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A LATE FRIENDSHIP: ITALIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY (1947–1992)

ABSTRACT: *Based on primary sources and relevant literature this study examines the relations between Italy and Yugoslavia in the second half of 20th century. The analysis covers four different phases that can be detected for the period from 1947 to 1992.*

Key words: *Italy, Yugoslavia, foreign relations, Cold war, Trieste question, disintegration of Yugoslavia*

1. Italy and Yugoslavia after World War II: Between National Struggles and Ideological Antagonism

After World War II, political and diplomatic relations between Italy and Yugoslavia were characterized by misunderstandings, hostility and polemics, mainly due (though not exclusively) to the Trieste question, which had been the cause of territorial disputes that divided the two Adriatic countries for decades. After Italy had been defeated in the Second World War and after Yugoslavia had tried to take possession of Trieste and most of Venezia Giulia, the Peace Treaty of February 10, 1947 stated that the whole Italian territory to the east of the Tarvisio-Monfalcone line was assigned to Yugoslavia, with the exception of a narrow coastal belt which included Trieste (zone A), occupied by the Anglo-Americans, and Koper (zone B), under Yugoslav occupation. Under the Treaty, this coastal area would constitute a buffer state, the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT), to be formally established by the appointment of a governor by the UN Security Council.¹ However,

¹ A. Varsori, *Il trattato di pace italiano. Le iniziative politiche e diplomatiche dell'Italia*, in Id. (editor), *La politica estera italiana del secondo dopoguerra (1943–1957)*, Milano 1993, p. 140 ff.; L. Monzali, *La questione jugoslava nella politica estera italiana*

the division of Europe into opposing political blocs, resulting from the breakup of the coalition that had defeated Nazi-Fascism and from the ensuing confrontation between the two major powers of the coalition, the United States and the Soviet Union (which represented two political, economic and social systems completely opposite and alternative), made the constitution of FTT impossible. Cold War and bipolar logic transformed the Trieste question from a local problem into the Adriatic version of the Iron Curtain. In the light of containment policy adopted by the Washington government in response to the power policy of the Soviets and to the expansion of the communist movement, the defense of Trieste took on a new importance: the Adriatic city was becoming a sort of Western shield intended to contain any communist infiltration into Northern Italy. The United States and Britain decided to obstruct the birth of the FTT which was too exposed to a double risk of military pressures from Yugoslavia (as happened in September 1947 when Yugoslav troops crossed the border and created territorial pockets within Italian boundaries) or to become a sort of Soviet outpost thanks to the active propaganda of local communists (both Italian and Slovenian). It was for this purpose that the governments in London and Washington postponed the appointment of the governor of the FTT by the UN, subordinating it to the agreement between Rome and Belgrade, a hypothesis, at that time, virtually impossible to realize.²

However, a few months after the ratification of the Peace Treaty, a new variable was added to the already complicated framework of Italian-Yugoslav relations: a political (more than ideological) breakup occurred during 1948 within the communist world between Tito and Stalin, with Yugoslavia moving away from the Soviet orbit and subsequently Belgrade coming closer to the Western bloc, which from that moment became the main source of economic and military aid to Tito's regime. Yugoslavia started playing an important role in the

dalla prima guerra mondiale ai trattati di Osimo (1914-1945), in F. Botta, I. Garzia (editors), *Europa adriatica. Storia, relazioni, economia*, Roma-Bari 2004, p. 36 ff.; M. Bucarelli, *La „questione jugoslava“ nella politica estera dell'Italia repubblicana (1945-1991)*, Roma 2008, p. 15 ff. As regards the Trieste question, a great number of studies have been published; among them, see: D. De Castro, *La questione di Trieste. L'azione politica e diplomatica italiana dal 1943 al 1954*, Trieste 1981, 2 voll.; J.-B. Duroselle, *Le conflit de Trieste 1943-1954*, Bruxelles 1966; A. G. De Robertis, *Le grandi potenze e il confine giuliano 1941-1947*, Bari 1983; M. de Leonardis, *La „diplomazia atlantica“ e la soluzione del problema di Trieste (1952-1954)*, Napoli, 1992; B. Novak, *Trieste 1941-1954. La lotta politica, etnica e ideologica*, Milano 1996; D. Bogetić, *Tršćanska kriza 1945-1954. Vojno-politički aspekti*, Beograd 2009.

² C. Sforza, *Cinque anni a Palazzo Chigi. La politica estera italiana dal 1947 al 1951*, Roma 1952, p. 327 ff.; J.-B. Duroselle, *Le conflit*, cit., p. 258 ff.; D. De Castro, *La questione di Trieste*, cit., p. 673 ff.; R. Gaja, *L'Italia nel mondo bipolare. Per una storia della politica estera italiana (1943-1991)*, Bologna 1995, pp. 81-82.

eyes of the Americans: the breakup with Moscow did not only have a great ideological and propagandistic significance because of the blow given to the Soviet hegemony in European communist countries of the Danube-Balkan region, but it also represented a great strategic advantage because it eased the Soviet pressure on the southern borders of the Atlantic Alliance and turned Yugoslavia into a sort of buffer State between the Adriatic and the Balkan branches of the two blocs.³ The realignment of Yugoslav policy could not remain without consequences for the evolution of the Trieste question: given the importance of Belgrade for the political and military strategies of Washington and London and becoming aware of the continuous inability to realize the FTT because of unbridgeable differences between Italy and Yugoslavia, the Anglo-Americans decided to favor a solution of compromise verified by the London *Memorandum* on October 5, 1954 by which Italy should replace British and American authorities in the administration of zone A of the FTT, while in zone B the Yugoslav military administration should be replaced by a civil administration. So, de facto the partition of the FTT was outlined, which was in accordance with desires of the Anglo-Americans who had the intention to renounce responsibility for administering zone A and to eliminate at the same time the cause of dispute which was considered harmful for the Western bloc.⁴ Italy was left with an alibi that the agreement and the borderline were provisional, allowing both the thesis of Italian sovereignty over FTT to exist intact and the related theoretical aspiration for a future return of Italy to zone B, as it had been promised by the Allies on the occasion of elections in 1948. The *Memorandum*, in fact, made reference only to practical arrangements for the transfer of administration, but no

³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The Trend of Soviet-Yugoslav Relations*, November 18th, 1948; Central Intelligence Agency, *Memorandum, Soviet-Yugoslav Relations*, August 22nd, 1949; *Intelligence Memorandum No. 232, Subject: Significance of Recent Intensified Soviet Action against Tito*, October 5th, 1949; Central Intelligence Agency. *National Intelligence Estimate. Probability of an Invasion of Yugoslavia in 1951*, March 20th, 1951, in *U.S. Diplomatic Records on Relations with Yugoslavia during the Early Cold War, 1948-1957*, edited by N. Ceh, New York 2002, pp. 54-60, pp. 103-104, pp. 116-118, pp. 268-270. *Jugoslovenski-sovjetski sukob 1948. godine. Zbornik radova sa naučnog skupa*, edited by Institut za savremenu istoriju, Beograd 1999. On Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the West, see: B. Heuser, *Western „Containment“ Policies in the Cold War. The Yugoslav Case 1948-1953*, London 1989; L. M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat. The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War*, University Park (PA) 1997; D. Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952-1955. Jugoslovensko približavanje NATO-u*, Beograd 2000; I. Laković, *Zapadna vojna pomoć Jugoslaviji 1951-1958*, Podgorica 2006.

