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**SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE**  
**THE LONDON MEMORANDUM OF 1954. THE BEGINNING OF ETERNAL PEACE IN THE NORTHERN ADRIATIC?**

**Zagreb, November 14-15, 2024**

Organized by the Doctoral Study Program in Modern and Contemporary Croatian History in the European and World Context, Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

In collaboration with:

MIREES, East European and Eurasian Studies, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna

Scientific Research Center (ZRS) Koper

ERC Open borders Project: Cold War Europe Beyond Borders

**November 14, 2024, Conference Room, Faculty Library**

*(Chair: Hrvoje Klasić)*

10:30 Opening of the Conference (Bianchini, Jakovina, Pirjevec)

11:00 Tvrтко Jakovina, *The Era of Globalism: Foreign Policy of Yugoslavia and the Trieste Question in 1954*

11:20 Jože Pirjevec, *Edvard Kardelj and the Trieste Question*

11:40 Stefano Bianchini, *Reconsidering the Pathway to the London Memorandum in the Light of Multiple Regional Interests in the Balkans*

12:00 Benedetto Zaccaria, *Italy and Yugoslavia from the London Memorandum to the Osimo Treaty, 1954–1975*

**DISCUSSION**

**15:00 SECOND SESSION** *(Chair: Federico Tenca Montini)*

15:00 Božo Repe, *The London Memorandum and the Slovenes*

15:20 Anna Graf-Steiner, *The Role of Austria in Soviet Strategy on European Security: From the Austrian State Treaty to the Helsinki Final Act*

15:40 Stefano Bottoni, *Hungary and Romania after Stalin's Death*

16:00 Ivo Goldstein, *Dilemmas, Plans, Achievements – Josip Broz Tito in the Mid-1950s*

16:20 Hrvoje Klasić, *The Yugoslav-Italian Border Issue in the Croatian Emigrant Press*

**DISCUSSION**



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**November 15, 2024, Conference Room, Faculty Library**  
**SECOND DAY, THIRD SESSION** (Chair: Anna Graf-Steiner)

10:30 Darko Dukovski, *Istria: Historical Turning Points 1945–1954*

10:50 Borut Klabjan, *Rethinking Border Regimes in Cold War Europe: Cross-Border Mobility along the Italo-Yugoslav Border in the 1950s*

11:10 Marko Medved, *The Catholic Church in Relation to the London Memorandum of 1954*

11:30 Gorazd Bajc, *The Issue of the Slovenian Bank in Trieste, 1945–1954*

11:50 Federico Tenca Montini, *The Solution to the Trieste Crisis: Why 1954?*

**DISCUSSION**

**End of Conference**



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## **SUMMARIES OF THE PAPERS AND PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Gorazd Bajc – University of Maribor**

The issue of the Slovenian bank in Trieste, 1945-1954

#### Abstract

The Tržaška kreditna banka operated within the Slovene ethnic community in Italy in the period 1959-1996. It was one of the most important activities for the minority founded on the basis of the London Memorandum of 1954. The paper will present the complex negotiations that led to this decision. At the same time, other lesser-known attempts of the Yugoslav side to give the Slovenes in Trieste their own bank, both immediately after the end of the Second World War and during the period of the Allied Military administration, will be presented. The research is mainly based on documentation held by the British central archive, The National Archives (Kew-London).

#### BIOGRAPHY:

Gorazd Bajc is Full Professor at the University of Maribor, where he teaches Contemporary European and Balkan History. His research focuses on the history of intelligence services, diplomacy, Italian-Slovenian/Yugoslav relations, and violence—on one side, regarding the so-called foibe, and on the other, concerning the treatment of women after the two World Wars. He also addresses issues related to the legal history of the Slovenian minority in Italy and is currently devoted to the international and transnational aspects of Yugoslavia's dissolution. He has authored three books and co-authored two others, including *Baptism of Fire: The Burning of the Narodni Dom in Trieste and Adriatic Europe in the 20th Century. History and Memory* (Il Mulino, 2023), written with Professor Borut Klabjan.

### **Stefano Bianchini**

Reconsidering the pathway to the London memorandum in the light of the multiple regional interests in the Balkans.

#### Abstract

This paper explores the regional dimension of the contested question of the Free Territory of Trieste after World War II. It argues that this controversial issue was not solely about the ethno-national borders between Italy and Yugoslavia, which had been the focus of intensive diplomatic negotiations since the early months of 1918. While this aspect continued to influence relations between Belgrade and Rome, the new Cold War context, the different socio-political systems of the two countries, and the role they wished to play in the Balkans had unexpected effects on the future of the Trieste question. Consequently, the paper delves into the results of the Balkan Pact arrangements between 1952 and 1955 in the search for a compromise between Italy and Yugoslavia. Even though the US and the UK diplomacies were actively involved in the mediation between the parties about the future of the FTT, the two major Powers were also keen on bringing Yugoslavia into the Atlantic bloc, relying on Greece and Turkey as leverage. While this strategy gathered some consensus in Belgrade for distinct motivations, Italy strongly opposed it for territorial and strategic reasons. Therefore, drawing from primary archival sources and existing literature, the paper aims to unravel the complexity of the diplomatic efforts involving multiple actors, each pursuing its own political objectives.



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## BIOGRAPHY:

Stefano Bianchini is now an independent scholar. He was a Professor of East European Politics and History at the University of Bologna until October 2023, when he retired. From 2015 to 2021 he served as Rector's delegate for relations with Eastern Europe. Previously, he coordinated the two-year Interdisciplinary MA in East European Studies (MIREES), a joint diploma of the Universities of Bologna, St. Petersburg, Vytautas Magnus at Kaunas, and Corvinus of Budapest (later University of Zagreb and VMU Kaunas). He was a visiting professor at the State University of St. Petersburg and holds an H.D. in Humanities from the Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas. From 2001 to 2018, he was also the co-director of the European Regional Master in Democracy and Human Rights for SEE (ERMA), awarding a double diploma from the Universities of Sarajevo and Bologna. He is also Executive Editor of the blind peer-review journal "Southeastern Europe", (Brill, Leiden). As an expert on Balkan issues, he was an adviser to the ICTY in the Hague. He published and co-edited 39 books and over 240 articles in different languages. He is the author, among others, of *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe*, Edward Elgar, London-New York, 2017; *Eastern Europe and the Challenges of Modernity 1800-2000*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York, 2015; *La Question Yougoslave*, Castermann, Paris, 1996, co-editor of *Rekindling the Strong State in Russia and China*, together with Antonio Fiori, Brill, Leiden, 2020 and editor of *Italy, Yugoslavia and the Controversy over the Adriatic Region, 1915-1920*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York, 2024.

