

World War II and East-West confrontation redefined borders between Italy and Yugoslavia, reshaped national frontiers and adversely affected political relations. As a result, major quarrels and disputes arose over territorial claims, demarcation of State boundaries, expulsion of national minorities, and diverging visions on international and domestic politics. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s, during the years of *Détente*, that rapprochement between Rome and Belgrade became possible and normalization of bilateral relations was attained. Long-lasting territorial disputes, such as the Trieste question, were solved and bilateral relationship greatly improved, so much so that Belgrade became an important asset in Italy's Balkan and Adriatic strategy, while Rome was a sort of bridge between Socialist Yugoslavia and Western Europe.

This book is intended to shed light on the process of Italian-Yugoslav normalization and rapprochement, which ultimately brought to the Adriatic *Détente*. Based on a wide collection of primary sources and documentary materials, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the history of the Adriatic region, a conflicted European space that had been affected by territorial disputes and ethnic strife for decades during the 20th century.

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L. Monzali & L. Riccardi (eds.)

Italy and Tito's Yugoslavia in the Age
of International *Détente*

38 *Issues*

International



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information and press articles concluded that cooperation was developing normally. Italian fear was motivated by reasons of a security nature.³⁵ The possibility of Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement would negatively affect Italian interests in the region and potentially would have brought Soviet military forces to the borders of Italy. The Italians were worried because of the announced joint maneuvers of Soviet and Hungarian military forces.³⁶

The established Yugoslav-Italian cooperation on the issue of mutual interest to reduce tension in Europe, as well as in the area of mutual relations, gave significant results in the beginning. However, new Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement and the growing problems of the definition of a mutual borderline which in the name of the finding of an agreeable solution motivated by higher goals had been left aside, started once again to burden mutual relations.

During 1972 and 1973, a series of incidents occurred in regular communication as well as the delay in the signing of mutual agreements and greater insistence on the solution of the problem of borders. This resulted in the reopening of old disputes which had been forgotten. This was the prologue to the clash that took place in 1974 and threatened to lead Yugoslavia and Italy into a state of war.

Soviet influence on the course of Yugoslav-Italian détente was multiple and significant. The Soviet commitment to a global policy of détente had an effect on both countries and their relations. The complementarity of Soviet commitment to this policy, Yugoslav closeness with the Soviets and the crisis in Yugoslav-Italian relations in 1967 did not bode well for the success of these efforts. Then Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia accelerated Yugoslav-Italian détente. Both sides thought that with mutual cooperation they could strengthen their own national security against the danger of the Soviet threat. Yugoslavia needed a strong ally in the Mediterranean and Italy needed an ally who would, with the depth of its territory and stability of its geostrategic position, potentially remove direct Soviet danger from Italian borders. Later Brežnev's commitment to détente on a global scale, full normalization of relations with Yugoslavia and the establishment of closer contacts with Italy resulted in the strengthening of Italian-Yugoslav relations, but the independent improvement of relations between these two countries had the indirect effect that they no longer saw the Soviet Union and its presence as threatening. Instead it was seen as an important factor of stability and therefore, a power which went from being a potential danger to becoming a partner in the future progress towards European collective stability and cooperation.

³⁵ AJ, APR, KPR, I-5-b, Report of DSIP, 11 June 1971.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

French Diplomacy and the Road to the Osimo Agreements

Stanislav SRETENović

In 1945, France emerged from the Second World War as a victorious power alongside the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Together with these victorious countries, it participated in the occupation of defeated Germany and played an active role in the post-war peace settlement. However, France was seen at that time as the "weakest" of the great powers, as a great power which obtained (or retained) its status more on the basis of the memory of its key role in international relations before the Second World War than on the basis of its real contribution to the victory of the Allies in the War. Aside from Germany, traditionally the most important preoccupation of French foreign policy, France was interested in the future of its Transalpine neighbor Italy, but showed no particular interest in Eastern Europe which was seen as part of the Soviet sphere of influence. During the preparation of the peace treaties with five former German allies, signed solemnly in Paris on 10 February 1947, France only took an active part in the drafting of the treaty with Italy. The creation of the Free Territory of Trieste – under the protection of the UN Security Council – through the Peace treaty with Italy, as well as the difficulties of Italian-Yugoslav relations from that moment onwards, were not of particular interest to the French, although they were carefully observed by their diplomats.

The relative lack of involvement of the French in Italian-Yugoslav relations from 1945 onwards and during the détente of the 1970s was a surprise for the author of this paper. During the Great War and the period between the two world wars, the French government was involved and interested politically, militarily, economically and culturally in Italian-Serbian relations which, from 1918, were made more adversarial by the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians/Yugoslavia. Until 1939, in an effort to build an anti-German grouping, France worked on the reconciliation of its Italian ally and rival with its Serbian ally-protégé from the Great War. It was a difficult goal to achieve, as Italian nationalism was constantly opposed to Slovenian and Croatian nationalism within the Yugoslav ideology sustained by the Serbs. We expected to find the heritage of the inter-war period in French participation

in Italian-Yugoslav relations in the 1970s. However, in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in La Courneuve, in the under-series Yugoslavia, we find only one box of documents dedicated to Italian-Yugoslav relations in the 1970s in existence together with documents regarding relations between Yugoslavia and Austria and Yugoslavia and American countries (United States excepted) in the same period.¹ These documents were made available to researchers only very recently. They show that French ambassadors in Rome and Belgrade were very well informed of the state of Italian-Yugoslav relations in the period leading up to the Osimo agreements, which they observed systematically and in detail. They suggest also that if France was an excellent observer, it was not an actor in Italian-Yugoslav relations. In this paper, we will examine who the French diplomats that observed Italian-Yugoslav relations in the 1970s were, how they gathered their information and which subjects and issues were of particular interest to them. The central administration of Quai d'Orsay showed some interest in Italian-Yugoslav relations only from 1971, when it wrote its first memo on that subject to the French diplomatic representatives abroad. We will examine how the question of Italian-Yugoslav relations became more important for French diplomacy from that moment in the context of preparations for the Conference of European Security and Cooperation.

1. From the "opening to the left" to the "opening to the East" in Italy: Italian-Yugoslav relations according to French diplomats (1962-1969)

With no occupation forces on the ground and engaged in different internal and external problems especially regarding its colonial empire, France was not a signatory of the 5 October 1954 Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Free Territory of Trieste between the United States, United Kingdom, Italy and Yugoslavia.² According to the Memorandum, the Free Territory of Trieste was divided temporarily into Zone A (including the city of Trieste) under Italian administration and Zone B under Yugoslav administration. From that moment on, Belgrade considered the line of demarcation between Zones A and B as a state border. Rome denied the existence of the state border and insisted that this was merely a line of demarcation within the Free Territory of Trieste in line with the peace settlement of 1947. On the occasion of the signing of the Memorandum, French diplomacy expressed its agreement with the solutions that had been adopted and its conviction that all future possible

¹ AFMFA, s. Europe 1944, ss. Yugoslavia 1971-1976, b. 3763.

² United Nations Treaty S., doc. 3297 (New York: 1956), 100-18.

problems between the two countries could be resolved through "friendly negotiations". With the gathering pace of European integration processes marked by the signing of the Treaty of Rome (Common Market and Euratom) on 25 March 1957 and the search for the "proper place" for France in international relations announced by General Charles de Gaulle after his coming to power in 1958,³ France found itself detached from Italian-Yugoslav relations, which continued to be seen as a reflection of the tensions between the Communist bloc and the West.

