

EMIGRATION FROM FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA TO CANADA

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1. The new France. Canada, an old French colony: emigration between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In 1873 Gustave Bossange, an official of the Canadian government and an agent of the Allan Shipping Lines, published in Paris a propaganda pamphlet in Italian entitled: *La nuova Francia. Il Canada, antica colonia francese. Appello alle classi operaie*¹ (*The new France. Canada, an old French colony. An appeal to the working classes*). Bossange described Canada as an enormous region of mostly French language and society, where Italians would find all they could hope to find in France without having to face the competition of French workers. The affinity of language and culture was greatly highlighted, in the hope that this ethnic closeness would reassure potential Italian emigrants. The better guarantees that Canada could offer as opposed to Latin America, and the comparatively shorter duration of the sea crossing (between 10 and 12 days instead of the 25 or even 30 days needed to reach Brazil and Argentina) could also represent determining factors in the choice of migratory destination. In the pamphlet by Bossange, Paris and Le Havre were the two meeting points of Italian emigrants. Departure was in Paris, from the Gare St. Lazare, at 10.50 in the evening on a Wednesday, to arrive in Le Havre the following morning at 6. Philippe Winterter, an innkeeper, in *rue de Percanville n. 20*, received the emigrants at the station and took them to his inn, then to the offices of the Canadian government, at number 51 Quai d'Orleans. Here the official of the Canadian government was in charge of certifying the contracts and transferring the luggage on board. On Friday the passengers were taken on board and left Le Havre for Liverpool, where they arrived on Sunday. About ten days later they finally reached Canadian soil.

¹ See Gustave Bossange, *La nuova Francia. Il Canada, antica colonia francese. Appello alle classi operaie*, Paris, Allan Lines Agent, 1873.

However, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, there were very few Friulians moving to Canada. In the three years from 1876 to 1878, the Italian authorities reported that only fourteen left for “new France” (and that is without distinguishing emigrants heading to Canada from those heading to America), and in the almost quarter of a century from 1879 to 1902 there were just thirty one. A year before, on the occasion of the visit to Udine of the Friulian, Giuseppe Solimbergo, the consul general of Italy in Canada, the daily newspaper “La Patria del Friuli” reported some of the comments made by the consul on the characteristics and consistency of the Italian community in this country of North America: “Our emigrants are generally poor; in Montreal the established Italian colony is made up of around 2.000 inhabitants; in Toronto about 600; a couple of hundred in Ottawa and fewer in Quebec. Then there are some settlements, of various dimensions, spread around the province of Ontario, in Winnipeg, in Manitoba; and larger ones, with a higher population density, in English Columbia, particularly on the island of Vancouver, where 8.000 individuals have been reported apparently mistakenly; in any case however it is certain that there are some thousands. It is impossible to determine with precision the overall number”².

During the first months of 1901, a considerable number of articles published by Friulian newspapers such as the “Giornale di Udine” and “La Patria del Friuli” discouraged those possibly interested in moving to this country of North America by informing them of the “extremely serious consequences” caused by emigration to Canada³. The “Giornale di Udine” reported the first outcomes of a research started in February 1901 by the “Corriere della Sera” on

a considerably large and mysterious flow of emigration towards the Swiss border. The emigrants, nearly all men, gathered in the town of Chiasso and from there they continued their way to the

² See *Gli italiani nel Canada (Italians in Canada)*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 23 March 1901. Particularly worthy of mention is the report *Il Canada sotto l'aspetto economico e politico* written by consul Solimbergo *Rapporto del Comm. Giuseppe Solimbergo R. Console Generale in Montreal*, in “Bollettino del Ministero degli Affari Esteri” – Bulletin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 1901, n. 190, pages 169-205).

³ See *L'emigrazione al Canada (Emigration towards Canada)*, in “Giornale di Udine” 9 May 1901.

north. In Chiasso, with agents belonging to a mysterious society, they signed a contract for jobs to be carried out in Canada, where it was said that this huge stream of emigrants [approximately 2.500] was headed.

In actual fact, contrary to the rumours which had spread in Chiasso (according to which the emigrants had been recruited by England to take them to the Transvaal region), the Milanese paper was actually able to ascertain the destination and method of recruitment of the Italian workers: “The correspondent related that the emigrants, attracted by the promise of a lot of work and good earnings, each paid 200 lira to be recruited, for the right to travel from Chiasso and receiving board only during the journey by sea”⁴. This matter, made worse by the outbreak of two cases of smallpox among the 250 Italians on board one of the steamers in quarantine near Quebec, raised a parliamentary debate between MPs such as Morpurgo, Pozzo, Marco and Cottafavi⁵. According to the Milanese paper, the emigrants were supposed to have been sent to work in the west part of the country, on the railways of British Columbia, even though in actual fact up to two thirds ended up in the United States⁶. A couple of months afterwards, the “Giornale di Udine” went back to the subject by questioning the real motives of those who had employed the emigrants, the conditions of whom, according to the paper,

are not at all bad now. In fact the news which reaches our government from Montreal is that in Canada there are no unemployed Italians; on the contrary, because of the strike by labourers hired by the *Canadian Pacific Railway Co.* there is a shortage of men, to the point that this railway company gets Italians to come to the United States to work for it, taking upon

⁴ See *L'emigrazione nel Canada*, in “Giornale di Udine”, 10 May 1901.

⁵ See *Per gli emigranti del Canada*, in “Giornale di Udine”, 13 May 1901.

⁶ See *Dolorose condizioni nel Canada degli emigranti italiani*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 7 May 1901.

itself the responsibility for any violence that the strikers could commit against the Italians who go to take their places⁷.

The beginning of this flow of Italian emigrants, who were supposed to have substituted as ‘blackleggers’ the workers on strike of the *Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)*, was the result of a deal between the railway company and Antonio Cordasco, maritime agent and manager of an employment agency in the city of Montreal. This big “boss” therefore became the exclusive agent of *CPR* and, together with Alberto Dini (who was, on the contrary, employed by the *Grand Trunk Railway*) shared the recruitment and organisation of all Italian labour carried out in the Dominion, from Italy, but also from the “Little Italies” of the United States. They acted as intermediaries between the work force and money, and their task was to recruit labour that was docile, especially Chinese, Galicians and Italians for the summer works of the railway. For the latter, Dini and Cordasco had to negotiate with agents in Switzerland, who were the direct employers of the labourers. In 1901 people from Friuli did not seem to take part in this emigration trade. Only in 1903, when the *Canadian Pacific Railway* recruited, through Cordasco, more than three-thousand-five hundred Italians (mostly from the Southern provinces, and the regions of Veneto and Friuli), the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce reported that two hundred and six people from the province of Udine had left for Canada. On 10 March, for example, the press news reported the departure, via Chiasso, of 45 men from the district of Codroipo, seemingly not at all poor

since they all had about 400 lira, and left behind in Sedegliano houses, animals and fields, and decided to make their way to Canada and not Austria because some men from Sedegliano, who were already in Canada, in a few months managed to send home considerable amounts of money, guaranteeing in their letters that a

⁷ See *Gli italiani al Canada*, in “Giornale di Udine”, 23 July 1901.

builder in Canada earns around 2 and a half dollars a day, that is more than 14,50 lira⁸.