⁴ J.-B. Duroselle, *Le conflit*, cit., p. 406 ff.; D. De Castro, *La questione di Trieste*, cit., vol. II, p. 797 ff.; M. de Leonardis, *La „diplomazia atlantica“*, cit., p. 393 ff.; P. Pastorelli, *Origine e significato del Memorandum di Londra*, in „Clio“, 1995, n. 4, pp. 607-609.

transfer of sovereignty was planned.⁵ The Belgrade government, however, although it had to renounce the Slovenian dream of conquering Trieste, considered the dispute essentially closed. Stabilization of the Italian border allowed Tito and the communist leadership to strengthen the country (turning their attention exclusively towards the East, to the Soviet bloc and not anymore to two fronts) and to complete the realization of the Yugoslav road to socialism, making more secure the grip that the regime had inside the country.⁶

On the assumption that the London agreement was just a temporary accommodation of the border, Italian governments decided to normalize relations with Yugoslavia, with a series of successive bilateral agreements such as the agreement of Udine in 1955 which regulated the flow of people and goods between the region of Trieste and the surrounding areas, and the agreement on fishing in the Adriatic in 1958. Such arrangements, despite numerous polemics, represented a prelude to the intense development of economic and cultural relations between the two countries verified in the sixties, which put Italy on the first place among countries importing from Yugoslavia and third place among exporting countries. Outstanding improvement of economic relations was the direct result of the guidelines followed by the Italian governments which were based on the complete separation of economic and political issues; such guidelines, moreover, were strongly supported by some economic and industrial stakeholders, whose primary aims were to benefit from proximity and complementarity of the two Adriatic coasts.⁷

⁵ *Briefing Note on Trieste's „Status“ (Zone A and Zone B)*, Manlio Castonuovo's „Strictly Confidential“ Memorandum, Rome January 11th, 1964, attached to *Castonuovo to Giovanni Fornari*, Rome, January 11th, 1964, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma (ACS), Archivio Aldo Moro (AAM), box 77, file 215/1. Also: J.-B. Duroselle, *Le conflit*, cit., pp. 423–424; P. Pastorelli, *Origine e significato*, cit., pp. 609–610.

⁶ *Memorandum of Conversation between Josip Broz Tito and a Delegation of Slovenian Representatives from Zone A of the FTT, in the presence of Edvard Kardelj*, Belgrade, November 8th, 1953, in Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), Arhiv predsednika Republike (APR), Fond 837 Kabinet predsednika Republike (KPR), (I–3–A), box. 144. Also: D. Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad*, cit., p. 124 ff.; N. Troha, *Yugoslav Proposal for the Solutions of the Trieste Question Following the Cominform Resolution*, in *Yugoslavia in the Cold War*, edited by J. Fischer, A. Gabrić, L. Gibianskii, E. S. Klein, R. W. Preussen, Ljubljana 2004, p. 161 ff.

⁷ *Memorandum on Negotiations with Italy*, „Secret no. 1646“, Belgrade, September 19th, 1955; *Memorandum of Conversation between the Under-Secretary of State, Anton Vratuša, and the Italian Ambassador, Gastone Guidotti*, Belgrade, July 2nd, 1957, in AJ, APR, KPR (I–5–B), box 245; *Information Memorandum on Italy*, (without date, but presumably in October 1958) in AJ, APR, KPR (I–3–A), box 144; *Memorandum of Conversation between the Under-Secretary of State, Veljko Mićunović, and the Italian Ambassador, Francesco Cavalletti*, Belgrade, February 11th, 1960, in AJ, APR, KPR (I–5–B), box 246; *Report on Yugoslavia*, (without date, but presumably

Despite the intensification of trade, Italy and Yugoslavia however failed to establish the atmosphere of cordiality and friendly collaboration, essential to give a definite solution to the Trieste question. After the signing of the London *Memorandum*, the Belgrade government wanted Italy to formally recognize the closure of the dispute and expansion of Yugoslav sovereignty on zone B of the unborn FTT; the recognition represented for the Yugoslavs a necessary reward for their elimination from the pockets created by Yugoslav troops in September 1947 and for setting-up the border between the two countries. Italy's government, however, aimed at separating the two issues, deriving the definition of the northern border from the Peace Treaty and reaffirming the practical and provisional nature of the 1954 *Memorandum*, which if exceeded would let Italy launch new negotiations *ad hoc* (from which the Italian government was hoping to get some additional territorial benefits regarding only zone A, demanding at least the acquisition of the coastal areas of zone B based on the so-called „continual ethnical line”).⁸

2. The Rapprochement in the Late Sixties: Italy and Yugoslavia in the years of „Détente“

International events and parallel internal Yugoslav affairs in the second half of the sixties promoted the rapprochement of the two Adriatic shores. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with the troops of other Warsaw Pact countries (except Romania), invaded Czechoslovakia to put an end to an internal crisis which had begun in January of the same year with the appointment of Alexander Dubček as Secretary-general of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Aggression against Czechoslovakia was also justified by ideological reasons through the development of the „Brežnev Doctrine“, which theorized the necessity of subordinating interests of every single socialist State to the interests of the international communist movement and taking action to curb

between 1967–1968), in ACS, AAM, box 85. As for the economic relations between Italy and Yugoslavia after WWII, see: M. Capriati, *Gli scambi commerciali tra Italia e Jugoslavia dal dopoguerra al 1991*, in F. Botta, I. Garzia (editors), *Europa adriatica*, cit., pp. 165–173. For overall analyses, see: R. Gaja, *L'Italia nel mondo bipolare*, cit., pp. 166–167; L. Monzali, *La questione jugoslava*, cit., pp. 49–51.

⁸ *Italian-Yugoslav Talks. A General Overview*, (Memorandum without date, but presumably in 1960); *Overall Considerations on Italo-Yugoslav Questions*, (Memorandum without date, but presumably in 1960 as well), in ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri – Ufficio del Consigliere Diplomatico (PCM – UCD), box 27; *Briefing Note on Trieste's „Status“*, cit. ACS, AAM, box 77, file 215/1.

any threats to the revolutionary gains achieved by the peoples of communist countries.⁹

Violent solution to the crisis in Czechoslovakia and enunciation of the „Brezhnev Doctrine” put the Belgrade government on alert, concerned about a possible application of the same doctrine to the case of Yugoslavia.¹⁰ In those years, actually, national problems inside the Federation were forcefully reappearing making its political weakness obvious. Political instability was also exacerbated by economic difficulties coming from the early failures of the Yugoslav development model based on self-management and local autonomies. The Yugoslav road to socialism ended up with deepening economic and social differences and political divisions between various national groups, exacerbating internal fragmentation underlined by the Communist Party itself, transformed from a unitary and monolithic subject into a Federal League of Communist Parties of six republics and two autonomous provinces. Between 1969 and 1971 growing popular protests shook up the internal cohesion of the country so much that the affirmation and the construction of the Yugoslav socialist regime seemed to be called into question. Great was the fear of Tito and his closest associates that such destabilizing factors could be taken as a pretext for intervention by the troops of the Warsaw Pact, with the intention of absorbing Yugoslavia into Soviet orthodoxy by replacing the Yugoslav leadership with the elements favored by Moscow.¹¹

A fear also shared by the Italian government, more and more interested in preserving and consolidating the role of the Yugoslav Federation as a necessary territorial and ideological shield between Italy and countries of the Warsaw Pact. Since 1963, following the formation of a center-left cabinet in Italy due to the Socialist Party entry into a coalition government headed by the Christian Democratic Party, the two

⁹ M. Kramer, *The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine*, in C. Pink, P. Gassert, D. Junker (editors), 1968: *The World Transformed*, Cambridge 1998.