The year 1962 was decisive in French foreign policy. With the Evian agreements, the Algerian question was resolved. De Gaulle orientated his policy towards European and nuclear questions, trying to oppose the "European Europe" under French influence to the "Atlantic community" under the dominance of the United States. In the European policy of de Gaulle, the Federal Republic of Germany had an essential role, much more important than that of Italy. At the same time, de Gaulle was looking for French autonomy in nuclear matters and within NATO. In his European ambitions, de Gaulle met with the opposition of the United States. The Kennedy administration did not hesitate to intervene in the internal affairs of some European countries. This was the case with Italy, where the American administration strongly supported the "opening to the left" of Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani (1954, 1958-59, 1960-63, 1982-83, 1987). A Christian-Democrat, Fanfani created a new government in February 1962, incorporating the Social-Democrats. This tendency was accentuated with the government of Aldo Moro (1963-68, 1974-76) in November 1963, which consisted of Christian-Democrats, Social-Democrats and the Socialists, unifying in this way the non-Communist left and the Christian-Democrats. The creation of governments led by Fanfani and Moro was the result of the efforts of several advisors of President Kennedy initiated at the very beginning of his presidency. Contacts were established between American and Italian trade unions as well as with the Socialist leader Pietro Nenni, who took on ministerial positions in both governments. In terms of foreign policy this political combination signified Italy's link to "Atlantic Europe" and the end of the de Gaulle's desire to attract Italy together with Germany to his project of "European Europe".⁴ One of the consequences of American involvement in Italian affairs was the policy of Moro towards Yugoslavia. Moro's aim was to establish relations of "intensity and friendship" with its eastern neighbor in order to show that two countries with different political and economic systems could cooperate fruitfully, especially at an economic and cultural

³ Serge Berstein, *La France de l'expansion. La République gaullienne (1958-1969)* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), 35-44.

⁴ Georges-Henri Soutou, *La Guerre froide, 1943-1990* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), 608-9.

level. Supported by economically more developed Italy, Yugoslavia was to play the role of a "Trojan horse" within the Eastern bloc, as a country that would show that an alternative "way towards communism" than that of Moscow was possible.

The French diplomats in Italy and Yugoslavia in the mid-1960s saw Italian-Yugoslav relations as being in a state of constant change characterized by highs and lows. For the French diplomats, these relations were a function of the unstable internal situation in both Italy and Yugoslavia. The perception of instability in Italy resulted from the constant political struggles which manifested themselves in frequent changes of government. However, it was Yugoslavia which was seen as the weakest and more unstable state that was on the brink of disintegration and in a state of constant economic crisis. The "self-management" introduced by the Constitution of 1963 and supported by strong official propaganda, showed its disastrous effects on the economy. Instability also resulted from relations between the different socialist republics within the federation and within the communist political elite of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In this period, Josip Broz settled his scores with Aleksandar Ranković (1966), a senior Serbian Communist official, strengthening his own leader cult along the way.⁵ The "non-alignment" proclaimed in foreign policy showed its weaknesses due to the low level of economic development and the dispersal of the countries within the movement. Along with "self-management", "non-alignment" became the most important ideological frame of reference for political use in the domestic political arena. Regarding Italy, the regime presented itself as a decisive and strong partner that defended "Yugoslav" interests, especially in border and minority questions seen as resolved by the "victory over fascism" during the war. Yet at the same time, the regime expected economic, financial and cultural support from Italy to decrease the internal tensions in Yugoslavia.

A sign of the improvement of Italian-Yugoslav relations was the visit of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro to Yugoslavia in November 1965. At that time, France changed its ambassador in Belgrade. The new French Ambassador Pierre Francfort (1965-70) was known for being experienced in East European affairs. Prior to Belgrade, he had been ambassador in Bucharest (1953-58) and Budapest (1962-65). In his diplomatic career, as the Second Counselor of the French Embassy in Washington in 1952, he also observed US policy towards the Eastern Bloc. After the two sides

⁵ Stanislav Sretenović, Artan Puto, "The Leader Cults in the Western Balkans (1945-90): Josip Broz Tito and Enver Hoxha," in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships. Stalin and Eastern Block*, ed. Balázs Apor et al. (London: Palgrave – McMillan, 2004), 208-23.

expressed their mutual understanding on international and bilateral issues during Moro's visit and signed commercial and cultural agreements, Francfort observed Moro's strong intention to present the visit to Yugoslavia as an important success.⁶ For the French Ambassador, it was a confirmation of the Italian policy of "opening to the East". Indeed, it was the second visit of an Italian politician of the highest rank to Eastern Europe in the period of less than one month. Moro's visit to Yugoslavia came following the visit to Poland in October 1965 of Italian President Giuseppe Saragat (1964-71) who was known to the French political and diplomatic elite as a former Italian Ambassador in Paris (1945-46). The declaration by Moro that his government would postpone the repayment of Italian loans by Yugoslavia and would support Yugoslavia's integration into the economic system of Western Europe was underlined by Francfort in his telegram to the Quai d'Orsay.⁷ The French Ambassador in Belgrade based his observations on the information received separately from both sides in the talks. Each side found itself in front of a partner better disposed to talk and agree than previously expected.⁸ Francfort judged that the conclusion of the talks – "apparently satisfactory for the two sides" – was the result of their careful preparation. It was also the result of the new approach in bilateral relations with Yugoslavia regarding territorial problems introduced by Moro before this trip to Belgrade. In front of the Italian Parliament, Moro stated that he would not evoke the "disputed territorial questions", an attitude that was accepted in Belgrade. For Francfort, the visit signified Moro's and Tito's wish to establish their relations on a "normal basis" and even as "good neighbors". The French Ambassador saw in the approach of not raising disputed questions and adopting a "favorable disposal" towards the other as proof that "the moral aspect was of real political importance",⁹ an observation that probably referred to American influence. As an example of the impact of this "positive" attitude in negotiations Francfort observed that, surprisingly for both sides, the difficult minority question was mentioned as a "point of comprehension" even if the minority question was not on the program of the talks. However, the French Ambassador came back to the arguments regarding the situation on the ground and the weight of minority questions in both countries. The Slovene minority in Italy was more numerous than the Italian minority in Yugoslavia, which is why Belgrade was in

⁶ AFMFA, Europe 1944, Yugoslavia (1961-1970), b. 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 12 November 1965, tel., 2; this document was transmitted to the French diplomatic representatives in Rome, New York (United Nations), Brussels, The Hague, Vienna and Athens.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 15 November 1965, tel.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Francfort to MFA (Department of Europe), Belgrade, 15 November 1965, copy.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

the stronger position to demand minority protection, a demand that was accepted by Moro. The expulsion of Italians from the former Italian territories that became Yugoslav in 1945 was not mentioned.