Two days later, another thirty-eight emigrants left Sedegliano for Chiasso and Canada.⁹ In nearly all cases those concerned were seasonal or long term migrants, or according to the definition by Robert Harney of “target migrants”, that is “people who emigrated in order to earn enough money for a specific purpose and whose intention therefore was to remain in the host country only for a limited period of time, to reach the target they had set themselves. They had not come to North America to settle, but to earn enough money which would enable them to change their living conditions back home”. As Harney further explained, “only one season of work made it possible to save money and send it home; if they stayed for more seasons, they could scrape together quite a bit so they would not have to come back again”¹⁰. It is not a coincidence, in fact, that at the time the average remittance transferred from Canada, equal to 221 lira, was the highest among those sent from countries overseas where the majority of Italian emigrants went (Argentina 194 lira, United States 185, Brazil 168)¹¹. The economic advantages offered by work in Canada seemed to attract the nearly eight hundred Friulians, the majority of whom came from the district of Codroipo, and reached the country of North America during the course of 1904. On 11th February, for example, the daily newspaper “La Patria del Friuli” announced an emigration of about fifty workers “attracted by those who have preceded them to Canada, from where they write how well they have settled and about the high wages they receive”¹². A couple of weeks later, about twenty people from Codroipo, others from Zompicchia, Bertiole, Biauzzo and the villages nearby, overall one-hundred and fifty people, left from the railway station of the town of central Friuli. “By this time Canada can be said to represent the promised land for our workers who in hundreds leave for such a far destination”. They were “skilled bricklayers, carpenters, etc. who

⁸ See *Emigranti per il Canada. Da Codroipo*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 12 March 1903.

⁹ See *Emigranti per il Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 12 March 1903.

¹⁰ See Robert Harney, *Il re dei lavoratori italiani di Montreal: un caso esemplare di padronismo*, in Id., *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Rome, ed. by Bonacci, 1984, pp. 116-117.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pages 145 and 284.

¹² See *Codroipo. Continua l'emigrazione per il Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 11 February 1904.

have difficulty finding work here”¹³. On Friday 11th March the Mayor of Sedegliano Bernardino Berghinz said farewell and gave interesting information to all those preparing themselves for the crossing of the Atlantic. With Canada as their final destination, twenty-two workers from the village of Gradisca and other neighbouring villages arrived at the railway station of Codroipo travelling “on a cart, to the music of a harmonica and wearing the Italian flag on their head”¹⁴. The correspondent of San Vito al Tagliamento for “La Patria del Friuli” expressed his wishes for a safe journey to around twenty of his fellow townsmen, including bricklayers, carpenters, stonecutters and labourers, who left for Canada on 14th March¹⁵. On the afternoon of 5th April, the square of the station of Codroipo was practically invaded by “crowds” of emigrants about to depart for the Dominion. “I counted a long row of carts pulled by horses and donkeys; a flag at the head and a flag at the rear. The emigrants went through the village singing, followed by their families and friends”, recounted the correspondent from Codroipo, who also reported the departure of Giovanni Lunazzi, a teacher at the primary schools of Baracetto and Nogaredo di Prato¹⁶. The festive tone of the departure was in contrast to the first negative pieces of news coming from overseas that the daily newspaper “La Patria del Friuli” announced during the first days of May and described, with a wealth of detail, towards the end of the month. The account of the situation of Friulian emigrants who had just arrived in Canada was told by one of them, Enrico Cengarle di Codroipo, “a good worker, among the last to leave, and one of the most enthusiastic in his decision to travel to that land”. The letter written by Cengarle was just one of the many disheartening testimonies which arrived from overseas: it described “the appalling treatment received during the journey”, about the arrival in Montreal where the first people they saw were “a crowd of fellow Italians begging for bread and work”, about the impossibility of finding a job. Enrico Cengarle pointed his finger in accusation to “those assassins of workers, among whom there is that rascal Antonio Cordasco, who wrote to Mr. Paretti in Italy

¹³ See *Verso la terra promessa*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 7 March 1904.

¹⁴ See *Emigrazione per il Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 15 March 1904.

¹⁵ See *Partenza per Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 17 March 1904.

¹⁶ See *Codroipo. Un maestro partito per il Canada perché non ha più fiducia nei ministri della Pubblica Istruzione*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 6 April 1904.

to send over ten thousand workers when here there are already too many. He expects to receive 3 dollars for every workman he gets employed and who knows when a job will come up". During the spring of 1904, in fact, the reduced request for workers, a late thaw and the greed of Cordasco, who had recruited an excessive number of workers, caused the trade in emigration managed by this boss to go to the verge of bankruptcy. Between June and July 1904, the Canadian deputy minister of labour started an inquest on Antonio Cordasco, followed by a further investigation promoted by a Royal Commission of fraudulent business practices. The situation of the new emigrants was intolerable: "Here all we do is wander around the city doing nothing" wrote Enrico Cengarle. And he added: "If our wishes were to come true, those who spoke so well about this cruel land and Paretti who deceived us by saying that maybe 50 thousand workers would find a job and many other lies, will no longer be so fortunate, because they will feel the guilt of having caused such misery and pain to so many poor families"¹⁷. In his letter, Cengarle, brought into the open the network of relations which connected bosses, agents and sub-agents from one side of the ocean to the other. The Canadian employer (in particular industries requiring intense labour, such as railways and foundries) was in close contact with local intermediaries like Antonio Cordasco and Alberto Dini who, in turn, were assisted by agents and sub-agents located in the various Italian regions and in Chiasso, controlling the recruitment and transfer of the work force. Antonio Paretti, an agent of the navigation company "La Veloce" in Udine, was one of Cordasco's many contacts in Italy and there were numerous letters passing between them during 1904. In one of these Cordasco reminded Paretti of the type of workers the Canadian railway companies required (unskilled labourers and not skilled workmen) and complained about the fact that he had been sent stonecutters instead of plain labourers.¹⁸ It is not clear if this was also the case of Cengarle, in other words if he also fell as a "good worker" within the working categories in less demand. The daily newspaper of Udine, however, guaranteed the good faith of Paretti and described him as "a serious and conscientious

¹⁷ See *Codroipo. Brutte campagne dal Canada*, in "La Patria del Friuli", 29 May 1904. See also the article *Cose del Canada* in the issue of 10 May.

¹⁸ See Robert Harney, *Il re dei lavoratori italiani di Montreal*, above, p. 124.

man, not one of those who spread lies just to increase if only by one the number of emigrants”. Questioned by “La Patria del Friuli”, Antonio Paretti claimed to have never met his accuser, whose name did not figure in the registers of emigrants kept by his agency. The newspaper also added that Mr. Paretti “has never given anyone information on the situation awaiting them in the countries where they emigrated, but always advised them to ask the Secretariat of Emigration, which was specifically set up for this purpose and with which Mr. Paretti has always had good relations”¹⁹. In the spring of 1904, through the Secretariat of Emigration of Udine, the “Society for the protection of Italian emigrants of Boston” advised against leaving for Canada because “the working season is nearly over and during the winter workers are forced into inactivity due to the weather”. According to the “Society”, because of the excess of labourers, Canadian sites were “besieged by people offering to work for a miserly sum”²⁰.