¹⁰ V. Mićunović, *Moskovske godine 1969/1971*, Belgrado 1984, p. 17 ff.; L. Dimić, *Godina 1968 – Ishodište nove jugoslovenske spoljnopolitičke orijentacije*, in 1968 – *Četrdeset godina posle*, edited by Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Belgrade 2008, p. 339 ff.

¹¹ Leonhart to Rogers, Belgrade, March 13th, 1970, in *Foreign Relations of United States (FRUS), 1969–1976, Vol. XXIX, Eastern Europe Eastern Mediterranean, 1969–1972*, doc. 218. Also: Z. Vuković, *Od deformacija SDB do Maspoka i liberalizma. Moji stenografski zapisi 1966–1972*, Belgrade 1989, p. 11 ff.; J. Pirjevec, *Il giorno di San Vito. Jugoslavia tragica 1918–1922. Storia di una tragedia*, Torino 1992, p. 363 ff., p. 437 ff.; S. Bianchini, *La questione jugoslava*, Firenze, 1996, p. 97 ff.; J. R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History. Twice There was a Country*, Cambridge 2000, p. 276 ff.; F. Privitera, *Jugoslavia*, Milano, p. 96 ff.; M. Vrhunec, *Sest godina s Titom, (1967–1973)*, Zagreb 2001, p. 251 ff.

countries had gradually started renewing their dialogue in an attempt to break the deadlock reached not only in the Trieste question but also in international political collaboration. Italy and Yugoslavia found common political ground in criticizing some aspects of American foreign policy, such as the military intervention in Southeast Asia and its definite pro-Israeli support in the Middle East. One of the political protagonists in that new phase of relations between Italy and Yugoslavia was Aldo Moro, a Christian-Democrat politician, several times Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister *ad interim* between 1963 and 1968. The Christian-Democrat leader was primarily concerned with strengthening the economic and cultural cooperation and fostering collaboration between the two countries on major international political issues, without specifically addressing the issue of the final settlement of zones A and B of the FTT. In November 1965 Moro was the first Italian prime minister to pay an official visit to Yugoslavia; a visit returned by the head of the Federal Government of Yugoslavia, Mika Špiljak, in January 1968, to seal the „common interests and intentions” existing between the two countries in numerous sectors of politics and economy, with the exception – obviously – of the Trieste question.¹²

It was in the light of improved relations between the two countries and of the vital strategic importance of the non-aligned Yugoslavia that on September 2, 1968 Giuseppe Medici, Foreign Affairs Minister at the time, communicated to the government in Belgrade that Italy would not attempt to derive any benefits from potential moves towards the eastern borders of the Yugoslav troops stationed along the border with Italy.¹³ In the face of instability of the neighboring Yugoslav Federation, it was more than evident that Italy would be concerned to see the troops of the Warsaw Pact enter Yugoslav territory to apply the „Brezhnev Doctrine” and to find itself sharing the same border

¹² As regards the official visits of Moro and Špiljak, see: *Visit to Yugoslavia, November 8th–12th, 1965, Memorandum of Conversations, November 8th and 9th, 1965*, in ACS, AAM, box 77, file 215/3; *Memorandum of the Conversation between Tito and Aldo Moro*, Belgrade, November 9th, 1965, in AJ, APR, KPR (I-3-A), box 145, file 44/31; *Memorandum of Italian-Yugoslav Conversations (January 8th – 9th 1968)*, in ACS, AAM, box 66, file 6. Also: F. Imperato, *Aldo Moro e la pace nella sicurezza. La politica estera del centro-sinistra 1963–1968*, Bari 2011, pp. 104–105, pp. 205–208.

¹³ *Prica to Tepavac*, tel. no. 578, Roma, September 2nd, 1968, in AJ, APR, KPR (I-5-B), box 247; *Italian-Yugoslav Relations and Disputes*, Memorandum attached to *Preparatory Materials for the Italian President Saragat's Official Visit to Yugoslavia*, October 2nd–6th, 1969, „Confidential”, in ACS, AAM, box 127, file 5. Also: G. W. Maccotta, *La Jugoslavia di ieri e di oggi*, in „Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali”, 1988, n. 2, pp. 231–232; Id., *In ricordo di Giuseppe Medici e Giovanni Fornari*, in „Affari Esteri”, 2001, n. 159, p. 185; S. Mišić, *Jugoslovensko-italijanski odnosi i čehoslovenska kriza 1968. godine*, in *1968 – Četrdeset godina posle*, cit., p. 293 ff.

with the Soviet bloc, bringing the iron curtain right next to Gorizia and Trieste. Italian guarantees produced a real „thaw” between the two Adriatic shores, making an important contribution to the improvement of political climate and to overcoming mutual suspicions and numerous misunderstandings. The improvement was highlighted by visits of the new Foreign Minister, Pietro Nenni, and of the President of the Republic of Italy, Giuseppe Saragat, respectively in May and October 1969, both convinced of the necessity to help the socialist and non-aligned Yugoslavia remain united and independent, because – as they said – the true Italian eastern border was the Yugoslav border with neighboring People’s Democracies and not the one that went along the Isonzo River.¹⁴

The atmosphere changed so much that the governments in Rome and Belgrade went back to talk even about the Trieste question and the northern border based on a new assumptions: the Italian side accepted that there was a connection between delimitation of the northern border (which remained suspended since the Peace Treaty) and final partition of the unsuccessful Free Territory of Trieste, while the Yugoslav side accepted the Italian request to include the territorial problem into broader political and economic negotiations (request which was advanced in the hope of obtaining benefits and advantages in exchange for an agreement that the Italian public opinion would perceive as a renunciation). Even on this occasion, the protagonist of the revival of negotiations on the closure of the border issue was Aldo Moro who returned to the Foreign Affairs Ministry in August 1969. Unlike the approach taken in previous years, the Christian-Democrat leader decided to deal with the issues still pending by undertaking concrete actions to find a definite solution to the Italian-Yugoslav territorial disputes. Moro’s actions were based both on general and particular reasons. Determination of the new head of Foreign Affairs was, no doubt, influenced by the international framework in the late sixties when the process of detent between the two blocs started and when the Federal Republic of Germany sacrificed some of the territories in the context of *Ostpolitik*.¹⁵ Changes taking place in international politics

¹⁴ As to Nenni’s and Saragat’s official visits to Yugoslavia see: *Memorandum of Conversation between President Tito and the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pietro Nenni*, Belgrade, May 28th, 1969; *Stenographic Transcript of the Conversations between the Yugoslav Delegation and the Italian Delegation*, Belgrade, October 3rd, 1969, in AJ, APR, KPR (I-3-A), box 145, files 44/43 and 44/46. Also: P. Nenni, *I conti con la storia. Diari 1967-1971*, Milano 1983, p. 222, p. 542.