From Rome, French Ambassador Armand Bérard,¹⁰ an experienced diplomat previously posted to Washington, Bonn, Tokyo and New York, informed the Quai d'Orsay about the attitude of Farnesina regarding Moro's visit to Belgrade.¹¹ Without speaking about morality and politics as his colleague in Belgrade had, he informed the Quai d'Orsay that Italian diplomacy represented Moro's visit as one of "diplomatic routine" which contributed to the utilitarian strengthening of the ties between the two countries in the fields of economy and culture. Bérard confirmed that the territorial questions were not mentioned during the talks. The French Ambassador underlined that the minority question had a "painful character" for the Italians because the number of Italians in Yugoslavia in the hinterland of Trieste had diminished between the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (London Agreement) in 1954 and Moro's visit to Belgrade (1965) from 70,000 to 30,000 persons. At the same time, the "Yugoslav community" constantly increased in Italy because of the arrival of political émigrés. Although the French Ambassador did not mention the sources for the given figures and what exact territory he was referring to when speaking of the hinterland of Trieste, the reasons for this process, unfavorable to Italy, lay in the different political systems of the two countries. The London Agreement provoked a new wave of displacement of Italians from Area B of the Free Territory of Trieste put under the Yugoslav administration, as it was seen as the definitive establishment of the communist regime that they did not want to serve.¹² Through economic and cultural rapprochement with Yugoslavia, Rome tried to stop the dual process of displacement towards Italy from the East. Aside from that, Bérard observed the satisfaction of Italian diplomacy that Italy held the first place in terms of Yugoslavia's trading partners (15% of exports and 11% of imports) while financial ties were constantly expanding.

The development of Italian-Yugoslav bilateral relations could also be explained by the strong relations established in the 1960s between the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) and the parties of the Italian left. After the crisis provoked by Tito's split with Stalin in 1948, the relations with the Italian Communist Party again became close. In

¹⁰ Armand Bérard, *Cinq années au Palais Farnèse. Un ambassadeur se souvient* (Paris: Plon, 1982), 237.

¹¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Bérard to MFA, Rome, 16 November 1965, tel.

¹² Raoul Pupo, *Il lungo esodo. Istria: le persecuzioni, le foibe, l'esilio* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2005), 334.

the message that the PCI sent to the SKJ on the occasion of the Yugoslav national holiday of 29 November 1965, the Italian communists invited their comrades from the East towards "closer ties between the European parties on the unity of our entire continent regarding security problems".¹³ Within this rhetoric, Francfort saw the existence of the "European conception" within the PCI and the SKJ, a conception that is confirmed through the relations of the SKJ with "all Italian parties from the left", especially with the socialists of Nenni.¹⁴ The observation of Francfort was confirmed by the mutual visits of the delegations of the SKJ, the Italian Socialist Party and the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity in April and July 1966.¹⁵ These relations were developed on the basis of the memory of the partisan anti-fascist cooperation in 1945, but also on the geographical proximity of the two countries, which contributed to the exchanges of party representatives from the border regions of Friuli and Slovenia. The SKJ was very attentive to the relationship of the PCI with the "Catholics" and "Socialists" in Italy, as well as with the French Communist Party.¹⁶ Through the strong ties with the PCI, the SKJ tried to influence Italian domestic politics in favor of the parties of the left and tried to regain some influence in the "international proletarian movement". In November 1966, after the visit of the delegation of the SKJ to the XI Congress of the PCI, the joint *communiqué* was published. The two parties expressed their points of view on border questions in Europe, inspired by Soviet conceptions: "For the establishment of détente in Europe, the recognition of the borders of the current states, the existence of the two German states by all the states and particularly German Federal Republic, is essential".¹⁷ The two parties insisted on the ideological argument inherited from the immediate aftermath of the Second World War that if borders are not recognized, this would result in the strengthening of nationalist and neo-Nazi tendencies. In fact, this ideological construction was intended for internal political use within the context of the strengthening of the activity of extreme right parties in Italy and of anti-communist groups in Yugoslavia.¹⁸

According to French diplomacy, in December 1966, the established Italian-Yugoslav economic relations brought the first concrete changes in Yugoslavia. Based on the information from the Italian embassy in Belgrade,

¹³ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 1 December 1965.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 30 April 1966; *ibid.*, Belgrade, 5 July 1966.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Belgrade, 23 November 1966.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ Marina Cattaruzza, *L'Italia e il confine orientale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), 336.

Francfort wrote to Quai d'Orsay about the "peaceful invasion" of the shops in Trieste by some 200,000 citizens of Yugoslavia as a consequence of the opening of borders without visa requirements, something which had been decided during Moro's visit.¹⁹ The bulk of these travelers were from the socialist republics of Slovenia and Croatia, geographically the closest to Italy. The facilitation of visa-free travel contributed to the economic development of Slovenia, which had already established commercial ties with the Italian region of Friuli. Francfort came back to the discussion on morality and politics. Not without cynicism, he concluded that "the mercantile side of the relations with the West corrupted the socialist morality that was already damaged".²⁰ On the political level, the French Ambassador observed that the exchanges with Italy could provoke differences of behavior on the part of Slovenia and Croatia in relation to the other republics and the Federation. Thus, the most important question became whether this process would bring pro-Western change throughout Yugoslavia or whether in fact it would contribute to the deepening of its internal problems and its dissolution. French diplomacy was perplexed regarding this question. When the negotiations on the new Italian-Yugoslav commercial treaty broke down in January 1967 and Italian-Yugoslav relations entered into a period of crisis,²¹ French diplomats placed particular attention on the situation in Croatia. The General Consul in Zagreb noticed the augmentation of interest of the Croatian communist leaders in an expansion of the rights of the Italian minority in Croatia.²² Yet the reason was not to satisfy Rome in return for the continuation of commercial negotiations. The real reason was in order to pressure the Yugoslav and Italian governments so as to secure gains for Croatia in domestic and foreign policy. Some ten thousand minority Italians well overseen by "the reliable communists" could not represent a threat for Croatia or for the Federation. However, by defending the rights of the Italian minority, the Croatian communists wished to defend the rights of Croatia supposedly endangered within the Federation.²³ According to the French Consul in Zagreb, the Croatian communists also wished to influence the Slovenian minority in Italy to ask for the same rights. The Slovenian minority in Italy could embarrass the local government because it supported the opposition parties to the Christian-Democrats in power. From Belgrade, Francfort criticized the excessive reaction of the senior Croatian communist official Josip Djerdja, a Parliamentary deputy

¹⁹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 8 December 1966.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 27 January 1967, tel.

²² AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, General Consul in Zagreb to Francfort, Zagreb, 17 March 1967.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

from the former Italian territory Zara (Zadar) and ex-diplomat whom he saw as an extremist constantly seeking to stir up disputes with Italy.²⁴ The French Ambassador thought that the interest of both sides was to maintain good relations. The behavior of Djerdja was seen as a way for the central government in Belgrade to pressure Italy to continue the commercial negotiations by showing the kind of anti-Italian reaction that could be provoked in Croatia. From Italian sources, the French *chargé d'affaires* in Belgrade Gerard Amanrich described the Yugoslav tactic of diplomatic pressure which sought to introduce France into the game. The senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated to Italian diplomats that if Italy did not change its attitude in the commercial negotiations, they would turn towards others, "particularly France".²⁵ Amanrich commented on this attitude only with an exclamation mark. Yet he was aware that the Yugoslav "manoeuvres" were orientated to appeal to a part of the Italian public opinion on the left with the aim of increasing pressure on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amintore Fanfani (1965-68), considered too intransigent in the commercial negotiations. The observed radicalization of the tone towards Italy of the Croatian daily *Vjesnik* was also seen as part of the attempt to pressure the Italian government into restarting the commercial negotiations.²⁶

At the end of 1967, during the crisis in Italian-Yugoslav relations, France changed its ambassador in Rome. The new French Ambassador, Etienne Burin des Roziers²⁷ – a man close to Charles de Gaulle – who had previously been *chargé d'affaires* in Belgrade at the time of the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (1954), then ambassador in Warsaw (1958-62) and Secretary-General of the Presidency (1962-67), believed in the possibility of improving Italian-Yugoslav relations through contacts at the highest political level.²⁸ The opportunity was the visit to Rome, in January 1968, of the Federal Prime Minister Mika Špiljak, (1967-69) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Marko Nikezić (1965-68), high-level communist officials from Croatia and Serbia. This was the return visit for Moro's trip to Belgrade in 1965 and the first visit to Italy since the Second World War of a Yugoslav Prime Minister. The French ambassador transmitted, without commenting, some points of the

²⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 13 April 1967.

²⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Gerard Amanrich to MFA, Belgrade, 16 May 1967.

²⁶ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, General Consul in Zagreb to Francfort, Zagreb, 25 May 1967.

²⁷ Etienne Burin des Roziers, *Retour aux sources. 1962, l'année décisive* (Paris: Plon, 1986), 36-49.

²⁸ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Burin des Roziers to MFA, 21 December 1967, tel.

official *communiqué*, saying that the two Prime Ministers expressed their wish for the improvement of their bilateral relations, their devotion to peace and détente²⁹ in the world. On that occasion, President Saragat was invited to visit Tito in Belgrade.³⁰ In communication with representatives of the Farnesina, the French Ambassador was told that only general questions were raised with Špiljak, and that the visit represented the end of the "coolness" in relations, which characterized the year 1967, due to the Yugoslav rapprochement with Moscow.³¹ Indeed, during the Israeli-Arab conflict of 1967, the Soviets wished to increase their Mediterranean fleet and Fanfani suspected that the Yugoslavs were willing to give them access to the Adriatic ports. Moro's interest in Adriatic questions was interpreted by the Italian diplomats (and accepted by the French) as being linked to his political origins as a deputy from Bari.

The French position towards British access to the Common Market had some echoes on Italian-Yugoslav relations. French opposition to British access to the Common Market in November 1967 provoked the Italians to announce a "period of reflection after the failure within the Common market" in regard to Italian support for Yugoslavia's candidacy.³² Yet the French did not oppose the Italian long-term policy of drawing Yugoslavia closer to the West in order to bring about domestic change in the country. In Rome, Burin des Roziers expressed his conception of realism in policy: he insisted that the development of Italian-Yugoslav relations was based on the "strongly concrete figure" that Italy is the most important trading partner of Yugoslavia. Ambassador Roger Seydoux, the French representative to NATO in Brussels, got confirmation from his Italian colleague that the visit of Špiljak was "very satisfactory", that "the Yugoslavs" showed themselves to be "moderate and constructive" and that Yugoslavia, inspired by the "growing flexibility" between Bonn and Pankow, will improve its relations with the German Federal Republic.³³ On the other hand, the Yugoslavs spoke about the economic reforms in their country that "already" had a certain influence in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, a sentence destined to show to the West the impact of the Yugoslav model on the Eastern bloc. Within the Quai d'Orsay, Seydoux's

²⁹ Georges-Henri Soutou, "Convergence theories in France during the 1960s and 1970s," in *The Making of Détente. Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965-75*, ed. Wilfried Loth, Georges-Henri Soutou (New York: Routledge, 2008), 25-45.

³⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Burin des Roziers to MFA, Rome, 10 January 1968, tel.

³¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Burin des Roziers to MFA, Rome, 11 January 1968, tel.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.

³³ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Roger Seydoux to MFA, Brussels, 17 January 1968.

note was transmitted to the Directorate for Eastern Europe "for their information".

In Belgrade, Francfort wrote a detailed note of 14 pages on Špiljak's visit to Rome after a conversation with his Italian colleague.³⁴ Špiljak's visit to Rome and the topics discussed are explained by domestic political factors both in Italy and in Yugoslavia. Because of the approach of Italian elections in May 1968, the Italian government asked the Yugoslavs not to raise territorial and minority questions, seen as "delicate bilateral questions" which could provoke inappropriate campaigns and polemics in Italy.³⁵ The request was accepted by the Yugoslav side on the grounds of supporting the leftist parties in Italy. The territorial and minority questions were seen by leftist propaganda as subjects that parties of the Italian right used for their political promotion. In Yugoslavia, Francfort observed the split in the communist political elite between the pro-Western and pro-Soviet camps. For the French, Špiljak's visit to Rome was a sign that Yugoslavia would not renounce its Western friendships. Moreover, the note from Zagreb confirmed that during the visit to Rome, Špiljak had a "cordial meeting" with Pope Paul VI, information given by Špiljak himself in Zagreb during a local communist meeting and not exploited by the press.³⁶ During the meeting in Zagreb, the questions to Špiljak focused on economic relations with the Western countries, something that was seen as an expression of the "essential preoccupations" of the Croats. For the French observer, probably the Consul, Western influence was penetrating among the Croats and starting to show results.

During that time, the relationship with the Common Market was the most important preoccupation of the Yugoslav government. Yugoslav Communists expected that entrance to the Common market would resolve the disastrous economic situation in their country and would confirm the country's position as a model for the Eastern bloc. The decision from March 1968 of the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community not to discuss the demand for negotiations with Yugoslavia, provoked an anti-Italian reaction in the country. This decision was based on the Italian veto on negotiating with any country before the resolution of the question of Britain's candidacy, refused in 1967 by France. Yugoslav officials and the press portrayed Italy as being responsible for the failure of Yugoslavia's candidacy.³⁷ They tried to play on the Franco-Italian rivalries within the Common market, accusing Italy of wishing to have its revenge on France for the French veto on Britain's candidacy.

³⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 22 January 1968.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁶ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Note for the Embassy, Zagreb, 2 February 1968.

³⁷ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 18 March 1968.

Furthermore, they complained that Yugoslavia was the "accidental victim" of the Italian settling of accounts with "its Mediterranean rivals". One representative of Yugoslavia's Foreign Ministry complained to Francfort regarding the Italian veto in Brussels and put the responsibility on Fanfani, who presumably wished to satisfy the Italian right before the elections.³⁸ In communication with Francfort, the under-secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Radivoj Uvalić – a senior communist diplomat of confidence from Serbia, who got his PhD in law in Paris and was ambassador to Norway, Austria and France – accused Italy of hiding behind the economic questions the more political border problem in Trieste and the bad position of the Slovenian minority in Friuli-Venezia Giulia.³⁹ Using the communist rhetoric inherited from the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Uvalić blamed Italy for considering the Italian-Yugoslav border as temporary and having pretensions over Yugoslav territory. The Yugoslav diplomat assured Francfort that, for Yugoslavia, the question was resolved "through facts", without mentioning explicitly the occupation zones in Trieste and the expulsion of ethnic Italians from the ex-Italian territories after 1945. In the manner of the victorious Yugoslav communists of 1945, Uvalić demanded that the "settlement should be legalized" in the imminent future. Before that, he said, it would be necessary to limit the actions of "right-wing forces in Trieste". The recriminations of Yugoslav diplomacy against Italy did not leave Francfort indifferent. He prepared a response that protected the French position in the EEC: "Maybe, one can judge it expedient in Rome the transfer to France of the responsibility for the loss of time of which Belgrade is complaining".⁴⁰ However, he was not sure that this way of presenting the attitudes of France would be accepted in Belgrade. At the same time, the French consul in Zagreb reported the orchestration of anti-Italian feelings by the newspaper "Vijesnik".⁴¹ Employing the usual language of Yugoslav national communists, the Croatian newspaper accused Italy of irredentism, chauvinism, propaganda to "again grab Istria" and "other Adriatic regions", domination on "both sides of the Adriatic", preparing and financing the intelligence units to be introduced in Istria. The consul in Zagreb was aware that Yugoslav propaganda was in the function of the approaching Italian elections with the aim of supporting the Italian left. He informed Francfort that the periodic "expressions of bad mood" of Croatian public opinion does not last long and that it would stop after

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 18 March 1968, 7.