The letter sent from Jackfish, a small village north of Lake Superior, by Ferdinando Della Picca, who was born in Pantianicco in 1870 and left for Canada in 1903, described the sufferings and frauds of which emigrants from Pantianicco, Friuli and Italy in general were victims. From the arrival in the port of New York, to the journey by train to Montreal, to the moneychanger in the local bank, to the registration at the local employment office (which Della Picca described as “a warehouse of working men”), until reaching his place of work “after 200, 300 kilometres... in the middle of the woods ... among strikes”, the emigrant was always deceived. In 1903, 48 people left Pantianicco and headed to North America: of these, as many as 21, who had returned home after a few years, would then go on to Argentina to work as nurses. Obviously, the news about the precarious conditions faced by emigrants in Canada soon reached fellow townsmen in Pantianicco who had stayed home. However, it was the unlikelihood of being able to save that work in Canada appeared to offer that persuaded possible new emigrants to stay put and after 1903 the local registers have no record of other departures for North America. Ferdinando Della Picca reported:

¹⁹ See *A proposito di una lettera da Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 30 May 1904.

²⁰ See *L'emigrazione al Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 1 June 1904.

The last day of the month finally arrives, the day we should get paid, but with one expense and another, the money remaining disappears, and workers are forced to manage without. And so what happens? ... Sad and painful things to tell: people curse... they swear... they plot. The mayor who issued the passport is cursed... even our home country is cursed: Italy... emotional scenes of anger and rage that would break the heart of any person of feeling! ... What can be done in such predicaments? Escape... escape... put yourself in God's hands. These things happen every day, to the point that at the railway of the *Grand Trunk Railway* Company in Canada Ontario more than 500 people from our province were found, with no clothes and after having been exploited in a barbaric manner²¹.

According to Della Picca the Friulian emigrants came from the areas of Bertiolo, Barazzetto, Coseano, Pantianicco, Codroipo, Camino di Codroipo and Villaorba. On 5th August 1904 the same newspaper published again the *Interessante lettera di un comprovinciale dal Canada (An Interesting Letter of a Fellow Townsman from Canada)*. This time the message that Daniele Jem sent from New Rochelle, in New York State, was loud and clear: "Don't come to Canada". The letter was written in 12 numbered paragraphs which illustrate the precarious situation of emigrants who had embarked in Canada, where "there is practically no work, also because the new railway line that was meant to be built has been suspended". The words of Daniele Jem therefore confirm the type of work for which Italians were generally used, but also the role of 'blackleggers' often bestowed on emigrants.

Up to now more than 45,000 and 50,000 emigrants have arrived.

The secretary of emigration has made an agreement with the

²¹ See *Dal Canada. Lettera di un nostro comprovinciale*, in "La Patria del Friuli", 30 July 1904.

railway companies to give them workers for a miserable price: from four to five lira a day and the poor emigrants have to accept, for fear of starvation. You can imagine. For fear of starvation. You can imagine how well these Italian emigrants are regarded, working for half the price Canadian workers receive.

The attack by Jem does not spare the intermediaries, who were also being accused by the Canadian authorities.

Here those who make money are the so called «correspondents», that is those who have agreements with the companies to provide workers. The worker has to pay two écu just to be considered. [...] Among the «correspondents» who took the most trouble to attract emigrants, there is a certain Mr. Antonio Cordaschi. But there are many more, because this «profession» is rather lucrative. But now these men are no longer used because the Italian workers who immigrated here took them to court, and the Canadian court condemned them to pay all the expenses and also compensation to these poor people²².

However, the earnings guaranteed by the railway works still seemed higher than those offered by a working season in Europe. Up to the beginning of the Great War, departures from Friuli towards Canada tended to be relatively constant, with sudden rises in 1906 and especially in the two years 1912-1913. Indeed in 1906 the daily paper “La Patria del Friuli” reported that the construction of important railway lines would require a high number of labourers²³. Two years later, in 1908, the job situation worsened because of the financial crisis that had hit the country since November 1907. “Farms were beginning to run short of jobs, to the point that some

²² See *Dal Canada. Interessante lettera di un comprovinciale*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 5 August 1904.

²³ See *La mano d'opera nel Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 28 April 1906.

of the workers were sent away and some were employed only 2 or 3 days a week”, wrote Giovanni Collavini from Sault Ste. Marie “where there are many of our fellow townsmen”. According to Collavini, who probably came from Bertuolo, those worst affected were the Italians who, at Sault Ste. Marie, were in the majority²⁴. In those same years, the Friulians were also in the coalmines of British Columbia, in the areas of Fernie, Michel, Natal, Coleman. On 13th April 1908, near the railway station of Crown Nest [Crowsnest Pass] not far from Michel, Giovanni Misson, a labourer from San Lorenzo di Sedegliano, died squashed under one of the wooden sheds used as lime deposits. While describing the last respects paid “to poor Misson”, the correspondent of the daily paper “La Patria del Friuli” confirmed the high number of Friulians and Italians in the area:

Thanks to the request by around twenty of his fellow countrymen who are workers here, especially Angelo Chiesa, Pietro Chiesa and Giuseppe Zoratti who organised everything, the authorities allowed the corpse to be carried here to Michel B.C, a small village where 500 Italian workers employed in the coalmines are living. [During the funeral] the coffin was followed by about 200 people from every region of Italy. In the sacred enclosure, fellow worker Pacifico Campana from Rodeano gave a passionate speech, paying his last respects to the dear departed²⁵.

The reports regarding the Italian community of Michel sent by the correspondent of “La Patria del Friuli” coincide with the results of the research that, after nearly one hundred years, Gabriele Scardellato carried out in the archives of the “Crowsnest Pass Coal Company”:

²⁴ See *Italiani maltrattati negli Stati Uniti*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 23 April 1908.

²⁵ See *La disgrazia mortale d'un friulano al Canada*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 5 May 1908.

To the east of Trail, for example, in the Crowsnest Pass coal-mining town of Michel, according to local employment records from the first decade of this century, a large majority of the roughly 470 Italians employed by one of the mining companies gave addresses for their next of kin or for their previous residences as «Udine» (probably referring to the province and not to the provincial capital). Some of the other Friulian place-names noted in these records include Codroipo, Sedegliano, Spilimbergo, San Vito al Tagliamento, Flaibano, and Zoppola²⁶.

The thirteen pioneers who, in 1905, arrived in the nearby village of Trail, were on the other hand, from San Martino al Tagliamento: here they found a sort of village-foundry made up of about 300 inhabitants including many Italians, who had settled in the “Gulch” district, previously known as “Dublin Gulch” and which then became “Little Italy”²⁷.

