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## Adriatic Tourism: A Forum

FORUM

# “Dedicated to Serving the Tourist”: Environmental Management, Economic Crisis, and the Pressures of Adriatic Mass Tourism in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1980–1991

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## Abstract

This article examines how and why mass tourism on the Adriatic coast in the 1980s became such a dominating factor in local societies and environments. As economic crises led to decreased living standards, local municipalities became more dependent on foreign tourism. Also, previous environmental management policies ensured that tourism became entangled with the Adriatic environment, which was heavily transformed by the rapid expansion of tourism.

**Keywords:** environmental history; tourism history; Southeast European history

Tourism on the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia reached a historic peak in the middle of the 1980s when the number of foreign guest overnights reached the tens of millions, with tourists from Central and Western Europe coming to dramatically overshadow the number of domestic visitors.<sup>1</sup> Given that socialist Yugoslavia had made guaranteed vacations for its working-class citizens a staple of its promise to provide a specifically socialist Yugoslav good life,<sup>2</sup> the explosion of foreign tourist visits at the expense of domestic Yugoslav ones was a clear testament to the deteriorating state of Yugoslav society at this time, which was experiencing economic and social crises.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously troubling for citizens, locales, and businesses invested in tourism was the potentially negative impact this exponential growth in tourists could have on the Yugoslav Adriatic’s main attraction, which had historically banked on perceptions of pristine nature. An example of this concern can be found in a German and English-language tourist guidebook for the Adriatic coast published just before the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation and its descent into a series of bloody wars (1991–99). The guide told its readers that the waters of the Dalmatian coast were still “clean,” and that Yugoslavia was “environment-conscious.” At the same time, however, the authors lamented Dalmatia’s overcrowded beaches and the loss of the many quaint little towns and undiscovered harbors that once existed. The authors claimed that “although you can see everywhere the more recent attempts by the authorities to preserve the historic buildings, it is, nevertheless, all too obvious that the beautiful land of Dalmatia is today

<sup>1</sup>Igor Duda, “When Capitalism and Socialism Get Along Best: Tourism, Consumer Culture and the Idea of Progress in Malo Misto,” in *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, eds. Rory Archer, Igor Duda, and Paul Stubbs (London, 2016), 178.

<sup>2</sup>Patrick Hyder Patterson, “Yugoslavia as It Once Was,” in *Yugoslavia’s Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s–1980s)*, eds. Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor (Budapest, 2010), 367, and Igor Duda, “Adriatic for All: Summer Holidays in Croatia,” in *Remembering Utopia: The Cultural of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*, eds. Breda Luthar and Maruša Pušnik (Washington, DC, 2010), 290.

<sup>3</sup>Branko Milanović, “Poverty in Eastern Europe in the Years of Crisis, 1978 to 1987: Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia,” *The World Bank Economic Review* 5, no. 2 (1991): 187–205, 188.

dedicated to serving the tourist.”<sup>4</sup> This quote succinctly represents the dilemma faced by the Yugoslav tourism industry during this period—as more and more tourists came to the shores of the Adriatic, the more it risked losing its draw.

By the 1980s, tourism was ubiquitous throughout the Adriatic coastal region from Slovenia down to Croatia and Montenegro, fulfilling the dreams of local stakeholders who had promoted its growth since the interwar period, and since the socialist government began to consider tourism to be a valuable and legitimate economic sector in the early 1950s.<sup>5</sup> There is a well-established body of literature on Yugoslav tourism during socialism that details the upward trajectory of Adriatic coastal tourism, with a scholarly consensus maintaining that tourism became an essential part of the socialist experiment in Yugoslavia for local stakeholders, domestic populations, and the Yugoslav leadership.<sup>6</sup> Despite the well-studied terrain of the social impacts of tourism, other crucial aspects of coastal mass tourism’s peak in the mid-1980s have not been studied in detail. Therefore, some important questions remain. First, why did so many foreign visitors flood onto the shores of the Adriatic during this decade, eclipsing the significance of domestic tourists? Given that the coastal environment was a major attraction for tourists, what were the environmental impacts of such a dramatic increase in bodies on the Adriatic coast? Finally, how did the local leadership and stakeholders respond to these pressures, and what were the long-term consequences?

As this narrative will demonstrate, despite a steady increase in the number of visitors to the eastern Adriatic since the 1950s, Yugoslavia’s coast maintained its reputation as a site of untouched nature and history accessible from modern infrastructure and resort amenities, which galvanized coastal tourism’s success in the 1980s. Additionally, due to plans and policies enacted by the socialist leadership, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and foreign experts during the previous decades, some measures for environmental protection were put in place that helped the Adriatic region maintain its environmentally friendly image and further assisted tourism’s success. Despite these successes, however, the existing models for sustainably managing tourism were unable to keep up with tourism’s rapid expansion on the coast, and some serious environmental issues connected to mass tourism went unaddressed during this final decade of Yugoslavia’s existence.

To analyze the connections between mass tourism, environmental pressures, and socialist Yugoslavia’s capacities for dealing with such pressures, this article first discusses the state’s model for managing the Adriatic environment, followed by some details behind the rise in tourism in the 1980s. Finally, the article tracks some of the more severe examples of environmental pressures on the coast that occurred concurrently with the peak of mass tourism, particularly issues of inadequate sewage treatment, insufficient water supplies, and the problem of algal blooms caused by eutrophication. My main argument is that rather than carefully addressing the infrastructural requirements of mass tourism that were needed in such a fragile environment, local leaders remained mostly concerned with preserving the coastal environment’s visual beauty and attracting more tourists, especially as the growing economic crisis only further cemented local communities’ dependence on tourism.

Some critics in the 1980s, and after the collapse of communism in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, have pointed to a general lack of concern among socialist leaders toward environmental issues, especially following the Chernobyl disaster.<sup>7</sup> Socialist Yugoslavia’s shortcomings in terms of sustainable tourism development in the 1980s, however, had little to do with a perceived socialist apathy toward the environment and had much more to do with a common phenomenon of tourism overdependency in countries with developing economies. During the crises of the 1980s coastal

<sup>4</sup>Birgit Wiesner and Armin Ganser, *Yugoslavia: Dalmatian Coast, from Zadar to the Makarska Riviera including the Dalmatian Islands*, trans. David Cocking (Norwich, 1990), 4.

<sup>5</sup>Boris Vukonić, *Povijest Hrvatskog Turizma* (Zagreb, 2005), 147.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, *Yugoslavia’s Sunny Side, Povijest Hrvatskog Turizma and Remembering Utopia*. For literature on the political significance of tourism for socialist Yugoslavia as a whole, see Igor Tchoukarine, “Playing the Tourism Card: Yugoslavia, Advertising, and the Euro-Atlantic Tourism Network during the Cold War,” in *Tourism and Travel During the Cold War: Negotiating Tourist Experiences Across the Iron Curtain*, eds. Sune Bechmann Pedersen and Christian Novack (London, 2019).

