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**Transregional Diplomacy and Cooperation Across the  
Adriatic: The Apulia Region and the Socialist Republic of  
Montenegro (1980-1989)**

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## Introduction

This research focuses on the transregional relations between the Italian Region of Apulia and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro – a constituent part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – during the 1980s. This study aims to expand existing literature on relations between Montenegro and Apulia during the 1970s<sup>1</sup>, and also to contribute to a rich strand of studies – such as those by Sarno<sup>2</sup>, Milano<sup>3</sup>, Ruzicic-Kessler<sup>4</sup> – on regional diplomacy in Cold War Europe. These studies have enhanced our knowledge on the perspective and concept of regionalism, evaluating regional actors as local purveyors of détente in the bipolar world. This research therefore offers a new perspective on regional diplomacy and cooperation networks that developed in the Adriatic region during the Cold War.

The idea for this study comes both from the curiosity to discover how relations between these two regional actors developed after the 1970s, and from a sense of necessity to fill that vacuum in the literature on this matter. Thus, the research question of this work was: what relations did Apulia entertain with Montenegro during the 1980s? The point of observation for this question was fundamental on a methodological standpoint: the core sources of this thesis are Apulian, hence the perspective of the specific Apulian actor in its relations with Montenegro. The scarcity of primary sources during the exploration phase conditioned the very structure of this work. With the only exception of eight Resolutions by the region's executive – which I collected at the Archive of the *Segreteria della Giunta Regionale della Regione Puglia* [Secretariat of the Apulia Region's executive] in Bari – this research could rely on any other official source.

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<sup>1</sup> D. Papović & O. Popović, “Collaborazione tra Montenegro e Puglia 1973–1980,” *Nuova rivista storica* Vol. 108, no. 1, 2024, pp. 253–284.

<sup>2</sup> E. Sarno, “La cooperazione transfrontaliera come esperienza *bottom up*: prove tecniche tra Molise e Montenegro,” *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* (BSGI), Series 13, vol. 10, no. 3-4, Roma, Società geografica Italiana, 2017, pp. 247–256.

<sup>3</sup> R. Milano “Percorsi di ricerca storica. Il Consiglio della Regione Puglia tra questioni di politica internazionale e iniziative dirette estere,” in *Il Consiglio regionale della Puglia. Storia e statistica della normazione*, Consiglio regionale della Puglia, No. 56, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 2024, pp. 387–411.

<sup>4</sup> K. Ruzicic-Kessler, “Regional Cooperation in Europe: Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia and the ‘Alps-Adriatic’ Region,” *Europske studije – European Studies*, 2015, Vol. 93, No. 1 (2), pp. 91–110.

The poor conservation of formal documents in some Italian regional archives is an issue that severely hinders research on the recent past of local administrations. Hence, a switch was needed towards secondary sources, particularly towards the local press. Consequently, the main sources that were used during this research were the articles written for the Apulia-based newspaper *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, which from 1980 to 1989 published 197 articles on the specific relations between Apulia and Montenegro. The newspaper, particularly its online database and the physical archive located in Bari's National Library "Sagarriga Visconti Volpi", indeed represents a comprehensive tool to use both as replacement and support to primary documents when they are insufficient or incomplete. Reading through the lenses of multiple journalists that reported on cross-Adriatic exchange, it was possible to analyze the width of the sectors interested by the interactions among Apulia and Montenegro. The relations among these two territorial entities partially originated from the Treaty of Osimo of 1975, which settled the political, territorial and commercial disputes between Italy and the Federation of Yugoslavia twenty years after the conclusion of the Second World War.

The research is divided in four chapters, each of them divided in several sections to address specific questions. The first chapter is an overview of the international relations between Italy and Yugoslavia from the beginning of the Cold War to the 1970s. While starting with the foreign affairs performed by central governments and diplomatic bodies of the two states, this chapter also focuses on the cooperation experiences of the 1970s among regional authorities, with respect to the Alps-Adriatic Working Community, and to Apulia's relations with Montenegro. The second chapter turns towards the origins of cooperation between Apulia and Montenegro in the 1980s, which is the main core of the research. Hence, Chapter II encompasses the interregional relations between the two actors over the years 1980 and 1984, which can be considered as the most dynamic part of the decade in terms of the subject discussed. The third chapter focuses on the years 1985–1987, when the cooperation system followed the consolidated path established in the years before, with a particular focus on cooperation between police forces to fight domestic and international crimes. The fourth and final chapter concentrates on the years 1988–1989, when the initial symptoms of the political crisis and future disruption of the Yugoslav federation influenced Apulia's regional diplomacy towards Montenegro in a pejorative sense with far less contacts and greater uncertainty.

## **Chapter I. “An Overview of International and Transregional Relations between Italy and Yugoslavia during the Cold War”**

Before focusing on the transregional relations between Apulia and Montenegro, it is necessary to provide some context on the historical and political events that anticipated the core case investigated within this research. Accordingly, this chapter addresses the developments that involved both national and local actors from the political, diplomatic and economic spheres of Italy and Yugoslavia. Through their joint efforts, these subjects became the architects of détente in the area and solved the longstanding Adriatic Question by ceasing hostilities and engaging in cooperation.

Accordingly, the first section scrutinizes the bilateral relations enacted by Italy and Yugoslavia throughout the Cold War, analyzing the foreign and domestic implications that the normalization of their relationship generated. In the second section the focus shifts to the specific connections started among local entities, mainly through the stipulation of agreements that developed transnational networks of considerable dimensions, as in the case of the “Alps-Adriatic Working Community”. The third section is relevant for understanding the antecedents of this study’s main topic, as it offers a comprehensive overview of the relations between Apulia and Montenegro throughout the 1970s.

### **1.1 From Military Hostility to Thriving Cooperation: Italo-Yugoslav Relations, 1945–1970s**

The wars of liberation from Nazi-fascism in Italy and Yugoslavia inevitably shaped future international relations both on a bilateral and a global standpoint. Eventually, throughout the Cold War, the central governments of the two countries conducted different foreign policies in light of the political positions they adopted (or were forced to adopt) after the Second World War.

On the one hand, Italy had come out of the conflict under a military occupation of Western Allied forces, which, joined by partisan resistance in a two-years long effort

(September 1943-April 1945), succeeded against the Nazi-fascist forces<sup>5</sup>. In 1946, a referendum on the institutional form of the state was held, which marked the birth of the Italian Republic, and the first free elections to elect a Constitutional Assembly were organized<sup>6</sup>. When the Republican Constitution finally entered into force in 1948, the first parliamentary elections of 18 April 1948 established a government majority led by the Christian Democratic party, which meant Italy's Atlantic and European choices<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, Yugoslavia came out of the war as a country unified during and through the partisan liberation war guided by Josip Broz Tito. Despite the Communist leader received Allied aid in the means of consulting and supply, the Allied Armed Forces did not engage directly in the Communist partisans' war efforts. The Red Army contributed with the conquest of Serbia in 1944, but the largest effort to free the country was conducted by partisans, who saw this factor as an opportunity to claim autonomy from any external pressure. From November 1943 Tito consolidated his rule – adopting Stalinist economic policies and marginalizing political opponents – and ultimately established the Federation of Socialist Republics of Yugoslavia in 1946. Regarding foreign affairs, Tito had great ambitions for his new state and was committed to follow a regional power strategy, which included the creation of a Balkan federation encompassing Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria, the support to the Greek Communist Guerrilla, and ambitions towards disputed lands with Italy around the city of Trieste<sup>8</sup> – an issue that would deteriorate bilateral relations with Rome until the 1970s. These plans were far too ambitious for both the strategic equilibrium that the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union had negotiated in the “Percentage Agreement” of October 1944<sup>9</sup> and, after the escalation of the Cold War in 1947, for Stalin's ambition to create a defensive and homogeneous Socialist bloc under Soviet leadership<sup>10</sup>. Throughout 1947 and 1948,

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<sup>5</sup> E. Aga Rossi *L'Italia tra le grandi potenze. Dalla seconda guerra mondiale alla guerra fredda*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> G. Bernardini, M. Cau, G. D'Ottavio e C. Nubola (a cura di) *L'età costituente. Italia 1945-1948*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2017 DOI: 10.978.8815/335661.

<sup>7</sup> A. Varsori *Dalla rinascita al declino: Storia internazionale dell'Italia repubblicana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2022, p. 75-128.

<sup>8</sup> Z. Janjetović, “An Oppressive liberation: Yugoslavia 1944–1948,” in John R. Lampe and Ulf Brunnbauer (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, London, Routledge, 2021, p. 401–407.

<sup>9</sup> A. Resis, “The Churchill-Stalin Secret ‘Percentages’ Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2, 1978, 368–87.

<sup>10</sup> V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996.

Yugoslav-Soviet relations deteriorated, mainly due to Stalin's disagreement towards Tito's foreign policy. On 28 June 1948, the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled from the Cominform – the Communist Information Bureau that the Soviet Union had created in September 1947 to enhance its leadership over Communist parties in Europe<sup>11</sup>.

This expulsion convinced Tito that he could internationally locate his country on an independent stance. In internal politics, Tito and his comrades adopted a “third-way” socialist approach founded on the system of self-management; while in international politics, he opted a non-engaged policy which rejected adhesion to any of the two blocs. This path led him to contribute to the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, which encompassed countries emerging from former Western colonies – such as India, Indonesia, South Africa, Egypt and others – that qualified as politically independent from the Cold War's logics of power.

During the Cold War, bilateral relations between Italy and Yugoslavia were marked by alternate moments of critical tension, and positive cooperation. The pivotal watersheds that improved relations between the two countries would be the Memorandum of Understanding signed in London in 1954 – which solved *de facto* the territorial dispute around Trieste<sup>12</sup>, and the Treaty of Osimo of 10 November 1975, which finally settled the Adriatic Question from both a legal and political viewpoint<sup>13</sup>.

However, for the purposes of this research, it is important to dwell into the events that brought the two countries to a solid friendship. After the conflict, the different global positions of the two countries, along with the political and ideological diversions, and the disputes on the northeastern border and the control of Trieste, were a source of instability for both Italy and Yugoslavia<sup>14</sup>. The tension continued well after the 1947 Treaty of Paris which created the “Free Territory of Trieste”. The latter was not established due to divergences among the superpowers over its administration, so that it was *de facto* divided in two militarily controlled zones: Zone A, which encompassed the city of Trieste,

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<sup>11</sup> P. Dragišić, *The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years After*, Ljubljana, Ljubljana University Press, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> M. De Leonardis, *La «Diplomazia Atlantica» e la soluzione del problema di Trieste (1952-1954)*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> B. Zaccaria, *La strada per Osimo: Italia e Jugoslavia allo specchio (1965-1975)*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> M. Bucarelli, “Aldo Moro e l'Italia nella Westpolitik jugoslava degli anni Sessanta,” in Italo Garzia, Luciano Monzali, Massimo Bucarelli (a cura di), *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana e i Balcani*, Nardò, Salento Books, 2012, p. 115.

controlled by the Anglo-American armed forces, and Zone B, under Yugoslav military administration. This partition was not decisive due to the different interpretation given by Yugoslav and Italian governments to the agreement: on the one hand, Yugoslavia saw it as a resolution to the controversy, and renounced to the aspiration of control over Trieste; on the other hand, Italy considered it was a transitory measure which later could open the possibility to extend control to Zone B, that is to the districts of Koper/Capodistria and Buje/Buie<sup>15</sup>. The position of the two countries crystalized on these instances, and Italy maintained the same hopes for the above-mentioned 1954 London Memorandum<sup>16</sup>. The Memorandum formally solidified the status quo, allowing for a transition in the two areas of the Free Territory of Trieste from a military to a civil administration, managed by the Italian government in Zone A and, accordingly, by the Yugoslavs in Zone B. From that moment on, relations between Rome and Belgrade deescalated and the two parties started cooperating in the economic, scientific and cultural sectors<sup>17</sup>: in 1955 the Udine Agreement on free circulation of people and goods, and the 1958 accord on fisheries contributed to a partial détente between them, although political and diplomatic relations remained distant. An initial phase of normalization in the political relations started from the end of the 1950s, with a series of bilateral meetings and official visits exchanged: in 1959 the Italian Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Alberto Folchi, visited Yugoslavia; in 1960 the Yugoslav Secretary of Foreign Affairs visited the Italian Minister of Foreign affairs, Antonio Segni, who returned the visit in Yugoslavia the next year, with a formal meeting with Tito; and in 1962 the Vice President of the Socialist Federation, Aleksandar Ranković, visited Italy. During these meetings, the two countries' authorities assessed the positive relations they were developing<sup>18</sup>. In Italy, the new center-left governments led by Aldo Moro after December 1963 initiated a new course in the Italo-Yugoslav relations, constituted by openness towards Yugoslavia with the aim of normalizing and intensifying inter-Adriatic political and economic connections. This path became known as Moro's *Ostpolitik*<sup>19</sup>, which reshaped the paradigm of Italian foreign relations promoting increased

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem., 116–117.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem., 121.

<sup>17</sup> K. Ruzicic-Kessler, "Italy and Yugoslavia: From Distrust to Friendship in Cold War Europe." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 5, 2014, 641–64.

<sup>18</sup> M. Bucarelli, "Aldo Moro e l'Italia nella Westpolitik jugoslava degli anni Sessanta," pp. 123–124.

<sup>19</sup> L. Monzali, "Aldo Moro, Italian Ostpolitik and Relations with Yugoslavia," in Massimo Bucarelli, Luca Micheletta, Luciano Monzali, Luca Riccardi (ed.) *Italy and Tito's Yugoslavia in the Age of International Détente*, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 199–216.

openness toward the Eastern bloc, and particularly with non-aligned Yugoslavia. Moro was a firm advocate of Atlanticism and Europeanism<sup>20</sup>, as well as of concepts like peace, international solidarity and dialogue among peoples<sup>21</sup>. In this sense, the Prime Minister sought dialogue between the East and the West although without losing sight of the need for security and international balance<sup>22</sup>. Regarding the specific relations with Yugoslavia, he thought the residual problems with the neighboring country, primarily the question of Zone B, needed to be finally addressed and solved, through the acceptance of the status quo stated in the London Memorandum. Italy had to revolutionize her approach in this matter, no longer pursuing the territorial expansion, but rather expanding in commerce, economy, cultural influence, developing the relations between the two governments and representing a fundamental ally in the West against the constant threat of the USSR<sup>23</sup>. The Italian Prime Minister reckoned that a further development of relations would bring to a mutual benefit, in the way that Italy could access a neighboring flourishing market and, indirectly, a number of markets across the Iron Curtain, while Yugoslavia would find in Italy an important commercial and political ally in the western sphere, especially for the emerging European Economic Community<sup>24</sup>. Hence, in 1965 Moro visited Belgrade, in 1968 the Head of the Yugoslav government, Mika Špiljak, visited Rome. In 1969 the new President of the Italian Republic, Giuseppe Saragat returned the visit in Belgrade, while in 1971 Tito was received in Rome. Saragat, a prominent leader of the Italian Social-democratic Party (PSDI), represented an important asset for Yugoslavs in Italian politics due to his commitment to strengthen bilateral ties in an anti-Soviet function<sup>25</sup>. With time, the appreciation between Yugoslav authorities and the leaders of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), primarily Pietro Nenni, steadily grew. In fact, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Italian socialists were not keen towards Yugoslavia, which was supported by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). However, throughout the 1960s, the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>21</sup> M. Bucarelli, "Aldo Moro e l'Italia nella Westpolitik jugoslava degli anni Sessanta," 138. For additional information on Aldo Moro: G. Formigoni, *Aldo Moro: lo statista e il suo dramma*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2023. For Aldo Moro's foreign policy: F. Imperato, "Aldo Moro e la pace nella sicurezza. La politica estera del centro-sinistra 1963-1968," Bari, Progedit, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 140–141.

<sup>24</sup> K. Ruzicic-Kessler, "Italy and Yugoslavia: from distrust to friendship in Cold War Europe," pp. 641–664. For additional information on the European Economic Community's Yugoslav policy: B. Zaccaria, *The EEC's Yugoslav Policy in Cold War Europe, 1968-1980*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Bucarelli, "Aldo Moro e l'Italia nella Westpolitik jugoslava degli anni Sessanta," 128.

center-left Italian government – which included the socialist forces, too – improved relations with the League of Communist of Yugoslavia, with the PSI party secretary stating that the only way to modify the current asset of the bipolar world was to allow smaller political groups and powers to emerge. In other words, Nenni endorsed a “third way” in international relations, led by Yugoslavia<sup>26</sup>. Thus, in the 1960s the Italo-Yugoslav relations reached a peak that would continue for many years, with a constant progress in peaceful bilateral relations and cooperation initiatives, interpreted in a cautious and reflexive manner as it was Moro’s attitude. These were the premises that brought the two governments to sign the Treaty of Osimo in 1975. Aldo Moro calculated that the agreement should set at once multiple matters not yet unsettled, not only on the territorial, but also on the fishery, commercial, and economic sectors. On the other side of the border, Yugoslav political and diplomatic authorities warmly welcomed the Italian center-left governments of the 1960s, and even more Aldo Moro’s leadership, believing that the latter might be the man who could finally change inter-Adriatic relations and end hostilities almost permanently<sup>27</sup>. The literature on the Italo-Yugoslav relations sets in the year 1968 the moment when relations reached the highest level of trust and mutual assurance that would bring the two parties to Osimo. When the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia, in what will be remembered as the end of the “Prague Spring”, Yugoslavia found itself in a dangerous situation: Italy’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Medici, reassured Yugoslavia that Italy would not take advantage from the displacement of soldiers from the border<sup>28</sup>. In 1968 the two countries initiated a series of talks on the possibility of military cooperation in the Adriatic<sup>29</sup>. In 1969, after the official visits of Nenni and Saragat in Yugoslavia, Italians took the first steps towards a joint commission for the resolution of the border controversy. Italian and Yugoslav authorities kept on communicating in secret to reach an agreement – the choice to entertain confidential negotiations was due to the sensitivity Italians had towards the territorial issues of the crisis – until 1970, when rumors about secret negotiations were spread by right-wing politicians, press reports and local citizens in the area around Trieste, which

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>28</sup> M. Bucarelli, “La politica estera italiana e la soluzione della questione di Trieste: gli accordi di Osimo del 1975,” *Qualestoria*, No. 2, 2013, pp. 1–26.

<sup>29</sup> Ruzicic-Kessler, “Italy and Yugoslavia: from distrust to friendship in Cold War Europe,” 641–664.

argued that Italy was ready to acknowledge Yugoslavia's sovereignty over Zone B<sup>30</sup>. Moro, at the time Minister of Foreign Affairs, publicly denied in November 1970 – at the eve of Tito's visit to Rome – that any surrender of legitimate national interests was excluded<sup>31</sup>. Yugoslav authorities were utterly dissatisfied by the words of Moro, and interpreted them as a question to Yugoslav sovereignty: hence, Tito's visit was cancelled in retaliation<sup>32</sup>. Additionally, the countries were hit by a surging domestic instability: on the one hand public unrest in the Trieste area in Italy, on the other hand internal liberal reforms and nationalist movements, concurrently with severe economic and commercial crises in Yugoslavia. Later on, in February 1971, the two Foreign Ministers, Aldo Moro and Mirko Tepavac, held a summit in Venice. On this occasion, the Italian minister confirmed the conditions set in 1954. Additionally he suggested to address the case at once integrating all matters – territorial, political, economic, and of minorities – in the same concertation, producing one single agreement. The two parties agreed on the extension of bilateral negotiations, despite different internal priorities. In fact Moro wanted to avoid irredentist resistance, while Tepavac had to secure the success of the Yugoslav federal government which was then affected by centrifugal tendencies. They also accepted to accelerate the process of stipulation of an agreement on minority rights before the final, comprehensive Treaty, allowing both sides to claim interim successes without dealing with the territorial issue directly<sup>33</sup>.

Tito's visit in Rome took place in March 1971. It was a great step forward in the Italo-Yugoslav relations, since he and the Italian Prime Minister, Emilio Colombo, agreed on economic assistance for Yugoslavia, a general commitment to cooperation, and on Italian political support for Yugoslavia's economic requests to the EEC.

However a number of obstacles emerged in bilateral relations during this process. Yugoslavia was committed on the preservation of the current conditions, attributing *de jure* Zone B to itself and Zone A to Italy; but Italy, particularly the diplomat Gian Luigi Milesi Ferretti, demanded for an economic compensation for the loss of Zone B. Thus, the new Italian Foreign Minister, Giuseppe Medici, paid an official visit in Dubrovnik

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<sup>30</sup> Zaccaria, *La strada per Osimo: Italia e Jugoslavia allo specchio (1965-1975)*, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Ruzicic-Kessler, "Italy and Yugoslavia: from distrust to friendship in Cold War Europe," 641–664.

<sup>32</sup> S. Mišić, "Poseta Josip Broz Tita Italij 1971. Godine", in *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja. Zbornik radova*, Belgrade, Institut za Noviju Istoriju Srbije e Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2011, pp. 508–12.

<sup>33</sup> Ruzicic-Kessler, "Italy and Yugoslavia," 653–654.

where he met his Yugoslav counterpart, Miloš Minić, in March 1973. They agreed to institute a “second channel” of negotiations detached from the political-diplomatic, and centered on economic-trade affairs. This channel started operating only on July 1974<sup>34</sup>. Dialogues in the second channel lasted from July to November 1974: ultimately the two sides recognized the *de jure* division of the Free Territory of Trieste, placed on the border among the two zones of the countries, and concluded measures for protection of minorities as well as the economic compensation for Italians and Yugoslavs migrating from zones B and A<sup>35</sup>. The parties agreed also on the establishment of an industrial free zone in the whole area, however this condition was never applied, even though it would have promoted industrial cooperation for the production of goods which could be exported in the European Common Market as Italian goods<sup>36</sup>. The Treaty of Osimo was finally stipulated on 1975, although it would be ratified by both sides two years later, and it settled the decade-long Adriatic Question on the Italo-Yugoslav border. The Treaty was seen as a milestone of Italian diplomacy, especially by its main purveyor, Aldo Moro, and as a sign of the country’s growing importance at the international level. Internally, it also removed the Adriatic Question from any future political manipulation by far-right groups<sup>37</sup>, further consolidating the advantage represented by the dialogue between center-right and communist political forces – one of Moro’s core political goals.