⁴¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, General consul to ambassador, Zagreb, 30 April 1968.

the Italian elections.⁴² The defeat of the Italian right in the elections of May 1968 was accepted with satisfaction in Yugoslavia. At the beginning of June, the French Consul in Zagreb reported the end of anti-Italian campaigns in the press.⁴³ The results of Italian elections were welcomed by Francfort in Belgrade, who confirmed the improvement in relations between the two countries.⁴⁴

During the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the evolution of Italian-Yugoslav relations was in line with the general policy of France. De Gaulle condemned strongly the Soviet intervention and saw it as a consequence of the division of Europe into blocs, something that should be overcome. The Soviet intervention contributed to the strengthening of bilateral relations between Italy and Yugoslavia.⁴⁵ From 1948, Tito's regime was obsessed with the possibility of an eventual Soviet intervention and used this fear to obtain Western support and to strengthen the internal cohesion of the country. Italy feared that in the case of Soviet occupation of Yugoslavia its army within NATO would be the first to face the Red army. That is why the Italian government reacted to the Yugoslav military measures of protection against the presumed Soviet attack on the Eastern border by assuring the Yugoslavs that they had no need to "be worried" about their Western border with Italy. Francfort underlined that this Italian reassurance to Yugoslavia was "spontaneous", i.e. not at the instigation of the Americans, but that it did not imply Italian renouncement on the territorial issue in Trieste.⁴⁶ At the same time, the contacts of the Italian left and the Yugoslav communists were intensified to stress the common views on the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. On the economic front, the French diplomat observed the intensification of relations and the "full restoration of the climate of good neighbors". However, French diplomacy was aware that the impulse for the restoration of good Italian-Yugoslav relations also came from American-Italian contacts. In October 1968, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Giuseppe Medici came back from New York where he had contacts with representatives of the State Department and his Yugoslav counterpart, Marko Nikezić. Together with the State Department, Farnesina was worried about the consequences on Yugoslavia of possible Soviet political and economic pressure in the long term.⁴⁷ Immediate

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, General consul to ambassador, Zagreb, 4 June 1968.

⁴⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 18 June 1968.

⁴⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 24 September 1968.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁷ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 268, Burin des Roziers to MFA, Rome, 19 October 1968, tel.

Soviet military intervention was ruled out after the contacts in New York. The Italian military and civil interlocutors of the French Ambassador in Rome also excluded the possibility of Soviet intervention by sea against Albania because of the weakness of the Soviet fleet and stressed the importance of the capacity of Yugoslavia to resist Soviet pressure.

Western diplomacy underestimated the use of the Soviet threat in Yugoslav domestic politics. The intervention in Czechoslovakia weighed upon the Soviet Union. Within half a year, the Soviets turned from an aggressive to a more conciliatory policy in Europe. Under the Soviet impulse, in March 1969, the political-consultative committee of the Warsaw Pact launched from its meeting in Budapest an appeal for the organization of a Conference on European Security and Cooperation in Europe.⁴⁸ The Council of NATO held in Washington in April 1969, responded with interest to the Soviet initiative. At the Washington Council, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Pietro Nenni laid out the idea of the organization of one huge conference that would bring together the countries of Western Europe, of the Warsaw Pact, of neutral and non-aligned countries as well as the Soviet Union and the United States.⁴⁹ During his visit to Belgrade at the end of May 1969, Nenni insisted that Italian-Yugoslav relations would be an example of the possibility of "cooperation and peaceful coexistence" between two countries with two different political systems, "one linked to the pact, the other non-aligned".⁵⁰ Nenni insisted on European cooperation, advocated "the end of the bipolar system" and the development of a "multi polar system" where Europe would play an important role in "spreading democracy in the world". The Italian minister paid tribute to de Gaulle's vision of the future of Europe,⁵¹ but expressed his reservation for the "methods" of the General, certainly thinking of his veto on Britain's accession to the Common Market. The French *chargé d'affaires* in Belgrade concluded that the discourse of Nenni was very well received in Yugoslavia. In fact, Nenni spoke more as a politician than as a diplomat. Together with Tito, he presented himself as a "champion of socialism" and "eminent combatant against fascism". In the rhetoric of Nenni, French diplomacy saw two frustrated countries wishing to forget their domestic and foreign problems by insisting on their international importance. But, under Italian instigation, Italian-Yugoslav bilateral relations could become a part of the wider discussions on security and cooperation in Europe.

⁴⁸ Ljubivoje Aćimović, *Problemi bezbednosti i saradnje u Evropi* (Beograd: IMPP, Prosveta, 1978), 447.

⁴⁹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Serge Gelade to MFA, Belgrade, 30 May 1969, tel.

⁵⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Serge Gelade to MFA, Belgrade, 4th June 1969.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

3. France and the solution of the "ultimate consequence of the war" in Europe (1969-1975)

European questions had priority in the foreign policy of Georges Pompidou from the beginning of his Presidency in June 1969.⁵² This was clear from the choice of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Schumann, known as "the most Gaullist of the Europeans and the most European of the Gaullists". Pompidou was skeptical of de Gaulle's Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals" and thought that the process of détente should be gradual. In the relationship with the Soviet Union, which he intended to develop, he rejected the Soviet tendency to "freeze" the world order characterized by the two blocs and to recognize the status quo in Europe. In October 1969, Pompidou was the first statesman in the West to officially accept the Soviet proposal for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, but under the condition that questions of human rights would be addressed. In the relationship with Germany, he supported the *Ostpolitik* of chancellor Willy Brandt, but was suspicious about the reunification of the two Germanys as its final aim. Pompidou wished to supervise the *Ostpolitik* through the strengthening of the Franco-German relationship and of the European construction. Italian-Yugoslav relations remained of limited significance for French diplomacy.

While Pompidou accepted the Soviet proposal for the CSCE, Italian President Saragat was on an official visit to Yugoslavia from 2 to 6 October 1969. This was the first visit of an Italian president to its Eastern neighbor after the Second World War and represented not only a sign of friendship but also the coronation of the evolution of around a decade of bilateral relations that sought to overcome the "difficulties of the past".⁵³ Burin des Rozières observed that the opposition to fascism and a common experiences of the resistance, both of Saragat and Tito, would contribute to the sealing of the friendship of the two countries. However, the French Ambassador in Rome was aware that "everything is still unresolved", especially the border and minority questions, which were not intended to be discussed during the Saragat visit. Nevertheless, Tito made an allusion to the border question, but found a reaction only from the side of the Italian press, not from Italian officials.⁵⁴ What really interested French diplomacy was the impact of Saragat's visit on the other East European

⁵² *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe*, ed. J.R. Bernard et al. (Bruxelles: Complexe, 1995), 691; Thierno Diallo, *La politique étrangère de Georges Pompidou* (Paris: LGDJ, 1992), 271.

