

ITALY'S BALKAN  
STRATEGIES  
(19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY)

*Edited by*

VOJISLAV G. PAVLOVIĆ



INSTITUT DES ETUDES BALKANIQUES  
ACADEMIE SERBE DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS

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# LES STRATEGIES BALKANIQUES D'ITALIE

(19<sup>e</sup> – 20<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE)

*Sous la direction de*

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## YUGOSLAVIA AND ITALY, 1945 – 1947: YUGOSLAV POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN THE TRIESTE CRISIS

**Abstract:** The article describes relations between the Yugoslav and Italian government in the period between 1945 and 1947 in connection with the Trieste issue. The Trieste crisis erupted on 1 May 1945 between Yugoslavia and the Western Allies and went on to cause a conflict between the Great Powers. The entry of Yugoslav troops into Trieste reawakened the old territorial dispute between Yugoslavia and Italy. The trial of strength ensued in which both sides employed different tactics.

**Keywords:** *Yugoslavia, Italy, Trieste, Great Powers, foreign policy.*

With the Yugoslav Army's entrance into Trieste on 1 May 1945, the crisis in relations between Great Powers started. This crisis became a prism for seeking solutions for geopolitical and strategic issues. The unfulfilled goals of American and British commandants related to the dynamics of Italy's liberation and the general delay in the conduct of military operations in the fall of 1944 provided the conditions for the Yugoslav Army to liberate Trieste before the arrival of the Allied troops.<sup>1</sup> The Allies lost a "race for Trieste"<sup>2</sup> and thus started the first crisis among the anti-fascist coalition. The Trieste crisis began as a result of power gap created in the wake of the Nazi retreat from the northern coast

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<sup>1</sup> E. P. Hoyt, *Backwater War. The Allied Campaign in Italy 1943 – 1945* (Westport, (Con), London: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> G. Cox, *The Road to Trieste* (London, Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd., 1947); from the same author, *La corsa per Trieste* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2005).

of the Adriatic Sea.<sup>3</sup> Yugoslav territorial pretensions towards Venezia Giulia and the formation of the *Allied Military Government* were regular topics during the Allied Conferences in the period from 1943 to 1945.<sup>4</sup> With the end of World War II, the differences between the American, British and Soviet governments became more obvious in relation to the territorial status of Venezia Giulia. Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, thought that the Americans and British should keep their positions in the north of Trieste at the end of the war and also warned that “in terms of *high-level policy*, we should have our stake in Northern and Southern Europe and we should not allow that everything goes to Soviet hands because that could have unforeseeable consequences”.<sup>5</sup> The American President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, did not think about the formation of spheres of interests; he wanted to establish a multilateral world order instead.

From May to June 1945, the survival of the the common front of the Soviet Union, the USA and the United Kingdom was put in question. The American and British governments faced communication problems with the Soviet government and the arrangements reached on the division of spheres of interests were brought in question. In June 1945, Anglo-American and Soviet leaders exchanged letters which heralded the beginning of the Cold War.<sup>6</sup> The Trieste crisis could be seen as the first Cold War crisis.<sup>7</sup>

Churchill considered the Yugoslav government formed on 7 March 1945 under the pressure of Great Powers to be no more than the “extended tentacle”<sup>8</sup> of the Soviet Union. Neither he nor his American ally recognised that the Yugoslav army constituted a part of the Allied forces. Its participation in the occupation of Venezia Giulia was deemed as interference on the part of the Soviet Union in the sphere of interests earmarked for the Western Allies. Consequently, the military operations of the Yugoslav Army in Venezia Giulia did not fail to adversely affect relations between the Yugoslav government and Anglo-Americans.<sup>9</sup> In the circumstances, the possibility of an

<sup>3</sup> G. Valdevit, “Simetrije i pravila igre. Engleska, Sjedinjene Države, Jugoslavija i majska kriza 1945” in P. Kačavenda, D. Bogetić eds., *Balkan posle Drugog svetskog rata*, (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1996), 55-70.

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Duroselle, *Le conflit de Trieste 1943 – 1954* (Bruxelles: Editions de l’Institut de sociologie de l’Universite libre de Bruxelles, 1966); Miljan Milkić, “Jugoslavija, Velike sile i pitanje statusa Julijske krajine 1943 – 1945” in A. Životić ed., *Oслобођење Београда 1944* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2010), 282-296.

