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Global civil society mobilisation
during the Yugoslav wars (1991-1995):
The case of Dante Cruicchi in Marzabotto

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La liberté c'est la possibilité pour l'homme de réaliser pleinement son avenir dans le progrès social. Le monde traverse, dans ses rapports politiques, sociaux, économiques, une phase de transition si importante qu'elle provoque une crise de tous les critères fondamentaux d'interprétation et d'analyse de la réalité. Le genre humain ne s'est jamais trouvé, comme aujourd'hui, dans la condition d'avoir, en même temps, les instruments de sa propre destruction totale et de son propre salut universel. Le monde dans lequel nous vivons est unique, dans le bien comme dans le mal. Un seul peuple, une seule famille, un seul destin que nous voulons de sagesse et de bonheur. C'est pour cela que les droits de l'homme, tels que définis dans la Déclaration universelle de 1948, inspirent tous les efforts à favoriser l'avènement d'une civilisation de l'universel.

Le Peuple Palestinien ne demande rien d'autre que ce qui est un droit nature, d'avoir une Terre et une Patrie. Moi qui a été témoin de l'holocauste du peuple juif, voudrais vous dire que ces millions de morts n'auraient pas accepté l'arrogance et la violence des dirigeants d'Israël. Alors il serait bien ne pas oublier qu'il est offensé leur sacrifice en niant aux Palestiniens un droit de se rassembler et unir dans un propre État.

*Lettre de Dante Cruicchi au Président de la Rencontre Culturelle d'Oued Zem,
datée du 24 avril 1992.*

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INTRODUCTION

Yugoslavia's wars were characterized by being ethnic conflicts, a high degree of violence, and their location on the edges of Europe, but not only. They are also notable for witnessing the creation and expansion of a strong solidarity network and large-scale solidarity efforts throughout Europe, with Italy playing a crucial role. Numerous civil mobilization projects emerged, yet the humanitarian action promoted by Dante Cruicchi, the former mayor of Marzabotto, a town nestled in the Apennines of Bologna known for its tragic history during World War II, stands out as particularly noteworthy and deserving of attention. The aspect that most distinguishes Cruicchi's mobilization is the fact that his efforts are deeply rooted in the historical legacy of the Italian Resistance. Marzabotto was indeed the site of the terrible Monte Sole massacre at the end of September 1944, during which Nazis soldiers brutally murdered hundreds of civilians. Cruicchi transformed the Monte Sole massacre into a powerful symbol not only of the devastation that war can bring but also as a constant reminder to remain vigilant so that such atrocities are never repeated. Under his guidance, this event became a key element of Marzabotto's identity. However, his vision extended beyond mere remembrance: he used this tragic episode as a tool to foster the creation of strong international relations among cities, municipalities, and local entities that shared the painful experience of war, becoming ideal partners for him to promote twinning and friendships. Cruicchi dedicated his life spreading the memory of the Monte Sole massacre, organizing numerous initiatives aimed at making this tragic event known to an increasingly wider audience. His goal was not only to commemorate the past but also to build a future of cooperation and solidarity between different communities by leveraging the common bond of the Resistance. Thanks to his efforts, Marzabotto forged connections with other cities that had suffered similar devastations, creating an international network of collaboration based on memory and peace.

It is important to highlight Cruicchi's political affiliation, as he was a fervent supporter of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). This aspect is particularly relevant because he was born and spent much of his life in Emilia Romagna, a region of Italy heavily influenced by the PCI. The region is known for its "red political subculture", characterized by strong socialist leanings, active political participation, social solidarity,

collaboration, and mutualism at the local and territorial levels. Immersed in this environment, Cruicchi was not only an active participant, but also made an unique contribution to what is referred to as the “Emilian model”. To this model – already marked by a strong sense of collective belonging and a solid local organization – Cruicchi added an international vision, promoting the values of internationalism and transnational cooperation between local entities. Starting in the 1950s, his efforts were instrumental in creating a vast transnational network of cities united by ideals of solidarity and collaboration. This network sought to build ties beyond national borders, strengthening relationships between local communities through associations and joint projects. Thanks to his ability to build connections, Cruicchi helped consolidate this network through numerous initiatives, mainly focused on commemorating the events of World War II and on promoting peace and democracy. Among his most significant works was the founding of the World Union of Martyred Cities, established in Bastogne in 1982. This organization served as a symbol of resistance against fascism and a tribute to the martyr cities devastated during the conflict. As the Union’s Secretary General, Cruicchi played a key role in coordinating its activities, emphasizing the importance of historical memory as the foundation for building lasting peace. Under his leadership, the organization not only commemorated the tragedies of the past, but also actively engaged in creating a future grounded on international cooperation and the defense of human rights. Another key activity of the World Union of Martyr Cities was providing substantial humanitarian aid to numerous regions affected by war, ethnic conflicts, and liberation movements. Dante Cruicchi, in particular, initiated several aid projects, including efforts to assist the Kurdish people, the Eritrean population, and the Palestinian cause: his humanitarian involvement, however, reached its peak during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The successful outcomes of Cruicchi’s work during the Yugoslav wars can be attributed to the pre-existing friendships between the mayors of various cities in the former Yugoslavia and the twinning relationships with Marzabotto, with Kragujevac standing out as a notable example. Therefore, one of the central research questions of this thesis is: how and to what extent did the pre-existing solidarity networks, based on the preservation of memory and the promotion of human rights, contribute to the development of humanitarian aid and the mobilization of global civil society during the Yugoslav wars?

Furthermore, Kragujevac shared a similar fate with Marzabotto during World War II, having experienced a Nazi massacre in October 1941. From the post-war period onward, both cities have held commemorative events to remember the horrors of war, fostering awareness of the Resistance movement and the rejection of nationalism and fascism, which is a common thread among all the martyr cities. Another key research question in this thesis is: what impact did the commemoration of Nazi-fascist massacres and the Resistance movement have on the creation of transnational links between local entities and cities? Additionally, how did the legacy of World War II influence the provision of humanitarian aid during the war in the former Yugoslavia?

The literature on Dante Cruicchi's commitment to peace and the memory of historical events in the context of Monte Sole has been extensively developed by Eloisa Betti, Federico Chiaricati and Tito Menzani. Their joint contributions, particularly through works like "*Dante Cruicchi, l'artigiano della pace. Mostra fotografica a 100 anni dalla nascita (1921-2021)*", and "*A ottant'anni dalla strage di Monte Sole (1944-2024)*", provide multifaceted perspectives on Cruicchi's impact, the memory of the Monte Sole massacre, and the enduring significance of his work in Italian history. These works are extremely useful and clear for providing a general overview of Cruicchi's life, historical context, thought, and activities. However, they offer limited evidence of his speeches, correspondence, and epistolary activities. Indeed, this thesis aims to uncover the less public aspects of Cruicchi and to analyze his informal activities as well, aimed at managing humanitarian aid during the war in the former Yugoslavia, assessing the accuracy of media coverage concerning the conflicting parties, and spreading principles of peace, respect for human rights, disarmament, coexistence among peoples, and rejection of war. Regarding the literature review on the commitment of civil society, the works of Marzia Bona and Marco Abram emerge. These authors focused on the support network created by the solidarity mobilization of the Italian population in managing refugees from the former Yugoslavia. This thesis specifically analyzes Dante Cruicchi's work on this topic, which was made possible by the friendly relationships he had previously established with numerous Yugoslav personalities before the conflict. The innovative element of this thesis is that both for the analysis of Cruicchi's correspondence and the management of refugees, primary sources and new evidence from the "Archivio del Comitato regionale per le onoranze ai caduti di Marzabotto -

Centro di documentazione per lo studio delle stragi nazifasciste e delle rappresaglie di guerra, Archivio Dante Cruicchi” in Marzabotto have been used.

The first chapter of this thesis, titled “Dante Cruicchi, *The Artisan of Peace*”, outlines the historical background of Marzabotto, starting from the *Biennio Rosso* and the rise of fascism in Italy. It then delves into the violent actions and killings carried out by Nazi forces between September 29 and early October 1944 in the Monte Sole Historical Regional Park, which encompasses several towns and villages, including Marzabotto. During this period, hundreds of people were killed – confirmed deaths reached 770, although the actual number may be higher. What stood out most about these atrocities was the extreme cruelty and method of execution used by Nazi soldiers against civilians. Despite their claims of fighting against partisans, the true target was the civilian population, which was brutally massacred. This chapter then covers the post-war reconstruction process, which was intended to focus on preserving memory. However, this process was not always straightforward. While many cities, including Marzabotto, organized numerous commemorations to remember the horrors committed during the war, not all of Italy experienced the conflict in the same way. For example, not every region participated in the National Liberation struggle, so the identification of Italy’s wartime experience with the partisan resistance was not shared by the entire population. One of the chapter’s key points is the notion that Italy has never fully reckoned with its fascist past, often portraying itself as a victim of Nazi Germany, as though fascism had been an external “virus”. Instead, the focus has largely been on the two years following July 25, 1943, rather than on the entire Fascist period called “*Ventennio*”. This chapter also details the events in Marzabotto and across Italy that occurred in the following decades, examining key episodes from the 1960s and 1970s, such as the rise of the student and worker movements in 1968 and the so-called “*Historic compromise*”, before moving into the 1980s and the end of the Cold War. It provides both a local view of politics and society in Marzabotto, and a broader international perspective, because external politics have significantly influenced the local situation. Marzabotto, an area with a strong leftist and communist identity, stood in contrast in the first place to the fascist backdrop of World War II, and in the second place to the anti-communist climate of the Cold War.

The second chapter, “The International Commitment of the *Artisan of Peace*”, explores Dante Cruicchi’s biography, highlighting his major achievements throughout his life. Cruicchi held numerous roles: as a young man, he was an activist in France, part of a network supporting Italian volunteers going to Spain to fight for the Republic, and he created an anti-fascist youth center. He fought in World War II but was imprisoned in the Nazi camp of Luckenwalde after the armistice of September 8, 1943. Later, he became a councilor for his hometown, Castiglione dei Pepoli, under the PCI. He also worked as a journalist and editor-in-chief for the newspaper “*La Lotta*”, a foreign correspondent for “*L’Unità*”, and eventually served as the Secretary-General of the International Organization of Journalists in Prague. He went on to serve two terms as a councilor in San Benedetto Val di Sambro and was then elected mayor of Marzabotto for two terms, from 1975 to 1985. The chapter also delves into Cruicchi’s international activities through the various associations he was involved in, such as the Fédération Mondiale de Villes Jumelées and the World Union of Martyr Cities, Cities of Peace. The latter, in particular, receives detailed attention as Cruicchi served as its Secretary-General. The process leading to the Union’s creation and the statute governing its activities are thoroughly examined.

The third chapter of this thesis, titled “International initiatives related to the Yugoslav Wars”, focuses on Dante Cruicchi’s activities during the wars in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. After a brief historical introduction, the various initiatives implemented by Cruicchi are explained, such as his participation in numerous international conferences. One of the most significant was the Prague Conference, held between September 19 and 21, 1991, where Cruicchi delivered a powerful speech highlighting the importance of cities in coordinating and facilitating international processes in the new post-Cold War world order. In this context, Cruicchi emphasized that cities had become key players in promoting international solidarity and cooperation, leveraging their transnational networks and relationships to address global challenges, including the conflict among the “peoples of Yugoslavia”. Following this, the Budapest Conference, held between November 29 and 30, 1991, was even more successful, as it addressed the Yugoslav crisis more directly. The final declaration stated that participants must use all available means, especially at the local government level, to save as many lives as possible, provide aid to refugees and war victims, promote peace initiatives, and

protect minorities. Of course, Cruicchi was one of the participants, and he delivered a speech during this occasion as well, stressing the importance of the values of solidarity, equality, brotherhood, and democracy, while condemning national, ethnic, and religious conflicts. The Ohrid Conference, held from November 5 to 8, 1992, organized by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, aimed to encourage permanent dialogue between citizens and local authorities in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Its goal was to end the war, prevent future conflicts, and create transnational and European projects focused on promoting peace. Although this was a very important conference in the international sphere, no Italian participants were present. Nevertheless, Cruicchi's work also emerged on this occasion, as he sent letters to the conference's secretary and the mayor of Skopje, expressing his disappointment and emphasizing the shared history and resistance movement between Italy and Yugoslavia. He also reiterated his commitment to managing humanitarian aid and refugees. This chapter also discusses the Florence Conference, held from March 3 to 6, 1993, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Conference, held from August 4 to 9, 1993, and the meeting of the World Union of Peace Cities in Warsaw, held on May 29 and 30, 1992. The latter effectively summarizes the international stance of the Union – and consequently that of Cruicchi, as Secretary General, and President Stanislaw Wyganowski – toward the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

The fourth and final chapter, titled “Cruicchi's correspondence and actions during the war”, analyzes Cruicchi's activities beyond meetings and international conferences. A significant portion of his humanitarian work, in fact, resulted from his direct correspondence with influential figures such as mayors, presidents of municipal assemblies, regional council presidents, and various political leaders. Dante Cruicchi's letters, varied in nature, reflect his deep commitment to peace and brotherhood. On the one hand, some of these letters contain declarations where Cruicchi clearly expressed his principles, emphasizing the urgent need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and consistently reiterating his belief that only through dialogue and cooperation between peoples could lasting peace be achieved. On the other hand, Cruicchi also wrote more practical letters aimed at managing humanitarian aid, coordinating support for refugees, and addressing the logistical needs associated with

ongoing emergencies. Additionally, a portion of his letters was directed to journalists and newspaper editors, with the goal of countering the polarized narrative of the Yugoslav conflict, which often portrayed the Serbs as the sole perpetrators and Croatia and Bosnia as the only victims. Cruicchi strongly opposed what he called “*anti-Serb hysteria*”, and he sought to correct what he considered partial or inaccurate representations of the facts, urging for a more balanced and nuanced view of the situation.

For the preparation of this thesis, a historical-analytical approach was adopted, primarily based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources. A significant part of the research was based on archival sources consulted at the Marzabotto’s Archive, specifically from the collection titled “*Attività internazionale*” and the series “*Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace*” – as these documents are neither digitized nor available online. This allowed for the direct examination of both Cruicchi’s private correspondence and official documents from the World Union of Martyr Cities, providing a direct view of the events and transnational relationships that developed during the Yugoslav war. Secondary sources include numerous volumes, most notably the biography of Dante Cruicchi titled “*L’artigiano della pace. Dante Cruicchi nel Novecento*” edited by Carlo De Maria, but also “*Il comunismo in una regione sola? Prospettive di storia del Pci in Emilia-Romagna*” edited by Luca Baldissara and Paolo Capuzzo, which was essential for gaining a comprehensive overview of the historical and sociopolitical situation in the region where the protagonist of this thesis lived. Several academic articles were also used, covering topics such as the activities of the World Union of Martyr Cities and the Italian Resistance movement. Finally, several websites were consulted for an accurate reconstruction of the massacres carried out by the Nazi-Fascist army in the Monte Sole National Park area. Among these sites, “*straginazifasciste.it*” and “*martirimarzabotto.it*” were particularly useful for identifying the locations of the killings. The official ANPI website was a valuable resource for learning about the biographies of various Italian partisans. The analysis of these sources was crucial in understanding the importance of historical memory in building international solidarity networks and the role of cities in the context of global conflicts.

CHAPTER ONE

Dante Cruicchi, *The Artisan of Peace*

1.1. Historical background in Marzabotto

Marzabotto is a town in the province of Bologna, located in the Bolognese Apennines and bordered by the Setta River valley to the east, the Reno River to the west, Monte Sole to the north, and Monte Salvaro to the south¹. Its origins date back to the Etruscan period, during which a city was established in this area. Although the name of the city has not been preserved, its existence is evidenced by the presence of excavations and archaeological finds such as roads, temples, wells, and tombs². In the Middle Ages, several ecclesiastical centers were located in this town, while in the nineteenth century, the area was included in the municipality of “Caprara sopra Panico”. Only in 1882, the town was officially named Marzabotto. During this period, the town saw an increase in road and railway network improvements, as well as a growth in artisanal and commercial activities. Prior to World War I, various workers’ and farmers’ leagues were formed in Marzabotto, along with consumer and labor cooperatives. During World War I, there were no significant historical events, although 110 soldiers died out of a total population of 6,113³.

New trade union organizations emerged in Marzabotto during the so-called “*Biennio Rosso*” (Two Red Years), although the first organized labor movements had already appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the strikes and protests carried out by railway workers, miners, and construction workers gained considerable importance. This phenomenon culminated in the general elections on November 16, 1919, where the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) achieved a significant victory, receiving 79% of the votes at the municipal level. The local election on September 19, 1920, further solidified this trend and, for the first time, socialist forces, which later became

¹ Ventura A., “Monte Sole. La memoria pubblica del massacro”, in Bagnaresi D. e Carrattieri M. “Spostarsi nel tempo. Esperienze emiliano-romagnole di viaggi della e nella memoria”. *E-Review Dossier*. 2019-2020; 7, pag.1

² Brizio E., “*Guida alle Antichità della Villa e del Museo Etrusco di Marzabotto*”, Bologna, Fava e Garagnani, 1886, pag.7

³<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/luoghi/marzabotto-bo-1>

communists, gained control of the municipality⁴. A notable example of this shift is the election of Amedeo Nerozzi as mayor. Nerozzi was also the head of the farm laborers' league and he was incarcerated for crimes related to the agrarian struggle, but he was later granted amnesty by the *Corte di Cassazione*. As soon as the Italian Communist Party (PCd'I, later renamed as PCI) was founded in January 21, 1921, he immediately identified himself as a communist and made Marzabotto one of the four municipalities administered by communists in all of Emilia-Romagna – the geographical region that includes Marzabotto and Bologna – as recorded in the proceedings of the 2nd National Congress of the Communist Party of Italy⁵. Also Bruno Cruicchi was a member of the PCd'I: he was the father of Dante Cruicchi, the future mayor of Marzabotto and a key figure for the construction of transnational humanitarian networks from Marzabotto, which will be discussed in this thesis. Initially, Bruno Cruicchi was a leader in the PSI, responsible for organization and propaganda in the Bolognese Apennines, but he later shifted towards the PCd'I, becoming one of its founders in this area⁶.

It is not surprising that socialist and communist views consolidated and gained strength during this period. This inclination has its roots in the agrarian crisis of the 19th century, which laid the groundwork for the emergence of the “red” political subculture in Emilia-Romagna⁷. The term “red political subculture” refers to a specific local political system, characterized by a high degree of social-communist consensus and a strong capacity of aggregation and mediation of local interests, expressed through a dense institutional network⁸. In central Italy, not only the presence of the Church was less extensively organized and widespread compared to northeastern Italy, but it also did not play a significant central role in managing local networks. As a direct consequence,

⁴ Arbizzani L., “*Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune*”, Bologna, ANPI, 1998, pag. 142

⁵ Craver E. “Review of Storia del Partito comunista italiano; Amadeo Bordiga, by P. Spriano & A. de Clementi”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 45(4), 1973, pag. 707

⁶ De Maria C., “*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*”, in De Maria C. “L'artigiano della pace, Dante Cruicchi nel Novecento”, Bologna, CLUEB, 2013, pag. 19, 27-29.

⁷ Almagisti M., “*Una democrazia possibile, politica e territorio nell'Italia contemporanea*”, Roma, Carocci editore, 2019, pag. 124

⁸ Trigilia C., “*Le subculture politiche territoriali*” in “*Sviluppo economico e trasformazioni socio-politiche dei sistemi territoriali a economia diffusa*”, Milano, Fondazione Feltrinelli, 1981, pag.47-48

local entities in this region embraced a socialist orientation, which clashed with the rise of fascism⁹.

In this phase, the phenomenon of squadristism emerged throughout Italy, particularly targeting openly socialist towns and cities like Marzabotto. The mayor and other leaders were subjected to violent assaults, which intensified after the general elections on May 15, 1921, when fascists instigated several clashes in various districts of Marzabotto. Specifically, these attacks occurred in the hamlets of Sibano in May, Sirano in August, and Sperticano in October. Consequently, in November, the mayor and the entire municipal council were forced to resign¹⁰.

