



Making politics – and science – through maps. The “Europa etnografica” maps of the *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano* (1927-1940)

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Abstract

During Mussolini’s fascist regime, the *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano* – produced in Milan (1927-1938) and widely recognised far beyond the borders of Italy – included among its plates two maps of European ethnic groups. The makers of the TCI’s atlas passed on to us a specific approach to determine the kind of collective that ought to be considered an ethnic group.

The enigmatic second reprint of the fifth edition (1938) was inexplicably not accompanied by the symbolic features required by the fascist authorities, but, after World War II started, the new version of the “Europa etnografica” map – on a 1:12.000.000 scale – clearly showed the changes that occurred in the political context.

Keywords: Ethnolinguistic Maps, Fascism, Europeans, Italians, Ethnic Groups, Languages, TCI, Consociazione

1. The ethnolinguistic maps

Country maps are among the symbols that incarnate the world as it is divided into nation-states. These graphic representations of state borders have been and continue to be perceived as logos (Anderson, 1991; Boria, 2012), as has been and is the case with flags or national coats of arms¹.

¹ “The second avatar was the map-as-logo. Its origins were reasonably innocent – the practice of the imperial states of coloring their colonies on maps with an imperial dye. In London’s imperial maps, British colonies were usually pink-red, French purple-blue, Dutch yellow-brown, and so on. Dyed

this way, each colony appeared like a detachable ‘piece’ of a jigsaw puzzle. As this ‘jigsaw’ effect became normal, each ‘piece’ could be wholly detached from its geographic context. In its final form all explanatory glosses could be summarily removed: lines of longitude and latitude, place names, signs for rivers, seas, and mountains, *neighbours*. Pure sign, no longer compass to the world. In this shape, the map entered an infinitely reproducible series, available for transfer to posters, official seals, letterheads, magazine and textbook covers, tablecloths, and hotel walls. Instantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination, forming a powerful emblem for the anticolonial nationalisms being formed” (Anderson, 1991, p. 175).

But along with these cartographic representations of political borders (administrative or legal), as well as physical maps that show landforms, we find thematic pieces “[...] showing ethnic structure based on language” (Wilkinson, s/d [1957], p. 548a); maps which may become logos for the corresponding realities. Thus, I am not referring to specimens like the “ethnographic map of Europe based on racial criteria” (Wilkinson, s/d [1957], p. 549a) by the German ethnographer settled in Scotland, Gustav Kombst, who had no qualms in accompanying his cartographic contributions with decidedly unjustifiable comments (Robinson, 1982, pp. 139-140)².

The boom of ethnolinguistic cartography dates back to the XIX century: “It was only in the course of the nineteenth century that they began to proliferate, a reflection of technological advance, the coming of sophisticated statistics gathering and the growing importance of nationalism” (Barber, 2005, p. 272)³.

But it is not just that these maps – “Völker- und Sprachenkarten” in German – proliferated to the beat of the nationalisms surging in Europe: “Until detailed ethnographic mapping began to reveal the extent of various groups in Europe from about 1840 onwards, the idea of the nation

had remained the romantic preoccupation of a relatively few intellectuals” (Wilkinson, s/d [1957], p. 551b). As the logical conclusion of all of the above, several authors have come to claim that “Inherent in the production of many of these maps is the presumption that the ethnic groups so identified have a right to a separate or independent cultural and political identity” (Wallis and Robinson, 1987, p. 105) (Figure 1).

Thus, there was a time when the maps of the “Peoples of Europe based chiefly on language”⁴ abounded, and it was customary to include them in atlases and even in the educational versions of the latter. All of this, we ought to reiterate, much before the emergence of the Nazi obsession with the matter; and all of this furthermore brought forth by individuals who did not necessarily have far-right leanings: “[...] [the] elemento etnico o lo spazio culturale mitteleuropeo, [were] temi ricorrenti nelle carte e negli atlanti prima dell’avvento del nazismo al potere e non certo monopolio del pensiero dell’estrema destra” (Boria, 2012, p. 102).

