



ACTA HISTRIAE

30, 2022, 2



UDK/UDC 94(05)

ISSN 1318-0185
e-ISSN 2591-1767



Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper
Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria

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30, 2022, 2

KOPER 2022

ISSN 1318-0185
e-ISSN 2591-1767

UDK/UDC 94(05)

Letnik 30, leto 2022, številka 2

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Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper / Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria® / Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja / Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment / Istituto IRRIS di ricerca, sviluppo e strategie della società, cultura e ambiente®

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Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko, SI-6000, Koper-Capodistria, Garibaldijeva 18 / Via Garibaldi 18, e-mail: actahistriae@gmail.com; https://zdpj.si/

Tisk/Stampa/Print:

Založništvo PADRE d.o.o.

Naklada/Tiratura/Copies:

300 izvodov/copie/copies

**Finančna podpora/
Supporto finanziario/
Financially supported by:**

Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije / Slovenian Research Agency, Mestna občina Koper

**Slika na naslovnici/
Foto di copertina/
Picture on the cover:**

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Redakcija te številke je bila zaključena 30. junija 2022.

Revija Acta Histriae je vključena v naslednje podatkovne baze / Gli articoli pubblicati in questa rivista sono inclusi nei seguenti indici di citazione / Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in: CLARIVATE ANALYTICS (USA): Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Social Scisearch, Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), Journal Citation Reports / Social Sciences Edition (USA); IBZ, Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur (GER); International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) (UK); Referativnyi Zhurnal Viniti (RUS); European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS); Elsevier B. V.: SCOPUS (NL); DOAJ.
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VSEBINA / INDICE GENERALE / CONTENTS

Matjaž Grahornik: Tragičen vstop v novo leto: smrt Franca Jožefa grofa Herbersteina v dvoboju 2. januarja 1713	263
<i>Un tragico ingresso nell'anno nuovo: la morte in duello di Franz Joseph conte di Herberstein il 2 gennaio 1713 A Tragic Start to a New Year: The Death of Franz Joseph Count Herberstein in a Duel on 2 January 1713</i>	

Alessandro Fausti: Relazioni di amicizia tra Salò e Venezia. Il caso della riedizione degli statuti della Magnifica Patria	297
<i>Friendship Relations between Salò and Venice. The Case of the Re-edition of the Statutes of Magnifica Patria Prijateljski odnosi med Salòjem in Benetkami. Primer nove izdaje statotov »Magnifice Patrie«</i>	

Marija V. Kocić & Nikola R. Samardžić: British Sources on the Crisis of the Venetian Patriciate during the Second Morea War: The Case of Daniel IV Dolphin	325
<i>Fonti britanniche sulla crisi del patriziato veneziano nel periodo della seconda guerra di Morea: il caso di Daniele IV Dolfìn Britanski viri o krizi beneškega patriciata v času druge morejske vojne: primer Danieleja IV. Dolfina</i>	

Jelena Knežević & Julian Köck: Theodor Mommsen in Montenegro (1862)	347
<i>Theodor Mommsen in Montenegro (1862) Theodor Mommsen v Črni gori (1862)</i>	

Milena Kavarić & Rajka Đoković: Čedomorstvo u modernoj i suvremenoj Crnoj Gori	377
<i>L'infanticidio nel Montenegro in età moderna e contemporanea Infanticide in Modern and Contemporary Montenegro</i>	

Ivona Jovanović & Jasna Potočnik Topler: The Contribution of First Teachers of French at Petrović's Court to the Transformation of Society and the Affirmation of Montenegro in Europe	407
<i>Il contributo dei primi insegnanti di francese alla corte dei Petrović alla trasformazione della società e l'affermazione del Montenegro in Europa</i>	
<i>Prispevek prvih učiteljev francoščine na Petrovičevem dvoru k preobrazbi družbe in uveljavitvi Črne gore v Evropi</i>	

Ivan Jeličić: I migliori elementi d'italianità. Local Political Power Ascension and Italianization during the First Years of Post-world War I in Volosca–Abbazia, 1918–1920	429
<i>I migliori elementi d'italianità. L'ascesa al potere locale e l'italianizzazione nei primi anni del primo dopoguerra a Volosca–Abbazia, 1918–1920</i>	
<i>I migliori elementi d'italianità. Vzpon lokalne politične moči in italijanizacija v prvih letih po prvi svetovni vojni v Volosko–Opatiji, 1918–1920</i>	

Marko Medved: L'abuso della religione nella liturgia politica della Fiume dannunziana: la benedizione del pugnale nella chiesa di S. Vito	451
<i>Abuse of Religion in the Political Liturgy of D'Annunzio's Rijeka (Fiume): The Scandal of the Blessing of the Dagger in St. Vitus Church</i>	
<i>Zloraba vere v politični liturgiji na dannunzijeovski Reki: blagoslov bodala v cerkvi sv. Vida</i>	