¹⁵ L. V. Ferraris (editor), *Testimonianze di un negoziato Helsinki-Ginevra-Helsinki 1972-75*, Padova 1977; L. V. Ferraris, *On the Backstage of the Negotiations in View*

avored Moro's project to include the closure of the Trieste question into the framework of general effort to improve Italian relations with neighboring countries, Austria and Yugoslavia (with which Italy had some issues since the Second World War). According to Moro, it was time to overcome patterns of power politics and set up an international society based on the values of solidarity, dialogue and peace. Italy, too, could make a contribution to the on-going transformation of the international system, by putting effort to resolve political and territorial disputes with Vienna and Belgrade and establish a close political collaboration.¹⁶

As to the bilateral dimension of Italian-Yugoslav relations, Moro was convinced that the territorial settlement established by the London *Memorandum* was „not possible to modify by force” and „not possible to modify by consent”.¹⁷ For the Christian-Democrat leader, the overall situation created by the *Memorandum* was supposed to be respected without bringing in any changes, and „territorial spheres” deriving from it (corresponding to de facto partition of the FTT) were „out of question” and „not for discussion”. The missing step for stabilization of the border and for complete normalization of relations between the two countries was the change in legal status defined by the London agreement and transformation of the demarcation line between zone A and zone B into a state borderline. At the same time, however, Moro realized that a quick and sudden solution of the Trieste question through the recognition of de facto partition of the FTT would cause many adverse reactions, both at the local level (even in the Christian-Democratic Party of Trieste itself) and at the national level in circles of the extreme right. The Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry wanted to avoid the possibility of an immediate success being turned into aggravation of relations caused by the reaction of public opinion which was not mature enough on some issues, as it was still tied to „passionate” and „sentimental” factors that were not to be neglected. It was necessary, according to Moro, to present the agreement with Yugoslavia not as an Italian

of a European Security Conference (1966-1969) in C. Meneguzzi Rostagni (editor), *The Helsinki Process: a Historical Reappraisal*, Padova 2005, p. 139 ff.

¹⁶ A. Moro, *Programma per una „pace integrale”*, in „Il Popolo”, October 9th, 1969. Also: R. Gaja, *L'Italia nel mondo bipolare*, cit., pp. 181-182; C. Meneguzzi Rostagni, *La politica estera italiana e la distensione: una proposta di lettura*, in [www.dsi.unipd.it / documenti / ProfMeneguzzi.pdf](http://www.dsi.unipd.it/documenti/ProfMeneguzzi.pdf); P. Pastorelli, *L'Italia e la Grande Distensione (1968-1975)*, in P. G. Celozzi Baldelli (editor), *La politica estera italiana negli anni della Grande Distensione (1968-1975)*, Roma 2009, p. 37.

¹⁷ A. Moro, *Discorsi parlamentari*, edited by E. Lamaro, Roma 1996, Vol. II, p. 1547; G. W. Maccotta, *Osimo visto da Belgrado*, in „Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali”, 1993, no. 1, p. 65.

renouncement of zone B, because it was not possible to renounce something that had not belonged to the country since the War and the Peace Treaty, but to present it as a final acquisition of benefits both territorial (zone A with Trieste which the Peace Treaty of 1947 had left outside of the national borders) as well as political and economic, through revival of friendship between Italy and Yugoslavia.¹⁸

3. Closure of the Trieste Question and Revival of Italian-Yugoslav Friendship

Secret exploratory talks (conducted by Italian Ambassador Gian Luigi Milesi Ferretti and Yugoslav Ambassador Zvonko Perišić) were held in the second half of 1969. Negotiations – as expected – turned out to be rather complex and difficult because of the gap created between Italian and Yugoslav positions and because of the impossibility to overcome in a short period of time misunderstandings and differences caused by decades of conflicts and hostility. Discussions were going from one extreme to another for almost two years, until the autumn of 1970 when – precisely on November 21 – the two appointees concluded their work with a report which consisted of a few points of agreement and many points of disagreement.¹⁹ Negotiation problems, caused the resistance of the political exponents of Trieste, strong critiques in the Parliament by the leader of the extreme right and the subsequent straining of political relations by Yugoslavia, especially Slovenia and Croatia, to such an extent as to prevent the arrival of Tito in Italy in December 1970, planned as a return visit to the official visit made by Saragat the previous year.²⁰ It was only after a clarification meeting between Aldo Moro and his Yugoslav colleague, Mirko Tepavac, held in Venice in February 1971, that Marshal Tito's visit could be carried out in March 1971. In Venice, as well as during the visit of the Yugoslav president in Italy, Moro insisted on compliance with the London *Memorandum*, acknowledging that the 1954 agreement „was not provisional

¹⁸ *Memorandum of the Conversation between Aldo Moro and the Yugoslav Ambassador, Srdja Prica*, Rome, December 12th, 1970, in ACS, AAM, box 131, file 61; *Memorandum of the Conversation between Aldo Moro and the Yugoslav Foreign Affairs Ministers, Mirko Tepavac*, „Secret“, Venice, February 9th, 1971, in ACS, AAM, box 147, file 14.

¹⁹ *Trabalza to Gaja*, Belgrade, December 8th 1970, „Top Secret“ Note, in ACS, AAM, box 131, file 61. Also: M. Bucarelli, *La „questione jugoslava“*, cit., pp. 51–52.

²⁰ *Trabalza to Moro*, Belgrade, December 8th 1970, tel. no. 1097, „Top Secret – Very Urgent“, in ACS, AAM, box 131, file 61. M. Bucarelli, *La „questione jugoslava“*, cit., pp. 52–54.

anymore". At the same time, however, he pointed out that the final agreement should be reached without causing disturbances in Italian public life; and in order to achieve this it was necessary to give one global solution to all the issues, through extensive, gradual and, above all, secret negotiations. Yugoslav leaders, on the contrary, having the absolute need to achieve international success for the sake of Slovenian and Croatian public opinion, pressed for a fast resolution of negotiations or, at least, for their official status to show that there was a will on both sides to reach a final agreement. In Ljubljana and Zagreb, in fact, Italian hesitations were misinterpreted and they started suspecting that Italy's intention was only to „beat around the bushes" while waiting for a possible internal Yugoslav crisis and then take advantage of it. After a temporary split in the winter of 1970-1971, Moro and Tepavac decided that, in order to relaunch negotiations without creating embarrassment to the two governments, it would be appropriate to continue with secret exploratory talks on territorial issues and, at the same time, to agree on a series of well-balanced „packages" to be implemented immediately in order to resolve the most urgent problems of the local populations. Basically, they were trying to send a reassuring message to Slovenians and Croats and make them understand that they were working towards the stabilization of the Italian border; at the same time, however, they were making Italians understand that at that moment the fate of zone B was not on the agenda.²¹ Despite all the positive premises posed in Venice and during Tito's visit, the work dragged on for many months, without the possibility to neither reach any agreement on „packages" to be implemented immediately nor find a global solution for the Italian-Yugoslav dispute.