<sup>7</sup>Joan DeBardeleben, “Introduction,” in *To breathe Free: Eastern Europe’s Environmental Crisis*, ed. Joan DeBardeleben (Washington, DC, 1991), 4, 18.

municipalities became even more dependent on tourism, a phenomenon which in large part helps explain tourism's dominance in Croatia and Montenegro today. Thanks to the eastern Adriatic's natural features, however, which include a heavily indented coastline that makes other types of development either difficult or impossible, its image as a destination of pristine environments lingers into the present.<sup>8</sup> Through the case study of Yugoslavia, we can see that less economically developed countries with fragile but attractive environments and substantial economic limitations have struggled to find a balance between absorbing large numbers of tourists and protecting the environment, whether they operate under a socialist or capitalist model.

### Yugoslavia's Struggles to Balance between Tourism and Environmental Pressures in Context

The story of environmental pressures from mass tourism threatening tourism's own success and the health of local built and natural habitats in Mediterranean tourist destinations has become a rather familiar one. Helen Briassoulis has shown how tourism's success on the Greek island of Crete shifted from being on a "sustainable trajectory" in the 1970s to increasing environmental degradation as tourism expanded rapidly in the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> R.J. Buswell has also mentioned that the environment is seen as a natural resource in most Mediterranean tourist destinations where sand, sea, and sun are marketed.<sup>10</sup> He also points out that in Spain's tourist island of Mallorca, the draw of these factors led to successful foreign tourist economies where increasing touristic constructions have caused severe environmental impacts on the island, including "the general degradation of the natural environment."<sup>11</sup> Eastern Adriatic coastal tourism in this regard, then, is not unique. Indeed, the success of mass tourism on the Yugoslav coast quite predictably led to greater environmental pressures. Socialist Yugoslavia's mass tourism on the Adriatic coast is therefore part of a broader story of the relationship between tourism and coastal environments in the Mediterranean, and in developing states and regions on a global scale.

Regarding this global phenomenon, Scott Moranda provides a valuable comparative framework by pointing out that in the 1960s and 1970s, many different countries on either side of the Iron Curtain with valuable tourist destinations held a strong conviction that they could protect the environment while simultaneously catering to tourist demand through strict zoning laws and spatial planning. He calls this process a top-down "environmental movement built on consumerism," which, he notes, had several limitations that became clearer in the late 1970s.<sup>12</sup> While this concept applies to Yugoslavia's coastline, there are some unique characteristics that make the case study of the Adriatic coast under socialism stand out. As a non-aligned and decentralized socialist country, Yugoslavia's geopolitical situation was unique, but so too was the degree to which it sought to establish a statewide plan for sustainable development. Yugoslavia's approach was more complex than constructing zoning laws. The leadership sought to create a paradigm shift that would embed sustainability within the self-management model and modernization project. The greatest limitation to the coastal Yugoslav model, therefore, was not a lack of will but rather a lack of means by which the official approach could be implemented in the long term.

### Rational Planning: Tourism and Environmental Protection on the Yugoslav Coast Since the 1960s

In the 1980s, despite a steadily increasing flood of tourists, Yugoslavia's coastline often continued to be presented as an environmentally pristine destination.<sup>13</sup> Part of this stemmed from the fact that the

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, the images of pristine nature used by the Croatian National Tourist Board. <https://croatia.hr/en-gb>.

<sup>9</sup>Helen Briassoulis, "Crete: Endowed by Nature, Privileged by Geography, Threatened by Tourism?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 11, no. 2–3 (2003): 97–115, 106.

<sup>10</sup>R.J. Buswell, *Mallorca and Tourism: History, Economy, and Environment* (Bristol, 2011), 96.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>12</sup>Scott Moranda, "The Emergence of an Environmental History of Tourism," *Journal of Tourism History* 7, no. 3 (2015): 268–89, 275.

<sup>13</sup>This can be viewed in various pieces of tourism literature, but also in scientific publications from both Yugoslav and international studies. See, for example, OECD, *Environmental Policies in Yugoslavia: A Review by the OECD and its Environment*

state's project for managing the coast in previous decades included an assumption—based on both cultural and scientific understandings—that the Yugoslav Adriatic environment was “clean” and that tourism could keep it that way.<sup>14</sup> As we will see, however, despite some relatively impressive measures to protect the coastal environment, the experts and leaders involved in the Yugoslav coast's environmental management placed a heavy emphasis on tourism's ability to be sustainable, leaving questions about how to respond to the pressures from mass tourism either unanswered or vaguely addressed.

The Adriatic Projects—as they became known—were the first-ever example of international cooperation for tourism development between the UNDP and any single nation on such a massive scale, occurring over the course of almost five years between 1967 and 1972. The immediate purpose of the projects was to bring the entire coastal region, which was considered underdeveloped and economically lagging behind the industrial hubs of Yugoslavia, up to a higher standard by the years 1990 and 2000 respectively. The most secure way to make this possible, the planners believed, was through the development of tourism.<sup>15</sup> While there were some comparable projects elsewhere in the Mediterranean around this time, especially the Mission Racine in France's Languedoc region, the scale of the Yugoslav projects and the amount of state investment made them unique.<sup>16</sup>

While Yugoslavia looked to the UN for assistance, the Yugoslav government was the main investor in the Adriatic Projects, contributing almost \$6 million, while the UNDP financed much less, with \$1,650,000.<sup>17</sup> Spearheading the projects on the Yugoslav side were mainly experts from the urban institutes of each coastal republic, directed by Yugoslav architect Miro Marasović, with Polish architect Adolf Ciborowski acting as the project manager. And while the majority of plans envisioning the transformation of former agricultural and fishing villages into tourist settlements never materialized, they provided a framework and were meant to be referred to in all development projects on the coast up to 1990 and 2000.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the projects' documents can be used to demonstrate attitudes among planners and how they informed subsequent policies regarding development and environmental management. This helps to explain the course of environmental policies throughout the rest of the socialist period in Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav development planners were well aware that the main draw of the coast was its harmony between clear blue waters and ancient/early modern towns and heritage sites. The finalized regional plan for the South Adriatic region communicates this by reporting that the working teams agreed “the climatic advantages, landscapes, and environmental riches of the area should be protected and used to the greatest possible extent for the physical and mental recreation [of the local population and tourists].”<sup>19</sup> This idea that the environment should be concurrently exploited and preserved by and for tourism determined the official approach toward developing and managing the coast up to the collapse of socialism in Yugoslavia. The experts involved in the Adriatic Projects argued that this could be done through careful management based on what they called “rational planning,” a term adopted from the UN to describe a comprehensive approach to development.<sup>20</sup>

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*Committee undertaken in 1985 at the Request of the Government of Yugoslavia* (Paris, 1986), 151, and United Nations. *Press Release*, TA-1275 (1964), “Experts on Tourism sent to Yugoslavia under United Nations Technical Assistance Programme,” 4. UN. TE 322/1, Yugo (140-1).

<sup>14</sup>HR-HDA. 1228.5.2.18, RKSSRNH. 5.2.18 Sekcija za zaštitu i unapređenje čovjekove okoline (zaštita Jadrana), Box 1509. Druga konferencija o zaštiti Jadrana. Hvar, 11–13. 5, 1970. Press bilten 5. Dr. Josip Čiček, “Osvrt na realizaciju rezolucije i konferencije o zaštiti Jadrana: Opatija, 21–23 Studenog 1974,” 3–4.