⁵³ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 1 October 1969, tel.

⁵⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 6 October 1969, tel.

countries. This is why the telegram from the Ambassador in Prague speaking about the wishes of Czechoslovaks to build their relationship with the West on the model of Italian-Yugoslav relations was of particular interest and was transmitted from the Quai d'Orsay to the embassies in Moscow, Rome and Belgrade.⁵⁵ From Belgrade, Francfort confirmed that Italian-Yugoslav relations would encourage the socialist countries to come closer to Western Europe.⁵⁶ Moreover, he adopted the point of view of his Italian colleague in Belgrade, Ambassador Folco Trabalza, that Saragat's visit would diminish both Italian and Yugoslav "nationalism" and would reduce the "nationalist" disputes in Italian domestic policy. At the end of the visit which was represented by both sides as "historical", Tito was invited to come to Rome in 1970.⁵⁷ In the meantime, in May 1970, the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs held the first political consultations on the situation in Europe and the world, wishing to establish an exchange of views on a regular basis.⁵⁸ Francfort noticed that Yugoslav diplomats and the press expressed their appreciation for the *Ostpolitik* of Willy Brandt and their admiration of Aldo Moro's foreign policy "in the interest of détente and peace". The Italians and the Yugoslavs judged Soviet policy as "defensive" and wishing to assure the status quo in Europe because of the Chinese danger. On the other hand, French diplomacy of that time, fearful of being excluded, was frustrated by the contacts between the Soviets and Willy Brandt. France was worried about preserving the quadripartite prerogatives on Germany that could be neglected in the preparation of the German-Soviet treaty of August 1970.

The international context was favorable to the development of Italian-Yugoslav relations. Tito's visit to Italy was scheduled from the 10 to the 15 of December 1970 with a charged program in which he was to be received by Saragat and by the Pope, Paul VI.⁵⁹ However, the visit was planned during difficult internal situations both in Italy and Yugoslavia. Italy was affected by social dissatisfaction, strikes and political tensions, while the confrontation between the socialist republics and the federation was deepening in Yugoslavia with the expression of Croatian protest against the central government ("Mass-movement"). The new French ambassador in Belgrade Pierre Sebilleau (1970-76) – who previously was in Libya, Brazil and Denmark – reported on the manifestations of Yugoslav domestic rivalries concerning foreign

⁵⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Lalouette to MFA, Prague, 9 October 1969, tel.

⁵⁶ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 10 October 1969, tel.

⁵⁷ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 11 October 1969.

⁵⁸ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Francfort to MFA, Belgrade, 22 May 1970.

⁵⁹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 8 December 1970, tel.

policy. A few days before Tito's intended visit to Italy, a low ranking Croatian communist from Zagreb denounced publically the "Bulgarian pretensions on Macedonia" and the pretensions of "some Italian circles" to "seize" Zone B of Trieste.⁶⁰ The Italian embassy in Belgrade feared that, at the moment when the tendency in Europe was to affirm the status quo, Belgrade would make a parallel between the settling of the contentious issue of Trieste and the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line, following the example of the negotiations that led to the signing of the German-Polish treaty a few days later (7 December 1970). Sebilleau assessed that the Yugoslav diplomacy did not want to compromise its relations with Italy through such a statement. The evocation of Bulgarian (implicitly Soviet) and Italian threats was, in fact, in the service of domestic policy. Yugoslav propaganda used the fear of external menace to strengthen internal cohesion. Given such domestic situations both in Yugoslavia and Italy, one Parliamentary question in Rome provoked a diplomatic incident. The Parliamentary question by two senators of the Italian Social Movement, considered a neo-fascist party, and a Demo-Christian deputy from Trieste close to Fanfani was regarding Moro's attitude in case the border problem was to be brought up by Tito. For Burin des Rozières, Moro's response that the "Italian Government will not take into consideration any renouncement on legitimate national interests" was a sign that Farnesina was anxious about the question as well as Italian public opinion.⁶¹ The response of Aldo Moro to the parliamentary question provoked the postponement of Tito's visit to Italy.⁶² For Sebilleau, the Yugoslav reaction was one of excessiveness, reflecting more the deep internal problems than those in relations with Italy. The Yugoslav domestic problems concerned the weakening of Tito's power in the face of Croatian and Slovenian pressure for a border resolution with Italy, which he sought to balance with references to disputes over the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border in Macedonia.⁶³ The French Ambassador in Belgrade agreed with his colleague in Rome that the diplomatic incident was "serious" and that the situation should be repaired as soon as possible.⁶⁴ He advised the Quai d'Orsay that France, "ally of Italy and friend of Yugoslavia", should encourage the two sides

⁶⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 5 December 1970; this document was transmitted to 20 French diplomatic addresses abroad.

⁶¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 9 December 1970, tel.

⁶² AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 10 December 1970, tel.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 12 December 1970, tel.

to overcome the crisis. The Ambassador remained without a response from the central administration in Paris and continued to be an attentive observer of Italian-Yugoslav relations. In fact, Italian-Yugoslav relations were clearly limited by factors that resulted from the divergent positions of the two countries inherited from the war. Italy wished to hold on to the terms of the Peace Treaty of 1947 that established the Free Territory of Trieste and was a pledge for Italian integration in the Western world, while Yugoslavia, in the manner of the Soviet Union, seen as the threat and as the model at the same time, wished to assure the status quo of its territorial conquests from the war.

Yugoslav diplomacy's offensive in favor of securing *de jure* recognition of the demarcation lines between the two zones of the territory of Trieste did not surprise French diplomacy. The Yugoslav diplomats in Rome evoked the German-Soviet and German-Polish treaties as models for the recognition of borders in Eastern Europe.⁶⁵ In Farnesina, these treaties were interpreted as meaning that Bonn did not recognize *de jure* the new frontiers in Eastern Europe and the possibility was excluded that Italy could do more than the Federal Republic of Germany. Nevertheless, the contacts between the Farnesina and the Yugoslav embassy in Rome continued and the amelioration of Italian-Yugoslav relations was anticipated from January 1971. For both sides, it was important that Tito visited Saragat before the Italian presidential elections in 1971. As reported previously by French diplomacy, the two politicians established a particular understanding which contributed to the good relationship of the two countries. The impulse in that sense came from the highest level of Italian diplomacy. On 21 January 1971, Moro declared to Parliament that Italy would respect "the territorial dispositions that result from the London memorandum of 1954", an expression that satisfied his Yugoslav counterpart Mirko Tepavac (1969-72).⁶⁶ The two ministers met in Venice in February 1971 to prepare Tito's visit. On that occasion, Moro assured Tepavac that Italy considered the demarcation line between Zones A and B as an international border, but that it could not announce this position publically because of the rationale of domestic policy before the presidential elections. Sebilleau informed Paris that the negotiations on the border question were initiated from that moment even if the Italians did not want to pronounce this word.⁶⁷ In fact, a secret Italian-Yugoslav commission was established to discuss the questions that remained to

⁶⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (61-70), 269, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 28 December 1970, tel.

⁶⁶ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 22 January 1971, tel.