The initiative was resumed by the second government of Andreotti (1972-1973) with the return of Medici to Foreign Affairs Ministry. During the meeting in March 1973 in Dubrovnik, Medici and a new Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Miloš Minić, agreed to renew the negotiations and to use, in case the negotiations would lead to failure once again, a secret informal channel represented by two experts: Director-general of the Ministry of Industry, Eugenio Carbone, and the President of the Federal Committee for Economic Relations, a Slovenian Boris Šnuderl. Negotiations at the official level were soon stopped, resulting, in the

²¹ *Memorandum of the Conversation between Aldo Moro and the Yugoslav Foreign Affairs Ministers, Mirko Tepavac, „Secret", cit., in ACS, AAM, box 147, file 14.* As for Tito's official visit to Italy in March 1971, see: *Memorandum of the Conversation between President Tito and the Italian President Giuseppe Saragat*, Rome, March 23rd 1971, in AJ, APR, KPR (I-2-48/1), b. 90; as well as the preparatory materials in ACS, AAM, box 133, file 74. M. Bucarelli, *La „questione jugoslava", cit., pp. 57-61.*

spring of 1974, in new polemics fueled by the decision of Yugoslav authorities to break the deadlock reached in the negotiations by adding an inscription „Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” on transit points between zone A and zone B. The diplomatic crisis, however, did not prevent the opening of the informal channel. Šnuderl-Carbone negotiations lasted for about a year and, despite many difficulties, resulted in the conclusion of the Italian-Yugoslav Treaty signed in Osimo, on November 10, 1975 by Minić and Rumor, Foreign Minister in the fourth government of Moro. The governments of Rome and Belgrade recognized *de jure* territorial arrangements provided by the London *Memorandum*, permanently defining the borderline between zone A and zone B of the ex FTT. On behalf of their governments, Rumor and Minić declared that they would like to improve relations with neighboring countries with a „qualitative leap in economic and cultural collaboration”, so they decided – at Italy’s request – to establish a tax-free zone that could facilitate a possible inclusion of Yugoslavia to the European Common Market and inclusion of Italy in the economic space of Eastern Europe (tax-free zone which, however, was never established because of the Italian resistance at the local level). The two governments, finally, tried to maintain the level of protection of national minorities granted by the special statute attached to the London *Memorandum* whose overall content, under the new agreement, was destined to failure.²²

The Osimo Agreements had a positive impact on the general political and economic interests of Italy, helping to greatly improve bilateral relations between Rome and Belgrade, „so that it can be pointed out as an example of relations between the countries with different regulations and belonging to different political systems”. For the first time in the history of Italian-Yugoslav relations, a true friendship was developed between the two shores of the Adriatic, characterized by several important economic, commercial and financial agreements, underlining above all the fundamental role assigned to Yugoslavia in the Balkan and Adriatic political strategy of Italy, aimed at preservation of regional settlements, both political and economic, stabile and capable of insuring national interests.²³

Among the earliest and most significant results of the renewed collaboration between Italy and Yugoslavia, there was, undoubtedly,

²² V. Škorjanec, *Osimska pogajanja*, Koper 2007, p. 65 ff.; M. Bucarelli, *La „questione jugoslava”*, cit., pp. 62–75.

²³ G. W. Maccotta, *La Jugoslavia*, cit., pp. 232–233; S. Romano, *Guida alla politica estera italiana. Da Badoglio a Berlusconi*, Milano, 2002, p. 244. A. Cavagliari, *Jugoslavia: ricordi di un’ambasciata (1977–1980)*, in *Professione: diplomatico*, edited by E. Serra, Milano 1990, p. 45.

the creation of the „Working Community of the *Länder*, Regions and Republics of the Eastern Alps” (later named Alpe Adria Community). Formed in Venice on November 20, 1978 at Italian initiative, Alpe Adria Community was a regional grouping whose primary and original core included territories located in the northeastern part of the Alps, at the meeting point of the Italian, Yugoslav and Austrian borders. The aim was to encourage the development of multilateral cooperation and to promote economic, social and cultural integrations between adjacent regions belonging to different political and economic system; regions separated in the recent decades but that had in the past shared a common state experience and had developed a common Central-European identity. After a period of dividing and splitting, it was obvious that there was a need to overcome ideological barriers and to realize an informal and simplified collaboration able to avoid delays and inflexibility of traditional diplomacy. It was, therefore, all about rebuilding a „common environment” through a series of actions and initiatives to facilitate the flow of goods, people, capital, services, as well as information, knowledge and culture.²⁴

The intention of Italian politicians and leaders, promoters of the initiative, was to boost the country’s role in Central and Eastern Europe, making it much more present and active all over the region. Local Italian politicians had understood how important and necessary it was to build a solid friendship between Italy, Yugoslavia and Austria, in order to stabilize the Central-European region and to develop economic and cultural networks in the Adriatic. This was also vital for the interests of northeastern Italy in general, Trieste in particular. Within the ruling circle of Veneto, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia it was considered that the future of these regions was closely connected to the development of prospects of friendship and collaboration with neighboring countries. In such a sensitive moment for Europe, policy of democratic, economic and social development required a parallel policy of peace and international collaboration with neighboring nations and with entire Central and Eastern Europe.²⁵

²⁴ E. Vrsaj, *La cooperazione economica Alpe-Adria*, Trieste, 1975, p. 375; Id., *Il nuovo ordine economico mondiale e la sfida del 1992*, Trieste, 1988, p. 206 ff.; *La Comunità di Lavoro Alpe Adria*, Documenti CNEL, Roma, 1992, pp. 13-40; L. Poropat, *Alpe-Adria e Iniziativa Centro-europea. Cooperazione nell’Alpe-Adria e nell’area danubiana*, Napoli, 1993, p. 12 ff.; Id., *The Alpe Adria Working Community 1978-1994*, Trieste, 1996, p. 5 ff. Also: <http://www.alpeadria.org>.

²⁵ S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia 1990/1994*, Pirano, 2001, p. 31; E. Vrsaj, *La cooperazione economica*, cit. pp. 9-10; Id., *Il nuovo ordine economico mondiale*, cit., pp. 206-208.

Regional collaboration established through the Alpe Adria Community permanently transformed the role of Triveneto: it was not a border zone anymore, it was an area of active affiliation between various cultures and nationalities who had a past, even recent, full of antagonisms and conflicts. It was at the level of political debate and cultural exchange, rather than purely economic, that the Community operated most of its interventions in its first ten years. The Alpe Adria Community primarily represented an informal forum for cooperation between territorial entities belonging to different political, ideological and national alliances, but linked by geographical proximity, same historical and cultural traditions and common economic interests. Obviously, it was actually bringing to light the complementarity of the entire region, despite the existing barriers and divisions, that was the most significant contribution of the Italian initiative. A proximity and complementarity, which proved to have a significant role in the development of the Yugoslav crisis in the nineties.²⁶

4. Italian Policy Facing the Disintegration of Yugoslavia

After closing a long territorial dispute over the possession of Trieste, Yugoslavia became a key partner for the fulfillment of Italian national interests. As inter-Adriatic economic and commercial networks grew rapidly and bilateral relations were gradually normalized, Italian governments were increasingly relying on friendship and collaboration with neighboring Yugoslavia to implement its own Adriatic and Balkan policy. In the late eighties and early nineties, in fact, in a period marked by the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany, Yugoslavia became the pivot of major Italian initiatives in the Danube-Balkan region. In conjunction with the events of 1989, the Italian government promoted the establishment of a Central-European Association, with the participation of different political and economic realities. Other than Italy, a member of NATO and the European Economic Community (EEC), countries which joined the initiative were Austria, a neutral country on the verge of entering the EEC, Yugoslavia, socialist and non-aligned country, and Hungary, the most reformed and in a way the most advanced among Warsaw Pact countries. Due to the subsequent accessions of Czechoslovakia and Poland, the „Quadrangular“, established in Budapest in November 1989, became „Pentagonal“ and

²⁶ L. Poropat, *Alpe-Adria*, cit., p. 31 ff.

