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## Border Town of Nova Gorica and Its Role in Forming a New Urban Center : Nova Gorica in Its First Years after the Foundation

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Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne 8, 103-118

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2004

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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# **Border Town of Nova Gorica and Its Role in Forming a New Urban Center: Nova Gorica in Its First Years after the Foundation**

## **Introduction**

Gorizia (Slovenian Gorica, German Görz, Friulian Guriza) and Nova Gorica are two towns divided by the border between Italy and the Republic of Slovenia. Gorizia/Gorica was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the territory of Italian Kingdom in the period between the two World Wars, it was the only center of the wider political and administrative unit.

But after the World War II this unit was divided by the border between Yugoslavia and Italy. According to the Paris Treaty (15 September 1947), the biggest part of the town Gorizia/Gorica remained under Italian administration while suburban villages on the east part of the town remained in Yugoslavia. The autochthonous Slovenian population thus, with regard to their language, culture and tradition, became a minority community within the Italian State, so as did the Slovenes in the Provinces of Trieste/Trst and Udine/Videm. In the first years

after the World War II, the new border was totally impermeable until eventually the Udine Agreement introduced new regulations and opened the borders for cross-border activities.

The new post-war territory near the border (on Yugoslav part) had no administrative and infrastructural center at all, but had numerous Slovenian population. Because of this situation the new post-war regime decided to build a new border city on the Slovenian side and call it Nova Gorica.

I started ethnological research about this issue last year and it is aimed to study bibliography, archives and also includes the field research on both sides of the border. In the following text I would like to present preliminary results about how the city Nova Gorica was founded, developed and how it performed relatively important administrative and economic tasks and thus became an important force for the surrounding area. Its most important role, however, is related to cross-border relations, especially nowadays when Slovenia is preparing for the accession to the EU.

The town of Gorica/Gorizia is situated in an area surrounded by the Goriška Brda hills, Trnovska planota and Goriški Kras in the east and the vast Po flatlands in the west. This was an area in which, in the Middle Ages, a market settlement strongly connected to the nearby castle was formed on the top of the most suitable hill and named Gorica. Its population constantly increased<sup>1</sup> with the exception of the period after the World War I<sup>2</sup> and the town expanded into all directions. After 1927 the Kingdom of Italy annexed all the nearby villages and towns, and along with them also a large Slovene population, to Gorica (Gorizia in Italian). Gorica/Gorizia thus became not only the administrative, transportation, economic and cultural center of the Goriško polje area, but also the center of the entire Posočje, that is the area along the Soča river. The tolerance, pervading this part of the Austrian Empire<sup>3</sup> in the past and the result of four-centuries-long multiethnic cohabitation of Italians, Slovenes, Friulians, Germans and Jews, was destroyed in the period of the fascist regime. The period between the two World Wars was filled with violent actions against Slovene-speaking individuals or groups. "The use of any other language except Italian

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Gorica had approximately 5,000 inhabitants; in the second half 10,000, in 1853 – 20,000, in 1888 – 32,000, in 1910 – 48,000, in 1921, because of the ravages of war – 42,000 and in 1931 – 49,000. See Z. Mlinar: *Humanizacija mesta. Sociološke razsežnosti urbanizma in samoupravljanja v Novi Gorici*. Maribor 1983, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Let us just mention eleven offensives of the so-called Soča Front between June and October 1917. They ended with the final defeat of Italy in the 1917 battle by Kobarid (Caporetto). The entire front hinterland was devastated and the number of victims rose to 1,400,000. Among them were also the soldiers from local villages and towns.

<sup>3</sup> In this period the town acquired its three names: Gorica in Slovene, Gorizia in Italian and Görz in German. Since the last one later became irrelevant I shall use only the first two.

was termed a politically disloyal act; Slovene language was systematically removed from schools, liturgy, toponymy and local onomastics.”<sup>4</sup> As a result of the so-called “racial laws” in 1938 the local Jewish community was brutally destroyed in spite of its long tradition.

Italy capitulated on September 8, 1943 and partisans marched into Gorica/Gorizia on 1<sup>st</sup> May two years later. The area became the subject often discussed at peace conferences and diplomatic battles for the western Yugoslav border. Upon the pressure of Great Britain and the USA, and on the basis of the Belgrade (June 6, 1945) and the Duino (June 20, 1945) Treaties this area of Primorsko, which was freed by the partisans, was divided by the so-called Morgan Line into Zone A and Zone B. The area of Gorica/Gorizia came under the jurisdiction of the former. In June of the same year the Allied forces took over the administration of Zone A, which terminated the forty-day period of Yugoslav rule of the Gorica region<sup>5</sup>. Yet despite the established line between Yugoslavia and Italy negotiations for Gorica/Gorizia continued until October 1946 when at the Paris Peace Conference it became clear that it will belong to Italy. Article 5 stated that a special commission will stipulate the borderline *in situ* and “may digress from the suggested borderline stipulated by the Treaty for 500 meters at the most; eventual changes, however, should not affect more important infrastructural objects and settlements with over 500 inhabitants”<sup>6</sup>. Despite numerous protests of locals who gathered at the border in order to prove on which side they belonged, hoping that this would “force the commission to take into account the will of the people and solve the problem to the satisfaction of both sides”<sup>7</sup>, the Treaty came into force during the night between September 15 and 16, 1947. Although without making much sense, the initially stipulated border became officially valid. “The borderline was justified solely by the existing strategically important infrastructural corridors. As a result, the center of the city of Gorica/Gorizia and its western suburbs remained in Italy while eastern suburbs and the majority of its hinterland came under the jurisdiction of the state of Yugoslavia.”<sup>8</sup> Slovene hinter-