⁶⁷ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 13 February 1971, tel.

be resolved, such as the demarcation of the border between Italy and Yugoslavia, the rights of minorities and compensation of the Italian goods that were nationalized in Yugoslavia. The French Ambassador in Belgrade was satisfied with the evolution of Italian-Yugoslav relations. It was hoped that the resolution of the "package" of Italian-Yugoslav contentions would come as soon as possible in direct negotiations between the two sides. Once the "package" was resolved, the two sides could notify "with discretion" the United Nations that the "Trieste affair is not anymore on the agenda of the Security Council".⁶⁸ The hope for the quick and "discrete" resolution of Italian-Yugoslav disputes shows the preoccupation of the French Ambassador who sustained the Yugoslav positions in contrast to the more prudent Burin des Rozières in Rome. For Sebilleau, it was not conceivable to go to the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe without resolving previously this "ultimate consequence of the war". In fact, the cohesion of Yugoslavia was at stake. Diplomats in Belgrade speculated on the succession to Tito. The internal problems of Yugoslavia were such that the dissolution of the country after Tito's death was discussed. Not resolving the border question could allow Italy the possibility of direct negotiations with the bordering republics of Slovenia and Croatia thus jeopardizing the integrity of Yugoslavia once Tito was no longer there.

Tito's visit to Rome took place from 25 to 29 March 1971. The visit presented the cordiality of Italian-Yugoslav relations despite the divergence of views on major international problems and the Trieste question "not being completely resolved".⁶⁹ In the context of the negotiations regarding the status of Berlin that involved France, the Quai d'Orsay showed particular interest in Tito's visit to Rome. The Under-Directorate for Eastern Europe wrote a memo that served as a summary of the evolution of the Trieste problem from 1954 onwards and, based on the telegrams of Burin des Rozières,⁷⁰ reported the results of Tito's visit. The note adopted the point of view of the Ambassador in Rome that the visit reflected "fundamentally different" attitudes – the Yugoslavs "hostile to the blocs" and the Italians "very attached to NATO". The first visit of the president of a socialist country to the Pope was particularly underlined. French diplomacy observed that Pope Paul VI and Tito examined international questions in the "spirit of mutual comprehension" and agreed that the situation had "sensibly

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Holly Seat, 3567, MFA, Note, Paris, 9 April 1971.

⁷⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 26 March 1971, tel.; *ibid.*, Rome, 29 March 1971, tel.; *ibid.*, Rome, 1st April 1971, dispatch; *ibid.*, Rome, 5 April 1971, tel.

improved" for about six million Yugoslav Catholics. The satisfaction of Yugoslav Catholics, mostly Croats and Slovenians, could contribute to the internal strengthening of Yugoslavia, desired by France. During the visit of the French Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Schumann to Belgrade from 22 to 24 April 1971, Tepavac characterized Italian-Yugoslav relations as "very satisfactory" with no reaction from the French side.⁷¹ Italy continued to grant loans to Yugoslavia under advantageous conditions.⁷² After the signature of the treaty regarding the status of Berlin in September 1971 that involved France, Moro met Tepavac in October at the United Nations in New York. The two ministers expected the relaxation of the Soviet pressure on Yugoslavia because of the Soviet satisfaction with the Berlin agreement and the difficult Sino-Soviet relations.⁷³

However, the situation on the ground around Trieste continued to be unstable. In November 1971 an incident occurred concerning the Slovene ethnic group from Friuli-Venezia Giulia, who could not indicate their nationality on Italian official documents for the census.⁷⁴ The socialist republic of Slovenia supported the protests of the Slovene ethnic group in Italy and the incident gained a certain importance. It was possible because the central government in Belgrade allowed the republics to handle foreign policy with their neighbors. The weakening of central power in Belgrade suited the Italians. The direct contacts with Slovenia and Croatia permitted Italy to expand the circulation of persons and goods in the border zones without Belgrade. However, the explosion of Croatian dissatisfaction with the central government in Belgrade was seen in Rome as a threat which could upset Balkan equilibrium.⁷⁵ Eventual Croatian independence could benefit the Soviets, who could seize the Dalmatian coast by imposing a pro-Soviet leader as head of state. The diplomats also reported verbal insults against the Italian minority in Croatia. Burin des Rozières assessed that these incidents would not impact on the wish of the senior leaderships of the two countries to resolve the problem of Zone B in Trieste.

In fact, it was the internal struggle between senior communist leaders of the Yugoslav republics for Tito's legacy that conditioned the resolution of the question of Zone B in Trieste. From September 1972, Sebilleau

⁷¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3767, MFA, Note, Paris, 3 May 1971, circular.

⁷² AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 16 July 1971, tel.; *ibid.*, Robert Richard to Minister of Economy and Finance, Rome, 23 July, 1971.

⁷³ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 7 October 1971, tel.

⁷⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 20 November 1971.

⁷⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Burin des Rozières to MFA, Rome, 21 December 1971, tel.

noticed the offensive of Slovenian communist leader and Tito's possible successor Stane Dolanc for the formal attribution to Yugoslavia of Zone B in Trieste.⁷⁶ The border and minority question became the subject of Yugoslav internal and external diplomatic blackmail. Under Slovenian and Croatian pressure, the Yugoslav authorities complained about the situation of Slovenian and Croatian minorities in Italy, the Slovenian minority in Carinthia in Austria and, for the sake of domestic equilibrium, of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.⁷⁷ The intention of the Yugoslav ambassador in Helsinki to ask the future CSCE to pronounce on the minority problem in Europe provoked the first expression of the position of Quai d'Orsay regarding Italian-Yugoslav relations. French diplomacy reacted only when the minority question threatened to go beyond the Italian-Yugoslav bilateral level. In the note from the Under-Directorate for Eastern Europe prepared for the upcoming meeting of French and Italian ministers of foreign affairs (Maurice Schumann and Giuseppe Medici), written in case the situation in Yugoslavia was touched upon, the Quai d'Orsay expressed its categorical disapproval of the intention of Yugoslav diplomacy to "call to the international community for the affairs of the bilateral order".⁷⁸ For French diplomacy, the discussion on minority questions during the conference could bring risks of territorial claims for most of the participant countries (34 in the document). They saw the particular vulnerability of Eastern Europe where the discussion could provoke the "illusions" of numerous minority groups. Furthermore, the notion of "national minority" was not clearly defined by international law and was sensitive in France because French constitutional law did not provide to minority members collective, but rather individual rights. To avoid Yugoslav diplomatic menace at the CSCE, French diplomacy tried to facilitate the conclusion of the Italian-Yugoslav agreement on a bilateral level. During the audience of Sebilleau with Schumann, the French Ambassador in Belgrade got instructions to transmit to the Yugoslavs the conversation that the Minister had with Medici in December 1972.⁷⁹ On that occasion, Medici affirmed that Italy could decide to recognize *de jure* the annexation of Zone B by Yugoslavia, if Yugoslavia accepted the arrangement along the entire border that was contentious between the two countries. The information was accepted with interest in Belgrade, but it did not believe that the Italian government would accept it because of the fear of "nationalist reactions". The French initiative failed and Sebilleau

⁷⁶ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 20 September 1972, tel.