„Hexagonal”, until it was finally transformed during the nineties into a „Central-European Initiative” following the admission of many other countries of the region. Unlike the Alpe Adria Community, the Initiative was built on the convergence of various political and economic interests introduced and pursued at the national and not just local level. The new grouping, in fact, was not restricted only to some adjacent territorial entities, but it consisted of the majority of states in the Adriatic and Danube-Balkan region. In the light of the ongoing transformation of political arrangements in entire Eastern Europe, the primary objective of the new Central-European agreement was to strengthen the co-operation in the political, economic and cultural field; in essence, it was an attempt to improve the relations of neighboring countries that had been bitterly confronted for 45 years because of the bipolar logic imposed by the Cold War; and, at the same time, it was an attempt to support the development and consolidation of democratic institutions within those societies which were headed for a long transition towards liberal and pluralist political systems.²⁷

The project, promoted especially by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Gianni De Michelis, a leading figure of the Socialist party, particularly sensitive to Adriatic and Balkan issues, followed the „Adriatic Initiative”, a cooperation agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia in September 1989 whose goal was to transform the Adriatic, until then perceived as an obstacle and a barrier, into a common resource from which to address an entire set of problems and exploit a series of opportunities in important sectors, such as tourism, environment and communications. Some flexible parts of the Alpe Adria Community’s forms and instruments were taken over by the Adriatic Initiative which led, in April 1990, to the constitution of the „Working Community for the Southern and Central Adriatic”. Even in this case, the basic attempt of the initiative was to promote relations of good neighborliness and to enhance the inter-Adriatic collaboration, already well underway.²⁸ The Adriatic Community, however, could not act in the manner desired by the promoters, because of the internal crisis that shortly after involved

²⁷ G. De Michelis, *La lunga ombra di Yalta. La specificità della politica italiana*, Venezia 2003, pp. 92–94; A. Biasutti, *Friuli-Venezia Giulia: dieci anni dopo. Diario di un democristiano (1982–1991)*, Udine, p. 252. Also: L. Poropat, *Alpe-Adria*, cit., p. 61 ff.; S. Mazzaroli, *Cooperazione dell’Italia con l’Austria, la Repubblica Ceca, la Slovenia, la Croazia e l’Ungheria*, Roma, 1998, pp. 56–59; L. V. Ferraris, *Una associazione utile. L’Iniziativa centro-europea*, in „Affari Esteri”, 2001, no. 132, p. 751 ff. Also: <http://www.ceinet.org>.

²⁸ G. De Michelis, *La lunga ombra di Yalta*, cit., pp. 92–93; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 26–28; L. Poropat, *Alpe-Adria*, cit., pp. 24–28.

the Yugoslav republics and that in a short period of time made the socialist Yugoslavia disappear.

Essentially there were two objectives for the renewed Italian dynamism and they were quite obvious. The first one was aimed at strengthening stability of the entire region, facilitating integrations between western democracies and countries emerging from decades of communist rule. For Italy, the advantages would have been evident. Such a strategy would have revived its international role and weight as a reference point for Eastern-European countries and as a bridge to bring them closer to the EEC. At the same time, it would have allowed Italy to contain the economic expansion and increasing political influence of Germany in the region, preventing these countries from falling completely into the orbit of Germany.²⁹

The other objective was to anticipate in some way the Yugoslav crisis, that was about to explode in all its seriousness, favoring integrative tendencies in the sense of „laying foundations for a new Yugoslavia”.³⁰ During the eighties, after Tito’s death, tensions between various national groups within the Yugoslav Federation were exacerbated once again as a result of great economical difficulties in the country. Slovenians and Croats, whose political orientations were increasingly directed towards nationalism and independency, began to openly criticize the federal government in Belgrade and its economic and financial directives, demanding with greater firmness and insistence the liberalization of political and economic life. Prevalence of nationalist interests even within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, gathered for the last time at the congress in January 1990, led to the split in the communist leadership, due to the secession of Slovenian Communist Party, and to the end of the party’s leading role in the Federation. In the spring of the same year free elections were held in Slovenia and Croatia, and they brought affirmation of nationalist, anti-Serbian and pro-independence forces. Similar results were obtained at the end of 1990 in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. Only in Serbia and Montenegro, the Serbian Socialist Party and the Montenegrin Social-Democratic Party, heirs to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, reconfirmed their power. The second Yugoslavia, the republican, fede-

²⁹ S. Romano, *Guida alla politica estera italiana*, cit., pp. 242–243; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 26–27; M. Bucarelli, *La Slovenia nella politica italiana di fine Novecento: dalla disgregazione jugoslava all’integrazione euro-atlantica*, in M. Bucarelli, L. Monzali (editors), *Italia e Slovenia fra passato, presente e futuro*, Roma, 2009, pp. 114 ff.

³⁰ G. De Michelis, *Così cercammo di impedire la guerra*, in „Limes”, 1994, no. 1, p. 229; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 27–28.

ral and socialist one (as well as the first Yugoslavia, monarchical and centralized), proved unable to resolve so many ethnic issues and to create a unitary identity in various populations and a common feeling that would go beyond individual national allegiances.³¹

The aim of Italy's Adriatic and Central-European political initiatives was to help the Yugoslav federal government to confront, in the least painful way, the transition from a socialist single-party regime to a liberal and democratic system. Italian ruling class considered it was necessary to strongly support Belgrade authorities in this highly difficult and delicate phase, for both internal and international balance, since a new system was being formed in Yugoslavia, primarily based on participation of several ethnic and religious parties in the political life, whose aspirations were openly secessionist. Between 1990 and 1991, while inside the neighboring Yugoslav Federation relations between Serbs, Croats and Slovenians were going from bad to worse until parliaments in Ljubljana and Zagreb declared independence on June 25, 1991, Italian government supported the federal authorities attempt to deal with this difficult situation, convinced that it was still possible to preserve the existence of Yugoslav State, albeit profoundly reformed and transformed into a confederal entity free of old hegemonies and with guaranteed rights for all national groups.³²

As a consequence of this approach, after the proclamations of June 25 and the beginning of short confrontations between the federal army and Slovenian territorial defense, De Michelis worked actively to suspend the effectiveness of the declarations of independence expecting to develop a comprehensive solution for the Yugoslav crisis. The Italian Foreign Affairs Minister played a leading role in the mediation of the European Economic Community: a tripartite commission was sent to Yugoslavia delegated to make the confronted sides accept the suspension of hostility and to lay the foundations for a negotiated solution, without proceeding any further along the path of unilateral policies and attacks. The result of the European „troika“ mediation was a compromise reached on July 7 on the island of Brioni, under which

³¹ J. R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, cit., pp. 276 ff.; L. Silber, A. Little, *Yugoslavia. Death of a Nation*, New York, 1997; R. Thomas, *Serbia under Milošević. Politics in the 1990s*, London, 1999; L. Sell, *Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Durham and London, 2002; S. P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, Boulder, 2002.