<sup>5</sup> D. Biber ed., *Tito – Churchill strogo tajno* (Belgrade - Zagreb: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Globus, 1981), 309.

<sup>6</sup> M. Stojković ed., *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1976 – 1996. Dvostrani i višestrani međunarodni ugovori i drugi diplomatski akti o državnim granicama, političkoj i vojnoj saradnji, verskim i etničkim manjinama*, II, (1919 – 1945) (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1998), 670 – 671.

<sup>7</sup> R. G. Rabel, *Between East and West: Trieste, United States and the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Tito – Churchill*, 532.

<sup>9</sup> E. Kardelj, *Sećanja. Borba za priznanje i nezavisnost nove Jugoslavije 1944 – 1957* (Belgrade- Ljubljana: Radnička štampa, Državna založba Slovenije, 1980), 55.



armed attack against the Yugoslav Army was not out of consideration.<sup>10</sup> The Trieste crisis temporarily abated after the conclusion of the Belgrade Agreement of 9 June 1945 between communist Yugoslavia, on the one side, and the USA and United Kingdom, on the other.<sup>11</sup> The Duino Agreement signed on 20 June 1945 contained military concessions on the part of the Belgrade Agreement.<sup>12</sup> Venezia Giulia was jointly occupied by the Anglo-American and Yugoslav troops. The final status of this area was to be decided at the peace conference.

This paper focuses on the policies and strategies adopted for the resolution of the Trieste crisis in the period from 1945 to 1947. The analysis is two-fold: it examines the attitude of Great Powers towards the two participants in the crisis – Italian and Yugoslav government - and the direct relations between the above-mentioned governments throughout the crisis.

### The Trieste issue and Great Powers

In the early days of Yugoslav conflict with the Western Allies, the Soviet government did not take a clear attitude towards it.<sup>13</sup> After the signature of the Belgrade and Duino Agreements, Stalin drew attention of his Allies to situation in Trieste. In letters addressed to Harry S. Truman and Churchill and dated 21 June 1945 Stalin expressed his expectation that Yugoslav interests would be protected in Trieste.<sup>14</sup> However, the messages sent from Moscow to Belgrade during May and June 1945 pointed out that a conflict with the Anglo-Americans over this issue had to be avoided. The restraint of the Soviet Ambassador in Ankara during his conversation with the Yugoslav colleague was instructive in this respect. When the Yugoslav expressed his gratitude for the support provided by the Soviet Union in connection with the Belgrade Agreement, the Soviet Ambassador made a point to exclude the possibility of any conflict between his country and the Western Allies on that issue.<sup>15</sup> Despite occasional misunderstandings with the Soviet government, the Yugoslavs continued to conform their foreign policy to that of USSR until June 1948. Besides relying on the Soviets, the Yugoslav government had to keep an eye on the current relations among Great Powers and carefully watch Italy's reactions and intentions.

International circumstances were not favourable for Yugoslavia. The initiative for solving the Trieste issue following the signature of the Belgrade

<sup>10</sup> V. G. Pavlović, *Od monarhije do republike. SAD i Jugoslavija 1941 – 1945* (Beograd: Clio, 1998), 462.

<sup>11</sup> *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, II, 666 – 667.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 669 – 670.

<sup>13</sup> Kardelj, *Sećanja*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, II, 670 – 671.

<sup>15</sup> Diplomatic archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia, Political archive, 1945, box 30, No. 2583. (hereinafter: DA, MFA, RS, PA)

and Duino Agreements came from Churchill and Truman.<sup>16</sup> The status of Venezia Giulia was under consideration at the Potsdam conference during proceedings from 17 to 25 July and again from 28 July to 2 August 1945. Before the conference, it was believed in Belgrade that Trieste might become an internationally-governed territory.<sup>17</sup> The government received diplomatic reports to the effect that the Foreign Office and State Department regarded the merging of Trieste and Yugoslavia as means of the cession of that town to the Soviet Union. During the Potsdam Conference it was decided that the whole issue be transferred to the Council of Foreign Ministers of Five Great Powers (the USA, the Soviet Union, the UK, France and China).<sup>18</sup> The Council of Ministers, however, was divided in this matter. Anglo-Americans were against the passing of Trieste to Yugoslavia; the Chinese and French government were indecisive; the Soviets alone supported Belgrade.<sup>19</sup>