## Stefano Bottoni - University of Florence

Thaw and Challenge. Hungary and Romania after Stalin's Death

### Abstract

My paper examines the divergent position of two Soviet bloc countries, Hungary and Romania, in the period between Stalin's death and the 20th PCUS Congress. Between 1948 and 1953, the two countries had developed in seemingly similar ways as satellites of the Soviet Union. Following Stalin's death, however, the internal politics of the two states began to differ. In Hungary, an open and substantial conflict emerged within the Communist Party between incompatible political and cultural lines and between two fiercely competing figures: first party secretary Mátyás Rákosi and prime minister Imre Nagy. In Romania, first party secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej took advantage of the consolidation of the regime following Stalin's death to strengthen his leadership in the party. The few and sporadic domestic calls for democratization were stifled, and more attention was instead given, within a still very multinational state made up of almost one-fifth of non-Romanian populations, to launching a project of both ideological and social communist nation-building. The large and multiethnic region of Transylvania, where a Hungarian Autonomous Region had been set up on Stalin's will in 1952 in overwhelmingly Hungarian-inhabited areas of Szeklerland, and over which the Hungarian and Romanian national movements had been quarrelling for more than a century, began precisely in 1954 to reemerge in the public sphere as a point of friction between two regimes still heavily dependent on Soviet will, but animated by a desire to enlarge their respective spaces of political and cultural sovereignty.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Stefano Bottoni, PhD in Modern and Contemporary History (University of Bologna, 2005) is Associate Professor at SAGAS Department of the University of Florence, where he teaches Global History and History of Eastern Europe. Between 2009 and 2019 he has been Senior Research Fellow at the Research Center for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was visiting fellow at the Zentrum für Zeithistorische



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Forschung (Potsdam, 2012), and Fellow of Imre Kertész Kolleg (Jena, 2015). His fields of interest range from the political and social history of post-1918 Eastern Europe, with a focus on Communist-time nationality policies in Romania, to postcommunist transition and democratic backsliding in the region, with a focus on the historical legacies of illiberal rule in contemporary Hungary. He is the author of "Long Awaited West. Eastern Europe since 1944" (2017), published by Indiana University Press, "Stalin's Legacy in Romania. The Hungarian Autonomous Region 1952-1960 (2018), published by Lexington Books/The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series. More recently, he published a political biography of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán ("Orbán. Un despota in Europa", 2019; revised Hungarian edition "A hatalom megszállottja. Orbán Viktor Magyarországa", 2023) and a history of contemporary Hungary („Dagli Asburgo a Viktor Orbán. Il passato come prigione”, 2024).

### **Darko Dukovski – University of Rijeka**

Istria: Key Historical Turning Points 1945–1954

#### **Abstract**

From the end of World War II to the London Memorandum, this period for Istria and its population represents an era of historical turning points in social, political, economic, and cultural history. It was marked by processes of intense, turbulent, and short-lived transformations in which old structures disappeared, and significantly new ones emerged, not without difficulties. There were major changes in the national composition of the population, demographics, systematic and ideological-political transformations during the process of integration and positioning within a new state, new economic relations, generational shifts that prompted worldview changes, and the ongoing turbulence of establishing new models of coexistence and unity among different languages, cultures, faiths, and customs.

The territorial division of Istria from 1945 to 1954 greatly influenced the intensity of political and economic changes and the internal inter-ethnic relations among the three nations—Croats, Slovenes, and Italians. The first period of the existence of Zones A and B of the Julian March from June 1945 (the Devin Agreement) to February 1947 (the Peace Treaty with Italy, or September 1947 with the departure of Anglo-American troops from Pula) was marked by intense conflicts between pro-Yugoslav and pro-Italian forces, which occasionally took violent forms based on national and ideological-political differences, resulting in human casualties, especially in the first months after the war in 1945. Efforts were made to establish a sustainable supply system for the population, plan economic recovery, trade development, establish social policies, carry out agrarian reforms, and establish new national authorities. This period ended with the massive exodus of the Italian population.

The second period began with the establishment and existence of Zones A and B of the Free Territory of Trieste (STT) from 1947 to 1954. In Zone A, the Anglo-American military administration governed, while in Zone B, the Yugoslav Military Administration (VUJA) was in charge, under whose authority civilian government bodies operated. This situation lasted until the formal establishment of state sovereignty over the territory in 1954. The creation of the STT brought changes in the organization of civilian government in Zone B, which became a unified administrative-political entity. From the previous dual structure of the Regional National Liberation Committee for Istria and the Provincial Commissioner's Office for the Slovenian Littoral, a unified body for Zone B of the STT was formed. Nevertheless, this unified administrative-political territory, called the Istrian District, remained practically divided into two districts: Buje and Koper.

The period was marked by numerous economic and political processes, including relatively successful industrialization and electrification, expansion of the water supply system, the failed and harmful collectivization of villages (which would quickly be abandoned), the difficult establishment of a healthcare system, the introduction of a new, ideologically burdened school system in Croatian and Italian, and ongoing agrarian reform.



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Additionally, two new waves of emigration, mostly of Italians but also of Croats, opting for Italian citizenship in 1948 and 1949, significantly affected all social and economic processes. Istria struggled to recover from the loss of a large portion of its population, and while its numbers recovered by 1954, the loss of over 100,000 people between 1945 and 1954 was never fully compensated.

This was also a period of two important political events that would significantly influence the future political mentality of the Istrian population. The first was the Resolution of the Informbiro, with all its negative consequences, and the second was related to the conflict over the liberalization of political life in 1953–1954. The year 1948 was particularly significant for Istria in many ways, particularly regarding the resolution of the temporary situation in Zones A and B of the STT. The interests of world powers clashed even in this small part of Europe. In Italy's elections on April 18, 1948, the Christian Democratic Party won, and the position of De Gasperi's government was strengthened. At this time, Italy accepted the Marshall Plan, joined NATO the following year, and later the Council of Europe. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia's position deteriorated sharply due to its conflict with Stalin and the Cominform. Italian communists sided with Stalin, causing a split among communists in Trieste. Many Italian communists in Istria during 1948–1954 ended up on Goli Otok or in other Yugoslav prisons.

From 1951, Zone A of the STT began to slowly integrate into the legal system of Italy. On May 15, 1952, the Yugoslav Military Administration (VUJA), in agreement with the government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) and the governments of Croatia and Slovenia, abolished the Istrian District as a unified entity, transferring its responsibilities to the District National Committees of Buje and Koper.

During the government of Giuseppe Pella in 1953, Italy demanded the same status for Zone A of the STT as Zone B had for Yugoslavia (Districts of Buje and Koper). This led to a sharp escalation of the conflict, as both countries ordered troop movements to the border after the Allies withdrew and announced the transfer of administration to Italy. War seemed imminent. However, after the fall of Pella's government and the rise of Mario Scelba as Prime Minister in 1954, along with Yugoslavia's strengthened position through military agreements with Turkey and Greece, which provided "automatic military assistance in case of attack," tensions eased. Both Italy and Yugoslavia began to negotiate the issue of Istria and Trieste.

