accusations and counteraccusations on the window of an abandoned shop on the seaside promenade in Hvar town.⁶²⁸ Local debates focused on whether Hvar should remain a single municipality or be broken up. Aldo Čavić, a member of the liberal party HSLS and a prominent figure in the cultural life of Stari Grad, strongly argued for separate municipalities based on demographic and historical reasons. The centralization in Hvar town had resulted in it growing more than other towns, mirroring Yugoslav migratory trends that favored the main administrative cities. Hvar town doubled since the 1950s, whereas Jelsa and Stari Grad grew only slightly. Opponents of breaking up Hvar worried that the new municipalities would not have the resources to take on the tasks.⁶²⁹ The environment was the second issue of local importance. Besides the aforementioned civic initiative, the municipality developed an environmental plan for the island. However, these were overshadowed by the larger Yugoslav crisis, which sidelined the question of environmental protection.

During the summer of 1990, *Slobodna Dalmacija* confronted a leading ally of Slobodan Milošević on his holidays in Hvar. Nedjeljko Šipovac assured the journalists, “I have been going to Hvar for years and feel the best here. Hvarians are wonderful people, and I have never had the least problem with them.”⁶³⁰ The new mayor of Hvar also sought to reassure that Serbs were not staying away from the island.⁶³¹ Despite such claims, many Serbs hesitated to spend their holiday on Hvar. This was partly out of fear that they might experience hostile reactions, scratched cars, and pierced tires and partially due to an increasingly vociferous anti-Croatian campaign in Serbia.

In August, on the terrace of Hotel Helios in Stari Grad, a duo from Prijedor in Bosnia was performing; the waiters sang along to “Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia” as the foreigners danced. In this last Yugoslav tourist summer on Hvar, tourists were blissfully ignorant about what was brewing not far away.⁶³² The summer of 1990 started as a good season for Hvar tourism, unlike elsewhere in Dalmatia. In early August, *Slobodna Dalmacija* declared, “Hvar is full of tourists.” Ninety percent of the guests were foreigners, primarily from Italy, who were praised for “saving the season.”⁶³³

Trouble began in Knin in the Dalmatian hinterland on August 17. Local Serbs, with support from Belgrade, began blocking roads to the coast with tree logs, making the journey home for many tourists difficult. As many tourists were already starting to leave, an observer noted sardonically that “it is a big fortune ... that the West is too much preoccupied with the crisis in the Middle East [Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait] that the press does not pay much attention to the incidents in northern Dalmatia.”⁶³⁴ As the delivery of foreign newspapers was also delayed, many tourists were surprised when they encountered the barricades.

When the Hvar municipal assembly condemned the uprising around Knin, its rhetoric had turned nationalist, emphasizing the Croatian nature of both the island and the republic:

The island of Hvar is a boat. Until 20–30 years ago, only a Croatian population lived on it. That means the crew are Croats, who often left because it was not good for them. We consider Croatia a boat with a Croatian crew and no territory other than Croatia. And in this Croatian boat, people have embarked, among other Serbs Croats accepted them and accepted them generously.⁶³⁵

In brief, Croats are the owners of the land, and Serbs are guests, even if they had settled centuries ago. Gone was the emphasis on Hvar as an island of tolerance and tourism, but now the municipal authorities (falsely) claimed the exclusive Croat nature of Hvar.

In this climate, the tourist season in 1991 would be much worse. In April 1991, the Yugoslavia travel agency *Yugotours* presented its new catalog with Hvar featuring prominently on its cover at a tourism fair in Rome. However, the 400,000 copies of the catalog offered a false optimism as the country inched ever closer to war. Only three hotels were open mid-June, with 422 tourists and 293 foreign visitors.⁶³⁶