During the preparations for the Council of Foreign Ministers' conference which started on 18 September 1945 in London, the Yugoslav government demanded the entire territory of Venezia Giulia.<sup>20</sup> Trieste would fall under Yugoslav sovereignty but with the autonomous city administration. The arguments for Yugoslav sovereignty over Venezia Giulia were published in a memorandum on 17 September 1945 in London.<sup>21</sup> Edvard Kardelj, the Deputy-Prime Minister, and the Italian Foreign Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, expounded the views of their governments on the first day of the conference.<sup>22</sup> De Gasperi explained his position in territorial issues in conformity with current policy of Western countries, and warned about the dangerous Soviet influence. Security reasons were of a paramount importance. De Gasperi argued for the necessity of "providing the minimum systematic defence".<sup>23</sup> From 17 to 23 September, Edvard Kardelj and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, sought for a compromise acceptable to American and British government. They agreed that the Yugoslav delegation should prepare a proposal for the internationalization of the Trieste administration.<sup>24</sup> At the end of London Conference an announcement, which contained proposal for the Yugoslav – Italian delimitation to be carried out along the ethnic boundaries, was made. Finally, the Council of Foreign Ministers decided on 19 September

<sup>16</sup> J. Jeri, *Tržaško vprašanje po Drugi svetovni vojni. Tri faze diplomatskega boja* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1961), 130 – 132. Pavlović, *Od monarhije*, 475.

<sup>17</sup> Archives of Jugoslavija (hereinafter: AJ), 836 (KMJ), I-3-d/27.

<sup>18</sup> Pavlović, *Od monarhije*, 478.

<sup>19</sup> AJ, 836 (KMJ), I-3-d/27.

<sup>20</sup> Dj. Vasiljević ed., *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*, (Beograd: Jugoslovenski pregled, 1984), 208 – 209.

<sup>21</sup> AJ, 836 (KMJ), I-3-d/24. *Dokumenti*, 1945, 230 – 245.

<sup>22</sup> *Dokumenti*, 1945, 245 – 251.

<sup>23</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 35, 8529.

<sup>24</sup> AJ, 836 (KMJ), I-3-d/27.

1945 to dispatch a commission of experts in Venezia Giulia for the purpose of studying the borders issue.<sup>25</sup>

Both Yugoslav and Italian government continued their diplomatic activities in order to prepare the ground for the Council of Foreign Ministers Conference scheduled for 25 April 1946 in Paris. While the Commission of Experts was staying in Venezia Giulia the Yugoslav government encouraged local population to taking to the streets and manifesting their pro-Yugoslav feelings.<sup>26</sup> On 8 February 1946, an Aide-Memoire concerning the future activities of Yugoslav diplomacy in regard of the Commission for Delimitation in Venezia Giulia was compiled in the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>27</sup> Before the Commission completed its work both sides handed over their proposals for the internationalization of the port of Trieste.<sup>28</sup> It was a solution that both governments were willing to accept. A letter was sent from Belgrade to each of the four Foreign Ministers on 27 April stating the vital importance for Yugoslavia of the boundary issue in Venezia Giulia.<sup>29</sup> Ethnic, security and economical reasons were put forward. The representatives of Great Powers were often reminded of the Italian fascist past and aggression. These facts sometimes constituted the basic arguments.

Having returned from Venezia Giulia the Commission of Experts suggested four alternative solutions to the Council of Ministers on 29 April.<sup>30</sup> Discussion about the proposals then began.<sup>31</sup> On 3 May, both Kardelj and De Gasperi took part in a discussion.<sup>32</sup> Both men continued to support the earlier stance of their respective governments. During the conference in Paris, on 7 May, Soviet diplomats organized a meeting between Kardelj and De Gasperi. In a report to the Foreign Ministry Kardelj claimed that he did not talk about Venezia Giulia with De Gasperi.<sup>33</sup> In his *Memoirs* he did not even mention this meeting with De Gasperi.<sup>34</sup>

During its second session in Paris from June 15 to July 15, the Council presented a solution for the Venezia Giulia dispute and formed a commission to work out details for the status of what became known as Free Territory of Trieste.<sup>35</sup> The integrity of Free Territory of Trieste was guaranteed by the United Nations Security Council.<sup>36</sup> The plenary session of Peace Conference was held

<sup>25</sup> Pavlović, *Od monarhije*, 480.