<sup>4</sup> A. Carli, E. Sussi, M. Kaučič Baša: *History and Stories: Identity Construction on the Italian- Slovenian Border*. In: *Living (with) Borders, Identity Discourses on East-West Borders in Europe*. Ed. U.H. Meinhof. Hampshire 2002, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Authors of the article in the publication *Living (with) Borders, Identity Discourses on East-West Borders in Europe* emphasize the great enthusiasm for partisans and their administration on one side, and on the other the feelings of Italians from Gorizia/Gorica who experienced this period as a “plundering expedition of partisans” (A. Carli, E. Sussi, M. Kaučič Baša: *History and Stories...*, p. 42), as a period of “wicked raids” (*ibid.*) decorated with the disturbing symbolism of the red star, parades and unfamiliar songs.

<sup>6</sup> J. Šušmelj: *Odpiranje meje, Sodelovanje med Novo Gorico in Gorico*. In: *Nova Gorica – Gorica: izzivi in možnosti sobivanja*. Ed. J. Zoltan. Nova Gorica 1997, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> “Primorski dnevnik”, April 2, 1947, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> N. Jurca: *Strategija čezmejnega urejanja urbanega prostora Gorice na preizkušnji*. Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo. “Letnik” 1997/21(198), p. 103.

land had thus lost an important economic, cultural and infrastructural center. This led to a decision to create a new regional center across the border, in Yugoslavia.

Even before the Paris Peace Treaty resolutions took effect<sup>9</sup> there came the first suggestions. During a meeting on February 11, 1947 Milo Vižintin, the newly-elected president of the District People's Committee, "emphasized the resolution on the necessity of building a new district center – Nova Gorica. Especially necessary was to build this new town close to Gorica/Gorizia. According to Vižintin, any other solution would denote giving up the original Gorica/Gorizia. His speech concluded to a loud applause and the preparations for the new district center, Nova Gorica, were under way."<sup>10</sup> A month later, in March, calculations were already more concrete: "The population of Nova Gorica should be approximately 6,000–9,000, including all civic employees and their families."<sup>11</sup> A special committee, established on April 18 of the same year, "worked on the future location, necessary plans, future status of the new town, and gathered information from prominent local people. The committee proceeded from the resolution that Slovenes shall not give up Gorica/Gorizia, and that the new town will gradually merge with it and evolve into its extension."<sup>12</sup> According to local politicians the settlements situated from the north toward the south, that is Solkan, Pristava, Rožna dolina, Šempeter and Vrtojba, were too small and inadequate to take over the functions of the regional center. A more suitable location had to be found. Since the original draft of architect Božidar Gvardijančič, who favored the areas of Šempeter and Vrtojba, was not approved, he fashioned a new one that anticipated the location of the new town in the vicinity of Solkan. Numerous factors were in favor of this choice: ideological and political (this unsettled area was the only possible location for the future town of Nova Gorica; other settlements already had their own names and would be inappropriate for a new, modern town), historic, geological (the less fertile clay soil was not suitable for agricultural purposes), geographical (the new location could become the gravitational center for the hinterland), strategic (northern part of the site is protected by hills and would therefore not be easily accessible to possible attackers), economic (possible hydroelectric power plant

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<sup>9</sup> Polemics on the final date of the resolution about the creation of Nova Gorica have not yet been concluded and the key document has not been found. Dragica Ukmar emphasized the meeting in Ajdovščina on November 26, 1946 whose agenda included the adoption of investments of local character and on which the republic planned the connection of the Soča valley with the southern part of Karst and the region building an administrative center of the Gorica area.

<sup>10</sup> I. K r a i g h e r, J. M a r t e l a n c, A. O k r o g l i č: *Odmevi 1-2-3: o gradnji Nove Gorice*. "Srečanja" 1972/7 (37/38), p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> D. U k m a r: *Začetki gradnje Nove Gorice*. "Kronika: časopis za slovensko krajevno zgodovino" 1993/41(2), p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> J. R o s a: *Zgradili bomo Novo Gorico*. Razstava dokumentov o pripravah in začetnih delih izgradnje Nove Gorice v letih 1947 in 1948. Nova Gorica 1988, p. 3.

of the nearby Soča river would ensure swifter industrial development), transportational (better road connections with the areas of Soška dolina, Banjška planota, Trnovska planota, Brda<sup>13</sup> and Vipavska dolina) and climatic (some were of the opinion that the strong wind, common to this area, would even contribute to the development of the town even though it was unprotected from it). The commission whose task was to choose the right location was not unanimous. The problem was resolved by the obstinate decision of the then Minister of Public Buildings and Works Ivan Maček-Matija who in the summer of 1947 selected for the new town the triangle between Blanča, Ledine<sup>14</sup> and Grčna. He disregarded the fact that “due to limited space the possibilities for expansion and development are diminished, wind exposure is too strong, in comparison with the area around Vrtojba the chosen site has a harsher climate and is partly marshy”<sup>15</sup>. The choice thus strongly emphasized the connection between the old town and the new one. The would-be town was initially officially named Gorica, or nova Gorica without the capitalized adjective<sup>16</sup>. By order of the Presidium of the People’s Republic of Slovenia the new name Nova Gorica, written with capital letter, became official on November 7, 1949.