Larysa Poliakova & Natalia Shkoda: Historiographic Issues Regarding the Position of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in Soviet Ukraine in the Years 1920–1930	471
<i>Problemi storiografici relativi alle posizioni della chiesa ortodossa e quella cattolica romana nell'Ucraina sovietica negli anni 1920–1930</i>	
<i>Historiografska vprašanja glede položaja pravoslavne in rimokatoliške cerkve v sovjetski Ukrajini v letih 1920–1930</i>	

Klemen Kocjančič: A Contribution to the Role of (Former) Red Army Prisoners of War and White Emigrés in Slovenia during the German Occupation, 1943–1945	487
<i>Contributo riguardo al ruolo degli (ex) prigionieri di guerra dell'Armata rossa e dell'«emigrazione bianca» in Slovenia durante l'occupazione tedesca, 1943–1945</i>	
<i>Prispevek k vlogi (nekdanjih) rdečearmijskih vojnih ujetnikov in belih emigrantov v Sloveniji med nemško okupacijo, 1943–1945</i>	

Borut Klabjan: Graditi partizanski spomin v socialistični Jugoslaviji: slovenski primer v času po drugi svetovni vojni	513
<i>Costruire la memoria partigiana nella Jugoslavia socialista:</i> <i>il caso sloveno dopo la seconda guerra mondiale</i> <i>Building Partisan Memory in Socialist Yugoslavia:</i> <i>The Slovene Case after World War II</i>	

Boštjan Udovič: “Danke Deutschland!”: The Political and Diplomatic Contribution of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Creation of Independent Slovenia	535
<i>«Danke Deutschland!»: il contributo politico-diplomatico</i> <i>della Repubblica Federale di Germania alla nascita dello</i> <i>Stato indipendente della Slovenia</i> <i>»Danke Deutschland!«: politično-diplomatski</i> <i>prispevek Zvezne republike Nemčije k nastanku slovenske države</i>	

“DANKE DEUTSCHLAND!”: THE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO THE CREATION OF INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses Slovenian–German relations, with a particular focus on the period between December 1990 and June 1991. The author takes a look at the positions that the Federal Republic of Germany assumed with regard to the plebiscite in Slovenia and recognition of Slovenian independence, as well as the circumstances (national and international) that led Germany to these positions. The article finds that as late as the spring of 1991 the official German policy was preserving the integrity of Yugoslavia, while it was already aware this might be an unrealistic wish. This is why it foresaw Slovenian and Croatian independence as one of the possibilities. When war in Slovenia broke out, Germany saw that Yugoslavia was gone, so it took a completely different stance than only weeks before. This was also reflected in its active engagement for swift international recognition of Slovenia and Croatia.

Keywords: Slovenia, Federal Republic of Germany, Slovenian–German relations, diplomacy, Slovenian independence

«DANKE DEUTSCHLAND!»: IL CONTRIBUTO POLITICO-DIPLOMATICO DELLA REPUBBLICA FEDERALE DI GERMANIA ALLA NASCITA DELLO STATO INDIPENDENTE DELLA SLOVENIA

SINTESI

L'articolo analizza i rapporti sloveno-tedeschi, con particolare attenzione al periodo dicembre 1990–giugno 1991. All'autore interessa quali atteggiamenti sono stati assunti dalla Repubblica Federale di Germania a proposito del plebiscito sloveno e del riconoscimento dell'indipendenza dello Stato sloveno, al contempo, quali sono state le circostanze (nazionali ed internazionali) che hanno incoraggiato la Germania ad assumere gli atteggiamenti che sono state messi in pratica. Il risultato della ricerca è che la politica ufficiale tedesca ha voluto, ancora nella primavera del 1991, mantenere la Jugoslavia come era, ma allo stesso tempo si rendeva conto che si trattava di un desiderio irrealizzabile. Perciò, come una delle opzioni, ha “aggiunto” la possibilità dell'indipendenza della Slovenia e

della Croazia. Quando è iniziata la guerra in Slovenia, la Germania ha constatato che “la Jugoslavia non c’era più”. Perciò ha adottato un atteggiamento completamente diverso rispetto a qualche settimana prima, fatto che si è rispecchiato anche nella sua attività per un riconoscimento internazionale veloce della Slovenia e della Croazia.

Parole chiave: Slovenia, Repubblica Federale Tedesca, relazioni sloveno-tedesche, diplomazia, l’indipendenza slovena

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The aim of the article¹ is to analyse Slovenian–German relations in light of the diplomatic and political contribution of the Federal Republic of Germany (hereinafter BRD) to the creation of an independent Slovenian state. Although we also present the broader picture of ‘Slovenian’–German relations, we will focus mainly on the period between December 1990 and June 1991—a pivotal time for the establishment of independent Slovenia. In this respect, we will take a look at how much the political, economic and cultural relations that Slovenia had built with the BRD already as part of Yugoslavia influenced the German position on Slovenia’s struggle for independence.