The Road to War

In May 1991, Croatia held a referendum over independence, which received overwhelming support from 93.24 percent of the population. Results in Hvar were similar, with 96 percent supporting independence.⁶³⁷ This was less the result of long-lasting aspirations than a reflection of increased tensions. A National Defense Council was set up on Hvar in January 1991, which included representatives of all parties and an unarmed national protection force recruited 700 volunteers.⁶³⁸ There was no Croatian army, which developed only ad hoc from special police forces and the territorial defense units that dated back to the 1970s. Hvar had its own Territorial Defense Unit, but the army had confiscated its weapons from the weapons storage in Split.⁶³⁹

The first armed unit was set up locally in July with twenty-nine islanders armed with hunting rifles and surplus Second World War-era guns. Nearly 400 islanders volunteered to join the military unit in 1991.⁶⁴⁰ The first commander, Nikola Šimunović, describes how, later, the unit would get a few guns from the Split municipality authorities and the rest from the black market from Slovenia, where he went to buy some guns.⁶⁴¹ In early August 1991, the local civilian and military authorities set up a crisis committee to plan for an armed attack.⁶⁴² The committee considered the main threat an attack by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) from Vis, taking over Hvar town, cutting the main communication lines, and controlling the airstrip.⁶⁴³

A speech by the mayor, Kruno Peronja, showed how the island had entered a crisis frame when he spoke about any attack on the island or its inhabitants: "We will not fill the prisons with those who attack local inhabitants and the property and the security of the island. The police and the national defense will intervene in

a short procedure. In war, there is no space for sentimentality; finally, we can name the enemy. They are terrorists, chetniks, and the JNA.”⁶⁴⁴ Peronja noted with some pride that no Serbian-owned holiday home or any of the Serbian-owned guest houses had been damaged and rejected demands to expel Serbs or use their houses for refugees. The main argument was not moral but reputational and pragmatic, as he worried that this would hurt the island’s reputation and that Serbian real estate might serve in future negotiations.

The war in Croatia broke out in July 1991, following the ten-day war between the JNA and the Slovenian army in late June. It began in the Dalmatian hinterland and Slavonia, where the Serb Democratic Party self-declared Serb Republic of Krajina, with the support of the JNA and Slobodan Milošević, took control of large swaths of Croatian territory. At the same time, the Yugoslav army aimed at cutting Dalmatia off from the rest of Croatia. In the summer of 1991, it was unclear what the final war aims of the Serbian side would be. Hvar had not been part of even the wildest plans of radical Serb nationalists, yet it was unclear how the war would affect the island. The siege of Dubrovnik and its shelling by JNA forces in the fall and winter of 1991 underscored that even a city that had no sizeable Serb community could come within the crosshairs of the army. Over the summer, JNA fighter jets flew over the island and the sea, trying to scare tourists and fishermen. Lastovo and Vis had been major army bases since the Second World War and were off-limits for foreigners for most of the Socialist period. The islands were under army control, unlike Hvar, where there was no army presence. Some army recruits also fled Vis for Hvar and were helped to reach the mainland—many members of the army and navy rejected the orders to shell Croatian towns. The most prominent case was Vladimir Barović, a rear admiral in the JNA who refused to shell Dalmatia and committed suicide in September 1991 on Vis.

Until the end of November, when the local military leaders met with the newly formed Croatian navy, the local unit had to fend for itself. The Croatian army was just emerging and had limited means to support the units on Hvar. As Kruno Peronja remembered, “except for moral support and assistance of twenty automatic rifles and ammunition, the island’s unit was not integrated into the army command for Dalmatia. As islanders, we were being traditionally used to our ‘isolation,’ and that altogether, we must rely on our strength on the island, we continued the activities for defense ...”⁶⁴⁵

The first attack on the island occurred on September 15 as part of a wider attack in Dalmatia. Planes from the JNA bombed the airstrip on Hvar, destroying three small aircraft. Two weeks later, on November 3, a fighter jet bombed a TV and radio antenna just outside Hvar but missed, and a month later, the airfield was attacked once more without much damage.⁶⁴⁶ A major naval confrontation took place in mid-November 1991 around Hvar. Earlier, the Yugoslav navy bombed Split and the islands of Šolta and Brač. After a confrontation with Croatian artillery and navy, the Yugoslav navy ships withdrew beyond the narrow gate between the two islands. In the sea battle in the Korčula canal, the Yugoslav navy was defeated, losing two minesweepers and a patrol boat. The minesweeper was abandoned on the coast of Hvar, close to the village of Gdinj.