²⁶ See Gabriele Scardellato, *Friulians in Trail, B.C.: Migration and Immigration in the Canadian Periphery*, in Konrad Eisenbichler (editor), *An Italian Region in Canada. The Case of Friuli – Venezia Giulia*, Toronto, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1998, pp. 108-109.

²⁷ See *Ibidem* pp. 107-108.

Table 1 – People cancelled off the list coming from the province of Udine, divided by year and destination abroad (1876-1925) and repatriated from Canada to the province of Udine (1905-1925)

	Europe	Canada	Total emigrants	Repatriated from Canada
1876	17.561	2	17.871	
1877	16.769	9	17.400	
1878	15.395	3	18.407	
1879	15.194	0	16.988	
1880	16.538	6	17.800	
1881	19.439	0	19.951	
1882	20.292	0	20.816	
1883	25.987	0	27.839	
1884	25.387	0	28.540	
1885	23.699	0	25.819	
1886	25.744	0	27.325	
1887	29.292	8	33.859	
1888	31.422	0	38.429	
1889	34.186	0	39.126	
1890	38.001	0	39.359	
1891	36.480	0	37.550	
1892	38.754	0	40.972	
1893	42.121	0	43.907	
1894	47.550	0	49.177	
1895	42.866	0	44.930	
1896	41.398	2	43.004	
1897	44.706	0	46.579	
1898	50.571	0	51.569	
1899	55.485	0	56.241	
1900	43.256	7	43.614	
1901	49.448	3	50.290	
1902	45.069	5	46.051	
1903	49.251	206	50.607	
1904	23.660	791	26.042	

1905	35.567	877	38.759	0
1906	30.943	1.112	37.794	0
1907	31.531	856	35.512	0
1908	30.247	530	33.041	0
1909	26.911	793	31.348	0
1910	30.751	710	34.327	0
1911	33.270	716	36.494	0
1912	35.763	1.898	42.048	9
1913	33.473	2.023	44.053	13
1914	42.208	995	52.124	213
1915	1.665	84	2.231	129
1916	283	37	518	35
1917	122	3	163	25
1918	0	0	0	22
1919	2.993	380	4.531	186
1920	20.902	1.588	26.587	68
1921	11.231	1.208	15.649	164
1922	28.699	442	32.268	45
1923	28.026	1.151	35.867	9
1924	30.941	437	36.811	19
1925	23.139	291	27.356	33

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, Italian Emigration Statistics, years 1876-1914; General Commission on Emigration, Statistic Yearbook of Italian Emigration from 1876 to 1925, Rome, 1926, pp. 831-867.

N.B. For the three years 1876-1878, the numbers include emigrants for Canada and the United States together; data on repatriation was calculated only starting from 1905.

In 1909, Guido Picotti, an inspector of the local employment office, estimated that more than 35,000 (out of a total of 40,000) migrant furnace men and workers from areas around Udine arrived every spring to work in the furnaces and building sites of

Bavaria, Württemberg and Croatia²⁸. As for overseas, Picotti reported: “[South] America no longer exerts the great appeal it did years ago on our workers, who in the last twenty years have gradually come to almost abandon the idea of emigrating across the ocean, to the point that nowadays very few leave”. In the areas around Udine, it was only those of San Pietro al Natisone, San Daniele, Codroipo and Latisana that still produced a flow of emigrants headed to the other side of the ocean; in the other areas, emigrants for America represented a practically negligible number.

Our current emigration flows – Guido Picotti observed – are formed mainly by miners, workers, diggers and they prefer North America. They are employed for great building and railway works, and for the colossal American constructions of various kinds. Canada in particular is the destination of our transoceanic emigrants, who however do not go to stay there, but with the aim of returning after so many years, depending on how lucky they have been and on other economic factors and interests²⁹.

Before the Great War, in fact, in the village imagination emigration towards European countries was seasonal, and towards countries across the ocean, Argentina and Canada in particular it was limited to a certain number of years; it involved only men and its specific aim was to accumulate as much money as possible, which would then be used back at home to pay off debts (taxes and mortgages) or to buy land. Giovanni Battista Fabris wrote that, in the district of Codroipo:

Through the post office, or banks, some, the first who emigrated, sent their families the earnings from their work, which were needed to redeem a field, or the house from the hands of some loan shark – or to increase, with new purchases, their small possessions, or even

²⁸ See Guido Picotti, *Le caratteristiche dell'emigrazione nel circondario di Udine*, above.

²⁹ See ID., *Il soggiorno lontano dei nostri emigranti*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 3 November 1909.

to become registered as having no property. This was enough to make everyone believe that America was some sort of El Dorado for all.³⁰

It was therefore an emigration that tried to maximise economic advantages and those who emigrated rarely intended actually moving their whole family abroad on a permanent basis. Indeed the elderly and the women stayed back at home in Friuli “waiting for the crowns, marks and dollars that would arrive as a consolation during this period of forced widowhood”³¹ and took care of the fields, of a land that never guaranteed self-sufficiency.

2. Friulians in Canada between the two World Wars

The travel journals that don Luigi Ridolfi, chaplain of the motor ship *Vulcania*, published in 1931 describe in detail the main characteristics of the Friulian community in Canada between the two world wars. Old and new migratory waves, more or less common trades and activities, main villages and towns of origin, as well as the most frequent towns and regions of arrival were the factors defining the Friulian presence on Canadian soil. Ridolfi wrote: “Making a few calculations we can count no less than 3,200 Friulians, children included. About one thousand are in distant British Columbia. One thousand five hundred are in Ontario. The rest in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The majority work in mines and factories; a good part are bricklayers and navvies; some furnace men and hod carriers”³². Although it is extremely difficult to confirm or correct the estimations of the Friulian priest on the different trades of Friulians in Canada, the information collected by don Ridolfi during his pilgrimages in the towns of North America is in any case a sort of community portrait. The subjects depicted are the emigrants who arrived in Canada in the Twenties, but also those who travelled across the ocean at the beginning of the twentieth-century and decided to establish themselves, and had therefore lived there

³⁰ See Giovanni Battista Fabris, *Illustrazione del Distretto ora Mandamento di Codroipo*, Udine, printed by D. Del Bianco, 1896, pp. 125-126.

³¹ See *Emigrazione temporanea*, in “La Patria del Friuli”, 7 March 1911.

³² See Luigi Ridolfi, *I Friulani nell’America del Nord*, Udine, Arti Grafiche Cooperative Friulane, 1931, pp. 121-122.

for some decades. Of all the cities Toronto was the one that attracted the highest number of Friulians, approximately 500 according to don Ridolfi, up to twice as many according to other estimates³³: “The majority are from central Friuli. A conspicuous group is made up of people from Osoppo, Avasinis, Sedegliano, Gradisca di Sedegliano, Codroipo, Castions di Strada, Bertiole and Fagagna. They are nearly all bricklayers. There are some terrazzo layers from Sequals, Fanna, San Giorgio della Richinvelda and Provesano”³⁴. Ridolfi did not mention the time of emigration of the various groups, that is to say whether bricklayers and terrazzo layers arrived from Friuli before or after the Great War. Among the members of the first set the furnace workers from Zompicchia are mentioned for example:

Another group of friulani who had been in Toronto since about 1905 were the brickmakers from towns in southern Friuli. Many of them had worked at the same trade in Bavaria, as labourers hauling clay, or as firemen in the kilns. The largest employer in the city was the Toronto Brick Company at Coxwell Avenue and Gerrard Street. A small colony of brickmakers from the village of Zompicchia near Codroipo, in Friuli, lived near the brickyard, on Seymour Avenue³⁵.