<sup>15</sup>UNDP, *South Adriatic Project – Physical Development Plan for the South Adriatic Region: Final Report*, Dubrovnik, Town Planning Institutes of Croatia, Montenegro, BiH, 1968/1969, 22.

<sup>16</sup>For more information on the French project, see Giacomo Parrinello and Renaud Bécot, “Regional Planning and the Environmental Impact of Coastal Tourism: The Mission Racine for the Redevelopment of Languedoc-Roussillon's Littoral,” *Humanities* 8, no. 13 (2019): 1–12.

<sup>17</sup>Vladimir Mattioni, *Jadranski Projekti: Projekti Južnog i Gornjeg Jadrana, 1967–1972* (Zagreb, 2003), 65.

<sup>18</sup>For more specific descriptions, see Josef M. Djordjevski, “‘The (Still) Beautiful Blue Adriatic’: Tourism, Yugoslav Socialism, and the Adoption and Limitations of Visual Preservation on the Eastern Adriatic Seaside, 1960s–1990s,” *Balkanologie* 16, no. 2 (2021): 1–23.

<sup>19</sup>UNDP, *South Adriatic*, 18.

<sup>20</sup>Donald N. Rothblatt, “Rational Planning Reexamined,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 37, no. 1 (1971): 26–37, 26.

Despite expert planners' conviction that tourism presented the clearest and most rational path toward coastal modernization and that it would serve as a catalyst for further economic growth, conflicts with industry emerged alongside rises in tourism. Already by the end of the 1960s conflicts in communities like the town of Omiš in Dalmatia saw local populations divided—activists faced off against factory managers in protests against the building of new factories.<sup>21</sup> Then, in 1972, the same year that the Upper Adriatic Project reached its final phase, the Stockholm Declaration was passed, setting the foundation for the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). The declaration began with the proclamation that humanity is responsible for caring for the environment, as humans are both “creatures and molders” of nature. Yugoslavia spared little time in adopting this proclamation and attempting to make it a reality.<sup>22</sup>

Responding to the Stockholm Declaration's call for countries to manage their environments more sustainably, urban planning expert and professor at the Architectural Faculty at the University of Zagreb, Franjo Gašparović, who also directed the South Adriatic Project, spearheaded a continuation of the Adriatic Projects by ushering in a new, third phase. This third phase of the Adriatic Projects moved beyond strategies for developing tourism on the coast and focused more specifically on environmental protection. Adriatic III (*Jadran III*), as it became known, was officially titled “The Project for the Protection of the Human Environment in the Adriatic Region of Yugoslavia.” Gašparović and the team of experts involved, mainly members of Croatian institutes, promised to carry on the spirit of rational planning first addressed in the South and Upper Adriatic Projects. This time around, Yugoslav experts again collaborated with the UN, which acted as a co-funder in conjunction with the Yugoslav government, and the project roughly lasted from 1972 until 1978.

Despite the broad and at times ambiguous nature of the UN's Stockholm Declaration, the authors of Adriatic III took its points seriously and applied them based on their own logic. A 1973 report on the early progress of Adriatic III expressed the idea that environmental protection would be “harmonized with the overall goals of socioeconomic and physical development of the region.”<sup>23</sup> While the authors did not specify how this could be accomplished, they maintained that the project would be carried out on three levels; the federal level, which would continue to work closely with the UN; the inter-republican level, on which political organs and secretariats from each republic would form an inter-republican committee led by the Secretariat for Town Planning, Building, Housing, and Communal Works of Croatia; and, finally, at the “operational” level, where expert institutes would work together on research and scientific studies. While the plan avoided mentioning any specific projects it would conduct, its members pledged to protect all areas of the Adriatic environment from the air, soil, sea, and landscape to cultural landmarks and monuments.<sup>24</sup>

The finalized report of the project's plans, published in 1978, mapped out the state of the environment in each of the above categories, as well as some of the threats they each faced. According to the report, the quality of the seawater was rapidly declining, with industrial runoff and fecal pollution being the main culprits. Its authors did not provide many specific examples other than the fact that the northern Adriatic, around the busy port city of Rijeka, was most at risk for eutrophication.<sup>25</sup> The plan also presented the environment as being in need of protection for both the sake of biological survival and the social life of the region's residents. It claimed that environmental protection was essential to the success of tourism itself, showing a bias in favor of tourism at the expense of industry, despite its claims to be harmonizing the two.<sup>26</sup> With a degree of ambiguity, the plan's authors proclaimed that the project findings would be used by the government of Yugoslavia and all relevant

<sup>21</sup>Djordjević, “(Still) Beautiful Blue,” 12.

<sup>22</sup>“Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment” (1972), <http://www.un-documents.net/unchedec.htm>.

<sup>23</sup>UNDP. *Project Document. Protection of the Human Environment in the Yugoslav Adriatic Region*. (January 1973), 1.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>25</sup>UNDP and the Government of Yugoslavia, *Projekt o zas'titi c'ovjekove okoline u Jadranskoj regiji Jugoslavije: Projekt Jadran III, završni izvješ'taj* (Rijeka, 1978), 48–50.

<sup>26</sup>UNDP, *The Human Environment*, 10.



bodies as a basis of analysis and as a guide for all further development.<sup>27</sup> Despite the optimism, Adriatic III often fell short in important areas that would have far-reaching consequences. It did reach some of its goals in terms of setting up systems for the monitoring of seawater quality and facilitating scientific cooperation between Yugoslav republics, yet it fell short in its larger mission. Without foreseeing the shortcomings, Franjo Gašparović remained optimistic that “tourism, if meaningfully developed, could become, and should be activated to become, a very powerful ally in the environmental pollution abatement, since it uses the environment and space as basic resources being indirectly included into the tourist services sale price.”<sup>28</sup> Although Gašparović and other leaders had faith in the ability of rational management to ensure tourism’s sustainability, few concrete suggestions were provided by Adriatic III regarding how to address growing environmental pressures caused either by tourism or those that threatened tourism.

While Yugoslavia had grandiose plans for “rational” management in the 1970s, developments in the 1980s would only further expose the contradictions in maximizing tourist profits while preserving the coastal environment. These developments brought to bear the reality that as the state weakened, so too did the possibilities that it could implement its official visions. By the end of the 1970s, Yugoslavia had a well-established and unique social structure, known as self-management socialism, with factories and businesses socially owned and managed by workers rather than state-owned, coupled with a strong emphasis on regional and local decision making. While this structure had been seen by experts and leaders as an effective way to simultaneously develop tourism and protect the environment, as the decade played out in the 1980s shortages of funds, questions over who was responsible for implementing plans and projects, and a desperate grasp by coastal locales to secure hard currency from foreign tourists, ensured that many of the aims of the three Adriatic Projects would never be realized.