However, the main impact of the war was less the fighting itself than the naval blockade on the islands. Throughout the summer and fall, the islands were on and off under naval blockade, making it difficult for ferries and small private boats to reach Split. Some supplies, including newspapers, were brought with speed boats. The blockade isolated the islands from each other and the mainland, resulting in skyrocketing prices, shortages on the island, and a general sense of isolation. The third and last naval blockade in 1991 ended in late November.⁶⁴⁷

In the summer, Croat refugees from Slavonia filled hotels and guesthouses. By early August, some 1,170 refugees were accommodated in the hotels; that number declined to around half by the end of the year as some could return. The newly created National Guard Units filled other hotels and guesthouses.

The threat of attack receded in January 1992 as the UN negotiated a ceasefire in Croatia. On January 15, the European Community countries, followed by others, recognized Croatian independence. While the JNA remained in the Serb-held regions of Croatia, it withdrew from its barracks elsewhere, including Vis and Lastovo, in May 1992. However, up to a thousand islanders continued to fight in the Croatian army, particularly in the unit Zvir, which was nearly exclusively composed of soldiers from Hvar. It fought until 1995 in the occasional skirmishes along the Dalmatian front, especially in Novigrad, close to Zadar and the Velebit mountains.⁶⁴⁸

Blockaded, with refugees coming, many began to wonder whether the domination of tourism on Hvar had been a mistake. At a meeting of the trade union of *Sunčani Hvar* employees, a consensus emerged that “the island has been misdirected for years towards just one sector—tourism.”⁶⁴⁹ Besides wartime measures, such as freezing prices and reducing costs for food, they demanded the promotion of agriculture and fishing. These demands to reduce tourism on Hvar never came to fruition. Within a decade, the tourist monoculture would be back on track. In the interim, the absence of tourists due to the war hardly offered an economic alternative. Still, it highlighted that without tourism, the island would return to poverty and isolation.

The fighting in 1991 and, in particular, the behavior of the JNA as a conquering army on Croatian territory ended the Yugoslav century on Hvar. Socialist Yugoslavia transformed the island from a poor peripheral island to a popular European destination. Despite the crisis during the 1980s, Yugoslavia remained popular. It was only the polarizing nationalism of Slobodan Milošević and the resulting tensions between Serbia and Croatia that made leaving Yugoslavia attractive and rattled the ties Hvar had within the larger Yugoslav system.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

MEMORARE NOVISSIMA

Remember what will come after

Inscription, Tvrdalj by Petar Hektorović, Stari Grad

The war in 1991 ended the short Yugoslav century for Hvar. The newest state to which the island belonged was now Croatia. Thus, within two centuries, Hvar had been part of the Venetian Republic, the Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Italy, and the Illyrian Provinces, both under Napoleonic dominance, once more the Habsburg Monarchy, followed by Italy as an occupying power, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and later Yugoslavia, the Independent State of Croatia under Italian rule, brief Partisan control, the Independent State of Croatia now under German military rule, and eventually the new Socialist Yugoslavia. Some of these states were ephemeral and left little imprint, others were enduring for a century, and some were brief but left a disproportional trace. The lasting impression for Hvar, as for many other places in the Adriatic and Southeastern Europe, was the recurring experience of state collapse. These changes are not just ruptures but also continuities. Many of the states struggled with the legacies of their predecessors. Similarly, when Croatia succeeded Yugoslavia, Hvar's economic, social, and political structures only changed gradually.