There was an agreement on Italian civilian administration in Zone A of the STT and Yugoslav civilian administration in Zone B of the STT. After resolving the disputed issues, the London Memorandum of Understanding, also known as the London Memorandum, was signed on October 5, 1954. This memorandum ended the Allied military administration in the STT, allowing Italy to take over civilian administration in Zone A and Yugoslavia in Zone B. The memorandum guaranteed equality in treatment for national minorities, respecting their national rights and ensuring equality in all aspects.

Finally, according to the Decision of the Federal Executive Council from October 7, 1954, in the area of the STT that was assigned to the FNRJ: "...The civilian administration in the territory described in point 2 of this decision will be carried out by the national committees of municipalities, city municipalities, and districts, as well as, within their rights and duties, the republican and federal authorities... In the territory of the District of Koper and the former Zone A of the Free Territory of Trieste, where the civilian administration of the FNRJ extends, the relevant authorities of the People's Republic of Slovenia will exercise their rights and duties, while in the District of Buje, the relevant authorities of the People's Republic of Croatia will do so."

#### BIOGRAPHY:

Prof. Dr. Darko Dukovski (MBZ: 147865) is a full professor with permanent tenure at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka, where he teaches courses in contemporary European, world, and Croatian history at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition to his teaching work, he has participated in around seventy national and international scientific conferences and workshops in Italy, Slovenia,



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Germany, Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Greece, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria, as well as in about twenty national and several international scientific projects. Since 2003, he has been the leader and principal researcher of the project "Istria and Rijeka in the Croatian Spring 1971-1972" and since 2007 of the project "Istria and Rijeka in the Preparatory Period of Unification with Croatia 1943-1954." From April 2005 to 2007, he was a member of the mixed Croatian-Slovenian historical commission at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. He serves as the head of the Department of History and the chair of the Department of Contemporary History. To date, he has published more than 140 scientific and professional papers in national and international scientific journals, about ten features in Croatian daily and weekly newspapers, eight authored scientific books, two co-authored scientific books, and four university textbooks.

### Ivo Goldstein

Dilemmas, plans, achievements – Josip Broz Tito in the mid-fifties.

#### Abstract

For several decades, Josip Broz Tito was facing issues and problems that were solved in a certain way by the London Memorandum: back in the 20s of the 20th century, when he lived in Zagreb, he saw the misery and tragedy of the Istrian refugees who were expelled from their homes by Italian fascists.

As the war drew to a close, Tito dealt more often and more openly with the borders of the future Yugoslavia. In fact, he was figuring out how to change the borders with Austria and Italy created after the First World War. Just like the vast majority of Croats and Slovenes, he considered that these borders are unjust. He set things in principle already in 1941, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia concluded that it was necessary for the "Yugoslav peoples to lead the fight for the liberation of those parts of the country that were included in the Rapallo Treaty in 1920. and the Treaty of Rome in 1924 handed over to Italy". For this purpose „it is necessary to transfer the fight against the occupiers to those "estranged parts of Yugoslavia". In September 1944, in the speech on the island of Vis, he uttered the famous, and soon anthological, slogan: "We do not want what is not ours, but we will not give what is ours!" Then he specifically mentioned Rijeka, Istria, the Slovenian littoral and Carinthia. Apparently, Tito was also thinking about Trieste and its surroundings.

Although at the end of the war diplomacy basically claimed that territorial and similar problems would be solved according to generally acceptable concepts, it was clear that the law of the stronger and the policy of the „fait accompli“ would play a key role. And that is why, in the last days of the war, Tito fiercely pushed the advance towards Trieste, as well as the entry of Yugoslav troops into Carinthia.

After 1950, mostly Trieste crisis made difficult and slowed down the rapprochement with the West in a geostrategic sense, and the stabilization of Yugoslavia's international position as a whole. Taking into account all the elements of the foreign policy, Tito was skilfully searching for compromises: he did not confront the Western Allies more forcefully, because that would put in question other vital interests, but he was not ready to deviate at all from the already stated positions on borders. Of course, the question always remains how much Tito wanted to get closer to the West by signing the London Memorandum. Namely, in the meantime he had stormy relations with the Soviet Union - Stalin's death in 1953 was followed two years later by signing of the Belgrade Declaration, which was actually his personal triumph.

Tito began to believe that he could play the role of not only a mediator between the West and the East, the West and the non-bloc countries, but also that he can be a teacher to many. Precisely in the sense of his statement to Newsweek: "When I go to Paris, I know more about the Russian world than they do, and if I go to Moscow, I can tell them more about the Western world than they know."



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## BIOGRAPHY:

Ivo Goldstein (born 1958) is a historian, lexicographer, and diplomat. In the early phase of his career, he focused on Byzantine studies and the medieval history of Croatia, later expanding his research to the history of Jews in Croatia and various aspects of 20th-century Croatian history. Among his published works are *Byzantium on the Adriatic: 6th-9th Centuries*, *The Croatian Early Middle Ages*, *Croats*, *Croatian Lands*, and *Byzantium*, multiple editions of *Croatian History* (in Croatian, Slovenian, and English), *Croatia 1918-2008*, *Controversies of 20th-Century Croatian History*, *Croatia 1990-2020: Years of Great Hope and Bitter Disappointment*, *Jews in Zagreb 1918-1941*, *Zagreb 1941-1945*, *History of the City of Zagreb I-II*, *Jasenovac*, and *Antisemitism in Croatia from the Middle Ages to the Present*. He co-authored the books *The Holocaust in Zagreb*, *Jasenovac and Bleiburg Are Not the Same*, and *Tito with Slavko Goldstein*, and co-authored the *Dictionary of Foreign Words* with Vladimir Anić. He is also one of seven co-authors of the *Croatian Encyclopedic Dictionary*. Goldstein served as the editor for the history section of the *Croatian Encyclopedia* and was the chief editor of the *Jewish Biographical Lexicon* ([zbl.lzmk.hr](http://zbl.lzmk.hr)).

He received the City of Zagreb Award in 2005 and was awarded the Order of Danica Hrvatska with the image of Ruđer Bošković in 2007. Since 2018, he has been a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron awarded him the Knight of the Legion of Honor for his contribution to strengthening French-Croatian relations.

He also won the Krunoslav Sukić Peacebuilding, Nonviolence, and Human Rights Promotion Award for the Book of the Year 2022, for his work *Antisemitism in Croatia from the Middle Ages to the Present*.

### **Anna Graf-Steiner - Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Kriegsfolgenforschung**

*The Role of Austria in the Soviet strategy on European Security. From the Austrian State Treaty to the Helsinki Final Act.*

#### Abstract

The Soviet Union made initial proposals for a pan-European security conference (ESC) in 1954/55.

While the term ESC was already being used as a foreign policy slogan in 1954/55, at this time it was a propagandistic, stereotypical idea with Germany at its center.

In the summer of 1955, after the founding of the Warsaw Pact and the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty, Khrushchev had finally won the internal power struggles of the CP leadership. The Austrian State Treaty became the cornerstone of Soviet-Austrian relations.