People often publicly say (and believe) that Slovenian–German relations are excellent; however, they remain very poorly analysed in scientific and technical literature, particularly the last half a century, for which there is hardly any available analysis in Slovenia. The analyses that do exist mostly pertain to the 19th century,² the Slovenian national awakening and the aversive relations between ethnic Slovenes and Germans of the time. Slovenian literary corpus is full of references to this, including Ivan Cankar’s parody of German courage: “O domovina bod’ pr’ mir, na Reni ahta kanonir” (Grdina, 2005);³ Fran Levstik’s epigram complaining that a new church movement is encouraging singing in German (“Novo petje ceciljansko, ni slovensko, je germansko; Šola razslovenja nas, Cerkev tujči petja glas!”; Levstik, 1884, 632; Bedina, 1994, 66). The most vivid illustration of the distancing of Slovenes from Germans may be the famous response of Anton Korošec, member of the Austrian parliament, to Emperor Charles I: “Majestät, es ist zu spat.” (Bister, 1992, 258).⁴ Symbolically, this statement meant a final break from the Slovenian–German relations as we had known them for almost a millennium.

1 The article is a result of the Research Programme “Slovenia and its Actors in International Relations and European integrations” (P5-0177), financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS). The author would like to thank Urška Lampe, Darko Darovec and the reviewers for their comments on the manuscript. The article would be poorer in materials and photos without the help of: Ambassador Boris Frlec, Marjan Sedmak, Alojz Peterle, Marjan Šiftar, Vladimira Rančov and Barbara Radovan.

2 For more on this, cf. Žigon & Kramberger (2014) and Samide & Žigon (2020).

3 “Oh homeland, be at ease, a cannoneer is keeping watch on the Rhein.” It is Cankar’s parody of the German patriotic anthem *Wacht am Rhein*.

4 “Your Majesty, it is too late.”

Despite a symbolic break with the German nation (in the broadest sense) and the departure of Slovenes into another and different state in 1918, Slovenian–German relations continued, although in different form—through intensive economic cooperation.

Data on exports from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS, later renamed Yugoslavia) into German-speaking countries (Austria and Germany) show a dip in trade only in 1920, after which exports to Germany started growing dramatically. In 1925, the Kingdom of SCS exported 25% of its total exports to German-speaking countries (18.5% to Austria and 6.5% to Germany); in 1930, it exported 29% of its total exports there; and in 1938, just before WWII, the figure was at 42% (6% to Austria and 36% to Germany) (calculations based on Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1989, 297–301). The Second World War and German occupation of Slovenian territory broke Slovenian–German economic relations and subjected them to the interests of the Nazi war economy.⁵

Post-war time was extremely complex with respect to political and economic relations, since most things were arranged and determined by the Yugoslav federal authorities, and the individual states were left with relatively little space to pursue their own activities. Despite the complicated situation in Yugoslavia and West Germany, both countries quickly put their shoulders to the wheel of economic and political cooperation, which intensified after the *Cominform split* (1948). A CIA dispatch (2011, 2–3) states that Yugoslavia's exports to West Germany accounted for 1.7% of the total exports in 1948 and already 5.6% the next year. The dispatch adds:

The trade agreement concluded 31 March 1949 between West Germany and Yugoslavia contains lists of Yugoslav export and import. [...] Amendments of 19 August 1949 change the lists of imports and exports and increase the amount of manipulative credits. A supplement to the Agreement of 31 March 1949 increases the scope of export and import and regulates the import of Yugoslav agricultural products.

Not only in the economy, Yugoslavia and West Germany (BRD) also boosted their political relations soon after the Tito–Stalin split. On 13 June 1951, the BRD opened an economic mission in Belgrade, and on 6 July Yugoslavia did the same in Bonn. A week later, on 12 July 1951, Stane Pavlič, a Slovene, already submitted his credentials, becoming the first official Yugoslav envoy to the BRD. He was appointed to the rank of ambassador on 8 December 1951 (Brey, 1979, 634; Nečak, 2014, 704).⁶ Pavlič was replaced in Bonn by a Croat, Mladen Iveković, followed by another Slovene, Dušan Kveder (Nečak, 2014, 704).

At this point it seemed the relations between the BRD and Yugoslavia would start to flourish since there were almost no more obstacles. Well, there was one—Yugoslavia's relationship to the German Democratic Republic (DDR).⁷

5 On the issues and challenges for the ethnic composition of Germans in Slovenia after 1945, cf. Ramšak (2010), Grafenauer (2014) and Moric (2021).

6 Nečak (2014, 704) warns that data about when Yugoslavia's mission in Germany was opened do not match. This can be attributed mainly to the lack of clear notes from the time, particularly due to the unclear status of the BRD in relation to the DDR (East Germany).