## 1.2 Cooperation among Regional Authorities in 1970s Europe

During the Cold War bilateral cooperation among states was enriched by the progressive expansion of ties among local entities at regional and municipal levels. This activity developed connections to a transnational degree of relations, which meant that local administrations could build a parallel diplomatic system complementary to that performed by central governments’ foreign affairs. This allowed for an expansion of diplomatic relations on two spheres. First, regional activity shifted from a vertical region–state correlation to a horizontal region–foreign region relationship. Second, the direction

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<sup>34</sup> B. Zaccaria, “Yugoslavia, Italy, and European integration: was Osimo 1975 a Pyrrhic victory?.” *Cold War History*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2020, pp. 503-520.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> Ruzicic-Kessler, “Italy and Yugoslavia,” 658.

of influence evolved from a top-down to a bottom-up model. In other words, local entities moved from a predominantly vertical connection – with a firm subordination to the central government – to more horizontal types of external relations, which enabled a greater autonomy in cooperation with foreign administrations. At the same time, the top-down influence exerted by central governments over decentralized bodies partially reversed to a bottom-up situation, as local political and economic authorities leveraged central institutions to adopt policies that facilitated cross-border exchanges. The negotiations that brought to Osimo provide a clear example of this process. Regional cooperation throughout the 1960s and 1970s steadily rose to prominence at both local and central levels. At the territorial level, improved political relations enhanced the conclusion of economic, commercial and cultural objectives; at the national level, the existence of cross-border ties between neighboring local bodies induced state governments to consolidate and streamline interactions at the two governmental levels. This was the case of the Alps-Adriatic Working Community, which will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in other circumstances – such as relations between the Italian Region of Apulia and the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Montenegro – Italian authorities refrained from enabling a direct air link, as will be examined in the following chapters. Depending on their position within the state’s administrative apparatus and the consequent powers set by the constitutional order, local bodies could engage either in activities of “regional promotion” abroad<sup>38</sup> – as was the case with Italy’s Regions – or in proper forms of state-like foreign activity, as occurred with the Socialist Republics of the Yugoslav Federation after the 1974 Constitution, which fundamentally turned the federation in a confederal system.

In the specific case of Italian and Yugoslav local authorities, an important factor to consider is the impact of political differences among the two countries, which influenced their respective legal frameworks as they were created following the Second World War. On the one hand, Yugoslavia – being the “Land of the South Slavs” – reunited under a single central authority multiple peoples (*narod*) that carried profound historical differences. Hence, it was natural for the state to assume the form of a federation of single

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<sup>38</sup> R. Milano, “Percorsi di ricerca storica. Il Consiglio della Regione Puglia tra questioni di politica internazionale e iniziative dirette estere,” in *Il Consiglio regionale della Puglia. Storia e statistica della normazione*, Consiglio regionale della Puglia, No. 56, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 2024, p. 409.

republics, each with its own local constitution and a certain degree of political and economic autonomy, that would be expanded in 1974. On the other hand, the Italian Republic was constituted as a unitary state with forms of local decentralization through institutions like Regions, Provinces and municipalities. Additionally, Regions were divided in two types: the majority of them were under an ordinary statute, while five regions could benefit of a special statute that granted them more autonomy from Rome. The Italian Constitution included in Title V this administrative and territorial subdivision and it was a prerogative of the executives that formed after 1948 to establish the complementary legal framework for them to operate. For Regions with ordinary statute, this political process was not activated until 1970, when regional authorities gradually established their Statutes and could start operating according to their competences – however the regions’ prerogatives were not clearly determined, a fact that would complicate their operativity for the years to come<sup>39</sup>.

Nonetheless, cross-border regional cooperation developed through multiple initiatives of integration along borders with countries having different constitutional and political orders. A remarkable model was pursued in the Alps-Adriatic border regions among Italy, Yugoslavia and Austria. This case is particularly fascinating due to the different constitutional orders adopted by the countries: Italy and Austria emerged as liberal democracies with capitalist-oriented economic systems, while Yugoslavia developed a democratic socialist state structure. These diversions were further intensified by their differing international alignments during the Cold War, with Italy acting as a key NATO member in the Mediterranean Sea and a founding country of the European Economic Community; Austria, a central Europe state, maintained neutrality under the 1955 Austrian State Treaty stipulated with the Allied powers; and Yugoslavia being a Socialist country, albeit non-aligned<sup>40</sup>. An additional latent obstacle to the good neighborly policies among the three countries were the territorial disputes that involved Italy with Yugoslavia for the Trieste area, Italy and Austria for South Tyrol, and

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<sup>39</sup> For a general discussion of the context of the foundation of Italian Regions, see: A. Bonatesta, “E pluribus unum. Un bilancio degli studi sulla storia delle Regioni italiane,” in *Ricerche di storia politica, Quadrimestrale dell'Associazione per le ricerche di storia politica*, Vol. 2, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2024, pp. 171-182.

<sup>40</sup> P. Mayrhofer, & K. Ruzicic-Kessler, “La regione Alpe Adria durante la Guerra fredda: un’eccezione nell’Europa divisa,” *Geschichte Und Region / Storia E Regione*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2021, pp. 63–86.

Yugoslavia with Austria for the contested region of Carinthia<sup>41</sup>. However, from the 1950s and all across the 1960s, the three countries engaged in a process of regional economic integration for a mutual development at local and central levels through a series of both trade and cross border agreements and diplomatic exchanges<sup>42</sup>. As it was discussed above, the cooperating approach established in this contested border territory was at times hindered by contentions, although once the three countries settled their disputes in the 1970s, the border regions established in November 1978 the “Alps-Adriatic Working Community” which at a first embodied the Austrian *Bundesländer* Styria, Carinthia and Upper Austria, Italian regions Veneto<sup>43</sup> and Friuli-Venezia Giulia<sup>44</sup>, and the Yugoslav Socialist Republics of Slovenia and Croatia<sup>45</sup>. In the 1980s, the group would include additional local authorities from Italy (Lombardy and Trentino-Alto Adige), Austria (Burgenland), and Hungary (Győr – Moson – Sopron and Vas), and even the German *Bundesländer* of Bavaria participated as an active observer. The community aimed at developing relations in any sectors between regions of the same geographical territory, although part of different countries with diverging economic and political systems. With the Alps-Adriatic Community Europe witnessed a proof of détente from below<sup>46</sup>, as it was simultaneously performed by city municipalities stipulating twinning agreements, especially between Italy and Yugoslavia<sup>47</sup>. Among several multilateral initiatives, the members of the Community established cooperation in healthcare, culture, mountain and

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<sup>41</sup> K. Ruzicic-Kessler, “Regional Cooperation in Europe: Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia and the ‘Alps-Adriatic’ Region,” *Europske studije – European Studies*, 2015, Vol. 93, No. 1 (2), pp. 91–110.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–98.

<sup>43</sup> For additional information on the regional diplomacy enacted by the Veneto Region during the Cold War, see F. Agostini (a cura di), *La Regione del Veneto a quarant’anni dalla sua istituzione: storia, politica, diritto*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> For additional information on the regional diplomacy enacted by the Friuli Venezia-Giulia Region during the Cold War, see M. C. Novello, “50 anni di politica estera regionale,” in Marco Cucchini (a cura di), *Politica e politiche dell’autonomia: 50 anni di Consiglio regionale del Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Udine, Forum Editrice Universitaria Udinese, 2016, pp. 219-235.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 104. For additional information on the origins of the Alps-Adriatic Community, see A. Ambrosino, “‘THE INVENTION OF ALPEN-ADRIA’ Processes of Region-Building in Sensitive Border Areas (1960s-2010s),” MPT (Memoire Preliminaire de Thèse), 2021.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>47</sup> B. Klabjan, “Twinning across the Adriatic: History, Memory and Municipal Co-operation between Italy and Yugoslavia during the Cold War,” *Urban History*, 2024, Vol. 51, pp. 763–776.

sea tourism, road infrastructure, university with joint scholarships, and international fairs, such as the Alpe-Adria Fair in Ljubljana<sup>48</sup>.

### 1.3 The case of Apulia and Montenegro in the 1970s

The following chapters of this research focus on the particular relationship between the two Adriatic local entities of Apulia, in Italy, and Montenegro, in Yugoslavia, during the 1980s. It is therefore appropriate to review the history of the ties established in the recent past between the two regions. For the purpose of this analysis, reference will be made to recent studies on the topic by Rosario Milano<sup>49</sup>, who examined this subject from Apulia's standpoint, mainly through reports of the region's Regional Council, and by Papović and Popović<sup>50</sup>, who studied relations using a greater political, economic and cultural scope from the Montenegrin standpoint. Contacts between these coastal territories were not unprecedented, as historic cultural and commercial interactions between them had been documented<sup>51</sup>. The Second World War laid the foundations for a deeper connection among the two territories: in Apulia were set multiple facilities of the Yugoslav Overseas Brigades, who were formed there and then sent in Yugoslavia to fight with the partisans, and after the fall of Mussolini in 1943, hospitals were placed in several cities in Apulia. In remembrance of this generous act, in 1970 Yugoslav authorities built a War Memorial in the city of Barletta, where over 800 fallen Yugoslavs were buried<sup>52</sup>. According to Milano, the enhancement of Apulia's external relations during the 1970s was due to two pivotal factors: first the geographical position of the Italian region which naturally acted as a bridge between the two Adriatic coasts and between Italy and the Adriatic Seas, a theater of multiple international crises across the 20<sup>th</sup> century; second,

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<sup>48</sup> F. Tenca Montini & S. Rutar, "Open Borders in the Alps-Adriatic Region during the Cold War and Beyond: An ERC Project, an Exhibition, and a Twin European Capital of Culture," *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, vol. 73, no. 2, 2025, pp. 239-240.

<sup>49</sup> R. Milano "Percorsi di ricerca storica. Il Consiglio della Regione Puglia tra questioni di politica internazionale e iniziative dirette estere," in *Il Consiglio regionale della Puglia. Storia e statistica della normazione*, Consiglio regionale della Puglia, No. 56, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 2024, pp. 387-411.

<sup>50</sup> D. Papović & O. Popović, "Collaborazione tra Montenegro e Puglia 1973-1980," *Nuova rivista storica* Vol. 108, no. 1, 2024, pp. 253-284.

<sup>51</sup> Milano, "Percorsi di ricerca storica," 397.

<sup>52</sup> B. Klabjan, "Twinning across the Adriatic: history, memory and municipal co-operation between Italy and Yugoslavia during the Cold War," *Urban History*, Vol. 51, 2024, pp. 763-776.

the search by Apulian administrators for a link between the central government, led by the Apulian Aldo Moro, and the peripheral regional entity<sup>53</sup>. Montenegro, for its proximity to the Adriatic area, and for the rail network between Belgrade and Bar opened in 1976, constituted an important partner for Apulia's trade expansion needs. However, the infrastructural and industrial deficits severely hindered this process. The Treaty of Osimo represented a turning point for lower Adriatic relations as well, especially in the tourism and maritime connection sectors. Montenegro sought to develop cooperation with Apulia, and Bari in particular, to revive the economy and to leave its condition of isolation, an increasingly evident factor after the 1974 constitutional reform in Yugoslavia that created more distance between the richer Slovenia and Croatia, and the depressed southern territories. Thus, in 1972, Yugoslavia opened its first consulate in Bari, and nominated as consul Velimir Icević, who between 1974 and 1979 would jointly operate with the Director of the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce in Bari, Šekulić, to expand the regional affairs between Montenegro and Apulia<sup>54</sup>. International fairs and Economic Chambers led this process and the first official meeting between Montenegrin and Apulia's authorities took place in Bari in May 1973: a delegation of the National Assembly of Montenegro encountered the President of Apulia, Gennaro Trisorio Liuzzi, discussing the question of cross-Adriatic transport. The aim was to increase maritime connections between Bari and Bar, not only to have in the Italian port an alternative channel to the frontier of Trieste, but also to enhance and facilitate industry and tourist flows in the lower Adriatic area. On the specific subject of transport, a number of additional visits were exchanged in this decade: in October 1976, during the Second Mediterranean Conference in Croatia, a delegation led by the President of Apulia's Regional Council, Luigi Tarricone, met the representatives of Socialist republics of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro. In 1977, a Montenegrin delegation was hosted in Bari to stipulate a Memorandum of Understanding to regulate cooperation in tourism, education, culture and sport.<sup>55</sup> The institution of a commercial direct link between the ports of Bari and Bar, however, needed structural improvements of the Montenegrin facility, which in the 1970s was not able to move substantial volumes of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>55</sup> Consiglio Regionale della Puglia e Fondazione Gramsci di Puglia, *50 anni del Consiglio regionale della Puglia: 1970-2020* (Bari: Sfera Edizioni, 2020), p. 84.

product. Despite these logistical problems, the Adriatic Chambers of Commerce stipulated an agreement for financial compensation after trade fairs: the parties demanded the same tariff reductions that were applied to cross-border traffic between Italy and Yugoslavia in northern Italian regions. Thus the same tax allowance could be applied to lower Adriatic trade<sup>56</sup>. The pact was named “Centro Jug-Italia” and it was signed by the Chambers of the Italian coastal cities Bari, Pescara and Ancona and the Montenegrin cities of Split, Mostar and Titograd. Ultimately, the initiative was not endorsed by the Italian government, hence it came to nothing. In 1976 several delegations were exchanged between Apulia and Montenegro to start a joint venture in the sectors of tourism, transport, industry and craftsmanship. Paradoxically, despite Aldo Moro’s presidency of the Italian executive, local initiatives lacked a sufficient coordination with central authorities, particularly between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Apulia’s Regional authorities<sup>57</sup>. This circumstance was particularly visible after the great opportunities for cooperation created by the Treaty of Osimo the year before.

Between 9 and 13 May 1977 a Montenegrin delegation moved to Bari to discuss the terms of a new joint venture, and further economic exchanges. New agreements were stipulated for cooperation among the Italian fairs of Bari (*Fiera del Levante*), Foggia (*Fiera Internazionale dell’Agricoltura*) and Montenegro’s Budva Adriatic Fair. The parties confirmed cooperation in fisheries, agriculture, and hunting, and agreed to establish a new joint working group to prepare a package of tourism services for the two regions<sup>58</sup>. At the end of the summit, the parties signed a Memorandum that consolidated coordination in the economic, cultural, techno-scientific sectors and a deeper cooperation between cities. The most important part of that agreement signed on 13 May 1977 was the final establishment of the Apulian–Montenegrin joint venture “Levant Co.” that would be founded a year later with a capital of Lit. 100,000,000 partitioned between Italians and Montenegrins with 51% for the former and 49% for the latter<sup>59</sup>. For the May 1977 official visit, when the agreement was stipulated, Bari’s Yugoslav consul had collected data from the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Commerce on the volume of exchanges between Italy and Yugoslavia in order to better understand the terms for the

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<sup>56</sup> Milano, “Percorsi di ricerca storica,” 402.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>58</sup> Papović and Popović, “Collaborazione tra Montenegro e Puglia,” 270.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

establishment of a joint company. During the official meeting, attended also by a plenipotentiary from the Italian Ministry of Affairs, Lorusso Attoma, the parties exchanged several pragmatic proposals<sup>60</sup>. Stefano Romanazzi, President of the *Fiera del Levante*, highlighted the industrial opportunities generated by cooperation among the two entities, and added that the new joint venture would have its capital distributed among Italian enterprises, Montenegrin associated labor organizations, *Fiera del Levante* and Adriatic Fair of Budva. The Memorandum declared the commitment for an upgrade of maritime infrastructural facilities between Bari and Bar in order to accomplish the link between the rail networks of the two countries<sup>61</sup>. The objectives of this agreement were far-sighted and ambitious, since the two local governments wanted to induce a shift in the commercial routes of Italo-Yugoslav trade, allowing for intermodal transport between the Danube, the Balkan peninsula, the Adriatic, and finally the Italian peninsula. This new commercial route was made even more necessary as data showed that 98% of the commercial goods traded among Apulia and Montenegro passed the border in Trieste, causing a delay in times of transport because of the longer route. However, the Yugoslav delegates demanded their Italian counterparts to leverage onto their central government to remove all the legal and administrative barriers that hindered appliance of lower tariffs, and to diverge the Italo-Yugoslav commercial trade on the Bari-Bar directive<sup>62</sup>. The Memorandum came into action already in the next months. Between the years 1977–1978, operators of the agricultural sector exchanged visits across the Adriatic to share their skills and competences, particularly in the field of olive oil production<sup>63</sup>. As for joint tourist initiatives, Apulian authorities proposed enhancement of rural tourism and restoration through tourist packages, opening of new restaurants with typical food, construction of villages for children and the youth, particularly in the area of Rožaje. Rural and mountain tourism had a great potential for Apulian tourists, especially those interested in winter, sports, and hunting tourism. In 1979, Levant Co. channeled Montenegrin imports from Apulia valued at Lit. 140,000,000 consisting of agricultural equipment, footwear, acoustic equipment, and other goods. Moreover, facilitated by *Industrijaimport*, an enterprise in Titograd, more than ten business operators from

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<sup>60</sup> Milano, “Percorsi di ricerca storica,” 405.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>63</sup> Papović and Popović, “Collaborazione tra Montenegro e Puglia,” 272.

Montenegro participated in *Fiera del Levante*, while Levant Co. organized the art display *Puglia in Montenegro* installed at Budva's Adriatic Fair<sup>64</sup>.

## **Final Remarks**

The aim of this chapter was to give an overview on the relations intercurrent in the Adriatic area at both international and transregional levels. As it was demonstrated, the posture used by central governments progressively evolved over time, with territorial disputes, minorities-related issues, and ideological divergences being either addressed or settled. The political problems in the upper Adriatic region made it one of the most complex regions for decades, as the territorial contentions and the ethnic tensions dated back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire's dissolution after the First World War. Hence, it was natural for the countries that shared that same territory in the continent to maintain ambitions high even after World War Two. In fact, after 1945, the central governments of the new Italian and Yugoslav republics did not give up their goals. However, international and domestic affairs eventually turned the course of history of this territory for the best. A series of political and economic developments – including the dramatic Tito-Stalin split of 1948, the London Memorandum of 1954, the negotiation of multiple bilateral agreements, the establishment of the center-left governments in Italy, the onset of economic crisis, and the first signs of nationalist sentiment rising in Yugoslavia – collectively contributed to the normalization of cross-Adriatic relations.

Ultimately, the symbol of the area's pacification was the Treaty of Osimo of 1975, which settled all the political, territorial and economic divisions of the area of Trieste in light of cooperation. This circumstance allowed for a deeper understanding and interaction between local authorities, such as Italy's Regions and Yugoslavia's Socialist Republics, which were able to expand their capabilities and competences to the point of being able to entertain transnational political, economic, commercial and cultural relations. Territorial entities fostered the political and diplomatic efforts for cooperation exerted by central authorities, nonetheless their leadership demonstrated the ability to act

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 273.

concurrently to their central states, as happened with the Alps-Adriatic Working Community established in 1978.

The perspective of the lower Adriatic was also analyzed, in order to grasp the developments of Apulia – Montenegro relations in the 1970s, a crucial period that set the stage for future cooperation. The decade considered in this chapter was one of strong commitment on the part of both regions' leaderships, who found themselves navigating a period of unprecedented novelty and political liberty. Montenegro benefited from the new federal constitution of 1974, which granted each Yugoslav republic substantial, state-like autonomy. The republic used this new status to exit its geographical and economic isolation by partnering with a historically connected and potentially advantageous local actor: Apulia.

Apulia, for its part, was a newly established authority, as Italy's ordinary regions were not effectively instituted until 1970. Albeit constrained by constitutional limits, the region's policymakers were faced with the task of shaping an entirely new political and administrative body, and were eager to make Apulia a relevant actor in international affairs – that is, within the boundaries of its administrative and political competences.

During the 1970s, both Apulia and Montenegro searched for a space and central recognition for their respective instances in the aftermath of the Treaty of Osimo. Local leaderships aspired to expand connections across the Adriatic not just through the land border in Trieste, but also via the ports of Bari and Bar, effectively creating a parallel route for Italo-Yugoslav – and potentially for Western-Eastern – trade. In this decade the local political class' ambitions were high, however they lacked political attention from the central state. The following chapters will examine the progress achieved in the 1980s.

## Chapter II. 1980-1984 “The Peak of Apulia and Montenegro’s Efforts towards Trans-Adriatic Cooperation”

The first years considered in this chapter may be defined as the most intense in terms of contacts between Apulia and Montenegro, and the number of news articles found in the newspaper used for this research proves that Apulian authorities as a whole had a strong interest in establishing relations with the overlooking shore of the Adriatic Sea. In the first five years of the decade alone, eighty-three articles addressing this topic were identified. These pieces reveal a substantial diversity of subjects involved, including both private citizens and enterprises or public institutions. These stretched from regional and sub-regional politicians to trade unions’ representatives (whether from regional federations or national confederations), businessmen from many productive sectors (commerce, tourism, industry, transports, agri-food etc.) as well as sports teams, universities and cultural organizations. The parties involved also signed various Memoranda of Understanding. The most significant was finalized in March 1982 between the President of the Apulian regional government (*Giunta*), Nicola Quarta, and the President of the Executive Committee of the SR of Montenegro, Momčilo Cemović.

Both news articles and official documents preserved in the Apulia Regional Government (*Giunta*) archives show that political personalities constantly expressed the need to expand relations between the two Adriatic shores, which were in fact very lively. Nonetheless, sources from 1982 reveal a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the contemporary state of these contacts. A news article from March 1982 reporting on the Memorandum between the two regional governments records a shared sense of discontent for the volume of their exchanges.

As this chapter will illustrate, the size of these ties was far from negligible, and the early 1980s represented the continuation of a fruitful cooperation that started already in the 1970s, as the literature testifies<sup>65</sup>, and would continue through the following years.

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<sup>65</sup> D. Papović, & O. Popović, “Collaborazione tra Montenegro e Puglia 1973–1980,” *Nuova rivista storica* Vol. 108, no. 1, 2024, pp. 253–284.

Academic literature on this topic highlighted a pattern of greater proliferation of new regional associations of various types and dimensions in the whole of Europe<sup>66</sup>.

The chapter is subdivided in three sections, each structured into subsections by years and topics discussed: the first section describes meetings between the governmental bodies of the two local entities; the second analyzes the central issue of direct transport connections between Apulia and Montenegro, as well as the challenges posed by Yugoslav budgetary constraint policies to Apulia's commerce; the third documents meetings between representatives of the two territories' trade unions and communist parties. The official names of certain regional, provincial and municipal institutions are going to be reported in Italian throughout the text, thus their correct definition is provided in this introduction:

- Italian regional, provincial and municipal governmental bodies are named *Giunta*. It is the executive body of each local entity and its administrative action is performed mainly through an act called *delibera*. The members of these bodies are named *assessore* and *assessori*, who assist the President or the Mayor in the management of specific sectors of the entity's administration;
- In Italian regional, provincial and municipal institutions the *Consiglio* is the legislative body, directly elected by the entities' citizens (except in the case of Provinces), and their members are named *consigliere* or *consiglieri*. In the case of Regions, the *Consiglio* issues regional laws which are applied in the entire Region's territory but are subjected to national laws.

## **2.1 Political Cooperation and Memoranda of Understanding (1979–1984)**

The first half of the decade was characterized by a vast exchange of delegations between Apulian authorities, both at regional and municipal levels, and Montenegrin political, industrial and unions' representatives. Twenty-six missions were documented in the newspaper between 1980 and 1984. In addition to bilateral diplomatic missions, relations developed in multiple ways, including participation in international congresses,

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<sup>66</sup> Sodupe, K. "The European Union and Inter-regional Co-operation." In Francisco Aldecoa and Michael Keating (ed.) *Paradiplomacy in Action. The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments*, New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 62–67.

international fairs, exchange of sport teams and mutual economic aid after natural disasters.