Under Brezhnev, the ESC concept was to be filled with more concrete content. Even before the idea of an ESC was taken up officially, the notion that Austria should "play a serious role in facilitating security in Europe" was increasingly expressed to Vienna by Soviet interlocutors in 1964/65, when it came to rejecting the NATO MLF plans, or to "mediate" (propagate the Soviet point of view) in the German question, due to Austria's close connection to the FRG. At the same time, West German (economical as well as political) influence on Austria led to constant criticism of Austrian neutrality policy.

In 1966, ESC (which was to be the CSCE) became the main foreign policy goal of Moscow and the WP. Pressure was exerted on Austria to act as advocate. During the CSCE negotiations, the Soviet Union focused on its main goal – the "final" settlement of the European post-war borders. Due to its geographical location and its historical ties to East Central Europe, Austria was very interested in the policy of détente. A balancing act between desire for humanitarian relief and political feasibility - or passionate diplomacy and politicians who hesitantly did not



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want to risk relations with Moscow – began. Not least Austria's own failings in minority policy threatened to catch up with it.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Anna Graf-Steiner is a Senior Researcher (Post-Doc) at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on Consequences of War, a position she has held since February 2023.

After earning her doctorate in history from the University of Graz, with a dissertation on "Neutral Austria in Soviet Foreign Policy Strategy, 1969-1975," she has established herself as a specialist in Cold War studies, Soviet diplomatic history, and Austrian-Soviet relations.

Her research focuses on the role of neutral nations during the Cold War and economic and diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Austria. Since 2022, she has been the lead researcher on a project examining Soviet-Austrian economic relations from 1955 to 1964, funded by the Austrian Science Fund.

Anna also co-coordinated a project on the Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic of Germany during the Brezhnev years, in collaboration with the Russian State Archive for Contemporary History and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. In recognition of her academic contributions, she received the prestigious "Award of Excellence" from the Austrian Ministry of Education and Research for her dissertation.

She has authored numerous publications, including the book *Brückenbauer im Kalten Krieg* and several articles on the evolution of Austrian diplomacy.

## **Tvrtko Jakovina, University of Zagreb**

The Era of Globalism: Foreign Policy of Yugoslavia and the Trieste 1954

### Abstract

The 1950s were likely one of the most dynamic periods in the foreign policy of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY). With no illusions about the intentions of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia leaned toward the West. Aid and military assistance came from the West, USA, UK and France, primarily, and through its policies toward the Stalinists within the country, Yugoslavia sent a clear message that the 1948 break with Moscow was final. Books and articles critical of Stalin and the governance of the Soviet Union were widely published. FPRY opened more diplomatic missions and played an increasingly active role in the United Nations. In 1948, Yugoslavia had diplomatic relations with 29 countries, though seven states had de facto suspended relations by mid-year. By the time negotiations on the fate of Zone A and Zone B were underway, the FPRY had established diplomatic relations with 49 countries.

It was a heroic era of young, capable, and proven personnel entering the system, fighting on the international stage as passionately as they had in wartime, driven by a sense that the nation's fate depended on them. This paper therefore highlights the broad diplomatic efforts that ran in parallel with the negotiations between Vladimir Velebit and Manlio Brosio in London, which led to the signing of the London Memorandum. This included the creation of the Balkan Pact, improved relations with Greece and Turkey, mending ties with Austria, and a diplomatic offensive toward Scandinavia. With the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union following Stalin's death in 1953, internal Soviet power struggles, and Nikita Khrushchev's new policies, particularly in several critical areas in Europe that indicated a shift in Soviet policy toward the West (such as Finland, Austria, China, and evidently Yugoslavia), Yugoslavia found itself in a much more favorable position for addressing its most pressing border issue. What was advantageous to the West, especially the U.S. and the U.K., was also beneficial for Yugoslavia and did not, at least not entirely, conflict with Italian interests.



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At the same time, the Yugoslav media were abuzz with discussions about a turn toward the Third World, prompted by visits from high-profile guests from Ethiopia (Emperor Haile Selassie in Split and Belgrade) and announcements of Tito's trip aboard the ship *Galeb* to India and Burma at the end of 1954. This was significant diplomacy by a country that was simultaneously addressing its most critical unresolved border issue.

The article shows how, alongside broad-reaching foreign policy efforts, Yugoslav newspapers initially responded to the announcement of the London agreement with near indifference and coldness, only to later dedicate special editions to the agreement, which was evidently seen as a success.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Tvrtko Jakovina (MA, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; Dr. phil. 2003 University of Zagreb) is tenured professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb and guest-lecturer at the University of Bologna. He was a research visiting fellow at the London School of Economics, Fulbright visiting scholar at the Georgetown University.

His publications include: „Socialism on the American Grain“ /*Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici* (2002), „The American Communist Ally. Croats, Tito's Yugoslavia and the United States 1945-1955“ /*Američki komunistički saveznik; Hrvati, Titova Jugoslavija i Sjedinjene Američke Države 1945-1955*“ (2003), “The Third Side of The Cold War” /*Treća strana Hladnog rata* (2011), “Moments of Catharsis. Breaking Events in XXth Century” /*Trenuci katarze. Prijelomni događaji XX stoljeća* (2013), “Budimir Lončar – From Preko to the top of the World. Biography” /*Budimir Lončar – Od Preka do vrha svijeta. Biografija* (2020) and „World without Catharsis“ (2023); “Croatian Spring – 40 years Later” /*Hrvatsko proljeće, četrdeset godina poslije*” (editor, 2012), and “25 Years of Croatian Independence – What is Next?” /*25 godina hrvatske neovisnosti – kako dalje?*” (editor, 2017), *The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years After (with Martin Previšić; FFZG i FF Ljubljana, 2020)* and „Croatia, but what kind? Miko Tripalo (1926-1995) / *Kakva Hrvatska? Miko Tripalo (1926-1995)*” (editor, 2024.)

Jakovina authored many articles dealing with the foreign policy of Tito's Yugoslavia and Croatian history in 20th century. He is member of the Board of the Croatian-American Association, Association of Croatian Fulbrighters, Management Board President of the Center for Democracy and Law “Miko Tripalo” and a member of several editorial boards. He is regular contributor for newspapers and portals in Croatia. From 2013 to 2016 he was anchor of Croatian Television show *Treća povijest* / “Third History”.

## **Borut Klabjan - Science and Research Centre Koper**

Rethinking Border regimes in Cold War Europe. Cross-border mobility along the Italo-Yugoslav border in the 1950s

### Abstract

At the end of the Second World War and as a result of Cold War tensions, the area of the northern Adriatic soon turned into a symbolic place of European bipolarity. Tito's conflict with Stalin, which culminated in the exclusion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948, led however to the border between Italy and Yugoslavia becoming more of a “Venetian blind”, than an insurmountable divide between East and West. In particular, living conditions along the border gradually improved from 1954 onwards with the repartition of the Free Territory of Trieste between Italy and Yugoslavia.

