

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN EUROPE: Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia and the "Alps- Adriatic" Region¹

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The idea of a "Europe of Regions" has been around for three decades now. Its heyday were the 1980s and 1990s when the European Community/European Union was seen as a potential ally for regions in their pursuit for influence on a continent led by nation-states and for the implementation of regional administrative and political structures (Knodt 2001: 66). The "Committee of Regions" is one example of the impact of these policies and the role of regions inside the boundaries of today's European Union. The motives for regional cooperation range from the importance of cross-border partnerships in order to develop regions politically, economically and culturally, to the lobbying for a certain regional model on a European scale.

Although the interest for these regional developments seemed to dwindle during the push for closer integration of the 2000s, it has become a major issue in more recent times. One only has to think of pushes

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for independence in Scotland and Catalonia to perceive that the regional identity and the importance of regions on a European level have not at all disappeared. Indeed many European initiatives have been dealing with regional questions in the past decades, to mention but a few: the European Structural and Investment Funds; the INTERREG initiative of the European Regional Development Fund, etc.

This paper considers the development of a concept of region during the Cold War. It is something that has not been in the focus of research so far, demonstrating the possibilities of interregional cooperation even in a very delicate international scenario. By choosing the "Alps-Adriatic" region – roughly the region comprising the Austrian-Italian-Yugoslav border areas – it shall be demonstrated what crucial importance different layers of developments had and can have for regional welfare in Europe. This region shows how relations in an international and interregional context have gone from being a model in divided Europe to becoming an institution in the European Union. Moreover, since the Cold War a "semiglobal system" was created, where states – especially in Europe – were drawn to one or the other hegemonic entity, the scope for regional cooperation seemed quite scarce (Väryrynen 2003: 28). This makes the analysis of the "Alps-Adriatic" region inside a complex international and bipolar scenario important.

Considering the closing of borders in a unified Europe during the migration crisis of 2015 and the mistrust with which governments engage towards neighbors, it seems as a shocking reality that only a quarter of a century after the vision of a unified Europe (without East-West restraints) this very notion appears to be in a grave danger. This makes the historical analysis of cooperation between states and regions even more significant.

From the point of view of a historian, this paper is not aimed at presenting solutions for today's problems or to show the path for prosperous cooperation in the future. Yet, considering the aim of the "Europe of Regions and the Mediterranean" initiative, history does not repeat itself and thus we should not study it to prevent the repetition developments that have already taken place at some point in the past. Yet, "[h]istory enables leaders to assess past experiences and learn from ill-conceived policies. History can provide policymakers with a deeper sense of perspective, an appreciation of past patterns and the wisdom to implement

more effective policies for the future."² This assessment of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies holds especially true when considering contemporary history. Thus, this paper will hopefully contribute to providing the aforementioned "deeper sense of perspective". Finally, a paper considering such a complex scenario can only provide an overview on the topic and mention some factors of interregional development, while a detailed picture will have to be the focus of future in-depth analysis.

A Troubled Region

The "Alps-Adriatic" Region is a unique case study. It encompasses countries having different political systems and ideologies, applying different economic policies and belonging to different groups of states during the Cold War. Italy was a founding member of the European Economic Community and NATO-member, Austria had to stick to neutrality once it regained full sovereignty in 1955 and Yugoslavia was a socialist, albeit non-aligned country. Thus, this paper reassesses what steps were needed and taken to make this region a success story of cooperation in divided Europe.

For the "Alps-Adriatic" region one has to bear in mind that this part of Europe was on the one hand an integral part of the Habsburg Monarchy until 1918 and on the other hand subject to territorial conflicts and ethnic strife for six decades following the end of the First World War. Indeed, Austria and Yugoslavia debated over the fate of Carinthia after 1945, a region claimed by Yugoslavia since the end of the First World War. Italy and Yugoslavia had completely opposing views on the future of the Italian eastern border region and especially the city of Trieste that had been claimed by the communist Yugoslav (Slovenian) leadership since the 1930s. Moreover, Austria and Italy had severe political and diplomatic problems concerning the South Tyrol region, mainly populated by German speaking population and subject to harassment during the fascist period. Thus, taking all these factors into consideration and the fact that these countries did not belong to the same group of states, any development towards mutual cooperation seems astonishing.