While mass tourism in the 1980s would prove not only to be susceptible to pollution but also a potential environmental polluter itself, in many cases official environmental management policies successfully managed to protect the visual beauty of the coastline, as seen in travel brochures and guides throughout the decade and into the 1990s and beyond. For example, a Yugoslav tourist guidebook published in 1989 boasted proudly that “[t]he Yugoslav Adriatic is still a clean sea, and the natural and cultural heritage on its shores is protected by law. Indeed, the preservation of these values is a responsible task of our age.”<sup>29</sup> Even more critically, scientific publications expressed similar ideas in the 1980s. A report published in 1986 by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), critical of the slow progress regarding the country’s environmental policies, still maintained that in Yugoslavia “seawater along most of the Adriatic coast is still extremely clean and clear. Wilderness exists in several places. Large numbers of historic buildings still stand in their original settings, surrounded by untouched landscape.”<sup>30</sup> Such positions have allowed coastal mass tourism to continuously grow at the expense of industry in former Yugoslav Republics on the Adriatic to the point that tourism is now dominant in many parts of the coast.<sup>31</sup> Despite an impressive track record of preserving visual beauty, a lack of financial means to address threats and problems below the surface has caused them to go unnoticed or at least unabated since the 1980s, as the following discussion illustrates.

### Yugoslavia’s Growing Dependence on Mass Tourism in the 1980s

In 1958, a significant year for tourism in Yugoslavia,<sup>32</sup> there were over one million tourist visits to the Adriatic seaside. Of these, over 700,000 were domestic, while 500,000 were foreign.<sup>33</sup> This landscape of

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>28</sup>Franjo Gašparović, “The Project on the Protection of Human Environment in the Yugoslav Adriatic Region (The Adriatic III Project)” in *The Second Conference of Mediterranean Towns* (Rijeka: 27–29 October 1976), 13.

<sup>29</sup>Marasović and Marasović, *The Yugoslav Adriatic: Its Natural and Cultural Heritage* (Belgrade, 1989), 21.

<sup>30</sup>OECD, *Environmental Policies in Yugoslavia*, 12.

<sup>31</sup>For much of the first decade of the Twenty-First Century, the official slogans of Montenegrin and Croatian tourism were “wild beauty” and “The Mediterranean as it Once Was” respectively.

<sup>32</sup>Igor Tchoukarine, “Yugoslavia’s Open-Door Policy and Global Tourism in the 1950s and 1960s,” *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, no. 1 (2015): 168–88, 174.

<sup>33</sup>NSK. 225.730. Državni zavod za statistiku, “Turizam 1995” *Dokumentacija* 991 (Zagreb, 1996), 11.

visitors would dramatically shift over the course of the following decades, and by the 1980s, foreign tourist nights represented the overwhelming majority of guest stays on the Adriatic. One study shows that in 1985, there were 8.5 million foreign tourists in Yugoslavia, with over 2.5 million coming from West Germany, over one million from Italy, just under one million from Austria, half a million from Great Britain, and tens of thousands of Americans.<sup>34</sup> The foreign guests on the coast, who made up over 90 percent of all tourist nights in Yugoslavia, contributed about two billion USD to the flow of foreign exchange in the country, or, “about a fifth of the country’s total foreign exchange earnings.”<sup>35</sup> At this pace, the record numbers for both guests and tourist nights in general on the Yugoslav coast occurred between 1986 and 1987—a total of sixty-eight million—86 percent of which were attributed to foreign visitors.<sup>36</sup> Concurrently with this peak in foreign tourism, Yugoslavia’s economic crisis was accelerating. For Yugoslavia’s workers, this meant a steady decline in living standards, with real income and wages decreasing by 30 percent between 1978 and 1987.<sup>37</sup> The standards for industrial workers especially declined and, in the 1980s, had become so dire that strikes began to occur throughout the federation, the longest and most dramatic of which occurred at the Raša coal mines in Labin on the Istrian coast in 1987.<sup>38</sup> With the Yugoslav good life slipping from the hands of potential domestic tourists, coastal populations became even more concerned with attracting foreign guests.

Tourists from Western Europe coming to experience the Adriatic seaside’s combination of natural beauty and unique historical architecture played an important role in shaping local actions and the trajectory of tourism’s relationship with the environment. Yugoslav tourism experts, as can be expected, were very receptive to the expectations of foreign guests. One 1982 article from *Otočki Vjesnik*, the local paper of the Kvarner islands Cres and Lošinj, published an interview with a couple from Vienna, Elfride and Karl Zeiser, who had been visiting Lošinj frequently since 1951. The couple had originally learned of the island from Yugoslav colleagues who invited them to stay at a socially owned *odmaralište* [resort] complex operated primarily to provide holiday opportunities for railway workers.<sup>39</sup> Even though in those early years there were recurring water and electricity shortages, the couple was attracted by the island’s “natural beauty” and remarked that until recently there were few crowds of tourists. When asked why they kept coming despite the problems they mentioned, the couple informed the interviewer that they returned for “the nature, the climate, the clear sea, the sun, the hospitality,” and that they “noticed progress from year to year ... now the electricity is there, there is plenty of water, the road is paved, the connections are good.” On the other hand, they mentioned that perhaps too many tourist facilities had been built since then, resulting in overcrowding. The interviewer was also curious as to what other problems the couple perceived in addition to the overcrowding, to which the couple explained that the construction and waste were the “most annoying,” and that while they understood the difficulties in managing waste from the large influxes of tourists, they reckoned that local authorities should set aside some of the tourist income for “cleanliness.”<sup>40</sup>

The opinions of this couple were obviously important enough to be published in the islands’ main local news source, but they also demonstrate the continuing dilemma faced by experts and leaders at the local and republic level: the expansion of tourism with masses of visitors drawn to the local environment can lead to environmental problems, like overcrowding and pollution, that could, in turn,

<sup>34</sup>Anton Gosar, “Structural Impact of International Tourism in Yugoslavia,” *GeoJournal* 19, no. 3 (1989): 277–83, 277.

<sup>35</sup>Boris Vukonić, “The ‘New Old’ Tourist Destination: Croatia,” in *Mediterranean Tourism: Facets of Socioeconomic Development and Cultural Change*, eds., Yorghos Apostolopoulos, Philippos Loukissas, and Lila Leontidou (London, 2001), 67.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>37</sup>Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (West Lafayette, IN, 2019), 252.

<sup>38</sup>Labin had a history of coal miners striking in 1921 against the prospect of an Italian fascist takeover, which culminated in a short-lived “Republic.” The miner’s strike in 1987, which was a response to worsening conditions, was often referred to as “The Second Republic of Labin.” For a more in-depth context of the history of the strikes see Andrea Matos’ević, “Druga Labinska Republika 1987. Godine: povijesno nasljeđe, s’trajkas’ka fonografija i fotografije obustave rada,” *Etnološka Tribina* 50, no. 43 (2020): 111–27.

<sup>39</sup>For more information on retreats for workers, see Igor Duda, “Workers into Tourists: Entitlements, Desires, and the Realities of Social Tourism under Yugoslav Socialism” in *Yugoslavia’s Sunny Side*.

<sup>40</sup>G. Purić, “Prirode nije više kakva je bila,” *Otočki Vjesnik* 34–35, 18.



deter potential visitors, a phenomenon explored in further detail below. As dependency on tourism grew along with dramatic increases in tourist numbers, how could leaders simultaneously cater to the needs and expectations of tourists and the environment that drew them there? As the following discussions will show, management plans from the 1960s and 1970s to create a sustainable future for the coast were constrained by the constant influx of tourists and the expansion of tourist capacities which, along with a shortage of funds due to the economic downturn, exposed the weaknesses of Yugoslavia's economic model in a time of crisis. In the 1980s, this combination of factors would lead to tourism outpacing the measures meant to ensure the balance between development and environmental protection about which the leadership was so optimistic in the 1970s.