### Transregional Congresses for Cooperation and Development in the Cold War (1980–1983)

Italian and Yugoslav regional authorities met multiple times in the early 1980s in Transregional Congresses that revolved into various topics, and interested local actors at various levels, from regions to municipalities. The engagement showed towards the resolution of shared problems (as in the case of sea pollution in the Adriatic), and towards the possibility to reduce distances between cities and towns governed by different political systems is demonstrated by several bilateral encounters between representatives of single regions or towns, as well as by meetings involving large organizations of local authorities, as in the case of the Italian ANCI and the Yugoslav SKGOJ, the two countries' municipalities associations. Another important channel of these exchanges was represented by partisans associations, notably the Italian ANPI and the Yugoslav SUBNOR, which tied together for remembrance of the fallen and of the mutual support given by the two countries' resistance movements<sup>67</sup>. The aim of these meetings was remarkable: to share and improve the path for development beyond national borders and opposing factions of the Cold War.

The first interregional meeting of the decade happened on 30 March 1980. Franco Ferorelli issued an article on the International Congress of Adriatic Regions (*Convegno Internazionale delle Regioni Adriatiche*) and Ipalmo (*Istituto per le relazioni tra Italia e i Paesi dell'Africa, America Latina e Medio Oriente*) held in Bari<sup>68</sup>. This conference was significant for the conceptualization of the “Adriatic System”, meant as a network based on historic bonds, economic interdependence, shared development paths, common interests and issues.

In the words of Piero Basetti, President of Ipalmo, as reported in the article, there was the need for an “Adriatic project” aimed both at preserving the status quo and at

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<sup>67</sup> “Oggi congresso provinciale dei partigiani,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 22, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> F. Ferorelli, “É il momento di fare un progetto Adriatico,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 30, 1980, p. 11.

activating the potential development of the area. However, he emphasized the necessity of framing this project with structures capable of managing such development.

One step forward in this continued framework of Adriatic relations was represented by the proposal of Apulia's vice President, Domenico Romano, for a meeting between the regional *assessori* of environment of Italian Adriatic regions on the issue of marine pollution. The *assessore* expected a later involvement of Yugoslav coastal republics and Italy's northern regions wetted by the Po river in the discussion. The organization of these works was to be coordinated with the existing Italo-Yugoslav Joint Commission, established under the Osimo Accords. In the Treaty's "Accord on the Promotion of Economic Cooperation between Italy and Yugoslavia", the parties had committed to the creation of multiple joint commissions with specific mandates – such as protection and improvement of common waters, namely the Adriatic Sea (Art. 2)<sup>69</sup>.

The Yugoslav delegates at the International Congress of Adriatic Regions emphasized the "good health" of the Italo-Yugoslav relations, renovating their desire to enhance cooperation in sectors such as fisheries, marketing (presumably for tourism) and environmental protection<sup>70</sup>.

Domenico Romano from the Apulian delegation suggested to form a committee composed of commissioners from all Italian Adriatic regions, with its composition depending on the subjects discussed. A second committee, open to the participation of Yugoslav coastal republics, would complement the board. Together these two committees would produce data and opinions for the Italo-Yugoslav Joint Commission. According to the author, this proposal was accepted<sup>71</sup>. Among the Italian representatives were regional *assessori* Boiocchi and Sensini (Emilia-Romagna), Buono (Marche), Brunetta (Friuli-Venezia Giulia) and Cortese (vice President of Veneto). The Yugoslav delegation included Gasparovic [Gašparović], director of the UNDP Adriatic project; Borivoj and Terzic [Terzić] from Bosnia and Herzegovina; Stjejevis from Montenegro; and Zmajic [Zmajić] from Croatia, as President of the Yugoslav delegation to the Italo-Yugoslav

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<sup>69</sup> *Agreement on the Promotion of Economic Cooperation between the Italian Republic and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, art. 2, signed at Osimo (Ancona), November 10, 1975, ratified and implemented by Law No. 73 of March 14, 1977, *Official Gazette of the Italian Republic (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana)*, General Series no. 77 (March 21, 1977), Ordinary Supplement.

<sup>70</sup> Ferorelli, "È il momento di fare un progetto Adriatico," 11.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

Joint Commission. Albania declined the invitation to the debate, which was only to be expected since during the 1970s and 1980s the country followed a policy of almost complete self-isolation in international relations<sup>72</sup>.

The significance of transregional Adriatic congresses was reassessed by Apulia's President, Nicola Quarta, who was questioned about this subject during a delegation of the Italian Christian Democratic party in Belgrade, in February 1982<sup>73</sup>. Quarta reaffirmed the friendly relations between Italy and Yugoslavia, and emphasized that within this bilateral framework Apulia had played a pivotal role in establishing privileged and particular relations with Montenegro, owing to their common interests. These commonalities could fuel their cooperation and mutual economic support. The President added that the Adriatic Regions Conference needed to be resumed, since it had initially produced promising results, and reassured Yugoslav authorities of Apulia's commitment in this regard.

Connections between Apulia and Montenegro fitted in an interesting process that saw the emergence of municipalities and national associations of municipalities as purveyors of cooperation during the Cold War. Journalist Annamaria Messa reported the events of the Sixth Conference of Italo-Yugoslav Adriatic cities of 16 March 1982, organized by ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) and SKGOJ (Permanent Conference of Yugoslav Municipalities), the two countries' associations of municipalities<sup>74</sup>. Throughout the Cold War, these two organizations had cooperated to promote cross-Adriatic relations between local authorities at regional and municipal levels as well. SKGOJ pursued an active diplomatic strategy, establishing contacts with municipal associations in both the Western and Eastern blocs – namely the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the *Fédération mondiale des villes jumelées*-United Towns Organisation (MFVJ-UTO). During the 1970s and 1980s, this engagement

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<sup>72</sup> E. Mëhilli, "Enver Hoxha's Albania: Yugoslav, Soviet, and Chinese Relations and Ruptures." in John R. Lampe and Ulf Brunnbauer (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 447–455.

<sup>73</sup> "Quarta rilancia la conferenza delle regioni adriatiche," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 5, 1982, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> A. Messa, "Cooperazione, obiettivo delle città adriatiche," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 17, 1983, p. 5.

facilitated the twinning process between Yugoslav and foreign cities<sup>75</sup>, and contributed to what has been called “détente from below”, whereby Cold War tensions were mitigated by the institutions that were closer to the general population, rather than by central governments<sup>76</sup>.

In her article, Messa described the emergence of a new phase of cooperation between cities on the two shores of the Adriatic sea, centered on the environmental protection of maritime waters, port and economic activities, tourism and preservation of cultural heritage. Despite a shared willingness to expand cooperation, the parties acknowledged the limited tangible outcomes achieved thus far and emphasized that further progress depended largely on decisions taken by central governments. Bari’s Mayor, De Lucia, suggested to create a permanent Adriatic affairs agency – a bilateral body tasked with promoting economic activities between the two countries, with sector-specific agriculture, industry, territorial planning and ecology, each addressing different projects and interests of the northern, center and southern Adriatic zones. In this direction, he emphasized the proposals by ANCI and SKGOJ, whose representatives advocated for intensified scientific exchanges to accelerate the development of economically disadvantaged Adriatic cities. As Messa furtherly reported in her article, the two associations were also engaged with relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations to promote enhanced Adriatic and Mediterranean relations and to plan new bilateral connections<sup>77</sup>. According to Messa, the conference concluded with a joint resolution affirming that the friendship between Italy and Yugoslavia constituted a key element of stability for the entire Mediterranean area.

#### Bilateral Exchanges between Apulia and Montenegro (1980-1984)

The mutual exchange of delegations between the two local entities was vibrant and frequent, with transregional meetings that spanned from institutional summits to

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<sup>75</sup> 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*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2021, pp. 559–576.

<sup>76</sup> Klabjan, “Twinning across the Adriatic,” 775.

<sup>77</sup> Messa, “Cooperazione, obiettivo delle città adriatiche,” 5.

scientific meetings between University professors<sup>78</sup> and sporting events<sup>79</sup>. Some official documents were found in the Region's archive in Bari that testify the tendency of the *Giunta* to consolidate ties with Montenegro, starting from annual appointments between the leaders of the two local entities.

The Apulian President Nicola Quarta, frequently accompanied by vice President Romano and *assessore* of Agriculture Angelo Monfredi, met very often, either in Titograd or in Bari, the President of the Montenegrin Executive Council Momcilo Cemovic [Momčilo Cemović] as well as with prominent political figures and local economic operators. A particular meeting held between 17 and 20 June 1980 was documented by a *delibera* found in the Region's archive<sup>80</sup> and by a news article in the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*<sup>81</sup>. The objective of this conference was to evaluate the state of bilateral relations and promote new initiatives. The two parties renovated the positive relations of the two local entities and considered the past three years as particularly fruitful in terms of initiatives undertaken. The news article mentions Levant Co. – a joint venture that will be illustrated in the next pages – as well as cooperation between the main trade fairs of the two regions – the *Fiera del Levante* in Bari and the Adriatic Fair in Budva [Будвански Јадрански сајам]. According to the article, cooperation was also underlined in agriculture, fisheries and small-scale industry, alongside common experiences in the fields of university, culture, arts and science. A new provisional air connection had been established in anticipation of a joint tourism project. As for new proposals for the next years, more efforts were to be made for the exchange of goods through an accord on small maritime border traffic and reduced custom duties between Montenegro and southern Italy. Additional new objectives included the development of the wood and textile industries, new forms of collaboration in the environmental protection of Adriatic waters, as well as promotion of tourism and culture. Levant Co. and the two Fairs were tasked with strengthening agricultural trade, while in the transport sector, the establishment of a

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<sup>78</sup> “Delegazione di Titograd in visita all'Università,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 24, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> “Il torneo italo-jugoslavo dal 24 nel Barese,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 20, 1980, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 4936 of June 16, 1980.

<sup>81</sup> “Fra Puglia e Montenegro sempre più collaborazione.” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 23, 1980, p. 4.

permanent airline between the two capitals and a stable rail junction via the regions' ports of Bari and Bar was proposed<sup>82</sup>.

The topics of infrastructures and adjustment to custom duties between the two territories were discussed very often, and the initiatives revolved mostly on the same opinion, that of the necessity to establish an air route to connect Bari with Titograd. About this, an article published on 8 July reported on a visit by the Montenegrin Minister of Transport Giranovic [Giranović] in Bari<sup>83</sup>. The occasion marked the inauguration of a new Yugoslav ferry, named "Njegos" which entered service to connect Bari with Bar, Igoumenitsa and Corfu. It sailed two times a week and it was an improvement compared to the older "Sveti Stefan". The president of Bari's Port Consortium, Pietro Pepe, said this new service would expand exchanges throughout the Mediterranean Sea and, at a request of the Yugoslavs, the port would apply a tailored tariff regime. Provincial *consigliere* Amato expressed confidence in the development of trade relations between Apulia and the Balkan countries, as well as Franco Morfini, general agent in Italy for the "Prekookeanska Plovidba" shipping company. The event was attended by the shipping line's General Director Dragoljub Knezevic [Knežević], the Director of ferry services Ljubisa Savic [Ljubiša Savić], Bari's Coast Guard commander Magno, Bari's Yugoslav consul Vidovic [Vidović], and other Italian authorities.

It is worth mentioning an important interview released by Bari's newly elected Mayor, Franco De Lucia, published on 31 December 1981 by the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*.<sup>84</sup> Addressing the city's foreign relations, the journalist – Cimmarusti – stressed the good relations with Albania and Yugoslavia, particularly Montenegro, based on trade and cultural exchanges. He also referred to the institutional frameworks underpinning these relations: the *Fiera del Levante*, and cooperation among universities and scientific institutes. But Cimmarusti reckoned that infrastructural limits delayed further exchanges: the city lacked an efficient port, an international airport and a railway station adequately suited to transport requirements. The Mayor assessed that in recent years the city had lost part of its leading role, so it needed to intensify trade relations with Albania and Montenegro, announcing

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> "Un altro traghetto per Grecia e Jugoslavia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 8, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> "Intervista al Sindaco sul ruolo della città," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 31, 1981, p. 7.

forthcoming meetings with delegations from both territories. On infrastructures, De Lucia noted that Bari's airport needed to become an international hub to secure more financing, although construction works had been halted. The modernization of the central station depended on approval by the national railway company (*Ferrovie dello Stato*), a particularly complex process.

On 12 September 1982, the newspaper reported a visit by a delegation of the city of Dubrovnik in Bari composed of the Mayor Gjukic, the President of the Provincial Tourism Authority, Alexander Apolonio and his secretary, Slavko Pavićević, among other municipal figures<sup>85</sup>. The delegates were hosted by Mayor De Lucia and participated in the *Fiera del Levante*. The parties expressed the intention to intensify the already good ties between the two cities and their respective regions. Tourism was a growing sector in Apulia's economy, and Dubrovnik, already a consolidated tourist destination in Yugoslavia, represented an important partner for Bari. In fact, the choice of the venue for this meeting was not accidental: the *Fiera del Levante* allowed to reach customers and economic operators from multiple sectors, including Italian touristic organizations which intercepted every opportunity of expanding in new markets, for instance the Socialist Republics of Croatia and Montenegro.

The *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* also devoted broad coverage to the visit of Italian President Sandro Pertini to Yugoslavia on 21 and 22 September 1983. On this occasion, the President travelled to Belgrade to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Garibaldi" division, a unit of Italian soldiers stationed in Montenegro that joined the Yugoslav partisan movement after the armistice of 8 September 1943<sup>86</sup>. Claudio Angelini, correspondent journalist, author of the articles, wrote that ties between Italy and Yugoslavia were widely regarded as strong, and their shared border was considered as "truly open".<sup>87</sup> As reported by Angelini, Pertini visited Titograd with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giulio Andreotti. The Italian delegation was welcomed by Yugoslav partisan associations, the President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia Mika Špiljak, the President of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro Orlandić, and the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign

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<sup>85</sup> "Delegazione jugoslava al Comune per l'amicizia con Dubrovnik," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 12, 1982, p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> "Pertini oggi in visita a Belgrado," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 21, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> C. Angelini, "Roma-Belgrado un'amicizia «priva di ombre»," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 22, 1983, p. 2.

Affairs Mojsov. In discussions with the latter, Andreotti addressed current international affairs and the UN's crisis. Pertini paid tribute to Tito, recalling him both as a partisan leader and as the founder of the Non-Aligned Movement. According to Angelini's account, Pertini added that Tito's absence was particularly felt in a moment when peace appeared increasingly in danger, arguing that his authority and prestige had been essential in giving voice to a Movement regarded as vital for humanity.

Later in the year 1983, a delegation from Montenegro moved to Bari, in order to conceive new common initiatives in the tourism sector<sup>88</sup>. The parties proposed some joint events like an exhibition to promote the regions' tourist attractions on international markets, and production of new pamphlets to advertise the two regions in so-called "third world" markets [sic]. The summit was held by the Regional Government's tourism Secretary, Giuseppe Affatato, who hosted his Montenegrin counterpart, Vanya Brailo, alongside Knežević, director of the Yugoslav Economic Chamber in southern Italy and Bari's Yugoslav consul, Vidović.

Montenegro entertained bilateral relations with multiple cities, as we can confirm from the several visits held in Bari and in other cities such as Barletta, Lecce etc. In a particular case of a Montenegrin visit in the city of Canosa on 16 December 1983, reported by journalist Antonio Bufano, the officials exchanged information on their cultural heritage<sup>89</sup>. According to the journalist, Canosa's Mayor, Paulicelli, expressed his hope that relations between Montenegro and Apulia would keep growing and reaffirmed the shared commitment to peace in the Mediterranean region. The delegation's visit to Canosa constituted the final stage of a broader tour that touched major cities in the region: Bari, Lecce, Taranto and Barletta, and formed part of a wider framework of cooperation and reciprocal exchanges across the Adriatic, sanctioned by a twinning agreement. Later, the delegation visited the city museum and the archeological site of San Leucio. Boro Milošević, Vice-Officer of the international section of the Yugoslav communist party [sic] and member of the delegation, highlighted Canosa's significant productive and

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<sup>88</sup> "Più turismo fra Puglia e Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 25, 1983, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> A. Bufano, "Delegazione jugoslava visita Canosa e la zona archeologica," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 17, 1983, p. 22.

economic potential, its hard-working population, and its rich historical and cultural heritage.

In 1984, during a Montenegrin diplomatic mission in Bari, the delegates announced the beginning of a new phase of exchanges between Apulian and Yugoslav economic operators<sup>90</sup>. On the first week of April, a delegation of Apulian operators of the food industry was to be hosted in Titograd for an exchange of competences, to establish a collaboration tie between the two shores of the Adriatic. Most importantly, Bari's Mayor, De Lucia, sent a formal letter to the Italian Minister of Transport, Claudio Signorile, asking – on behalf of Bari's business community – for the establishment of a new airline between Bari and Montenegro.

#### Levant Co.: a Joint Company for Economic and Industrial Exchanges (1980)

Levant Co. represented an important step forward in the economic relations between Apulia and Montenegro, and an article published by *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* on 12 June 1980 provides valuable insight on this topic as well as on a Yugoslav delegation that was sent in Bari on the occasion of the company's budget approval of the previous year. Levant Co. was an Italo-Yugoslav company founded in 1977 by Montenegrin and Apulian entrepreneurs with the support of the two local authorities<sup>91</sup>. By 1980, the firm was actively fostering technical, financial and commercial cooperation between a growing number of Italian enterprises and the Yugoslav Basic Organization of Associated Labor.

The same article reports the annual meeting of the firm's board for the budget's approval, held in Bari on 11 June 1980, where a Yugoslav delegation was sent to participate. The testimony of this news article signifies the importance of the company's annual meeting as an opportunity of dialogue with economic operators from all Yugoslavia. On this occasion, the company's president – whose name is not specified – awarded a medal to the incumbent director of the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce in Bari, Mr. Sekulic [Sekulić], in recognition of his achievements in developing commercial

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<sup>90</sup> "Necessaria una linea aerea Bari-Titograd," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 16, 1984, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> "C'è la Puglia nello sviluppo del Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 12, 1980, p. 15.

ties between Italy and Yugoslavia. Notably, according to the article, that year's board's assembly was the first to host associates from Kosovo, which the author described as being on a path toward significant modernization and socio-economic development. The Kosovar guest, Mr. Haxhiv, general director of "Agrokosovo", was in Apulia to study the adaptability of modern technologies to the region's needs, with a view to fostering agro-industrial development. Agrokosovo was a major agro-industrial organization of the Yugoslav autonomous province.

The Yugoslav delegation met with the Region's *assessore* of Agriculture, Monfredi, also present to the meeting, and later visited the Chamber of Commerce and the headquarters of Isveimer<sup>92</sup> which had recently opened a credit line with the Bank of Kosovo. The Apulian Chamber of Commerce also proposed a reciprocal visit to Montenegro, while the Yugoslavs revealed a significant initiative that would improve Apulia's position in the Budva Adriatic Fair: in fact, after five editions of Apulia's participation, its contribution would no longer be labeled as "Apulia in Montenegro", but rather "Apulia In Yugoslavia".

#### Mutual Financial Assistance in Post-Earthquake Recovery (1979-1983)

In the early 1980s, Apulia and Montenegro showed great mutual solidarity after two natural disasters that struck the regions. Notably, in 1979 Montenegro, and in 1980 southern Italy – in the area called "Irpinia" – were hit by devastating earthquakes. Historical ties and a strong sense of solidarity prompted both regions to engage in mutual assistance efforts.

This generous action was appreciated by both regions' population and by institutions, and this fervor fostered confusion and disappointment for the failure of Apulia's authorities to deliver financial aid to Montenegro after the earthquake of April 1979.

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<sup>92</sup> ISVEIMER (Istituto per lo sviluppo economico dell'Italia meridionale) was a public credit fund that provided medium-term loans to businesses in Southern Italy. For the founding legislation, see Law No. 298 of April 11, 1953, *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, arts. 2 – 4.

*La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* covered these matters very closely, so we are able to reconstruct the story of the two events as it was documented in a total of ten articles, in addition to some *delibere* that can help us reconstruct this story. As for the aids offered by Apulia to Montenegro after the 1979 earthquake, three *delibere* and seven news articles were found. *Delibera* no. 2027 of April 20 1979 titled “Constitution of the permanent pro-Montenegro Committee” (Costituzione Comitato permanente pro-Montenegro) declares the opening of a permanent internal committee, in response to the earthquake that shattered Montenegro on April 15, 1979<sup>93</sup>. The committee had to coordinate relief efforts and fundraising initiatives aimed at constructing a public facility in one of the affected areas. Its members included:

- Chairman: Angelo Monfredi, Regional *assessore* of Agriculture;
- Vice-chairman: Gianvito Mastroleo, representing the UPI, *Unione delle province italiane* [Union of Italian Provinces];
- Angelo Marino, representative of the *Unione delle Camere di commercio* [Union of Chambers of Commerce];
- Luigi Farace, Mayor of Bari and representative of ACI, *Associazione dei Comuni Italiani* [Association of Italian Municipalities];
- Mr. Romanazzi for Levant Co.;
- Representatives of three farmers’ associations;
- A representative of the united federation of trade unions CGIL-CISL-UIL;
- regional representatives of industrialists and merchants.

Archbishop Mariano Magrassi released an interview on 2 January 1980 where he recalled the solidarity and heed showed toward the Montenegrin population by Bari’s Church. This sympathy resulted in the dispatch of two aid caravans and further strengthened ties across the Adriatic<sup>94</sup>.

Another relevant archival document is the *Delibera* no. 2265 of 25 March 1980, titled “Permanent Pro Montenegro committee. Contribution disbursement” (Comitato permanente “pro Montenegro”. Erogazione contributo)<sup>95</sup>. This document assesses a

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<sup>93</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 2027 of April 20, 1979.

<sup>94</sup> M. Cristallo, “Accanto all’uomo specie se povero ed emarginato,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 2, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 2265 of March 25, 1980.

correspondence between Region's authorities and the Italian Prime Minister's and the Foreign affairs Ministry's offices and allocated L. 350,000,000 to the Yugoslav republic.

Toward the end of 1980, Montenegro showed great solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Irpinia by sending aid across the Adriatic. This act drew renewed attention to the funds Apulia promised after the earthquake in Montenegro, and journalistic investigations subsequently triggered a scandal. Indeed, as it was discovered from an article from 28 November<sup>96</sup>, a sum of L. 379,256,000 had never left the Pro Montenegro committee's bank account in Apulia's *Cassa di Risparmio*, prompting the opening of an investigation. The next day a letter to the editor in *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* written by the chairman of the Committee Angelo Monfredi clarified that the funds were intended for the construction of a "Casa della gioventù" (youth community center) – in Titograd, as jointly decided during a summit on 18 June 1980 with the city's municipal assembly<sup>97</sup>. He explained that the funds had never been transferred due to two main obstacles: the absence of an executive construction project; and the lack of an agreement between Montenegro and Isveimer, which prevented the activation of the necessary loans.