Even if the war for Hvar was over in January 1992, the consequences would last throughout the 1990s. The war in Croatia would only end in 1995 when a large-scale army operation in early August rapidly defeated the troops of the self-declared Republic of Serbian Krajina. The collapse of the Serb-held territories, together with most Serbs fleeing and being expelled from the area, brought the conflict to an end for Croatia. At the end of the year, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina came to an end with the Dayton Peace Agreement and the Erdut Agreement, signed at the same time arranged for the peaceful transfer of the last Serb-held territories in the north to Croatia.

During the war years, there was hardly any tourism on Hvar. In 1993, *Reuters* talked to a German visitor to Hvar who had been visiting Hvar since the early 1970s and tried to convince other regulars to return. Still, they refused, being afraid of warships and the landing of militant Serbs on the island. "Others say many refugees in old Yugoslavia are starving now, so how could a tourist feel

good eating well on holiday? Or they think our hard currency will buy Croatia more weapons?”¹ The following year, Veljko Lujanac, a tour guide, succinctly lamented, “I am sick for tourists.”² As the war years brought the island’s economy to a standstill, many survived through modest agriculture, but it highlighted how much the island and its population depended on tourism.

Even after the end of the war, it would take years for tourism to recover. The images of war, the nationalist and authoritarian rule of Franjo Tudjman, and the lingering threat of war in the vicinity, the war in Kosovo broke out in March 1998, further hampered a return to the tourism of the pre-war period. By the late 1990s, travel features and magazines “discovered” Hvar and the Dalmatian coast, noted that “this isolation, splendid for today’s tourists and unfortunate for locals, may not last long” *Conde Nast Traveler* magazine urged its readers to “catch this Croatian gem before the crowds do.”³

Fittingly, “The Mediterranean as it once was” became the slogan of the Croatian tourist board to advertise the coast, including Hvar, to the world in international media. This vaguely nostalgic slogan captured well the image Croatia sought to promote to the world. A travel writer for the *Financial Times* echoed this image when visiting Hvar,

Here, in its offshore havens, I found that distance from the mainland had added safety to enchantment. War is no stranger to the unending chain of Dalmatian islands, but it appears mostly in the faded pages of history, in the days of the early Greek, Roman, and Venetian invaders. Even the Italian and German occupiers during the Second World War left few reminders.⁴

By 2023, 320,608 tourists had visited Hvar, the majority heading for Hvar town, and, as was before the war, more than nine-tenths were foreign tourists.⁵ More tourists headed for the coast regions, yet Hvar, together with Dubrovnik and Split, became one of the best-known travel destinations on the Croatian coast. If, in the 1990s, the motto for Hvar was “discovering” a hidden gem, it shifted two decades later to stories about party tourists and the reputation of Hvar town as a place where young Europeans and Americans come to the party and sleep on the streets. Although the first new hotel since the 1980s opened in Hvar only in 2020, a five-star resort next to Stari Grad, tourism numbers boomed, again primarily due to private accommodation and booming hostels in Hvar town. In addition, frequent boat connections to Hvar town meant that party tourists could arrive in the evening and leave in the morning, partying through the night. The symbol of this boom was the nightclub and bar “Carpe Diem,” which opened its doors in 1998 and later also operated a beach bar. Ever bigger yachts docked at the port and brought a slew of global stars and billionaires, from Beyoncé to Bernie Ecclestone.

Pictures of tourists throwing up on the main square, having sex on the streets, and partying in the town’s streets all night circulated on social media, and more and more locals began complaining about how party tourism was making the town unlivable. When, in the summer of 2024, news broke that the co-owner of Carpe Diem and some security guards beat up the owner of a neighboring luxury

restaurant, the question of what kind of tourism the island wanted to be bubbled to the surface. In the days after the incident, over a hundred islanders protested in front of Carpe Diem against the bar, and petitions were circulated to restrict nightclubs. Within a few days, the state inspection “discovered” that the bar and beach club had operated as night clubs without the necessary permits, raising questions about how much the unbridled party tourism circumvented the rules with the authorities’ complicity. The fact that the co-owner of Carpe Diem hailed from Zagreb, not from the island, created additional antagonism. One incident thus brought to the foreground questions of over-tourism and the rise of party tourism, as well as how much the local community benefits from tourism. The rest of the island was not subjected to the hectic pace of yacht and party tourism, like Hvar town. Still, the dependency on tourism was once more consolidated after the hiatus of the 1990s, raising issues of the damage caused by ever-rising numbers of yachts. By the 2020 the tourism industry increasingly had to rely on workers from far away lands, such as Nepal, again transforming the island and raising questions not just about emigration, but for the first time about migration to the island.