2. Italy between the Wars

The Italian cartography of the 20th century peaked in the Interwar period, during Mussolini’s fascist regime – “il Ventennio” – supported by the House of Savoy between 1922 and 1943. The account of Edoardo Boria, in *Cartografia e potere. Segni e rappresentazioni negli atlanti italiani del Novecento*, allows us to conclude that from a technical standpoint, and for a few decades in the past century, leafing through certain Italian atlases would be as advisable, if not preferable, as consulting the best past or contemporary German, French, or British atlases.

² The “Ethnographic map of Europe according to Dr. Gustav Kombst” (1841), reprinted and turned into “The most widely distributed ethnographic map at that time” (Robinson, 1982, p. 137), was bound for the first time in *The National Atlas of historical, commercial and political geography* from 1843, a volume published under the direction of Scottish cartographer and geographer Alexander Keith Johnston (1804-1871).

³ “The idea of depicting the location of real or imagined races and ethnic groups on maps may be traced back to medieval times. [...] / Although such general maps included much dispersed and selective information, ethnographical mapping proper dates from the 17th century; and language, as a test of ethnic affinity, assumed great initial importance” (Wallis and Robinson, 1987, p. 106). But Peter Barber pushes this date back to “the late sixteenth century” and the earliest precedents of the cartographic representation of ethnic groups to ancient history: “As the Babylonian world map [conserved in the British Museum] demonstrates, maps have contained ethnic information from the earliest times” (Barber, 2005, p. 272).

⁴ The title comes from a wall map conceived in the United States and published in Chicago by Denoyer-Geppert: *Peoples of Europe based chiefly on language. Political boundaries and language areas as of January 1938*.



Figure 1. Detail of the general map of Europe with ethnographic borders (“Übersicht von Eüropa (sic) mit ethnograph. Begränzung [...]”, 1855), found in a copy of the second edition of the *Berghaus' Physikalischer Atlas* published in Gotha by Justus Perthes. In the map – 310 x 410 mm, approximate scale 1:18.500.000 – we can observe, marked with light blue ink boundaries, the areas populated by the Greeks in Europe and Asia: the areas adjacent to the Ionian Sea (including Corfu), the Aegean Sea (from the shores of Thrace to Crete and Rhodes in the South), the Eastern Mediterranean (including Cyprus, and the two islands previously mentioned), the Sea of Marmara (between the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus), and the Black Sea.

A Greek state straddling two continents and the five seas mentioned above, with its capital city in Constantinople (today's Istanbul), was the highest aspiration of the Greek Pan-Hellenic nationalism, summarised in the irredentist expression “Megali (Big) Idea”. To bring to life this idea, which seemed to lean toward restoring the Byzantine Empire and had been developed in 1844 by the Greek prime minister Ioannis Kolettis (1773-1847), required obtaining – either through diplomatic channels or by the use of armed forces – many lands held by the Ottoman empire. The map also shows the adjacency of the Greeks to the Albanians, the Ottoman Turks, and the Bulgarians (who speak a Slavic language and are nowadays split between Bulgarians and Macedonians). It is also worth mentioning that the map showed no Turkish population in Cyprus, and also that Crete was depicted with most of its territory coloured with the hue corresponding to the Turks.

They reached their peak in 1927, with the publication of “i tre più eccellenti atlanti prodotti dalla cartografia italiana del Novecento” (Boria, 2007, p. 8): in one instance, the *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano* produced in Milan (Bertarelli, Marinelli and Corbellini, 1927), the edition was widely recognised in the academic world far beyond the borders of Italy, and could be considered “[...] come la più grande opera di questo genere apparsa nel sec. XX e ha assicurato al nostro paese un primato non facilmente superabile” (Almagià, 1930, p. 215a).