Subsequent developments are documented in two additional sources: a Regional Government's *Delibera* and a news article, respectively of 15 and 16 June<sup>98</sup> 1981. The *delibera* (No. 4911) is titled "Cooperation ties between Apulia and Montenegro. Realization of a public facility in Titograd with the support of the Apulian Region" (Rapporti di collaborazione tra Puglia e Montenegro. Realizzazione in Titograd di un'opera pubblica con il contributo della Regione Puglia)<sup>99</sup>. It is documented that the total amount of the capital, as of 31 December 1980, was more than L. 400,000,000. During the 17–20 June 1980 meeting in Titograd<sup>100</sup>, the local administration – supported by the Montenegrin government – had requested a significantly larger sum (L. 4,500,000,000) for the community center. In March 1981, however, Titograd authorities informed the

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<sup>96</sup> "Non sono mai arrivati in Montenegro i fondi per i terremotati," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 28, 1980, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> "Chiarito il «giallo» dei fondi per i terremotati del Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 29, 1980, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> F. Ferorelli, "Per le piccole imprese un servizio di assistenza," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 16, 1981, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 4911 of June 15, 1981.

<sup>100</sup> "Fra Puglia e Montenegro sempre più collaborazione," p. 4.

Apulian Government that the republic's difficult financial situation made it impossible to proceed with the project before 1985, proposing instead to use the funds to construct a smaller sport facility. In the same *delibera*, it is documented that a delegation from Titograd visited Bari on 12 June 1981 to negotiate and sign a new Memorandum of Understanding – a copy of which is preserved in the Region's archives<sup>101</sup>. The agreement, signed by Branko Radović, Vice President of Titograd's City Assembly, and Angelo Monfredi, outlined the procedures for constructing a youth sporting facility in Titograd, symbolizing the long friendship and solidarity between the two regions.

The Memorandum defined the structure of the complex – which had to include a sport facility, a youth hostel, a meeting room and recreational areas –; Apulia's contribution for the project, of more than L. 400,000,000; and the companies entitled to build the facility – Levant Co. and Titograd's Sour Industriaimport. The accord defined that the complex had to be partially dedicated to Apulia with two plaques: one dedicated to Apulians' contribution to build the facility and the other in remembrance of Aldo Moro.

In May 1984, Apulia's President and the *Giunta* were acquitted by the Italian Court of Auditors in relation to the allocation of funds to Montenegro after the 1979 earthquake, which was deemed illicit from the Office of the Prime Minister<sup>102</sup>. According to the *Gazzetta* report, the Court ruled that the disbursement was legitimate, recognizing its dual purpose: to provide assistance to the population in Montenegro in the name of solidarity and to promote the Apulian regional community.

The case of the pro-Montenegro funds reappeared in the newspaper in an article dated 15 March 1983<sup>103</sup>. Again, the Italian Office of the Prime Minister cited the Apulian Regional Government and ruled that the allocated funds had to be returned, on the grounds that the initiative exceeded the region's institutional competences. In response, the Regional Government argued that it collected the funds only after obtaining the consent of the central government and with the explicit political endorsement of the Regional Council. Moreover, the *delibera* was lawful and consistent with the bonds of

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<sup>101</sup> Region of Puglia, Deliberation No. 4911 of June 15, 1981.

<sup>102</sup> "Fondi al Montenegro delibera legittima," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 27, 1984, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup> "Perché furono dati aiuti al Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 15, 1983, p. 4.

friendship between the Montenegrin and Apulian peoples, testified by recurring cultural and commercial exchanges.

On 22 May 1983 the newspaper published a letter to the editor sent by Nicola Parente, President of the “Pro-Loce”<sup>104</sup> association of Mola di Bari, a town located south of Bari<sup>105</sup>. Parente sought clarification on whether the funds raised by the Pro-Loce and local families for the twinned Montenegrin city of Tivat – intended to support victims of the earthquake – had been actually transferred. Parente also reported that the sum had never left the city’s treasury, due to a government decision prohibiting the transfer of Italian funds abroad. Parente expressed his frustration at the fact that the citizens’ generosity had remained unfulfilled.

As for the Montenegrin aid to Italy through Apulia, the first article of the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* on the matter appeared on 26 November<sup>106</sup> and reported that the Socialist Republic of Montenegro had allocated D.[inars] 100,000,000 – corresponding to approximately L. 300,000,000 – to provide material assistance to the victims. The commodities were transported through the ferry “Sveti Stefan” (Santo Stefano). The article also added that a Yugoslav delegation would visit Apulia to show solidarity. Said delegation was formed by Momcilo Vocinic [Momčilo Vočinić], Vice President of the Executive Council of Montenegro, the Montenegrin Red Cross President Ulicevic [Uličević], and former Yugoslav consul in Bari and member of the Executive Council of the Republic, Icevic [Icević].

The following day, the newspaper described the previous day’s events<sup>107</sup>. The “Sveti Stefan” ferry docked in Bari loaded with caravans, tents, mattresses, bedding and raw materials. The foreign delegation was welcomed by Prefect Latilla, Member of

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<sup>104</sup> “Pro-Loces” organizations operate at the local level in Italy for territories’ social and touristic promotion. For an analysis of the economy and organization of these institutions, see: D. Preite, & F. De Matteis, “Non Profit Entities and Multi-Stakeholder Relations: Some Highlights on Accountability Management from the Italian Pro-Loce Organizations.” *Procedia Economics and Finance*, Vol. 15, 2014, pp. 176–183.

<sup>105</sup> N. Parente, “Dove sono finiti gli aiuti di Mola per Tivat?,” letter to the editor, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 22, 1983, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> “Partono dalla Puglia i primi soccorsi una commovente gara di solidarietà,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 26, 1980, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> “Dalla Jugoslavia è arrivata una nave di tende,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 27, 1980, p. 9.

Parliament Siculo (PCI), the President of the shipping company “Morfimare”, Morfini, and the Yugoslav consul, Vidović.

Finally, on 29 November, a brief article testified a telegram sent by Montenegrin President Cemović to Quarta and the Yugoslav consul in Bari, expressing solidarity for the victims and offering further assistance if needed<sup>108</sup>.

#### A Memorandum of Understanding and Dissatisfaction Sentiments (1982-1984)

In March 1982, Apulia and Montenegro signed an important Memorandum of Understanding that would shape and improve significantly their exchanges in multiple sectors. From that moment on, the two regional entities would exchange in a more structured and continuous guise not only institutional delegations, but mostly sporting teams for international competitions: sports became the preferred channel to deepen knowledge between the two peoples, after a phase in the early 1980s which saw a greater involvement of institutional actors in this process.

The Regional *Delibera* no. 2579 of 15 March 1982 included a speech by President Quarta which explained that, acknowledging the friendly and cooperative relations between the two regions, the following Yugoslav authorities were invited in Apulia<sup>109</sup>:

- Momčilo Cemović, President of the Republic’s Executive Council;
- V. Knežević, President of Montenegro’s Economic Chamber;
- B. Lukovac, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee;
- M. Vujović, advisor to the President of the Executive Council;
- B. Srdanović, advisor to the President of the Foreign Affairs committee;
- Interpreters and security guards.

The aim of the visit was to return the 1980 visit of the Apulian delegation, verify the status of cooperation and propose new forms of collaboration in trade, industry, fisheries, tourism, agriculture and culture. The new visit was authorized by the Office of the Italian

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<sup>108</sup> “Da ogni angolo l’aiuto della Puglia: Solidarietà dal Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 29, 1980, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 2579 of March 15, 1982.

Prime Minister. The Apulian President was accompanied by the *assessore* of Agriculture Monfredi (as coordinator of relations between the two regions), and *assessori* of Tourism (Salvatore Fitto), Industry, Trade, Craftmanship (Mario Annese) and Culture (Francesco Troccoli).

A proposed program for the visit was attached to the deliberation. On 19 March, the delegation would pay courtesy visits to the President of the Regional Council, Bari's Mayor, the Prefect, and the President of the Provincial Council. In the evening, a negotiation session was held between the two delegations. The next day, the delegation participated to commemorative ceremonies in Bari's War Memorial and in Barletta's Yugoslav War Memorial and met with local Mayor and entrepreneurs at their production facilities, before participating in the opening of the *Fiera del Levante*. On 21 March, the delegation undertook an extensive tour of the region, visiting Alberobello, Lecce, and Gallipoli. On 22 March, discussions continued with representatives of the Regional Council from all political parties and with commercial operators from Montenegro and Apulia as well.

The official visit began on 19 March 1982<sup>110</sup>. Cemović, President of the Republic's Executive Council, discussed with Bari's Mayor De Lucia about current and future relations between the two regions, including trade, shared economic challenges and the prospect of twinnings between Bari, Titograd and Bar. Cemović raised concerns regarding trade-related difficulties, particularly the unloading of cargo and custom clearance procedures in the port of Bari. The competent municipal *assessore* Osvaldo Greco stated he would address said problems, consulting relevant ministries, if necessary<sup>111</sup>.

A following article published on 23 March examined in detail the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 22 March by Cemović and Quarta<sup>112</sup>. It consolidated and intensified bilateral relations across several sectors: industry, agriculture and fisheries, transport, tourism and culture. For the industrial sector, the Memorandum noted that

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<sup>111</sup> "Al Comune incontro con delegazione del Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 20, 1982, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> "Puglia e Montenegro rilanciano gli scambi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 23, 1982, p. 4.

cooperation was insufficient and that it should therefore be encouraged in the segments of aluminum, paper, plastics, steel and wood. In agriculture, the Memorandum emphasized cooperation in science and technology, as well as in production, processing and conservation of fruit and vegetables; production of quality wine; improvements in olive oil production and food industry. As for fisheries, cooperation in zootechnics and specialization of the workforce. In the field of transport and infrastructures, the parties committed to the improvement of rail and maritime connections, as well as in developing joint projects in radio and television. Tourism received particularly extensive attention, according to the journalist. The parties identified opportunities for off-season growth and stressed the importance of international amateur sports events involving Yugoslav and Apulian athletes. The “Giochi del Sud” where an example of these events, to be organized by tourism agencies, supported by multilingual promotional campaigns. A tourism facility was to be realized in Rožaje to promote mountain tourism exchanges. In April, Montenegro was to host representatives of tourism organizations in Budva, in order to draft a thorough cooperation program. In the fields of culture, science and sport, collaboration in the publishing industry, the circulation of scientific and cultural radio and television programs, plus more cooperation in culture and sport. Negotiations saw the participation of additional figures: Egidio Pani, Regional coordinator for culture; the Yugoslav Ambassador in Italy, Marko Kosin; the Yugoslav consul in Bari Vidović; Montenegro’s Minister of Commercial affairs, Božo Crnjak and the director of the Yugoslav Federal Economic Chamber in Bari, Milosav Knežević.

Both delegations noted that existing exchanges between the two regions were not satisfactory and that the Memorandum aimed to unlock the still largely unexpressed potential of bilateral relations.

A sentiment of urgency for the enhancement of relations between the two regions is tangible from later news reports<sup>113</sup>, where the parties remembered the necessity to improve infrastructures and economic exchanges. This was the case of a 1984 meeting between Montenegrin and Apulian representatives in Bari, when an important target was reached in the Apulian-Montenegrin relations: the invitation of Montenegrin cultural or

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<sup>113</sup> “Incontro al Comune con delegazione Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 9, 1984, p. 9.

sporting representatives in the *Maggio barese*. The presence of Yugoslav representatives to Bari's most important summer events would become a permanent occasion of contact between common (especially young) citizens of the two regions for many years to come. The Yugoslav mission consisted of the President of Titograd's Communal Assembly, Slobodan Simović, and the President of the Executive Council Branko Radović. They were received by the Yugoslav consul Vidović and by Bari's Mayor Franco De Lucia, together with deputy Mayor Angiuli. The delegates renovated their commitment to strengthening and giving more substance to exchanges in the fields of industry, commerce, culture and tourism. According to the *Gazzetta's* article, De Lucia stated that he was open to deepen relations through the Adriatic, which he described as a cultural bridge between the two cultures, and hoped the transport lines across the sea would be soon reestablished. The delegation later talked with the municipal *assessore* responsible for economic activities, De Marzo, to discuss prospects of economic and commercial cooperation.

On the following day, the Montenegrin delegation met the municipal *assessore* of culture O. Greco<sup>114</sup>. During the summit, new initiatives were discussed in the cultural, touristic and entertainment areas. Greco communicated the new initiatives scheduled for May, the "Maggio di Bari", and the summer program, "Estate '84". Among the initiatives, the author highlighted cultural events with folk groups and Titograd's choir, to be reciprocated by Italian artists visiting Montenegro later in the year.

The 1982 Memorandum was under a successful implementation, as the regions' institutions had cleared the path for anchored and scheduled occasions for exchanges not only between institutions, but rather for encounters between common citizens.

After the 1984 summer, many political and sporting appointments between the two regions took place. The first occurred in September: on 23 an international karate tournament was held in Montenegro, where an Apulian delegation – which included Giuseppe Attanasi, federal councilor and commissioner of the Italian Federation of Karate

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<sup>114</sup> "Collaborazione culturale tra Bari e il Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 10, 1984, p. 13.

and Martial Arts – met with Titograd’s sporting officials to discuss the possibility of a sport twinning between Bari and Titograd as well as between Apulia and Montenegro<sup>115</sup>.

In October 1984, Dalmatian economic and socio-political organizations expressed dissatisfaction regarding a draft Memorandum signed with the Italian government regulating fishing activities in the Adriatic Sea<sup>116</sup>. Yugoslav authorities decided to keep negotiations open regarding capital investments, sale of aquaculture technologies and common initiatives in Atlantic fisheries, but opposed two points: the formal matter regarded the extension of the transition period for finalizing a long-term agreement, from seven to two years; the substantial matter was the denial to joint enterprises<sup>117</sup>. In December, a new Yugoslav company would be established in Zadar, with the possibility of Italian capital participation, and would constitute the sole entity authorized to cooperate with Italian operators<sup>118</sup>. The agreement also regulated environmental clauses, namely water quality and limits on fishing volumes: Yugoslav representatives sought to increase per capita fish consumption to levels comparable with Italy’s 12,5 kilograms. The Dalmatian delegation accepted a transitional period of no more than two years, during which no more than 30 Italian fishing vessels equipped with engines up to 350 horsepower could operate in the waters of Dugi Otok, Pelagosa and Bar.

Two new Yugoslav delegations were hosted in Bari between late November and early December 1984. On 25 November, a delegation made of Drago Jovović, from the Presidency of Montenegro and Zoran Gregl, undersecretary of the Committee for Foreign Affairs, visited the city<sup>119</sup>. They were hosted by Bari’s Yugoslav consul Genić and municipal councilors Introna and Piccone, representing the Mayor. During the meetings, the parties confirmed the agreements reached in 1982 to increase ties between the two regions, and to establish a dedicated body with the aim of improving cooperation in various sectors, as supported by summits between Chambers of Commerce, industrial associations and Universities from both regions.

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<sup>115</sup> “Oggi a Titograd la squadra pugliese,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 23, 1984, p. 21.

<sup>116</sup> Agreement through exchange of letters between the Italian Government and the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia on the institution of a common fishing zone in the Gulf of Trieste, 18 February 1983.

<sup>117</sup> “Problemi per la pesca in Adriatico,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 6, 1984, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>119</sup> “Delegazione jugoslava in visita al Comune,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 25, 1984, p. 15.

Another delegation from Montenegro visited the Yugoslavs' War memorial in Barletta<sup>120</sup>. It was received by the Mayor, Aldo Bernardini, and members of the municipal executive board, together with the Yugoslav consul in Bari. During the visit, relations between the Apulian city and Yugoslavia were restated, with particular reference to the twinning with Herceg Novi. Then, the delegation visited the city museum and the art gallery. This was the third time in the 1980–1984 period a Montenegrin delegation visited Barletta and particularly the Yugoslav War Memorial: the frequency of these official visits proves the depth of the tie that linked Montenegro (and Yugoslavia in general) with the city for their historical ties that traced back to the Second World War and for the cultural and economic exchanges established between the two territories.

## **2.2 The Questions of Transport and Commerce**

The issue of establishing a direct airline between the two territories to enhance connectivity received extensive coverage in the newspaper, together with the improvement and restoration of major infrastructures such as Bari's port and airport. At the same time, commerce entered a critical phase as a result of the restrictive financial policies adopted by the Yugoslav central government in response to the country's economic crisis.

### The Air Route Question (1979–1984)

Apulian and Yugoslav authorities maintained strong interest and confidence in the establishment of a new air route across the southern Adriatic for the whole decade. The first example of this sentiment is in a statement left to Yugoslav broadcasters by Apulia's President Nicola Quarta<sup>121</sup>. He affirmed that relations between Apulia and Montenegro were positive and improvable, especially through new air links. The interview was given on the occasion of the inauguration of the first Titograd–Bari flight of 23 January 1980.

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<sup>120</sup> "Visita al Sacratio," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 1, 1984, p. 17.

<sup>121</sup> "Un padiglione della Puglia al Centro culturale di Titograd," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 24, 1980, tutturegione, p. 4.

The desire to improve Apulia's connections, particularly with Montenegro at East and Sicily at West, is confirmed by the fact that Apulia's leadership developed existing infrastructures – particularly Bari's port<sup>122</sup> and airport<sup>123</sup> – and aspired to renovate abandoned hubs – namely Grottaglie's airport, in the province of Taranto.

An article of 6 February on *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* provides an interesting reconstruction of the efforts to establish an air route between Bari and Titograd, starting from 1979<sup>124</sup>. The increasing volume of passenger and goods exchanges between the two regions made an air link between Bari, Titograd and Dubrovnik necessary.

- After the increase in the volume of passengers and goods exchanges between the two regions, in May 1979, some unspecified business operators from Apulia and Montenegro had encouraged a permanent link to be operated twice a week by the Yugoslav airline "Transadria";

- After this agreement, on June 12, Belgrade had submitted a formal request to the Italian Minister of Transport, particularly to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. At the time of publication, the Italian authorities had not yet answered to either Yugoslav or Apulian solicitations.

- The article revealed that a group of Apulian Members of the Italian Parliament, belonging to the parliamentary groups of Christian Democracy, Socialist Party and Communist Party, had submitted an inquiry to the Minister of Transport seeking clarification on the delay and on his instances regarding the new air route. The article reports undersecretary Bartolo Ciccardini's response: the establishment of a new air route required bilateral treaties between the two countries. Yugoslavia was not the only party to benefit from the infrastructure, as Bari and Apulia in general constituted important destinations for Yugoslav tourists and traders.

Later news from Rome reported opinions expressed in the Transport Commission of the Chamber of Deputies: the establishment of an airline between Bari, Titograd and Dubrovnik was put forward by Communists (represented by Sicolo) and Christian

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<sup>122</sup> "Più grande il molo di S. Vito possono attraccarvi sei navi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 3, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> "«Ma c'è chi ci pensa»," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 26, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> "Urgente il collegamento aereo col Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 6, 1980, p. 5.

Democrats (represented by Vernola). However, transports' undersecretary Tiriolo declared that, for both "substantive and formal matters", the route could not be authorized, despite the interest showed by Transadria<sup>125</sup>. Moreover, Alitalia, Italy's national carrier and monopoly airliner<sup>126</sup>, did not show interest in the service, but granted that other Italian companies might operate the route after necessary bilateral treaties.

The opinion of Minister of Transport Salvatore "Rino" Formica on the airline issue found journalistic coverage on the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* on 18 January 1981. The minister declared that 'Transadria' could not be allowed to operate permanently due to formal and substantial reasons. The only Italian hubs to host flights to Yugoslavia were Rome, Milan and Venice. Additionally, Alitalia was not interested in opening the route<sup>127</sup>.

As the documentation shows, Apulian members of parliament were not the only institutions to solicit the Italian government's action to jointly establish an air route between Bari and Montenegro, but Regional actors tried to make their voices heard too. This was the case of Giuseppe Colasanto, *assessore* of Transports, who declared he solicited the central government to authorize an air route between Apulia and Montenegro but received no response<sup>128</sup>.

#### Commerce in Bari: Thriving Business Despite Infrastructural and Economic Obstacles (1980–1984)

From the reconstruction of the previous section it can be noticed that the path for a direct air connection between Apulia and Montenegro has been arduous, especially due to hesitation by the central government. As a result, a stable air link between Bari and Titograd would be put in place only in late 1987<sup>129</sup>. Thus, in order to accommodate for the quantity of visitors from Montenegro, the main infrastructure to carry them was ferries, primarily the Yugoslav vessel "Sveti Stefan" which sailed between Bar and Bari.

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<sup>125</sup> "Volo Bari-Titograd: all'Alitalia non interessa," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 14, 1980, parlamento sud, ed. Domenico Russo Rossi, p. 11.

<sup>126</sup> A. Giuricin, *Alitalia: la privatizzazione infinita* (Torino: IBL Libri, 2009), 18.

<sup>127</sup> "Un volo Puglia-Jugoslavia? Formica spiega perché non si fa," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 18, 1981, parlamento sud, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> "«Ma c'è chi ci pensa»," 6.

<sup>129</sup> "Ponte aereo tra Bari e il Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 23, 1987, p. 23.

In the 1980s, the Apulian city was very well-connected to the Balkan Peninsula, up to the point that journalist Liborio Lojacono called the region “land of ferries”<sup>130</sup>, because the ports of Bari, Brindisi and Otranto suited to support growing connectivity with Yugoslavia and Greece through various destinations. However, this infrastructure was not without problems: during a mission in Bari of 20 March 1982, the President of the Executive Council of Montenegro, Momčilo Cemović, informed Mayor Franco De Lucia of the difficulties faced by transport operators in unloading cargo at port and completing customs clearance procedures. On that occasion, competent municipal *assessore* Osvaldo Greco, stated that he would address said problems<sup>131</sup>.

Apart from Yugoslavia, Apulia showed great interest towards Albania, a country that was so close to the Italian region, and yet so far, due to its decades-long isolationist policies<sup>132</sup>. This attention towards Tirana is demonstrated by the enthusiasm showed by Apulians after acts of openness pursued by Albanians. The first of these actions was an October 1980 project of a new railway line between Titograd and Scutari [Shkodër]<sup>133</sup>. Later on, after the death of Enver Hoxha, the post-1985 cautious policy of openness enacted by Ramiz Alia was praised in Apulia. Under the new leadership, the Balkan country slowly continued on an opening path in its foreign relations, firstly with Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia<sup>134</sup>. Albania participated in a joint commission with a Yugoslav delegation to complete the railway between the two countries. Thus, Albania would be connected to Europe via rail and sea, since Titograd lay on the Belgrade-Bar rail line and Bar was regularly linked to Italy through ferry services to Bari<sup>135</sup>. In a dedicated news report, the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* mentioned an article titled “l’Albania e l’Europa” [Albania and Europe] published on the Yugoslav paper “Politika” where Yugoslav–Albanian relations were still considered tense due to Kosovo’s Albanian minority question<sup>136</sup>. Most Yugoslav visitors (largely from Montenegro) moved to Bari for business reasons. In fact, they made a stable and consistent clientele for street markets –

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<sup>130</sup> “Puglia terra di traghetti,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 14, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>131</sup> “Al Comune incontro con delegazione del Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 20, 1982, p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> P. F. R. Artisien, “Albania in the Post-Hoxha Era.” *The World Today*, Vol. 41, no. 6, 1985, pp. 107–11.