Printed media, which according to Benedict Anderson create a specifically designed community, influenced with their articles the creation of awareness of a new town, even though this had not yet been officially confirmed. One of the purposes to create such atmosphere was to hush up the trauma, which was created after the stipulation the border. “Primorski dnevnik”, a Slovene newspaper printed in Trieste, spoke of a plan to build a town in the Solkansko polje area. “[...] this is a very suitable area for a new administrative, economic and cultural center of the Gorica district. The old cemetery, owned by the municipality, is a wonderful square around which buildings, those for administration and schools at first, then hotels, shops and warehouses, can be built in a short period of time. These buildings should meet all contemporary technological requirements and would set an example for others, for they will greatly affect further develop-

<sup>13</sup> This was not entirely true. Nova Gorica became accessible for the population of Goriška Brda only after the 1975 Ossimo Treaty when the Italian and the Yugoslav sides agreed to build a road to Goriška Brda partly across the Italian territory.

<sup>14</sup> In connection with the selected location Tomaž Vuga stated that it was true that due to the loss of Gorica/Gorizia the region needed a gravitational center, yet “the possibilities to build the entire Nova Gorica on fallow ground (hence the local name Ledine – fallow) were purely fictitious. A proof of this were political decisions and the gradually dwindling funds” (T. V u g a: *Pogled na nadaljnji razvoj Nove Gorice*. “Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo” 1984/8(50), p. 296.)

<sup>15</sup> Z. M l i n a r: *Humanizacija mesta. Sociološke razsežnosti urbanizma in samoupravljanja v Novi Gorici*. Maribor 1983, p. 47.

<sup>16</sup> It needs to be stressed that the name Nova Gorica started to appear relatively early: the “Primorski dnevnik” newspaper speaks about Nova Gorica already in 1947, and Slovenia started to publish a newspaper named “Nova Gorica” on November 8, 1947.

ment of the town.”<sup>17</sup> Unofficial guesswork and later louder and louder rumors about the building of a new town were confirmed in the speech of Miha Marinko, Slovene Prime Minister, during one of numerous celebrations of the annexation of Istra to Slovenia. In his speech in Šempeter on September 16, 1947 Marinko declared that the 1947 Slovene budget set aside 1,000 millions for Nova Gorica alone, which would suffice for the building of “apartments for approximately 10,000 people, administration and communal buildings, town planning and the waterworks”<sup>18</sup>, the development of railway and road transportation, industry, agriculture and forestry, education, health care and tourism. He announced the following phase of creating the town of Nova Gorica with these words: “Now we have to swiftly organize and commence work. Each pair of working hands is welcome and necessary. Everybody will be awarded according to how much work they will do. The bigger the input, the higher the award. We want to create suitable conditions for a good life in Nova Gorica, and for the rise of our culture. Since we are in a hurry we will soon experience a shortage of work force. Shock work is essential, and workers and work have to be organized expediently.”<sup>19</sup>

First youth work brigades<sup>20</sup> arrived on December 3. After the stipulation of the new border between Italy and Slovenia the only things that remained of the town of Gorica/Gorizia were a railway residential colony, a new cemetery, a Jewish cemetery<sup>21</sup>, brickworks, and a few isolated farmhouses. Numerous youth work brigades gradually, but with undiminished enthusiasm, set to work. Architect Edvard Ravnikar, whose design had been accepted by the majority, stated on the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town of Nova Gorica: “Urbanism such as we imagined

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<sup>17</sup> “Primorski dnevnik”, April 6, 1947, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> “Primorski dnevnik”, September 23, 1947, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> First youth work brigades were from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, the following were from Primorsko region, the third included youngsters apart from Slovenia came from Croatian town Slavonski Brod and from Hercegovina. In the last shift were youngsters from Slovenia, Macedonia, Monte Negro, Serbia and Croatia.

<sup>21</sup> When the building of Nova Gorica commenced the “Primorski dnevnik” newspaper observes that the future road between Šempeter and Nova Gorica was planned to cross the local Jewish cemetery: “This Jewish cemetery is not very large. The road shall cut away some of it. Since there are no Jews in Nova Gorica, and so few in Slovenia that they may be counted on the fingers of one hand, there will be no new burials there. So what is to be done with this Jewish cemetery? The Nova Gorica main road never gives way neither to buildings nor to waters or hills. It knows no obstacles. A Jewish cemetery therefore cannot present an obstacle. It is our opinion that an appropriate and honorable solution should be found for the Jews of the Gorica region. There will be no more new burials on this cemetery, and it does not make sense to drive the dead from Gorica across the border. The Jews from this region have to establish their cemetery on the Italian side anyway, so the best possible solution would be for them to contact Yugoslav authorities. They will doubtlessly give them permission to transport the remains of their dead to Italy” (“Primorski dnevnik”, July 20, 1948, p. 2).