Bricklayers and furnace workers from the area of Codroipo, however, continued to arrive even after the First World War:

Bricklayers and builders from Friuli began arriving in the city at about the same time as the brickmakers. The tradesmen were mostly from Codroipo and its surrounding towns, or from San Giorgio della Richinvelda [...] By the 1920s, Codroipo, in Friuli, would become a

³³ See Angelo Principe and Olga Zorzi Pugliese, *Rekindling Faded Memories: The Founding of the FAMEE Furlane of Toronto and Its First Years (1933-1941)*. *Ravvivare ricordi affievoliti: La fondazione e i primi anni della FAMEE Furlane di Toronto (1933-1941)*, North York, FAMEE Furlane of Toronto, 1996, p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

³⁵ See John E. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto. Development of a National Identity 1875-1935*, Kingston & Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990, p. 85.

significant source of building tradesmen and brickmakers for Toronto³⁶.

Mosaic workers and terrazzo layers are worthy of separate mention: they came from the valleys of western Friuli, Sequals, Fanna, Cavasso Nuovo, Meduno and Arba, and arrived in New York around 1880. From New York, the Friulian terrazzo layers reached every corner of the United States, of neighbouring Canada, but also to the Caribbean Islands. Friulian mosaic workers and terrazzo layers, in fact, did not arrive in Canada directly from Italy, but from the United States. In the latter country, don Luigi Ridolfi observed that “when you want to find Friulians in a town you need to ask if there are terrazzo or mosaic businesses and go there. Most times the entrepreneur is an American, but the workers are Friulian. [In Canada, on the other hand] the bricklayers, miners and factory workers preceded mosaic workers and terrazzo layers³⁷. In North America, terrazzos became widespread by using the same strategies already tested in Germany:

The contractors sent artisans to other urban centers to affix precut and set mosaics. If these employees saw a possible market, they often remained in the city to begin their own businesses. The first Friulian mosaic company in North America, Ideal Mosaic Company, began precisely in that manner [...] This process was repeated throughout the North American continent. When the De Spirt family of Buffalo sent employee Albino Pedron to Toronto in 1915, he established the Art Mosaic and Terrazzo Company. From Buffalo, the De Spirts did the work for the Cook County Courthouse in Chicago, the pre-1906 San Francisco Post Office, and Toronto General Hospital. Mosaic and terrazzo contractors eventually settled in each of those cities; in fact, after Pedron began his business in

³⁶ Ibidem, pp. 85 e 31-32.

³⁷ See Luigi Ridolfi, *I Friulani nell'America*, above, p. 43.

Toronto, one of the De Spirt sons opened a satellite firm for the family in the growing Ontario city. From Toronto, the De Spirts and Pedron sent employees to Ottawa, Hamilton, Timmins, Subdury, Montreal, Halifax, and other cities. Their employees eventually formed their own companies in each of these towns (another De Spirt opened a Montreal branch). The Friulian mosaic workers diffused their trade throughout North America between 1900 and 1903, just as they had done in Europe fifty years earlier³⁸.

In 1925, for example, Edigio (Gid) De Spirt from Fanna – reported John E. Zucchi – controlled the terrazzo business in the city of Toronto³⁹. Together with the De Spirt family there were many other building and terrazzo entrepreneurs, such as for example Pietro Rodaro and Andrea Ridolfi from Avasinis (Trasaghis), Leonardo Antonutti from Blessano (Basiliano), Giacomo Tortolo from Bertiole, Pietro Cantarutti from Castions di Strada, Antonio Venchiarutti from Osoppo, the Bratis brothers from San Giorgio della Richinvelda, Beniamino Cignolini from Codroipo. The Colautti brothers, on the other hand, were owners of a building, terrazzo and mosaic firm in Windsor. The city of Ontario, however, hosted many Friulians “some of which are employed in the city of Detroit”⁴⁰, an important industrial centre in the American state of Michigan. It is not unlikely that, during the Twenties and Thirties, this kind of commuting across borders between the United States and Canada, due to the differences in wages, also involved a significant number of Friulian workers. “Once again I have had to witness the difference between the United States and the English empire. The emigrants also know this difference in their wages. A bricklayer in the United States earns 12 dollars a day, while in Canada it is around 8. There is the same proportion in all other jobs. Hence the different quality of life”⁴¹.

³⁸ See J. E. ZUCCHI, *Immigrant Friulani in North America*, in *Italian Immigrants in Rural and Small Town America*, above, p. 65-66.

³⁹ See J. E. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto. Development of a National Identity 1875-1935*, Kingston e Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988, p. 84-85.

⁴⁰ See Luigi Ridolfi, *I Friulani nell'America*, above, p. 48.

⁴¹ See Luigi Ridolfi, *I Friulani nell'America*, above, p. 105.

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, it does not seem as if there were many emigrants who took advantage of the benefits offered by the Canadian government to those who intended to work in agriculture. Thanks to the “Immigration Act”, a Canadian farmer could be authorised by the government to introduce in the country one or more tenant farmers who would accept working for him for at least one year, in exchange for board, lodging and a small salary. However, a tenant who was willing to move to Canada had to prepare a long series of documents. Roberto Perin remembered the “barriers of bureaucracy” (the “webs of paper” as don Luigi Ridolfi called them) which his father Valentino had to get through when, barely sixteen, he left for Canada in 1924 thanks to a request for sponsorship signed by Gustave Martin, a French farm owner living in the state of Saskatchewan:

He [Valentino] had to present to the Canadian Immigration officer at the port of departure a copy of the letter written by the Canadian Department of Immigration accepting Martin’s request for sponsorship. This letter also had to be approved by the *Regio Commissario d’Emigrazione* (Royal Emigration Commissioner) in Ottawa. In order to obtain an Italian passport, Valentino had to possess an *Atto di Espatrio* (Expatriation Permit) issued by the consular agent of Italy in Winnipeg in which Furlan [a fellow countryman of Valentino] guaranteed a return fare for Valentino should circumstances warrant it. He had to have a statement from the provincial court of Udine that he was without a criminal record, as well as confirmation from a medical doctor at his place of birth that he was indeed a farmer, of robust health, and free from contagious diseases. In addition to an Italian passport, Valentino also had to have a Canadian visa for which he had to pay \$ 5. In applying for this document he attested to being able to plough, attend horses, and do farm work. He declared that he was in possession of 2,000 lire, that he paid for his fare himself, and that he had a first cousin

already resident in Quebec. Finally, Valentino had to undergo a Canadian medical inspection at the port of embarkation [Cherbourg]. On board ship, he was given an Immigration Identification Card that he had to show on landing in Canada⁴².