<sup>133</sup> “Presto una ferrovia fra Albania e Jugoslavia,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 19, 1980, p. 25.

<sup>134</sup> “La politica albanese preoccupa Belgrado,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 21, 1985, p. 20.

<sup>135</sup> “Presto una ferrovia fra Albania e Jugoslavia,” p. 25.

<sup>136</sup> “La politica albanese preoccupa Belgrado,” p. 20.

especially the weekly market in Via Calefati –, as well as for small shops and department stores such as *Upim* and *Standa*. For this reason, Bari’s merchants and store managers paid particular attention to their security<sup>137</sup>, while expressing deep concern over Yugoslav federal financial policies to fight inflation and money smuggling. These issues are documented in various articles from the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*. The year 1980 opened with a decrease in the number of Yugoslav customers: from 312 recorded in October 1979 to 46 in the first week of January<sup>138</sup>. A similar problem was witnessed in Trieste, where the reduction was even more consistent, falling from approximately 10,000 visitors to a few hundreds, forcing many vendors – whose businesses relied almost exclusively on Yugoslav customers – to close their shops<sup>139</sup>. The causes of this decline in the number of customers were two: one related to adverse weather conditions, as declared by Apulian maritime agencies and the Yugoslav consul; and the other related to infrastructural disruptions, such as the regular maintenance of the “Sveti Stefan” ferry. In this period, the only Yugoslav ferry operating from Bari was the “Slavija”, which served primarily Croatian ports, leaving Montenegro without a direct link with Bari. Indeed, it was the “Sveti Stefan” to connect Bari to Bari. This last event revived the demand for a direct aerial link between Titograd, Dubrovnik and Bari. Another reason mentioned to explain this phenomenon was Yugoslavia’s debt crisis and inflation of the Dinar. In October 1984, prices had increased of 57% compared to the previous year, and inflation had reached 80%<sup>140</sup>. Starting from the early 1970s throughout the following decade, the country accumulated substantial external debt, while foreign institutions progressively refrained from granting financial aid<sup>141</sup>. Numerous articles on *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* of the time examined the measures employed by the central government to curb inflation, and this further demonstrates the attention Apulia had towards Yugoslavia, its constituent republics and their respective economic conditions<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> “Intensificata la vigilanza al mercato di via Celentano,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 9, 1982, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> “Pochi jugoslavi pendolari: maltempo o crisi del dinaro?,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 9, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>140</sup> “Inflazione in Jugoslavia verso l’80%,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 6, 1984, p. 8.

<sup>141</sup> M. M. Cvikič & M. Mrak, “Former Yugoslavia’s Debt Apportionment,” *World Bank Internal Discussion Paper*, Europe and Central Asia Region, Report No. IDP-161, Washington, D.C., The World Bank, June 1996, p. 2.

<sup>142</sup> “Pochi jugoslavi pendolari: maltempo o crisi del dinaro?,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 9, 1980, p. 6.

In July 1981 two articles of *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* investigated the consequences of Yugoslav monetary restrictions on cross-border trade, analyzing first the situation in Trieste, on 12 July<sup>143</sup>. The day before, only a limited number of Yugoslav customers had come to Italy, as the previous week the Yugoslav government had formalized a limit of 1,500 Din. exportable per person over a twelve-month period. This new norm discouraged shopping trips to Trieste, Gorizia and even Udine. According to the article, tens of thousands of buyers had previously crossed the border every Saturday, so the new regulation raised concerns that goods would remain unsold in warehouses and shops.

Some days later, an article by Benedetto Sorino explained the effects of same new measures on Bari's commerce<sup>144</sup>. In the two previous weeks, vendors had reported a decline in visitors from Serbia and Montenegro, compounding the effects of the Dinar's devaluation of the year before. Upim's manager, Mr. Carminati, said that sales had dropped by 30% and that Yugoslavs accounted for 10% of the store's customers. The article included an interview with the Director of the Yugoslav Economic Chamber in Southern Italy based in Bari, Milosav Knežević. He argued that the drop in sales was less attributable to currency restrictions in Yugoslavia than to rising prices in Italy. Yugoslavia exported 30% less goods to Italy than it imported, resulting in a growing trade deficit. He also suggested that restrictive measures applied by the Italian government were weakening his country's economy by reducing Italian tourist flows. Bilateral relations were not considered poor, but to be improved and developed: economic operators in both countries did not have sufficient knowledge of each other and of available investment opportunities, a gap that the Economic Chamber sought to address. Examples of industrial cooperation were mentioned, such as those between "Officine Calabrese", "Vagona Craievo" and Levant Co. In the end, Knezevic recommended to work together to overcome the economic crisis affecting both countries.

Between 23 and 24 October 1982, the *Gazzetta* journalist Liborio Lojacono focused again on the subject of Yugoslav monetary restrictions affecting Bari's commercial sector. The first of these articles was effectively titled: "Non vengono più

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<sup>143</sup> "A Trieste drastico calo di acquirenti jugoslavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 12, 1981, p. 10.

<sup>144</sup> B. Sorino, "La crisi jugoslava fa soffrire Bari," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July, 17, 1981, p. 11.

slavi per fare i loro acquisti” (Slavs no longer come to shop)<sup>145</sup>. This article reported that the day before, the ferry “Niegos” did not leave the port of Bar due to lack of passengers, marking the first significant backlash after the monetary restrictions imposed by Belgrade. All Yugoslavs travelling abroad were now required to deposit 5,000 Din. at customs, to be returned after one year, and an additional 2,000 Din. for each of their next trips, until a maximum of 23,000 Din. Additionally, Yugoslavs could cross the border carrying no more than 1,500 Din. Yugoslav banks also froze all foreign-currency accounts, limiting withdrawals to 250 U.S. dollars per month. The article included an interview to Milosav Knežević, who explained that this exceptional measure attempted to combat the smuggling of money and goods. According to the journalist, Bari previously hosted hundreds of Yugoslav customers twice a week, generating a L. 30,000,000,000 business in commodities like clothes, appliances, jewelry. Knežević considered this business as speculative: he affirmed customers resold at prices up to ten times higher in Yugoslavia. Although the restrictions would reduce visits to Bari and affect its private sector, he requested local operators to shift their activities towards the major “official” channels of cooperation between Apulia and Yugoslavia. He stated that bilateral trade had reached L. 30,000,000,000 by August and was expected to rise to 40,000,000,000 by the end of the year. Knežević remembered industrial cooperation initiatives between “Officine Calabrese” and “Vagona Kralievo” for coach building; “Cornice” and “Markoradović”, respectively from Molfetta and Titograd for timber industry; “Breda” and Split-based “Termofris” in the air conditioning sector; and the Italo-Yugoslav Levant Co. which fueled commerce and interchange between Apulia and Yugoslavia. Knežević concluded demanding Bari’s vendors to use this last company to directly access the Yugoslav market.

The next day, on 24 October, Lojacono published a second article on the consequences of the Yugoslav restrictive economic policy on domestic productivity<sup>146</sup>. The 20% devaluation of the Dinar, mandatory currency deposit when leaving the country, partial block of foreign-currency bank accounts, and credit limitations were all intended to prevent the country’s bankruptcy. Inflation had raised to 25%, unemployment to 13%,

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<sup>145</sup> L. Lojacono, “Non vengono più slavi per fare i loro acquisti,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 23, 1982, p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> L. Lojacono, “Bari, ci sarà ancora il lunedì degli slavi?,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 24, 1982, p. 7.

affecting nearly 830,000 people. In the words of Yugoslav Minister of Finance, Jose Florjanić, these measures aimed at stimulating production, especially for exports, and to restore the competitiveness of Yugoslav products in foreign markets. The government expected to reduce the country's trade deficit by increasing internal production and decreasing imports. According to Lojacono's article, this "import substitution" policy had produced some negative effects in Italy: in Trieste, cross-border bus services were suspended, ferries from Montenegro to Bari remained docked, and Bari's merchants feared weekly losses up to millions of Liras.

In April 1983, numerous Yugoslavs returned to Bari after the recovery of the "Sveti Stefan" ferry from Bar<sup>147</sup>. However, public statements from the Yugoslav consulate were not optimistic, noting that nothing was actually changing in the country, including economic restrictions. Nonetheless, the reopening of the Bar-Bari ferry line appeared as an incentive: Lojacono interpreted this event as a successful moment and an occasion for the city's commerce to thrive.

The tourism industry was not immune from restrictive monetary policies, which in 1984 had made trips in Yugoslavia more expensive. Private owners of vacation homes in Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro were required to comply with new republican regulations to address the ongoing financial crisis<sup>148</sup>. These policies banned direct financial operations between private individuals, that is, between Yugoslav citizens and foreigners, and required visitors to register with local tourists' offices to rent accommodation. Additionally, rental prices were pegged to the American Dollar and the German Mark. This intervention was for the government to monitor inflows of foreign currency and to combat tax evasion.

Inflation had inevitably reduced the competitiveness of Yugoslavia's tourism sector. In response to the crisis, investments were made to modernize marinas and docks in Dalmatia and Istria to attract foreign guests. Despite these limitations, Yugoslavia continued to offer fuel coupons at a 10% discount to travelers entering from Italy<sup>149</sup>.

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<sup>147</sup> L. Lojacono, "Ben tornati, jugolsavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 12, 1983, p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> "Anche in Jugoslavia la vacanza non è più economica," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 28, 1984, p. 9.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

### 2.3 Exchanges between Trade Unions and Communist Parties (1980–1984)

A significant part of the ties between Apulia and Montenegro consisted of exchanges involving representatives of trade unions and communist parties. These interactions operated at a level closer to civil society and facilitated the formation of personal and institutional ties through visits to local party headquarters, factories, international fairs and conferences. In the 1980-1984 period, eight delegations were exchanged between the two territories. These visits involved congresses at local Communist Party's headquarters as well as tours in various cities, as in the 21-24 April 1980 mission<sup>150</sup>. In this case, the Montenegrin delegation was formed by David Dašić, Executive Secretary of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro, and Vojislav Knežević, Vice President of the Republic's Chamber of Commerce. They were expected to attend a conference entitled *Autogestione Socialista della Jugoslavia: lo sviluppo socio-economico del Montenegro* ["Yugoslavia's Socialist Self-Management: Montenegro's Socio-Economic Development"]; while in the following days, meetings were held in Andria, Gravina and Trani, where the delegation encountered local politicians, trade unionists, entrepreneurs and business representatives.

Another kind of experience to signal is the exchange of union representatives between Apulia and Montenegro. From the Italian perspective, the unions' delegations did not act depending on their political affiliation. Indeed, the three main Italian trade union organizations based on different political ideologies and therefore were strongly tied to akin political parties: CGIL was tied with the Italian Communist Party, UIL to the Italian Socialist Party, CISL to the Christian Democracy party. Nonetheless, the three unions' confederations acted unanimously – in a practice called *concertazione* – also in sharing knowledge and culture with their foreign counterparts. This is the case of the 18 June 1981 delegation of Apulia's trade union federations visiting Montenegro<sup>151</sup>. The delegation included representatives from CGIL, CISL and UIL alike being hosted in Titograd by the Trade Union Council of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, in particular by Lazar Đodić, chairman of the Trade Union Council of Montenegro. The aim

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<sup>150</sup> "Ospite del Pci barese delegazione del Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 19, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>151</sup> "Sindacalisti pugliesi in visita nel Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 18, 1981, p. 11.

of the visit was to deepen cooperation between the parties and share experiences and expertise of the two regions. Meetings were held with Jovan Bajčetić, President of the Council of the Titograd Chamber and with Budimir Badović, Executive Secretary of the President of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro, as well as with unions' and self-management's representatives encountered in various industrial centers. The visit's achievements were to be discussed in an assembly of the Italian unions' regional federations, with the aim of formulating new suggestions to solidify ties and to invite a Montenegrin delegation in Apulia in September.

This commitment was later fulfilled on 20 September 1981 when a Montenegrin delegation was hosted in Bari's *Fiera del Levante*<sup>152</sup>. The Yugoslav representatives, Velizar Mijajlović and Jovan Ljutica met with general secretaries of Apulia's unitary federation of CGIL, CISL and UIL to examine the program of joint initiatives for the following year. The Yugoslav delegates met with the Fair's directorate board, represented by the fair's board member Riccardo Di Corato and the Fair's Secretary General Giuseppe Giacobelli, with whom they visited the venue's agricultural machinery sector, the IRI<sup>153</sup> Group, the *Galleria delle Nazioni* [Nations' Gallery] and the Montenegrin stand. For the year 1982, the parties scheduled commercial exchanges, cultural events and debates on the problems of self-managed economies, industrial democracy and the Italian trade union movement. As reported in the article, Di Corato – from the Fair's board – argued that the *Fiera del Levante* welcomed future events involving Italian and Yugoslav unionists, particularly those aimed at fostering Europe's economic development, increasing youth employment and enhancing friendship and peace between peoples.

A second unitary visit in Montenegro of regional secretaries of the three most representative trade unions, CGIL, CISL, UIL happened from 23 to 29 May 1983 to meet their Montenegrin counterparts<sup>154</sup>. The delegations were received by the Vice-President of the Republic's government and by several municipal Mayors. According to the *Gazzetta's* account, the parties debated on world peace, balanced development in both

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<sup>152</sup> "Incontro in Fiera con delegazione del Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 20, 1981, p. 10.

<sup>153</sup> Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (Institute for the Industrial Reconstruction) was an Italian public body that gathered multiple industries and businesses, their majority share the Italian state's. It was liquidated in the year 2000 after a vast privatization process of all the companies under the institution.

<sup>154</sup> "Scambi politico-sindacali tra Puglia e Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 2, 1983, p. 4.

countries and regions and – from a trade union perspective – they addressed the questions of labor rights, labor organization and, more specifically, about work environment, weekly and monthly working hours, the self-management experience and the role of unions in Italy. The parties agreed to intensify industrial development in the trade of both raw materials (such as leather) and finished goods. In this regard, Italy was expected to provide technical expertise, while Yugoslavia would supply raw materials. Similar exchanges could be extended to other productive sectors like agriculture and tourism, finalized to support the development of the two countries.

On some occasions, the congresses held by the trade unions received guests from other countries too. This was the case of the 7–8 November 1983 conference of the Apulian UIL federation participated by delegations from Montenegro as well as from Greece and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This conference was held in the “Cassa del Mezzogiorno” stand in *Fiera del Levante*<sup>155</sup>.

Frequent were the delegations of the Italian Communist Party and the League of Communists of Montenegro. This was the case of the 18 December 1981 Italian Communist Party’s second regional congress, which was attended by a delegation of Montenegrin communists<sup>156</sup>.

On 7 December, an article of the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* documented the visit of a delegation of the League of Communists of Montenegro in Bari, hosted by the local section of the PCI, formed by Svetozar Durutović, member of the Central Committee of the LOC of Montenegro; Marco Spadier, Executive Secretary of the Presidency of the Central Committee; Vaso Bojović, Secretary of the LOC of Montenegro’s Commission for Foreign Relations; Wilorad Vidović, Bari’s Yugoslav consul<sup>157</sup>. Apulia’s President Trisorio Liuzzi met the delegates and said institutional relations had to resume to check the regions’ cooperation status; he added that only through reciprocal knowledge and exchange an active peace among peoples could be established. The PCI leader in the Regional Council, Sicolo, and Councilor Vessia accompanied the mission and indicated

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<sup>155</sup> “Conferenza organizzativa della Uil di Puglia,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 23, 1983, p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> M. Cristallo, “Il Pci pugliese batte il tasto dell’alternativa,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 18, 1981, pp. 1–2.

<sup>157</sup> “Proposto il gemellaggio Bari-Titograd,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 7, 1983, p. 11.

sectors requiring stronger cooperation: fisheries, trade fairs, cultural initiatives, preservation of Adriatic waters.

In July 1984 a delegation from Apulia's PCI Regional Committee – formed by regional secretariat's Sabino Colangelo, Lecce Federation's secretary Sandro Frisullo and Brindisi Federation's secretariat Marialba Pileggi – was hosted by the League of Communists of Montenegro<sup>158</sup>. This delegation was quite different from those of the previous years because authorities of different levels were involved. Indeed, the delegations agreed to enhance relations not only between regional authorities, but also with municipal authorities of cities like Barletta and Cerignola. The parties declared to deepen exchanges between the two coasts of the Adriatic through a more intense collaboration between the Italian Communist party's and the League of Communists of Montenegro newspaper – *l'Unità* and *Komunist* – as well as among Universities of Bari, Lecce and Titograd. The delegation was welcomed by the President of the Central Committee of Montenegro, Vidoje Žarković, President of the SR's Assembly and the Mayor of Titograd, as well as local Mayors, party officials, workers, agricultural cooperatives, cultural and touristic agencies. The reopening of the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce in Bari was identified as a priority, and the parties decided to exchange delegations every year, to hold seminars and conferences. In the end, the parties agreed on cooperation in preserving peace across the Adriatic and the broader Mediterranean region.

### **Final remarks**

The first part of this research has testified that relations between the Italian Region of Apulia and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro in the early 1980s were flourishing. This prolific cooperation of the two authorities expanded within a broader European path that emphasized a growing centrality of local entities in transregional diplomatic efforts. In that regard it is notable that the Italian central government initially questioned Apulia's activities, arguing that such forms of foreign policy exceeded the administrative

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<sup>158</sup> “Puglia-Montenegro collaborazione fra i partiti comunisti,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 25, 1984, p. 4.

competences assigned to regions by the Constitution. However, Italy's Court of Auditors ultimately justified these actions.

The interregional ties between Apulia and Montenegro followed three main trajectories.

First, institutional relations and official encounters were considered: the two regions effectively narrowed the gap represented by the Adriatic Sea. These initiatives allowed their political leaderships to know each other and to formalize agreements aimed at fostering development and cultural exchanges. Cooperation extended to productive sectors such as tourism and industry, as well as to cultural and recreational channels, in particular cultural and sporting events, and collaboration in telecommunications.

Second, the research addressed several issues that impeded the acceleration of exchanges across the Adriatic. Primarily the difficulty of establishing a direct air route between the two main cities, Bari and Titograd. Secondly the issues faced by commerce in Bari, related not only to infrastructural limitations but, more significantly, to the financial measures applied by Belgrade to contrast the severe crisis affecting the Yugoslav economy and currency. The findings indicate that Apulian authorities and business operators acknowledged these constraints and expressed concern over the dropping volumes of Yugoslav clientele, whose contribution to Bari's retail business was crucial. This case highlights the reciprocal importance of the two regions on effective connectivity for their economic development.

Finally, the third part of the research focused on exchanges between communist parties and trade unions in the two regions, a kind of organizations that during the 1980s was still central to political and social representation in the two regions – and countries. Delegations from Montenegro and Apulia regularly participated in congresses to share experiences on topics such as industrial democracy, the conditions of the trade union movement and workers' self-management. The social component of these experiences was valuable, as delegates were able to visit industrial plants and encounter workers, party members and trade union representatives on the other side of the Adriatic.

### **Chapter III. 1985–1987 “Paths for Cooperation are Consolidated: Fairs, Sports and Tourism”**

Between 1985 and 1987 the local authorities of Apulia and Montenegro engaged in a cooperation framed within bilateral meetings between institutions as well as among private and public operators of the tourism sector. In this sense, the parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1986 which was aimed at promoting and increasing tourism in all seasons of the year. Although economic and trade matters were discussed and regulated, the parties increasingly revolved their connections on tourism. Sports and cultural events became the main channels of exchange, with multiple, permanent events held especially in summer. This cooperation partially reduced the sense of dissatisfaction, especially on the Yugoslav side, whose authorities explicitly stated that sport events had done more to expand relations between the two Adriatic regions than Memoranda had achieved in the years before. Despite the positivity of these agreements, the inadequacy of economic, commercial and industrial agreements was demonstrated by these remarks.

#### **3.1 Delegation Exchanges across the Adriatic (1985–1987)**

The institutional delegations exchanged in the mid-1980s between Apulia and Montenegro mostly focused on tourism. Indeed, the two parties launched the tourist exchanges planned in the previous years' Memoranda of Understanding<sup>159</sup>, establishing permanent appointments and cooperation to ease tourist flows. One such occasion was a meeting between Apulian and Yugoslav authorities of 4 February 1985, when the Regional *assessore* of Tourism, Giuseppe Affatato, discussed joint tourism initiatives with the Yugoslav consul Radivoje Genić, in accordance with existing cooperation commitments<sup>160</sup>. On that instance, an Apulian delegation was invited to Montenegro to produce further concrete cooperation initiatives in the tourism sector.

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<sup>159</sup> See chap. I.

<sup>160</sup> “Saranno intensificati i rapporti con il Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 4, 1985, p. 4.

Throughout the 1980s, Apulia and Montenegro also shared a number of ceremonies commemorating important anniversaries and awards. On 13 November 1985, a Montenegrin delegation visited the Apulian town of Gravina in Puglia to confer upon it the highest honor of the Federal Committee of Associations of the War of Liberation (SUBNOR) of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the “Plaketa Subnor-a Jugoslavije” [Author’s note: Плакета СУБНОР-а Југославије]<sup>161</sup>. Proposed by Bari’s Yugoslav consul Genic [Genić], the initiative expressed gratitude to the city for supporting wounded Yugoslav partisans who were hospitalized there during the Second World War. The ceremony was attended by the Yugoslav consul and the President of the Montenegrin Central Committee of SUBNOR.

A subsequent celebration involving Apulian authorities was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FSRY, which dated to 29 November 1985. For this occasion, an article emphatically titled “A friendship between two peoples united by the Adriatic” [*Un’amicizia tra due popoli da sempre uniti dall’Adriatico*] by Franco Ferorelli, reported on the commemoration held at the Yugoslav consulate in Bari<sup>162</sup>. These events served not only to celebrate the past, but also to assess and develop new ties between local authorities.

The abundance of detail contained in Ferorelli’s article makes it appropriate to pay closer attention to it. During the anniversary celebrations, Apulia’s leadership reaffirmed the positive ties between Apulia and Yugoslavia, and particularly with the Socialist Republics of Croatia and Montenegro. Trade volumes were considered rich – especially owing to Yugoslavia’s permanent stand at the *Fiera del Levante* – as were tourist exchanges. Yugoslavs consistently crossed the Adriatic Sea throughout the year for business purposes, while Italians were more accustomed to spend summer in Yugoslavia, as stated by consul Genić.