after the war was not only something new and visionary, but much, much more: it was an anticipation of what was to happen in the future, and an anticipation of solutions to all social, technical and aesthetical problems. Formerly a person in the shadows, in the war period an architect became a much-needed designer and teacher of a new life-style."<sup>22</sup> In the spirit of growing "generally felt optimism"<sup>23</sup>, "everybody, from farmers to the highest politicians, enthusiastically embraced this concept. Modern town planning had thus become a weapon in the national and political struggle."<sup>24</sup> After Le Corbusier's theory of a town divided into four areas by a street crossing Ravnikar separated the chosen site into four parts; these were to correspond to four primary functions of a town: the town center, the residential area, the industrial area, and recreational areas. According to Ravnikar the building of Nova Gorica "represented an opportunity to prove equal to this task, to be capable of its realization, and to be ready for it; what we did not know, however, is that we were about to hand it over to the hands of the administrative and technical apparatus that did not understand its task"<sup>25</sup>. Initially the two tasks of the youth brigades (which acquired the name shock brigades when they exceeded the 100-percent norm), were the construction of a road between Solkan and Šempeter and the regulation of the Koren rivulet that during that time overflowed the area around Solkan. Reports on everyday work results, transmitted over the public loudspeaker system, increased the competition between brigades and their announcements of future results. Another method of achieving this was the introduction of wall newspapers, stimulating songs<sup>26</sup> and paroles such as "Who are we building Nova Gorica for? For Tito, the nation, the Party!" Thus encouraged, the brigaders had to further increase their work load. "Nova Gorica", "Ljudska pravica" and "Primorski dnevnik" newspapers enthusiastically followed their work. An article in "Primorski dnevnik" says: "One feels a real pleasure in following the work and lifestyle of these healthy<sup>27</sup>, courageous youths who do not know the term impossible and are unafraid of any obstacles, and to see them gaze into the future that shall be theirs with a clear

<sup>22</sup> E. R a v n i k a r: *Nova Gorica po 35 letih*. "Arhitektov bilten" 68/69, leto 1983, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Some of the songs sung by the youth brigades were also the song by Ivan Minatti entitled "To the Builders of Nova Gorica, the Song for the Builders of Nova Gorica" by Tone Javor, and a song written by Branko Orbaničič (for details of these songs see D. U k m a r: *Začetki gradnje Nove Gorice*. "Kronika: časopis za slovensko krajevno zgodovino" 1993/41(2), p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Dragica Ukmar writes that not enough emphasis was given to the health of youth brigades members. There were also physically weaker and underage youngsters. The young had been examined only superficially, and some of them had to be sent home because of their weak health. Special medical regulations were adopted later. They stated that brigaders should not be of weak constitution and younger than fifteen, and that each accepted member should be medically examined and should receive a shot against thphoid.



and self-assured look in their eyes.”<sup>28</sup> These youngsters’ workday started with morning gymnastics, bedmaking and room cleaning, was followed with an assembly, greeting to the flag, breakfast of “hot milk with coffee, tasty rye bread, and on top of that merry tunes from the radio and a growing joyous mood among the brigaders. Then comes the cry: ‘Brigaders, assemble and proceed to work!’”<sup>29</sup> Work was completed by 3 p.m., followed by a “tasty and nourishing lunch”<sup>30</sup>, laundry chores and preparations for the following day’s tasks. Later there was group work during which the brigaders read, wrote, participated in different educational activities, rehearsed for plays, recitations, sketches, edited the “Brigadier” newspaper, or prepared a special radio transmission of news in Slovene, Italian and Serbo-Croatian. “All this illustrates the great enthusiasm and self-sacrifice among these healthy young people that were like brothers and sisters; despite sometimes difficult weather conditions they did not interrupt their work nor recognized any obstacles. Aside from work they also read and participated in different cultural activities. Let us just mention that 91 illiterate or half-illiterate youngsters learned to read and write. Others read the 700 books lent by a local library. They attended twenty cultural events and approximately fifty lectures on technical subjects and politics.”<sup>31</sup> This was followed by dinner, a short evening entertainment and then off to bed where brigaders, “covered by warm blankets, reflect on their work and on the tasks ahead”<sup>32</sup>.

Working in four several-month-long shifts these youth brigades constructed the foundations and the first outlines of the future town. They set up the road connection between Solkan and Šempeter, built some streets and the central town avenue, regulated the Koren rivulet, dug the foundations for an administrative building, created the town park and recreation grounds, built student housing and a work colony for construction workers who were in charge of highrises. In the days after the commencement of work on the highrises the importance of the new town was the subject of many speeches: “Nova Gorica must become the westernmost beacon of our country, the beacon that will warn us against the dangers from the reactionary West. Nova Gorica must become a symbol of the working people and an expression of the unity of our nations! Nova Gorica shall be the blooming garden of new buildings, it will become a new Belgrade on a smaller scale. The people of Primorsko, June 16 encourages us to exhibit brotherhood and unity of Yugoslav nations!”<sup>33</sup> After the initial problems with building materials and also with workers who were less enthusiastic than the young, the work became smoother. One of the reasons for this was probably the

<sup>28</sup> “Primorski dnevnik”, March 11, 1948, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “Primorski dnevnik”, February 2, 1948, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> “Primorski dnevnik”, March 11, 1948, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> “Nova Gorica”, June 11, 1948, p. 1.