<sup>26</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 37, 2691.

<sup>27</sup> AJ, 836 (KMJ), I-3-d/36.

<sup>28</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 38, 3854.

<sup>29</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 35, 5784.

<sup>30</sup> Pavlović, *Od monarhije*, 481 – 482.

<sup>31</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 35, 5611.

<sup>32</sup> Jeri, *Tržaško vprašanje*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 35, 5330.

<sup>34</sup> Kardelj, *Sećanja*, 86.

<sup>35</sup> Jeri, *Tržaško vprašanje*, 155.

<sup>36</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 35, 9066. Pavlović, *Od monarhije*, 483, 484.

from 29 July to 15 October 1946 in Paris.<sup>37</sup> The Italian and Yugoslav delegation endeavoured to provide all kind of historical, ethnical, geographic and economic reasons for their standpoints. Throughout Yugoslavia mass rallies were organised in support of the delegation.<sup>38</sup> The delegates were well prepared and had a strong case, but their arguments made little difference.<sup>39</sup> The Conference of Ministers was convened in New York (4 November – 12 December 1946) with a view to preparing the final text of peace treaties with Italy and *Axis satellite*-countries. The Paris Peace Treaty with Italy was signed by twenty countries on 10 February 1947 and it entered into force on 15 September 1947.<sup>40</sup> On the same occasion was created Free Territory of Trieste within Venezia Giulia, thus regulating its legal status. However, the political problem remained because neither Yugoslavia nor Italy was satisfied. Nevertheless, this “peace without tears”<sup>41</sup> was imposed by Great Powers.

### On path to a bilateral agreement

The entry of Yugoslav troops into Trieste sparked off the old dispute between Yugoslavia and Italy left over from World War I.<sup>42</sup> At the end of the war the Yugoslav government was forced to accept an unfavourable delimitation in that quarter. During WWII, one of the major foreign policy aims, espoused by both the London - based Royal Yugoslav government in exile and Yugoslav communists in the occupied Yugoslavia, was a revision of the north-west borders (towards Italy and Austria).<sup>43</sup> In the changed circumstances in the wake of WWII when Yugoslavia was on the winning side and Italy defeated, the struggle over the territory of Venezia Giulia continued. In this struggle the Italian government was backed by Anglo-Americans whereas Yugoslav diplomacy had the support – although not unqualified - of the Soviet government.

In the period between 1945 and 1947 Rome and Belgrade were engaged in a diplomatic trial of strength over the Trieste issue. As far as relations be-

<sup>37</sup> V. Dedijer, *Pariska mirovna konferencija* (Belgrade: Biblioteka “Trideset dana”, 1947); Jeri, *Tržaško vprašanje*, 158 – 175.

<sup>38</sup> B. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije. Socijalistička Jugoslavija 1945 – 1988*, III (Beograd: Nolit, 1988), 172.

<sup>39</sup> Kardelj, *Sećanja*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> M. Stojković ed., *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1976 – 1996, Dvostrani i višestrani međunarodni ugovori i drugi diplomatski akti o državnim granicama, političkoj i vojnoj saradnji, verskim i etničkim manjinama*, III (1946 – 1996) (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1999), 59 – 87.

<sup>41</sup> Sergio Romano, *Giuda alla politica estera italiana. Da Badoglio a Berlusconi*. (Milano: Bur, 2004), 40 – 45.

<sup>42</sup> *Rapalski ugovor i sporazumi i konvencije između Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i Kraljevine Italije* (Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, 1923); N. Grga, *Italija prema stvaranju Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod, 1925); Lj. Trgovčević, *Naučnici Srbije i stvaranje Jugoslavije 1914 - 1920* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, Srpska književna zadruga, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Milkić, “Jugoslavija, Velike sile”, 282 – 296.