The article also mentioned the active cultural exchanges between Apulia and Montenegro: Bari’s and Titograd’s Universities cooperated in scientific projects and created a joint commission to compare research results<sup>163</sup>. Moreover, the two regions

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<sup>161</sup> P.M., “Riconoscimento jugoslavo al Comune di Gravina,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 13, 1985, p. 14.

<sup>162</sup> F. Ferorelli, “Un’amicizia tra due popoli da sempre uniti dall’Adriatico,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 29, 1985, p. 13.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

found a channel to intensify reciprocal knowledge of their heritage through congresses, exhibitions and guided tours.

In sports, the two regions had multiple contacts, thanks to international tournaments in various disciplines that fostered opportunities for the youth to meet and learn about each other<sup>164</sup>. In his remarks reported by Ferorelli, Genić's speech reiterated his hope that friendship between the two peoples would strengthen alongside cultural and commercial exchanges, particularly through improvements in maritime and air infrastructure. He also placed these relations in a broader international context. Concerning Yugoslavia, he underlined the importance of the anniversary for its people, and he further recalled how the split between Tito and Stalin had allowed the Balkan country to leave the Soviet sphere of influence and open the "Non-aligned Movement" with the intent to promote peace and collaboration among peoples of the world. Ties with Italy became optimal, after tensions in the territory of Trieste were ultimately solved through the Treaty of Osimo: ten years later the two nations were united by a solid friendship, demonstrating that countries with different political systems could successfully collaborate. According to Genić, the crucial requirement for such cooperation was frequent contact between peoples, a process increasingly facilitated by infrastructures that shrank distances across the Adriatic Sea.

In January 1986, a delegation from Apulia was invited in Montenegro for a tour of several Montenegrin cities and ultimately to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Montenegrin authorities. The members of the Apulian delegation were the President of the Regional Council, Nicola Di Cagno, and his vice President, Nicola Occhiofino, and stayed in Montenegro from 25 to 27 January. Throughout this three-day visit, the delegates were accompanied by the SR's leadership, including the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro Radivoje Brajović and the President of the Republic Branislav Šoškić. The Italian guests visited Bar, Cattaro [Author's note: Kotor], Sveti Stefan and Cetinje [Cetinje], where they encountered local Mayors<sup>165</sup>. This visit ended on 27 January with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, later

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> "Delegazione pugliese in Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 26, 1986, p. 9.

presented in a press conference held by Di Cagno and his vice presidents Occhiofino and Annese with the Yugoslav consul Genić<sup>166</sup>.

The parties acknowledged the urgency to make relations more regular and frequent than they had been in previous years. Genić complained on the minor contribution of southern Italian regions to trade exchanges with Yugoslavia – resuming the same issues raised by union representatives in a later visit in Apulia. This feeling reflected a broader dissatisfaction expressed years before by representatives of different sectors – such as journalists, trade union leaders, politicians, and consular officials.

The new Memorandum committed the parties to coordinate activities in the fields of industry, commerce, maritime and air infrastructures, tourism, culture, science, healthcare and telecommunications. Additionally, it proposed scientific initiatives such as a symposium between the Universities of Titograd, Bari and Lecce scheduled for 1987, and the establishment of new scholarships for technological research. For the transport chapter, Di Cagno proposed reductions in custom duties and port charges affecting the Bar-Bari route. The agreement stipulated that the respective Chambers of Commerce should meet to address economic issues and that the state of relations should be reviewed annually. Finally, the agreement included a declaration in favor of peace in Europe and the Mediterranean<sup>167</sup>.

The words of discontent expressed by Genić regarding the Apulian–Montenegrin relations were resumed shortly after by a delegation of Montenegrin trade union representatives – Vlado Djurković and Radonja Rakočević, both members of the union’s Presidency – during a visit in Bari, on 11 February 1986. The delegation moved in Apulia for a meeting with the Italian union UIL [Author’s note: *Unione Italiana del Lavoro*]<sup>168</sup>, and was welcomed by Consul Genić, and Aldo Pugliese, General Secretary of Apulia’s UIL federation. The two parties agreed on the necessity to develop further relations between workers of Apulia and Montenegro not only on a cultural, but mostly on an economic basis. The Yugoslavs stated that Italy’s southern regions contributed only

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<sup>166</sup> T. Tondo, “Puglia-Montenegro Gli scambi destinati a crescere,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 14, 1986, p. 8.

<sup>167</sup> “Ok minipolitica estera regionale,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May, 25, 1987, p. 9.

<sup>168</sup> “Incontro a Bari Tra la Uil e il sindacato del Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 11, 1986, p. 2.

marginally to overall bilateral exchanges and stressed the importance of realizing an integrated transport system between Bar and Bari to expand economic relations not only with Montenegro, but with the entire Eastern European area. Apulia's General Secretary, Pugliese, claimed the two unions' organizational differences, due to their countries' distinct political systems, nonetheless he expressed interest a deeper connection with the Socialist Republic's public institutions and industries.

At the same time, exchanges between Apulia's Communist Party and Montenegro's League of Communists continued at both regional and municipal levels, allowing for dialogue on different political and normative frameworks between these two political organizations. One of these meetings happened on 19 May 1986, when a delegation of the League of Communists of Montenegro, made up of Marko Spadijer, member of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro, and Stevo Goranovic [Goranović], Secretary of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of the city of Niksic [Nikšić] and member of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Montenegro<sup>169</sup> was welcomed by the Yugoslav consul Genic, Bari's Mayor De Lucia and member of Parliament Giuseppe Gramegna to take part to the Regional Congress of the Italian Communist Party.

After the 1986 Memorandum of Understanding, Apulian authorities sought to achieve a similar agreement with Dubrovnik to increase cultural, touristic, commercial exchanges with one of the richest Republics of Yugoslavia. A new pact between the two cities would have complemented existing economic arrangements linking northeastern regions of Italy and the Socialist Republics of Croatia and Slovenia – in the framework of the “Alps–Adriatic” community. Thus, between July and August 1986, a delegation from Dubrovnik [Author's note: the source of this information erroneously assesses Dubrovnik as the capital of the Socialist Republic of Croatia] visited Bari to launch a joint tourism initiative<sup>170</sup>. The Croatian delegation included the Mayor of Dubrovnik, Tomoslau Milkovic [Milković], the President of the Croatian Socialist Party, Mano Alkovic [Alković], Secretary of Croatia's trade union, Ivo Margaretic, the President of

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<sup>169</sup> “Una delegazione del Montenegro ricevuta dal Sindaco,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 19, 1986, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> G. De Tomaso, “Il turismo per saldare l'amicizia con Dubrovnik,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, August 1, 1986, p. 12.

the Region's tourism agency in Dubrovnik, Ismet Taslaman [Tašlaman], Secretary of the Region's tourism agency, Mario Kovacevic [Kovačević] and journalist from Radio Zagreo [Zagreb], Josko Jelavic [Jelavić]. The guests had the chance of meeting Bari's Mayor, De Lucia, the municipal *assessore* of Sports, Barbone, municipal *consigliere* Maggiore – also President of Bari's Conservatory “Nicolò Piccinni” – and Trani's Mayor, Vincenzo Caruso. In the tourism sector, the parties agreed to promote cooperation through weekend trips to Bari and Dubrovnik, youth tourism programs, and partnerships among tourism agencies and businesses. Additionally, they committed to a joint promotional campaign that included brochures in Italian, Serbo-Croatian and English languages distributed on Adriatic ferries, and to establish tourist information points in both countries to inform potential visitors about summer and winter holiday activities, particularly on hunting.

The delegations discussed issues related to transport infrastructures and proposed to simplify customs procedures at ports, as well as to establish a new Bari–Dubrovnik air route. Bari's *assessore* for Sports, Barbone, suggested cooperation for the *Maggio barese*, the series of events held in Bari on every May, in the same way Yugoslavs did in Dubrovnik's summer festival, and recommended to implement the Trani–Dubrovnik sailing race in the international schedule of the sport.

In the cultural sector, Maggiore, as President of Bari's Conservatory, proposed joint seminars for the best students from Bari's and Dubrovnik's music Conservatories, while De Lucia proposed cooperation between cultural foundations like the Petruzzelli theater.

Scientific cooperation between Apulia and Montenegro continued throughout the mid-1980s<sup>171</sup>. Universities of the two regions maintained solid relations based on joint scholarships and exchanges of students, professors and technological innovations<sup>172</sup>.

Cultural exchanges were channeled through other institutions too, as in the case of the International Congress on Medicine – *V Giornate Mediche del Sud Est Adriatico* [Author's note: Fifth edition of the Days of Medicine of Southeastern Adriatic] – held

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<sup>171</sup> Ferorelli, “Un'amicizia tra due popoli da sempre uniti dall'Adriatico,” p. 13.

<sup>172</sup> Tondo, “Puglia-Montenegro Gli scambi destinati a crescere,” p. 8.

between 3 and 5 June 1987 in the city of Molfetta<sup>173</sup>. This initiative was strongly supported by Franco Margiotta, a surgeon at Molfetta's hospital and a prominent academic figure in Bari's province, who aimed at expanding academic medical research and health education beyond the region's borders. This project was positively received by Dubrovnik's *Medicinski centar* [Medical Center] which had maintained scientific relations with Molfetta since 1982 through annual exchanges, creating an unofficial form of scientific twinning. The medical conference was organized by the municipality of Molfetta with the *Società di medicina*, and was sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Health, the office of the Regional *assessore* of Health, the municipal administrations of Molfetta and Giovinazzo, the University of Bari's Faculty of Medicine, and many other public and private institutions. On this occasion, Molfetta's Mayor, De Cosmo, acknowledged the development of scientific and humanitarian cooperation between Molfetta's and Dubrovnik's medical institutions, that consolidated their economic and cultural ties. To honor this long friendship, the authorities of both countries exchanged medals and presents. The fact that scientific cooperation was somewhat decentralized away from Apulia's main scientific and cultural center, Bari, involving smaller cities as well, proves the capillarity of the relations that intercurrent with Yugoslavia. A detail that confers more complexity to the system of interregional relations between the two entities.

In 1987, commitments between Apulia and Montenegro were reassessed at an international congress named *L'Adriatico e lo Jonio: il dialogo delle sponde* [The Adriatic and Ionian Seas: dialogue across shores], held in Bari in December. This meeting was part of a broader event on the topic of cooperation organized by the Italian socialist newspaper *l'Avanti!*<sup>174</sup>. Guests included Member of the European Parliament Gianni Baget Bozzo, the coordinator of Mediterranean universities Giovanni Dotoli, the Vice-President of Ipalmo, Giuseppe Scanni, the President of the Italian–Albanian association, Arturo Foschi, and Momir Sijukic [Momir Šijukić], President of the Foreign Affairs Section of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia (SSRNJ) of Montenegro. Baget Bozzo argued that dialogue between countries with different political

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<sup>173</sup> M. de Sanctis, "Collaborazione scientifica con la Jugoslavia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 5, 1987, p. 19.

<sup>174</sup> "Nel Mediterraneo confronto Nord-Sud," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 9, 1987, p. 22.

systems – namely, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania – was possible due to their mutual interconnection. Šijukić, however, expressed concern about the current political situation, stating that bilateral cooperation was no longer sufficient, while the multilateral did not deliver the expected outcomes. According to the Montenegrin official, the European Economic Community had to revise its approach to the Adriatic-Ionian area, promoting scientific cooperation and the transfer of technology.

### Security Cooperation (1985–1986)

In the second chapter of this research it was noted that Montenegrin shoppers represented a fundamental part of Bari's retail market. The importance of these customers was important up to the point that Bari's merchants demanded more security, especially for Yugoslav customers who were exposed to a high risk of pickpocketing and thefts<sup>175</sup>. This security matter and the contrast to smuggling in the Adriatic Sea demanded for a series of meetings between Bari's central police office [Author's note: Questura] and Montenegro's authorities. These visits often saw the participation of Bari's police chief [Questore] Aldo Arcuri and other law enforcement officers. In the case of a particular visit, the aim was to consolidate relations between Bari and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro in the specific topic of law enforcement<sup>176</sup>.

In April 1986 a delegation of prominent Montenegrin political figures visited Apulia in a long tour of various cities. The importance of this visit is demonstrated by the thorough, daily reportage found in *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, which represents a valuable testimony of the events.

The program of the visit included various official meetings in several cities in Apulia by the Montenegrin Minister of Interior and his wife – Slobodan and Miryana Filipovic [Slobodan and Mirjana Filipović] – who occasionally split up to inspect a number of locations in the Region. This was the case of Mirjana Filipović's visit in the provincial rehab center for deaf people "Lorenzo Apicella" in Molfetta of 12 April

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<sup>175</sup> "Intensificata la vigilanza al mercato di via Celentano," p. 11.

<sup>176</sup> "Nel Montenegro una delegazione della Questura," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 26, 1985, p. 13.

1986<sup>177</sup>. This visit was to strengthen the friendship between Molfetta and Yugoslavia, as well as between the “Apicella” rehab center and Dubrovnik’s public institute for the deaf, already visited by Molfetta’s patients and teachers. Later, on 16 April, Mrs. Filipović attended a recital in the “Istituto femminile «M. Cristina di Savoia»” [Author’s note: female institute] with the wives of the Region’s President, Bari’s chief of police and officials from Bari’s Yugoslav consulate<sup>178</sup>.

On 13 April, the delegation visited Bari’s central police office<sup>179</sup>. The members of the Montenegrin delegation were the Minister of Interior and his wife, Miomir Radunovic [Miomir Radunović], undersecretary of public security; Milorad Draskovic [Milorad Drašković], Vice minister of Interior and director of the anticrime office; Miroslav Vickovic [Miroslav Vičković], chief of staff of the Minister of Interior. The delegation met the prefect, the Region’s President, the President of Bari’s province and Bari’s Mayor. On the same day, the delegation visited some touristic attractions in the province and the Yugoslav War Memorial in Barletta<sup>180</sup>.

The parties shared experiences and opinions on common problems of the two police forces, and discussed measures against crimes related to car theft, nomadism and contraband<sup>181</sup>. On this occasion, meetings were attended by officials from Criminalpol (Direzione centrale della Polizia Criminale) [Author’s note: Central office of Criminal Police], Digos (Divisione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Speciali) [Author’s note: General investigations and Special Operations Division] and the chief of Bari’s city police, Patruno.

On April 16, the delegation moved to the city of Andria to visit the city’s police office with prominent officials of the city’s and the Region’s police forces<sup>182</sup>. The guests inspected the operational units and their technical equipment (including armory and computers), and the first response systems.

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<sup>177</sup> M. De Sanctis “Dall’estero per studiare il recupero degli audiolesi,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 10, 1986, p. 16.

<sup>178</sup> F. Amendolagine, “Calorosa accoglienza al ministro slavo,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 18, 1986, p. 16.

<sup>179</sup> “Delegazione del Montenegro in missione di lavoro a Bari,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 12, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>180</sup> G.R., “In visita il ministro del Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 15, 1986, p. 15.

<sup>181</sup> “Proficuo incontro con la delegazione del Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 13, 1986, p. 12.

<sup>182</sup> P.M., “Al commissariato ospiti dal Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 17, 1986, p. 17.

On April 17, the guests met with people from the political, business and cultural sector of the city of Bitonto. Slobodan Filipović met the Mayor Michele Labianca and his deputy Salvatore Zanga and made a statement on the fact that cooperation between Italy and Yugoslavia, two countries with diverse political systems, represented an example for Europe and for the world, because this collaboration came from a shared sense of goodwill and love for democracy<sup>183</sup>. Labianca replied expressing his hope that a twinning agreement could be signed between Bitonto and the Minister's city [Author's note: the article reports that the Mayor hoped for a "friendship tie" between his and the other's city (lit. vincolo di amicizia tra la mia e la sua città)]. After a visit to the cathedral situated in the old town of Bitonto, the delegation moved to inspect the city's main business establishments like the oil mill and industrial factories.

### **3.2 Knowledge Through Sports**

After the 1982 Memorandum of Understanding between Apulia and Montenegro, a substantial portion of the relations among them developed through sport events. Exchanges involved top personalities of the two regions' main sporting organizations, who met to plan participation in international tournaments, as well as to create agreements to consolidate cooperation. As Michele Barbone, President of Bari's CONI [Italian National Olympic Committee], observed, Bari aimed at creating administrative and sporting Memoranda with overseas partners to establish a fruitful network<sup>184</sup>. However, the most important part of these encounters involved athletes, particularly the youth, who had the chance to meet foreign peers and build with them a sense of community and respect through shared sporting values.

One important appointment that involved the main sports authorities of the two regions took place in Montenegro on 6 September 1985. After meeting various political institutions like Titograd's Mayor, and meeting exponents of Yugoslav sport, Michele Barbone met with his Montenegrin counterpart, Budimir Barijektarevic [Barijektarević], President of the Association of Physical Culture (SOFK) of the Socialist Republic of

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<sup>183</sup> "Calorosa accoglienza al ministro slavo," p. 16.

<sup>184</sup> "Da sabato a Bari la grande pallanuoto," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 9, 1985, p. 20.

Montenegro<sup>185</sup>. They signed a twinning agreement centered on sports and scheduled future international sporting events, first and foremost the *Maggio barese* of 1986, which was supposed to host foreign representative teams from eight different sporting disciplines.

Bari's most prominent international sporting event was instituted on 13 September 1985: the "Città di Bari" Trophy<sup>186</sup>. This international men's water-polo competition saw the participation of four teams: one Italian, two Montenegrin (from Kotor and Herceg Novi) and one Greek (Athens' Olympiakos)<sup>187</sup>. On the occasion of the tournament, a delegation from Titograd was hosted in Bari to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. Signed by the Mayors of Titograd and Bari, respectively Borivoje Drakic [Drakić] and Franco De Lucia, the agreement normed cooperation in the commercial and industrial sectors – hence the participation of the general director of a Yugoslav timber company<sup>188</sup> – and aimed at improving the cultural and sporting prestige of Apulia within the lower Adriatic area, particularly with Yugoslavia and Greece<sup>189</sup>.

The 1986 edition of the *Maggio barese* was extended to host Yugoslav representative teams in several disciplines, including handball, archery, sports fishing<sup>190</sup>. Once again, an official delegation from Yugoslavia attended the event in Bari<sup>191</sup>.

Sporting cooperation between Apulia and Montenegro extended to motorsports too, facilitated by an accord between two public motoring associations: Apulia's ACI and Montenegro's Auto Moto Savez. As a result, a Montenegrin representative of pilots competed in the International Salento Rally in May 1986, while nine drivers from Apulia competed in the "Trofej Lovcen" Rally in Montenegro on 12 and 13 July of the same year<sup>192</sup>.

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<sup>185</sup> "Gemellaggio sportivo fra Bari e Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 9, 1985, p. 19.

<sup>186</sup> "Da sabato a Bari la grande pallanuoto," p. 20.

<sup>187</sup> "Da oggi a Bari il Posillipo contro gli slavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 14, 1985, p. 22.

<sup>188</sup> "Nel nome dello sport più intensi rapporti tra Bari e Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 12, 1985, p. 11.

<sup>189</sup> C.D., "Un altro ponte di amicizia tra Bari e Titograd," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 15, 1985, p. 10.

<sup>190</sup> "«Maggio barese» all'insegna dell'amicizia italo-slava," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 13, 1986, p. 19.

<sup>191</sup> "Pallamano: dominano i giocatori jugoslavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 7, 1986, p. 21.

<sup>192</sup> "Piloti pugliesi in Jugoslavia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 10, 1986, p. 20.

On 18 July 1986 a delegation of Bari's CONI visited Montenegro to meet some institutions of the Socialist Republic and to coordinate future sporting competitions involving athletes from both regions. The delegation, led by Michele Barbone, President of Bari's CONI, met with the SR's Minister of Foreign Affairs Milenko Stefanovic [Stefanović], the Mayor of Titograd, Ratko Ivanovic [Ivanović], and the President of SOFK, Slobodan Filipovic [Filipović]. It is important to report a statement made by Ivanović during the meetings: the fast development of sporting cooperation since 1985 facilitated a depth of reciprocal understanding that years of formal twinnings had failed to achieve<sup>193</sup>. Although not necessarily representative of the entire Montenegrin political leadership, this statement echoed the dissatisfaction surge manifested by Yugoslav authorities regarding relations with Apulia and, to a certain extent, southern Italy. Eventually, from this perspective, sports were more effective and fulfilling for cooperation. The positive results of such cooperation were shown by the growing importance of the "Città di Bari" Trophy in its second edition in 1986, which, in addition to the swimming and water-polo competitions, scheduled a 15-mile open-water crossing in the Bay of Kotor<sup>194</sup>, and basketball matches<sup>195</sup>.

The third edition of the *Maggio barese* enlarged the program, incorporating fencing, cycling, relay race and archery<sup>196</sup>. A Montenegrin skeet shooting team participated in the first international individual and team trophy of skeet shooting, alongside swimming teams from Greece and Montenegro<sup>197</sup>. Additionally, the 1987 *Maggio barese* featured international tournaments in tennis, table tennis, basketball and sailing. With the participation of more than 4,000 athletes from five different nationalities, this edition was considered a major success<sup>198</sup>.

The solid sporting cooperation between the regions was confirmed after the "Trofej Lovcen" Rally stage of 16 July 1987, when G. Resta, a delegate of the Italian ACI, publicly declared that solidarity and friendship were strong with Montenegrin

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<sup>193</sup> "Un programma sportive lega Bari e Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 18, 1986, p. 12.

<sup>194</sup> C. Lerario, "A Bari rivincita mondiale fra slavi e italiani," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 4, 1986, p. 21.

<sup>195</sup> C. Lerario, "Da stasera si rinnova a Bari la sfida fra italiani e slavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 6, 1986, p. 16.

<sup>196</sup> "Di scena 4 sport," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 31, 1987, p. 27.

<sup>197</sup> "Domenica a Bari tentativi di record," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 5, 1987, p. 21.

<sup>198</sup> "Trionfo jugoslavo nel Maggio barese," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 23, 1987, p. 21.

authorities<sup>199</sup>. Bari's commitment to this cooperation was symbolically validated by the institution of a municipal trophy to be awarded to the best-placed Yugoslav driver in the race<sup>200</sup>.

Between September and November 1987, three representative teams from Apulia moved to Yugoslavia to compete in international sport events. These included a youth soccer tournament in Titograd, participated by the *Comitato provinciale di Bari* [Bari's soccer provincial committee] on 30 September<sup>201</sup>; a trapshooting competition on 27 October, attended by a delegation from Mola di Bari<sup>202</sup>; and an international skeet shooting competition held in Dubrovnik on 21 November, again involving athletes from Mola di Bari<sup>203</sup>.

As stated by the Mayor of Titograd, sporting exchanges proved capable of delivering more results more rapidly, compared to formal institutional agreements like twinnings. Indeed, during the three-year period examined in this chapter, contacts between Apulia and Montenegro became more frequent, followed a regular schedule, and offered repeated opportunities for interaction among members of society across different ages.

It can be argued that economic and political cooperation generally requires longer timespans to produce results – and may ultimately prove unsuccessful – however, the positive assessments expressed by authorities of both regions after these sporting encounters cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, political and commercial collaboration continued to shape interregional development, especially in the tourism sector, as it will be discussed in the following section.