The focus of most of the literature is on high level politics and diplomacy between nations, largely disregarding the importance of regional economic and political elements. Additionally, until recently there was a paucity of



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analysis on the ways in which high-level politics and national diplomacy are received and experienced in the daily lives of those living in border areas. Taking the case study of the London memorandum of 1954 as a starting point, this paper aims to understand how bottom-up social actions are formed and overlap with top-down politics in this transnational area and how this affects aspects of everyday life of the populations living along what became increasingly considered the new Italo-Yugoslav border.

## BIOGRAPHY

Borut Klabjan, is Full Professor of History, with research specialties in the political and social history of Central and Southeast Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century. Currently he is Principal Investigator of the ERC Advanced Grant Cold War Europe beyond Borders. A transnational history of cross-border practices in the Alps-Adriatic area from World War II to the present hosted at the Science and Research Centre in Koper, where he works as Principal Research Fellow. He has been Humboldt Fellow at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Visiting Fellow at the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the EUI in Florence, and Simone Veil Fellow at the LMU in Munich. His articles were published in nine languages, and he is co-editor and author of five multi-lingual volumes. His last edited volume *Borderlands of Memory. Adriatic and Central European Perspectives* was published by Peter Lang Oxford in the series *Cultural Memories*, while his last book in Slovene *Ogenj ki je zajel Evropo. Narodni dom v Trstu 1920-2020* (The fire that embraced Europe. The story of the Narodni dom in Trieste 1920-2020), has been published in Italian in 2023 (*Battesimo di Fuoco. L'incendio del Narodni dom di Trieste e l'Europa adriatica nel XX secolo. Storia e memoria*).

## **Hrvoje Klasić – Univerdity of Zagreb**

The problem of the Yugoslav-Italian border in the Croatian emigrant press

### Abstract

The paper examines the relationship of Croatian political emigration to the problem of solving the Yugoslav-Italian border after the Second World War. It is about the views of different, often politically opposing, emigrant organizations that emerged throughout Europe and the world after the collapse of the Independent State of Croatia and the creation of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation. Yugoslav-Italian relations had a special status in Croatian emigration, especially that of Ustasha origin, because it was the members of these organizations who were burdened with the "sin" of the capitulation policy towards Italy, namely the ceding of parts of Croatia, as well as areas inhabited by majority Croats, to this western neighbor. For the purposes of the work, an analysis of printed materials such as *Hrvatska revija* (Buenos Aires), *Hrvatska* (Buenos Aires), *Slobodna Riječ* (Buenos Aires), *Nova Hrvatska* (London), *Danica* (Chicago), *Na pragu sutrašnjice* (Rim) etc.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Hrvoje Klasić was born on 6.12.1972. in Sisak (Croatia) where he completed elementary and high school. In 1997. graduated from the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. At the same University he defended his dissertation entitled "1968 in Yugoslavia. Socio – economic changes in international context". Since 2013 he has been employed as assistant professor at Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. Hrvoje Klasić holds number of the courses related



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to the world and national history of the 20th century. In last few years Klasić held numerous lectures at European universities (Aarhus, Belgrade, Giessen, Leicester, Berlin, Kiev etc.)

Hrvoje Klasić won the Annual Award of the Association of University Teachers and other Scholars in Zagreb in 2006. That same year he won the Annual Award of Sisak City for the book "Croatian Spring in Sisak". He is co-author of two documentary series "Croatian Spring" and "Independent State of Croatia" produced by Croatian Television. His book "Jugoslavija i svijet 1968." (Yugoslavia and World in 1968) was published in 2012. In 2017 The Serb National Council in Croatia gave him award for the improvement of Croatian-Serbian relations. In 2019 he published a book "Bijelo na crno. Lekcije iz prošlosti za budućnost" and "Mika Špiljak – revolucionar i državnik". The same year he won the Award for the promotion of peacebuilding, nonviolence and human rights.

### **Marko Medved - University of Rijeka**

The Catholic Church in relation to the London Memorandum of 1954

#### Abstract

The ecclesiastical context regarding the London Memorandum from 1954 on the Free Territory of Trieste is described, taking into account several levels. In the first place, attention will be focused on the attitude of the local bishop of Trieste Antonio Santin (he was the bishop of Rijeka just before that) to the Yugoslav-Italian border disputes. He regrets that the London memorandum was signed because he rejects the transfer of northern Istria to communist Yugoslavia. It is interesting that even 20 years later he does not change his position. Namely, in November 1975, he publicly expressed his disagreement with the signing of the Osimo agreements between Italy and Yugoslavia, although he had been a retired bishop for several months at that time. Santin firmly stood by Italian national interests, and even from the time of fascism, Catholic Slovenes and Croats in the dioceses in which he worked linked him to the inter-ethnic tensions that arose in the Church community at the time. When it comes to Trieste, it should be known that even three bishops there were forced to leave their positions due to national tensions during fascism (Karlin, Bartolomasi, Fogar).

The context of Church life in Yugoslavia in 1954 was marked by the tightening of relations with the State. Two years before that, Yugoslavia broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican, and right after that staged court trials would take place, as well as the closing of seminaries in Rijeka and Split. It is interesting that among the charges against the priests convicted in Rijeka for hostile activities was also listening to Friuli radio stations and connections with Italian Christian Democratic circles. In the context of anti-Italian historiography in Yugoslavia, it should be noted that several works were published just before and during the decisions in London in 1954. In them, not a lot of space is devoted to criticism of the Vatican's church policy in relation to Croats and Slovenes (for example Lav Čermelj and Viktor Novak).

In Istria, Božo Milanović, Ivan Pavić, Tomo Banko, and Josip Pavlišić were key to the gradual and very slow resolution of the issue of Church administration in the changed border conditions. On the Italian side, the key influence on the decisions of the Vatican came from Antonio Santin from Trieste. The Italian bishops Ugo Camozzo from Rijeka and Raffaele Radossi from Poreč left with the Italian population in 1947, so mostly Slovenian apostolic administrators were appointed from Rome first, and only later Croatian ones.

The bishops in Istra and Rijeka did not comment publicly on the 1954 decisions. In addition, historical research is in difficulties to reveal the attitudes of Church members because in those years there was still no Catholic press, after it stopped being printed after 1945. The ecclesiastical question of diocesan borders was not resolved in 1954, but only in 1977, two years after the Osimo Agreements. In this case, following the policy of not changing the borders of dioceses until they are finally settled in the civil area, the Vatican reacted much more cautiously



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and slowly than during Italian fascism. For example, Diocese of Rijeka was founded in the 1920s only one year after the annexation of the city to the Kingdom of Italy.

The episcopal organization of Istria in 1954 was the result of the Austrian reforms of 1828 – Diocese of Poreč-Pula and Diocese of Trieste-Kopar. However, in the past there were several other dioceses (Novigrad, Pićan), of which Poreč dates back to the first centuries of Christianity. The final settlement of church boundaries will follow in 1969 for Rijeka, and in 1977 for Istria and the Slovenian Littoral.