creation of competition between the participating companies that was patterned after the shock brigades. In the area of Mali klanec the workers reorganized the already-existing work settlement, founded a school for bricklayer apprentices, and built an auditorium for culture events. There was also the so-called Red Corner equipped with a radio, daily newspapers and a library with recent books. Enthusiasm was strong and the propaganda even stronger; inscriptions on worksites proclaimed: "We shall build a new town and new factories – this is our answer to all who slander us!"<sup>34</sup> Yet despite all this there was a severe shortage of workforce, especially for harder tasks. The District People's Committee therefore decided to organize volunteers who could help construction workers. They formed the so-called front brigades consisting of mostly smaller front brigades from the vicinity. "All of them focused on only one thing: the more we do with voluntary work the sooner our economic and cultural center can be completed!"<sup>35</sup> Like the young, the volunteers were stimulated by the sound of accordions, participated in different competitions between the fronts, and had their own Front Corner patterned after the Red Corner. Yet they still needed help from volunteers from nearby villages. Soon Nova Gorica had a new furniture factory whose shock brigades set out to compete with all other furniture factories in Yugoslavia. The first apartment highrise was ready for its new residents in the second half of February 1950. The four-storey building had twenty-four family apartments and rooms for the unmarried. Some of it temporarily served as the district and the magisterial court offices, the offices for social welfare and public health, and the Red Cross Committee. Other space was allotted to the families of these institutions' employees. The tasks planned for 1950 were the following: the building of the town waterworks, a coffee shop and eight apartment highrises<sup>36</sup> that would attract future town residents.

First financial problems arose in 1951. Investment funds for Nova Gorica were depleted, investors kept changing, and the state did not approve further credit. The work stopped and there were also ideas of rearranging the original town plan. In an interview architect Ravnikar stated that when he and his team accepted the task of designing the town plan of Nova Gorica "there was enough knowledge and capability to put into force technical and moral principles that would suffice for the beginning of work and for further development. The necessary knowledge, suitable organization and sufficient means, of course, would help weather during the stormy events of those days. These were the moments

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<sup>34</sup> "Primorski dnevnik", September 17, 1949, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> D. U k m a r: *Začetki gradnje Nove Gorice*. "Kronika: časopis za slovensko krajevno zgodovino", 1993/41(2), p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> Two were the work of engineer Fürst and six of the then leading architect Ravnikar. Each building was to have twenty-four apartments and thirty rooms for the unmarried on the upper floors. Apartments had two or three rooms, a kitchen, two pantries, a vestibule, a toilet and a bathroom. Each had a balcony, parquet floors and fixtures for a future phone.

we dearly desired. We wanted to build a town that would not lag behind and would not be culturally isolated. Its mission would be to become part of the historic and civilizational process for those of us living on this side of the border, in this new, interesting area.”<sup>37</sup> Ravnikar’s plan anticipated gradual merging of the new town with the older towns of Šempeter and Rožna dolina; this would create conditions for a coherent urban community with approximately 15,000 residents. The image of a town full of flowers and Mediterranean vegetation, oriented toward the main town thoroughfare and reminiscent of Aix en Provence in France, gradually sank into oblivion.

The building of Nova Gorica that now depended upon the local economy of the Gorica area came to a standstill. “The fate of the town, this prematurely-born baby, was finally relinquished to the region that desperately needed it, but was incapable of building it.”<sup>38</sup> Parallel to the diminished enthusiasm were the changing estimates about what kind of town it was still possible to build while managing to pay for its upkeep in the future. Since the leaders of the time probably presumed that neither the town itself nor the entire region would be able to maintain the originally designed eighty-meter-wide central avenue named Kidričeva street, the traffic along it had to endure frequent dust and mud for many years to come. Vinko Torkar wrote of this period: “We can well imagine the feelings of newcomers who came to live in the new apartments. A ‘town’ in the middle of a field, on marshy and fallow ground, for many years remained a mere torso and a phantom in the middle of an empty space, built along an impossibly wide (as it was viewed at that time) street that looked like an airport, a street that came from nowhere and led to nowhere. The loud Yugoslav cackling about a new and modern town that would reflect upon the new regime yielded but one wide street, ten residential houses and a palace for the new authorities.”<sup>39</sup> There was no money for anything else.

Vuga is of the opinion that “this is undoubtedly the reason for an overly pessimistic view of the possibilities to build the town at the beginning of the 1950s. The completion of some, already partly constructed, streets was abandoned and modest one-family houses were built almost in the very center of the town.”<sup>40</sup>

The first results of insufficient funding were soon visible. Some of the buildings remained unfinished and slowly started to decay, and “the lack of available apartment and office space prevented more rapid population growth; this, in

<sup>37</sup> M. K r o n e g g e r: *Nova ali nora Gorica*. “Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo” 1989/13(91/92), p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> T. V u g a: *Pogled na nadaljnji razvoj Nove Gorice*. “Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo” 1984/8(50), p. 296.

<sup>39</sup> V. T o r k a r: *Nova Gorica mesto park ali parking?* “Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo” 1994/18(156), p. 182.

<sup>40</sup> T. V u g a: *Pogled na nadaljnji razvoj Nove Gorice*. “Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo” 1984/8(50), p. 296.

turn, hindered the development of trades, commerce and other urban functions. Nova Gorica was soon in the middle of a vicious circle: insufficient population could not further the development of economy and other branches, and the hampered economy could not produce enough funds to continue with the building of apartments and other objects. As a result there was no population growth."<sup>41</sup> On the initiative of the District People's Committee and under the supervision of Igor Vrišer, architect Božidar Gvardijančič designed a rough draft of a general town plan that was less expensive and more suited to the current economic situation; this plan served as a basis for the final town plan of architect Strmecki. With the building of smaller residential buildings the town image gradually started to change. Fortified by newcomers from the country who viewed Nova Gorica as a possibility for their own growth and who did not mind living in large apartment houses<sup>42</sup> its population started to increase<sup>43</sup>. The first inhabitants of Nova Gorica were from surroundings and wider hinterland and finally people from other Yugoslav republics.