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<sup>199</sup> “Bis a tempo di record per Giorgio in Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 17, 1987, p. 25.

<sup>200</sup> “Piloti pugliesi in Jugoslavia,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 8, 1987, p. 18.

<sup>201</sup> “A Titograd baresi al secondo posto,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 30, 1987, p. 22.

<sup>202</sup> “Tiro a volo: la squadra di Mola in Jugoslavia,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 28, 1987, p. 17.

<sup>203</sup> “Successo dei tiratori molesi,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 22, 1987, p. 19.

### 3.3 Tourist Campaigns and Fiera del Levante

Following the Memoranda of Understanding signed throughout the decade, tourism emerged as a central field in the expansion of joint initiatives among the Adriatic regions. One of the main channels used to consolidate cooperation in this sector was participation in trade fairs, in particular Bari's *Fiera del Levante*.

During the 1985 edition of "Expolevante", which concluded on 31 March, several touristic organizations and companies gathered in an international event named "Tour Info" to discuss new strategies for tourism promotion in Apulia. The venue attracted many international operators and foreign delegations from Poland, Bulgaria, Spain, Jordan, Egypt, Croatia, Montenegro, Greece, accompanied by representatives of airline companies like Egypt Air, Pakistan Airways and Yugoslav air carriers<sup>204</sup>. The Regional *assessore* of Tourism, Affatato, commented positively on the event, stating that Apulia could increasingly be considered an international tourist destination in the Mediterranean Sea.

Cooperation through the *Fiera del Levante* between Apulia and Yugoslavia was extended during the 1986 edition, when the Yugoslav delegation was coordinated by the Adriatic Fair of Budva, which represented tourism operators from the whole country. Yugoslavia benefited from dedicated daily appointments for promotion and exchanging events with economic operators of the industry, tourism and transports sectors, while on 18 September the "Yugoslavia Day" was scheduled<sup>205</sup>.

Over time, the "Yugoslavia Day" became an increasingly important occasion for reciprocal knowledge between the two Adriatic coasts. During the 1987 edition, on the "Yugoslavia Day" held on 13 September, a delegation formed by Bari's Yugoslav consul, Genić, and Minister-Councilor of the Yugoslav Embassy, Bogoljub Koprivica, announced new legislation was being introduced to enhance exchanges with Italian business operators. Among these new regulations, the establishment of a new air connection between Bari and Titograd<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>204</sup> V. Raimondo, "Da Tour-Info nuove strade per il turismo della Puglia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 1, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>205</sup> "Jugoslavia e Italia una serie di incontri," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 12, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>206</sup> A. Ambruosi, "Affari e turismo un aereo fra Bari e Titograd," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 14, 1987, p. 8.

The new air link was to be operated by the Yugoslav company “Transadria” by October 1987, with two flights per week. Two representatives of the company – Krsto Kraljevic [Kraljević] and Samo Ivancic [Ivančić] – communicated that the service would be extended during the summer season, to include a direct link between Bari, Titograd and Dubrovnik. The meeting referenced multiple business agreements signed between Montenegrin and Apulian companies: particularly with a Yugoslav brewery, an Apulian pasta factory and between two shoe factories.

The Minister-Councilor from Rome’s Yugoslav Embassy focused on the investment opportunities offered in the Montenegrin port city of Bar, which had been opened to foreign investors. The aim was to establish industries oriented to both import and export markets, while simultaneously upgrading touristic infrastructures. Bar’s port was expanded to accommodate up to 1,500 boats.

While Yugoslav delegates expressed overall satisfaction with relations between the two regions, they also reckoned that there was margin for improvement.

Apulia’s and Montenegro’s mutual efforts towards tourism cooperation were also reflected in promotional campaigns exhibiting the two territories’ artistic and natural beauties. Between 1985 and 1987, Yugoslav tourism organizations regularly held meetings in Apulia to present summer and winter tourism offers. On each occasion, agencies displayed the multiple improvements in tourism infrastructures and facilities in Montenegro and Dalmatia<sup>207</sup>.

An example was the conference organized by General-turist [sic] and, presumably, Yugotours<sup>208</sup>, at *Expolevante* on 18 March 1986, where prominent figures of the Yugoslav tourism industry presented the next summer’s touristic offer<sup>209</sup>. The operators anticipated planned expansions of tourism facilities such as hotels and camp sites, upgrades to ports with the addition of approximately 1,000 new dockings. Additionally, for tourists were available either small cruises along the Dalmatian coast, from Zadar to Rijeka, or private boat rentals. Improvements to the road network were also anticipated, with two new highways between Belgrade and Niš, and between Belgrade

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<sup>207</sup> “Jugoslavia: agevolazioni e più posti-letto,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 25, 1985, p. 7.

<sup>208</sup> The main state-owned tour operator in Yugoslavia.

<sup>209</sup> A.D.P., “Jugoslavia: più alberghi e più natura,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 18, 1986, p. 10.

and Zagreb, while the 5% fuel discount for foreign visitors was confirmed. Nicola Lattarulo, director of Bari's Yugotours office, stated that tourists could choose from over 100 seaside towns and resorts, as well as mountain and lake destinations.

Croatia and Montenegro further delved into the tourism industry throughout the 1980s so far as they opened the economy to foreign investors from Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria and even Japan and the USA. One important incentive was a new law that permitted time-sharing arrangements for tourism infrastructure, such as accommodations, boat dockings and sporting facilities<sup>210</sup>, for periods of up to thirty years. Additional conferences promoted off-season tourism, particularly winter holidays in Montenegro, mainly in Cetinje and Durmitor's National Park, with its ski resort<sup>211</sup>.

For Apulian and Montenegrin authorities the maximization of touristic flows across the Adriatic Sea was facilitated by the establishment of a new air route in 1987. After years of uncertainty and negotiations between local and central authorities, on 26 October the air route between Titograd and Bari was inaugurated, and operated by the Yugoslav company "Adria Airways"<sup>212</sup>. The service would connect the regions two times a week with a 48-seater Dash-7 aircraft, reducing travel time over the Adriatic to 80 minutes. The Bari–Titograd relation offered onward connections to Belgrade and Mostar, and connecting flights to Skopje, Sarajevo and Ljubljana. Although Italian authorities seemed receptive to accept an air link in 1986 – even more so with the involvement of SEAP, a newly established regional airport authority<sup>213</sup>, the final decision rested with Yugoslavia, and Adria Airways remained the only vector operating the route.

Finally, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* regularly featured Yugotours' advertisements promoting holiday trips organized in Montenegro and Croatia from Bari throughout the year – although predominantly in summer. These offers included packages for the Italian national holiday of *Ferragosto*, celebrated on 15 August<sup>214</sup>, as well as short,

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<sup>210</sup> "Jugoslavia, grandi progetti," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 28, 1986, p. 14.

<sup>211</sup> "Ora è più facile sciare sul Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 18, 1987, p. 16.

<sup>212</sup> "Ponte aereo tra Bari e il Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 23, 1987, p. 23.

<sup>213</sup> G. Campione, "Anche in Puglia il futuro è nei collegamenti brevi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 28, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>214</sup> "A Ferragosto nel Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 17, 1987, p. 14.

weekend trips in October<sup>215</sup>, Easter holidays<sup>216</sup>, and winter vacations in the mountain destinations of Zabljak [Žabljak] and Ivangrad [Author's note: today Berane]<sup>217</sup>.

## Final Remarks

Relations between Apulia and the Yugoslav Adriatic Republics of Montenegro and, on a minor part, Croatia intensified during the mid-1980s through a dense activity in the institutional, touristic, and sporting sectors. The old and new Memoranda of Understanding provided a formal framework for cooperation, which was followed by the regions, however, it was the practical implementation of joint initiatives that ultimately gave substance to interregional relations. Tourism, sport, culture, scientific collaboration, and security-related contacts emerged as the most dynamic fields, often compensating for the limited effectiveness of economic and industrial agreements.

Regional and municipal authorities, as well as trade unions, universities, and even more so, sporting organizations, were crucial intermediaries in sustaining dialogue across the Adriatic. These actors contributed to a form of para-diplomacy that relied on regular contact, personal networks, and shared interests. Sporting exchanges, in particular, increasingly gained more importance as effective channels of cooperation, as they facilitated frequent and permanent interactions. More importantly, these events instilled a sense of trust, described by Yugoslav officials as more productive than formal twinning agreements.

Through fairs such as the *Fiera del Levante*, promotional campaigns, and the improvement of transport infrastructures, primarily the Bari–Titograd air link, Apulia and Montenegro were able to fuel an economic field that would become increasingly important for the two regions in the decades to come: tourism. These initiatives also reveal a broader Yugoslav strategy of opening the tourism sector, and the market as a whole, to foreign markets and investment, to the advantage of Adriatic Republics as Montenegro and Croatia.

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<sup>215</sup> “Viaggio a Cetinje nel Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 18, 1987, p. II.

<sup>216</sup> Yugotours, “Pasqua in Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 19, 1983, p. 17.

<sup>217</sup> Yugotours, “Vacanze bianche nel Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 22, 1988, p. 16.

Despite relations had come to a consistent level and they were expanding to several different fields, Yugoslav authorities repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the limited economic engagement of Apulia and southern Italy in general. This sense of unfulfilled potential could explain why cooperation progressively relied on fields that produced visible and immediate results, such as sport and tourism, rather than more structurally complex areas like trade and industry. Ultimately, interregional relations between Apulia and Montenegro towards the end of the 1980s proved that local business operators and institutions used cultural, social and touristic channels to consolidate their cooperation, although overshadowing a fully developed economic integration. These practices proved successful on the eve of the upheaval that would soon reshape the region.

## Chapter IV. 1988–1989 “Transregional diplomacy and turmoil in Yugoslavia”

Relations between Apulia and Montenegro entered the late 1980s in a relatively positive state, with the two actors following an increasingly consolidated path of interchanges. These ties were primarily based on tourism and commerce, although sports events were gradually gaining importance in the process. In the specific years considered for this chapter, however, ties were marked by stationary cross-Adriatic cooperation and escalating political instability within Yugoslavia. Between the end of 1988 and 1989, a decline can be noted in the contacts between the local authorities, which came as a consequence of structural limitations of regional diplomacy, as well as of the social, economic and political crisis that involved the whole Yugoslav federation.

### 4.1 Institutional delegation exchanges

Institutional exchanges between Apulia and Montenegro declined drastically towards the end of the decade. Cooperation formally continued along tracks established in the years before, however the volume of exchanges between political, economic and social operators diminished, mainly due to the rising tensions in Montenegro and in the whole of Yugoslavia. It was in this historical context that ethnic, strategic and political differences among the Yugoslav *narodi* [peoples] were instrumentalized by republican intelligentsia and political representatives to spread nationalist and secessionist purposes.

In the specific case of institutional delegation exchanges between Apulia and Montenegro, most official visits did not transcend the consolidated frameworks, that is, the two regions' institutions did not initiate additional visits beyond those required by usual meetings in *Fiera del Levante* or formal occasions like the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

One notable official visit by Apulia's leadership to Montenegro was combined with an international soccer match in February 1988<sup>218</sup>. The official delegation, which

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<sup>218</sup> “Taranto, sabato amichevole col Buducnost,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 24, 1988, p. 18.

stayed in Montenegro between 22 and 24 February<sup>219</sup>, was composed by the Region's President, Salvatore Fitto, Vice President, Franco Borgia, multiple *assessori* responsible for relevant policy areas, and representatives of the Region's federations of tourism industry and commerce. Fitto had previously expressed his personal interest in an official visit to the Socialist Republic during a plenary session of the *Giunta*: he stated that cooperation between the two Adriatic regions represented a productive contribution to the broader development of the Italo-Yugoslav relations. The President wanted to assess existing forms of collaboration and develop new initiatives in technical, economic, agricultural, transport and telecommunications sectors, thus he assembled a large delegation and invited operators of strategic economic sectors like industry, agriculture, tourism and commerce<sup>220</sup>. Notably, Fitto conveyed cooperation had not yet reached an adequate level, despite mutual interest and favorable conditions that could have benefited both parties<sup>221</sup>.

The two regions carried on with their touristic exchanges and kept having meetings to plan investments and review developments in the tourism industry. This was the case of a conference held on 13 September 1988 at the *Fiera del Levante*, where the Yugoslav ambassador to Italy, Ante Skataretiko, the General Secretary of Dubrovnik's touristic office, Mario Kovacevic [Kovačević], and the Yugoslav consul in Bari, Slavko Njegomir, contributed to a review of the previous summer's touristic business<sup>222</sup>. More than 9,000,000 tourists were welcomed in Yugoslavia in 1987, and during the first seven months of 1988 tourist arrivals increased by 8%, approximately one million more tourists than the previous year, with Italy and West Germany constituting the main countries of origin of foreign tourists. Dubrovnik, Cavtat and Budva ranked among the most popular destinations. Yugoslav guests emphasized the need for foreign investment in decisive sectors such as the road network, hospitality facilities, and small and medium-sized factories. Hence, the Secretary of Bari's Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce, Jussuf Hozic

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<sup>219</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 671 of February 9, 1988.

<sup>220</sup> Region of Puglia, Regional Government (*Giunta Regionale*), Deliberation No. 12694 of December 29, 1987.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, it must be specified that this is the only official document to be found with a statement by a prominent figure of Apulia's leadership containing words of concern for the inadequacy of cooperation between Apulia and Montenegro.

<sup>222</sup> M. Schiralli, "La costa jugoslava sempre più... vicina," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 14, 1988, p. 15.

[Jusuf Hozić], demanded for more cooperation, enabled by new favorable legislation enacted by Yugoslavia<sup>223</sup>. In January 1988, Italy and Yugoslavia signed a Memorandum of Understanding that allocated hundreds of billions of Italian liras in investments, export, and joint private companies, with additional cooperation in technology, education, academic research and joint projects<sup>224</sup>. Yugoslav officials announced plans to purchase a new ferry and the establishment of a new Bari–Dubrovnik air route, however the transport sector necessitated further improvements.

A later significant bilateral meeting took place in Bari on 29 November 1988 for the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. On this occasion, journalist Stefano Boccardi of *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* interviewed the Yugoslav consul in Bari, Slavko Njegomir, to review the current relations between Italy and Yugoslavia, and, specifically, between Apulia and the coastal republics<sup>225</sup>. The consul noted his country's gradual recovery from the previous years' economic crisis, primarily through reforms enabling foreign investments. According to the consul, due to their annual trade amounting to approximately 3 billion dollars, Italy represented the third economic partner of Yugoslavia after West Germany and the Soviet Union. In this situation, Italy was crucial for supporting the economy and Njegomir assessed Yugoslavia's low labor represented a profitable preference for Italian public and private investors. He identified the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce in Bari, Yugotours, and the Italo–Yugoslav joint venture “Centro Produkt” as the main lines for cooperation. In relation to the state of affairs with Apulia, Njegomir reckoned that frequent connections between the two coasts had drastically reduced distances through weekly Adria Airways air links between Bari and Titograd.

Regarding to trade relations, Yugoslavia and Italy exchanged permanent contacts through fairs, specifically the *Fiera del Levante* in Bari and Budva's Adriatic Fair in Montenegro: Apulia represented an important source for potential cooperation in the industrial, touristic, cultural and media sectors for the Socialist Republic. Moreover, Yugoslavia looked forward to the removal of custom barriers within the European

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> “Memorandum di intesa riguardante un programma pluriennale di cooperazione economica, tecnica e allo sviluppo,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana* (All. 175, art. 1), January 29, 1988.

<sup>225</sup> S. Boccardi, “«La Puglia partner ideale per la Jugoslavia»,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, November 27, 1988, p. 13.

Community for the establishment of a single market in 1992<sup>226</sup>. In the specific case of custom duties between Italy and Yugoslavia, in October 1989 the Italian Minister of Finance, Rino Formica, under-secretary of Foreign Affairs, Claudio Lenoci, and the General director of customs, Giovanbattista Cantiello, met in Bari the General director of Yugoslav customs and the directors of Slovenian and Montenegrin customs to discuss administrative cooperation, customs frauds, value of commodities and issues between the two countries<sup>227</sup>. These Italo-Yugoslav meetings were a permanent biennial appointment settled in an international agreement signed in Belgrade in 1965 and become effective in 1968<sup>228</sup>.

The 1989 edition of *Fiera del Levante* hosted the “Day of Yugoslavia”, the customary meeting between Italian and Yugoslav officials and economic operators hosted to review relations between the two countries and to promote new initiatives of cooperation<sup>229</sup>. On 13 September the event had a Yugoslav delegation made of Rome’s ambassador, Dusan Strbac [Dušan Štrbac], the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cedomir Kovacevic [Čedomir Kovačević], the Yugoslav consul in Bari, Slavko Njegomir, and the director of the country’s Economic Chamber in Bari, Jusuf Hodzic [Jusuf Hodžić]. As for the Italian official guests, the President of the Consortium of the port of Bari, Adolfo Morante, and the plenipotentiary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicola Lo Russo Attoma. Italo-Yugoslav relations were seen as mutually important for both countries for their connections: Italy represented a fundamental door for Yugoslavia’s commerce with the EEC’s single market, as Yugoslavia was an important bridge towards Eastern European markets. Kovačević assessed the new economic policy of his country allowed stipulation of 57 contracts with Italy in the first eight months of 1989 alone. The parties agreed on an imminent reopening of the Joint Commission for the Protection of Adriatic Waters, which could develop cooperation in the fisheries sector.

In the late-1980s relations between local trade unions continued, however only one official visit was reported, in the Third Regional Congress of the Italian trade union

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> “Per le dogane è tempo di cooperazione,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 30, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>228</sup> *Legge 19 maggio 1967, n. 512: Ratifica ed esecuzione dell’Accordo di mutua assistenza amministrativa per la prevenzione e la repressione delle frodi doganali tra l’Italia e la Jugoslavia*, GU no. 169 of July 8, 1967, Normattiva.

<sup>229</sup> D. Petrelli, “Tra Italia e Jugoslavia molti interessi comuni,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 13, 1989, p. 21.

UIL on 19–20 May 1989<sup>230</sup>. On this occasion the delegations of Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina took part to the congress to consolidate friendship between the two coasts of the Adriatic. A successful operation mentioned by the foreign delegations in this respect was UIL's "Institute for the development and cooperation" with local production sites. This institute, formally known as "Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione con i Paesi in Via di Sviluppo", was an internal organization of the Italian trade union, established in 1984 to promote projects for development, assistance, education, research and information in developing countries<sup>231</sup>.

#### 4.2 Touristic, sporting and cultural encounters

Until the late-1980s, tourism continued to constitute the backbone of Apulia–Montenegro cooperation. The main Yugoslav tour operator, Yugotours, regularly organized annual meetings, either in Yugoslavia or in Italy, to display the services offered for the whole year in the main destinations of the country. On 4 February 1988 – 20 days before the aforementioned institutional visit of the President of Apulia, Fitto – a delegation of journalists and tourism operators from Apulia moved to Montenegro to learn about the Socialist Republic's touristic offer, primarily from Vanja Brailo, the Republic's Secretary of Tourism<sup>232</sup>. Additionally, Yugotours continued to promote organized holiday packages for Easter 1988<sup>233</sup>, and throughout 1989, offering discounted rates during the off-season<sup>234</sup>.

On 15 September 1988, the *Fiera del Levante* hosted a meeting organized by the Yugoslav Chamber of the Economy, bringing together Yugoslav officials and tourism operators to review the past summer<sup>235</sup>: the meeting saw the participation of Krsto Kraljevic [Kraljević], director of Titograd's Adria Airways' office, Miriana Derrer, from

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<sup>230</sup> G. Sollitto, "Lo sviluppo competitivo del Sud richiede la strategia della qualità," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, May 20, 1989, p. 14.

<sup>231</sup> Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione con i Paesi in Via di Sviluppo "Istituto Progetto Sud," UIL,

<sup>232</sup> S. Boccardi, "Un ponte con l'altra sponda dell'Adriatico," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 4, 1988, p. 12.

<sup>233</sup> "Pasqua a Cetinje antica capitale del Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 19, 1988, p. 16.

<sup>234</sup> V. Cimmarusti, "Settimane-vacanza in Jugoslavia paghi due, la terza è gratis," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 19, 1989, p. 22.

<sup>235</sup> D. Petrelli, "La Jugoslavia è bella anche d'inverno," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 16, 1989, p. 16.

Dubrovnik's touristic office, Alexandre Apollonio, President of the Conference of Lower Adriatic, Mr. Salamunic [Salamunić], Yugotours director, Vojko Plestina, representing the Dalmatian touristic office. The Yugoslav delegation demanded for an improved promotion of tourism opportunities in Apulia through targeted advertisement campaigns, particularly focusing on casinos on the coast, or on hunting and fishing opportunities. Plestina [Pleština] of the Dalmatian tourism office suggested to leverage international sporting events scheduled for August 1990 to promote Apulia in Split – host city of the European Athletics Championship – and Yugoslavia in Bari – the venue for several matches of the FIFA World Cup.

Sporting exchanges continued throughout 1988 and 1989 with both usual appointments and larger international events. On 27 February 1988 the Apulian city of Taranto hosted a friendly soccer match between the local team and Titograd's *Buducnost* [Budućnost]<sup>236</sup>. The Taranto club's President, Vito Fasano, invited Apulian President, Salvatore Fitto, and representatives of the Montenegrin community to watch the match. During the *Expolevante* event of March 1988, a series of sporting competitions was organized, including a basketball match between a junior Montenegrin team and one from Bari's high schools, marking the inaugural edition of the "Expolevante" Trophy<sup>237</sup>. Another international event took place on 17 June 1988, when the town of Mola di Bari hosted the third international trapshooting tournament, featuring local teams and two representatives from Montenegro<sup>238</sup>. A number of Yugoslav officials participated to the award ceremony: among others, the consul Dragan Djurjevic, the director of the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce, Hodžić, secretary of the Yugoslav skeet shooting Federation, Boro Vucinic [Vučinić]. Further sporting exchanges occurred on 1–2 July 1989, when swimming and water-polo tournaments, brought together representative teams from Turin, Italy, Croatia and Montenegro – Yugoslavia participated with three teams in total<sup>239</sup>.

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<sup>236</sup> "Taranto, sabato amichevole col Buducnost," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 24, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>237</sup> D. Petrelli, "Emozioni con il brivido-trial e con campioni cinesi del ping-pong," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 19, 1988, p. 11.

<sup>238</sup> "Successo barese nel tiro a volo," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, June 18, 1988, p. 23.

<sup>239</sup> "Da oggi a Bari l'Internazionale di nuoto e pallanuoto," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, July 1, 1989, p. 17.