tween the two countries were concerned, it could be said, in Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's words, that "every conflict, even if limited in scope, and without the use of force of arms, represents a competitive behaviour".<sup>44</sup> The Italian government made several attempts to establish diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia, but, at the same time, refused informal negotiations concerning the Trieste issue. It took a view that any negotiations with the Yugoslav government inevitably led to a compromise solution. A compromise was not desirable because Rome refused to consent to nothing short of the major part of Venezia Giulia and the city of Trieste passing to Italian sovereignty. For the realization of such solution the Italian government counted on the support of the USA, Great Britain and France. Rome firmly declined to recognise the pro-Allied credentials of the Yugoslav army. Requests were made for Belgrade to hand over the former Italian territories liberated by the Yugoslav army.<sup>45</sup> The Yugoslav government insisted on postponing the establishment of diplomatic relations with Italy until a decision on the border dispute had been made at the Paris Peace Conference. It believed that their territorial demands were justified and undertook wide-ranging diplomatic activities to achieve its goals. In doing so, the Yugoslav leaders made the maximum territorial demands, which they knew from the start to be impossible to achieve. They were aware that Trieste had been lost from the onset of the crisis.<sup>46</sup>

The Yugoslav communist government obtained the most valuable information on Italian policy and the plans regarding the Trieste issue from their delegation at the Advisory Commission in Rome and from diplomatic representatives and various delegations in Paris, London, Washington and Moscow. Since there was a Yugoslav delegation in Rome, the Yugoslav government had a certain advantage over the Italian government. This delegation protected Yugoslav diplomatic interests by working with the Allied military authorities in Rome and also performed consular services in Italy under the supervision of the Allied Control Commission for Italy. Josip Smodlaka, Yugoslav Deputy-Delegate at the Advisory Commission, was particularly engaged in gathering information and promoting Yugoslav interests.

The Yugoslav delegation was in a good position to perform intelligence and propaganda operations in Rome and exert influence on "Yugoslav friends". Not surprisingly, the best Yugoslav friends were the ideologically like-minded members of the Italian Communist Party. In this connexion, the nature of relations between the communist parties and their subservient position in relation to the Soviet Union should be noted.<sup>47</sup> For that reason, the relations between

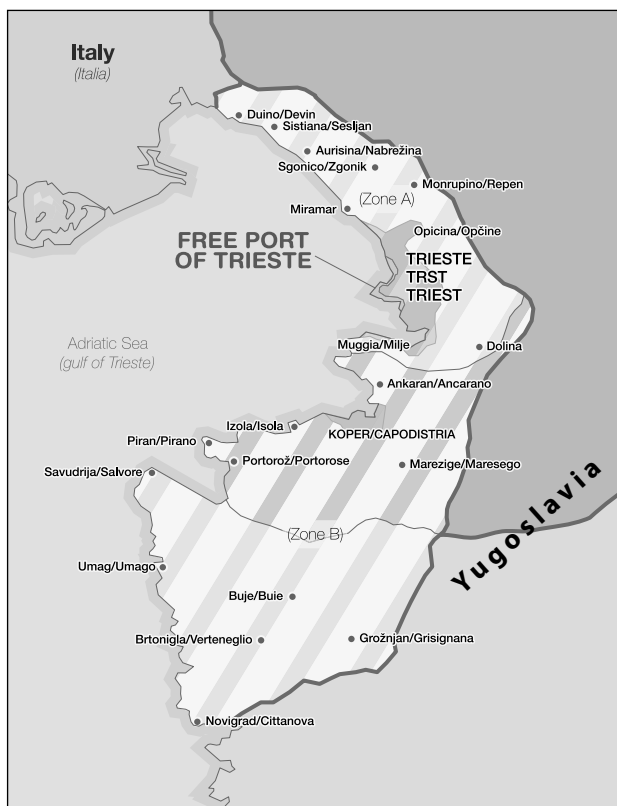
<sup>44</sup> Duroselle, *Le conflit*, 461.

<sup>45</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1945, 13, 1326.

<sup>46</sup> J. C. Campbell ed., *Successful Negotiation: Trieste 1954. An appraisal by the five participants* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 101; M. Šuvar, *Vladimir Velebit, svjedok historije* (Zagreb: Razlog d.o.o, 2001), 151.

<sup>47</sup> S. Pons, "Stalin, Togliati, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 2, 2001, 3 – 27.

the Yugoslav and Italian communists cannot be considered separately from the Soviet policy regarding the status of Venezia Giulia and Trieste. Of all the Italian politicians, the leader of Italian communists, Palmiro Togliatti, was the strongest advocate of the cooperation between the Italian and Yugoslav government.<sup>48</sup> Togliatti entered the Italian Cabinet for the first time on 22 April 1944 as Minister without portfolio. He held the same position in the next two governments. In the Cabinet formed on 21 June 1945 he was appointed Minister of Justice. He remained the head of that Ministry until 1 July 1946.