In mid-1960s certain cultural institutions started to open their doors: the theatre<sup>44</sup>, the study library<sup>45</sup>, the Kromberk Castle Museum, the archives, etc. Alongside with them appeared many cultural and educational organizations, societies, movie theatres, and the "Primorske novice" newspaper<sup>46</sup>. According to geographer Vrišer these institutions "give Nova Gorica the character of a smaller independent cultural center and greatly contribute to the urban character of Nova Gorica"<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> I. Vrišer: *Nastanek in razvoj Nove Gorice*. "Geografski vestnik" [Ljubljana] 1959/31, p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> In response to sociological research of Nova Gorica Almira Piriš writes that the newcomers, used to living in one-family houses, soon started to find a way to build a house of their own. "In our society one's own house is a way of investing money that pays off quite soon" (A. Piriš: *Beg iz bloka v individualno stanovanjsko hišo*. "Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo" 1982/7(43), 262.) "This increase of individual houses primarily denotes that former social ownership changed into private property. In Nova Gorica, one-family houses were built on the level part of the town center where apartment buildings should be built instead. Yet since even now there is a shortage of space there have been tendencies to locate them in an area that should definitely be set aside for the remaining town activities" (ibid., p. 263).

<sup>43</sup> In April 1950 the Nova Gorica bulletin states that Nova Gorica numbered 700 residents at the moment. Approximately 200 more settled there after the World War II.

<sup>44</sup> *Primorsko dramsko gledališče* (The Primorje Drama Theatre) had roots in amateur theatre activities after the World War II; in 1969 it acquired a professional status.

<sup>45</sup> Formally founded in Šempeter in 1949, the library never interrupted its activities despite numerous removals.

<sup>46</sup> The "Nova Gorica" newspaper was a predecessor of "Primorske novice". Initially located in Nova Gorica, "Primorske novice" moved its main office to Koper, leaving only a handful of correspondents in Nova Gorica.

<sup>47</sup> I. Vrišer: *Nastanek in razvoj Nove Gorice*. "Geografski vestnik" [Ljubljana] 1959/31, p. 62.

This was the period in which, in accord with the spirit of industrial self-management, entire Yugoslavia set out to modernize its means of production and open new factories. Nova Gorica started to employ highly-educated young professionals, mostly locals, in the field of social activities. The number of border crossings increased and the border with Italy became less impermeable. There were new exchange possibilities. Locals living along the border received certain benefits. According to Martina Skok "this resulted in a more or less uniform way of life on both sides of the border. Receipts of owning property in both countries and pass-check permits<sup>48</sup> enabled the formation of similar consumer practices and different ways of handling money (savings accounts abroad, reselling, etc.)."<sup>49</sup>

1960s were also the period of initiatives for official cooperation between Gorica/Gorizia and Nova Gorica. They culminated in the meeting of the mayors of both towns. Their talks about trying to find joint solutions to mutual problems of economic, transportation, urbanistic and cultural nature announced a new era of life along the border, an era of emphasized coexistence and cooperation of "residents of both Gorica towns, the towns that breathe with the same lungs"<sup>50</sup>.

Yet another result of these talks soon became obvious. There were more and more speculations about the needs and the identity of Nova Gorica. According to Torkar Nova Gorica "seemed like an adolescent in the middle of an identity crisis. Its identity was initially implied in the very definition of the adjective 'new', hence something that is new as opposed to the older town of Gorica/Gorizia. It was intentionally designed 'as something large, beautiful and proud, a town that will shine across the border' (Ravnikar). Its original purpose was to be different from old towns. In the course of years these differences became questionable for many, among them for town planners, and they did everything they could to nullify them."<sup>51</sup> Because of financial problems "socialist beacon" didn't shine through the border, the enthusiasm for creating something new gradually diminished and therefore the imagined identity of Nova Gorica slipped into oblivion.

Lewis Mumford, an American theorist, believes that "utopia is an integral part every town's origin. It is because its original form was so ideal that it cre-

<sup>48</sup> The 1949 Udine Agreement introduced special permits and passes that were later improved. Initially pass-check-permit holders were allowed to cross the border only at a certain border-crossing and with a limited amount of money and goods. They were allowed to stay abroad until the following day at the latest. The 1962 Agreement extended this period to up to 72 hours.

<sup>49</sup> M. S k o k: *Evropske državne meje, Od berlinskega zidu ekvatorju naproti*. In: *Nova Gorica – Gorica: izzivi in možnosti sobivanja*. Ed. J. Z o l t a n. Nova Gorica 1997, p. 55.

<sup>50</sup> M. D r o b e ž: *Skupna pota obeh Goric*. "Goriška srečanja" 1966 (2), p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> V. T o r k a r: *Nova Gorica mesto park ali parking? "Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo" 1994/18(156)*, p. 181.

ated the possibilities that might for an undefined period of time stay hidden in more providentially run smaller communities.”<sup>52</sup> A similar sentiment probably inspired the creation of Nova Gorica. And yet despite this utopia Nova Gorica represents a “collective memory accumulated in form”<sup>53</sup>. Torkar believes that it is “a phenomenon of centuries, a cultural, economic and national phenomenon that will always illustrate a certain degree of awareness (rationality) of a lifestyle that in every period of time builds a ‘monument’ to itself and to its descendants”<sup>54</sup>. The town of Nova Gorica, created in the 1950s, will always portray a story of separation and of renewed search for connections.