At the global level of the Roman Catholic Church, it is the time of the long pontificate of Pius XII, marked by a kind of closure to the *nouvelle théologie* that was slowly paving the way towards the Second Vatican Council. Only the Eastern policy (*Ostpolitik*) of the Pope John XXIII and Paul VI will lead to the improvement of relations between the Vatican and Belgrade, which will bear fruit with the establishment of diplomatic relations and Tito's visit to the Vatican in 1971.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Marko Medved, Phd in Church History of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is a full professor at the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities in Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka. He has been a lecturer in Church history at the Theology in Rijeka (Faculty of Catholic Theology, Zagreb). He is the head of the Archdiocese Archive in Rijeka. He was the editor-in-chief of the *Riječki teološki časopis* from 2013 to 2021. Among his scientific works, we can single out a study on the Church history of Rijeka during the period of fascism (*Riječka Crkva u razdoblju fašizma: nastanak biskupije i prvi talijanski upravitelji*) and a study about the Augustinian hermits in the oldest monastery in Rijeka (*Filius conventus Fluminensis. Augustinci pustinjaci sv. Jeronima u Rijeci*), for which he received the City of Rijeka Award and the University of Rijeka Foundation Award.

## Jože Pirjevec - Science and Research Centre Koper

### Edvard Kardelj and the Trieste Question

#### Abstract

Edvard Kardelj started coping with the Trieste Question at the beginning of the National Liberation War when its opponents accused the Communists of being indifferent to national problems because of their internationalist doctrine. He and his comrades replied that they wanted to unite the dismembered fatherland's body, including the parts annexed after World War I by Austria and Italy. Regarding Trieste, the Communists knew the Italian-speaking population predominantly populated it. Still, they requested it to the United Slovenia and future Yugoslavia, quoting Lenin's and Stalin's thesis that a city belongs to its hinterland even if its population speaks a different language. In this belief, Kardelj advocated the liberation and occupation by the Partisan Army of Primorska/Venezia Giulia in May 1945. When, under Churchill's pressure, Tito's forces had to withdraw from the disputed city, he fought for its assignment to Federal Yugoslavia as head of the Yugoslav delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. On that occasion, he was supported only by Molotov, the Soviet Foreign minister, but to no avail.

The representatives of the Western Great Powers imposed a compromise solution: creating the Free Territory of Trieste as a buffer between Italy and Yugoslavia. Due to the Cold War, the FTT never acquired its true statehood since it remained split into two Zones, A and B. The first one, with Trieste, was under the Anglo-American, and the second one, with Northern Istria, was under the Yugoslav military administration. The situation changed dramatically after the Tito-Stalin split in June 1948, when the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled



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from Cominform - the family of the most critical European Communist Parties. Stalin thought that in this way, he would quickly get rid of Tito and his comrades, but failed. Despite being the object of Soviet economic and political boycott, Tito and his comrades remained in power, demonstrating their resilience and determination. Their survival was made possible also thanks to the aid of the Western powers, who quickly understood the strategic and ideological value of Yugoslavia's detachment from the Soviet bloc. This shift in alliances made the existence of the FTT and the presence of the Anglo-American troops in Zone A superfluous. In the summer of 1949, they started thinking about solving the Trieste question in Washington and London without harming Italy and Yugoslavia. The obvious solution was to return Zone A to Italy and to leave Zone B to Yugoslavia. Rome, however, opposed this proposal, considering that its sovereignty over the whole FTT never expired since it never acquired full statehood. Belgrade, where Kardelj was minister of Foreign Affairs then, was more flexible. However, since the secret talks between the diplomats of both Countries failed, the dispute peaked in 1953 when the Italians amassed their troops on the Zone's A border to occupy it. At that point, the Anglo-Americans proposed withdrawing their forces from Zone A and leaving it to Italy without consulting Tito. The latter reacted with a declaration that if an Italian soldier entered Zone A, a Yugoslav soldier would do the same. As the Americans were informed by their secret services, he meant it. An armed clash between the two countries seemed possible. In this tense atmosphere, Kardelj published on Belgrade's newspaper Borba an article later translated by the Yugoslav Embassy in London and published as a brochure titled Trieste and the Yugoslav-Italian Relations. In it, he analyzed Italy's foreign policy toward Yugoslavia, accusing it of imperialist tendencies and shortsighted behavior when the Western countries faced the Soviet threat. He didn't stop at this, but hinting at Yugoslav's readiness to concessions, he proposed a conference with the interested countries to rescind the Trieste knot. It was the first constructive step toward the London Memorandum of Understanding.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Jože Pirjevec graduated from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Trieste in 1966 and continued his postgraduate studies at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa in 1967-1969 and then at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna in 1969-1971. He completed his doctoral studies at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana in 1976 with his dissertation "Niccolò Tommaseo between Italy and Slavia".

Jože Pirjevec has been working as a Principal Research Associate at the Science and Research Centre in Koper since 1996, where he has led 14 research projects within the Institute for Historical Studies, including the research programme "The Mediterranean and Slovenia" between 2004 and 2019. Since 1971, he lectured at the Universities of Pisa, Padua, Trieste in Italy and later on the University of Primorska in Koper, Slovenia, where he also held the position of Head of the Department of History at UP FHŠ. Since 1995 he has been a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (full member since 2009).

Jože Pirjevec is the author of 11 scientific monographs, which have also been translated into English, German, Italian, French and other languages. His total number of scientific publications is 190.

Since 1988, when he received the Kidrič Fund Prize for his monograph "Tito, Stalin and the West", he has been the recipient of several awards: Premio Acqui Storia in 2002 for the monograph "Le guerre jugoslave 1991-1999"; in 2006, the Golden Plaque of the University of Primorska and the Erasmus EuroMedia Award for the documentary series "The Diary of a Nation"; in 2007, Ambassador in Science of the Republic of Slovenia; in 2011, the ARRS Excellence in Science Award for the monograph "Tito and Comrades"; and in 2020, for the monograph "Partisans". In 2021, he received the ZRS Koper 'Glasnik znanosti' Award for individual top scientific achievements of established researchers.



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## **Božo Repe – University of Ljubljana** The London Memorandum and the Slovenes

### Abstract

The demarcation of the border with Italy after the Second World War was of the utmost importance to the Slovenes and Croats. For this reason, Slovenian and Croatian diplomats, in particular Edvard Kardelj, Aleš Bebler, Jože Brilej, Vladimir Velebit and others, were heavily involved in the negotiations on the London Memorandum. Tito and the Yugoslav leadership defended Yugoslav interests in both zones of the Free Territory of Trieste with determination, even to the brink of armed conflict with Italy. Despite occasional disagreements between Slovenian-Croatian politicians on the one side and Tito and Foreign Minister Koča Popović on the other, the attitude of both Slovenian and Yugoslav politicians was completely different from the situation after the First World War regarding the Rapallo border, when Regent Alexander sought an agreement at all costs, while Anton Korošec and other leading Slovenian politicians avoided any role in the negotiations and limited their opposition to Italian policy to public protests.