### An “Intolerable” Situation: Tourism and Sewage on the Adriatic Coast in the 1980s

Despite an impressive track record of preserving visual beauty on the Adriatic coast, problems below the surface were exacerbated by increasing numbers of visitors since the beginning of the 1980s. For example, the shifting of benthic organisms (those inhabiting the seafloor) in the coastal areas of the Adriatic suggested a “progressive degradation” of marine ecosystems.<sup>41</sup> In the mid-1980s, experts established that the Kaštela Bay region of Dalmatia was highly polluted with heavy metals and sewage. Further to the north, a monitoring program discovered that the oxygen-depletion process of eutrophication posed a major risk in places like Rovinj in Istria where the “organic load is ... increased several times [by tourists], while sewage is disposed directly on the coastline without treatment.”<sup>42</sup> On the Dalmatian island of Hvar, home to a successful tourist economy in the 1980s, sewage treatment in the island's main port of Stari Grad remained out of date and ineffective despite pleas from the local community for financial assistance from the Croatian parliament's budget. Parliament declared it did not have the funds to assist the local community and untreated sewage plagued the bay throughout the decade and into the 1990s.<sup>43</sup> Wastewater treatment problems remain a major concern along the entire coast, and these problems were only exacerbated with the growing numbers of tourists.

Sewage runoff was also a major problem for Dalmatia's regional capital on the coastal mainland in the 1980s, the bustling port city of Split, which itself had become a prominent tourist destination with its UNESCO-protected Palace of Diocletian overlooking the main coastal promenade. The South Adriatic Project clearly stated that Split should remain the main transport and service hub for the region's tourist industry, essentially serving as a nexus of connection between the mainland and the islands. However, the planners also considered the potential of the city itself to build up its own tourist appeal while industry could be concentrated in inland areas like Imotski and Sinj. They perceived that “the pressure on the coast near Split is likely to become intolerable,” and suggested the creation of artificial beaches and easier access to other beach areas.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, they declared that “all coastal settlements on the mainland and the islands should have a piped sewerage system with sufficient treatment before discharge to ensure that there is no pollution of harbors and beaches.”<sup>45</sup> Despite the planners' hopes that infrastructural balance would coincide with the rise in population of the wider Split region, the region's sewage treatment struggled to keep up with the city's pace of growth, which was heavily impacted by the expansion of tourism. The Urban Institute of Dalmatia, based in Split, published a report in 1988 specifically addressing the problem of sewage in the region. In the report, the institute declared that despite the lengthy struggle to keep up with the city's growth, “unfortunately, this development and the spread of urban structures was not accompanied by an equally rapid development of communal infrastructure, and with it of sewerage, which resulted in considerable pollution of coastal waters, those of Kaštela Bay in particular.”<sup>46</sup> They suggested that wastewater be

<sup>41</sup>UNEP-MED POL, *National Monitoring Program of Yugoslavia; Report for 1983–1986*. MAP Tech, Rep. Ser. 23 (1988), 3.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>43</sup>Djordjevski, “(Still) Beautiful Blue,” 16.

<sup>44</sup>UNDP and SFRY, *Physical Development Plan for South Adriatic Region—Projekt Južni Jadran: Split Regional Plan* (London, 1970), 102.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>46</sup>Urbanistički Zavod Dalmacije, *Sewerage System Split-Solin* (Split, 1988), 1.

diverted from the Kaštela Bay, which had great tourism potential, to the Brač Channel where currents were stronger and waters more open. They also suggested a project to place wastewater treatment plants in industrial zones where the facilities would not conflict with “the planned function of the environment” (likely meaning touristic use),<sup>47</sup> all in the spirit of Yugoslav internationalism, and in close observance of the 1985 Genoa Declaration.<sup>48</sup> However, despite gaining support from various Yugoslav experts and expecting the plan to be implemented by 1990, a 1991 paper from the Yugoslav scientific journal *Acta Adriatica* revealed that the Kaštela Bay was still “particularly strongly affected by fecal effluents,” with the majority of sewage runoff coming directly from Split.<sup>49</sup> While the specific details behind shortcomings in the Split sewer treatment project are yet to be studied, it is likely that the start of the Croatian War of Independence in 1991 affected these plans. Even earlier, however, the OECD had already declared that Yugoslavia’s wastewater treatment as a whole was inadequate, especially citing “lack of finance and trained technicians” as being “typical problems” throughout the country.<sup>50</sup> Also, considering the relatively high costs for the wastewater treatment plan in Hvar around the same time, one can imagine that the costs would have been staggering for a city of almost 200,000 people.

### The “Adriatic Chernobyl”: Challenges in the Yugoslav Model for Responding to Eutrophication

As tourist numbers rose so too did pollution problems, especially in terms of wastewater that was being drained directly into the beaches and bays that attracted thousands of tourists to the Adriatic’s shores. However, while locals of the Croatian, Slovenian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin coasts struggled to solve these infrastructural problems, the Adriatic Sea and coastal environment were not passive spaces waiting to become less polluted. In fact, the material environment reacted in ways that caused great anxiety among stakeholders in tourism and environmental protection. One of the most unsettling processes haunting the tourism businesses, local leaders, and private weekend home owners throughout the coast was the threat of red tide—algal blooms in coastal waters spurred on by eutrophication from wastewater runoff, a process exacerbated by seasonal influxes in tourists. In fact, the increase of vacationers and the population of Split in the 1970s and 1980s led to a significantly greater amount of wastewater being discharged directly into the Kaštela Bay, and in the year 1980, the bay experienced its first red tide, leading to widespread mortality for many of the bay’s marine organisms.<sup>51</sup> From that point on red tides would become common in the south, but the impacts of algae were even more dramatic in the north, especially off the Istrian coast.

Red tides are algal blooms of diatoms and dinoflagellates, single-celled marine plankton that multiply rapidly and lead to losses of oxygen (anoxia) as their numbers rise and outgrow the available oxygen in their surrounding environments. These red tides, which sometimes can have harmful effects on human health if consumed, are often directly correlated to increases in nutrients in oligotrophic waters, which are low-nutrient and generally clear, caused by waste from freshwater runoff and sewage, often changing the properties of the water and resulting in a dark green or brown appearance. Red tides had been recorded in the northern Adriatic Sea since the late nineteenth century, especially off Italy’s Emilia-Romagna coastline around Ravenna and the Po river delta where industrial and urban runoff from the entire region, including the city of Milan, is carried directly into the sea. However,

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 7. The Genoa Declaration on the Second Mediterranean Decade, established in 1985, stipulated that all contracting parties would adhere to “establishment as a matter of priority of sewage treatment plants in all cities around the Mediterranean with more than 100,000 inhabitants and appropriate outfalls and/or appropriate treatment plants for all towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants.” Genoa Declaration, pt. 17 (b).