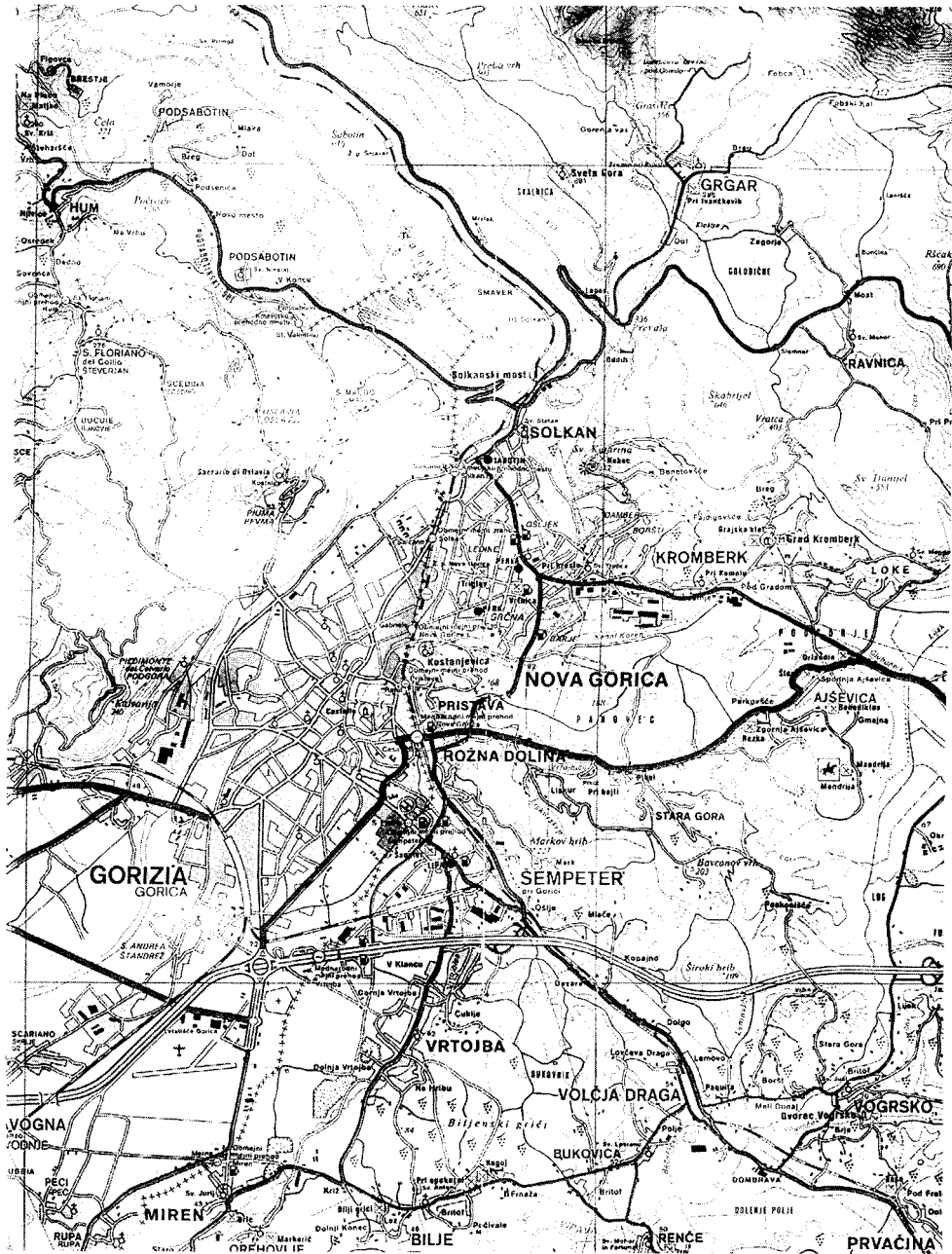


1. A map of Slovene's Primorska region

<sup>52</sup> L. Mumford: *Mesto v zgodovini*. Ljubljana 1969, p. 50.

<sup>53</sup> V. Torkar: *Dom – hiša – mesto*. “Primorska srečanja, revija za družboslovje, gospodarstvo in kulturo” 1980 (17–18), p. 284.

<sup>54</sup> V. Torkar: *Racionalizacija urbane strukture Nove Gorice z arhitekturo mesta*. “Arhitektov bilten” 1988(97/98), p. 4.



2. A map of Gorizia and Nova Gorica and of the surroundings

## Miasto pograniczne Nova Gorica i jego rola w kształtowaniu nowego centrum urbanistycznego Nova Gorica w pierwszych latach po założeniu

### Streszczenie

Gorica (wł. Gorizia), miasto powstałe z osady w XI wieku, do końca II wojny światowej było ważnym centrum migracyjnym nie tylko dla ludności słoweńskiej, ale również niemieckiej, furlandzkiej i żydowskiej. Po wojnie była to strefa dzisiejszej słoweńsko-włoskiej granicy, przede wszystkim miejsce konferencji pokojowych, które zgodnie z decyzjami politycznymi wpłynęły na wyznaczenie linii demarkacyjnej, pozbawiając tym samym Słoweńców centrum miasta. Wszystko to doprowadziło do stworzenia nowego centrum (po stronie słoweńskiej). Ideologiczne, polityczna, a przede wszystkim decyzje dokonywane w sposób demokratyczny pomogły wybrać obszar pod budowę nowego miasta, które miałyby „świecić jak latarnia nad granicą”.