The atlas published by the Touring Club Italiano (TCI) included among its plates two maps of European ethnic groups with a shared

title: “Europa etnografica”. The first of the two (pp. 15-16, scale 1:12.000.000) was devoted to the whole of Europe; the second one (p.16 bis, scale 1:6.000.000) dealt exclusively with Central and Eastern Europe. Both maps were the result, on one hand, of the work of a few determined Italian mapmakers (who were finally immersed in the fascist dictatorship and its mechanisms of ideological pressure, whether subtle or overpowering), and, on the other, of the perspectives of ethnographers and philologists of various nationalities. Furthermore, and as one would expect, these careful representations constituted a deposition of the ideological frameworks that promoted their making and diffusion during that period in history: the time following the great border shifts in Central and

South Eastern Europe after the 1919 Peace Conference.

3. The ethnic groups and the *Atlante internazionale*

Nevertheless, the makers of the TCI's *Atlante internazionale* passed on to us a specific approach to determine the kind of collective that ought to be considered an “etnia”, or ethnic group: they sought to transcend the traditional and practically exclusive consideration of language as the determining factor in the

delimitation of ethnicities, and in some cases acted with utmost consistency (for instance, by including the representation of the Slavic Muslims of Yugoslavia in the 1:6000.000 scale map). Although the resulting map was not that different from the linguistic map of Europe also included by Touring in the *Enciclopedia Italiana di scienze, lettere e arti* a few years later, in 1932, that drive for renovation and the modernisation of ethnolinguistic cartography must be underscored and judged in a positive light (Figures 2 and 3).

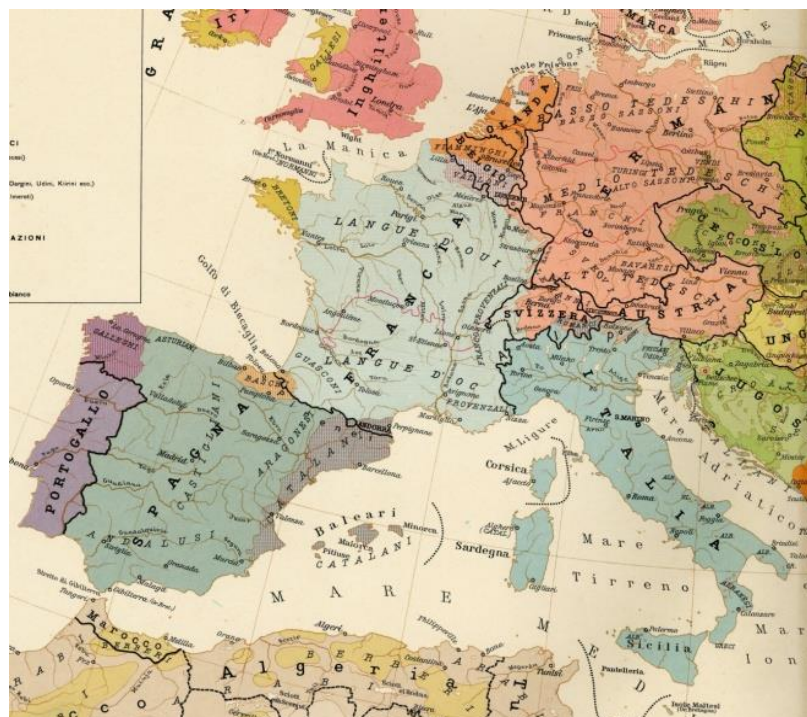


Figure 2. Fragment of the “Europa etnografica” map, on a 1:12.000.000 scale, included on pages 15 and 16 of the *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano*. The image comes from a first-edition copy from 1927. The peoples speaking Romance languages in Western Europe were represented with blue or purple hues; the peoples speaking Germanic languages in various pink (and some orange) tones; and those speaking Slavic languages (except for the Bulgarians, and the Montenegrins in this and the following edition) were depicted in a range of green tones; peoples speaking Celtic languages were all represented with a single mustard yellow hue, Hungarians are differentiated with a yellow tone, the Basque people represented with a colour of their own, etc. We can observe the differences in the treatment of the internal – or regional – diversity of the main ethnic groups in Western Europe: for instance, while we find denominations at two levels in German lands, with ethnonyms of a smaller geographic range than the “basso tedeschi”, “medio tedeschi”, and “alto tedeschi”, in Italy (needless to say, with the exception of “islands” and patches of other ethnic ascriptions) we only find demonyms for the “ladini” and the “friulani”; the latter, furthermore, were featured only in the first and second editions.