Thus, tourism once more became an activity that dominated the rhythm of the island, for better or worse. Tourism has reinforced the island’s extreme seasonal character. The importance of seasons predates tourism, of course. Like the one on Hvar, rural societies are shaped by the cyclical nature of harvests that dictate the rhythm of life. Fishing also imposes a rhythm of fishing, when the fish is conserved, and waiting periods. These are reinforced on an island, where the Bura blows from the Northeast, making the links to the mainland often precarious. Isolation becomes more palpable in the winter months, even without tourism. Tourism has strengthened the seasonal nature of life on the island. The monotony of the winter, when most restaurants are closed and little is happening, is still a defining feature of the island. Nowadays, the population drops at the end of the tourist season, as many who work on the island in the summer leave for jobs elsewhere, whether in Austrian ski resorts or Zagreb. Others resume their regular jobs. Jasna Čapo argues that the two temporalities, winter and summer, are no longer defined by an exciting summer and a monotonous winter; the island is busy when tourists do not require everybody’s attention.⁶ In 1986, an astute observer noted, “In the summer, Hvar is not Hvar but a mixture of inhabitants of different parts of Europe and beyond. In winter, Hvar is above all just Hvar.”⁷ With tourists visiting Hvar for decades and visitors docking on its shore since the early modern period, Hvar would not be Hvar without those tourists, pilgrims, or travelers arriving.

Just like the temporalities of the island, isolation is a multi-faceted reality for Hvar. Since steamships connected the island to the coast, islanders and their representatives complained about its isolation. Often, tourism was the key argument to argue for better connections to bring more tourists to the island. Even today, when dozens of ferries and catamarans connect the island during the summer months, it still takes at least an hour to leave the island for somewhere else. In winter, the connections are drastically reduced and storms and bad weather make connections to Split precarious. This is much less than it was, but the notion

of departure and arrival, so blurred when taking a journey by car, bus, or other transport on land, remains pronounced when leaving or arriving on the island.

During earlier periods, the seeming isolation of the sea was a connection, and it enabled fishermen to seek out fertile fishing grounds thousands of kilometers away and became part of a rich exchange of goods and money across the Mediterranean. Ships facilitated the flight to Egypt during the Second World War. Thus, it was Dalmatians, mainly from the coastal regions, who were able to flee. Leaving for Argentina, New Zealand, and the United States was also more accessible along the shipping routes and for those used to traveling on the sea. These maritime connections might seem like a thing of the past, but today, many rural communities on the mainland are further from larger urban centers than Hvar is by ship. Isolation thus cannot be understood as an objective category, but it is highly relational. Tourism creates a hyperconnectivity, even if it is limited in time.

The history of Hvar is that of an island connected. Unlike the metaphor of an island embodying isolation, Hvar has been profoundly intertwined in trade, fishing, and tourism, as well as political and social exchanges with the empires and states it was part of, but also well beyond. The links across the Mediterranean bypassed the larger urban centers or capitals of the empires and states. Pilgrims, scientists, and writers visited the island in passing along the Adriatic or as a destination in its own right. By the late nineteenth century, tourists came, first to tend to their health and later for sunshine and recreation. Writers, scholars, and politicians hailed from the island, making their careers in Venice, the Habsburg Monarchy, Yugoslavia, and beyond. Thousands left for the Americas and New Zealand, but many came back and retained close ties to their families back home.