Politicians and diplomats realised after the Second World War that Trieste was probably lost. A prospect that had been looming since the forced withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from Trieste and parts of the Julian March in June 1945 (Belgrade and Duino agreements), through both zones of the Julian March, the Paris Peace Conference and the division of the Free Territory of Trieste into two zones in 1947. However, Yugoslav and Slovenian politicians in the post-war period were determined to secure at least Zone B of the Trieste Free Territory and, if possible, to make additional gains from Zone A — whether territorial, financial or, in particular, in terms of the protection of minority rights.

In the long run, the London Memorandum is one of the most important diplomatic acts in the modern history of Slovenia. Although it did not officially define the border between Italy and Yugoslavia, as the Italians considered it a demarcation line. It was intended as a temporary document that demanded concessions from both sides. However, in line with the French adage that temporary measures are usually permanent, this compromise has endured to this day. Two decades later, in 1975, the border was more clearly defined by the more comprehensive and complex Osimo Agreement (which, according to some minority rights experts, offered less protection than the Memorandum). This border survived the break-up of Yugoslavia and is still valid today.

The London Memorandum made life considerably easier for the population in the extended border area and helped to pave the way for the post-war de-Sovietization of Yugoslavia. Immediately after the adoption of the memorandum, the Italian and Yugoslav governments committed themselves to improving relations and economic cooperation. The diplomatic missions in Rome and Belgrade were converted into embassies, and consulates were set up in Koper and Trieste. In December 1954, an agreement was signed on the final settlement of all mutual economic and financial obligations arising from the peace treaty. This was followed by a series of economic and trade agreements and conventions, including agreements on sea and air transport. Italy became Yugoslavia's most important export market, while Yugoslavia became Italy's second largest export market. Extensive cooperation also began in the cultural sphere. The good relations between the two countries improved in the 1960s and prompted Tito, together with his wife Jovanka, to make his first official visit to Rome in March 1971, a few years before the signing of the Osimo Agreement, despite the officially unresolved border issue.

The opening of the border began with the Udine Agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia (1955), which regulated border crossings for farmers who owned land on both sides of the border and for the population in the border area. A total of 54 small border crossings, six international border crossings and sea crossings were opened. Around 250,000 small border crossing permits were issued on both sides of the border. Practically every village was given a small border crossing. This was further expanded in the following years through a



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series of additional agreements. From the 1960s onwards, traffic was extended to all inhabitants and mass border crossings with passports took place. The Yugoslav-Italian border became the busiest border between East and West, crossed by millions of travellers. After the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki and the Osimo Agreements of 1975, Yugoslavia also became a security buffer for Italy.

The settlement of relations with Italy (and soon afterwards with Austria) had a strong impact on the internal life and living standards of the population. From the 1950s onwards, Yugoslavia differed greatly from the Eastern European socialist states. This difference was evident not only in the political system, but also in personal living standards, tourism, foreign travel, shopping abroad and the imitation of Western lifestyles. Slovenia had an even more specific position within Yugoslavia: it was the most developed and culturally most pro-Western part, with strong minorities in Italy and Austria. This enabled the Slovenes to have constant contact with these two countries and thus a realistic comparison of living standards. From the mid-1950s onwards, the Slovenian authorities made efforts to bring personal and social standards into line with those of neighboring capitalist countries. The mixture of the socialist system and the imitation of Western capitalist influences created an unusual cultural atmosphere in Slovenia. People believed in Tito, self-government and non-alignment, but long before the fall of the Iron Curtain, they also believed in washing machines, refrigerators, televisions, fashion and other aspects of consumer society.

## BIOGRAPHY

Božo Repe holds a doctorate in history and is a full professor of contemporary history at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. In 1999-2000 he was head of the Department of History. From 2009 to 2022, he headed the Slovenian History research programme group. In addition, he led several Slovenian research projects (currently on the Rapallo border) and was a collaborator in several foreign projects. He has been a guest lecturer at various European universities. His field of research is contemporary Slovenian, South Slavic and Central European history, the history of tourism, social history and the history of everyday life. He also deals with issues of school education in Slovenia and Southeast Europe and is the author of several textbooks.

### **Federico Tenca Montini - Science and Research Centre Koper**

The Solution to the Trieste Crisis: Why 1954?

#### Abstract

The London Memorandum of October 1954, widely recognized for its historical significance, marked the de facto resolution of the territorial dispute that had persisted between Italy and Yugoslavia since the conclusion of World War II. This was achieved by dividing the Free Territory of Trieste, a proposed independent state that was intended to stretch from Duino to Novigrad, between Italy and Yugoslavia. Although this territory had been formally established by the Peace Treaty with Italy in February 1947, it had never materialized in practice, remaining a theoretical construct on paper. The region had been divided, from as early as June 1945, along the so-called Morgan Line. This line split the territory into two distinct zones: Zone A, which was administered by the Anglo-American forces in the northern section, and Zone B, which was administered by Yugoslavia in the southern portion.

This paper aims to delve into the roots and development of the territorial proposal that eventually served as the basis for the agreement between Rome and Belgrade. It is grounded in a comprehensive analysis of scientific literature in the principal European languages, as well as those of the countries most directly involved in the conflict. Furthermore, the study draws upon a wealth of primary and published sources from Yugoslav, Italian, and American archives to reconstruct the complex diplomatic process that led to this agreement.



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The proposal for dividing the Free Territory of Trieste by handing the A and B Zones to Italy and Yugoslavia respectively had already been circulating in diplomatic discussions since at least the early months of 1950. At that time, Yugoslav diplomats Mates and Vejvoda put forward a suggestion to the Italian Ambassador in Belgrade. Their proposal was that Zone B should remain non-negotiable, essentially placing it beyond the scope of further discussion, while the rest of the territory, with only minor adjustments, could be ceded to Italy. Over the following years, the issue was revisited on several occasions. In particular, during the discussions held between Bebler and Guidotti in late 1951 and early 1952, the proposal gained renewed attention. Finally, this division was solidified as a key element of the conversations led by British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden during his visit to Yugoslavia. During these crucial negotiations, Eden secured assurances from Yugoslavia that Belgrade would be willing to accept such a solution, provided it was enforced by the Western powers.

While it remains challenging to offer definitive answers as to why this seemingly "natural" division took so long to be accepted, the scope of my paper is to formulate some informed hypotheses. These considerations are based on a broader analysis that situates the Trieste negotiations within the wider context of the political and military developments of the early 1950s.