Figure 3. Detail of the map “Europa. Carta linguistica” of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* on a 1:20.000.000 scale, 258 x 312 mm, featured on pages 604 and 605 of volume XIV (VV.AA., 1932). The most notable differences in this fragment when compared to the corresponding ethnographic map of the *Atlante internazionale* are the following: the Dutch and Flemish territories do not display a specific colour to set them apart from the general German area (the map key, however, notes the “olandese” next to the “Tedesco”); the Welsh and Breton areas appear *invaded* by strips that denote the presence of the English and French languages, respectively; Walloon speakers are not set apart with their own tone (they are also absent from the map key); although there were borders between them, Galician and Portuguese, and Castilian and Catalan, were not given different colours (the map key only omits the reference to Galician); the territory of the Romansh language – the Rhaeto-Romance language of Switzerland – is only noted by the use of the number “1”, and therefore is not represented graphically; Czech and Slovak areas share the same colour, unlike what happens with Czechs and Slovaks in the ethnographic map, something that also occurs with the Croatian and Serbian languages (and with Croats and Serbs in the atlas).

4. The *lost atlas*

The editions and reprints of the *Atlante internazionale* – with successively modified versions of the “Europa etnografica” maps – were published from 1927 in Milan as well as Barcelona (where Montaner y Simón published its *Edición especial hispanoamericana* of the atlas with the title and introductory pages in Spanish: *Atlas internacional del Touring Club Italiano*). Completing the print runs of the Touring atlas prior to the start of World War II were the two 1938 runs: on the one hand, the first reprint – *prima ristampa* – of the fifth Milan edition, in which the title was changed to *Atlante internazionale della Consociazione Turistica*

Italiana to reflect the new name of the institution, in adherence to the Italianization of proper names mandated by the fascist regime since 1937; on the other, the second reprint – *seconda ristampa* – of the fifth Milan edition, which shows the date of 1938 that was inexplicably not accompanied by the year of the Fascist Era, or *Era Fascista*, and also inexplicably had the original title of the work, that is, *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano* (Figure 4).

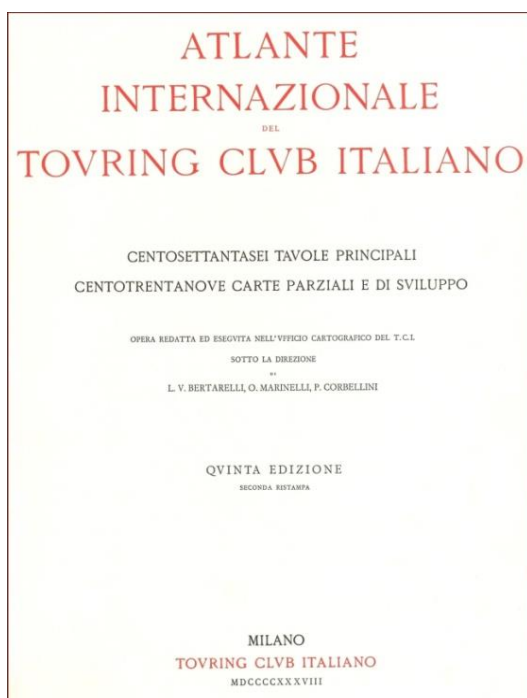


Figure 4. Cover of the second reprint of the fifth Milan edition of *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano*, 1938.