⁷⁷ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, MFA, Note, Paris, 12 December 1972.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 9 February 1973, confidential.

concluded that the resolution of the Trieste problem was still far away. A new crisis occurred after Tito's recriminations against Italy in his speeches in Ljubljana and Titograd (Podgorica) in December 1972. The meeting of the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs Miloš Minic (1972-1978) and Medici in March 1973 in Dubrovnik did not provide new elements for the resolution of the border problem.⁸⁰

With the arrival of Michel Jobert⁸¹ as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in April 1973, French foreign policy turned to the decisive style of the "necessity of Europe" from the Gaullist period. The symbol of the Franco-Italian alliance was the visit of Italian president Giovanni Leone together with Medici to Pompidou and Jobert prepared for June 1973 in Paris.⁸² For that occasion, the Under-Directorate for Eastern Europe wrote a Note on the recent history of the Italian-Yugoslav dispute over Zone B in Trieste.⁸³ French diplomacy concluded that the Yugoslavs had not given up on obtaining formal recognition of the border and that it could not be excluded that they would appeal to the CSCE if they believed this necessary to force an Italian decision. Jobert was less disposed to intervene in Italian-Yugoslav relations than Schumann. During the conversation with Minic in May 1973 in Paris, he refused to speak with the Yugoslav Minister about Italy, respecting the wish of his Italian colleagues.⁸⁴ His preoccupation was to position Europe in a world divided by the two blocs. In his speech on the occasion of the opening of the CSCE in Helsinki on 4 July 1973, Jobert rejected the idea that Europe become the "playing field where external forces would balance, the place of their rivalry" thinking of the two antagonist super-powers. This attitude supposed the solution of the Italian-Yugoslav border and minority problem at the bilateral level, which was the constant attitude of French diplomacy in that regard.

While the CSCE was in session, in January 1974, a new crisis started in Italian-Yugoslav relations regarding Zone B. Unilaterally, the Yugoslavs installed border posts on the demarcation line which provoked strong protests from the Italian authorities.⁸⁵ The Italians officially reaffirmed that the problem of Zone B remained open and qualified this zone as "Italian territory". The strengthening of the Italian position provoked

⁸⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 29 March 1973. This document was transmitted to 26 French diplomatic addresses abroad.

⁸¹ Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d'avenir* (Paris: Grasset, 1974), 310; Michel Jobert, *L'autre regard* (Paris: Grasset, 1976), 412.

⁸² AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, MFA, Note, Paris, 24 April 1973.

⁸³ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, MFA, Note, Paris, 18 May 1973.

⁸⁴ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3766, MFA, collective dispatch note, Paris, 23 July 1973.

⁸⁵ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, MFA, Record, Paris, 9 December 1974.

an explosion of protests from the Yugoslav side which accused Italy of irredentism. The Italian right was accused of collusion with NATO, which organized manoeuvres in the northern Adriatic in March. It was Aldo Moro, who became Prime Minister in November 1974, who calmed the dispute appealing to Yugoslav friendship. During the 1974 crisis, the Yugoslav government asked for the official support of France in the Trieste affair.⁸⁶ French diplomacy, guided from May 1974 (following the death of Pompidou) by Jean Sauvagnargues as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as the President of the Republic, expressed the point of view that "it was difficult to give satisfaction" to the Yugoslavs, making reference to the legal arguments from 20 years ago:

France is not the signatory of the London Memorandum. In the declaration of 4th October 1954 we made known our position in that field: we do not give our support to the 'claims that one of two countries could express on the territories put under the sovereignty or administration of the other'. We declare our conviction of the possibility for the two countries to resolve in the way of friendly negotiations the different problems that arise to them.⁸⁷

Thus, the first explicit French official point of view on the question was given on the occasion of the preparation of the Franco-Yugoslav political consultations in December 1974. France did not want to interfere in the Italian-Yugoslav dispute and still expected its resolution on a bilateral level.

The duration of the CSCE and the signature of the Final Act in Helsinki on 30 July-1 August 1975, symbolized the peak of the détente. Simultaneously with the preparation of the Final Act and in relation with it, the Italian-Yugoslav negotiations on the Trieste issue progressed while French diplomacy continued to observe without acting. At the end of June 1975, a group of Italian deputies from the ruling coalition prepared a "declaration" which consisted of the de jure recognition of Belgrade's suzerainty over Zone B.⁸⁸ Sebilleau was satisfied by the democratic procedure through which the Italian Parliament would give a mandate to the Government to define the practical modalities of that recognition. Furthermore, the "package deal" on other pending problems was in preparation as required by the Italians. The declaration of the Italian Parliament was postponed once again until autumn because of Italian domestic politics.⁸⁹ For this reason the Yugoslavs would introduce "a small sentence" in Tito's speech in Helsinki regarding their position on

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 27 June 1975, tel.

⁸⁹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 29 July 1975, tel.

Zone B. Tito's speech in Helsinki was accepted with great relief by both the Italians and the French.⁹⁰ The "minority question" was not discussed and Sebilleau characterized the discourse as "proof of moderation".

The Osimo Agreements signed on 10 November 1975 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Italy and Yugoslavia Mariano Rumor and Miloš Minic, were written in French, the most familiar diplomatic language for both sides. The Quai d'Orsay contented itself in having one example of the official text of the agreements published in 1976 by the *Documents d'Actualité internationale*, which reprinted the text published in Belgrade by the *Revue de Politique internationale* some days after the signing of the agreements.⁹¹ In May 1976, speaking about the "situation of the détente" as the consequence of the signing of the Final Act in Helsinki, Sebilleau lumped the Osimo agreements together with the German-Polish reparation agreement (October 1975) and the Greek initiative for Balkan cooperation (1975) as being the significant result of the revival of cooperation in Europe.⁹²

Conclusion

For French diplomacy after the Second World War, Italian-Yugoslav relations were of secondary importance. Although concerned for its position as a great power in the world and implicated in its relations with Germany, French diplomacy was a very well informed observer of Italian-Yugoslav relations. France supported Italian-Yugoslav economic cooperation from the 1960s which would bring Yugoslavia closer to the West and be a model for the other East European countries under the control of Moscow. Ally of Italy and "friend" of Yugoslavia, France hoped for the resolution of Italian-Yugoslav border and minority disputes concerning the Trieste territory. The difficulties in Italian-Yugoslav relations were seen as a function of the internal situation in both countries. The instability of democratic governments in Italy and the internal crisis in Yugoslavia (seen sometimes on the brink of disintegration), were the factors that blocked the resolution of the Italian-Yugoslav problems. With the German-Soviet and German-Polish treaty of 1970 and the agreement on Berlin of 1971 that involved France, the international context changed in favor of Italian-Yugoslav agreement. France saw the Italian-Yugoslav dispute as the "ultimate consequence of the war in Europe" and expected its resolution on a bilateral basis. The Yugoslav diplomatic blackmail of Italy regarding the threat of putting the question of Trieste on the table

⁹⁰ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 1st August 1975, tel.

⁹¹ AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3763, Official text, source: *Revue de Politique internationale*, No. 615, Belgrade, 20 November 1975.

⁹² AFMFA, Eur. 44, Yug. (71-76), 3767, Sebilleau to MFA, Belgrade, 25 May 1976, tel.

for the discussion of the CSCE, met with the categorical disapproval of France. In 1972, for the first time, French diplomacy involved itself in Italian-Yugoslav relations by trying to mediate between the two sides but without success. It was the preparation of the Final Act in Helsinki which gave the impetus for the resolution of the Italian-Yugoslav dispute leading to the Osimo agreements which were perceived by French diplomacy as a sign of the "revival of cooperation in Europe" after Helsinki.