Friulians and Italians also took advantage of the new job opportunities offered by industry: the great steel plants of Sault Ste. Marie and Hamilton, for example, received a numerous group of emigrants. Hamilton, a town on the shores of Lake Ontario at the south of Toronto, was also called the “Birmingham of Canada”: here Friulians came mostly from the area of Codroipo and Zompicchia in particular. At Sault Ste. Marie, on the borders with the United States, the Friulians employed at the paper mill and factories came from Bannia (Fiume Veneto), but there were scattered groups formed by people coming from all parts of the plain of Udine and Pordenone.

From Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury the railway passes through the middle of the woods, where the winds have uprooted the trees or the fire has burnt them; through the middle of rock formations that have been lashed, cracked and split by storms. Now and again you come across a miserable hut, some sawmills and the occasional stopping point. It wrings my heart to see men working along the tracks or running to watch the train during its brief stops, because some of them are Friulians and as much as I wish, it is not possible for me to bring them comfort or a smile to their faces with a word about their distant homeland.⁴³

With these words don Luigi Ridolfi described his journey from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury, a mining town that attracted many Friulian emigrants. The first, the

⁴² See Roberto Perin, *Perin Peregrinations*, in Konrad Eisenbichler (editor), *An Italian Region in Canada*, above, pp. 66-67. For further accounts on the “webs of paper” which, in the years immediately following the First World War, caused problems for Italian and Friulian emigrants who wished to enter France, see Luigi Ridolfi, *L'emigrante friulano*, Udine, Segretariato del Popolo, 1926, p. 16 e 77.

⁴³ See Luigi Ridolfi, *I Friulani nell'America*, above, p. 107.

pioneers, had arrived between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, employed by the *Canadian Pacific Railway* for the building of the railway tracks. Most of them then went back to Italy or moved to other areas of Canada, but others remained in the surroundings of Sudbury, an area rich in mines and nickel foundries. In Coniston, for example, the foundry managed by the Mond Nickel Company employed some emigrants from Magnano in Riviera, San Daniele del Friuli, Rive d'Arcano and Fagagna. The village of Creighton developed in 1900 when the International Nickel Company (INCO) started extracting the nickel and copper present in this area. Some Friulan families, such as the Franceschini from San Daniele and the Cappelletti from Tomba di Mereto, or the Cozzarini, the Fabris and the Manarin who arrived in the aftermath of the Second World War, lived in Creighton until the beginning of the 1970s, when the INCO decided to close the mine and to knock down all the houses of the village. The foundation of Copper Cliff, a mining field created by the Canadian Copper Company, dates back to 1886. In this area there were not many Friulians and some owned food stores, like Giuseppe Topazzini from San Daniele del Friuli, owner of a renowned bakery. The town of Sudbury became an important destination for emigrants especially in the aftermath of the Second World War, when INCO started again to extract nickel from the mines of this area⁴⁴. To the north of Sudbury, in the middle of the woods, Timmins was situated right in the centre of an area of gold mines. Don Luigi Ridolfi wrote:

Some [gold shafts] are 1,000 meters deep. The gold is extracted in its primitive state, in crystals and veins in the quartz rocks, mixed with pyrite, antimony sulphur, silver minerals, copper, iron, tellurium, etc. [...] The shafts of Hollinger throw out up to 600 tons of rock every day. One ton produced about 20 dollars worth of gold. That makes an average of 12,000 dollars a day. But let us not forget that there are from 2 to 3 thousand workers. The previous year one

⁴⁴ On the Friulian and Italian community of Sudbury and of the neighbouring countries see Diana Iuele-Colilli, *I Friulani di Sudbury*, New York-Toronto-Ontario, Legas, 1994 and by the same author *Creating an Identity: The Friulian Community of Sudbury*, in Konrad Eisenbichler (editor), *An Italian Region in Canada*, above, pp. 85-101.

million and a half ounces of pure gold were gathered, and then sold for 30 million dollars⁴⁵.

In Timmins, and especially in nearby Schumacher, Friulians, families and single men, worked in the fields extracting gold for MacIntyre and Hollinger⁴⁶.

3. Old and new migration flows: emigration after the Second World War

At the end of the Second World War there was a new surge in emigration. A flow resumed towards the older countries of destination such as France, Belgium, Argentina and the United States, and there was an increase towards countries such as Canada and, to a lesser extent, Switzerland, which had already, since the last years of the nineteenth century, hosted a considerable number of Friulians. New migratory routes also opened towards countries such as Venezuela, Australia and South Africa. In the years after the Second World War,

Canada was one of the first countries to reach special agreements with Italy for the recruitment of labourers. But within the short space of a couple of years, the unprecedented expansion of the Canadian labour market made Italy become one of the greatest suppliers of population and manpower. The Canadian policy of «sponsoring» contributed to this, by facilitating the entry of candidates with a family relative residing legally in Canada and who declared himself willing to act as a «sponsor» and take on the financial responsibilities of those newly arrived during the time it took them to settle. Italians were the nationality that mostly took advantage of this policy. Indeed, among all the Italians who emigrated to Canada

⁴⁵ See Luigi Ridolfi, *I Friulani nell'America*, above, pp. 112-113.

⁴⁶ See James Louis Di Giacomo, *They Live in the Moneta: an Overview of the History and Changes in Social Organization of Italians in Timmins*, in "Polyphony. The Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario", 1985, v. 7, n. 2, *Italians in Toronto*, p. 84.

between 1948 and 1967, about 90% were sponsored by Canadian relatives⁴⁷.

The Friulians also took advantage of this mechanism which favoured more established communities. In the period from 1955 to 1980, of the over 500,000 Italian emigrants to Canada about 7% came from Friuli Venezia Giulia⁴⁸. In the city of Toronto, where already since 1932/3 emigrants had set up a “Famee Furlane”⁴⁹ and actively participated in the fight against Fascism⁵⁰, the groups coming from various villages set in motion once again the migratory chains that had been interrupted by the great crisis and by the Second World War. New chains also emerged, diversifying and enriching the existing components of the group. After this opening to immigration on behalf of the Canadian government and throughout the Fifties, “there were many routed into the country – family sponsorship, refugee status, work permits, one year contracts in the bush, in the mines, on a farm, or on the railroads”⁵¹. The case of the refugees from Giulia and Dalmatia who arrived in Canada after the end of the war is worthy of separate mention. Effectively, while the migratory route of the Friulians reaching Canada in the years after the Second World War took place, apart from a few exceptions, within the social networks created mostly by the relatives and fellow townsmen who had already emigrated to this side of the ocean (for example by way of “family links”), in the case of the Giulians the recruitment,

⁴⁷ See Bruno Ramirez, *In Canada*, in Piero Bevilacqua – Andreina De Clementi – Emilio Franzina, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana. Arrivi*, Rome, ed. by Donzelli, 2002, p. 93. On Canadian emigration policies in the years following the Second World War see Franc Sturino, *Post-World War Two Canadian Immigration Policy towards Italians*, in “Polyphony. The Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario”, 1985, v. 7, n. 2, *Italians in Toronto*, pp. 67-72.