The phenomenon of squadristism was characterized by a particular type of violence: it was not simply understood as a means to achieve a political end and a source of power, but it was also considered a foundational element of their identity, both collective and group¹¹. With the March on Rome on October 28, 1922, and Mussolini's rise to power, there was an assimilation and institutionalization of squadrist practices within the Italian regime. The *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* (MVSN) was indeed created with the goal of integrating the old action squads under more direct control. In many areas where opposition and the socialist movement maintained a significant presence, fascist squads used violence as a constant tool of intimidation¹². The situation continued to deteriorate more and more, as fascism, having become institutionalized, entrenched itself not only in Parliament but also in local administrations. Figures like Amedeo Nerozzi and Bruno Cruicchi perceived that circumstances were rapidly worsen: the first was threatened with death and warned to leave Marzabotto, leading him to emigrate to Belgium, meanwhile the latter began moving towards France, starting in 1923, in search of work, as it was extremely difficult for opponents of the regime to find employment under fascist rule. He eventually moved to France permanently with his entire family in 1933¹³.

⁹ Almagisti M., “*Una democrazia possibile, politica e territorio nell'Italia contemporanea*”, op. cit., pag. 124

¹⁰ Arbizzani L., “*Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune*”, op. cit., pag. 142

¹¹ Millan M., “The Institutionalisation of Squadristo: Discipling Paramilitary Violence in the Italian Fascist Dictatorship”, *Contemporary European History*, 2013;22(4), pag 552

¹² *Ivi* pag. 555-57

¹³ De Maria C., “*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*”, op. cit., pag. 31-34

Mussolini fell from power on July 25, 1943, when the Grand Council of Fascism approved the motion to depose the Duce by a vote of 19 in favor. However, the complete downfall of fascism was not yet imminent, as the Italian Social Republic (RSI) was established. Despite this, in Marzabotto, there was hope for the end of the war. On September 8, the Armistice of Cassibile was signed, in which Italy surrendered to the Allies¹⁴. In Marzabotto, anti-fascist opponents seized weapons abandoned by soldiers and mobilized to end the conflict. The first partisan groups joined the “*Stella Rossa*” detachment, which officially became a Brigade (B.S.R.) consisting of about a hundred people. Over time, the number of partisans grew, and on April 11, 1944, most of them settled on the plateau at the roots of Monte Sole, conducting guerrilla operations to attack positions, seize weapons and ammunition, and kill fascist marshals and militias¹⁵. However, on May 28, German reinforcements arrived, supported by the Republican National Guard of the RSI, and attacked the B.S.R. The Brigade had to leave Monte Sole and move west towards Monte Vignola, in the area of Savigno. The Germans reacted violently against civilians, burning dozens of homes. Despite this, the B.S.R. returned to the Monte Sole area on June 6 and resumed partisan operations. These operations were marked by occasional partisan victories, such as a battle in Pioppe and Lama di Reno on July 22, where several Germans were killed or wounded, but also by defeats and retaliations, such as the next day, July 23, when the Germans killed men, women, and children in the villages of Malfolle and Pian di Venola¹⁶. However, in the summer of 1944, the Anglo-American armies launched an offensive to break through the German Gothic Line. The German military strategy began to turn into a “fighting retreat”, where the troops repositioned themselves a short distance from the previous defensive line to gain time, using various forms of violence. The B.S.R. partisans knew that the Allies were about to reach the Bolognese Apennines and thought that the fighting would end in a few days. They could not imagine that the horrors of war were far from over¹⁷. At the end of September, specifically from September 29 to

¹⁴<https://www.anpi.it/libri/date-cruciali-25-luglio-e-8-settembre-1943>

¹⁵ Arbizzani L., “*Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune*”, op. cit., pag. 142

¹⁶ *Ibidem*

¹⁷ Muratori S., “Strage di Marzabotto. Chi uccise don Giovanni Fornasini”. *Al sâs - semestrale di storia, natura, cultura*. 2013; 27, pag 33-34

October 5, 1944, one of the bloodiest and most terrible massacres of civilians in the history of World War II would take place, where over 700 people were killed, known as “The Massacre of Monte Sole”¹⁸.

1.2. The massacre of Monte Sole

The Monte Sole massacre was a mass killing of civilians that took place at the end of September 1944. This was part of a series of violent actions that had already occurred in previous months in central Italy, along the Gothic Line. For example, on August 12, 1944, in Sant’Anna di Stazzema, located in the province of Lucca, more than 500 people were brutally killed¹⁹. A few days later, from August 17 to 19, another 159 people were murdered in San Terenzo Monti, in the province of Massa and Carrara²⁰. These two atrocities happened in the nearby region of Tuscany, but looking at the official records of the Bologna area, over five thousand individuals were rounded up between July 15 and August 11²¹. Furthermore, on September 23 and 24, the Germans detonated explosives to demolish tunnels, bridges, electrical and telephone lines, along with railway tracks²². Indeed, when the Allied offensive to break through the Gothic Line became imminent, the German command decided to carry out roundups and implement a “war on civilians” as a true military tactic. This was done to secure the rear areas, deprive the partisans of any support, and break their morale. Their strategy of exterminating any form of life in territories hosting partisans, in fact, had the consequence of killing the partisans’ own family members²³.

The so-called Massacre of Monte Sole is characterized by its occurrence in multiple hamlets of Marzabotto, with several military divisions deciding to attack simultaneously. Undoubtedly, one of the war criminals who played a leading role in these massacres is Max Simon, commander of the 16th SS Division. He was sentenced to death by a British court in Padua on June 26, 1947, though the sentence was later

¹⁸ For further reading on the topic, see also: Betti E., *Monte Sole, la memoria pubblica di una strage nazista*, Carocci, 2024

¹⁹https://www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/bolognaonline/events/la_strage_di_santanna_di_stazzema

²⁰https://www.straginazifasciste.it/?page_id=38&id_strage=4855

²¹<https://www.anpi.it/la-feroce-tecnica-dei-rastrellamenti-nazifascisti>

²² Arbizzani L., “*Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune*”, op. cit., pag. 146

²³ Muratori S., “Strage di Marzabotto. Chi uccise don Giovanni Fornasini”. op.cit., pag 34-37

commuted to imprisonment. Walter Reder is another officer responsible for the massacre; he was also sentenced to life imprisonment by the military court of Bologna on October 31, 1951²⁴. On April 30, 1967, Reder sent a letter of apology to the community of Marzabotto, which responded with a refusal: 282 votes against and only 4 in favor. Once released and back in Austria, he claimed he had not asked for forgiveness and that the letter had been written by his lawyer²⁵.

The militiamen who obeyed orders must also be considered accomplices. In total, the militias used to carry out the massacres numbered at least 1,500, divided into 150 in the 105th Flak Regiment, 600/700 men in the 4th East Battalion of the 1059th Grenadier Regiment, 100 in the machine gun unit, 200 artillerymen, and 350 in the 16th Reconnaissance Battalion of the 16th Panzer Grenadier Division. These figures emerged from the trial against Reder²⁶. Further responsible parties include local fascists who actively collaborated in the operations: among them there was the leader of the Marzabotto Fascist Party, who was sentenced to 30 years in prison by the Bergamo Court of Assizes on September 30, 1946, and the marshal of the Marzabotto Carabinieri²⁷.

The main events of this massacre occurred in the hamlets of Casaglia, Caprara, Cerpiano, San Giovanni di Sotto and Casoncello, San Martino, and other hamlets of Marzabotto, as well as in some hamlets of Grizzana Morandi and Monzuno, such as the towns of Creda and Botte di Pioppe. Some people prefer to refer to it as the “Marzabotto Massacre” since it is a more easily identifiable location, while others use the more general “Monte Sole Massacre” to emphasize that it occurred over a broader geographical area. Initially, due to the destruction of the registry offices, it was not possible to estimate an exact number of victims, leading to an estimated figure of 1,830. However, more recently, it has been confirmed that the number has been reduced to 770 confirmed deaths²⁸.

²⁴ Muratori S., “Strage di Marzabotto. Chi uccise don Giovanni Fornasini”. op. cit., pag 34-37

²⁵<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/eventi/eccidio-di-monte-sole>

²⁶ Arbizzani L., “*Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune*”, op. cit., pag. 146

²⁷ Muratori S., “Strage di Marzabotto. Chi uccise don Giovanni Fornasini”. op.cit., pag 34-37

²⁸ Ventura A., “Monte Sole. La memoria pubblica del massacro”. op. cit., pag.4

The massacre began in Casaglia, a hamlet of Marzabotto, where people were seeking refuge in the church. German soldiers from the 3rd company of the 16th division stormed in, forced the people out, and led them to the cemetery, a few hundred meters from the church. Joined by another patrol, they ordered the people to enter, gathered them in front of the chapel, and began to shoot them: over a hundred people were killed in a few minutes. For this reason, the events in Casaglia became a symbol of the entire massacre²⁹. Only five people survived in Casaglia, and thanks to them, we know exactly what happened³⁰.

Caprara, on the other hand, is another hamlet of Marzabotto, home to thirteen families, mainly sharecroppers. However, on the same day, September 29, nearly an entire family was exterminated: the mother and seven children were slaughtered, while the father managed to hide and survive. The horror did not end there: the Germans gathered around forty people, crowded them into the kitchen of a house, and brutally killed them by throwing bombs through the window and firing machine guns, leaving no chance to escape.³¹ The survivors' accounts of what happened were some of the most difficult to piece together. Nevertheless, the testimony of Guerrino Avoni, a partisan belonging to the B.R.S., is crucial:

I could follow the Nazis and Fascists in their work of destruction in Caprara with my binoculars. I saw five Nazis dragging sixteen women behind them, tied to each other with a thick cable; one of them was holding a baby only a few months old. In this case too, we tried to intervene and shoot, but without being able to provide effective help. It was heartbreaking for us to witness such events, powerless to intervene, and that terrible vision was more debilitating than enemy fire.

Following them with the binoculars, I saw them dragging the women into the house in Caprara and then saw them throw stick grenades and set up the machine gun through the door³².

²⁹<https://www.straginazifasciste.it/wp-content/uploads/schede/CASAGLIA%20MARZABOTTO%2029.09.1944.pdf>

³⁰<https://www.martirimarzabotto.it/luoghi/>

³¹<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/eventi/caprara-0>

³²<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/testimonianze/don-dario-zanini-parroco-di-sasso-marconi-34>

The same modus operandi occurred in the hamlet of Cerpiano. Here, on September 29, a squad of Germans, coming from the hamlet of Murazze and heading to the village, encountered two women with their children along the road, four each, the oldest being 9 years old and the youngest only 40 days old. They were all killed. Subsequently, they reached Cerpiano, a town characterized by a large number of refugees and displaced persons from neighboring hamlets. It was also home to a kindergarten that had moved from Gardelletta to Cerpiano in October 1943. Antonietta Benni, the kindergarten teacher, was the only adult survivor of the massacre. The German militias rounded up about fifty people, mostly women and children, locked them in the oratory, and threw hand grenades inside³³. As Benni testified:

The explosion of the bombs, the injuries sustained, the desperate screams of the victims made me lose consciousness; when I came to, I realized the catastrophe. The survivors called out to each other, each calling for their loved ones, many of whom no longer responded because they were dead³⁴.

About twenty people survived this initial bomb attack, but the following day, September 30, the Germans returned to the oratory and initiated another shooting spree. Subsequently, the militias plundered the dead of their personal belongings of minimal value and left. Fortunately, despite the horror that had occurred, there was a high number of survivors among those who had not been taken to the oratory. A significant number of people found refuge in an air raid shelter in the woods, which the German squad did not discover³⁵.

San Giovanni and Casoncello are two farmhouses in the hamlet of Casaglia, where Germans from the 5th company of the 16th division killed 51 civilians, including 20 children. In Casoncello, they set fire to the barn, the house, and the adjacent haystacks around 9 a.m., then left. However, shortly after, another patrol of about 8-9 men arrived and forced everyone remaining in the house to come out. These people were taken to San Giovanni di Sopra. Upon reaching San Giovanni di Sopra, the Germans proceeded to San Giovanni di Sotto, locating the air raid shelter between the two houses where the

³³<https://www.straginazifasciste.it/wp-content/uploads/schede/CERPIANO%20MONZUNO%2029-30.09.1944.pdf>

³⁴ *Ibidem*

³⁵ *Ibidem*

elderly men, women, and children had hidden. These people were taken to San Giovanni di Sotto, where a German soldier set up a machine gun on the ground and opened fire on the group gathered near a wall³⁶.

In San Martino, on September 30, 72 people, including 25 children, were executed. They were seeking refuge in a church, but the militias forced them out, grouped them together, and killed them with machine gun fire. Julien Legoll, an Alsatian deserter serving in the 1st company of the 16th division, described what happened. However, there are some ambiguities in his account, as he claimed that another company rounded up the civilians to be killed, but a few eyewitnesses disputed this. Despite this, his testimony offers some interesting insights, highlighting the soldiers' confidence and efficiency as they advanced, knowing they would not encounter armed partisans. It also underscores the automatic nature of their actions and, most importantly, their awareness that they were committing the extermination of women, children, and the elderly³⁷.

Creda di Salvaro, part of the municipality of Grizzana, a village near Marzabotto, experienced a massacre that resulted in the killing of 69 people. This atrocity is counted among the numerous horrors of the Marzabotto massacre. Creda is more accurately described as a cluster of a few houses belonging to the same farm. Here, the German militias, numbering between fifty and one hundred fifty, according to testimonies, rounded up about eighty people, then threw hand grenades and incendiary bombs at them³⁸.

In Botte di Pioppe, also a village in the municipality of Grizzana, 45 people were brutally killed. According to reconstructions, Botte di Pioppe was designated as the coordination center for all the round-up operations conducted in those days, both in the Setta Valley and the Reno Valley. Here, the survivors of the round-ups were brought, destined for a terrible fate. They were confined to a small space, subjected to torture and deprivation of food. Finally, they were divided into three groups and taken to a water tank at the hemp factory, an industrial water basin with a walkway and railing. The first group was lined up at the edge of the tank and machine-gunned. The second group had

³⁶https://www.straginazifasciste.it/?page_id=38&id_strage=5285

³⁷<https://www.straginazifasciste.it/wp-content/uploads/schede/SAN%20MARTINO%20MARZABOTTO%2030.09.1944.pdf>

³⁸<https://www.straginazifasciste.it/wp-content/uploads/schede/CREDA%20DI%20SALVARO%20GRIZZANA%2029.09.1944.pdf>

to throw the bodies into the water and was also machine-gunned. The German soldiers, numbering between 20 and 30, then finished off anyone still alive with pistol shots and threw all the bodies into the water tank, also throwing in hand grenades. The bodies remained in this condition for days. Many tried to bury them but had to desist due to the difficulty of retrieving the bodies from the tank and because the Germans were still in the area. The corpses were still in the basin many days later, and the situation had become unbearable. The water level had risen due to rain, and the bloated bodies polluted the air. It was only about 20 days after the massacre that the tank was opened, and the bodies were dragged into the waters of the Reno. This episode was one of the most significant in terms of cruelty, involving persecution, degrading behavior, killings, and desecration of corpses, as the bodies were thrown into the water and left there for days³⁹.

According to the German military report of October 1, 1944, by the staff officer in charge of Division espionage, on September 29 and 30, “21 firefights took place, some of which were very intense. The enemy’s resistance was overcome after the use of heavy weapons”⁴⁰. Additionally, it is stated that during these two days, “the result was as follows: 718 enemies killed, of which 497 were bandits [partisans] and 221 were supporters of the band”⁴¹. It is evident that the Germans attempted to highlight the anti-partisan aspect of their actions to assert that their objective was not civilians. This attempt can be deemed futile, as it is clear that their assaults were intentionally and brutally directed towards the civilian population. Following the terrible events in the Monte Sole area, the Red Star Brigade ceased to exist: the remaining partisans joined the 63rd Brigade, operating in the Monte San Pietro area, and others joined the 7th GAP Brigade, to continue the fight and reach the city of Bologna⁴².

It is erroneous to think that once the massacre ended, the killings ceased: on October 18, in Sasso Marconi – a locality near Marzabotto – six Marzabotto residents were slaughtered; other partisans of the Red Star Brigade and other Marzabotto residents fell

³⁹<https://www.straginazifasciste.it/wp-content/uploads/schede/BOTTE%20DI%20PIOPPE%20DI%20SAVARO%20GRIZZANA%2029.09-01.10.1944.pdf>

⁴⁰ Arbizzani L., “*Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune*”, op.cit., pag. 146

⁴¹ *Ivi*, pag. 148

⁴² *Ibidem*

in subsequent clashes with the Nazis. Marzabotto was officially liberated on April 19, 1945, and by the end of that month, Vito Nerozzi, nephew of Amedeo Nerozzi, was appointed mayor⁴³. From this point on, both the post-war reconstruction process and the process of preserving the memory of what had happened began.

1.3. From the end of World War II to the end of the Cold War

Once World War II ended, the theme of post-war reconstruction became a topic of interest for the entire Italian population. However, the process of reconstruction also had to include the process of the preservation of memory, specifically on what happened and what horrors were committed, and the commemoration of these events in the social and political spheres. It must be taken into account that World War II was not experienced in the same way across all of Italy, and consequently, the experiences of people vary from region to region. Italy was the stage for the actions of fascists, nationalists, partisans, collaborators, and the civilian population, resulting in conflicting and fragmented memories, identities, and social institutions⁴⁴. For example, the Italian resistance movement took place predominantly in the north of the peninsula, as it was occupied by the Nazis from September 1943 onward, while the south was liberated by the Allies. Therefore, the identification of the Italian experience during the conflict with the partisan resistance is not shared by the southern population. However, the new political class of the nascent republic – and also the PCI – decided to consider the Italian resistance as the highest expression of anti-fascism, due to the need to establish a legitimate democratic foundation after years of dictatorship⁴⁵. It was necessary to demonstrate a complete break from fascism in order to reintegrate Italy into the Western landscape, and the anti-fascist narrative was greatly facilitated by the glorified role

⁴³ Arbizzani L., *“Antifascismo e lotta di Liberazione nel bolognese, Comune per Comune”*, op.cit., pag. 148

⁴⁴ Forlenza R., “Sacrificial Memory and Political Legitimacy in Postwar Italy: Reliving and Remembering World War II”, *History and Memory*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2012), pag. 73-74

⁴⁵ Fogu C., *“Italiani brava gente: the legacy of fascist historical culture on Italian politics of memory”*, In. Lebow R.N., Kansteiner W., Fogu C., “The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe”, Duke University Press, 2006, pag.149

assumed by the Italian resistance and the narrative of the so-called “*Secondo Risorgimento*”⁴⁶.

This discordance, having different wartime experiences between the North and the South in the social sphere and considering the resistance movement as the founding myth of the Italian republic in the political sphere, meant that the realization of a long-term unifying national memory was lacking.

1.3.1. The postwar period

Between 1943 and 1947, antifascist forces believed it was necessary to cultivate a collective memory of the war that promoted a sense of a new beginning. A negative effect of this strategy was the significant reduction in the sense of Italian responsibility during the conflict and its alliance with the Axis powers. Italians began to be depicted as victims of both fascism and Nazi Germany⁴⁷. As a result, not only were resistance partisans considered martyrs, but also the soldiers who fought alongside the Germans, as their participation was seen as passive. In the early post-war commemorations, therefore, only very general values such as sacrifice for the country and heroism were highlighted, avoiding mention of the Italian army’s collaboration in the persecution of Jews and other crimes. This approach aimed to reconcile the various political forces that operated during the conflict⁴⁸: the partisan resistance movement was extremely heterogeneous, including Catholics, communists, socialists, liberals, and moderates⁴⁹. Focusing mainly on the *Biennio* (the two years between July 25, 1943, and April 25, 1945) and much less on the Fascist *Ventennio* led to the perception of Mussolini’s dictatorship as an external virus. Consequently, only the more significant Fascist hierarchs were condemned and punished by military courts, while the administrative,

⁴⁶ Sierp A., “Italy’s Struggle with History and the Europeanisation of National Memory”, In: Engel U., Middell M. and Troebst S. “Erinnerungskulturen in transnationaler Perspektive”, Leipzig, *Leipziger Universitätsverlag*, 2012, pag.3-4

⁴⁷ Focardi F., “*Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale*”, Roma, Bari, Laterza, 2013, pag 77-81

⁴⁸ Sierp A., “Italy’s Struggle with History and the Europeanisation of National Memory”, op. cit., pag.4-5

⁴⁹ Peli S., “*Storia della Resistenza in Italia*”. Torino, Einaudi, 2006, pag 37-40

judicial, and police apparatuses remained unchanged even after the proclamation of the republic⁵⁰.