2 Taken from the initiative "History and Policy-Making", a joint initiative of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. See: <http://www.gcsp.ch/Topics-Initiatives/History-and-Policy-Making>

Indeed, the international context plays a crucial role in this story. First, the Soviet indifference to the question of South Tyrol made a treaty between Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and Austrian Foreign Minister Karl Gruber – with the mediation of Great Britain – possible in September 1946. Herewith Rome could rest assured of South Tyrol belonging to Italy, while it had to guarantee minority rights to the German speaking population (Di Ruzza 2009; Steininger 1999: 255-384; Idem 1997; Gehler 2001; Stadlmayer 2002; Pallaver 1993). Due to the Soviet-Yugoslav split and the developments in Yugoslavia post 1948, relations of the West towards Belgrade became examples on how to establish good relations with a communist regime already in the 1950s. This was also a first phase of international détente following the death of Stalin in 1953. Italy and Austria benefited immensely from these developments. Austria and Yugoslavia officially established diplomatic relations in January 1951, when the theretofore existing political missions in Vienna and Belgrade were raised to legations and the actually never-existing war-status was formally abolished (Dedijer 1980: 141f.). The development of Austrian-Yugoslav relations in the first years after the Second World War was hindered by difficulties concerning the unsettled border problem in Carinthia and the question of the Austrian state treaty. The repatriation of some 27.000 Austrian (Dragišić 2013: 111ff.) – and 50'000 Italian (Di Sante 2007: 74-80) – citizens held as POWs in Yugoslavia was also a constant diplomatic issue. Most prisoners were repatriated until 1947 but the last group arrived in Austria in July 1953 (Dragišić, 2013: 120ff).³ The situation was also difficult for the Italian civilians who found themselves in Yugoslavia after the end of the war. The Peace Treaty with Italy signed on 10 February 1947 sanctioned the assignation of most of the former Italian territories of Dalmatia and Istria to Yugoslavia, while Trieste and its surroundings would form the "Free Territory of Trieste" (FTT), subdivided in an Anglo-American "Zone A" and a Yugoslav "Zone B" of administration (Cialdea/Vismara 1947; Varsori 2006: 156-163). This question was solved in October 1954 with the London "Memorandum of Understanding" – albeit only with a provisional status, transferring administration of the two zones to Italy and Yugoslavia respectively.

3 Yugoslavia transferred 132 Austrian war criminals to Austria, while 15 persons were shot and seven died a natural death. See: Arhiv Jugoslavije (hereafter: AJ), KPR 837, I-2-a/9: Austrijski ratni zločinci, no date.

Austria could sign its State Treaty in May 1955, regaining full sovereignty (Dragišić 2013; Höll 1988a; Jesih 2004; Stourzh 1998; Suppan/Stourzh/Mueller 2005). In November 1955, Yugoslavia acceded to the state treaty, happy enough to be released from the threat emanating from the Soviet troops stationed in Austria. Belgrade herewith officially abandoned any claims on border changes in southern Carinthia (Höll 1988b: 205-251).⁴

Yet many of the questions debated between these three countries remained open for discussion – first and foremost the minority issues. Most important in this context was the stance of Yugoslavia towards its two Western neighbors. First, although the "Memorandum of Understanding" with Italy did create a platform for further development of bilateral relations, its provisional status would thereafter leave room for misinterpretation and misjudgment on both sides of the Adriatic. The fact that "Yugoslav" minorities outside the "Zone A" were not granted a special status would also interfere in bilateral affairs. Second, the Austrian state treaty and especially article 7 defining the obligations toward "the Slovene and Croat minorities" was to cause the most serious disgruntlement between Yugoslav and Austrian politicians and diplomats in the years and decades to come (Matscher 2005: 783-819). Moreover, Austria conducted a more active role towards the Italian governments' handling of the problem of South Tyrol and the German-speaking population after 1955. The following years were characterized by Austrian pressure for minority rights in the region and the successful attempt to bring up the question at the United Nations in 1960, deteriorating bilateral relations.⁵ Furthermore the years of (infrastructure) bombings by pro-Austrian forces in South Tyrol, complicated the path to a solution of the question even more (Steininger Südtirolfrage 1997: 3-23; Idem 2011: 211; Idem 2003). A solution deemed acceptable to both countries was only found with the "package" of 1969 and the autonomy statute of 1972 (Di Ruzza 2009; Muigg 2005). Interestingly enough, the Slovenian minority issue created some problems for bilateral relations between Belgrade and Rome (due to the lack of special minority rights outside the former "Zone A") as well as Belgrade and Vienna up to the 1970s – foremost after the

4 The definite renouncement by official Belgrade on Austrian territory was done not before April 1965, when an agreement confirmed the exact borderline.