Instead of simply isolation, it is the strong sense of separateness that shapes the island. The mainland, "kopno," is an important marker of distinction from the island. At critical times, the islanders often had to rely on themselves. During the Second World War, the first partisan units emerged and organized themselves without much support from the mainland. Self-reliance has long been a critical feature of life on the island, but it could not exist without exchanges. It depended on grain, meat, and later water and electricity from the mainland. The wine, salted and canned sardines, dried figs, and olive oil, an insecticide made from tansy, rosemary oil, and later, lavender, were meant for markets, often far away.

In the era of islands, Hvar was an important island. Not only were islands the essence of Venetian rule, the ports to secure the maritime empire, but it was a world based on islands. Sometimes, they were physical islands like those controlled by Venice; others relied on trading posts that resembled islands. The control of large territories and the notion of states defined by land borders only began to emerge as the fate of Venice and Hvar declined. As islands made way to states based on territory, so did Venice's power and importance; with it, Hvar declined.

Over the past two centuries, the states that governed Hvar were often remote. Neither the Habsburg Monarchy nor the two Yugoslavias were oriented toward the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. Despite efforts by organizations such as *Jadranska Straža* in the interwar years, the states looked east, southeast, or toward Central Europe. Even today's Croatia, which has sought to distance itself from its links to the

Balkans, presents itself as Central European instead. The Mediterranean identity of the country is largely ignored. The islands that protect the mainland for most of the length of the Adriatic seem to isolate it from the Mediterranean, whereas the scattered islands of Greece open that country to the sea. As Egidio Ivetic, in his history of the Adriatic, observed, “the last two centuries have witnessed the nationalization of the sea as maritime regions are reduced to a peripheral status of each nation.”⁸ Hvar might become a brief center of attention during the summer months but quickly recede to the periphery as tourists and VIPs leave.

The strong sense of distinctiveness extends to the relationship between the island and the mainland and the island itself. Throughout the centuries discussed in the book, there has been a strong local sense of identity among the island's towns, villages, and regions. The two most pronounced divisions are between the more prosperous central and western part of the island and the eastern region, known historically as *Plame*. Onto this difference, larger conflicts and markers of distinction were projected, not least the term Kosovo to describe the poorer Eastern region. The other rivalry pitched Stari Grad against Hvar town. Hvar town dominated in size and as an economic and political center for most of the period discussed here. Stari Grad, on the other hand, had a longer historical tradition and was linked more intimately to the villages around the Stari Grad plain. Otherwise, the villages in the interior have a distinct history and identity to the towns on the coast. The villages focused on agriculture, winegrowing, olives, and later lavender, whereas the towns looked more outward to fishing and later tourism. The strong sense of local identity can be best described as *campanilism*, the notion of attachment to one's locality, defined by the *campanile*, the bell tower. This strong sense of local identity could develop, as nearly all the villages and towns existed in their current position through the six centuries discussed in this book, as mentioned in the Hvar commune's original statutes. This long line of historical continuity experienced few disruptions. Even the most traumatic and extensive displacement during the Second World War was temporary. Migration to the island was limited, and even those who left overseas often took with them their strong sense of local identity.

Despite the strong local identities, these were never captured or politicized to create local antagonism or conflict. For example, the Second World War was not just a foreign occupation but also a civil war in most Yugoslavia, but not on Hvar. Elsewhere, the war triggered a range of local conflicts and mass murders, be they along national or ideological lines or both. While there were supporters of the Ustaša movement on the island and the small number of Italians left supported the arrival of the Italian army, the war was essentially a conflict between the Italian and later German occupying forces and the Partisans. The Ustaša were too weak on the island, and their hold too tenuous to make them a credible force. As a result, the war left fewer deep wounds on the island than elsewhere.