In reality, there was a deliberate political intent to maintain continuity with the fascist state in terms of bureaucracy and leadership, but this was not ideologically driven. Initially, in 1943 in southern Italy, there was a purge of fascist officers and bureaucrats through special courts, but in a second phase, starting in 1946, this process of expulsion became much more lenient, and trials were conducted in ordinary courts, culminating in an amnesty issued by the Minister of Justice and PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti⁵¹. It should not be surprising that the Communist Party supported this amnesty, as its objectives were to integrate into the antifascist leadership and establish a legal and social order, aware that the electorate was diverse and came from different sectors of society⁵². Additionally, international events in this period undoubtedly fueled anti-communist sentiments and laid the groundwork for the bipolar tensions of the Cold War, such as the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the Soviet blockade of Berlin in May 1949, and the detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb two months later⁵³.

It is evident that the decision to maintain administrative continuity with the fascist state, which at first might seem contradictory to the desire for a clear break from the past and the ideas and values of the Ventennio, was not ideologically based but primarily practical. In the post-war period, Italy was in disastrous economic conditions, and in the urgency to distribute the ERP (European Recovery Program) aid, the existing state machinery consisting of public state agencies was utilized. These agencies simply passed into the hands of the majority party after the 1948 elections, namely the Christian Democrats (DC), with the full support of the Allies. Subsequently, it became increasingly difficult to distance themselves from these corporatist institutions, as they were well embedded in the Catholic-influenced social culture of Italy. Moreover, private

⁵⁰ Fogu C., *“Italiani brava gente: the legacy of fascist historical culture on Italian politics of memory”*, op. cit., pag.149

⁵¹ Salvati M, “Behind the Cold War: rethinking the left, the state and civil society in Italy (1940s-1970s)”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2003, 8:4, pag.558

⁵² Ivi pag.559

⁵³ T. Judt, *Postwar, a History of Europe since 1945*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2005, pag. 139, pag. 146, pag. 242-248

monopolies and industrial interests at the economic ministries had reestablished themselves⁵⁴.

Despite the fact that post-war administrative continuity was not based on solid ideological foundations, it nonetheless had significant consequences at the local level, especially in those Italian areas characterized by a strong presence of the PCI and a red political culture, such as Marzabotto and the surrounding towns in the Bologna region. In the spring of 1946, more specifically on March 10, 17, 24, 31, and April 7, the first round of post-World War II municipal elections was held. During these dates, almost 80% of Italian municipalities voted, including all those in the province of Bologna, Marzabotto among them. The remaining municipalities held elections in a second round in the autumn. The organization of these elections was not without challenges, due to the difficult post-war situation: public services were severely compromised, and road networks – essential for communication between municipalities – were disrupted. This lack of infrastructure was particularly problematic for rebuilding the population registries destroyed during the conflict, for adding prisoners of war and civilian deportees to the electoral rolls, and the effort to track down missing people⁵⁵. These elections led to the creation of a young political class in the Emilia-Romagna region, composed of local administrators in their thirties, mainly from the PCI. A notable example is Dante Cruicchi, son of Bruno Cruicchi, who entered the municipal council of his birthplace, Castiglione dei Pepoli, at just 24 years old⁵⁶. Since 1946, local administrations had been deeply concerned about municipal and provincial legislation, which was still heavily influenced by the *Testo Unico Fascista* of 1934. This law allowed for so-called “merit controls”, which supervisory authorities applied to nearly all municipal resolutions. This type of interference significantly limited the autonomy of local entities, with the intensity and frequency of these controls varying depending on the political situation and the presence of nationally influential figures. As a result, these local authorities had almost no legal autonomy. In addition to these legal and institutional constraints, political challenges arose as well. With the onset of the Cold War, the Italian state implemented repressive measures against Emilia-Romagna’s local

⁵⁴ Salvati M, “Behind the Cold War: rethinking the left, the state and civil society in Italy (1940s-1970s)”, op. cit., pag.559-560

⁵⁵ De Maria C, “*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*”, op. cit., pag. 40-41

⁵⁶ *Ivi* pag. 43

entities, including the postponement or annulment of municipal resolutions, as well as the suspension or arrest of mayors and the dissolution of municipal councils. The fascist legacy clearly still permeated the Italian state, as small left-wing-run municipalities, such as Marzabotto and Castiglione dei Pepoli, were often the most targeted, with administrative authorities acting more severely. Despite the many difficulties, these towns and the local governments that administered them developed a style of local governance inspired by the early 20th-century popular municipalism, with the goal of building a political identity rooted in the territory. This effort was reflected in practical, specific proposals, such as reduced gas and transport rates for workers⁵⁷. In the following years, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, the PCI introduced further innovations, still within the Emilia-Romagna region: the PCI focused on training and disseminating administrative personnel with specific professional skills, capable of addressing the problems of Reconstruction and the economic boom. The innovative aspect was that this administrative personnel was to be integrated into a structure characterized by strong participatory components, aiming to prioritize the interests of local small businesses⁵⁸.

1.3.2. The beginning of the Cold War and the spread of anti-Communism

Returning to 1948, it can be said that this year marked the beginning of the definitive break in the union of antifascist forces and the development of the Cold War. The elections of that year saw the victory of Alcide De Gasperi's party (DC), which decided to adopt an anti-communist stance and question the link between the Second Risorgimento and the Resistance, as the latter began to be accused of harboring anti-national sentiments⁵⁹. This new conception is evident in the commemorations that followed after 1948, as a legislative decree approved by the government banned the use of uniforms during celebrations and subsequently denied the presence of communist speakers or partisan associations, turning the commemorations into mere celebrations of

⁵⁷ De Maria C, "*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*", op. cit., pag. 43

⁵⁸ Ventresca R., "*Territorio, Europa, comunismo. Il Pci emiliano-romagnolo tra dimensione regionale e orizzonte internazionale (1975-1991)*". In: Baldissara L., Capuzzo P., "*Il comunismo in una regione sola?: Prospettive di storia del Pci in Emilia-Romagna*", Bologna, Mulino, 2023, pag.427

⁵⁹ Forlenza R., "*Sacrificial Memory and Political Legitimacy in Postwar Italy: Reliving and Remembering World War II*", op. cit, pag. 74-75

the Italian armed forces⁶⁰. Numerous disputes arose on this matter, with the left accusing the DC of reneging on the values of the Resistance, while the DC responded that it was the left that was using communist propaganda to promote an anti-democratic doctrine. In a short time, antifascism became synonymous with anti-communism, which became the main characteristic of the party and ensured it broad support, given the bipolar historical period in which the party emerged⁶¹. It should be noted, however, that the PCI remained the most important and strongest communist party in the West, despite the undeniable and uninterrupted success of the DC. In this phase, with the help of partisan associations, the PCI organized various counter-demonstrations against the institutional ones of the DC to highlight the role of communist partisans during the Second Risorgimento⁶². The PCI also actively operated at the local level, proposing goals of social transformation within the already existing national regulatory context⁶³. An example of commemoration from these years is the 5th anniversary of the Monte Sole massacre, held on September 29, 1949. On this occasion, the President of the Republic Luigi Einaudi awarded a Gold Medal for Military Valor to the town of Marzabotto, stating:

Nestled among the steep cliffs and green woods of the ancient Etruscan land, Marzabotto chose iron, fire, and destruction rather than surrender to the oppressor. For fourteen months, it endured the harsh tyranny of the Teutonic hordes, who failed to break the pride of its sons, entrenched on the rugged peaks of Monte Venere and Monte Sole, sustained by the love and encouragement of the elderly, women, and children. The ruthless massacres of defenseless youths, flourishing wives, and aging parents did not subdue it, and its 1,830⁶⁴ dead rest

⁶⁰ Fogu C., *“Italiani brava gente: the legacy of fascist historical culture on Italian politics of memory”*, op. cit., pag.152

⁶¹ Sierp A., *“Italy’s Struggle with History and the Europeanisation of National Memory”*, op. cit., pag.5-6

⁶² Fogu C., *“Italiani brava gente: the legacy of fascist historical culture on Italian politics of memory”*, op. cit., pag.153

⁶³ Ventresca R., *“Territorio, Europa, comunismo. Il Pci emiliano-romagnolo tra dimensione regionale e orizzonte internazionale (1975-1991)”*. op. cit., pag.426

⁶⁴ As highlighted on page 6, the initially estimated number of victims was 1830. Only in more recent times has the number been revised down to 770 confirmed deaths.

on the mountains and in the valleys as a perpetual reminder to future generations of the power of love for the Fatherland⁶⁵.

Despite the presence at the commemoration of important figures of the Resistance, some of whom were also members of the PCI – such as the communist leader and partisan Giuseppe Dozza⁶⁶, the partisan Renato Giorgi⁶⁷, the socialist partisan Gianguido Borghese⁶⁸, and Umberto Terracini⁶⁹, a friend of Antonio Gramsci and one of the founders of the Communist Party of Italy during the Livorno Congress of 1921 – Einaudi's speech made no reference to the B.S.R. or other partisan groups, instead placing great emphasis on the patriotic sentiment of those who fell during the massacre⁷⁰. A few months earlier, on April 24, 1948, Einaudi had signed the decree granting the Gold Medal for Military Valor: in the first draft of the text, it was stated that the massacre aimed to “*overcome the undefeated resistance of its partisans*”, as well as “*eighteen hundred and thirty fallen from Marzabotto, civilians and partisans together embraced and still effused in a single halo of radiant and everlasting glory*”. In later revisions of the document, however, the terms “*Resistance*” and “*partisans*” were completely removed, emphasizing instead the sacrifice of the civilian population. This shift aligns with the anti-communist sentiment that was permeating Italian society and politics at the time⁷¹.

In 1955, however, the tenth anniversary of the Resistance commemoration occurred, characterized by the fact that the DC had to grant more concessions than in previous years. In the 1953 elections, although the DC maintained its primacy, there was a significant drop in support from the electorate. Therefore, the demands of the PCI were more firmly confirmed, and during the celebration, the presence of partisans and communist senators was allowed. Despite that, this symbolic participation was not reflected in the political sphere, as the DC, to counteract the decline in electoral support, began to turn increasingly towards far-right parties, including the Italian Social

⁶⁵https://www.anpi.it/patria-indipendente/media/uploads/patria/2012/11_Presentazione_MARZABOTTO.pdf

⁶⁶<https://www.anpi.it/biografia/giuseppe-dozza>

⁶⁷<https://www.anpi.it/biografia/renato-giorgi>

⁶⁸<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/archivio/persone/borghese-gianguido-detto-ferrero-e-rodì>

⁶⁹<https://www.anpi.it/biografia/umberto-terracini>

⁷⁰<https://www.cittadegliarchivi.it/pages/getDetail/idiUnit:776/archCode:FT0032>

⁷¹ Ventura A., “Monte Sole. La memoria pubblica del massacro”. op. cit., pag.3

Movement (MSI), a party composed of neo-fascists⁷². This choice had negative effects for the Christian Democrats, evident in the events of July 1960. During this period, Prime Minister Ferdinando Tambroni gave his permission for an MSI rally to be organized in Genoa, a city known for its “red” leanings and its role in the Resistance. Consequently, the Genoese partisan associations, ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans), and CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) decided to express their dissent and indignation, demanding Tambroni’s removal. This climate of tension quickly spread to other Italian cities, such as Rome and Reggio Emilia: in the latter, during a demonstration, dozens of people were seriously injured and five were killed, which subsequently led to Tambroni’s resignation⁷³.

1.3.3. The 1960s, the 1970s, and the historic compromise

Within a few years, a student and worker movement emerged, known as the Movement of 1968, which developed from the late 1960s into the 1970s. This movement affected many countries, but in Italy, it took on unique characteristics, including the notion of a “Betrayed Resistance”: the Resistance began to be seen as a class war, rather than a patriotic war, and thus as a popular revolt that was never fully realized⁷⁴.

It is interesting to note how the PCI behaved during the period from the 68 movement to the 1970s: it was a period of profound maturation for the party, as it condemned the Soviet intervention during the Prague Spring of 1968 and adopted an increasingly open stance, thanks in part to the rise of Enrico Berlinguer as party secretary. During this phase, the PCI acted in line with bipolar détente and the policies of the EEC, marking the end of the political-ideological rejection of the European integration process, which was no longer seen as a US political design⁷⁵.

This period was also marked by the introduction of ordinary state regions in the early 1970s, which led to the transfer of certain administrative responsibilities from the

⁷² Fogu C., “*Italiani brava gente: the legacy of fascist historical culture on Italian politics of memory*”, op. cit., pag.153

⁷³ Faccioli L., “I fatti del luglio 1960”, *E-Storia*, Anno II numero 3 - novembre 2012, pag. 22-24

⁷⁴ Forlenza R., “Sacrificial Memory and Political Legitimacy in Postwar Italy: Reliving and Remembering World War II”, op. cit., pag.75

⁷⁵ Ventresca R., “*Territorio, Europa, comunismo. Il Pci emiliano-romagnolo tra dimensione regionale e orizzonte internazionale (1975-1991)*”, op. cit., pag.428

national level to the regional level. The PCI had a significant tradition of local governance practice, especially in the Emilia-Romagna region, and consequently a crucial debate emerged within the Emilian-Romagnol communist party regarding the potential redefinition of the scope of intervention, proposals, and autonomy of local structures. However, this coincided with a period of severe economic slowdown that affected much of the Western world in the first half of the 1970s, including the collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system (1971), the global recession of 1974-75, the Yom Kippur War and the first oil shock, as well as the deterioration of the international economic landscape⁷⁶.

Returning to Berlinguer, starting in 1973, more precisely after the coup in Chile, he decided to commit to achieving the so-called “historic compromise”, which involved abandoning the opposition that party had against the DC. He realized that even if the PCI had a majority, the West would never allow it to govern⁷⁷. Despite the failure of this compromise, undoubtedly due to the international actors’ unwillingness to legitimize PCI policies and the party’s lack of political and social tools, Berlinguer’s political experience remained one of the most significant and original⁷⁸. Berlinguer had a very particular conception of revolution, which consisted of a process of transforming social and cultural structures through consensus, freedom, democracy, pluralism, and absolutely without any use of violence. Berlinguer’s thinking thus critically distanced itself from the Soviet experience. He considered the “Italian case” a model capable of recomposing a divided and conflicting society, especially in a historical period characterized by financial crises, two oil blockades, and the intensification of terrorist attacks⁷⁹. These events, along with inflation and Italy’s entry into the EMS (European Monetary System), made the PCI’s field of action at the local level very difficult. Despite numerous efforts, development plans and service provision at the regional level were practically unfeasible⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ Ventresca R., “Territorio, Europa, comunismo. Il Pci emiliano-romagnolo tra dimensione regionale e orizzonte internazionale (1975-1991)”, op. cit., pag.430-431

⁷⁷ T. Judt, *Postwar, a History of Europe since 1945*, op. cit., pag. 495

⁷⁸ Pons S. “Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo”, Torino, Einaudi, 2006

⁷⁹ Barbagallo F. “Enrico Berlinguer, il compromesso storico e l'alternativa democratica”, *Studi storici*, Anno 45, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 2004), pag 940-942

⁸⁰ Ventresca R., “Territorio, Europa, comunismo. Il Pci emiliano-romagnolo tra dimensione regionale e orizzonte internazionale (1975-1991)”. op. cit., pag.434-435

1.3.4. The 1980s and 1990s and the end of the Cold War

The 1980s were marked by a harsh attack on the antifascist narrative that had been told up to that point. This period is known as “Revisionism” precisely because there was a resurgence of accusations and criticisms regarding the Communist Party’s connection with the resistance movement, not only from right-wing parties but also from Bettino Craxi’s PSI⁸¹.

The PCI, however, became isolated again in the Italian landscape starting from the late 1970s, due to the renewed intensification of bipolar tension and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Consequently, the discussion about the Euromissiles was addressed in Parliament, where the votes in favor came from the DC, the PLI (Italian Liberal Party), the PSDI (Italian Democratic Socialist Party), the PRI (Italian Republican Party), and the PSI, while the PCI voted against it. This opposition vote did not signify a rapprochement with Moscow; on the contrary, for Berlinguer, the connection with the Soviet Union was a heavy constraint that prevented him from creating effective policies in Italian society⁸². However, from this point on, the influence of the PCI began to decline: during the 1979 political elections, for the VIII legislature, all parties more or less maintained the same electoral support as in 1976, except for the PCI, which lost 4 percentage points. Consequently, a coalition of the DC, PSI, PSDI, PRI, and PLI was formed, known as the “*Pentapartito*”, and lasted until the early 1990s. It is worth noting, however, that the decline in PCI votes did not translate into increased support for the aforementioned parties, as the votes were distributed between the PR (Radical Party) and NSU (New United Left)⁸³. Additionally, during this period, the long decline of the DC began, due to a combination of several causes. First, just a year earlier, its most charismatic leader and supporter of the historic compromise, Aldo Moro, was killed by the Red Brigades, and from then on, the party struggled to find an equally authoritative leader⁸⁴. Second, starting in 1992, one of the biggest scandals in the Italian scene occurred, called “*Tangentopoli*”, where a system of unparalleled corruption emerged from the operation called “*Mani Pulite*” (Clean Hands). This

⁸¹ Sierp A., “Italy’s Struggle with History and the Europeanisation of National Memory”, op. cit., pag.8

⁸² Colarizi S., “*Storia politica della Repubblica. 1943-2006: Partiti, movimenti e istituzioni*”, Roma-Bari, Laterza,, 2007, pag.139

⁸³ *Ivi* pag.141

⁸⁴ *Ivi* pag.145

scandal occurred because a member of the PSI, Mario Chiesa, was arrested in Milan in February 1992, caught red-handed while accepting a kickback: shortly after, he began to confess all the frauds and corruption related to high-profile figures in the Milanese and Italian political scene, both from the DC and the PSI. Shortly thereafter, in October 1992, Arnaldo Forlani resigned from his role as secretary of the DC – and was replaced by Fermo Martinazzoli – and in February 1993, Bettino Craxi (PSI) also resigned⁸⁵. Third, the DC was increasingly seen as a party incapable of representing an Italy that was more open to new customs and values⁸⁶. Finally, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, main reasons and interests that had driven voters to support it, namely the fear of communism, were gone⁸⁷.

The history of Italy from the postwar period to the end of the Cold War, although covering a short span of less than fifty years, is characterized by being extremely conflictual, marked by internal tensions and influenced by international hostilities. It is important to highlight the role that the process of preserving the memory of World War II had and how the memories of the massacres committed against the civilian population influenced the subsequent years of Reconstruction. This process had the grave flaw of not acknowledging the responsibilities of the Italian government and army, and, consequently, the debate on the Resistance, antifascism, and communism continued in the following decades, influencing Italy's political and social sphere.

⁸⁵ Giglioli P., “Political corruption and the media: the Tangentopoli affair”, *International social science journal*, 1996, pag. 381-382

⁸⁶ Colarizi S., “*Storia politica della Repubblica. 1943-2006: Partiti, movimenti e istituzioni*”, op. cit., pag.145

⁸⁷ Varsori A., “*L'Italia e la fine della guerra fredda. La politica estera dei governi Andreotti (1989-1992)*”, Bologna, Mulino, 2013, pag 23

CHAPTER TWO

The international commitment of the *Artisan of Peace*

2.1. Dante Cruicchi: some biographical notes

Dante Cruicchi was a figure of great importance, both in the context of Marzabotto and on the international level. Over the course of his long life, he held various significant roles, being a politician, local administrator, mayor of Marzabotto, journalist, and promoter of a vast network of international relations based on the values of peace, democracy, preservation of memory, cooperation among peoples, and respect for human rights.

Born in Castiglione dei Pepoli (Emilia-Romagna) on July 29, 1921, Cruicchi grew up in a family that embraced socialist ideals, which later evolved into communist convictions. His father, Bruno, adopted socialist and revolutionary ideals during the Great War, becoming a prominent figure of the PSI, while in January 1921, a few months before the birth of his son, he participated in the PSI Congress in Livorno, which marked the creation of the PCd'I (Partito Comunista d'Italia). It was during this event that he embraced communist beliefs, while the socialist section of Castiglione dei Pepoli, represented by the mayor Mariano Girotti, faced with the split, chose to remain loyal to the PSI. In Castiglione dei Pepoli, only 35 out of approximately 800 PSI members decided to join the PCd'I. Though it was a small number, this group, led by Bruno Cruicchi, managed to establish a section of the new party in the town¹.