5 United Nations General Assembly Resolution no. 1497 (XV), 31.10.1960, item 68.

"Ortstafelsturm" in 1972 – (Pirker 2004: 81-94)⁶ while Yugoslav covert operations and bomb attacks in Austria led to further escalation. An exchange of notes in 1974 showed how relations between Vienna and Belgrade had almost reached the freezing point (Elste/Wadl: 2015).⁷ In 1976 a law was passed in Austria that granted major rights for the Slovenian population of Austria, leading to a normalization of relations in the following years (Klemenčič/Klemenčič 2010; Liedermann, 2002: 535; Osolnik 1977: 180).⁸ The question of the Slovene population outside the former "Zone A" in Italy was less heatedly discussed in later years too, and eventually, the minority status and rights were expanded in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁹

Cooperation in Cold War Europe

The years following the diplomatic solutions of the mid 1950s were characterized by a significant increase of exchange between the three countries. Within the frame of international developments, Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia all sought regional economic integration for the development of their respective countries and border regions. One only has to study the commercial and cross border agreements of the late 1950s and 1960s to understand that all governments involved in the "Alps-Adriatic" area were genuinely interested in the expansion of economic ties to neighboring states (Portmann/Ruzicic-Kessler, 2014; 297ff). For instance, Italy granted loans to Yugoslavia for its economic development and the two countries signed commercial agreements

6 AJ, KPR 837, I-2-a; Note 6 November 1972; AJ, F-507, IX 6/V-73, Austrija: Podsetnik o Austriji i jugoslovensko-austrijskim odnosima, 12 September 1972; National Archives London (NAL), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 33/1676, Political Relations between Austria and Yugoslavia. Letter from the British embassy in Vienna to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 21 December 1972; Notes of the SFR of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Austria Concerning Current Problems between the Two Countries, In: Yugoslav Survey Vol. V, No. 4, (1974), 139-158.

7 Notes of the SFR of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Austria Concerning Current Problems between the Two Countries, In: Yugoslav Survey Vol. V, No. 4, (1974), 139-158.

8 AJ, F-507, IX 6/V-76, Zabeleška o razgovoru sa saveznim kancelarom Brunom Krajskim iu Beču 19. maja 1976. godine, signed by Bogdan Osolnik; AJ, F-507, IX 6/V-78, Letter from Stane Dolanc to Bruno Kreisky, 16.05.1976; AJ, F-507, IX 6/V-78, Aide-Memoire über die Regierungsvorlage eines Volksgruppengesetzes und seiner Begründung, June 1976.

9 Legge n. 482, 15 Dicembre 1999, "Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche", in: Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 297, 20.12.1999; Legge n. 38, 23 Febbraio 2001, "Norme per la tutela della minoranza slovena della regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia", in: Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 56, 8.3.2001.

on facilitated cross-border traffic in 1955 and 1957 already (Cattaruzza, 2007: 331f; Monzali 2004: 50).¹⁰

The interest in neighbors was also reflected in an active and fruitful visiting diplomacy, starting in the early 1960s. Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky's visit to Belgrade in spring 1960 and his Yugoslav colleague's counter-visit in autumn 1960 initiated a longer phase of normalization.¹¹ In 1959 an Italian undersecretary of state visited Yugoslavia for the first time, whereas Yugoslav Foreign Minister Koča Popović visited Italy in 1960 (Cattaruzza 2007: 336). This diplomatic détente culminated in the first visit to Belgrade by an Italian Prime Minister – Aldo Moro – in November 1965. During Moro's visit, Tito affirmed that the economic rapprochement between Yugoslavia and Italy was a very important milestone in bilateral relations and that the discussions of the mixed commission set up in 1963 to solve problems resulting from the agreement of 1954 had helped in finding some common ground in international politics. Additionally, Tito stressed that Yugoslav-Italian relations were a good example of international collaboration beyond ideological barriers. Moro affirmed the Italian intention of "helping Yugoslavia in international forums" to further develop its interests. Both politicians also agreed that a visa-free regime between the two countries and the economic exchange should be further promoted.¹² Moreover, after a visit by federal chancellor of Austria Josef Klaus, to Yugoslavia in March 1965, it was said in a joint communiqué that the talks "have been conducted in a friendly atmosphere, which has for years been a characteristic of relations between the two countries", and that "good neighborly relations [...] have been developing, regardless of the differences in their social system, in a very satisfactory manner [...] on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference."¹³ And in a Yugoslav preparation

10 Legge 19 dicembre 1956, n. 1588, Approvazione dei Accordi fra l'Italia e la Jugoslavia, conclusi a Roma il 31 marzo 1955 (GU n.32 del 5.2.1957 – Suppl. Ordinario 320).