Na teren przyszłego miasta przybyli najpierw członkowie brygad młodzieżowych z całej Jugosławii, później z pomocą przyszły brygady z okolicznych miast oraz osoby, które włączyły się do nich jako tzw. ochotnicy. Początkowo budowa przebiegała według wcześniej ustalonego planu urbanistycznego miasta, dzięki czemu ugory zaczęły nabierać jakiegoś kształtu. Po dziewięciu miesiącach pracy brygad młodzieżowych na teren budowy zaczęli przybywać robotnicy, którzy początkowo nie byli w takim stopniu zaangażowani jak poprzednicy, jednakże propaganda była na tyle silna, że przyczyniła się do zwiększenia efektywności pracy robotników. W roku 1951 pojawiły się pierwsze problemy finansowe hamujące rozwój miasta. Spowodowały one, iż pierwotny plan architektoniczny Edwarda Ravnikarja, stworzony na podstawie teorii miasta Le Corbusiera, coraz bardziej upraszczano i ostatecznie miasto przybrało zupełnie nowy wizerunek, którego pomysłodawcą został architekt Gvardijančić.

Nova Gorica znalazła się w błędnym kole, ponieważ deficyt mieszkań i lokali urzędowych uniemożliwiał szybszy wzrost liczby mieszkańców, a jednocześnie hamował rozwój rzemiosła i handlu, co w konsekwencji doprowadziło do niedostatecznego rozwoju gospodarki, przez co zabrakło środków niezbędnych do budowy mieszkań i urzędów. W latach późniejszych zaczął rozwijać się przemysł, który do Novej Goricy przyciągnął najpierw okoliczną ludność, później także robotników z ówczesnej Jugosławii. Stopniowo coraz ważniejsze stawały się poszczególne instytucje kulturalne, organizacje kulturalno-oświatowe, stowarzyszenia, kinematografia.

W latach sześćdziesiątych odnotowano pierwsze przejawy współpracy pomiędzy dwoma miastami, w latach siedemdziesiątych stało się bardziej płynne przekraczanie granicy z Włochami (na podstawie zawartych porozumień). Jednakże szybko pojawiła się jeszcze jedna płaszczyzna rozwoju: coraz liczniejsze stały się dywagacje na temat tożsamości Novej Goricy, a jej ideologiczny przydomek „nova” stracił na ważności.

## Die Grenzstadt Nova Gorica und deren Rolle bei der Gestaltung des neuen Stadtzentrums Nova Gorica in den ersten Jahren nach seiner Gründung

### Zusammenfassung

Gorica (ital. Gorizia) ist eine im 11. Jh. aus einem Dorf entstandene Stadt, die bis zum Ende des 2. Weltkrieges ein wichtiges Migrationzentrum sowohl für slowenische als auch für deutsche, kurländische und jüdische Bevölkerung war. Nach dem Krieg war das die Zone der heutigen slowe-



nisch-italienischen Grenze und eine Stelle für Friedenskonferenzen, die den politischen Entschlüssen gemäß die Demarkationslinie abgesteckt haben, in Folge dessen die Slowenier kein richtiges Stadtzentrum mehr hatten. Das neue Zentrum wurde dann an der slowenischen Seite gebaut. Ideologische, politische aber vor allem demokratisch getroffene Entscheidungen ermöglichten, ein Gebiet auszuwählen, auf dem eine „wie eine Laterne an der Grenze leuchtende Stadt“ entstanden wurde.

Auf das Baugebiet kamen zuerst Mitglieder der Jugendbrigaden aus dem ganzen Jugoslawien, dann auch Brigaden aus umliegenden Städten und die sog. Freiwilligen. Es wurde nach einem Stadtplanungsprojekt gebaut, so dass dieses Brachland reale Formen annahm. Nach neun Monaten kamen hier Arbeiter, die schon nicht so sehr wie ihre Vorgänger mit dem Bau beschäftigt waren, doch die Propaganda war so stark, dass ihre Arbeitseffektivität endlich gesteigert wurde. Im Jahre 1951 zeigten sich erste finanzielle Probleme, die die Entwicklung der Stadt hemmten. Der primäre architektonische, auf Grund der Stadttheorie von Le Corbusier entstandene Plan von Edward Ravnikarja war immer wieder vereinfacht, so dass die Stadt eine neue Gestalt, nach dem Vorschlag von dem Architekten Gvardijancic, angenommen hat.

Nova Gorica befand sich im Teufelkreis, denn der Mangel an Wohnungen und Amtsgebäuden verhinderte die Einwohnerzunahme und hemmte die Handwerk- und Handelentwicklung, was im Resultat die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung beeinträchtigte und deswegen gab es keine ausreichenden Mittel für Wohnungsbau. In späteren Jahren wurde Industrie entwickelt, was nach Nova Gorica die einheimische Bevölkerung und dann auch andere Arbeiter aus ehemaligem Jugoslawien anlockte. An immer größerer Bedeutung gewannen einzelne kulturelle Institutionen, Vereine und Filmindustrie.

In 60er Jahren kamen erste Anzeichen der Zusammenarbeit zwischen den beiden Städten zum Ausdruck, in 70er Jahren war die Überschreitung der Grenze zu Italien, auf Grund des abgeschlossenen Vertrags, viel leichter geworden. Bald erschien noch eine andere Entwicklungsebene: es wurde immer häufiger über die Identität von Nova Gorica diskutiert, und der ideologische Beiname der Stadt – „Nova“ hat an Bedeutung verloren.