³² G. De Michelis, *Così cercammo di impedire la guerra*, cit., p. 230; F. Cossiga, *La passione e la politica*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2000, pp. 263–264; A. Duce, *La Commissione Affari Esteri e Comunitari della Camera dei Deputati italiani di fronte alla disgregazione jugoslava e alla questione slovena (1989–1992)*, in M. Bucarelli, L. Monzali (editors), *Italia e Slovenia*, cit., pp. 159–166.

Slovenia and Croatia, represented by their presidents Milan Kučan and Franjo Tuđman, declared to be willing to suspend for a period of three months the implementation of their declarations of independence and to take part in multilateral negotiations on the future structure of Yugoslavia, conducted under international supervision; the authority of collegial presidency of the Yugoslav Federation was reinstated, with Serbia, represented by Slobodan Milošević, accepting a Croat Stipe Mesić to be the President on duty; finally all present parties, tried not to recognize any unilateral acts, especially if put in place by force.³³

However, in late 1991, due to a continuous and intensified war in Croatia in open violation of agreements reached in Brioni, the unity of European governments was getting weaker and the attitude of the Italian ruling class was getting closer to the idea of recognizing the two secessionist Republics, even in the absence of a negotiated solution of the Yugoslav crisis. Lack of compliance with the agreements reached in Brioni by the Serbian paramilitary forces, the ongoing violent fights in Croatia, and the failure of peace plans urged some EEC countries to reconsider the previously adopted policy. Those countries were more and more convinced that mediation was not possible anymore, that Yugoslavia de facto had ceased to exist and that the only acceptable solution, in order to prevent the continuation of hostilities and to find a solution for the crisis, was internationalization of the conflict through the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. Germany was the first one to break the EEC front, thinking that a more direct and decisive intervention was necessary in order to eliminate the elements of the civil war from the conflicts. At the end of November, Chancellor Helmut Kohl declared that the German government was ready to recognize Ljubljana and Zagreb before Christmas, hoping that the largest possible number of European partners would be willing to do the same, but making it clear, at the same time, that the German decision would not be conditioned by the principle of unanimity.³⁴

Germany was getting ahead of itself, convinced that internationalization of the on-going conflict was the only deterrent capable of stopping the Serbian aggression, so it prompted other European partners to accept the compromise and recognize the secessionist republics. Agreement reached by the EEC Foreign Affairs Ministers in the meeting held on 15 and 16 December 1991 in Brussels, provided

³³ G. De Michelis, *Così cercammo di impedire la guerra*, cit., pp. 232-233; J. Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave 1991-1999*, Torino, 2001, pp. 49 ss.

³⁴ G. De Michelis, *Così cercammo di impedire la guerra*, cit., p. 234; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 69-71; A. Duce, *La Commissione Affari Esteri e Comunitari*, cit., pp. 166-167.

recognition, by January 15, 1992, not only of Slovenia and Croatia, but also of other republics of already former Yugoslavia, that had requested it before December 23, 1991, provided that their internal regulations were compliant with some general values and conditions, such as respect of democracy, human rights and minorities, and commitment not to change borders without the consent of the parties concerned.³⁵

Even on this occasion, Italian Foreign Minister De Michelis was one of the major protagonist in the mediation between British and French positions, opposed the recognitions fearing that the war might be expanded to Bosnia and Macedonia, and Germany's stand, which was firmly arguing that Yugoslavia was already a fiction, useful only to the Serbs for their military interventions in other republics as defenders of federal authorities.³⁶ De Michelis intervened by indicating that the Italian government had changed its attitude and was now campaigning for the recognition of Ljubljana and Zagreb.³⁷ Evolution of the Italian position was both due to international as well as domestic factors. It was evident, first of all, that the idea of a reformed confederal Yugoslavia became unsustainable, because the violence and cruelty of conflicts demonstrated absolute hostility of the Yugoslav peoples in pursuit of common political experience. Italian policy-makers were, finally, concerned with the unilateral stance of the German government, which threatened to cause a major split within the EEC; the government in Rome was interested in maintaining unity of action among EEC and keeping Germany anchored to the method of collegial decision making because, otherwise, the alternative would be the renewal of „destructive competition“ of Italy and Germany in the Balkans.³⁸ Equally conclusive and influential for the change in policy by the Italian government was the move of the Holy See, which had, since September 1991, following the intensification of conflicts in Croatia, clearly expressed itself in favor of immediate recognition of Ljubljana and Zagreb. The Vatican policy was based on the Helsinki Accords, which established, among other things, the right of peoples to choose their own political regime freely and without external interference, and to pursue, in forms

³⁵ J. Major, *The Autobiography*, Londra 1999, p. 533; G. De Michelis, *Così cercammo di impedire la guerra*, cit., p. 234; J. Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, cit., pp. 100 ss.; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 69-71; L. V. Ferraris, *L'Italia, la Germania, e l'Europa*, in „Affari Esteri“, 2001, no. 129, pp. 94-95.

³⁶ D. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, S. Diego, London and New York, pp. 375-377.

³⁷ F. Cossiga, *La passione*, cit., p. 264; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., p. 61; A. Duce, *La Commissione Affari Esteri e Comunitari*, cit., pp. 167-170.

³⁸ G. De Michelis, *Così cercammo di impedire la guerra*, cit., p. 234.

and manners deemed most appropriate, their own political, economic and social development.³⁹

Moreover, since the beginning of the crisis, the pro-Yugoslav position of the ruling class in Rome was subject to criticism and internal pressures coming from important political circles, which were close to the government members and belonged to the parliamentary majority. Those were, in particular, some of the political leaders and rulers of Veneto and Friuli - Venezia Giulia, the two regions of northeastern Italy which were related to Slovenia and Croatia since 1978 due to the Alpe-Adria network.⁴⁰ Over the years, the Community also became a place to establish and strengthen political ties and solidarity, which at the time of the implosion of Yugoslavia proved to be of great importance.⁴¹

It was in the light of these particular relations that during 1991 some local Italian politicians gave initiatives for the support of Slovenian and Croatian independence, which were completely autonomous of and antithetical to the official standing of the government in Rome. Among the major protagonists of this sort of regional foreign policy were governors of the Regional Council of Friuli - Venezia Giulia and of Veneto, Christian-Democrats Adriano Biasutti and Gianfranco Cremenese. Besides guaranteeing their political solidarity to Ljubljana and Zagreb, they made sure that the events in Yugoslavia were given the greatest possible emphasis through extensive media coverage, which could spread the first hand news coming from Slovenian and Croatian politicians.⁴² In February 1991, the President of Friuli - Venezia Giulia had the Regional Council approve a report, which, in addition to criticizing the position of neutrality taken by the government in Rome regarding the internal Yugoslav crisis, invited Italian policy makers to support requests of Slovenian and Croatian leaders and sustain the process of democratization on-going in the two republics.⁴³ Equally striking and important was the lobbying done by Biasutti in the heart of the government and national institutions, through internal channels of

³⁹ A. Varsori, *L'Italia nelle relazioni internazionali dal 1943 al 1992*, Roma-Bari 1998, pp. 241-242; C. De Montclos, *Le Vatican et l'éclatement de la Yougoslavie*, Paris 1999, p. 29.