11 See the documentation: AJ, F-507, IX 6/V-71, Zabeleška o razgovoru sa Ambasadorom Austrije g. Wodak dana 14 maja 1958, signed by Aleš Bebler; AJ, I-3-a, Informacija. Austrija i jugoslovensko-austrijski odnosi (povodom posete austrijskog predsednika Republike Franc-a Jonas-a u Jugoslaviji), 12.09.1968; AJ, I-3-a, Informativna beleška o Austriji, 16.03.1960; AJ, Kabinet Predsednika Republike (KPR) 837, Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Predsednika sa Predsednikom vlade Republike Italije Aldom Morom, 9.11.1965.

12 AJ, KPR 837, I-3-a/44-31 Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Predsednika sa Predsednikom vlade Republike Italije Aldom Morom, 9.11.1965.

13 Relations between Yugoslavia and Austria, in *Yugoslav Survey VIII, no. 1* (1967) 134.

paper it was stated that "the political, economic, and cultural relations have reached a level that can be characterized as friendly. It is obvious that between the two countries common interests and a high degree of accordance in some crucial questions related to the world peace and the cooperation in Europe exist."¹⁴

These years also brought new initiatives to life between Austria and Italy. A commission was installed to clear the open questions of South Tyrol in 1961, yet its work was mostly stalled until 1963, when a new Italian government under Aldo Moro showed more openness to the question (Pombeni 2015: 126ff). Moreover, Giuseppe Saragat (first as Foreign Minister and later as President) and Pietro Nenni (as Foreign Minister) were seen as favoured interlocutors for Foreign Minister Kreisky (Gehler 2012: 173-208). This was of utmost importance in the bilateral scenario, since the years of bombings in South Tyrol created a high degree of friction between Rome and Vienna. Testifying to the importance of this question, Italy hindered Austrian ambitions for an association with the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1960s, linking it to the unsolved question of South Tyrol and the bombing activities in the region (Gehler 2009: 58-80). Thus, initiatives to solve the issue bilaterally were needed. In April 1964 the commission on South Tyrol prepared a "package" to solve the question, yet it was met with hostility and refusal by the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) at first. Thus the discussions continued, while Italy still blocked Austrian-EEC consultations, until in November 1969 also the SVP accepted the "package", opening the path to a final solution of the South Tyrol question and deeper cooperation between Italy and Austria (Steininger 2004: 501ff).

Finally, the fact that Yugoslavia could not keep up the pace of economic development must also be considered within this trilateral frame (Jakir 2013: 83-108). The formula of self-administration of the Yugoslav federation started to show cracks in the 1960s and the division along national and "ethnic" lines was vividly discussed in economic affairs, whereas the gap between the richer, north-western and the poorer south-eastern republics inexorably widened (Artisien/Holt, 1980: 355-369; Vuković 1989). These developments created even more incentives for Belgrade to cooperate with its neighbors, and for Austria and Italy,

14 AJ, KPR 837, I-3-a, Informacija. Austrija i jugoslovensko-austrijski odnosi (povodom posete austrijskog predsednika Republike Franc-a Jonas-a u Jugoslaviji), 12.09.1968.

to try and stabilize Yugoslavia, which had become an important partner for both countries.