It is important to emphasize Dante Cruicchi's family background, as it greatly influenced him. He absorbed his father's values, later reinterpreting them and making his own personal contribution in his early political activism and in the years that followed. In 1933, Dante moved with his family to France, specifically to Issy-les-Moulineaux, due to both his father's economic difficulties, exacerbated by the 1929 economic crisis, and political reasons, namely the consolidation of the fascist regime². Here, Dante attended high school, where he learned fluent French – a skill that proved extremely useful in the years to come, both in his journalistic career and in his international activities. In 1936, just fifteen years-old, Cruicchi became actively

¹ De Maria C, "*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*", op. cit., pag.27-30

² This topic was previously addressed in Chapter One, paragraph 1.1

involved in a support network for Italian volunteers heading to Spain to fight for the Republic. Two years later, he contributed to the creation of an antifascist youth center. However, in 1939, his father Bruno lost his job and, foreseeing the possibility of World War II, decided to move the family back to Italy. Dante served in the war, initially in Sicily in 1941, and later in the Balkans. In the spring of 1943, he was stationed in Kočevje, Slovenia, which had become part of the Italian province of Ljubljana following the Yugoslav Campaign. After the armistice of September 8, 1943, these territories were occupied by the Germans. As Cruicchi attempted to join the Yugoslav resistance to return to Italy, he was captured and interned in the Nazi camp of Luckenwalde, along with many other Italian soldiers whose army had disbanded across various fronts. It wasn't until the spring of 1945, with the advance of the Russian army towards Berlin, that Cruicchi regained his freedom³. Returning to Bologna in July of that same year, Cruicchi immediately resumed political activity, supporting the social-communist alliance and contributing to propaganda efforts in the lead-up to the 1946 local elections. In these elections, the first democratic vote in post-fascist Italy, Cruicchi ran on the PCI list and was elected as a councilor for Castiglione dei Pepoli. Despite the challenges posed by the complex postwar sociopolitical situation, which were felt both in Castiglione dei Pepoli and in other towns in Emilia-Romagna governed by the PCI, the so-called "Emilian model" took shape. This model was rooted in a socialist tradition aimed at building a political identity based on territorial engagement⁴. From the outset and throughout the following years, Cruicchi contributed to this model with his unique point of view, emphasizing the principles of internationalism and the importance of international cooperation among local entities⁵. He always maintained an international outlook, undoubtedly shaped by his life experiences, which led him to spend several years living outside Italy. This "calling" manifested itself throughout his life, starting with his journalism career, which began in the late 1940s. The first newspaper where Dante Cruicchi wrote was "*La Lotta*", the weekly publication of the Bologna Provincial Federation of the Italian Communist Party. His collaboration with this journal began more precisely in 1949, particularly in the section "*La voce della*

³ De Maria C, "*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*", op. cit., pag.33-39

⁴ This topic was previously addressed on pages 24-25

⁵ De Maria C, "*Tra esilio, deportazione e guerra*", op. cit., pag.44-47

montagna”, which reported on the political events of the Apennine region. As a city councilor, Cruicchi was the ideal person to describe the realities of these areas, which faced severe challenges related to poverty and unemployment, typical of the post-war reconstruction period. Cruicchi often clashed with the Catholic Bolognese newspaper “*L’Avvenire d’Italia*”, accusing it of disseminating biased information that only favored the DC. It is important to remember that during this period, international tensions related to the Cold War were intensifying, with clear repercussions on the national level⁶. Cruicchi’s politically driven journalism allowed him to gain greater prominence within *La Lotta*, eventually writing not only for the insert dedicated to the mountain regions but also in the main pages of the newspaper⁷. In 1950, he wrote his first article focused on international politics, concentrating on the Vietnamese liberation struggle. From that point onward, his articles became increasingly numerous, with a growing focus on foreign policy and international issues, such as the rejection of nuclear escalation. That same year, Cruicchi also published an article on the Hiroshima massacre, in which he urged the people of Bologna to sign the international petition for the abolition of nuclear weapons. His commitment was not limited to writing, as in the following years he took part in numerous commemorative events in the Japanese city, a symbol of wartime devastation, where most victims were civilians⁸.

Between 1954 and 1956, Cruicchi served as the editor-in-chief of *La Lotta*, a change that reduced his output of articles due to time constraints. During this tenure, he often found himself facing delicate situations, especially given the political climate of the time⁹. One emblematic episode was the complaint filed by the political unit of the Bologna police department, accusing Cruicchi of publishing on *La Lotta* graphic photographs of Nazi concentration camps, deemed “obscene and horrifying” and not in line with the directives of central authorities and the moral atmosphere of 1950s Italy¹⁰. Another episode involved a complaint related to an article published, again in *La Lotta*

⁶ Varsori A., “*Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell’Italia repubblicana*”, Bologna, Mulino, 2022, pag.159

⁷ Troilo M., “*Una vocazione internazionale: dall’attività giornalistica all’Unione Mondiale delle Città Martiri*”, in De Maria C. “L’artigiano della pace, Dante Cruicchi nel Novecento”, Bologna, CLUEB, 2013, pag. 49-51

⁸ *Ivi*, pag 52-53

⁹ *Ivi*, pag 54-56

¹⁰ “*Assolto a Barra un compagno che aveva affisso foto anti-noziste*”, *L’Unità*, 27 febbraio 1955, pag.2: https://archivio.unita.news/assets/main/1955/02/27/page_002.pdf

– this time the article was written in collaboration with the Provincial Communist Federation secretary, Rino Bonazzi – in which they called for government intervention, in agreement with union actions, to prevent the recurrence of so-called “white murders”, meaning deaths in the workplace. Both Bonazzi and Cruicchi were charged with “inciting hatred between social classes”, but the court ultimately acquitted them, stating that “the fact does not constitute a crime”¹¹.

Between 1957 and 1964, after concluding his experience at *La Lotta*, Cruicchi began his career as a foreign correspondent for “*L’Unità*”. At the same time, he continued his role as a PCI official, managing international relations. This period is not well-documented, as Cruicchi never provided a complete account of his travels. However, a notable journey in 1959 took him to Africa and the Middle East for four months, during which he sought to document the fight against colonialism. He met several key international figures, including representatives of the National Liberation Front (FNL) in Algeria and the secretary of the Moroccan Communist Party, Ali Yata¹². Cruicchi played a central role in fostering relations between the PCI and Guinea, which had gained independence through a referendum in 1958. He managed to establish ties with the “*Parti Démocratique de la Guinée*” (PDG) and its leader, President Sékou Touré. Cruicchi offered a positive assessment of the situation in Guinea, even though Western governments, particularly France, disapproved of the country’s independence and its growing closeness to the Soviet Union. In the eyes of the PCI, and Cruicchi himself, Touré was pursuing a form of “democratic path to socialism”¹³, although, in reality, he had established a dictatorship that would eventually lead to the exile of thousands of political opponents¹⁴. The relations between the PCI and the Non-Aligned Movement were indeed unique, marked by a moment of convergence because of a meeting between Palmiro Togliatti and Josip Broz Tito in May 1956. Both leaders agreed on the need to move away from the rigidly bipolar international context of the Cold War. However, their strategic goals diverged: while Tito aimed to build a network of relations with

¹¹ “*Interessante sentenza di assoluzione a Bologna*”, *L’Unità*, 17 dicembre 1955, pag. 2: https://archivio.unita.news/assets/main/1955/12/17/page_002.pdf

¹² Troilo M, “*Una vocazione internazionale: dall’attività giornalistica all’Unione Mondiale delle Città Martiri*”, op. cit., pag. 56-57

¹³ Siracusano G., “*Il PCI e il processo d’indipendenza dell’Africa nera francese (1958.1961)*”, *Studi Storici*, vol. 57, no.1, 2016, pag 189-218

¹⁴ Diallo A., “*Sékou Touré 1957-1961. Mythe et réalités*”, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2008, pag.137

emerging nations, Togliatti sought a transition to socialism in Western countries, which he believed should lay the groundwork for the decolonization process. This lack of alignment in their broader objectives meant that the strategic convergence between Togliatti and Tito did not solidify. Additionally, there were differences regarding Stalin's legacy and the role of the Soviet Union. Despite this, both the PCI and the Non-Aligned Movement shared a fundamental commitment to supporting the independence struggles of Asian and African nations, with the expectation of a "collapse of colonialism as a system of global domination by a small minority of imperialist states"¹⁵.

In 1959, Cruicchi took on the role of secretary of the International Organization of Journalists in Prague, a position that he held for two years. Upon returning to Italy in 1962, he resumed his political activity within the PCI¹⁶. He was re-elected as a city councilor, this time in San Benedetto Val di Sambro, a town in the Apennines halfway between Marzabotto and Castiglione dei Pepoli. He held this office for two terms. Unlike his first experience as a city councilor, which was marked by the post-war reconstruction and a strong social cohesion at the local government level, his tenure as councilor in the late 1960s and early 1970s was shaped by the broader transformations occurring internationally, which also echoed in small local contexts. For instance, on August 4, 1974, a neo-fascist terrorist attack on a train passing through San Benedetto Val di Sambro, later known as the "Italicus massacre", resulted in the deaths of twelve people and left over forty injured¹⁷. During the same period, Cruicchi gained further political experience in local administrations, first as a provincial councilor and later as a provincial assessor for roads and transports in Bologna. This was a particularly interesting time for Cruicchi, as it coincided with the establishment of the Italian regions, which created a new institutional framework and restructured the overall system of public powers.

In 1975, Cruicchi was elected mayor of Marzabotto, a position he held until 1985, serving two terms. In the first term, the PCI – in coalition with the PSI – won 69.9% of

¹⁵ Galeazzi M., *"Il PCI e il movimento dei paesi non allineati, 1955-1975"*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2011, pag-37-38

¹⁶ Troilo M., *"Una vocazione internazionale: dall'attività giornalistica all'Unione Mondiale delle Città Martiri"*, op. cit., pag. 57-59

¹⁷ Menzani T., *"Al servizio dei cittadini. L'impegno di Dante Cruicchi nelle amministrazioni locali"*, in De Maria C. *"L'artigiano della pace, Dante Cruicchi nel Novecento"*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2013, pag. 122-123

the vote, while in the second, the PCI – running alone – obtained 62.7%. Despite the challenges posed by the national and international context, and even as labor and student struggles were beginning to be seen as part of the past, the PCI maintained a strong foothold in this local area, rooted in the strong antifascist sentiment that permeated the Marzabotto community. During his years as mayor, Cruicchi enjoyed a solid majority in the city council. Even in the 1985-90 term, when he could no longer serve as mayor but returned as a councilor, strong cohesion resisted¹⁸. As mayor, Cruicchi implemented numerous changes and made significant efforts to improve various aspects of life in Marzabotto.

First and foremost, he focused on countering the growing depopulation of the Bologna Apennines, primarily caused by declining job opportunities and economic depression in the region, by promoting incentives and infrastructure. Business owners received tax relief and other contributions, and the secondary road network surrounding the newly opened “*Autostrada del Sole*”, which connects Bologna and Florence and was inaugurated in December 1960, was modernized. Great attention was given to transportation and mobility, with the introduction of a network of buses, coaches, and trams, in line with the Emilian model, which emphasized welfare, popular participation, and social progress. This approach provided services at reduced or even free costs, promoting wage integration, economic development, and increased consumption. The cost of local welfare was then offset by overall growth in productive activities¹⁹.

Another significant aspect Cruicchi focused on as mayor and councilor was building and consolidating Marzabotto’s identity through official initiatives and commemorations of the Monte Sole massacre. Thanks to Cruicchi, Marzabotto became a symbol of Nazi horrors even on an international level²⁰. This was particularly evident starting in October 1982, when the “*Comitato Regionale per le Onoranze ai Caduti di Marzabotto*” was established. This Committee was created by Cruicchi, who institutionalized the existing local committees responsible for organizing April 25th celebrations and the commemoration of the massacre, along with the “*Comitato per le Onoranze ai Caduti*”. Cruicchi was appointed President, the Statute was approved in

¹⁸ Menzani T., “*Al servizio dei cittadini. L’impegno di Dante Cruicchi nelle amministrazioni locali*”, op. cit., pag. 124-128

¹⁹ *Ivi*, pag. 129-133

²⁰ *Ivi*, pag. 135-136

1983, and the Committee became operational in the mid-1980s, expanding commemorative events and initiatives²¹.

2.2. The creation of transnational networks

Simultaneously, with his work as a journalist and political-administrative figure, Cruicchi also took part in international activities. During this period, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Non-Aligned Movement was taking shape, but at the same time, networks of municipal internationalism were also emerging. In this context, it is important to highlight the role played by Tito's Yugoslavia in order to provide a well-defined historical background to better understand its dissolution and the fratricidal war that inflamed the territories of the former Yugoslavia, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The Non-Aligned Movement was strongly promoted by Yugoslavia, which, for example, hosted the Belgrade Conference in September 1961, attended by 25 states from four continents. This endorsement had both ideological foundations — for instance, the criteria for joining the movement were primarily to have an independent foreign policy, to pursue peaceful coexistence, not to interfere in the internal affairs of other sovereign states, but above all, to reject any alliance with the military superpowers of the Cold War — but also brought domestic benefits. This movement, in fact, legitimized single-party rule, and later in 1974, Yugoslavia constitutionally approved its status as a Non-Aligned state. As for the role of municipalities in this context, it can be said that they played a significant role, especially after Stalin's death in 1953, since from that moment on they assumed the role of promoters of dialogue between East and West. However, the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 led to the freezing of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, which lasted until the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, thus preventing further Yugoslav mediation efforts. During this period, Yugoslavia sought to promote international relations between the global North and South, as evidenced by Tito's trip to India and Burma in December 1954 and the meeting with Egyptian leader Nasser and Indian Prime Minister Nehru on the island of Brioni in 1956²². It was

²¹<https://www.martirimarzabotto.it/storia/>

²² Unkovski-Korica V., "Non-aligned Cities in the Cold War: Municipal Internationalism, Town Twinning and the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia, c.1950–c.1985", *The International History Review*, 44(3), pag.560-564

precisely during this period that one of the most important city associations on the international scene was created: the “*Fédération Mondiale de Villes Jumelées*” (FMVJ) in 1957 – which in the late 1980s became the “*Fédération Mondiale de Cités Unies*” in French and “United Towns Organisation” (UTO) in English – which included many representatives from Yugoslav cities. The FMVJ was founded on the basis of another association, “*Le Monde Bilingue*”, which was established in Paris in 1951 by former Resistance member Jean-Marie Bressand and other academics and journalists, including Dante Cruicchi. The aim was to promote bilingual education as a tool for fostering communication and understanding among peoples, with the goal of establishing lasting peace²³.

The FMVJ, instead, brings together various territorial entities, including cities, provinces, and regions. It operates in 74 countries, mainly in Europe, Francophone Africa, the Arab world, Latin America, and Canada, with a smaller presence in Southeast Asia. The FMVJ focuses both on city twinning, and on the organization of international relations between local communities²⁴. For the FMVJ, in fact, cities play an increasingly important role in economic, social, and cultural development²⁵. Along with Cruicchi, key figures in the Federation included former mayor of Florence Giorgio La Pira, who became president of the federation in 1967²⁶, and the partisan Giulio Dolchi²⁷. At a FMVJ meeting in Rimini on June 15-16, 1978, Dolchi introduced a motion that summarized the federation’s core mission:

The International Council of the World Federation of Twin Cities–United Cities (...) recalls that the FMVJ is a movement born from the Resistance and founded on its tradition of friendship and solidarity after the Second World War; believes that peace, both today and in the future, can only be achieved through an

²³ Stasi B., Bressand J.M., “La Fédération Mondiale Des Villes Jumelées Cités-Unies - Vingt Ans Après.” *La Revue Administrative*, vol. 31, no.181, 1978, pag.63

²⁴ For further reading on the topic, see also: Klabjan B. “Twinning across the Adriatic: history, memory and municipal co-operation between Italy and Yugoslavia during the Cold War”, *Urban History*. Published online 2023:1-14. doi:10.1017/S0963926823000160

²⁵ Archivio del Comitato regionale per le onoranze ai caduti di Marzabotto - Centro di documentazione per lo studio delle stragi nazifasciste e delle rappresaglie di guerra, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, busta 18b, fascicolo 27

²⁶<https://giorgiolapira.org/la-vita-in-sintesi/>

²⁷<https://www.anpi.it/biografia/giulio-dolchi>

understanding of the sacrifices experienced by cities and their populations during the war; and expresses its warmest wishes for the broad dissemination of the FMVJ's inquiry on disarmament and martyr cities²⁸.

A document of great interest that precisely outlines the values on which the FMVJ is founded is an editorial written by Jean-Marie Bressand for the Congress celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Federation, held from October 29 to November 2, 1977. Originally intended for publication in "*Cités Unies*", Bressand made it available to all members so that it could be distributed through the press in other countries as well. The theme of the editorial was "*la Commune, espoir du monde*", but many other aspects were explored, including the defense of human rights and the interdependence of peoples. In his editorial, Bressand highlighted the importance of the five "Ds" that characterized the FMVJ: "*Démocratie, Décolonisation, Développement, Désarmement, Détente*". Among these, Democracy was emphasized as the essential foundation for achieving the other goals.

The FMVJ also played a central role in the process of establishing the World Union of Martyr Cities, which will be discussed in detail in the following section. Although this association was officially founded in Bastogne on February 6, 1982, its precursor can be traced to Bologna on September 27-28, 1979, during a convention dedicated to martyr cities held in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the start of World War II. In that setting, Jean-Marie Bressand, as a delegate of the FMVJ, declared:

The true way to respect and honor those who have died is to desire, and do everything possible to ensure that there are no more wars, no more destruction, no more massacres — in other words, no more inequalities, exploitation, or domination.

(...) [The Federation] seeks to promote an authentic local democracy, real citizen participation, cooperation from all, at their level and according to their abilities, across all geographical and political borders, as was the case in the Resistance.

The FMVJ has defended and will always defend Human Rights: its Charter states this repeatedly. For respect for humanity, tolerance, and also the rejection

²⁸ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3. Translated from French by the author.

of all forms of racism, fascism, totalitarianism, or imperialism, are essential for true peace.

(...) It is through cooperative solidarity replacing competitive cooperation that a new path can be found, leading to that millennial peace dreamed of by Professor Giorgio La Pira, who left a deep mark on our Movement. The cities, at the grassroots level, can set an example for the summit by weaving thousands of city twinnings across the world, particularly between industrialized cities in the North and underdeveloped communes in the South²⁹.

The values of the FMVJ reflect those of many other organizations related to martyred cities, twin cities, or cities of peace: respect for human rights, the rejection of war and inequalities, the importance of disarmament, and especially the central role that cities play in pursuing lasting peace. A distinctive feature of the FMVJ, however, is the emphasis on the Resistance, while the World Union of Martyr Cities focuses on the Nazi massacres that took place in martyred cities, highlighting the importance of memory. These values are also present in other organizations in which Cruicchi himself was actively involved. For example, in 1990, he simultaneously held the position of delegate president of the “Italian Committee of Twin Cities”, vice president of the “Association of Italian Municipalities Decorated for Military Valor”, and vice president of the “World Union of Cities of Peace”. However, this last association faced significant difficulties, and in 1991 it was merged with the World Union of Martyred Cities, creating the “World Union of Martyred Cities, Cities of Peace”, where Cruicchi retained his position as vice president³⁰.

²⁹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3. Translated from French by the author.