Free Territory of Trieste

In connection with the Yugoslav communists' ambition to annex the Slovenian Littoral and Trieste Togliatti was of opinion as early as September 1943 that the best solution was "postponing border disputes till the moment when the people would have an opportunity to vote upon it absolutely freely".<sup>49</sup> He

<sup>48</sup> S. Pons, "L'Unione Sovietica nella politica estera di Togliatti (1944 - 1949)", *Studi Storici*, 2/3 (Rome 1992), 438, 439, 440.

<sup>49</sup> A. Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti. A Biography* (London, New York: I. B. Taurus Publishers, 2008), 166.

called upon the Soviet government to exert influence on the Yugoslav communists so that the latter's territorial claims at the expense of Italy lay dormant.<sup>50</sup> However, the headquarters of all communist parties in Moscow did not take a clear stand on this issue at the time.<sup>51</sup> According to the reliable information which Josip Broz (alias Tito) received from Italy, in mid-August 1944 Togliatti backed the views of other Ministers in terms of the maximum Italian demands in respect of the Yugoslav border.<sup>52</sup> With regard to Venezia Giulia, Minister Togliatti found himself in a difficult position when on 17 October 1944 he met Edvard Kardelj in Bari. After that meeting, in a conversation with his fellow-communist Vincenzo Bianco, Togliatti spoke affirmatively of the liberation of Venezia Giulia by Yugoslav partisans. Togliatti gave instructions to the Italian Communist Party to "cooperate with Yugoslav comrades as closely as possible on organizing people's forces in all liberated territories".<sup>53</sup> At that point Togliatti advocated a full autonomy allowing even the possibility of declaring Venezia Giulia an independent state.<sup>54</sup> In response to Togliatti's concerns and his request for a clear Soviet declaration on Trieste's status, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs sent a memorandum to Foreign Minister Molotov on 1 March 1945 beginning with the following sentence: The "Trieste issue has not been discussed yet".<sup>55</sup> In mid-May 1945, Togliatti sent a telegram to Stalin in which he criticised Tito's intention to denounce Italian foreign policy as imperialist.<sup>56</sup> According to the report sent by Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, Vladimir Popović, Stalin did not endorse the views of Togliatti.<sup>57</sup>

Togliatti was central to the mission undertaken in Rome in early October 1945 by Yugoslav Minister without portfolio, Josip Smolaka. Smolaka expected that confidential and private talks with the representatives of Italian government would be conducive to initiating direct negotiations between the two governments about the Trieste issue.<sup>58</sup> In the course of his mission Smolaka expected Togliatti to support Yugoslav claim and consent to passing of Trieste to Yugoslavia. Tito gave his permission to Smolaka's visit to Rome as well as some additional instructions.<sup>59</sup> He pointed out that the Yugoslav government did not consent to the internationalisation of the status of Trieste. Belgrade's maximum offer was to make the city of Trieste one of

<sup>50</sup> L. Gibianskii, "The Trieste Issue and the Soviet Union in 1940s", in J. Pirjevec, G. Bajc, B. Klabjan eds., *Vojna in mir na Primorskem: Od kapitulacije Italije leta 1943 do Londonskega memoranduma leta 1954* (Koper: Založba Annales, 2005), 362.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 362 – 363.

<sup>52</sup> AJ, 836, (KMJ), I -3-d /4.

<sup>53</sup> Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*, 166.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Gibianskii, "The Trieste", 368.

<sup>56</sup> Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*, 166.

<sup>57</sup> AJ, 836 (KMJ), I-3-d/14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I-3-d/29.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Yugoslav federal units and internationalise the port of Trieste. On 16 October 1945, Josip Smodlaka wrote to Broz from Rome that there was no prospect that the Italian government would agree to constituting Trieste as the seventh federal unit of Yugoslavia.<sup>60</sup> Smodlaka thought that the Italians might accept a solution whereby Trieste would become a free city under the sovereignty of Yugoslavia and in customs union with Yugoslavia. One of the options mentioned by Smodlaka was to proclaim Trieste an independent state on the basis of an agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia. In a dispatch dated 23 October 1945 Josip Broz instructed Smodlaka to propose to Rome that Trieste become a free city under the sovereignty of Yugoslavia.<sup>61</sup> In late November, however, while Smodlaka was still in Rome, the Yugoslav government refused another proposal of the Italian government to establish diplomatic relations.<sup>62</sup> This gesture confirmed once again that the Yugoslav policy aimed at starting direct negotiations but without establishing diplomatic relations. On 2 November 1945, Smodlaka informed Tito that he had not opened talks as yet; he waited for Togliatti's return to Rome for it was him that he wanted to talk to first.<sup>63</sup> Josip Smodlaka's mission in Rome failed. The Italian government was not prepared to conduct direct negotiations with Yugoslavia.<sup>64</sup>