This does not mean that the islanders were passive or that society was without conflict. The rebellion in 1510 against the local nobility was part of a broader European trend of peasant uprisings during that area. It became a reference for later rebellions, from the peasants protesting the lack of land reform in Zastrazišće in 1924 to the partisan resistance that sprang up in 1941 to protests during the

1980s. Especially in the villages, rebelliousness became a part of local identity. Whereas it was directed at local nobles in the sixteenth century, the main targets were usually representatives of the state rather than other islanders.

The Adriatic was characterized not just by multiple empires, such as Venice and the Habsburgs, but also by a cosmopolitan maritime culture. This fluidity does not match the more rigid structures of national ideas. Only in the late nineteenth century began the “[s]hift from a pluri-national, multicentred urban and maritime Adriatic space to a representation of the Adriatic region as a sum of ... peripheries depending on a continental ethnic core.”⁹ This process was by no means linear. Hvar, like most Adriatic islands, had a predominantly Slavic population. Yet, it was also a place in which Venetian Italian was the *lingua franca*, and the urban centers were bilingual. The notion that the Slav inhabitants were Croats arrived late and only gradually in the late nineteenth century. Just as not every Italian speaker became an Italian, not every speaker of the local Čakavian became a Croat. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the distinction between South Slavs and Italians became pronounced, and the Italian occupation and creation of Yugoslavia reinforced the boundaries. During the Yugoslav century, the duality of identity was Croatian or Yugoslav. The idea of a Yugoslav national identity remained an elite project, also on Hvar. It did find important followers, including the writers Nikola Bartulović and Sibe Miličić, who saw themselves as Yugoslavs. Socialist Yugoslavia offered a duality of Croat and Yugoslav identity based on the limited mass support for Yugoslav national identity. This duality required renegotiation but appeared to provide a distinction between national and state identity. The crisis of Yugoslavia and the war eroded this option within a couple of years, in 1990 and 1991. While national identities often claim a monopoly of identity or prioritize nation over other identity markers, be they local or supranational, the reality is more complex.

The book has traced four recurring themes over three states and six centuries. These are the linkages of the island and its inhabitants; how its inhabitants managed, called for, and negotiated change and modernity; the identity choices—local, regional, and national—the islanders had and co-shaped; and finally, the relations to the larger states to which they belonged.

The linkages brought pilgrims at the beginning of the book to the tourists at its end to the island and islanders across the world. The island is thus not isolated but a node connected in both directions. Change and modernity were a recurring question. The fact that a peasant uprising from the sixteenth century resonated in the twentieth century reflected society’s unresolved challenges. The difficult economic situation, poverty, and uncertainty persisted for most islanders until the middle of the twentieth century. The demand for change in a deeply conservative society, shaped by strong religiosity, produced the seeming contradictions of a strong Communist and later Partisan movement amid many devout Catholics. The two major waves of modernity and its global connections arose in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the global reach of the Hvar fishing and shipping connections, and in the second half of the twentieth century, with the rise of tourism as the all-encompassing driving force in the social, economic, and political development of Hvar. The island’s dependency on tourism, just like

on wine a century earlier, creates opportunities and risks, as phylloxera and war demonstrated. The identity choices were also far from linear, leading inevitably to the Croatian identity of the island today. Decisive moments, such as the Italian occupation after the First World War, the failure of the Yugoslav nation-building, and the experience of the Second World War, were crucial in shaping the identity choices when many islanders felt agnostic to the options offered or imposed up to the early twentieth century. As identities, states that governed Hvar are distant. While the Venetian period put the sea at the center and with islands, the later states were more remote.

The history of Hvar is a piece of the larger puzzle of the history of Southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean. By exploring the history of an island, this book has sought to show the processes of change in a community that includes small urban centers and villages inhabited by peasants, fishermen, nobility, intellectuals, artisans, and, recently, those working in the tourism industry. Shifting the perspective away from capitals and urban centers shows that other places, such as Hvar, are not just “passive regions” economically, politically, socially, or culturally but shape the larger societies to which they belong. It is the agency of its inhabitants, which is the central feature of the history of Hvar.

NOTES

Chapter 1

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FO, Foreign Office

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