⁴⁸ See Clifford Jansen, *Italians in a Multicultural Canada*, Lewiston – New York, Edwin Mellen, 1988, p. 60.

⁴⁹ On the history and evolution of the “Famee Furlane” in Toronto, as well as the renowned volume by Angelo Principe and Olga Zorzi Pugliese see for example Gianni Angelo Grohovaz (editor), *1932 – 1982 The First Half Century. Il primo mezzo secolo*, Toronto, Famee Furlane Club, 1982 and Gianni Angelo Grohovaz (editor), *La nostra storia. Our Story*, Toronto, Friulian Women Society, 1988.

⁵⁰ Giuseppe De Carli (Arba 21.12.1883 – Toronto 15.2.1964) and Dante Colussi-Corte (Frisanco 10.12.1890 – Toronto 13.3.1966), first (1933-'35) and second president (1936-1940) of the “Famee Furlane” in Toronto distinguished themselves for their ideas openly against the Fascist regime. The latter “remains one of the most interesting and enigmatic figures of liberal anti-Fascism of Italo-Canadian origin, as testified by his publishing activity: first as the one in charge of the “Bulletin” of the Inter-Social Committee [federation of the most important Italian federations of Toronto], published every week in the “Progresso italo-canadese”, and then as director of the anti-Fascist weekly “Messaggero italo-canadese”, see Angelo Principe – Olga Zorzi Pugliese, *Rekindling Faded Memories*, above, pp. 21, 47-56.

⁵¹ See John Zucchi, *Furlans in Toronto and across Canada*, in *Landed. A Pictorial Mosaic of Friulani Immigration to Canada*, Toronto, Friuli Benevolent Corporation, 1992, p. 6.

the ways of migration and their settling in their new lives were very different. The end of the war and the moving back of the political borders in Venezia Giulia set the migratory flows once again in motion, represented in the period between 1946 and 1952 by about 300,000 refugees from Istria and Dalmatia. “The United States, Canada, Australia and Argentina were the foreign destinations mostly chosen by the refugees, due to the existence of migratory routes that had already been set up by various international organisations (Catholic Relief Service, IRO (International Refugee Organisation, ICEM (Inter-government Committee for European Migration), etc.), rather than a free choice of the refugees to move to those countries”⁵². On the other hand, after 1955 with the ending of the Allied Military Government the flows moving from Trieste were the result of the difficult economic situation which hit the city and, in many cases, they followed migratory courses that had been previously started.

A great number [of people from Giulia and Dalmatia] came to Canada during the Fifties, because the Canadian federal government, in need of people, revoked between 1947 and 1951 the naming of Italians as “enemy aliens” and imposed a policy of active recruitment. For some the journey to Canada was paid by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) or by the companies that had employed them. Although there is no precise information regarding the immigration of people from Giulia and Dalmatia in Canada during this period, between 1946 and 1948 71,200 immigrants arrived from the regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino, and between 1949 and 1950 another 102,500 immigrants

⁵² See Giorgio Valussi, *La comunità giuliana in Argentina. Analisi dei processi di mobilità geografica e sociale*, in Francesco Citarella, above, p. 378. On the Slovenes who reached Argentina between 1947 and 1950 see Joseph Velikonja, *Las comunidades eslovenas en el Gran Buenos Aires*, in “Estudios migratorios latinoamericanos”, I (1985), n. 1, pp. 48-61.

arrived among whom it is known that there were many people from Giulia and Dalmatia.⁵³

Toronto and other towns around the country such as Montreal⁵⁴ were the points of arrival for the majority of the new emigrants coming from Friuli, Giulia and Dalmatia. Ontario (as well as the metropolitan area of Toronto, and the towns of Windsor, Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Oakville, Sudbury, St. Catherine, Port Colborne and Thunder Bay) was the most popular province with people from Friuli, Giulia and Dalmatia. In 1952, don Luigi Ridolfi wrote: “during the last few years, Toronto has absorbed so many Friulians, that maybe no other town can beat it”⁵⁵. Friulians and Italians, however, also ventured as far as the western provinces of the country (Edmonton and Calgary in Alberta; Winnipeg in Manitoba; Vancouver in British Columbia) and the eastern ones (Halifax in Nova Scotia; Quebec City in Quebec). Villages such as Azzano Decimo, Cordenons, San Vito al Tagliamento, San Quirino, Fiume Veneto and Codroipo for example, the inhabitants of which had reached Canada between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also in the years following the First World War, sent a large number of emigrants. During the Fifties and Sixties, many of these communities of fellow countrymen organized themselves and created associations or groups named after their villages, like the “Club Ricreativo Sanquirinese” (Recreational Club of San Quirino) in 1957 or the “Nos de Cordenons”⁵⁶ group. This tendency to form associations among themselves

⁵³ See Robert Buranello, *Considerazioni storiche e prospettive moderne sui Giuliano-Dalmati Canadesi*, in “Italian Canadiana”, 1993, v. 9, p. 56; see also Konrad Eisenbichler, *I Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada*, in Robert Buranello (ed.), *I Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada: considerazioni ed immagini*, New York-Ottawa-Toronto, Legas, 1995, pp. 103-105.

⁵⁴ On the Friulians in Montreal see Mauro Peressini, *Migration, famille et communauté. Les Italiens du Frioul à Montréal*, Montreal, Comité pour les études italiennes – Université de Montréal, 1990.

⁵⁵ See Luigi Ridolfi, *Lacrime cristiane*, Udine, Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1952, p. 170.

⁵⁶ On emigration from San Quirino, Fiume Veneto, Cordenons, Azzano Decimo and San Vito al Tagliamento in Canada see respectively Lidio D’Odorico, *Emigrazione e immigrazione a San Quirino*, in Paolo Goi (ed.), *San Quirino. Storia del suo territorio*, San Quirino, Municipality of San Quirino, 2004, pp. 283-316; Giuseppe Bariviera, *Per le strade del mondo. 100 anni di emigrazione a Fiume Veneto*, Pordenone, Municipality of Fiume Veneto, 2001; Various authors., *L’emigrazione friulana in Canada*, catalogue of the photography exhibition of July 2000 in the towns of Azzano Decimo, Cordenons and San Vito al Tagliamento, Pordenone, Ente Friulano Assistenza Sociale Culturale Emigranti (Friulian Association for Social and Cultural Assistance to Emigrants), 2001; Luigia and Bruno Sappa, *Immagini delle emigrazioni*, in Various authors, *Azzano Decimo*, v. II, Azzano Decimo, Municipality of Azzano Decimo, 1986, pp. 269-301; Luigi Manfrin, *Nos. Venticinque secoli di vita cordenonese*, Fiume Veneto, Geap, 1992, pp. 263-274; Scuola Media Statale “L. Da Vinci”, *Quaderni cordenonesi. Emigrazione in Italia, in Friuli, a Cordenons*, Cordenons, Scuola Media Statale, 1976-1977, pp. nn.

demonstrated by the Friulians, but also more recently by the people of Giulia and Dalmatia, increased gradually while the community's role established itself throughout the various areas of the country: indeed, as well as those in Toronto, new community organizations were founded, not only with the aim of preserving their original cultural heritage and passing it on to the new generations who were born and raised in Canada, but they also began to offer a range of services in sectors such as health, education and information⁵⁷. The first informal gathering of people from Giulia, Dalmatia and Istria as such took place in Chatam in Ontario, and already started organizing periodic meetings from 1962: “in 1968, the first club was founded, the Giulian-Dalmatian Club and it published its first periodical, *El Boletin*. After some years the group from Chatam formed the League of Istria. Following the success of the '91 Assembly', the clubs of people from Giulia and Dalmatia started to blossom across the country from Vancouver to Montreal”⁵⁸.