<sup>49</sup>Nada Krstulović, and Mladen Solić, “Spatial distribution of faecal pollution indicators in the Kastela Bay under different meteorological conditions/Prostorna raspodjela indikatora fekalnog zagađenja u Kastelanskom zaljevu pri različitim meteorološkim uvjetima,” *Acta Adriatica* 32, no. 2 (1991): 828.

<sup>50</sup>OECD, *Environmental Policies in Yugoslavia*, 98.

<sup>51</sup>J. Margeta and A. Barić, “Rational Approach to the Solution of the Problem of Wastewaters Management – The Kaštela Bay Case,” *Global Nest* 3, no. 3 (2001): 117–30, 119.

occurrences in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries were episodic, seasonal, and confined to smaller areas. By the 1970s, red tides throughout the northern Adriatic became more common. In 1973 and 1983, extreme cases of red tide off the coasts of Piran in Slovenia and Istria in Croatia led to mass mortalities of marine life, especially mollusks and smaller fish. The red tide of 1973 was so severe that it was discussed at the Yugoslav Conference on the Protection of the Adriatic in Opatija in 1974. A paper on the topic of algae presented by Vera Johanides and Anto Jurilj, representatives of the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (IZOR) in Split, mentioned that while it was previously believed that algal blooms were natural occurrences, it was coming to be known that much of the eutrophication was coming from the shore and hinterland through wastewater and “[discharging] of fecal waste waters containing many organic substances.”<sup>52</sup> They also mentioned that the algae created a mucous-like mass “covering the entire surface of the water” that fishermen were complaining about getting caught in their nets.<sup>53</sup> Newspapers, on the other hand, reported that while algal blooms had occurred before, red tides were a specifically new phenomenon and mentioned the potential negative effects they could have on tourism. But it would soon become clear that red tides like the one in 1973 were the new norm. As tourism rose in the 1980s, so too did pressures on inadequate sewage treatment, which manifested in the increased frequency of algal blooms throughout the Yugoslav Adriatic seaside.

The issue of red tides and algal blooms in the Adriatic was so severe in the 1980s that it attracted the continued attention of the UN. The algae issue was mentioned in a stopover report by the technical adviser of the UNDP during a visit to Yugoslavia in 1976. In the report, Ovadia A. Salama mentions that the issue of red tides near Pula, which “appeared there every year,” required specialized equipment since the pollution there could “lead to highly toxic effects to humans.”<sup>54</sup> The Yugoslav government subsequently requested funds from the UNDP for equipment to study and combat the algal blooms. Despite engagement with the UN, Yugoslavia struggled with worsening eutrophic conditions in the bays along the coastline as wastewater pressures increased alongside growing populations of inhabitants and tourists throughout the 1980s. Although red tides had potentially catastrophic consequences in terms of mass mortalities of marine organisms, many of which were used for consumption (especially shellfish), most disturbing for those invested in tourism on the coast were the physical properties of the algal blooms themselves, mainly their thick, ugly appearance and foul smell which caused tourists to flee *en masse*.

Rovinj, a famously picturesque town on the Istrian coast, was heavily dependent on tourism by the 1980s. Its main draws were its Venetian-era architecture built on a rocky coastal bluff surrounded by the bright blue sea, but as it continued to draw in tourists, it also increasingly faced sewage problems and a new frequency of algae blooms. According to a UNEP report for 1983–87, the majority of sampled water from the Slovenian and Istrian coasts was considered in compliance with their standards, and the water quality off the coast of Piran to the north had improved due to an updated sewage system. However, the water off the coast of Rovinj was not considered satisfactory. The report declared that wastewater was to blame for eutrophication in Rovinj, much of which was still being discharged untreated. While the report cited industrial runoff, it also mentioned that “the increasing number of tourists and inadequate sewage discharges have resulted in a deterioration of the sanitary quality of the coastal waters in the Rovinj area.”<sup>55</sup> While a project to build an updated sewerage system that would extend the outfalls had begun by the time of the report, the work had been slowed down “because of limited financial means.”<sup>56</sup>

Local newspapers sensationalized the issue of red tides throughout the coastal region and characterized it as almost apocalyptic, as if it was a plague. After an especially intense red tide blooming

<sup>52</sup>Vera Johanides and A. Jurilj, “Approximation of the Diatomian Algi Character of the “Flower of the Sea,” on Jadran, July 1973,” in *Konferencija o zaštiti Jadrana 1974, Zbornik Referata*, 558.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 553.

<sup>54</sup>UN. YUG 72/004. Box 20, File 8. Report on Stopover Mission to Yugoslavia. 8–9 September 1976, by Ovadia A. Salama, Technical Adviser, 1.

<sup>55</sup>MAP and Med Pol, *National Monitoring Programme of Yugoslavia, Report for 1983-1986*, no. 23 (UNEP: Athens, 1988), 165.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

off the coast of Istria in 1988, newspapers drew on the fears of coastal communities that environmental impacts could ruin their tourist seasons. One article from Serbian tabloid *Novosti* in 1988 had a bold headline that read “Algae Strangles the Adriatic,”<sup>57</sup> while another from the newspaper *Danas* told its readers that “The Sea Dies Blooming.”<sup>58</sup> A local paper from Split went so far as to call it “The Adriatic Chernobyl,” and featured a large cartoon of a fish sporting a gas mask.<sup>59</sup> One year later another algal bloom caught the attention of the *New York Times*, which in a 1989 report called it a “hidden sickness” that was putting Italy and Yugoslavia’s tourism in jeopardy.<sup>60</sup> Most of the news articles challenged the idea that these red tides were natural occurrences, and they mainly blamed Italy and pollution from the Po River for causing them. However, Yugoslav newspapers also questioned Yugoslavia’s role, especially for the untreated wastewater being discharged into its bays. Since red tides in the late 1980s were also happening near Rijeka and Split, and not just in the north near the border with Italy, it was apparent that Yugoslavia’s coastal republics needed to respond locally in addition to working closely with Italy on joint measures against eutrophication.

While the red tides were sensationalized by the media, it was a very real problem and attracted the attention of both Yugoslav experts and the government. In 1984, the newly established Inter-Republican Commission for Coordination of Protecting the Adriatic Region addressed an “unpleasant” algal bloom from the previous year in Kvarner Bay. The commission, which was established in 1982 to help advance ideas set forth in Adriatic III, published an article in the Istrian newspaper *Glas Istre* claiming that the algae was threatening tourism and marine life in the Rijeka region. In the article, the commission contributed to popular anxiety by characterizing the algae as an amorphous monster, floating from coast to coast where it would “turn into a dense, slimy brown mass in bays and coves, repulsive not only in appearance but mostly in its slimy properties, which stick to the body of the swimmer.”<sup>61</sup> While the article mostly blamed the multitude of ships entering Rijeka Bay for the algae, it also mentioned human waste as a contributing factor. The authors also argued that it was necessary for actions that would eliminate the problem altogether. To carry this out, they suggested that the only solution was wastewater treatment, and that pushing sewage further out into the sea from the immediate coastline would not be a viable long-term solution, as the algae would still come back to the shore.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the commission’s recommendation, the more common action taken against the algae were short-term solutions that were meant to salvage the tourist seasons in the 1980s. After the severity of the 1988 red tide, the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Economic Relations in Belgrade sent a letter to the Republican Committees for Tourism in Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina requesting a list of measures they planned to use against algae blooms. They cited “the unfavorable reaction of the international tourism market to the ever-present publicity in the media of foreign information about the spread of algae in the Adriatic.”<sup>63</sup> The Assistant to the President of the Croatian parliament responded a day later informing the Federal Secretariat that, after a meeting with the Republican Committee for Tourism of Croatia about the proposal of protection against algal blooms, they would continue to constantly monitor the properties of the seawater off the Croatian coast from the Ruđer Bošković station in Rovinj. They also committed to establishing a network of protected beaches that would use barriers to keep the algae away from swimming areas and employ the use of fishing nets to clean the algae, whereas in Rijeka disinfection was being introduced through the

<sup>57</sup>Dušan Krajčinović, “Alge guše Jadran,” *Novosti*, 10/6/1988, 29 in HR-HDA, F.2031-VND, EKO-25-26, Box 3629. “Cvjetanje Mora.”