Another crucial factor for rapprochement in the "Alps-Adriatic" region was most certainly the year 1968. All three countries involved in this paper were well aware of the importance of the events during the "Prague Spring" and the Soviet intervention in August. All three shared the common belief that the Soviet Union could become a threat for Central Europe once again, and especially Yugoslavia felt the breath of Moscow 20 years after the split between Stalin and Tito. What followed were some quite remarkable steps. In this turbulent context, Yugoslav representatives in Rome held talks with party leaders and the Foreign Ministry. While the Yugoslav ambassador was reassured by socialist leader, Pietro Nenni, that Italy and Yugoslavia's interests were indeed identical in the question of Soviet intervention (Nenni 1983: 221f), Italian Foreign Minister at the time, Giuseppe Medici, formulated a guarantee over the Italian-Yugoslav border in September, allowing Belgrade to move its troops and strengthen the forces in the east (Maccotta 1993: 58; Monzali 2004: 52f).¹⁵ Moreover, to further improve the quality at the official stage, Austrian President Franz Jonas – accompanied by his Foreign Minister Kurt Waldheim – was invited to pay a visit to Yugoslavia (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Dubrovnik, Brioni) in September/October 1968. The minority question and the Yugoslav claims for "returning" cultural goods stood in the foreground of the talks that were led under "very friendly auspices" (Höll 1988a: 429). The situation in Czechoslovakia was discussed too, and Tito noted with concern that "the intervention of Warsaw Pact troops would seriously jeopardise the process of rapprochement and cooperation in Europe."¹⁶ It seemed that for Tito the European cooperation with Austria and Italy was of more importance than the vexatious minority question, even more so in light of the developments in Czechoslovakia.

The events and talks during the summer and fall of 1968 seem to have had an extensive impact on the further development of favourable relations of Belgrade with Vienna and Rome. Not only were the open words between the countries a tribute to the positive climate that aimed at solving any dispute still pending from the Second World War.

15 AJ, KPR 837, I-3-a/44-43, Podsetnik o Italiji i jugoslovensko-italijanskim odnosima (povodom prijema ministra inostranskih poslova Pietra Nenija), 26.5.1969.

16 *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Außenpolitik*, 8 (1968), Heft 5, 315.

They even cleared the path for talks about Italian-Yugoslav military cooperation on the Adriatic. This was a quite remarkable step considering the history of the two countries and their ideological gap. From 1968 onwards, Yugoslav and Italian military representatives regularly met for strategic talks, while the navies of both countries paid visits to their neighbouring harbours and General Staff officers held lectures at the other country's military academies. Moreover, Yugoslav military circles suggested that the cooperation with Italy should yet "reach more important levels" than with any other country, considering the proximity of the two states.¹⁷ As another impressive symbol for the prosperous relations during and after 1968, Tito and Austrian president Franz Jonas solemnly opened the "bridge of friendship" over the bordering Mur river in 1969. When the two presidents were driving over the new bridge, Tito suggested renaming it in Franz-Josef-bridge. The social-democrat Jonas bewildered asked why to do so. Tito explained: "Well, *Franz* Jonas and *Josef* Broz Tito." (Ivanji, 2007: 33) This was also a further proof of cooperation across ideological barriers in the Cold War, after Tito had for the first time visited Vienna in February 1967.¹⁸ Similarly, the visits of Italy's Foreign Minister, Pietro Nenni, and President, Giuseppe Saragat, to Belgrade in May and October 1969 respectively, would further enhance the relations between these two countries. During the conversations held on 27 May 1969 between both Foreign Ministers Nenni and Mirko Tepavac, the Italian minister asked for information on the situation in Yugoslavia and in particular if the country was still threatened, as "if there is a danger to Yugoslavia, there is just as much a threat to Italy".¹⁹ The second Italian visit in October of that same year by president Saragat would also follow the scheme of Nenni's encounter with Tito and underline the prospect for even better relations between the neighbours on the Adriatic (Vrhunec, 2001: 62-66).²⁰

17 AJ, KPR 837, I-3-a/44-43, Državni sekretarijat za inostrane poslove, Uprava za Z. Evropu (br. 439496), Informacija o Italiji i o Stanju Jugoslovensko-Italijanskih odnosa, 25.11.1970.

18 The Bruno Kreisky Archive keeps an elaborate documentation on this visit. See: Bruno Kreisky Archiv (BKA), Jugoslawien, Box 2, Staatsbesuch des jugoslawischen Präsidenten TITO in Österreich vom 13. bis zum 17. Februar 1967.

19 AJ, KPR 837, I-3-a/44-43, Razgovori "u četiri oka" sa Nenijem, DSIP (str. pov. 416157), 27.5.1969.

20 AJ, KPR 837, I-3-a/44-46, Razgovor između državnih delegacija SFRJ i Republike Italije održanih u zgradi SIV-a, 3.10.1969.