The Canadian industrial economy and the sectors where there was the highest concentration of Friulian and Italian workforce, such as the car industry, the iron and steel industry, but most of all the building industry, offered many ways to rise up the social ladder.

In the cities some Friulani, especially women, would work in factories, but chances were that a Friulano would end up, like his pre-war co-regionalist, in the building trades. Indeed in the construction boom in Toronto in the 1960s and 70s thousands of Friulani worked in carpentry, bricklaying, tile setting, terrazzo, plastering and formworks⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ On the creation and development of the various associations, *famee* and *fogolârs* in Canada, as well as the interesting news reported since 1973 by the paper “La Cisilute” (body of the “Federation of Fogolârs Furlans of Canada”) see for example *Fogolârs '89. A mare usque ad mare. Di un mâr a chel atri*, 8vo Halifax National Congress 6-9 October 1989, Halifax, Fogolârs Federation of Canada, 1989; *Fogolârs '94. Percorsi friulani in Canada*, 10th National Congress – 20th Anniversary Sudbury 7-10 October 1994, Sudbury, Fogolârs Federation of Canada, 1994. On the “Federation of Fogolârs Furlans of Canada”, created in October 1974, see Errepi [Rino Pellegrina], *Federazione dei Fogolârs del Canada. Tanto per non dimenticare*, in *Fogolârs '94. Percorsi friulani in Canada*, above, pp. 1-4; Monica Stellin, *From Sea to Sea. An Illustrated History of the Fogolârs Federation of Canada*, s. l., Fogolârs Federation of Canada, 1999.

⁵⁸ See Robert Buranello, *Introduzione*, in Id. (ed.), *I Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada*, above, p. 12; in the same volume see also Konrad Eisenbichler, *I Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada*, pp. 106-108.

⁵⁹ See John Zucchi, *Furlans in Toronto and across Canada*, above, p. 6.

The building trade paved the way for a wide variety of autonomous activities: some emigrants established prominent businesses and started an important entrepreneurial class of Italo-Canadian origin. The Del Zotto brothers, Angelo, Elvio and Leo (sons of Jack, who emigrated from Cordenons in the second half of the Twenties) and Primo De Luca from Codroipo, who left for Canada in 1954, represent two examples of well-known building contractors and active members in the community life of Friulians and Italians. Furthermore, emigrants also played an active role in the Canadian trade-union movement. In the industrial sector, where the presence of Italians and Italo-Canadians was higher, “the participation quotas are particularly high, and it is not a rare occurrence that they cover a position of leadership during strikes and in the management of the unions themselves”⁶⁰. This was the case, for example, of the union leader Marino Toppan, born in Basedo di Pordenone, he emigrated to Canada in 1955. Three years after arriving in Toronto, Marino became a member of the Union of Canadian Builders. During the turbulent uprising by building workers which followed the tragedy of the Hogg’s Hollow construction site, where five builders lost their lives, Marino Toppan led the ‘Local 40’ of the Builders’ International Trade Union. Toppan wrote in his memoirs:

Since its first day, «The Immigrant Uprising» as it was called, revealed itself to be rather effective in causing the closing down of a great deal of the building sites of Toronto and its surrounding areas, involving about twenty thousand workers. Our flying squads, each formed by at least ten or fifteen cars, stormed into the building yards where the labourers had not suspended their work.⁶¹

In 1964, Marino set up the Union of Footwear-factory Workers and, following that, became a member of the Local 506 of the “Labourers International Union of North

⁶⁰ See Bruno Ramirez, *In Canada*, above, p. 95.

⁶¹ See Marino Toppan, *La voce del lavoro. Una vita dedicata all’edilizia di Toronto*, Pordenone, Amministrazione Provinciale di Pordenone, 2004, p. 90.

America” (the union of hod carriers), of which he was nominated president. In those same years, Toppan started and hosted a popular radio programme called “La voce del lavoro” (“The voice of workers”), focusing on the problems faced by workers. Other Canadian Friulians entered into politics thanks to the concentration of “the Italian vote” in the various constituencies with high residential density: this was the case of Peter (Pietro) Bosa, born in Bertuolo in 1925, a member of the Federal parliament, and also of Sergio Marchi, born in Buenos Aires, whose family came from Domanins di San Giorgio della Richinvelda and then emigrated to Canada, who was minister of the Federal government a number of times⁶².

These few examples illustrate the rise of emigrants from Friuli, Giulia and Dalmatia in Canada, from economics to politics, from cultural life to community life, and they indicate the level of integration reached in the host society. On the other hand, however, these people from Friuli, Giulia and Dalmatia were also able to maintain a close relationship with their mother country and, in a multicultural environment, transmit their original cultural heritage to the new generations of Canadians of Italian origin⁶³.

⁶² For a profile of Peter Bosa and Sergio Marchi see respectively *Canadian Who's who*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1993, p. 116 e 717.

⁶³ On the problem of conserving the national cultural identity in the new generations of emigrants from Friuli, Giulia and Dalmatia respectively see for example Guido Barbina, *La comunità friulana in Canada fra integrazione e assimilazione*, in Maria Luisa Gentileschi – Russell King (ed.), *Questioni di popolazione in Europa. Una prospettiva geografica*, Bologna, Patron Editore, 1996, pp. 11-21; Robert Buranello, *I giovani giuliano-dalmati e la crisi d'identità*, in Id. (a cura di), *I Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada*, above, pp. 83-93. On continuing the use of the Friulian and Italian languages and of the dialects spoken by the community of people from Giulia and Dalmatia, see for example Monica Stellin, *Gruppi linguistici ed etnici e processo migratorio: l'esperienza canadese*, in Raffaella Bombi – Giorgio Graffi (ed.), *Ethnos e comunità linguistica: un confronto metodologico interdisciplinare. Ethnicity and Language Community: An Interdisciplinary and Methodological Comparison*, papers from the international conference Udine 5-7 December 1996, Udine, Forum, 1997, pp. 463-477; Gabriele Erasmi, *La question de la lingua dei Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada: possibilità e prospettive*, in Robert Buranello (ed.), *I Giuliano-Dalmati in Canada*, above, pp. 62-72.