<sup>58</sup>Vlatko Fras, “More umire cvjetajući,” *Danas*, 8/23/1988, 70, in *Ibid*.

<sup>59</sup>Benović, “Nije loše, bit će i gore!” *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (8/28/1988), 5–7, in *Ibid*.

<sup>60</sup>Marlise Simons, “Algae Tides Make Adriatic Murkier,” in *The New York Times*, 8/16/1989, <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/08/16/world/algae-tides-make-adriatic-murkier.html>.

<sup>61</sup>“Neugodno Cvjetanje Mora,” in Republički komitet za građevinarstvo, stambene i komunalne poslove i zaštitu čovjekove okoline SR Hrvatske – Zavod za prostorno uređenje i zaštitu čovjekove okoline, *Informacijski Bilten* br. 9 (1983), 16.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid*, 17.

<sup>63</sup>Letter from Savezni sekretarijat za ekonomske odnose sa inostranstvom to Republički komitet za turizam SR Hrvatske, et al. Br. 260-2559 in HR-HDA. Republički komitet za turizam. 57/2050. Klasifikacijska Oznaka 351-01/89-01/5.

use of minerals that were also used to clean oil from the sea surface.<sup>64</sup> No mention was made of a permanent and updated wastewater or sewer treatment system for the coastline.

In April 1989, the Croatian parliament approved a budget of 1.2 billion dinars to fund the reduction of sea pollution on the coast. These funds would be allocated to continued collaboration with Italy on monitoring and addressing eutrophication from the Po River, which they considered to be the “basis of the whole program for the protection of the Adriatic.”<sup>65</sup> But there was surprisingly no mention of the planned use of the funds for wastewater treatment in Yugoslavia. Instead, the new 1.2 billion dinar fund for pollution abatement would support the use of “floating dams” and nets produced by Slovenian companies, along with special ships that would clean algae from the surface of the sea. One of these ships, *Ekomar* from Rijeka, which had been used to clean up oil, would also be employed to collect algae. The report by the Republican Committee for Tourism also made sure to mention that the Yugoslav Adriatic Sea was still “the cleanest in the Mediterranean.”<sup>66</sup>

While the Croatian parliament and the Republican Committee for Tourism continued to rely on temporary measures that would clean algae to spare the discomfort of bathers, algae continued to haunt Yugoslavia’s bays throughout the remainder of the Federation’s existence. In addition, the Alps-Adriatic Working Group for monitoring the Adriatic Sea focused mainly on researching the causes of pollution on the coast. This working group, established in 1978 in Venice, sought regional cooperation between Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia, but had no legal authority and did not involve federal governments. The working group, with its headquarters in Trieste, produced several studies but seems to have had only an indirect impact on Yugoslavia’s official response to the algae. In 1990, a year after the Croatian parliament passed the budget, the Institute for Environmental Protection of the Rijeka Municipality reported to the Republican Committee for Environmental Protection that the use of boats and nets could not completely eradicate algae from the sea due its malleable properties, so the algae masses should only be cleaned up in the vicinity of swimming areas.<sup>67</sup> While this episode points to a potential mismanagement of funds, it more clearly reflects the anxiety felt by coastal municipalities and communities that had become so dependent on tourism in the 1980s that they felt it was more important to spare each individual tourist season than to provide a long-term solution.

### Coming Up Dry—Tourism and Pressures on the Coast’s Fresh Water Supply

In addition to the ecosystem of the Adriatic Sea’s reaction to increased environmental pressures through eutrophication, the Yugoslav seaside’s dual draw of modern tourist comforts and “wilderness” would ensure the continuation of problems inherent in the material reality of the coastline, mainly its aridity. Water shortages in the northern Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia have been reported since the nineteenth century, but their severity wouldn’t be as clear until the growth of tourist economies in those regions. The architects of the Upper Adriatic Project were aware of the region’s environmental limitations, but argued that “[t]he natural barriers, the mountain range stretching along the coast, the lack of water, the deficiency of transport connections with the islands ... can be easily conquered by the use of modern technology and application of new technological solutions.”<sup>68</sup> Despite the planners’ faith in their abilities to overcome and surmount environmental barriers, they did not predict the lack of financial resources they would have to overcome to carry out such visions in the 1980s.

Istria, for example, continued to have severe freshwater shortages throughout the 1980s despite projects to increase the water supply having begun in the 1970s. Despite a long-running project that began

<sup>64</sup>Vladimir Trpović, letter to Savezni sekretarijat za ekonomske odnose s inozemstvom, “Mjere i aktivnost koje se poduzimaju na planu zaštita mora od zagađivanja” in *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>“O aktivnostima za smanjenje zagađivanja mora,” Zagreb, 4/25/1989 in HR-HDA. Republički komitet za turizam. 57/2050. Signatura 03/5, 1.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup>Andrija Randić, letter to Republički komitet za građevinarstvo, stambene i komunalne poslove i zaštitu čovjekove okoline, “Mišljenje – o podobnosti i funkcionalnosti broda tipa “PELICAN” firme “ECOLMARE” (Italija) za aktivnosti predviđene planom intervencija (čišćenje algi)” Rijeka, 4/11/1990 in HR-HDA. Republički komitet za turizam. 57/2050.