Thus, the 1960s witnessed a radical economic and political rapprochement in a region where diplomatic and political tension could be felt almost anytime (Portmann/Ruzicic-Kessler 2014: 306f). However, although economic needs and international threats certainly helped achieve amicable relations, it is argued in this paper that these form but a framework and not the sole explanation for the developments outlined thus far. Another factor has to be stressed at this point: the significance of statesmen for positive outcomes in international relations. In recent years Italian historians have discussed Aldo Moro's vision for neighborly relations during his career as head of the Italian Foreign Ministry and as Prime minister between 1963 and his tragic death in 1978 (Garzia/Monzali/Bucarelli, 2011; Mezzana/Moro, 2015; Monzali/Šuran, 2011). One of the most commonly recited statements of Moro is: "Our neighbors must be our friends." (Monzali, 2011: 89ff) Indeed, when analyzing his papers and the research on this politician, one has to conclude that for different reasons he did believe in mutual cooperation across system-borders and that the "Iron Curtain" could be overcome through economic and political rapprochement. He favoured the rapprochement with Yugoslavia and his nomination to Italian Prime Minister in 1963 opened the path to the "package" for South Tyrol, while his Foreign Minister, Amintore Fanfani, also brought important help to this issue. His discussions with Austrian Chancellor Franz Jonas were also paramount for a positive bilateral climate (Pombeni, 2015: 128ff). Moreover, in these crucial years of the 1960s and 1970s a leading figure of Austrian foreign policy was Bruno Kreisky – both as Foreign and as Prime Minister. Kreisky also shared a vision of reaching out to the east and fostering good neighborly relations despite ideological or diplomatic problems (Röhrlich, 2009). Finally in Yugoslavia strong economic and political bonds to Western Europe were a prerequisite for the stability of the regime and for a future association to the European Economic Community (Ruzicic-Kessler/Dragišić, 2016). After all, the country was threatened by high indebtedness and "revolts" from within like the "Croatian Spring" (Calic, 2010: 237–255; Halder, 2013: 110–118; Ramet, 2006: 227–262). Yet, when studying bilateral documents on the region and internal discussions as well as résumés of the time, one can assert that through the rapprochement of the 1960s a deep sense of trust could be achieved between Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia.

New Tensions and Solutions

The trust established during the 1960s made it possible that perturbations of relations caused by nationalist demonstrations, misunderstandings and misinterpretations, did not affect the long-term prospect of interregional and international integration in the "Alps-Adriatic" region.

In response to Saragat's visit to Yugoslavia of 1969, President Tito was due to travel to Italy in 1970. In the weeks before the scheduled visit, political representatives from Trieste and the Julian March, as well as MPs from the far right, accused the Italian government of holding talks with Yugoslavia and giving up "Italian soil". This situation culminated in a newspaper article in *Il Tempo* on 28 October 1970, where "well informed" sources were quoted stating that an agreement on the surrender of the – still bound to a provisional "status" – Zone B was close to being signed (Bucarelli 2008: 53; Cattaruzza 2007: 336f). This directly led to parliamentary inquiries on whether these rumors were well founded and if indeed Tito's visit was related to the signing of an agreement.²¹ Aldo Moro, as Foreign Minister, answered that the visits of state effectuated in 1969 as well as Tito's visit were of utmost importance for good relations among neighbors and he emphasized that everyone could rest assured that "no surrender of legitimate national interests" would be accepted "from our side".²² Following these statements and particularly the words "legitimate national interests", the Yugoslav government appeared offended. Obviously, Moro's words could be interpreted as an affront to Yugoslavia and as the Italian wish to gain control over the Zone B, which Belgrade regarded as a part of the national territory. Moreover, considering the growing turmoil in Yugoslavia and the autonomist gestures from Slovenia and Croatia in the late 1960s and early 1970s too, Belgrade could not afford to lose face on the international scene, especially when talking about a strip of land predominantly inhabited by Slovenes and Croats. Thus, Belgrade rejected going ahead with Tito's trip to Rome that had been arranged for December 1970 (Vrhunec 2001: 96).²³ Yet, testifying to the new trust, Yugoslavia did not want "to dramatize the

21 A compilation of all Italian parliamentary inquiries as well as Moro's answers in this case has been put together by Yugoslav agencies and can be found in: AJ, ACKSKJ 507, IX 48/I-475.