Another fact that we cannot account for is that this second print did not include the dedication page to the Italian dictator featured in all the other Milan prints, and its existence was not mentioned in the reference work about the history of the first six decades of the TCI, the book *I sessant'anni del Touring Club Italiano 1894-1954* by Giuseppe Vota (1954, p. 437), nor, for instance, in the miscellaneous commemorations of the 90th anniversary of the same institution (Touring Club Italiano, 1984, p. 205). However, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. included the *seconda ristampa* in their 1958 catalogue: p. 439 (reference 6968) of *A List of Geographical Atlases in the Library of Congress. Volume 5 Titles 5325-7623*⁵. In 1992, the list of authors for this work (*A List of Geographical Atlases in the Library of Congress. Volume 9 Comprehensive Author List*)⁶ once again mentioned the existence of this print run on p. 258. At any rate, there do not seem to be any references to the 1938 *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano* in the cartography research works that have been produced to this day.

⁵ The title of the catalogue continues as follows: *With Bibliographical Notes (A Continuation of Four Volumes by Philip Lee Phillips). Compiled by Clara Egli LeGaer, Map Division.*

⁶ In this case, it is recorded that the volume is compiled by *Clara Egli LeGaer, Geography and Map Division.*

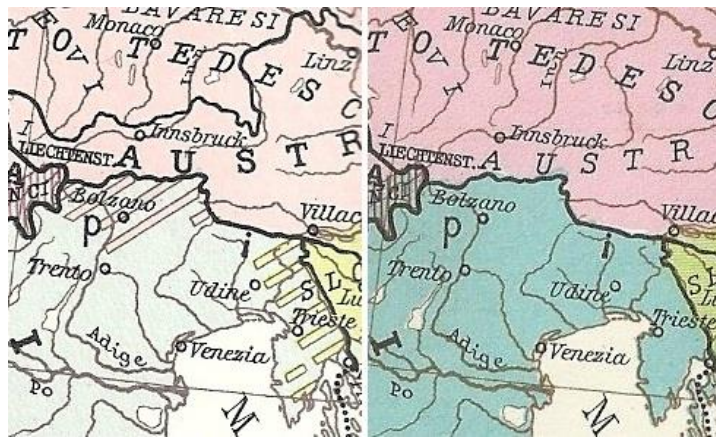
5. Ideology, cartography and... power, of course

In the previous paragraph I mentioned passing that the ethnographic maps of the *Atlante internazionale* modified some of their contents in the successive editions and reprints of the atlas. But here I would like to underscore that after World War II started, the new version of the “Europa etnografica” map on a 1:12.000.000 scale, published by the Consociazione Turistica Italiana⁷, clearly showed the changes that occurred in the context of fascism, be it due to the prevailing ideological climate or to the direct pressure of those in power; cartographic productions seemed to have been ceded to the regime as reflected in three aspects: the rather unitarian perspective of Italian nationalism (which made no concessions whatsoever to ethnic diversity), hints of an expansionist will toward territories adjoining the *Regno*, and the colonial ambitions toward the Maghreb, three core points of Mussolini’s discourse and other *visions* of Italy that had been formulated previously (Figures 5 and 6).

Acknowledgements

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⁷ As an individual map whose purpose was to update the atlas (folded vertically once), or as an annexe map to no. 1 (January 1940, year XVIII of the Fascist Era) of the CTI magazine (*Le Vie d’Italia*, with four folds).



Figures 5 and 6. The images show the convergence of North Eastern Italy and the neighbouring territories in two successive prints of the TCI “Europa etnografica” map on a 1:12.000.000 scale: to the left we observe belts of Germans and Slovenes, positioned in Alto Adige/South Tyrol and in the Italian lands adjoining Yugoslavia, respectively (the detail is from a copy of the *seconda ristampa* of the fifth edition of the *Atlante internazionale del Touring Club Italiano* dating from 1938); to the right, in the aforementioned version of the Consociazione Turistica Italiana (printed by *Le Vie d'Italia*, early 1940), the border between Germany and Austria has been removed (as the latter had been annexed by the Third Reich in 1938) and the Italian state is represented in a single hue to indicate the – presumed – fact that Italy was populated exclusively by “italiani”.

We must add that bands similar to those that appear in Figure 4 had also been featured – in the representation of the presence of the German and Slovenian languages – in the language map produced by Touring and published in 1932: the “Europa. Carta lingüística” map of volume XIV of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Figure 3).

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