³⁰ Troilo M, “*Una vocazione internazionale: dall’attività giornalistica all’Unione Mondiale delle Città Martiri*”, op. cit., pag. 70-72

2.3. The World Union of Martyred Cities, Cities of Peace

2.3.1. The International Convention of the Martyred Towns and Victims of All Wars (Bologna, 1979)

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the World Union of Martyr Cities was formally established in Bastogne on February 6, 1982, but the process leading to its creation began several years earlier. On October 22, 1977, Dante Cruicchi, then mayor of Marzabotto and vice president of the National Association of Italian Cities Decorated for Military Valor, together with Guido Bonino, mayor of Cuneo and president of the Association of Italian Cities that Participated in the Resistance, traveled to Kragujevac (an industrial city in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) to take part in the celebrations for the 36th anniversary of the Nazi massacre that claimed the lives of over 7,000 people. During this visit, Cruicchi and Bonino met with the mayor of Kragujevac, Borivoje Petrović, as well as several prominent figures in the Yugoslav scene: Djordje Paunović, president of the Municipal Conference of the Socialist Workers' Association of Kragujevac and president of the Commission for Collaboration with Yugoslav and Foreign Cities; Milan Milošević, president of the Municipal Conference of the Socialist Youth Association; Tomislav Jerinić, head of the Municipality's Information Secretariat; and Milorad Milić, secretary of the Foreign Relations Council of the Permanent Conference of Yugoslav Cities. On this occasion, it was agreed to promote an International Convention for the 40th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, involving the cities that had most suffered from fascist violence and had worked in defense of peace. The aim was to condemn fascism, as well as neo-fascist violence. Mayor Petrović proposed expanding the concept of "cities victims of aggression" to include not only cities that suffered from Nazi and fascist horrors, but also all cities victimized by aggression in the postwar period, in order to condemn all forms of aggression against humanity. He cited examples of cities in Korea, Algeria, and Vietnam. It was also agreed that a preparatory meeting for the International Convention was necessary and would be held again in Kragujevac in 1978³¹.

³¹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3

The date was set for June 27-28, but this preparatory meeting did not take place due to some difficulties. Firstly, Jean-Marie Bressand expressed his disagreement in a letter addressed to Cruicchi on June 5, 1978, stating:

I will not participate in the meeting in Kragujevac, Yugoslavia, because by only selecting certain cities, we are turning our backs on the necessary pluralism, and the documents show traditional rhetoric, covering all ambiguities. It is better to continue this matter without me, for I have too much respect for the Resistance and the past sufferings to fall into partisan routine³².

Secondly, ten delegations from ten different cities were invited – Kragujevac, Marzabotto, Minsk, Thulle, Lidice, Coventry, Kalavryta, Sétif, Guernica, Warsaw – but three cities did not promptly respond to the invitation. Consequently, as evidenced by a letter from Cruicchi to Dolchi dated October 25, 1976, the meeting was postponed³³.

The new preliminary meeting was held in Milan on March 9, 1979, because, as Cruicchi stated in a letter to Bressand on January 23 of the same year, “*les amis yougoslaves ont eu des difficultés à l’organiser*”. However, there were also absences here, as Cruicchi reported in a communication dated March 21, 1979, to the National Association of Italian Cities Decorated for Military Valor: “There was the participation of cities from Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, Poland, Spain, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Algeria (the British and French cities did not attend for reasons beyond their control)”. In this same communication, it was confirmed that in September 1979, in Bologna, the International Convention of the Martyred Towns and Victims of All Wars would take place, “to solemnly reaffirm total opposition to violence and, at the same time, engage peoples (...) in the practical search for mutual cooperation that allows the realization of concrete, convinced, and lasting peace.”³⁴

The Convention took place on Thursday, September 27, and Friday, September 28, in the Council Chamber of Bologna. On the following day, in Marzabotto’s main square, the annual popular commemorative event was held to remember the victims of the Monte Sole massacre, attended by the President of the Italian Republic, Sandro Pertini.

³² ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3. Translated from French by the author.

³³ *Ibidem*

³⁴ *Ibidem*

At the Bologna Convention, beyond the delegations of martyr cities, Guido Bonino, Cruicchi's companion during the earlier visit to Kragujevac and present as president of the National Association of Cities Decorated for Military Valor, was also present. In a previous letter from Cruicchi, dated September 3, 1979, and addressed to Bonino, he stated that "your Association could play an essential role within our Federation as a center particularly tasked with issues of safeguarding peace". On September 27, Bonino delivered the speech "The contribution of municipalities to peace among peoples", followed by other speeches such as: "Disarmament as a human responsibility" by the president of the City Assembly of Zagreb, Ivo Latin; "Peace education" by the vice president of the city of Warsaw, Stanislaw Bielecki; and "Positive effects of peace policy" by the president of the National Assembly of Senegal and the FMVJ Amadou Cissé Dia. The assembly was also chaired by the mayors of Bologna, Renato Zangheri, and of Boves, Giorgio Biarese. On the second day of the assembly, chaired by the president of the regional government of Piedmont, Aldo Viglione, and Emilia-Romagna, Lanfranco Turci, two working groups were formed: the first tasked with drafting a world peace manifesto, and the second with writing an appeal for disarmament. Ivo Latin's speech deserves particular attention, as it addresses the theme of disarmament by analyzing the causes of violence and armed conflict:

There are numerous causes of human conflicts; the relationships between patricians and slaves in antiquity; relations between nobles and serfs in feudalism; the relationship between private property and capitalist relations; between money and labor forces; the peak of fascism and anti-fascism up to today's opposition between blocs, which constitutes a source of threats bordering on war³⁵.

An equally significant speech was that of Jean-Marie Bressand, titled "For a world without masters or slaves" also mentioned in the previous paragraph, where he reiterated the role of the Resistance in the process of building lasting peace, highlighting the heroic role of those who were killed in the war and how important it is to maintain and preserve the memory of the horrors of the Second World War. He also emphasized

³⁵ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3. Translated from Italian by the author.

the role of the FMVJ, stating: “The Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées-Cités Unies (FMVJ) wanted to be present at this meeting because many of its members came from the Resistance; they paid with their persons, many comrades, with their lives. Most of its founders and leaders, now four decades ago, were directly engaged in the war”. He also presented a “peace plan” to bring all people together, because “we must bring together men from all countries, all religions, all races, and make them cooperate in a common endeavor based on common principles”³⁶. The speech also included a proposed text for a Peace Declaration, which stated:

We declare ourselves ready to begin a dialogue without exclusivity, without prejudice, with the citizens of all the cities of the world,

- to fulfill the immense task of reducing the economic and educational imbalance that exists between the peoples of the planet,
- to induce the conversion of the billions of Francs swallowed up each year for war and its preparation into expenses aimed at protecting and improving human life.

We invite all the cities of the world to join together to urge governments’ decisions towards disarmament, détente, cooperation that succeeds peaceful coexistence, and ultimately towards “peace”³⁷.

Finally, in a note on the conference, it emerged that it was decided to keep this Congress essentially of a European nature, primarily for two reasons: first, the difficulty in identifying which world cities to invite and understanding which to exclude, and secondly, because in October-November of the same year, the world congress of veterans’ associations was held, with delegations from all five continents, and unnecessary overlaps were thus avoided³⁸.

This Congress, held in Bologna, was a prelude to the meeting in Bastogne on February 6, 1982, which led to the creation of the Association, where representatives of the

³⁶ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3

³⁷ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3.2

³⁸ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3

twelve founding martyr cities gathered: Arnhem (Netherlands), Bastogne (Belgium), Coventry (Great Britain), Cuneo (Italy), Kalavryta (Greece), Kragujevac (Yugoslavia), Madrid (Spain), Marzabotto (Italy), Warsaw (Poland), Verdun (France), Volgograd (Soviet Union), and Wiltz (Luxembourg). A first assembly was also scheduled in Verdun in October of the same year, where the Statute of the World Union of Martyr Cities was approved, and Dante Cruicchi was elected Secretary-General³⁹.

2.3.2. The Statute of the World Union of Martyr Cities

The Statute of the World Union of Martyr Cities, Cities of Peace, establishes a series of objectives aimed at promoting respect for human rights and international cooperation. First and foremost, it sets the goal of taking concrete action for peace, particularly by working in schools, educating youth, fostering mutual understanding among peoples, respecting differences, and promoting reciprocal cooperation. In this context, the Statute references both governments and international actors such as the UN, UNICEF, the ILO, FAO, and UNESCO, stipulating that they must pursue the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Statute asserts that cities must commit to promoting actions that influence public opinion in order to raise genuine interest in the following issues: détente, disarmament, respect for human rights, children's rights, the rights of peoples, and world hunger. These objectives and themes are outlined in the first two articles of the Statute: in the second article, it is further stated:

Considering that the only means of resolving disputes is negotiation, the Union condemns any recourse to force, violence, and war, whatever the forms and means may be⁴⁰.

Article 4, however, specifies more technical aspects, such as the role of the General Assembly: on the proposal of the Executive Committee, its responsibilities include the approval of budgets and accounts, the amendment of the Statute, and the ratification of the admission or exclusion of members. In the same article, the functioning of the

³⁹https://archivi.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/ibc-cms/cms.find?flagfind=customXdamsTree&id=IBCAS01465&munu_str=0_1_1&numDoc=7&docStart=1&backward=&hierStatus=4.1.c.c.0&docCount=25&physDoc=20&comune=Marzabotto#nogo

⁴⁰ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3.2

agenda is also explained, stating that the General Assembly can only deliberate on the points contained in it, unless two-thirds of the members present decide otherwise. The General Assembly can deliberate when half of the members are present or represented, and each decision requires the favorable vote of the absolute majority of those present. Article 5, meanwhile, specifies the role and characteristics of the Executive Committee, which consists of a maximum of 15 members representing the founding cities, including the President and four Vice-Presidents. The President is the legal representative of the Association, as he convenes and chairs the meetings of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly, ensures compliance with statutory regulations, and, in case of urgency, takes the necessary measures, which will then be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval at the next available meeting. As in the General Assembly, decisions are made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and are recorded in minutes, signed by the President and the Secretary, and deposited in a special register at the headquarters⁴¹. Article 6 specifies the financial resources on which the association relies, namely from membership fees set by the Executive Committee, and any donations or grants from public bodies or private individuals. Finally, Article 7 explains how to proceed in the event of the dissolution of the association, which must be declared by the General Assembly with a two-thirds majority of the members present. In such a case, any funds or property of the Association must be donated to UNICEF or another international organization designated by the Executive Committee⁴².

This Statute not only outlines an operational framework, but embodies a vision of a more just and peaceful world, centered on a series of universal values and principles that are not merely stated abstractly, but are actively pursued through targeted actions, peace education, the involvement of younger generations, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and the firm rejection of violence and war.

⁴¹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.14, fasc.3.2

⁴² *Ibidem*

CHAPTER THREE

International initiatives related to the Yugoslav Wars

3.1. War in the former Yugoslavia and the international context

The disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remains a subject of intense debate, with conflicting opinions on its causes and the inevitability of its collapse. Scholars and analysts hold differing views on whether the breakup was an unavoidable outcome of deep-rooted issues or if it could have been prevented through political reforms or different leadership¹.

One central discourse revolves around the controversial figure of Josip Tito, as his legacy is marked by both achievements and criticisms. On one hand, he is celebrated as a symbol of political stability, having maintained 35 years of internal peace and improving living standards during his rule from 1945 to 1980. His leadership was also helped by the prestige he gained during World War II, when Yugoslavia's communist movement successfully resisted occupying forces largely without Soviet military assistance. However, several authors and historians argue that Tito's system was ultimately unable to create a long-lasting political system capable of containing Yugoslavia's ethnic tensions and separatist pressures. They critique Tito's adoption of the Soviet constitutional model, because it failed also in the USSR, and they also contest that the model of national integration Tito employed was inappropriate for the region's unique complexities². Furthermore, the division of Yugoslavia into federal units was decided by a small group of senior communist officials and, in many cases, without the consent of the populations concerned. Following the Soviet example, Serbia was given a central and powerful role within the federation and in fact Belgrade was declared the capital. Although each republic had its right of secession included in the constitutional principles regulating the federation since 1946 and endowed with its own political and cultural institutions, real political power remained firmly in the hands of Tito and the Communist Party. This authoritarian structure was supported by two other key pillars: the military and the political police, both of which were dominated by

¹ Ramet S.P., "Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pag1-34

² Pirjevec J., "*Tito e i suoi compagni*", Bologna, Punto Einaudi Bologna, 2015

Serbian officers. This imbalance fueled resentment in other parts of Yugoslavia, especially in Croatia. The highly centralized and authoritarian nature of Tito's regime lacked mechanisms to effectively manage or prevent national and ethnic conflicts³. As a result, the system struggled to absorb the growing inter-ethnic tensions that would later contribute to Yugoslavia's violent breakup⁴. On the other hand, some argue that external influences, such as the end of the Cold War, pressure from Western powers, and the shifting geopolitical landscape, significantly contributed to Yugoslavia's collapse. The weakening of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and the broader push for democratization across the region also played a role in destabilizing the Yugoslav state⁵. Richard Holbrooke, American diplomat and key figure behind the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the conflict in the former Yugoslavia⁶, makes a comprehensive analysis and summarizes these two aspects into five main factors that led to the war in his work "*To End a War*":

Five major factors helped explain the tragedy: first, a misreading of Balkan history; second, the end of the Cold War; third, the behavior of the Yugoslav leaders themselves; fourth, the inadequate American response to the crisis; and, finally, the mistaken belief of the Europeans that they could handle their first post-Cold War challenge on their own⁷.

This first aspect, the misreading of Balkan history, is reflected in the words of Roger Cohen, who stated – drawing on long-established stereotypes – that “the notion of killing people... because of something that may have happened in 1495 is unthinkable in the Western world. Not in the Balkans”⁸, but also in David Kaplan's book "*Balkan Ghosts*". The second aspect, the end of the Cold War, does not exclusively pertain to the

³ Gallagher T., “My neighbour, my enemy: the manipulation of ethnic identity and the origins and conduct of war in Yugoslavia”. In: Turton D., “*War and Ethnicity, global connections and local violence*”, United Kingdom, Boydell&Brewer, 2003, pag.49-50

⁴ Woodward S. L., “*Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*”, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 1995, pag.13-14

⁵ Zaccaria B., “A Failed Transition: Ante Marković, the European Commission, and the End of the Cold War (1989–1990)”, In: *Breaking Down Bipolarity: Yugoslavia's Foreign Relations during the Cold War*, edited by Martin Previšić, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021, pag. 249-268.

⁶<https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Bosnia-Erzegovina/Holbrooke-il-negoziatore-85665>

⁷ Holbrooke R., “*To End a War*”, New York, Random House, Inc., 1999, pag.21-22

⁸ Todorova M., “*Imagining the Balkans*”, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pag.6

dynamics of the international landscape, but also to the internal situation in Yugoslavia. In January 1990, the League of Communist of Yugoslavia dissolved⁹. That same year, the first multiparty elections were held, which saw the rise of nationalist parties, namely the *Stranka Demokratske Akcije* (SDA, the Bosnian Muslim nationalist party), the *Socijalistička Partija Srbije* (SDS, the Serbian nationalist party), the *Demokratska Opozicija Slovenije* (DEMOS, a coalition of Slovenian centre-right political parties) and the *Hrvatska demokratska Zajednica* (HDZ, the Croatian nationalist party)¹⁰. The rise of nationalism is closely tied to the end of the Cold War, as it led to the collapse of ideological foundations, the end of the logic of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the subsequent escalation of inter-republican tensions. The governments of Slovenia and Croatia began advocating for a shift towards confederation and, ultimately, independence. Serbia, however, was strongly opposed to this move, as it had significant Serbian minorities living in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina – Slovenia, instead, was ethnically more homogeneous. Croatia’s push for independence triggered fierce resistance among many Serbs in Croatia, who viewed the dissolution of Federal Yugoslavia as a drastic change in their status, from being part of the largest national group within the federation to becoming a national minority within an independent Croatia. There were 580.000 Serbs living in Croatia – 12.2% of the republic’s population – and 1.4 million in Bosnia-Herzegovina – 31%¹¹. However on June 25, 1991, both Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared their independence, causing significant divisions within the international community. Some countries viewed these declarations as illegal secession from Yugoslavia, while others argued that the break was legitimate and resulted in the creation of new states. This situation led to a swift reaction from the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA)¹².

While Slovenia emerged relatively unharmed from the so-called “Ten-Day War”, Croatia faced far more intense and protracted fighting. Violent clashes broke out in

⁹ Vujacic V., Zaslavsky V., “The Causes of Disintegration in the USSR and Yugoslavia”, *Telos*, 88, 1991, pag.120

¹⁰<https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Bosnia-Herzegovina/The-elections-of-1990-the-year-zero-of-Bosnian-ethnocracy-206518>

¹¹ Calic M, “Yugoslavia’s Wars of succession 1991-1999”. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, Abingdon, New York, Routledge - Taylor&Francis Group, 2021, pag.514

¹² Glaurdic J., “*The Hour of Europe. Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*”, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011

regions such as Banija, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, where Croatian forces confronted the JNA. Serb militias proceeded to carry out mass killing of Croatian civilians and soldiers in Kozibrod, on July, 26, 1991. As a result, on September 14, 1991 the Croatian government attacked all Serb garrisons on its territory. Then the JNA initiated a major offensive from eastern Slavonia, expelling the non-Serbs population, and surrounded and bombed the city of Vukovar. The city surrendered in the fall, alongside Dubrovnik. Within weeks, eastern Croatia and the Krajina region, but also the border with Bosnia, fell entirely under the Serb control, and more than half a million Croats were systematically displaced or forced to flee. To this delicate situation was added the fact that there was no unified response from the European states, as Germany decided to unilaterally recognize Slovenia and Croatia. Consequently, the other states of the European Community also chose to recognize them in January 1992¹³.

The escalating war in Croatia further exacerbated the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as it was the most ethnically diverse republic. Its population was composed of 43.5% Bosnian Muslims, 31.2% Serbs, 17.4% Croats, and 5.5% from other nationalities. Following Germany's positive stance towards a possible recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, Bosnian Muslim leaders also sought recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state, fearing Serb domination during this highly complex period. On October 14, 1991, Bosnia's parliament passed a resolution in favor of independence, despite the opposition from the Serb party. On December 24, 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina's government petitioned the European Community for official recognition, along with Macedonia, Slovenia, and Croatia. The response of the 'Badinter Committee' – the committee of experts established in the framework of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia launched in September 1991 at Hague, pointed at the need for a referendum to be held to decide on future independence. This further intensified the tensions, and Bosnian Serbs acted like their fellow Serbs have proceeded in Croatia¹⁴. At the beginning of 1992, the Bosnian Serbs declared the "*Republika Srpska*" (Serb Republic). On April 6, 1992, after a referendum which confirmed independence but to which Bosnian serbs did not participate, the European Community officially recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state: the following day, the

¹³ Calic M, "Yugoslavia's Wars of succession 1991-1999". op. cit., pag.514-515

¹⁴ Ivi, pag.516

Bosnian Serbs proclaimed their independence from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and with the help of the JNA, they launched a series of large-scale attacks, targeting the areas in the east along the Drina River, northern Posavina corridor, eastern Herzegovina, and Bosnian Krajina. Within a few months, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes, while tens of thousands were brutally killed. The Bosnian-Muslim Territorial Defense Force's fighters were no match for the combined forces of the Serbian army and Bosnian Serb troops, which included paramilitary units and volunteers like Arkan's "*Tigers*", Vojislav Šešelj's "*Chetniks*", and the "*White Eagles*". By July 1992, just four months after the war began, the Serbs had seized control of more than two-thirds of Bosnia's territory¹⁵. The Bosnian Serbs committed extremely cruel war crimes, such as separating family members into different concentration camps, targeting civilians while they were receiving food and water supplies, and besieging cities – most notably the siege of Sarajevo, which lasted 44 months. However, the most heinous atrocity was the ethnic cleansing they perpetrated. The gravest case was the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, where over 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed in just a few days. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly worsened in the autumn of 1992, when relations between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats deteriorated due to disagreements about the future constitution of an independent state. This led to the so-called "Second War" between the former allies, during which both sides committed violations of humanitarian law. In this context, Croatia's image as an innocent victim of Serbia quickly changed¹⁶.