22 Ibidem.

23 AJ, CKSKJ 507, IX 48/I-475, Informacija o Jugoslavensko-Italijanskim odnosima povodom odlaganja posjete Predsjednika Tita Italiji – sa sastanka Izvršnog biroa Predsedništva SKJ, 9.12.1970.

events through a strong campaign against Italy [...] Our country still wishes to intensify its relations with Italy [...] which is in both countries' interest [...] The cancellation of President Tito's visit shall not interfere negatively with our relations with Italy."²⁴ In January 1971 the Italian and Yugoslav governments respectively publicized a statement that confirmed both parties' willingness to proceed with the improvement of bilateral relations, respecting the treaties signed between the two countries, including the 1954 "Memorandum of Understanding" (Bucarelli 2008: 58). Finally, Tito travelled to Italy on 25 March. Again, the Italian side, with President Saragat, emphasized that the "Memorandum" had already clarified the factual border and that the question was but a mere juridical matter. Tito confirmed that Yugoslavia would be patient in the best interest of both countries (Vrhunec 2001: 104f).²⁵

In these same years, a serious crisis in Austrian-Yugoslav relations occurred when in June 1972, an ustaše group (ustaše being the ruling organization of the so called Independent State of Croatia, which extensively collaborated with Germany during the Second World War) consisting of 19 persons crossed the Austrian-Yugoslav border. One has to bear in mind that it was only in December 1971 when Tito had dismissed the national (nationalistic) leadership of the Croatian communists in the aftermath of the so called "Croatian Spring". The Yugoslav government promptly accused Austria of supporting the infiltration of terrorists into Yugoslav territory. A press campaign in the Yugoslav media against Austria followed this incident. In the autumn of 1972, German nationalistic groups in Carinthia – unhindered by the authorities – destroyed some of the recently placed bilingual topographic signposts (*Kärntner "Ortstafelsturm"*). The alleged fear (especially in Carinthia) of Yugoslav territorial demands served as an "excuse" for this vicious act. An extensive and sharp exchange of protest notes followed this incident. In a letter from the Yugoslav ministry for foreign affairs sent to the Austrian embassy in Belgrade it was said that the Austrian government even after 17 years had been reluctant to fulfill its obligations from the state treaty, while at the same time it was very engaged in protecting the German-speaking minority in southern Tyrol.²⁶ Maybe even more

24 Ibidem.

25 AJ, KPR 837, I-2/48-1, Zabeleška o razgovoru Predsednika Republike sa Predsednikom Republike Italije G. Saragatom, 25.3.1971.

26 AJ, F-507, IX 6/V-73, Note 6 November 1972.

disturbing for the Austrian side was a speech delivered by the Yugoslav minister of defense, Nikola Ljubičić, who on this occasion talked of the strength of the Yugoslav Army in direct connection with the setting up of bilingual signposts in Carinthia.²⁷

Yet, the cancellation of Tito's visit to Rome in late 1970, the escalation of minority problems in Carinthia in 1972 and the intensification of protest in South Tyrol in the same period, were all but small and in the end insignificant setbacks. The conciliation process led to the solution of minority issues in South Tyrol, with the implementation of the "package" in 1972; the solution of border issues between Italy and Yugoslavia with the signing of the "Osimo agreement" in 1975; the solution of minority issues between Austria and Yugoslavia with the implementation of new laws in Austria in 1976.

Deeper Interregional and International Cooperation

Once all national and international preconditions were affirmed, the deepening of regional connectedness led to the formation of the "Alps-Adriatic Working Community" between Austrian *Bundesländer* Styria, Carinthia and Upper Austria, Italian regions Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (South Tyrol joined in 1982) and Yugoslav Republics Slovenia and Croatia in November 1978 in Venice (CNEL, 1992; Popopat 1996; Vrsaj 1975; Klabjan 2013: 409-426). The task of the community was "joint informative expert treatment and co-ordination of issues in the interest of its members" specifically, "trans-Alpine traffic links, port traffic, generation and transmission of energy, agriculture, forestry, water management, tourism, environmental protection, nature conservation, landscape care, preservation of cultural and recreational landscape, regional development, settlement development, cultural relations, contacts between scientific facilities" while "Commissions may be installed for the purpose of expert consultation".²⁸ Thus, the community's purpose was not to impair existing international and interregional contacts but to serve as a platform for mutual understanding between regions that had once been part of a common state frame (the Habsburg

27 National Archives London (NAL), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 33/1676, Political Relations Between Austria and Yugoslavia. Letter from the British embassy in Vienna to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 21.12.1972.