In the meantime, Togliatti continued with his efforts to initiate Italo-Yugoslav negotiations. On November 3 1945, he gave a speech in Torino on which occasion he said that the Italian government should defend the Italian character of Trieste, but also maintained that it was necessary to reach an amicable agreement with Yugoslavia.<sup>65</sup> On 26 March 1946, Togliatti called for "a brotherly agreement with neighbours".<sup>66</sup> He contended that such an agreement was the best way to defend the Italian character of Trieste as well as Italian borders.

In a telegram dated 20 October 1946 the new Italian Foreign Minister and the leader of the Italian Socialist Party, Pietro Nenni, assured his Yugoslav counterpart, Stanoje Simić, that it would be possible to reach a direct agreement.<sup>67</sup> The telegram was well received by the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>68</sup> On 4 November 1946, Deputy-Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, Vladimir Velebit, sent a telegram to Nenni in which he confirmed Yugoslav willingness to accept "any sincere effort aimed at reaching an agreement".<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Josip Smodlaka, *Partizanski dnevnik* (Beograd: Nolit, 1972), 292.

<sup>65</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1945, 14, 5926.

<sup>66</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 38, 3738.

<sup>67</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 33, 12669.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*



The conversations held between 3 and 5 November 1946 in Belgrade between Togliatti and Josip Broz Tito received a lot of attention in diplomatic circles.<sup>70</sup> On that occasion Broz proposed that Yugoslavia recognise Italian sovereignty over Trieste in return for having Gorizia to herself. During Togliatti's negotiations with Broz, on 7 November, the Italian government published a communique about the private talks that were underway in Belgrade.<sup>71</sup> It was not prepared to cede Gorizia to Yugoslavia and thus repeated that borders should follow ethnic lines of division.

On his return from Belgrade Togliatti pressed the Italian government to accept Josip Broz's proposal.<sup>72</sup> The Italian Communist Party lobbied the other parties for an agreement with the Yugoslav government.<sup>73</sup> On 8 November 1946, Togliatti cancelled an official visit to Napoli in order to persuade the Foreign Minister, Pietro Nenni, to accept direct negotiations between the two governments during his talks with Smodlaka.<sup>74</sup> On the same day, Nenni asked Smodlaka for an official invitation from Yugoslavia in order to start negotiations which would be followed by the immediate dispatch of an Italian delegation.<sup>75</sup> The Italian Communists' request for an agreement with Yugoslavia was considered in Rome.<sup>76</sup> On 9 and 12 November, Togliatti spoke to Nenni. On 13 November, the Soviet ambassador informed Smodlaka that Nenni was getting closer to a decision to conclude an agreement and was even prepared to accompany Togliatti to Belgrade and personally enter into negotiations.<sup>77</sup> According to the information Smodlaka relayed to the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 November, Count Carlo Sforza (he was Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs from February 1947) declared himself in favour of an agreement with the Yugoslav government.<sup>78</sup> Sforza showed a great ambition and a desire to play the leading role during negotiations.

The Italians were concerned about the American and British government's response to the attempts to start direct negotiations. As soon as Togliatti had returned from Belgrade, Nenni sent the Secretary of the Italian Socialist Party, Ivan Matteo Lombardo, to London to provide the necessary information to the members of the British government.<sup>79</sup> On 8 November 1946, the Italian ambassador in Washington, Alberto Tarchiani, informed the American Secretary of State, James Byrnes, how Togliatti's visit to Belgrade was viewed in

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<sup>70</sup> Jeri, *Tržaško vprašanje*, 181.

<sup>71</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 33, 13605.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 13428.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 13462.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 13429.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 13427.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 13577.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 13461.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 14163.