3.2. The role of international actors in promoting peace during the Yugoslav Wars

In the middle of this complex and delicate situation, various international actors attempted both to mediate in hopes of reaching an agreement between the warring parties and to protect the civilian population. One notable body was the Council of Europe, whose Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities met several times to discuss the ongoing war in the former Yugoslavia. On July 5, 1991, they convened and declared:

¹⁵ Calic M, "Yugoslavia's Wars of succession 1991-1999". op. cit., pag.516

¹⁶ Ivi, pag.517

The Bureau of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE) expresses its profound emotion at events in Yugoslavia and condemns severely and outright the use of force against the populations and democratically-elected authorities of the Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, by a Federal army sometimes acting beyond any political control. The Bureau expresses its solidarity with the victims of violence and with the population as a whole currently under threat. (...) It launches forthwith an appeal to all municipalities, towns, provinces and regions in Europe to demonstrate publicly their condemnation of violence, their solidarity in respect of the population and the local and regional authorities concerned – victims of this violence – and to support the action of European Institutions by all appropriate means¹⁷.

In this session, the appeal addressed to “municipalities, towns, provinces, and regions” is particularly interesting, as it highlights the crucial role that local entities could play during an ongoing conflict. Their role was to raise public awareness and put pressure on European institutions to take action and end the violence. Another noteworthy appeal from the CLRAE dates back to October 25, 1991, and was characterized by being more specific and concise. It referred to the siege of Dubrovnik and states: “Following the distress call issued by the Mayor of Dubrovnik, (...) Lucien Sergent, President of the CLRAE, condemns the deliberate acts of destruction to which this town, belonging to the European and world heritage, is subjected”¹⁸.

Still in October 1991, a further example of local entities collaborating towards resolving the ongoing conflict emerged at the VI European Twinning Congress in Lausanne. Organized by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, this congress also focused on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Participants expressed deep concern about the situation and issued a formal declaration addressing the crisis:

¹⁷ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18, fasc.24

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

The intervention of the national armed forces on the domestic stage, for political reasons or due to changes in the national borders, is unacceptable and represents a violation of fundamental human rights. A federal State cannot be maintained by force and violence. The victims are the innocent citizens of the towns and municipalities, with which many of us have established twinning relationships; the people's historic heritage is being destroyed.

The fighting in Yugoslavia must stop at once. Political objectives can only be achieved through peaceful means.

The representatives of the European Twinned Towns, meeting in Lausanne, request that the European Community take more vigorous and intensive action in order to find a peaceful solution to the fighting in the war zones. This crisis in Yugoslavia shows that the process of Political Union in the European Community must be accelerated and that the peace zone thus established in Europe must be extended by means of association to incorporate other states¹⁹.

These various initiatives and appeals from local and regional entities illustrate the critical role that local authorities and municipalities could play in conflict resolution and humanitarian efforts. Their calls for action not only expressed solidarity with the victims of violence but also sought to influence higher-level political institutions to intervene and prevent further destruction. The appeals for peace, protection of human rights, and the preservation of cultural heritage in the former Yugoslavia underlined the belief that political conflicts should be resolved through peaceful negotiations. All these principles and actions were strongly supported by both the United Town Organisation and the World Union of Martyred Cities, Cities of Peace. One of the most dedicated advocates for this cause was Dante Cruicchi, who, as the Secretary General of the Union, worked tirelessly to end the violence in what he referred to as a "fratricidal war". In numerous public speeches and correspondences with like-minded colleagues, Cruicchi expressed his commitment to peace, striving to bring an end to the conflict through these shared values and efforts.

¹⁹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18, fasc.24

3.3. International Conferences

3.3.1. The Prague Conference (1991)

Between September 19 and 21, 1991, the “International Conference on Cooperation Between Cities and Regions in the Context of the Helsinki Process” took place in Prague. As the name suggests, it was not a conference specifically dedicated to addressing the crisis in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, but rather represented the first step in a series of meetings and conferences in which Dante Cruicchi participated to deal with the Yugoslav crisis. The Prague Conference was preceded by a pre-conference held on February 11 and 12 of the same year at Prague City Hall, before the war officially began, although Yugoslavia was already experiencing a period of intense political and ethnic tensions that foreshadowed the conflict. During this pre-conference, the objective and title of the main conference were established, intending to continue the work initiated at a conference held in Rotterdam in May 1990. For these reasons, therefore, the ongoing conflict was not included in the agenda; instead, the focus was on general objectives aligned with the Helsinki Process, such as establishing contacts between cities in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, as well as the mutual exchange of useful information for local authorities²⁰. Dante Cruicchi’s contribution to this pre-conference emerges in a letter sent to Alessandra Zagatti, President of the European Federal Intergroup, dated February 18, 1991, where he states: “I traveled to Prague to participate in the East-West pre-conference on European cooperation of territorial communities, which will be held in the Czechoslovak capital from September 19 to 21, 1991. Since the initial discussions focused only on cities, my friend Dolchi and I, representing Italy, made sure to also include Regions and Provinces”²¹. In addition to representatives from European states, delegates from the United States and Canada also participated both at the pre-conference and at the conference. The Prague Conference consisted of both plenary sessions and working groups that developed and delved into themes such as economic development policy,

²⁰ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.27

²¹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33

social policy, and citizen participation. Among the participants were Elisabeth Gateau, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Giulio Dolchi, and, of course, Dante Cricchi. During the Prague Conference, Cricchi delivered a speech covering numerous topics: he introduced the history of Marzabotto and recalled the massacre at Monte Sole, announcing that the 47th anniversary of that tragic event would soon take place in the next few days. He also emphasized the importance of cities in coordinating processes within the new international landscape following the end of the bipolar logic, stating: “The city, before being an urban landscape, is a human landscape. The city is people and the material instrument of collective life; with its language, it remains perhaps the greatest work of man, a symbol of that community of purposes and agreements that emerges to express and realize the new human personality, that of man in the world”²². Cricchi also dedicated to the “Yugoslav friends” the words of Altiero Spinelli from his Ventotene Manifesto of 1941, which stated: “[the youth] today seek each other out and meet to begin to build hope for the future, those who have understood the reasons behind the current crisis of European civilization, and for this reason, they gather the legacy of all movements aimed at uplifting a humanity that has foundered due to misunderstanding, in order to obtain the means to unite Europeans”²³. Finally, Cricchi highlighted that the invitation to attend the 47th anniversary commemoration of the Marzabotto massacre included a message stating: “the epoch-making encounter between East and West reintroduces values that have remained frozen and forced into distance and mutual excommunication. In the hope that the UN, born as an instrument of world governance, will rise to the occasion of the events that since 1989 have been changing the face of the world and will develop effective tools for conflict resolution, so that each nation can assert its rights and reach a fair agreement and peaceful settlement with the rights of others”, and he concluded by expressing “the hope that the peoples of Yugoslavia will find a solution to their internal problems by drawing from the humanitarian and European heritage of their national liberation movement”²⁴.

²² ACM, Archivio Dante Cricchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.27

²³ *Ibidem*

²⁴ *Ibidem*

3.3.2. *The Budapest Conference (1991)*

The Conference for Peace in Yugoslavia, held in Budapest on November 29 and 30, 1991, undoubtedly had a more significant impact as it focused directly on the Yugoslav crisis. Crucchi's involvement became evident in the days leading up to the conference, as reflected in two of his letters sent to the mayor of Budapest, Gábor Demszky, on November 13 and 28, 1991. In these letters, Crucchi emphasized Italy's role in promoting twinning between Italian and Yugoslav cities, as well as its collaboration in building international relations during the Cold War period. He highlighted that, during the previous Prague Conference, the Italian delegation had been one of the largest and most qualified, presenting a document on the Yugoslav crisis. Crucchi also stressed the need to ensure the most pluralistic participation possible in the Budapest Conference.

The event saw the participation of numerous international representatives, including members of the European Parliament, the Standing Conference of Towns and Communities of Europe, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the World Union of Martyred Cities-Cities of Peace, and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. Several national organizations, such as the Standing Conference of Towns and Communities of Yugoslavia ("*Stalna Konferencija Gradova Jugoslavije*", SKGJ) and the Democratic League of Kosovo, also took part, as well as representatives from many cities²⁵.

The conference lasted for two days, alternating between plenary sessions and smaller working group meetings. On the morning of November 29, after the welcoming meeting with Mayor Gábor Demszky and Hungarian President Árpád Göncz, Huib van Walsum, president of the Network for Municipal Peace Policy, opened the proceedings by introducing the agenda. The morning continued with the speech "The civil peace initiatives in Yugoslavia" by Sonja Licht, President of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. In the afternoon, there were plenary presentations of municipal peace and dialogue initiatives regarding the cities of Sarajevo, Pula, Subotica, followed by smaller group meetings focused on cooperation between municipalities.

²⁵ Amersfoort, Ankara, Bitola, Bratislava, Bucharest, Delft, Glasgow, Gödöllő, Győr, Karlovac, Kosice, Lille, Ljubljana, Longjumeau, Novi Sad, Oświęcim, Pécs, Praga, Pula, Renkum, Roman sur Isère, Sarajevo, Schiedam, Skarsterlan, Strasbourg, Subotica, Székesfehérvár, Szeged, Szentendre, Titograd, Tilburg, Vilnius, Warszawa, Zsofia, Zagreb.

On the second day, November 30, several significant speeches took place: Mient Jan Faber, secretary-general of the Interchurch Peace Council, introduced and presented this plenary session; Arie Oostlander, member of the European Parliament, rapporteur to the Political Committee of the European Parliament, delivered the speech “The Yugoslavia policy of the European Parliament and the European Communities”; Mary Kaldor, Senior Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies at the University of Sussex, gave the speech “The changing position of the nation-state, new challenges for municipalities”; Milan Kondr, mayor of Prague, presented “How can international municipal co-operation further local democracy and social and economic development?”; and finally, writer György Konrád gave the speech “The future of Europe, our responsibility for Yugoslavia”. Following these presentations, further group meetings were held, leading to the presentation of final conclusions and the closing speech by Gábor Demszky.

The work of these peace advocates to resolve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia culminated in the Final Declaration. The declaration outlined the goal of discussing means to end the war and supporting all efforts, especially at the local government level, to save human lives from the rivalry of nationalist ideologies. The declaration emphasized the importance of cities and municipalities that promote peace initiatives, as they represent a tangible alternative to the logic of war and can serve as places of protection for minorities, as well as providing aid to victims and refugees during the conflict. It highlighted the usefulness of meetings and roundtables between different ethnicities and religions to promote dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties. The declaration also stressed the role of international bodies in ensuring the right of individuals and elected institutions to engage in efforts aimed at halting the war. It underscored the need to send UN peacekeeping forces to the region as soon as possible to secure an immediate ceasefire, thereby limiting the destruction caused by the war and preventing the conflict from spreading to other republics. Finally, the various parties participating in the conference committed to humanitarian projects for the reconstruction of cities and villages through cultural exchanges, support for economic cooperation between businesses and factories, and the promotion of school twinning programs. The Final Declaration concluded with the statement:

The participants underline the importance of twinned cities and bi- and multilateral municipal cooperation projects. These twinings encourage local communities to take concrete action for peace and reconciliation, and they can contribute to the integration of local authorities into a united Europe²⁶.

Dante Cruicchi, during the Budapest Conference, delivered a speech as the Delegated President of the Italian Committee of Twin Cities and Vice President of the World Union of Cities of Peace. As a first step, Cruicchi referred to the agenda approved during the previous meeting of the Steering Committee of the World Union of Cities of Peace held on November 16 in Cuneo, which was distributed to all participants of the Budapest Conference. This agenda stated that the participants committed to a peaceful and just solution to the serious crisis that is profoundly affecting the former Yugoslavia. It called on the Yugoslav cities that were members of the World Union, as well as those that had suffered the most from foreign occupation, to promote initiatives aimed at ending this incredible tragedy, immediately safeguarding all human lives and all artistic treasures. Finally, it was decided to send a delegation to visit Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade, and potentially other cities if necessary, to help implement the content of this agenda²⁷.

In his speech during the Budapest Conference, Cruicchi also emphasized the need to commit to finding a peaceful and just resolution of the military conflict between Serbs and Croats. Such a solution must be based on respect for the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Final Act, to guarantee the right to self-determination for the peoples that made up Yugoslavia. Cruicchi also referred to the work of the Prague Conference, recalling that on that occasion the Italian delegation had presented an agenda urging Yugoslav cities that had suffered the most during the foreign occupation to promote initiatives aimed at ending the fratricidal war and fostering reconciliation through peace. Cruicchi also suggested a collaboration with the United Town Organisation (FMVJ-UTO), the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), and the Association of European Cities and Regions to organize, in a short time, a

²⁶ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18, fasc.24

²⁷ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33

conference of all cities that had twinning or friendship ties with their “Yugoslav sisters”²⁸. This aspect is extremely innovative because, traditionally, the IULA was oriented toward the West, while the FMVJ-UTO was much more open to communist-led municipal administrations. Additionally, these two organizations had begun to lose significance in the Yugoslav landscape as, during the Cold War, the focus of international municipal organizations was instead placed on the development of inter-municipal networks abroad, giving cities greater prominence. This shift occurred because the division of the two blocs significantly influenced the work of the IULA and the FMVJ-UTO, and indeed, starting from the 1960s, Yugoslavia experienced a surge in establishing connections with local authorities from various parts of the world, from the Soviet bloc to Mediterranean Africa. By the end of 1969, the SKGJ recorded that 60 Yugoslav cities had established twinning relationships with 150 cities across 20 different countries. However, beginning in the 1980s, even relationships between municipalities started to show weaknesses, as they were affected by the country’s economic difficulties, and the SKGJ began to lose international influence²⁹.

Returning to Cruicchi's speech, he suggested Italy as the venue for holding this conference among cities twinned with Jugoslavia, as “our two peoples have built, together, in Dubrovnik, Istria, and Dalmatia cities of art, but also because it was at the border between Italy and Yugoslavia that the first wall of the world divided into opposing blocs fell about 20 years ago”. Indeed, starting from the Treaty of Osimo in 1975, the border between Yugoslavia and Italy was established following the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki. From that moment on, local actors from the municipalities located along the border played a fundamental role in implementing cooperation between the two states, demonstrating how diplomacy based on local governance was possible³⁰.

²⁸ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18, fasc.24

²⁹ Unkovski-Korica V., “Non-aligned Cities in the Cold War: Municipal Internationalism, Town Twinning and the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia, c.1950–c.1985”, *The International History Review*, 44(3), pag.567-570

³⁰ Klabjan B. “Twinning across the Adriatic: history, memory and municipal co-operation between Italy and Yugoslavia during the Cold War”, *Urban History*. Published online 2023:1-14. doi:10.1017/S0963926823000160

Cruicchi concluded his speech by appealing to the “Yugoslav people” and the representatives of the cities and municipalities to face their responsibilities and issuing a peace appeal that states:

The birth of particularisms and conflicts on a national, ethnic, and religious basis, and the set of these contradictions, can only find a solution through a policy capable of achieving a global transformation so that the link between liberty, equality, and fraternity produces a unified vision of human liberation. After the fall of the old barriers that divided the world, we must move from weapons to laws. The value of solidarity, as the social expression of fraternity, can be the foundation of a new pact of citizenship that overcomes the abstract opposition between formal democracy and substantive democracy. Europe must become a nation composed of several states. We must set aside all that divides us and cling, with our nails, to all that unites us, and never forget that hatred and revenge are cancers that ravage human consciences³¹.

3.3.3. The Warsaw Reunion of the World Union of Cities of Peace (1992)

On May 28 and 29, 1992, there was a meeting of the World Union of Cities of Peace attended by President Stanislaw Wyganowski, Vice President André Biver, the Secretary General of the city of Verdun, and, of course, Dante Cruicchi in his role as Vice President. This meeting did not have significant international resonance as the Budapest Conference did, but it remains a very important moment in the history of the Union because it clearly and formally outlined the Union’s position and role during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The agenda reiterated the founding principles of the Union, namely peace, democracy, self-determination of peoples, and solidarity. However, it also addressed more sensitive and difficult issues related to the war, such as the fact that the main victims were the populations of villages and cities, the massacre of the city of Sarajevo, and the exodus of refugees, which was reaching “unimaginable” proportions. An “urgent and fervent” appeal was made to the governments and parliaments of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina to immediately cease

³¹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18, fasc.24

violence and ethnic clashes. The appeal was also addressed to cities, particularly those of Kragujevac, Krank, Belgrade, Mostar, and Kocevje, calling on them to contribute concretely and allow the United Nations “blue helmets” to carry out their peacekeeping functions. Once again, reference was made to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Final Act³². The agenda also highlighted the importance of a document signed by Cruicchi on May 20, 1992, in Koper (Slovenia), along with Mayor Aurelio Juri, where they emphasized the urgency of managing refugees, condemned the worsening of the war, and expressed their concern for the victims, who were mostly civilians.³³.

3.3.4. The Ohrid Conference (1992)

The International Citizens' and Municipal Peace Conference was held in Ohrid from November 5 to 8, 1992, organized by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, in cooperation with other local, national, and international organizations³⁴. The chief aims of the Citizens' and Municipal Peace Conference were to encourage permanent dialogue between the citizens and local authorities of the Balkan region, in order to stop the war and prevent further violent conflicts, but also to enable citizens and municipalities from all over Europe to start comprehensive joint projects and programmes with citizens' and municipal initiatives in the Balkans, seeking to put an end to the war, to nurture peace and to introduce genuine democracy in the Balkans. It was a very important conference from an international perspective, as it addressed numerous proposals, such as refugee projects, peace zone programmes, humanitarian aid, minority issues, preservation of multiethnic local communities, economic cooperation, trade unions projects. However, it did not see the participation of Italian invitees. Dante Cruicchi mentions this in a letter sent to the conference secretary on October 29, 1992, where he reiterated that Italian

³² ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1 / b.19, fasc.3

³³ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1

³⁴ The group of initiators includes cities – Subotica, Sarajevo, Maribor, Koper, Skopje, Bar, Budapest, Kecskemet, Elche, Nurnberg, Bradford, Kosice, Schiedam, Luleå, Kiruna – and organisations – Network for Municipal Peace Policy (NMP), United Town Organisation (UTO), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR/IULA), Association of Towns and Communes in Macedonia.

cities were among the most committed to humanitarian aid for the population of the former Yugoslavia. He highlighted the common history that the two countries shared, relating to the Resistance movement against Nazi-fascist forces during World War II, which created an unbreakable bond and numerous city twinning activities. He stated:

Our World Union, from the beginning, has not taken sides, but in our Warsaw document and in my report in Budapest, we clearly highlighted our position, with clear proposals that were aligned with those of the United Nations and the European Community. Today, finally, our television has shown that the responsibility lies with all those who are betting on an international conflict and who want to destroy the heritage of the popular struggle against the Nazi-fascist aggressor³⁵.

Cruicchi expressed his dissent regarding the absence of an Italian delegation, even with the mayor of Skopje (“I cannot hide my surprise”), in a letter dated October 29, 1992. He reiterated the same points made in the letter addressed to the Ohrid conference secretariat, but here he also added an example of Italy’s commitment to the people of former Yugoslavia: “Here in Bologna, we are preparing to send 3,000 packages to 1,000 Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian children for Christmas, as a show of solidarity from our children to their brothers in need”. Cruicchi concluded the letter by firstly highlighting the fact that the mayors of Belgrade and Kragujevac, the latter being an ONU “Messenger of Peace” city, were also absent from the conference, and secondly, by offering his help for the refugee children³⁶.

³⁵ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1

³⁶ *Ibidem*

3.3.5. The Florence Conference (1993)

The Third International Conference on Cooperation of Cities and Regions was held in Florence, at Palazzo Vecchio (City Hall), from March 3 to 6, 1993. It was a conference under the patronage of various international organizations³⁷, aiming to recognize the importance of cooperation between local authorities and to promote and coordinate specific projects. In fact, local authorities and national and international organizations that actively supported cooperation projects were invited to participate, creating a point of contact between various officials. Participation was limited to 400 people to facilitate exchanges among attendees. The first day was dedicated to the presentation and subsequent discussion of existing cooperation projects. Due to time constraints, only 27 out of a total of more than 300 projects were presented. In the following days, work focused on projects related to three areas of cooperation: environmental, political-social, and citizen participation at the local level. These three areas represent the main challenges faced by national and local governments. Dante Cruicchi also participated in this conference, but on this occasion, the figure of Stanislaw Wyganowski, president of the World Union of Cities for Peace and mayor of Warsaw, emerged more prominently. He delivered a very eloquent speech on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, denouncing the violence, loss of life, cruelty of concentration camps, executions, and ethnic clashes. He emphasized that the war in the Balkan region is a “disgrace for Europe and the free world”³⁸, as well as a real threat³⁹. The president also added that respect for freedoms, human rights, and democracy should always be upheld, but the tragic fates of Vukovar, Sarajevo, Gorazde, and many other cities prove otherwise. It was therefore the duty and responsibility of free European nations to defend these principles by all legal means possible, and this responsibility also fell on local

³⁷ International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), Sister Cities International, World Federation of United Cities (FMCU), Union of African Cities (UVA), Union of Capitals of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, World Federation of Cities for Peace, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC), Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Assembly of European Regions.