28 The joint declaration of Venice, 20.11.1978, in: <http://www.alpeadria.org/>

monarchy). Moreover the idea was to "reconstitute a common base" between regions that had been "artificially separated for forty years" due to the fact that they belonged to opposite economic and ideological systems. These regions would otherwise have been "integrated like the frontier regions of France, the Benelux states and Germany" (CNEL 1992: 14). Thus, this transnational community would set the goal to intensify communication and cooperation in a region that had witnessed several political and diplomatic ups and downs in the 20th century. In fact, the cooperation would have some quite impressive results in the cultural field, while the ambitious economic and infrastructural plans would not be fulfilled before the breakup of Yugoslavia (Bucarelli, 2008: 78f; Cattaruzza 2007: 353f). This was a proof of trust on a regional level, since the motors for these developments had mostly been the Austrian regions and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, as well as Slovenia. Thus détente from above was followed by détente from below. Yet a prerequisite for this détente and cooperation from below was the national framework in which the regions concerned could work since room for manoeuvre of entities inside a state is dictated by constitutional restraints/freedoms, economic strength and the possibility of regions to develop strategic interactions (Knodt 2001: 67). For instance, in Italy the regions (not only the autonomous ones) gained more political rights in 1970; in Austria, a country with historically relevant regional affairs, the regions were allowed to sign "State Treaties" between themselves and the "Bund" in 1974; finally, in Yugoslavia the constitution of 1974 strengthened the role of the Republics (Ableitinger 2005: 147-163). Thus, a high level of cooperation needs developments on a regional, national and international level. It also has to be stressed that local bonds were formed during the time of détente in the late 1960s as well (Valentin 1998: 172-212).

The regular consultations inside the community were used to deepen the trust between regions and for the planning of new cultural and economic cooperation projects. The most important results of this cooperation were trilateral cultural events, such as theatre representations; the connection of Universities in the "Alps-Adriatic" region; multiple scientific symposiums; the establishment of fellowships for students; the engagement for infrastructure programs, such as the "Alps-Adriatic" motorway between Udine and Villach (inaugurated in 1986). Indeed, in the summer of 1984, the representatives of Slovenia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Carinthia unanimously agreed that there was no similarly

good cooperation between three countries in any other part of Europe²⁹, even leading to the idea of a cross-border, trilateral application to hold the Olympic Games of 1992. Although the statement on deep cooperation may have been slightly exaggerated, it was proof of how tight the relations had become in this international scenario and also proof of the relevance of such interregional connections, going beyond international agreements.

Conclusion

The 1980s were characterized by other developments that had their effects on the "Alps-Adriatic" region. The gradual path to dissolution on which Yugoslavia was set after Tito's death proved to be irreversible, especially in connection with Yugoslavia's endemic indebtedness, economic lagging behind the West and the surge of nationalism. The neighbors, Italy and Austria, who were well aware of a possible destabilization after Marshal Tito's death, naturally perceived these symptoms. Indeed Italian and Austrian diplomacy – contrary to some myths appeared after 1991 – were not interested nor advocates of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Both had achieved a good model of cooperation and although they favoured internal reforms and possible further decentralization, the amicable relations to Yugoslavia were a factor that was not to be put in danger by nationalism or war. Italy (adding to the European Community's contribution) even provided hundreds of millions of dollars to stabilize the country (Varsori, 2013: 125ff). The course of events changed this approach after the outbreak of armed conflict.

With the dissolution of Yugoslavia regional cooperation changed. Yet, the Alps-Adriatic community did not disappear and thrived in following years within the frame of now independent Slovenia and Croatia, becoming the "Alps-Adriatic Alliance" in November 2013 and aiming at the integration of the region within the European Union. Thus, this community has become a tool of inner-EU policy in the past years and the seed that had been planted during the heyday of cooperation in the "Alps-Adriatic" region resisted the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia.

To conclude, the example of the "Alps-Adriatic" region shows that regional and multilateral cooperation beyond nation-state agreements and policies can be achieved through following prerequisites: 1) the

²⁹ Kärntner Landeszeitung, 20.12.1984.

willingness on a national level for mutual cooperation with other countries/regions, 2) the willingness of policy- and decision-makers to seek better relations for mutual prosperity and engage in policies to shape the future, and 3) the implementation of a framework for international cooperation within regional affairs in nation-states.

Even though the challenges facing the region today are not the same as those experienced during the "bipolar" division of the world, it seems fair to say that leaders in Europe have to act on challenges they are facing instead of reacting and awaiting events as seems to be more and more the case. Therefore, a vision of international and interregional relations is needed for this to come true.

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