Among cultural events, two particular exhibitions took place in 1988. In April, Montenegrin poets Spasoje Blagojevic [Blagojević], Janko Brajkovic [Brajković], Dusan [Dušan] Govedarica and Vuckman Otasevic [Otašević] attended a series of public initiatives, also in schools, to promote their poetry in Apulia<sup>240</sup>. A second important cultural exchange took place in Montenegro with the presentation of *La casa di pietra – Kamena Kuća* [“The Stone House”] –, a book by Italian writer Anna Santoliquido<sup>241</sup>. The volume, translated into Serbo-Croatian by Dragan Mraovic [Mraović], was presented in Nikšić on 20 September as part of the cultural exchange program between Apulia and Montenegro.

### **4.3 Turmoil spreads in Yugoslavia: the case of Montenegro (1988–1989)**

In the late 1980s, the Yugoslav federation was unsettled by profound social and political unrest. This instability was fueled, on one hand, by the major economic crisis that shattered the country’s currency, with inflation reaching levels as high as 150%, and, on the other hand, by the proliferation of ethno-nationalist sentiments in all republics and autonomous provinces. These sentiments derived from economic and political differences that prominent politicians and intellectuals identified as factors dividing the republics from one another. The very fact that antagonistic politicians and intellectuals could spread their opinions came after a further process of liberalization, enacted by a central political leadership that lacked Tito’s charisma and popular consensus. Additionally, to the new policies that allowed more freedom of dissent, it was the political will to hear and accept these voices against the central government that favored their diffusion, especially in the republics of Slovenia and Serbia. In Slovenia, the leading figure of Milan Kučan focused his political strategy on the secession from Yugoslavia to gain complete independence, detach from the one-party system and have multi-party democracy. In Serbia, the ethno-nationalist Secretary of the republic’s League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, became increasingly influential in the mid-to-late 1980s among Serbian

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<sup>240</sup> “Poesia dal Montenegro,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, April 8, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>241</sup> “«La casa di pietra» in Jugoslavia,” *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 20, 1988, p. 13.

extreme political factions due to his project on recentralization of power in Belgrade to the detriment of autonomy of the federation's republics<sup>242</sup>.

Milošević's "Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution" strategy to reach consensus in southern Yugoslav republics against the Slovene, Croatian and Albanian-Kosovar populations was twofold: it had both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Regarding the bottom-up political tactic, it was centered on the dissemination – primarily through state-owned media broadcasters<sup>243</sup> – of the Serbian intelligentsia's ideologies, conspiracy theories and revisited historical narratives, describing the centuries-old Serbian *narod* as being under the constant oppression and menace by other Balkan peoples. According to these allegations, Serbians were represented as secular victims of genocides and backstabbing by other Yugoslavs, and of Tito's Croatian yoke that limited the development and growth of the Serbian republic in the federation. The top-down approach used by Milošević had the objective of aligning leaderships of southern federal authorities, including republics and autonomous provinces, to his political agenda. The path used in Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro was to induce internal coups to subvert the ruling class imposing new – generally younger – loyal politicians. In the case of Montenegro, he argued that there was no historical Montenegrin *narod*, that those who identified as Montenegrin were in fact Serbs, and that the idea of a "Montenegrin people" was a politically fabricated deception to divide the Serbs' unity.

Thus, Milošević started the anti-bureaucratic revolution in Vojvodina in 1988. In October he supported a wave of violent demonstrations against the autonomous province's parliament in Novi Sad, which forced the President, Mandor Major, to resign on 6 October. The tens of thousands of protesters manifested against the local League of Communists' leadership decision to oppose two Milošević's supporters in the party.

Articles by the local press on the situation in Montenegro were published in the following days, offering a peculiar 'Apulian viewpoint' to the state crisis in Yugoslavia. On 8 October, the *Gazzetta* published an article about ten Montenegrins who manifested the day before in Titograd to demand for resignation of the republic's League of

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<sup>242</sup> S.P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, London, Routledge, 2002.

<sup>243</sup> J. Dragović-Soso, "Yugoslavia's political endgame." in John R. Lampe and Ulf Brunnbauer (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 481–489.

Communists<sup>244</sup>. Mass protests emerged in the following days, with thousands of protesters gathered in Titograd against the League of Communists. Titograd's leadership resigned on 8 October, including the Mayor and the city's party and administrative leadership, after requests of thousands of demonstrators who reportedly stated their frustration after betrayal and need of political change<sup>245</sup>, and multiple protesters' leaders publicly delivered nationalist and subversive speeches<sup>246</sup>. In the end, the Montenegrin communist leadership did not resign, unlike the local government. However, the substantial ferment provoked by protests forced the President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia, Raif Dizdarevic [Dizdarević], to announce the state of emergency if the situation worsened after threats to the constitutional order<sup>247</sup>. The President's words remained unheard: on 10 October, Montenegrin workers and students demonstrated in Nikšić against the violent measures adopted by the police in suppressing Titograd's protests of the previous days. This time, however, they requested resignation of the Montenegrin League of Communists' leadership and lamented the severe economic crisis also with hunger strikes<sup>248</sup>. On 11 October, Radivoje Brajovic [Brajović] of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Montenegro resigned after a strong resistance, admitting responsibility for his mistakes<sup>249</sup>. On 13 October the Secretary of Interior of Montenegro and chief of police, Lazar Djodjic [Đođić], resigned after discontent for his violent counter-measures against Titograd's protesters<sup>250</sup>. The republic's authorities issued contingency measures such as a ban on demonstrations and a major deployment of police forces. On the same day, the governing bodies of Montenegro and Kosovo met to discuss on Albanian intimidations and harassments perpetrated against Montenegrins in the Yugoslav autonomous province. The 17<sup>th</sup> conference of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, held between 17 and 19 October, exacerbated the frictions between representatives at federal and local levels, especially on the question of Milošević's

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<sup>244</sup> "E ora i serbi minacciano una «marcia su Belgrado»," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 8, 1988, p. 20.

<sup>245</sup> "Anche nel Montenegro esplodono le proteste," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 9, 1988, p. 8.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> M. Martelli, "Jugoslavia, stato di emergenza se continueranno le tensioni," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 10, 1988, p. 16.

<sup>248</sup> G. L. Giorda, "La protesta fa tremare il governo di Belgrado," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 11, 1988, p. 8.

<sup>249</sup> G.L. Giorda, "Si spacca la Jugoslavia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 12, 1988, p. 20.

<sup>250</sup> "Montenegro, si dimette il capo della polizia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 14, 1988, p. 4.

policies. During the Plenum, Milan Popović from the Central Committee accused the President of the League of Communists, Stipe Suvar [Šuvar], of supporting Milošević; while Katsusa Jasari, President of the League of Communists of Kosovo, argued that Adem Crasnici [Krasniqi], also from Kosovo [sic], could not prove his accusations on the Serbian involvement in the demonstrations in the autonomous province<sup>251</sup>. Ultimately, the October Congress of the Central Committee of the League of Communists resulted in a political loss for the Serbian leader as the assembly voted for the expulsion from the League of his ally Borisan Yovic [Borisav Jović], the President of the Serbian Parliament<sup>252</sup>.

In December 1988 a plenum of the Montenegrin students' League of Communist demanded again resignation of the whole Presidency of the Montenegrin League of Communists, particularly of those who ordered the suppression of October's protests<sup>253</sup>. The students reckoned they could take over the republic's leadership due to their competence and best will, hence they demanded a special meeting with the party to discuss terms and conditions.

In the first months of 1989, the *Gazzetta* continued to monitor internal events in Yugoslavia and Montenegro. The social unrest worsened in Montenegro and would spread in the other autonomous province of Serbia, Kosovo. On 10 January, another round of protests exploded in Montenegro, with more than 10,000 demonstrators – mainly university students and workers of the Radoje Dakic [Dakić] factory – storming the House of the National Assembly in Titograd, demanding and obtaining the resignation of the whole political leadership of the Socialist Republic. At the time the economic situation in Montenegro was precarious: it had the lowest wages and the highest unemployment rate in Yugoslavia<sup>254</sup>. On 11 January, after two days of protests, both the Presidency and the directorate of the League of Communists of Montenegro collectively resigned, as well as the representatives of Montenegro in the party's federal central committee of the

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<sup>251</sup> E. Dall'Ara, "Ora sulla Jugoslavia spaccata anche l'incubo dell'esercito," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, October 19, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>252</sup> E. Dall'Ara, "Jugoslavia, la crisi raggiunge i vertici," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 22, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>253</sup> "Costretti alle dimissioni altri dirigenti jugoslavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, December 12, 1988, p. 5.

<sup>254</sup> "Proteste popolari in Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 11, 1989, p. 5.

presidency<sup>255</sup>. Eventually these demonstrations broke out due to the decision, adopted both at federal and local level, not to renovate the composition of the ruling class, which was warmly expected from pro-Serbian nationalists at the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Federal Central Committee of 17 October 1988. The situation in the whole country at that point was extremely tense, due to great political agitation, the power vacuum caused by the resignation of Prime Minister Branko Mikulić, and the severe economic crisis – with the inflation rate well above 200%. Hence, the fear of a military intervention in the country previously advocated by the federal President of the Presidency, Dizdarević, and by the Minister of Defense, Veliko Kadijević [Veljko Kadijević], was ever more tangible<sup>256</sup>. On 19 January, Milošević suffered an additional political defeat after the nomination as new Prime Minister of Yugoslavia of the Croatian Ante Marković, who leaned more towards pluralist and liberal economic instances promoted by Croatian and Slovenian leaderships. The President of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Stipe Šušteršič, in order to contain protests in the Yugoslav autonomous provinces and in Montenegro, organized an extraordinary convocation of the Central Committee on 25 January<sup>257</sup>. In 20<sup>th</sup> extraordinary Congress of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, held between the end of January and 1 February, the President of the Presidency, Stipe Šušteršič, delivered a speech where he openly condemned Milošević's "ideological orthodoxy", and labelled him a "neo-stalinist". Invoking unity among all the federal republics, Šušteršič assessed the committee was undergoing an internal struggle between reformist and anti-reformist formations, however the country needed a process of integration towards the economic and political liberalization – thereby supporting the Slovene approach, but preserving political and territorial unity in Yugoslavia<sup>258</sup>. The President expressed his concern for the outbreak of a civil war if the political divergences in the country did not quit.

The *Gazzetta* also reported Italy's attempts to mediate the internal crisis in Yugoslavia. In order to manifest Italy's support for Yugoslavia, the Foreign Minister, Giulio Andreotti, moved to Belgrade on 30 January to meet the designated Prime

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<sup>255</sup> E. Dall'Ara, "I dimostranti ora vogliono le dimissioni del Governo," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 12, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Dall'Ara, "Jugoslavia, la crisi raggiunge i vertici," p. 5.

<sup>258</sup> E. Dall'Ara, "E' aspra battaglia ai vertici jugoslavi," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, January 31, 1989, p. 5.

Minister, Marković, the President, Dizdarević, and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Budimir Loncar [Lončar]. The Italian minister held long meetings with the Yugoslav leadership and declared Italy's intention to continue bilateral relations also with the offer of further financial aid – through national as well as communitarian resources –, due to their mutually primary importance for import and export<sup>259</sup>. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Federal Central Committee, the Montenegrin and Kosovar delegations in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia were purged in favor of Milošević: for Montenegro resigned one of its most prominent exponents, Vidoje Zarkovic [Žarković], while for Kosovo, Svetislav Dolasevic [Dolašević] and the former President of the League of Communists of the autonomous province, Azem Vlasi<sup>260</sup>.

In March 1989 mass demonstrations carried out by Albanian Kosovars erupted in multiple areas of Kosovo, particularly in the cities of Urosevac [Uroševac, in Albanian: Ferizaj], Podujevo [in Albanian: Podujevë], Pec [Peć, in Albanian: Pejë], Klina [in Albanian: Klinë], Lipjan [Lipljan, in Albanian: Lipjani] and the capital Pristina [Priština]. Kosovars stormed the streets of their major cities to oppose Milošević's constitutional amendments for recentralization of power in Belgrade and reduction of autonomy for Kosovo<sup>261</sup>. The violent protests in Podujevo caused three victims, two police officers and a protester, and the demonstrators damaged the city hall and several shops. Picketers targeted private houses of Serbian and Montenegrin people as well, but the police dispersed them with water cannons. These episodes of targeting people based on their ethnicity somewhat forecasted the tactics used later in the 1990s wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina both by the Yugoslav National Army and paramilitary militias to commit their war crimes and genocides.

In the second half of 1989, more protests erupted in Serbia and Montenegro to oppose the constitutional reform promoted by the republic of Slovenia. The 81 amendments to the 1974 Yugoslav constitution aimed at self-determination and secession from Belgrade, detachment from the one-party in favor of a multi-party system,

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> "Jugoslavia: epurazioni in Kosovo e Montenegro," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, February 3, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>261</sup> "Kosovo, quasi una Guerra ammazzati due poliziotti," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, March 28, 1989, p. 5.

independence from the Serbian-centered Yugoslav National Army, and the prospect of political association with other countries<sup>262</sup>.

## **Final Remarks**

The interregional relations between Apulia and Montenegro continued throughout the late-1980s, however the volumes of their exchanges drastically decreased, if compared to the early years of the decade. Delegations were exchanged in 1988 and 1989 through the consolidated channels of commerce fairs and sporting events, which allowed economic operators and young athletes to learn about each other and to make business together. An official delegation of Apulia's regional leadership in February 1988 travelled in Montenegro to reinstate relations and develop interchange in various productive sectors. This visit was particularly important for affairs between the two regions after the central governments had stipulated a Memorandum that allocated billions of Liras to support Yugoslavia. The meetings held in *Fiera del Levante* in the two years considered in this chapter represented a firm occasion for reviewing the ongoing status of relations and for planning the next years' strategy of coordination for shared development. Tourism represented a valuable source for both regions, but in particular for Montenegro, where millions of Italians steadily chose to pass their holidays in every period of the year. Sporting events persevered with their intent to reiterate exchanges between the regions: the civil society and the youth consolidated their understanding of the people that lived across the Adriatic Sea. At the same time, these events expanded: additional sporting disciplines were added to each year's calendar in order to attract as many visitors as possible, and Bari's public and private authorities demonstrated their interest instituting new trophies.

However, attention should be drawn on the fact that ties between Apulia and Montenegro were at least in part compromised by the delicate social and political situation in the Yugoslav republic. The absence of Montenegrin leaders in Apulia in these years is in itself indicative. The only Yugoslav official guests who moved to Apulia were members of embassies and consulates in Italy, who were hosted in *Fiera del Levante* for

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<sup>262</sup> "Ancora proteste per lo «strappo» della Slovenia," *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, September 30, 1989, p. 9.

promotional or touristic events. It is reasonable to consider that the trembling administration of the Socialist Republic prioritized the internal menaces represented by nationalist public upheavals and politicians such as Milošević and his local followers. In this circumstance the interregional relations with Apulia were kept at their status quo, without further developments and advancements.

On the other hand, Apulia's economic situation was not bright either. As the President, Giuseppe Colasanto, stated, Regions in Italy had been the substitute of the central government for fifteen years, granting services that Rome were not capable to offer<sup>263</sup>. However, at the end of the 1980s, Regional authorities were required to reduce their spending, hence, Apulia's leadership had the mandate to provide social services with less resources, and according to a more structured, planned expenditure<sup>264</sup>.

*La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* is a precious source of information to grasp how the state crisis in Yugoslavia was observed by Apulia. The reports of prominent local journalists like Edoardo Dall'Ara, Mario Martelli and Gian Luca Giorda were essential to share the climate of uncertainty in the socialist federation's final years. They effectively noted both the secessionist ambitions of the Slovenian intelligentsia and political class, and Slobodan Milošević's complex and subtle strategy to centralize power by the subversion of the constitutional order – particularly in the republic of Montenegro and Serbia's autonomous provinces – by encouraging radical ethno-nationalist groups. Given Montenegro's geographical and political proximity to Apulia, it was natural for correspondents to report more thoroughly on the developments in that region. Between October 1988 and the early months of 1989, Montenegro was undermined by pro-Serb demonstrations that ultimately forced the resignation of both local and central authorities. They were replaced by officials loyal to Milošević who would support the gradual consolidation of his power, mainly to counter Slovene and Corat autonomist pressures.

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<sup>263</sup> G. Colasanto, "Per un'utile riflessione," *Cronache della Regione Puglia*, June 3, 1989, pp. 3–4.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusions

Relations between Apulia and Montenegro during the 1980s displayed a series of phases that followed a relentlessly descending curve: success in the early years, stability in the middle of the decade, and decline in the late 1980s. The time between 1980 and 1984 was a flourishing moment for both Apulia and Montenegro, which engaged in multilateral activities with Adriatic territorial administrations from Italy and Yugoslavia to coordinate their economic activities and jointly preserve the Adriatic waters. The Italian central government questioned Apulia's activities, arguing that such forms of "foreign policy" exceeded the administrative competences assigned to regions by the Constitution. However, Italy's Court of Auditors ultimately justified these actions. The central government's attitude against the region is explicable if it is reconducted to a general conduct by Rome towards a recentralization of competences after a great decentralization-driven momentum towards regionalism in the 1970s. Institutional relations and official encounters allowed political leaderships to know each other and to formalize agreements aimed at fostering development and cultural exchanges, as well as cooperation in productive sectors such as tourism and industry, as well as to cultural and recreational channels, in particular cultural and sports. However, when it came to infrastructural projects, problems arose. For instance, the parties found it complicated to establish a direct air route between the two main cities, Bari and Titograd, a problem that would carry on until the late-1980s. The research further examined the Yugoslav economic crisis on an Apulian standpoint: Montenegrin shoppers and business operators were an important share of Bari's retail market, and the currency limitations, as well as the decrease in the visitors' flows deeply concerned Bari's trade operators.

The exchanges between communist parties and trade unions in the two regions were a fundamental channel to deepen mutual knowledge and cooperation. Delegations from Montenegro and Apulia regularly participated in congresses to share experiences on topics such as industrial democracy, the conditions of the trade union movement and workers' self-management. The social component of these experiences was valuable, as delegates were able to visit industrial plants and encounter workers, party members and trade union representatives on the other side of the Adriatic. Additionally they were able to learn from workers and trade union representatives the delicate situation of the self-management system that was wobbling in the early 1980s.

Between 1985 and 1987, relations between Apulia and the Socialist Republics of Montenegro and, on a minor part, Croatia intensified on a number of sectors. Tourism, sport, culture, scientific collaboration, and security-related contacts emerged as the most dynamic fields, often compensating for the limited effectiveness of economic and industrial agreements. Regional and smaller municipal authorities, as well as trade unions, universities, and even more so, sporting organizations, were crucial intermediaries in sustaining dialogue across the Adriatic, contributing to a form of para-diplomacy that relied on regular contact, personal networks, and shared interests. Sporting exchanges, in particular, were seen as more productive than formal twinning agreements. Fairs remained the main channel for promotion and exchange of competences, although no more in the industrial sector, as in the touristic sector. This steadily became the main channel for economic cooperation between Apulia and Montenegro after the apparent failure of the project for a joint industrial network. An additional advantage to the expansion of the tourism sector was given by the final establishment of the Titograd-Bari air link in 1987, operated by the Yugoslav vector Trans Adria.

In the late 1980s, specifically in the years 1988 and 1989, interregional relations between Apulia and Montenegro drastically decreased, if compared to the early years of the decade, and were channeled through the usual levels of trade fairs and sport events. In 1988, Apulian leaders visited Montenegro to revive bilateral relations and promote new cooperation, a move made especially significant by a recent Memorandum signed by the central governments that provided substantial Italian financial support to Belgrade. Sporting events continued to promote regional exchanges, consolidating ties between civil society and youth across the Adriatic. Local administrators expanded the events adding new disciplines and trophies to attract more visitors and participants.

However, the ties between Apulia and Montenegro were jeopardized by political instability in Yugoslavia and Apulia's more restrictive economic policies. Montenegrin leaders focused on nationalist unrest and threats by politicians such as Milošević and his local followers. Hence, interregional relations with Apulia were inevitably kept at their status quo, with no advancements. On an Apulian standpoint, President Colasanto assessed local entities had been doing the government job in the management of welfare, but at the end of the decade they had to limit and structurally organize their budget.

Finally, between 1988 and 1989 the political and ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia were evident. Montenegro saw mass pro-Serb demonstrations storm the streets of Titograd and other cities, and the republic's leadership was forced to resign. According to Milošević's plan, they were replaced by loyal followers, animated by pro-Serb sentiments and by anti-Croat and anti-Slovene feelings.

In conclusion, the descending curve of Apulia and Montenegro relations in the decade studied in this research could be connected to various factors that succeeded through the years. The early 1980s can be seen in the inter-Adriatic framework as a transitory moment where the aftermaths of the Treaty of Osimo were still visible in the optimism, proactivity and dynamism by the Apulian leadership. In the mid-1980s, the major economic crisis in Yugoslavia, the ineffectiveness and irregularity of relations and the uncertainty related to joint projects brought distrust and disappointment. Eventually, this factor forced regional leaders to pursue a successful economic cooperation through low value, short-sighted initiatives, like sport events and tourism. Finally, the late-1980s exacerbated all the limitations of the Yugoslav system, which perhaps lost all credibility with its territorial and stata partners. Apulia would not engage with its historical partner anymore, although it was concerned and carefully watched the wars of Yugoslav dissolution.

Further research should continue this historical reconstruction of relations among Apulia and Montenegro, possibly analyzing the contribute offered by Apulia during the War in Bosnia, or studying the Montenegrin perspective of relations in the same decade considered in this work.

Relations among the two local entities considered in this study were made possible by a political class that pursued a sustained, joint effort to reduce distances between the two shores of the Adriatic Sea. Throughout the decade, several eminent members of the Region's Christian Democracy party held the office of President of Region: Nicola Quarta (1980–1983), Gennaro Trisorio Liuzzi (1983–1985), Salvatore Fitto (1985–1988) – whose mandate tragically terminated after a fatal car accident –, and Giuseppe Colasanto (1988–1990). These political actors, possibly owing to their maritime perspective as representatives of a coastal territory, but also for the political legacy of Aldo Moro – himself a native of Maglie, in southern Apulia – displayed a firm commitment to the

emergence of Apulia as a bridge to connect Italy to the “East”, that is, the Balkan peninsula and, more broadly, the Eastern Mediterranean.

This strategy, continuously maintained in the 1980s, found strong support among Bari’s retail sector, the leadership of the *Fiera del Levante*, and other economic operators who engaged in the challenge of establishing a link between the two Adriatic coasts, parallel to that developed in Alps-Adriatic region. However, these ambitions were obstructed by both subjective and objective factors. On the subjective side, cooperation suffered from the inconsistency and episodic nature of contacts with foreign authorities, an issue repeatedly raised on the Montenegrin part. On the objective side, the process was constrained by the tendency of the Italian government toward the partial recentralization of competences, which often resulted in political and legal opposition to Regions’ initiatives, as well as by the gradual deterioration of Yugoslavia’s economic and political stability, which in the late 1980s affected Montenegro. Despite their coherence and persistence, Apulian leaders’ attempt to establish a consolidated and expanded cooperation pattern ultimately failed, for a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors on both sides of the Adriatic.

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