³⁸ “*J'en suis profondément humilié vu que j'ai consacré de longues années de ma vie mure à la défense des valeurs qui sont aujourd'hui bafouées dans les rues de Sarajevo, dans les Camps de concentration de Manzatch et de Trnopolje ou autres lieux de supplices et de souffrances*”.

³⁹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4

authorities and cities. Wyganowski acknowledged that, for the moment, the actions taken have had a limited impact, as they had only mitigated the effects of hostilities without contributing to their cessation. For this reason, he proposed two initiatives: one regarding the organization and delivery of food and medical aid by the UN Cities of Peace to Bosnian cities; and the other involving organizing a mission of the mayors of Warsaw, Berlin, and either Moscow or St. Petersburg, aimed at the demilitarization of Sarajevo. According to Wyganowski, the demilitarization of Sarajevo should occur through the handing over of heavy weapons under UN control, as this would represent a real opportunity to end the conflict. The choice of cities for this mission fell on those that had suffered most during World War II, as they represented the character of today's European order. The mission's operations would involve visits to representatives of respective governments – such as foreign ministers – as well as to the governments of neighboring countries. The mission would report on the positions and arguments of its partners regarding the demilitarization of Sarajevo. Its conclusions would be presented to all partners, as well as to the UN Secretary-General and the co-chairs of the International Conference on Yugoslavia. The mission's conclusions would also be brought to the attention of the Polish, German, and Russian public opinion⁴⁰.

3.3.6. *The Hiroshima and Nagasaki Conference (1993)*

From August 4 to 9, the 3rd World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-City Solidarity was held in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The choice of these cities was, of course, symbolic, as they are the only cities to have experienced nuclear destruction. The key theme of this conference was, in fact, “*The Role of Cities in Building Peace – Towards the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons*”. Like the Prague Conference, which focused on cooperation between cities and regions in the context of the Helsinki process, this event concentrated mainly on the atomic issue and on the abolition of nuclear weapons. However, this conference also marked a significant moment regarding the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In the Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeal, it was stated:

⁴⁰ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4

We must also consider the additional problems facing humanity, particularly the vast gap between industrialized and developing countries, hunger, poverty, the population explosion, refugees, and environmental degradation—all of which are worsening. Furthermore, numerous regional conflicts, taking the form of ethnic and religious disputes, as seen in the tragic struggle in the former Yugoslavia, are the result of human rights violations, massive violence against women and children, especially systematic rape as a weapon of war, bloodshed, and the devastation of cities⁴¹.

The appeal concluded by stating that it was the duty of municipal administrations to adopt any measures necessary to prevent war, ensure the safety of citizens, and free cities from conflict, discrimination, and environmental degradation. Participants should promote mutual understanding and exchange, asserting the following goals:

- 1) Recognize the reality that, despite the end of the Cold War, the world is still threatened by nuclear war, and, in light of this, strengthen the organization of the Mayors Conference, mobilize and raise public awareness;
- 2) Respect the diversity of cultural and religious values and encourage exchanges between cities based on mutual trust; place particular emphasis on instilling in young people – the generation that will lead the world into the next century – an active awareness of the horrors and misery of war, the critical importance of peace, a deep respect for human rights, and the desire for peaceful multi-ethnic coexistence. Actively engage in preserving human resources and public opinion that contribute to world peace. The complete rejection of violence must be part of peace education.
- 3) Promote broad support for solving issues such as hunger, poverty, discrimination at all levels, including discrimination against refugees and foreign workers, human rights violations, and environmental degradation⁴².

⁴¹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4

⁴² *Ibidem*

While the first point is the least relevant as it refers to the nuclear threat, the last two points of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeal hold particular significance, as they represent fundamental principles that are also applicable to the Yugoslav crisis. The conflict in the former Yugoslav territories, marked by brutal violence, ethnic tensions, and humanitarian devastation, required interventions that went far beyond a mere temporary ceasefire. Although the immediate cessation of hostilities was a crucial and necessary first step toward peace, it was not enough to ensure lasting stability and genuine reconciliation. Such interventions, therefore, included both general principles, such as peace education and multi-ethnic coexistence, as well as concrete actions to address the humanitarian consequences of the war, such as managing refugees and combating poverty and hunger⁴³.

⁴³ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4

CHAPTER FOUR

Cruicchi's correspondence and actions during the war

4.1. Thoughts and perspectives of the Artisan of Peace

In the early 1990s, despite Dante Cruicchi being heavily involved in issues related to the Gulf War and the situation of the Kurdish people, he also dedicated significant attention to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. He intensified his correspondence, both by letter and fax, with numerous individuals with whom he had previously established relationships of mutual friendship and respect. The ongoing humanitarian crisis made these exchanges even more frequent and no longer solely focused on the topics dear to Cruicchi, such as the commemoration of Nazi-Fascist massacres and cooperation between local entities. Many of Cruicchi's letters began to express sincere concern about the conflict in Yugoslavia, as it can be seen in a letter sent to the President of the Municipal Assembly of Kragujevac, Srboľjub Vasović, on July 1, 1991, where he stated:

We are deeply concerned about what is happening in Yugoslavia. The problems that have arisen do exist, but they must not be exacerbated. They must be resolved with the same unified spirit that the Yugoslav people were able to forge during their titanic struggle for national liberation: an example, a legacy that is yours but also European, which must not be relegated to the books and archives of history, or worse still, as is being attempted, thrown away. It has been said, both by the European Community and according to the founding principles of our World Union, that now is the time to sit around a table to find a political solution, one that must start from feelings of solidarity, not from partisanship, of fraternity, to demonstrate that division will not pay off today nor tomorrow. As Europe gradually moves towards its unification, the deaths of these days, the grave tension that has nearly led to the tragedy of civil war, constitute dangerous obstacles that must be removed¹.

¹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33. Translated from Italian by the author.

While in this letter, Cruicchi described the European Community or Europe in general in a benevolent manner, emphasizing the founding principles of fraternity, in another letter addressed to Piero Fassino, head of the Foreign Affairs section of the “*Partito Democratico della Sinistra*” (PDS), on July 8, 1991, he was much more critical and highlighted the mistakes made, speaking both in the first person and in judgment of the actions of others:

Regarding the Yugoslav issue, we have not always remained faithful to our orientations (...), we should have, in our statements and in our press, been more cautious, but also take into account, for example, that people like Altissimo, Pannella, and many others² have always disregarded the Slovenian minority in Italy. For a long time now, in Slovenia, Croatia, but also in Serbia, there has been an attempt to smear the national liberation struggle: one of the most glorious chapters of the resistance to fascism in Europe. The belagardists, Ustaše, and Chetniks are being rehabilitated. The monuments honoring the victims and the heroism of the Yugoslav people are being insulted. Austria and Germany are not only fanning the flames but have also provided the spark. When a few weeks ago a conscript soldier was strangled live on television in Split, we should have spoken out more³.

Another characteristic that emerged from Cruicchi's letters was that he did not limit himself to organizing humanitarian aid or merely expressing his apprehension and dismay, as can be seen in a letter sent to Svetlana Milivojević on November 21, 1991, where he stated: “The war in Yugoslavia greatly saddens us, and the news this morning of the massacre of children in the Vukovar area fills us with outrage, just as we are very distressed by what is happening in Ragusa and elsewhere”⁴. He also dedicated himself to explaining his vision of peace, which was rooted in the memory of the Resistance and the War of Liberation. In another letter addressed to Srboľjub Vasović, dated July 17, 1991, he wrote:

² Renato Altissimo was a member of the Italian Liberal Party (PLI), while Marco Pannella was part of the Radical Party.

³ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33. Translated from Italian by the author.

⁴ *Ibidem*

I inform you that on our part, we are working to prevent the legacy of the Liberation War, heroically led by your people under the leadership of a great European anti-fascist, Marshal Tito, from being lost. Everything possible must be done to prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia, also because everyone must know, Slovenians, Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, Bosnians, that this would trigger a nationalistic rupture of the democratic balance that we have been painstakingly building after the Cold War. There is more difference between a Basque and an Andalusian than between a Slovenian and a Serb, more difference between a South Tyrolean and an Apulian than between a Croat and a Montenegrin. And then: Slovakia, Alsace, Brittany, Scotland, Transylvania: where will it end?⁵.

Cruicchi concluded this letter by emphasizing that, in his view, the division of Yugoslavia into a confederation or a structure similar to that of the United States was in itself an acceptable solution. The problem arised when such divisions were driven by nationalist sentiments, or what he called “nationalist trenches”, especially since he believed that the differences between the various republics of the former Yugoslavia were minimal. In fact, Cruicchi argued that the republics share a significant common history and culture, and he believed that “democracy does not mean the liquidation of a heritage painstakingly put together”.

In Cruicchi's letters, his sharp criticism of the sanctions applied to the territories of the former Yugoslavia is also evident. He was strongly opposed to embargoes that had direct repercussions on the civilian population. This position is clear in a letter sent to Živorad Nešić – President of the Municipal Assembly of Kragujevac, successor of Srboljub Vasović – on June 3, 1992, where he stated: “The situation has worsened, and now more than ever, we must be cautious, patient, and tolerant. Personally, I believe that the sanctions imposed did not take into account the reality that has unfolded on Yugoslav territory”⁶; and in a letter addressed to the President of the Regional Council of Emilia Romagna, Federico Castellucci, on October 24, 1994, where he affirmed:

⁵ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33. Translated from Italian by the author.

⁶ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1

I have observed firsthand how the embargo, which is an inhumane act and against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, mainly affects the weakest categories. Hundreds of thousands of children and young people attend schools in the cold. This is also the case in many hospitals, where the lack of medicine has caused alarming mortality rates. I will propose that a commission of our doctors (through the regional USLs⁷) be sent to verify what I have reported. There is an admirable youth here, dedicated to their studies and work. The population wants to end this fratricidal war (I have gathered data that the media hides regarding what is happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina)! Continuing with sanctions, particularly on medicines, fuel, and spare parts for transportation vehicles, would only create conditions of desperation, from which anything could happen. People are very 'angry' with the USA. The President of the Yugoslav Republic, Lilić, thanked me for what we are doing to help the refugee populations, but there is a vast difference between what is being done for Croatia and what is being done for Serbia. History will judge the responsibilities for what is happening. There is now a need to end the sanctions. I will also provide a detailed report for our parliamentarians⁸.

Cruicchi also addressed the issue of the embargo in a letter sent to the presidency of the Association of Slovenian Anti-Fascist Fighters on November 11, 1994, where he stated:

In Serbia, I found much willingness, not only among the former freedom fighters but especially among the youth. The embargo penalizes them, and this has devastating repercussions for children and the elderly. It is a punishment that the people do not deserve, especially since history teaches us that people are not to blame for what they suffer due to the actions of regimes and rulers⁹.

Cruicchi also argued that sanctions should be strictly military in nature, as expressed in a letter sent to Bruno Lazzaro on June 5, 1992, where he stated that “Regarding Yugoslavia, where in my opinion the EC and others are making several mistakes (the

⁷ USL means Local Health Unit (Unità Sanitaria Locale)

⁸ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4, translated from Italian by the author.

⁹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19b, fasc.8, translated from Italian by the author.

arms embargo should have been imposed as early as 1991 or even before)”¹⁰. In the same letter, Cruicchi also describes the situation in Bosnia on the eve of the clashes between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats, stating that “not only the Federal Army and Serbian irregular militias must leave Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also the Croatian armed forces and militias that have invaded it, and they must not take the place meant for the UN peacekeepers in the contested areas, or else a wider war will break out”. Cruicchi, in fact, believed that not only the Serbian authorities were responsible for the conflict, but also the Croatian ones. In the next section, what Cruicchi defines as “anti-Serb hysteria” will be addressed.

Cruicchi’s thoughts can also be summarized in a speech given in Lisbon on December 8, 1992, directed at the Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio, where he stated:

I would like to confirm to you, and this is also on behalf of our President, Dr. Stanisław Wyganowski, Mayor of Warsaw, our commitment to support all your initiatives aimed at building a fraternal world, one of peace and justice. The Mayor of Warsaw and the Mayor of Berlin have long established close contacts and common goals, despite being capitals that found themselves on opposite sides during the war, for reconciliation between the German and Polish peoples. This is an example that should be considered by the mayors of Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, and Skopje, whose populations, during World War II, wrote one of the most glorious chapters of European resistance.

It must never be forgotten that a city, before being an urban landscape, is a human landscape. With its language, it remains perhaps the greatest work of humankind, symbolizing that community of purpose that arises to express and realize the new personality of man¹¹. That of man in the world and his harmony with nature. The role of our Federation, whose destiny, as has been said, is universal, is that of having worked, when the Iron Curtain had fallen across our continent and the world was divided by the wall of two opposing blocs, to ensure

¹⁰ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1

¹¹ This concept of the city as a human landscape as well as an urban one, was also mentioned in a speech during the International Conference on Cooperation between Cities and Regions within the framework of the Helsinki Process, held in Prague, addressed on page 46.

that democracy, as a global value, would also be applied in international relations (...).

Regarding the former Yugoslavia, not only have we acted and continue to act to end the fratricidal war, but we have developed and are developing a movement of solidarity that has few precedents in Italy and even in Europe. The aid provided so far exceeds that of the Italian government. In Ribnica, we have transformed a former barracks into a solidarity center for hundreds of refugees, sending our own personnel there. For Christmas, we will send gift packages to over 4,000 children, and hundreds of our citizens are marching toward Sarajevo with the olive branch of peace¹².

4.2. The search for truth: Cruicchi against the “anti-Serbian hysteria”

During the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Dante Cruicchi actively worked to avoid simplifying the situation by viewing Serbia solely as the aggressor to be condemned and Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as the victims. He believed the reality was far more complicated than a simple division of “good” and “bad”. Cruicchi’s primary objective was to provide assistance to the civilian population, regardless of their origins, and to manage the massive number of refugees, many of whom were of Serbian origin, given that there were numerous Serbian minorities in both Croatia and Bosnia¹³. He argued that it was necessary to criticize both the actions of the Serbian government under Milošević and the actions of the JNA, but also to critique the conduct of Franjo Tuđman, who was a major proponent of a strong Croatian nationalist sentiment that evoked historical symbolism tied to the Ustaša regime, fostering intolerance and hatred towards Serbs among the Croatian population.

Cruicchi was extremely critical of the media, including television, radio, and the press. In a letter sent to Giulio Dolchi on October 29, 1991, he noted that the media had taken a “one-sided stance: supporting Croatia and attacking Serbia. Certainly, the latter has made and continues to make mistakes, but we must facilitate a political solution to the

¹² ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1, translated from Italian by the author.

¹³ This topic was previously addressed in Chapter Three, paragraph 3.1

ongoing crisis”. In this letter, he also emphasized that the situation in the former Yugoslavia was not just a local dispute but also a European responsibility. He wrote: “who sent arms to the secessionist republics (this has been happening for two years now)? Germany and Austria, and not just them”¹⁴. Cruicchi expressed similar sentiments to Alessandro Curzi, director of the Italian news program TG3, in a letter dated October 30, stating:

It is not up to me to judge Italian television news, but it would be good to also visit the non-Croatian side, where there are already 200,000 Serbian refugees who have lost everything and recount things that are certainly not favorable to those who believe Croatia is always right. Why was the mayor of Dubrovnik, who also sent a message to Italian TV, murdered? It was said he wanted to hand the city over to the Serbs. That is not true. Nonetheless, there should have been a proper trial, with journalists present. Why was the mayor of Vukovar, a Serb, removed by a Croatian usher? If there are Chetniks and the White Eagles Legion in Serbia, in Croatia there is the Zebras Legion, made up of Ustaša, fascists, and mercenaries¹⁵.

Cruicchi’s criticism of the media also emerged in a letter addressed to Walter Veltroni, then director of the newspaper *L’Unità*, dated June 1, 1992. In this letter, Cruicchi pointed out that even *L’Unità*, a journal traditionally aligned with his views, was not exempt from criticism, as he felt that the coverage of the Yugoslav conflict had been inadequate:

For all these months, just two days ago in Warsaw¹⁶ (I am enclosing a copy of the document I signed with the mayor of Koper), with our Presidency Office, we have been working concretely, but unfortunately unheard, for a fair solution to the serious crisis affecting not only Yugoslavia but also the future of Europe itself. There is much more difference between a Basque and a Catalan than between a Serb and a Croat. But even “L’Unità”, with articles where “according

¹⁴ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33

¹⁵ *Ibidem*. Translated from Italian by the author.

¹⁶ It refers to the meeting held in Warsaw of the World Union of Cities of Peace on May 28-29, 1992, as described in paragraph 3.2.3.

to Radio Zagreb” was dominant, without sending someone permanently to Belgrade, has not always provided good information. Now I see a large photo of Vuk Drašković published on the third page (God save us from a potential rise to power for him; compared to him, Milošević is a moderate). The big headlines yesterday and today in the newspaper founded by Antonio Gramsci are not helping to find a solution. Other newspapers have been more cautious. Beware of following those who have always written and spoken about “Serbian hordes”, because there is more freedom in Belgrade than in Zagreb. Do you think a demonstration like yesterday’s could be held in the Croatian capital? where press freedom is five or ten times less than in Belgrade. I am not pro-Serbian, but I know recent and past history, and I remember the Serbs who came to us to escape assassination by the Ustaša of Pavelic, who today are in favor in the West, finding myself at that time a soldier in Croatia. (...) Be careful not to “slip up”, I ask you as an old comrade, with over 55 years of communist commitment, who has followed the reformist path for thirty years and tries to lend a hand to the European left. But you were right to wake up the “pacifists”. I will help you too. Now send someone to see what is happening not only in Belgrade. From Kragujevac, a city that had 7,350 people executed on October 21, 1941, twinned with Marzabotto, they are asking us to help 980 displaced Serbs or refugees, including 250 children, who have come from Croatia. (...)

P.S. The Serbs bear responsibility, but others do too. This does not mean that all the mistakes made are equal. Curzi is absolutely right to remind us that for years, even by the West, arms worth hundreds of billions have been sold to prevent Yugoslavia from finding a Swiss-style solution¹⁷.

Dante Cruicchi expressed his doubts about the accuracy of information concerning the conflict in the territories of the former Yugoslavia also in a letter to Libero Bencivenni, the coordinator of the monthly “*Nuovo Informatore*”. In this undated letter, he wrote:

¹⁷ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1. Translated from Italian by the author.

Dear colleague, I read the article about the “special trip to Zagreb”. I would like to raise some “political” considerations regarding the correct information about what is happening in the former Yugoslavia, in order to avoid worsening controversies and to promote, instead, the end of the fratricidal war and multi-ethnic reconciliation. It is stated that Zagreb is the capital of the “Republic of Croatia, which is now at war with Serbia, which has militarily occupied the fertile territories of Bosnia”. Just last night, it was said on TV that the Croats and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina are at war with each other. Croatia has occupied vast territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was also said that the citizens of Zagreb are 40 kilometers from the front and that the Croatian capital is in danger of being conquered by the Serbs. This is a statement that I do not agree with and that no newspaper has reported in the past ten months. Certainly, the Serbs bear responsibilities, and I am referring to the “extreme” points of nationalism. But in Croatia, nearly a thousand monuments erected in honor of the valor and sacrifice of the partisans who fought against Nazism and fascism have been destroyed¹⁸.

Also in this letter, Cruicchi highlighted European responsibilities, stating:

Yesterday, we saw a ship full of weapons destined for Trieste. In recent months, the Germans have sent many tanks from the former East Germany to Croatia. Certainly, the destruction, killings, torture, and rapes that are causing suffering to the populations of the former Yugoslavia are touching, but to varying degrees, everyone bears responsibility. (...) I am willing to meet with the two colleagues who signed the article, not out of disagreement, but to work together to build solidarity free from any anti-Serbian, anti-Croatian, or anti-Bosnian hysteria¹⁹.