<sup>68</sup>UNDP, *Upper Adriatic Project – Coordinating Physical Plan for the Upper Adriatic Region Final Report* (Rijeka, 1972), 23.



in the 1960s to connect the coast to a freshwater supply at the Butoniga reservoir, located well within the Istrian hinterland, the coastal Istrian municipalities struggled to keep up with the water demands of increasing numbers of tourists, and by 1985 the project had reached an estimated cost upward of eight billion dinars. Regarding the freshwater supply, the Istra-Jadran Workers' Organization wrote to the Croatian parliament that water shortages were "not only a basic limiting factor for further development of tourism in the most developed tourist areas," but that they were "increasingly negatively affecting the normal flow of existing tourist traffic" with water restrictions frequently being introduced each tourist season.<sup>69</sup> The working organization *Vodoopskrbni Sistem Istre*, however, declared that by their measurements "the largest consumer of drinking water in Istria is the tourism economy, which due to the seasonal nature of the business makes a big difference in consumption in the winter and summer months."<sup>70</sup> In April 1988, the Federal Executive Council in Belgrade accepted a request for a coastal water conservation project for the Istrian and Slovenian coastlines by authorizing the Federal Secretariat for Finance to apply for a new loan acknowledging that:

The accelerated development of urban and tourist villages in the western coast of the peninsula of Istria and the Slovenian coast has not been followed in the last two decades by the proper development of communal infrastructure, above all the capacities for drinking water supply, so that water has become a limiting factor for the overall development of these areas.<sup>71</sup>

The project, which would cost 240 million USD, 60 percent of which would come from an international bank loan, was foreseen as being capable of doubling the existing freshwater capacities for Istria and Slovenia and was set to be completed by 1995.<sup>72</sup> While the archival information in the Yugoslav-era fonds at the Croatian State Archive on this subject ends in 1989, it is apparent that, unlike the sewage project in Stari Grad, the water supply in Istria and Slovenia was considered to be significant enough an issue at the Republic and Federal level that more funds would be directed for addressing this problem. The Butoniga water reserve in the Istrian hinterland was built in 1988 and continues to supply water to the Istrian coast. However, a new loan request by Croatia, now independent, for more money from the world bank in 2001 to fund continued work on the project suggests that the 1988 project did not accomplish its goals. According to the new loan request, water shortages were still frequent in the area, with the Yugoslav Wars and increasing costs interrupting the project between 1991 and 1995. The new loan would be in the estimated total of 126.6 million USD, with the World Bank financing 20 percent of that total.<sup>73</sup> While this episode demonstrates a willingness among Yugoslav authorities in Belgrade and Zagreb to pour borrowed money into grandiose tourism infrastructure projects, the costs would be higher than anticipated, and even with the securing of revenue generated by tourism and foreign loans, the funds still came up short, putting the long-term cost-benefit of tourism into question.

## Conclusion

1987, the same year that Slobodan Milošević made his nationalistic speech in Kosovo that many view to have sparked a chain reaction of nationalism in Yugoslavia that led directly to the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, was also a record year for Adriatic coastal tourism. But by the end of the decade, it was clear

<sup>69</sup>Gino Matošević, letter to IVS. "Pismo SOUR-a Istra-Jadran u vezi s prijedlozima za rješavanje problema vodoopskrbe u Istri," 1. 4/1/1985 in HR-HDA. Republički komitet za turizam. 58/2050. Folder 1985, 150/1 "Istra-Jadran, vodoopskrba."

<sup>70</sup>Željko Žudrić, letter to IVS, "Prijedlog izvora sredstva za gradnju VSI. Vodovoda Butoniga," 1. 09-29-1986 in HR-HDA. Republički komitet za turizam. 58/2050. Folder "vodoopskrbni sistem Istre."

<sup>71</sup>Savezni sekretarijat za finansije, "Predlog – osnove za vođenje pregovora i zaključenje sporazuma o garanciji između SFRJ i međunarodne banke za obnovu i razvoj za zajmove za projekat vodovoda i kanalizacije u Istri i Slovenačkom primorju, Beograd: December 1988, 4. in HR-HDA. Republički komitet za turizam. 58/2050. Folder 03/5, 363-01/85-01/01.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>73</sup>OED. "Istria Water Supply." Report no. ICRR 10995. July 30, 2001. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/518911474484996647/pdf/000020051-20140602112014.pdf>.



that Yugoslavia and its system of self-management among the republics could not afford to implement many of the plans for environmental balance and sustainable development it constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. While this shows weaknesses in the Yugoslav system, it does not, in my opinion, show a lack of consideration or will among the leadership for environmental protection.

As cracks in the Iron Curtain became evident in the 1980s, more vocal internal and external criticism of European communist regimes' relationship with environments emerged. Especially after the Chernobyl disaster, sentiments that communism was "inherently prejudicial" toward nature became common.<sup>74</sup> Some of these criticisms were justified, with rapid industrialization and urbanization in formerly agricultural locales having perhaps predictable negative environmental consequences. On the other hand, Yugoslavia, which was not quite deemed behind the Iron Curtain due to its unique form of socialism and non-aligned geopolitical position, actually had quite impressive measures and plans to minimize the negative environmental impacts of development and to ensure sustainable resource use while modernizing the country.

Yugoslavia at the twilight of the Cold War was viewed globally not as an environmental polluter, but was instead recognized by the UN and other international bodies as a leader in environmental protection in the Mediterranean. Going back to the foreign tourism brochure introduced earlier in this article that claimed Yugoslavia was "environmentally conscious," we can see a mixed truth to this. The idea that Yugoslavia's seaside was unique for the country's actions in maintaining the coast's natural beauty was a process constituted by cultural, political, and scientific forces. While the notion that Yugoslavia's sea was "clean" has been problematic for its role in helping to overlook problems like sewage and aridity, it also needs to be acknowledged that Yugoslavia's coastal leaders dedicated tremendous effort in attempting to establish a degree of environmental preservation in the face of modern development and economic crises.

Scott Moranda explains that landscape architects in communist East Germany were able to secure some support from the regime for environmental protection by arguing that "socialist modernism promised to improve the living standards for the working class."<sup>75</sup> This idea that communism promised an alternative modernization that would lead to better lives for the working people is a major factor that should not be overlooked. Yugoslavia's coastal stakeholders and leaders took this notion very seriously. The Adriatic Projects, which were supposed to be completed by 1990 and 2000 respectively, were meant to raise the standard of coastal communities and subsequently raise the standard of the entire Yugoslav Federation.<sup>76</sup> Part of raising the standard included securing and maintaining a healthy "human environment." Yugoslavia's failure to live up to its own standards, as this article has shown, was due more to financial inadequacies, ambiguity, and grandiosity rather than any lack of concern about the environment. In short, financial weakness and deliberate planning led Yugoslavia's coastal Adriatic society to become ever more dependent on foreign mass tourism in the 1980s, which resulted in its leaders' main concern being a dedication to serving the tourist above all other issues. Following in the footsteps of their socialist predecessor, in the twenty-first century, Croatia and Montenegro both often maintain a similar path of encouraging mass tourism before addressing the enduring environmental problems associated with it.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London, 2005), 517. For criticism of Yugoslav socialist attitudes towards the environment, see Barbara Jancar, "Environmental Protection: 'The Tragedy of the Republics'" in *Yugoslavia in the 1980s*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (London, 1985) 224–48; Barbara Jancar-Webster, "Environmental Politics in Eastern Europe in the 1980s" in *To Breathe Free*, ed. Joan DeBardeleben (Washington, DC, 1991); Barbara Jancar, *Environmental Management in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia: Structure and Regulation in Communist One-Party States* (Durham, NC, 1987).

<sup>75</sup>Moranda, "Environmental History," 276.

<sup>76</sup>For example, UNDP and SFRY, *Split Regional Plan*, 14.

<sup>77</sup>Kristian Orsini and Vukašin Ostojić, "Croatia's Tourism Industry: Beyond the Sun and Sea," European Commission, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, *Economic Brief* 36 (2018), 1, and Jurija Cerović Smolović et al., "Montenegro's Road to Sustainable Tourism Growth and Innovation," *Sustainability* 10, no. 12: 4687 (2018): 1–20, 1.