⁴⁰ A. Varsori, *L'Italia nelle relazioni internazionali*, cit., pp. 241-242; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 31-32; M. Bucarelli, *La Slovenia nella politica italiana*, cit., pp. 109 ff.

⁴¹ A. Sema, *Estate 1991: gli amici italiani di Lubiana*, in „Limes”, 1994 n. 1, pp. 216-219; A. Biasutti, *Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, cit., p. 268; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., p. 31.

⁴² A. Sema, *Estate 1991*, cit., pp. 200 ss.; E. Greco, *L'evoluzione delle relazioni politiche*, cit., pp. 27-29; F. Cossiga, *La passione*, cit., pp. 264-266; A. Biasutti, *Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, cit., pp. 294 ss.; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., pp. 32-33, pp. 40-41.

⁴³ L. Poropat, *Alpe-Adria*, cit., pp. 43-44; S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., p. 59.

the Christian Democrats; that made the president of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia become one of the privileged interlocutors of the political leaders in Rome, in particular the Minister of Transportation Lorenzo Bernini (former governor of the Veneto region and a convinced supporter of Alpe Adria) and, above all, the President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, whose sort of personal ambassador Biasutti became in Ljubljana and Zagreb. Constant actions of the Friulian leader and other local rulers were an introduction to the meeting held in Ljubljana in January 1991 between Slovenian and Croatian representatives and governors of the regions of northeastern Italy in the presence of Minister Bernini, who was becoming more and more convinced of the economic benefits for Italy that would result from the secession. During the discussions, future conclusion of an agreement on cross-border cooperation was determined, with the intention to facilitate approach and entry of Slovenia and Croatia into the European Community, after the proclamation of independence.⁴⁴ President Cossiga always at the urging of Biasutti made striking gestures, such as the meeting in Gorizia, in early November of 1991, with the President and Prime Minister of Slovenia, Milan Kučan and Lojze Peterle. Despite the point made by Cossiga, who clarified that this was proof of Italian and his own friendship towards Slovenia, the meeting was interpreted as „a creeping attempt to recognition”.⁴⁵

One of the most significant results of domestic pressure on the political circles in Rome was the debate at the Chamber of Deputies on 22 and 23 October 1991, after which a resolution was passed, whereby, after expressing appreciation and approval for the work done by the government, it was asked to proceed with the recognition of two secessionist republics, on the basis of principles established in the Helsinki Accords and within the framework of peace actions of the European Economic Community. Policy of friendship and cooperation with Yugoslavia, based on the defense of its territorial integrity, was now entirely abandoned by the Italian ruling class and it began to follow the anti-Yugoslav and anti-Serbian policy, which considered the formation of smaller state entities on the other side of the Adriatic as a major political benefit and greater economic opportunity.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ S. Lusa, *Italia-Slovenia*, cit., p. 41.

⁴⁵ F. Cossiga, *La passione*, cit., pp. 264–266; A. Biasutti, *Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, cit., pp. 294 ff.

⁴⁶ A. Duce, *La Commissione Affari Esteri e Comunitari*, cit., pp. 171–175; E. Greco, *L'evoluzione delle relazioni politiche*, cit., pp. 27–28.

In the light of this new stance of the ruling circles, Italy sided with the Slovenian and Croatian independence, though conditioned to respect the principles established by the European Economic Community. However, since Germany decided to proceed with the recognition in any case, and the Holy See proclaimed to be willing to do the same, the Italian government tried to make other European partners abandon their reserves and consent to the recognition of Ljubljana and Zagreb. After the German recognition on December 23 (followed by the Holy See, the Baltic States, Ukraine and Iceland), Italy and other members of the European Economic Community on January 15, 1992 recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, under condition, as regards the latter, to accept the commitment to amend the constitution and to formulate more precisely the protection of national minorities.⁴⁷

Thus the Adriatic and Danube-Balkan strategy of Italy was collapsing. Such a strategy began with the Osimo Agreement and focused mainly on close friendship with Yugoslavia. The closing of the Trieste question actually helped to improve relations between Rome and Belgrade: for the first time in the history of Italian-Yugoslav relations, a friendship between the two shores of the Adriatic was established which was real and sincere, characterized by numerous important economic, commercial and financial agreements. After the signing of the treaty in 1975, the cooperation with Yugoslavia became the primary option available to the Italian government to establish itself as a regional power of Eastern Adriatic, which was one of the goals constantly present in Italian politics of the twentieth century. However, it was a choice that probably did not give all the results which were expected, because of the irreversible process of dissolution within Yugoslavia. The outbreak of ethnic wars and the secession of the constituent Republics of the Federation, in addition to the ending the Yugoslav and Balkan political strategy implemented by Italy since the early seventies, caused the reappearance of a long-standing political disparity within the Italian ruling circles between defenders of the idea of Yugoslavia, although changed and reformed, and supporters of independency for all the nations of the Adriatic and the Balkans. Policy of friendship and cooperation with Yugoslavia proved, therefore, probably not to be a choice approved and shared by the whole Italian political class, especially at the local level. In any case, it was certainly implemented too late, when the ethnic disintegration of Yugoslavia was already taking place.

⁴⁷ J. Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, cit., pp. 104–105; C. de Montclos, *Le Vatican*, cit., p. 51, pp. 243–246. E. Greco, *L'evoluzione delle relazioni politiche*, cit., pp. 29–30.

Резиме

Др Масимо Букарели

Закаснило пријатељство: Италијанско-југословенски односи у другој половини двадесетог века (1947–1992)

Кључне речи: Италија, Југославија, спољна политика,
хладни рат, тршћанска криза, распад Југославије

У раду се говори о односима између Италије и социјалистичке Југославије у другој половини XX века. Аутор разликује четири фазе кроз које су односи две државе прошли у овом периоду (1947–1992). Прва фаза обухвата период тршћанске кризе, време неразумевања, непријатељства и сукоба на идеолошкој и националној основи.

Друга фаза у односима почиње у другој половини шездесетих година. Тада долази до поправљања односа које су обележиле посете премијера, прво италијанског Југославији (1965), потом југословенског Италији (1968). Промена у политици обе земље може се приписати и страху од агресивног понашања Совјетског Савеза. Трећу фазу обележава пријатељство и сарадња, нарочито након формалног решавања територијалног спора 1975. године. Постигнути су бројни трговачки и финансијски договори, а Југославија постаје кључни партнер Италије у спровођењу њене јадранске и балканске политике.

Последња фаза у односима настаје отпочињањем ратних сукоба у Југославији почетком деведесетих година. Аутор открива линије притиска, како спољашње тако и унутрашње, које је тадашња италијанска влада трпела да призна проглашену независност западних југословенских република и напусти дотадашњу политику неутралности. Док се под спољашњи фактор могу подвести утицаји Немачке и Ватикана, унутрашњи су чиниле локалне власти у

пограничним крајевима североисточне Италије. Крајем 1991. политика подршке територијалном интегритету Југославије потпуно је напуштена, што је формализовано почетком наредне године признањем Словеније и Хрватске.