Dante Cruicchi, in fact, constantly emphasized the importance of what he called the “search for Truth” in many of his letters. For him, this meant highlighting the faults and responsibilities of all parties involved in the conflict, including Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as those in Western Europe who had exacerbated the situation. In a letter to Živorad Nešić dated April 17, 1992, Cruicchi stated:

¹⁸ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4. Translated from Italian by the author.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*

There is now an important question: the truth about what is happening in Yugoslavia. I assure you that my commitment to this truth is unwavering. I have demonstrated it in Italy and elsewhere, as the breakup of the Yugoslav Federation will bring nothing good. We could have done as Switzerland did, but there are forces in Western Europe that do not want solidarity between peoples, to better impose their will. Unfortunately, the press and television have started a war against Serbia, which certainly has its faults, but others have theirs too, and even more²⁰.

A practical example of Dante Cruicchi's pursuit of truth can be seen in his commitment to understanding the fate of a group of missing Croatian journalists that, at the time Cruicchi was writing, were considered “disappeared”. In a letter addressed to Helena Duplancic from the Foreign Office of the city of Zagreb on January 12, 1992, Cruicchi first assured her that he would do “everything possible to ensure that our contribution facilitates reconciliation among all the peoples and ethnicities of Yugoslavia”. He then requested her to provide him with “documented information about the journalists and other Croats from Vukovar who are considered ‘missing’, as well as any violations of international norms regarding prisoners of war, soldiers, or civilians”. This request stemmed from Cruicchi's intention to travel to Belgrade to urge the local authorities to respect human rights²¹. This last aspect is particularly interesting, as it disproves any possible insinuations that could be made regarding Cruicchi's deep friendship with numerous Serbian figures, such as Živorad Nešić, Srbojub Vasović, and the Vice President of the Serbian Assembly Borivoje Petrović. However, this was not the case, because, in fact, he addressed a very stern letter to Petrović, despite the friendly and respectful tone, dated May 12, 1992, where he argued:

What has happened over the past year has led to a negative fragmentation of the community of Yugoslav peoples, with consequences that will have painful repercussions for the future of the ethnic groups themselves and the existing or newly formed republics after the elections. Foreign intervention has fueled

²⁰ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1 (Translated from French by the author)

²¹ *Ibidem*

nationalism, even extreme nationalism, which has caused serious damage to the fraternal relations that once existed in Yugoslavia. It is true that a faulty centralism and the failure to do what was necessary to give more weight to the differences between ethnicities and communities in the various republics facilitated the actions of those who, by revising history, want to overthrow the truth. But, dear Petrović, it is necessary on your part as well, and forgive my frankness, to take action to isolate and cut off the extreme factions, such as the so-called “White Eagles”, who make very negative statements and are picked up by the Western press. What is happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina, certainly not always due to those who opposed independence that did not take into account the existing reality, puts us, who have stood by your side, in very precarious conditions. I must repeat that your information services are not providing an immediate response to the injustices written in the press and said on Western radio and television. Why doesn't President Milošević, and forgive me for the audacity, call a press conference to clarify in full what is happening? Official statements are not enough. You should invite Italian television and those from France, Germany, and the USA to reveal the truth. The decisions made in Brussels should not be underestimated. We are now at a crossroads. We are close to you, but you must also facilitate our task”²².

Dante Cruicchi also addressed Živorad Nešić in a similar tone as he had with Borivoje Petrović. Cruicchi insisted that Nešić, as the president of the Municipal Assembly of Kragujevac, a member of the World Union of Cities of Peace, should speak out against the fratricidal war engulfing the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Cruicchi believed that this conflict was directly opposed to the principles of peace, human rights, and democracy upon which the Union was founded. In a letter dated January 12, 1993, Cruicchi described various reports of crimes committed by Serbs, emphasizing how these events damaged the integrity of the Union, but concluded the letter with a hopeful appeal that Nešić and the members of the Municipal Assembly of Kragujevac would become advocates for peace:

²² ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1. (Translated from Italian by the author)

I insist: Kragujevac, a member of the Executive Committee of the World Union of Cities of Peace, must take a stand, for our dignity is at stake. The Statute of the World Union is very precise. The situation is worsening day by day. It is true that there are other crimes, but the general information accuses Serbian militias, especially the Chetniks, of war crimes. This morning, “La Repubblica”, the largest Italian daily with a democratic left-wing orientation, published two pages with the headline: “We raped them out of hatred”. It reports that young girls were raped until they became pregnant and kept prisoners to prevent them from aborting. Azra and Elvira were born in the hospital of Zenica; their mothers do not want the brutal fruits of this violence. The hospital director, Dr. Muhamed Vejzagić, says that one woman went insane because her child was slaughtered before her eyes. Former detainees from the Bratunac camp arrive with broken bones and the sign of the cross carved with a knife on their foreheads or backs. The Bosnian government claims that the number of raped women is 30,000, the same number given by the Muslim leader of Sarajevo in Assisi, in front of Pope John Paul II, and on Eurovision, adding that 200,000 Bosnians have been killed and 500,000 wounded²³.

Initially, Cruicchi did not receive an immediate response to this letter. As he mentioned to Dragisa Stepovic in a letter dated April 30, 1993, “having received no reply to my faxes sent to the mayors of Kragujevac and Belgrade, I must conclude that my friendship is in doubt”²⁴. Cruicchi received a response from Nešić only on May 14, 1993, in which he explained:

Be assured that neither I nor my colleagues can ever forget your contribution to the understanding and recognition of the painful and heroic past of our city and its inclusion in our World Union. Five previous presidents have spoken to me about you and your friendship with Kragujevac. I have already had the opportunity to witness your dedication to the truth. Dear Mr. Cruicchi, my “silence” is due to illness. For almost two months, I was in the hospital or at

²³ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4 (Translated from French by the author)

²⁴ *Ibidem*

home, far from my professional duties. I ask you to understand. Everyone is aware of the fratricidal war, even those who are fighting. (...) Our city has not made official declarations or appeals for a ceasefire or against the destruction of cities or the rape of women. But we spoke a little in Bastogne, and a little in Florence (...). Unfortunately, our public declaration or appeal would change nothing²⁵.

Cruicchi responded to Nešić a few days later, on May 17, 1993:

I believe I have condemned the regime in Zagreb several times, where war criminals and men responsible for wrongdoing, even in Italy, are being celebrated, while monuments and memories of the national liberation struggle are being destroyed. Just as I have never hesitated to criticize those in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who have not respected human rights and international conventions. Germany, in particular, bears significant responsibility (...). I wonder, dear friend, if the positions taken today by the political leaders of Serbia and Yugoslavia had been taken by the cities, including Kragujevac, five or six months ago, it would have been useful for you and for us. But what matters now is how to get out of this quagmire today (...). You can count on me, as I completely agree with Antonio Gramsci, who said that “truth” is always revolutionary. Let us end this barbaric fratricidal war together, and prepare to rebuild what has been destroyed and renew what is old. Good health and happiness to the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. Peace, Brotherhood, and Solidarity to all²⁶.

Cruicchi's stance towards his Serbian colleagues was not only communicated directly to them but also shared with his Italian colleagues to make his position clear. He aimed to show that he was not afraid to express his opinions regarding human rights violations, even when they were committed by Serbian authorities. On May 21, 1992, Cruicchi, in fact, wrote to Roberto Soffritti, the mayor of Ferrara, informing him: I have made it known to the Serbian authorities, whom I know personally, with my even severe

²⁵ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.4 (Translated from French by the author)

²⁶ *Ibidem*. Translated from French by the author.

criticisms of the behavior of the Armed Forces, how a friend for 50 years of their populations think”²⁷. Cruicchi expressed his opinion about the Bosnian Muslims as well: while acknowledging that they were victims of ethnic cleansing and massacres, he also pointed out that they too had committed war crimes. Bosnian commander Naser Orić, for example, ordered attacks on Serb-majority villages with the intent to massacre civilians along the Drina Valley²⁸. Cruicchi summarized the situation in a letter dated August 2, 1992, where he stated:

It is terrible what is happening in Yugoslavia. In the USA and even here, the blame is placed on the Serbs. But that is not correct. In Croatia, mercenaries are active, and there is the Ustasha party, which was responsible for the massacre of 600,000 Serbs during World War II, Pavelić was like Hitler. Certainly, there are responsibilities in Belgrade, but in Sarajevo, with weapons from Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the Muslims want to create a religious state, without regard for the other ethnic groups. The Croats have occupied a good quarter of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the city of Mostar, without the press mentioning it. This morning, the newspapers are headlining that a bus full of children was fired upon: two dead, but some forget that one of them was Serb and disabled. Why place all the blame on the Serbs when the UN commander reports that the Bosnians are responsible for breaking the ceasefire? A solution must be found, but it can only be political: a just peace that initiates reconciliation²⁹.

Dante Cruicchi's reflections on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia are characterized by a deep understanding of the complexities of war, avoiding simplistic narratives and instead focusing on what truly matters—the protection of civilians and the peaceful resolution of the war through multi-ethnic reconciliation. Through his writings and letters, Cruicchi also emphasized European responsibility in fueling the conflict, particularly through the supply of arms and biased media coverage, advocating for a more balanced approach that acknowledges the atrocities committed by all factions.

²⁷ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1

²⁸<https://www.eastjournal.net/archives/64498>

²⁹ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1. Translated from French by the author.

4.3. Cruicchi's aid to refugees

In just the initial phase of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, over one million refugees and 1.2 million internally displaced persons were recorded. Between late 1992 and 1995, approximately 800,000 Yugoslav citizens settled in Italy, an incredibly high number that led Italian civil society to step in and provide humanitarian aid³⁰. This surge of involvement was primarily driven by the inadequacies of the government's reception system, which struggled to meet the demands of the crisis. As a result, grassroots networks began to take on the responsibility, relying on existing networks and key figures capable of mobilizing communities across Italy³¹. Among the prominent figures who managed the flow of people and the supply of everything needed to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis was Dante Cruicchi. His dedication is evident through the numerous letters he sent to key figures on both the Croatian and Serbian sides, where he expressed his concern for the dire conditions of the refugees. In addition to highlighting their suffering, Cruicchi provided concrete suggestions and directives on how to address the humanitarian crisis effectively. His efforts sought to bridge divides and ensure that aid reached those in need, regardless of their ethnic background, emphasizing the importance of upholding human rights and fostering reconciliation between the warring factions. On December 13, 1991, Cruicchi wrote a letter to Mato Kranjcević, who was working at the Pola municipality, stating:

You need everything (...) the refugees in Pola are 7,000 and in the province 20,000. I did the same for Novi Sad and Zagreb. We must stop the war first of all. I am "stirring up", if I may use the expression, everyone, because the issue is of European and global significance. (...) We must isolate all extremists, as it seems you are doing. We are grateful for this. It is essential to understand that if we don't sit around a table with tolerance, then everything will fall apart³².

³⁰ Bona M., "Gli anni novanta: una rete di accoglienza diffusa per i profughi dell'ex Jugoslavia", *Meridiana*, no. 86, PROFUGHI, 2016, pag. 97

³¹ Abram M., Bona M., "'Sarajevo. Provaci tu, cittadino del mondo". L'esperienza transnazionale dei volontari italiani nella mobilitazione di solidarietà in ex Iugoslavia", *Italia contemporanea*, n.280, 2016, pag.72

³² ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.18b, fasc.33. Translated from Italian by the author.

On May 21, 1992, Dante Cruicchi wrote to Živorad Nesić, informing him of his efforts to manage the flow of refugees, with a particular focus on the violence they had suffered:

We are receiving in Italy refugees who have left their towns and villages, with nothing more than the poor clothes they wear and, at most, a small suitcase. The press and television sometimes attempt to place the blame on those who are not responsible, showcasing the entire tragedy. Currently, there are more than a thousand women, children, and elderly people who want to reach Split but are being blocked by “Serbian irregulars”, using the pretext that there are besieged barracks. We cannot equate children, women, and the elderly with soldiers, who, according to the agreements with the U.N., have the right to move to other locations. This sort of hostage-taking must end. Public opinion risks shifting entirely in the opposite direction, which would undermine the truth we are working to establish. Dear Friend (...) this unfortunate situation must end³³.

An example of the concrete aid that Cruicchi provided can be seen in a letter from the mayor of Kragujevac, Dragoslav Srejić, dated November 12, 1992. In the letter, Srejić gives a detailed list of the number of refugees in Kragujevac and the medical, food, and other supplies they needed:

According to Red Cross statistics, there are currently 1,138 refugees from Croatia and Slovenia in the Kragujevac municipality, including 45 children under 2 years old, 101 children between 2 and 7 years old, 180 children between 7 and 15, 95 children between 15 and 19, and 717 people over 19. Nearly 1,000 people are living with families, while the others are housed in community institutions such as schools, youth centers, and student dormitories. Our refugees need: baby clothes and food, especially milk; food for all categories of refugees, such as canned meat, canned vegetables, canned cheese, rice, oil, and all types of pasta; medicines, including antibiotics and those for cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and children's diseases; sanitary materials; personal and household hygiene products (soap, detergents, disinfectants, toothpaste, shampoo, etc.);

³³ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1. Translated from French by the author.

clothes, bedding, blankets, school supplies (notebooks, drawing paper, pencils, erasers).

The Kragujevac Red Cross asks our Italian friends to send all these items to the Kragujevac Red Cross Committee, at Svetozara Markovic Street No.7. Our city has a large customs section.

The refugees, our Red Cross committee, and the entire population of Kragujevac thank our Italian friends in advance³⁴.

Another example of the tangible aid that Cruicchi provided to refugees can be found in a letter sent to Mauro Roda, coordinator of the Bolognese Committee of Solidarity for Refugees from the former Yugoslavia, on November 18, 1992. In this letter, Cruicchi lists the efforts made:

Dear friends, following our conversations and the commitments I made, both as President of the Regional Committee for the Honors of the Fallen of Marzabotto and as the first Vice President of the World Union of Martyr Cities, here is what has been done:

- a) For Serbia, the municipality of Kragujevac is preparing the names of 1,000 children – tel.0038.34.68.814 – fax. 003834-68.996 – President of the municipal assembly Živorad Nešić (...)
- b) Arturo Calabria – regional secretary of the ANPI of Friuli Venezia Giulia – has gone to Pola and Fiume. We already have 500 names, mostly Bosnians, and it will be easy to reach 1,000 with the addition of Croatian children.
- c) Grazia Ceschia – the comrade who was seen on TV the other night – informs me that there is a Bosnian refugee camp in Postumia with nearly 1,000 people – 350 children – living in very difficult conditions. Contact her – 040/22.44.76
- d) It would be good if on Tuesday or Wednesday, I could go with someone, starting early in the morning, to Trieste and perhaps Postumia. What do you think?

³⁴ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1. Translated from French by the author.

I await your response. Now we must mobilize the municipalities. In this regard, I will write to some of them, such as Marzabotto, Monzuno, Grizzana Morandi, Camugnano, Castiglione dei Pepoli, San Benedetto V.S., Monghidoro e Sasso Marconi³⁵.

Dante Cruicchi's efforts during the Yugoslav war reflect a deep and multifaceted commitment to addressing the refugee crisis, grounded in both practical action and well-defined ideological principles. He approached the plight of refugees not merely as a logistical problem but as a humanitarian issue, paying special attention to vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly. His advocacy was focused on ensuring that international attention was drawn to urgent human rights issues within the conflict, while also providing concrete assistance to alleviate suffering. Cruicchi's vision went beyond mere aid distribution; he continuously emphasized the importance of seeking peaceful resolutions and promoting dialogue between conflicting parties.

In his correspondence with key figures such as Živorad Nesić, Cruicchi's tireless efforts to mobilize resources and support from various national and international actors are evident. His insistence on the need for unity and mutual understanding as the path to lasting peace underscores the ideological foundation of his work. The way he engaged both Croatian and Serbian communities demonstrates his belief in the potential of local and international cooperation to address crises, even amidst war.

Cruicchi's dedication serves as a powerful reminder of how individuals and communities can play pivotal roles in confronting humanitarian challenges. His legacy is a testament to the impact of principled, action-oriented engagement in the face of war and displacement.

³⁵ ACM, Archivio Dante Cruicchi, raggruppamento Attività internazionale, serie Unione mondiale delle città martiri - città della pace, b.19, fasc.1

CONCLUSION

This thesis has addressed the importance of historical memory in building transnational networks, which have been crucial in fostering the growth and development of a global civil society committed to providing humanitarian aid to populations affected by conflicts, particularly in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. These networks, formed through collaboration between local governments and the joint efforts of cities and municipalities, have substantially contributed to supporting communities in crisis. In response to the research question, “What impact did the commemoration of Nazi-fascist massacres and the Resistance movement have on the creation of transnational links between local entities and cities?”, this thesis has argued that commemorating events from the Second World War has laid the foundation for a global movement in which cities and associations have come together around shared principles and ideals, such as peace, democracy, human rights, peace education, and multiethnic coexistence. The sharing of these principles represents an innovative aspect of these initiatives since city associations such as the World Federation of Twin Cities or the World Union of Martyr Cities and Cities of Peace had no other objectives except to promote ideals of peace and commemorate Nazi-Fascist massacres.

Through his extensive correspondence and public speeches, Dante Cruicchi repeatedly emphasized how the struggle for national liberation and the resistance movements have created a shared history among various nations, which in turn fostered a solidarity network on a local level. This network, founded on memory and historical recollection, laid the groundwork for providing humanitarian aid to the civilian population and refugees of the former Yugoslavia. This thesis thus answers the question on whether the pre-existing solidarity networks, based on the preservation of memory and the promotion of human rights, contributed to the development of humanitarian aid and the mobilization of global civil society during the Yugoslav wars. In conclusion, it showed that the already consolidated solidarity network of local entities proved fundamental, acting swiftly in response to the outbreak of the Yugoslav crisis.

This was evident during the Prague Conference held in September 1991, only a few months after the conflict began. This conference was not initially organized to address the conflict in the former Yugoslavia; in fact, its agenda was focused on the Helsinki

Process. However, Dante Cruicchi managed to draw attention to the tragic fratricidal war taking place and laid the foundations for future conferences to address the humanitarian crisis.

This thesis has provided an in-depth overview of Dante Cruicchi's life and activities, with the goal of shedding light on the work of a figure who was highly influential on the local stage in Emilia-Romagna but remains relatively unknown on a national level and outside the discourse of transnational networks among local authorities. By analyzing his correspondence, public speeches, and other primary sources, this study has sought to showcase Cruicchi's multifaceted character and his commitment across various domains, including the partisan struggle, local politics, journalism, and tireless international work. Cruicchi consistently promoted principles of peace, human rights, and democracy – ideals that, as the sources reveal, guided him throughout his life and earned him the title of “Artisan of Peace”. His dedication to internationalism and solidarity with war victims makes him a key figure for understanding the role of local actors in fostering global dialogue.

Among the possibilities for further research, there is a compelling interest in examining the Yugoslav perspective, analyzing the work of figures like the presidents of the municipal assembly of Kragujevac, Živorad Nešić and Srboljub Vasović, or the vice president of the Serbian Assembly, Borivoje Petrović. Although some letters from these figures were examined, the documentation studied primarily consisted of Cruicchi's correspondence, limiting the possibility of a complete reconstruction of the dialogues between the protagonists. However, such a reconstruction presents an opportunity for future studies, where an analysis of conversations and relationships among these figures could further enrich the understanding of this topic.

Indeed, this thesis could stimulate new research on Cruicchi's work itself, through a comparative study that contrasts his efforts in Yugoslavia with his activities in other contexts, such as assistance to the Kurdish population, support for Palestinians, and aid to victims of the Eritrean war. While these initiatives are not all directly linked to the memory of the Resistance, they nonetheless reflect Cruicchi's commitment to promoting values of peace and democracy that were central to his life and work. Future research could contribute to a better understanding of the international scope of his work and further examine the impact of his moral legacy.

Finally, this thesis has offered a significant contribution to the study of historical memory and transnational solidarity by examining the work of a figure like Dante Cruicchi, whose civil and humanitarian commitment has left an indelible mark on international associations and the promotion of universal ideals. Ultimately, this thesis serves as an invitation to view historical memory not as a closed and circumscribed element but as a living and current resource that can continue to inspire new generations and guide the actions of societies and governments.

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