Rome.<sup>80</sup> During his conversation with Smodlaka on 8 November 1946 Nenni professed that the Italian government was not at liberty to initiate any negotiations without an approval from the Allies. Otherwise the Allies might think that the Italians were breaking away.<sup>81</sup> For that reason, Nenni wanted the initiative to come from the Yugoslav side. Therefore, the official invitation had to be issued by the Yugoslav delegation in New York.

On 14 November, the Commission for Foreign Affairs had a meeting at the request of Communist Ministers. The Finance Minister, and a member of the Communist Party, Mauro Scoccimarro, took issue with the government statement of 7 November and demanded an immediate start of negotiations with the Yugoslav government.<sup>82</sup> He proposed a declaration to be issued, along the lines of the decision of the Four powers, which Nenni accepted. At the same session of the Commission for Foreign Affairs a representative of the Christian Democratic Party proposed a declaration denouncing Togliatti's activities in connection with Yugoslavia, but his proposal was refused. A declaration was adopted stating the Commission for Foreign Affairs' willingness to consider the possibility of a direct agreement with Yugoslavia in respect of the Trieste issue. On 16 November 1946, Smodlaka reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that minister Nenni, as a private citizen, communicated to Smodlaka his personal desire that the Yugoslav government reiterate in official terms, the proposition it made to Togliatti, thus enabling the start of the direct negotiations between the two delegations at the Council of Foreign Ministers conference in New York.<sup>83</sup>

The leader of the Christian Democratic Party, Alcide de Gasperi, was adamant in his opposition to direct negotiations between the two governments. He deplored the suggestions of Great Powers for resolving the Trieste crisis. On the other hand, he deemed any kind of negotiations with the Yugoslav government impossible.<sup>84</sup> In addition, he suspected that Togliatti wanted to give away Italian territories to Yugoslavia.<sup>85</sup>

The conference in New York presented a great opportunity for the Yugoslav and Italian representatives to make contact and intensify their efforts to bring about the start of negotiations. Since the representatives of Great Powers had already agreed on the final terms of a peace agreement, the Yugoslav and Italian delegates were in a position to consider all aspects of the future bilateral relations. The Italian delegation in New York was instructed to establish contact with the Yugoslav delegation and explore the possibility of direct ne-

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<sup>80</sup> Dj. Vasiljević ed., *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*, 1946, (Beograd: Jugoslovenski pregled, 1985), 420.

<sup>81</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1946, 33, 13429.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 13613.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 13814.

gotiations.<sup>86</sup> The Italian government let the Council of Foreign Ministers know of this step. In early December 1946, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Stanoje Simić, and the Italian representative, Quadroni, discussed about relations between their countries. On the basis of these talks and Nenni's report, the Italian government unanimously decided on 5 December to start direct negotiations with the Yugoslavs in Belgrade.<sup>87</sup> The former Prime Minister, Ferruccio Parri, was appointed a head of the delegation. The task of the delegation was to make a trade agreement, an agreement regarding the protection of minorities and explore the possibilities for a border agreement. However, the official talks never took place.

Yugoslav diplomats' guardedness in direct contacts and their mistrust of Italian officials continued until the official establishment of diplomatic relations. When De Gasperi was about to visit Washington in January 1947 the Yugoslav Ambassador Sava Kosanović was instructed not to attend the receptions organised on that occasion.<sup>88</sup> Yugoslav Deputy-Foreign Minister, Vladimir Velebit, was of opinion that the unofficial private talks were sufficient if the Italians insisted, but also warned that the instructions for such talks had not been given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>89</sup> The Italian side took a similar attitude. The Italian Ambassador Tarchiani avoided contacts with the Yugoslavs during the conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers in New York.<sup>90</sup> The appropriate conditions for direct negotiations were not created before the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs Simić gave instructions to all Yugoslav embassies, legations, consulates and delegations on 26 February 1947 allowing them to freely make contact with the members of Italian diplomatic and consular service.<sup>91</sup> In the ensuing period the two governments made some efforts to solve the economic, cultural and infrastructural issues. However, direct Italo-Yugoslav negotiations about the Trieste issue were not arranged in the relevant period.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 13924.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 14542.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 1530.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 15345.

<sup>91</sup> DA, MFA, RS, PA, 1947, 48, 43296.