Several pivotal events contributed to bringing this particular territorial arrangement to the forefront of discussions, and ultimately to its acceptance: the progressive expansion of NATO in Europe, partly driven by the failure to reach a consensus around the European Defence Community (EDC), played a significant role in shaping the geopolitical landscape. In addition, the formalization of the Balkan Pact in 1953, which united Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey in a military alliance, further influenced regional stability and the dynamics of negotiations. The stabilization of Italy's internal political scene, characterized by the marginalization of the Italian Communist Party, provided a more favorable environment for reaching a compromise. Equally important were the changes in diplomatic personnel over this period, which brought fresh perspectives and approaches to the negotiations. Above all, however, the death of Joseph Stalin in the spring of 1953 was a turning point. His passing opened the door for a more flexible and pragmatic resolution to the long-standing territorial dispute over Trieste. This combination of factors made the chosen solution not only viable but relatively straightforward to implement in a manner that was both durable and acceptable to all parties involved.

## BIOGRAPHY:

Federico Tenca Montini is a research associate in the frame of ERC 'Open Borders' (ZRS Koper, P.I. Borut Klabjan).

After completing a master's in Sociology, he has been enrolled in a joint PhD programme in Contemporary history at the universities in Teramo and Zagreb (mentor prof. Tvrtko Jakovina). He later dealt with various aspects of the Slovene minority in Italy during two post-doc researches at the University in Trieste. He has authored two books (2014 and 2020, the latter also available beside in Italian (La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste 1945-1954, il Mulino, Bologna 2020) also in Croatian (Trst ne damo! Jugoslavija i Tršćansko pitanje 1945-1954. - 2021) and Slovenian (2023) translations) and scientific publications in Italian, English and Croatian. He will be HORIZON WIDERA fellow with the research project TRANSBORDER TV (contract no. 101180568).

## **Benedetto Zaccaria, University of Padova**

Italy and Yugoslavia from the London Memorandum of understanding to the Osimo Treaty, 1954-1975

Abstract



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The signing of the 1954 London Memorandum of understanding (MOU) was a pivotal change in relations between Italy and Yugoslavia. Although it was critically received in Italy – it was not ratified by the Italian Parliament – it paved the way to enhanced bilateral relations between the two countries. At first, bilateral exchanges concerned commercial relations and plans for economic cooperation. This was due to both international and regional reasons. From an international perspective, Italy participated in the Common Market – established in 1957 – which created a privileged customs union whose commercial consequences Yugoslavia feared. Enhancing relations with Italy meant developing relations with the broader Western European market. From a regional perspective, the border zone also offered opportunities for cooperation. This is the case of the regional fairs organized between Italy, Austria and Yugoslavia starting from the early 1960s, named “Alpe Adria fairs”. Crucial to the launch of these fairs were local actors, in particular communal, provincial and regional chambers of commerce from Italy’s north-eastern regions, Austrian Landers and the Socialist Republics of Slovenia and Croatia.

Therefore, the de-facto solution of the border question agreed in London de-ideologised bilateral relations. Political questions relating to international alignments disappeared from the bilateral agenda: economics came first. Yet economic relations were a precondition for stability in bilateral relations, which was the major goal of both countries in the 1960s. This can be seen by the privileged relations established by the Yugoslav president, Josip Broz “Tito”, and by the League of Communist of Yugoslavia with the top leadership of Italy’s ruling parties during the 1960s: the Christian-Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). For instance, after the establishment of the first center-left government in Italy in December 1963, a delegation of the PSI led by the Party Secretary and Vice-President of the Italian Government – Francesco De Martino – visited Tito in Belgrade. The following year, Italy’s Prime Minister Aldo Moro visited Tito again. This was an early instance of détente based on economic interests and the ambition by Italy to confirm its historical influence in the Balkan region. Throughout the 1960s the border question was not questioned, despite the Yugoslav wish to raise it in bilateral summits: Italy’s policymakers did fear the reaction of the public opinion. The 1960s were indeed a decade of rising social tension which would explode in the “hot biennium” of 1968-69. Re-opening the public debate on the Trieste question would further weaken the legitimacy of the ruling parties. This is why until mid-1968 no progress was made on the border issue. Yet the conclusions of the 1954 MOU were offering the right “low profile” basis to let bilateral relations continue.

Bilateral relations between Rome and Belgrade improved after the August 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. This improvement was linked to security concerns nurtured by Italy and its Western allies. Italy guaranteed the stability of the Italian-Yugoslav border in bilateral consultations with the Yugoslav ambassador in Rome in early September 1968 and in the same month also launched secret talks to solve the border issue. Negotiations lasted several years (1968-1975), including moments of crisis: for instance, the postponement of Tito’s state visit in Rome in Dec. 1970 and a major political crisis in spring 1974 linked to a “verbal note” of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which defined Zone B of the never established Free Trieste Territory (FTT) as “Italian”. Secret talks resumed in July 1974 and a bilateral understanding was reached by the end of 1975. One feature of these negotiations was their secret character, to avoid a public debate on the Trieste question, which would probably favor the reaction of conservative and even extreme-right forces.

The Treaty of Osimo was finally signed in November 1975. The essence of the Treaty concerned the final settlement of the border dispute between the two countries. Indeed, the basic provisions of the MOU were confirmed, concerning the formal attribution of Zone A of the FTT to Italy and Zone B to Yugoslavia. But some major differences must be noted.

First, the Osimo Treaty also concerned new avenues of cooperation to integrate Yugoslavia economically to Italy and, consequently, to the Common Market. It inaugurated a period of steady bilateral relations which lasted until the collapse of Yugoslavia 1991.



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Second, in Italy, the debate over the ratification was limited, with the only exception of the local context where opposition for the “secret” nature of negotiations which had “sold” the FTT (according to the treaty’s critics) and for the environmental consequences of the Free Industrial zone in the border between Italy and Yugoslavia envisaged by the Treaty. Unlike the MOU, the Osimo Treaty was ratified by the Italian Parliament in 1977.

Third, the Osimo Treaty was not an international operation including external partners, namely the United States and UK. This time, the latter were passive and external observers, which nevertheless favored the reconciliation between Rome and Belgrade.

Fourth, new regional actors were involved in the making of the Osimo Treaty. Recent literature has indeed highlighted the role of the republican leaderships of Slovenia and Croatia in the negotiating process, especially in the framework of the “secret channel” led – on the Yugoslav side – by the Slovenian representative Boris Šnuderl. The two northern republics were able to develop their republican “external” interests, drawing on the provisions of the 1974 Yugoslav constitution. They would pursue this agenda three years later when the Alps-Adriatic Working Community was established in Venice (1978). The SR of Slovenia and Croatia established solid relations with Austria’s southern Landers and Italy’s North-East regions, drawing on a triangular relationship that – as noted above – had already emerged in the early 1960s.

Fifth, the international climate this time was different. While the London MOU was signed in the “early” Cold War, in the immediate aftermath of Stalin’s death, the Osimo Treaty was signed in a context of international détente, which marked its apex at the Helsinki CSCE and which offered the right “background” to the Treaty.

Beyond these differences – linked to the two decades that separate the London MOU and the Osimo Treaty – the MOU provided the ground and the political conditions to close the territorial dispute. This was a “small” step that shows, with hindsight, the relevance of the 1954 “de facto” understanding.

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