7 On relations with the DDR, cf. Rullman (1969).

Yugoslavia always avoided formal acknowledgement that there were two Germanies. This can be attributed in part to the fact that Yugoslavia expected capital injections from the West after its split with the Cominform, so recognising the DDR *de facto* or *de iure* could jeopardise Yugoslavia's survival. At the same time, any more intensive cooperation with the DDR in the time of the great break from the countries of the Eastern bloc could be interpreted in the international community as Yugoslavia giving in to pressure, and would have been used by the Soviet Union to its advantage. But the situation changed after 1954, and particularly after the adoption of the Belgrade (1955) and Moscow (1956) declarations of friendship and cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. A fateful moment for German–Yugoslav relations was Tito's speech in Moscow on 19 June 1956, when he said: "Today, there are two states: the West and East Germany, and it would be wrong to ignore this fact. But it would also be wrong not to recognise the state organism that is East Germany" (Nećak, 1991, 162). Tito swept away with one swing everything that Yugoslavia had been building in its relations with the BDR for eight years. The reaction from Bonn was harsh. The Yugoslav ambassador was called for a talk, where he stressed that Yugoslavia's policy towards the BDR had not changed and that Tito only pointed to the international reality in Moscow. Tito himself gave the same assurance to the BRD's ambassador to Belgrade. But Yugoslavia's attempt at rekindling relations with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc took its toll. This became most evident in September 1957 when Tito explained in his meeting with Gomułka⁸ that for Yugoslavia the border on the Neisse and Oder rivers was final, while reiterating the reality of two German states. The *Hallstein Doctrine* of 1955 could not prevent it, so Bonn went for swift action. On 18 October 1957, the BRD decided to break diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia, with effect on the next day (Nećak, 1991, 155–166; Nećak, 2014, 703–711; Nećak, 2017, 111–123). For a decade, formal political relations between Yugoslavia (and therefore Slovenia) and the BRD came to a standstill, while economic relations developed with increasing speed—as if there were no political dispute (Nećak, 2013b).

The absence of political relations between the two countries on the highest level—Yugoslavia was represented in the BRD by Sweden and the BDR was represented in Belgrade by France—was not to the liking of either side, but both got tangled up in their own webs from which they could hardly come out as winners. The BRD could not give up the *Hallstein Doctrine*, because this would mean recognising the existence of two Germanies by way of facts, which the political elite in Bonn would not survive. And Yugoslavia counted on the BRD to give in first because it was the BRD that broke diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. The game of cat and mouse dragged on throughout the 1960s, all the while neither the BRD nor Yugoslavia in fact prohibited (despite a formal ban) the work of so-called *Gastarbeiter* (literally "guest workers") in the BRD, who sent foreign currencies to Yugoslavia. Conversely, Yugoslavia actively worked on luring German tourists to the Yugoslav coast, as they also brought in foreign currency, which was always in short supply in Yugoslavia.

Nećak (2013a, 123) points out that the situation was becoming increasingly intolerable as the gap between the economic and political interests grew, highlighting how both sides tried to find ways of overcoming this unbridgeable canyon of non-relations already

8 Władysław Gomułka was the leader of the Polish Communists and head of state between 1956 and 1970.

in the early 1960s. The first (formal) step in this direction was made by BRD leadership, who—despite the absence of diplomatic relations between the BRD and Yugoslavia—sent state secretary Rolf Lahr to Belgrade on a diplomatic reconnaissance mission a few days ahead of a formal visit by Walter Ulbricht⁹ to Yugoslavia (19–20 September 1964). As part of this mission, Lahr met with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Marko Nikezić, who assured him that, despite attempts by the DDR, Yugoslavia would not raise the rank of its representation there, and would not allow the DDR to do so even if it should wish to. And so it was, but only for two years. A year after Ulbricht's visit to Belgrade, Tito returned the visit to the DDR. There—again for reasons unknown—Tito tightened the rhetoric in relation to the BRD, raising eyebrows in Bonn again. But they tried to let it go by. Of course, the Yugoslav side did not hold true to its word to the BRD's envoy, and raised the rank of the representations on both sides to embassies after another visit by Ulbricht to Belgrade in 1966 (Nećak, 2013a, 123–129). According to the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*, which had been in force since 1964, this meant setting up symbolically¹⁰ the highest and most important relations possible,¹¹ as well as a final implementation of a policy of two Germanies.

While the DDR was thrilled about this, Bonn was furious. That is why the relations between the BRD and Yugoslavia deteriorated somewhat again in 1966. A breath of fresh air between the countries came with the appointment of Willy Brandt as German foreign minister in 1967, as he engaged in a new *Ostpolitik* (eastern policy) that included a normalisation of relations¹² between the BRD and Yugoslavia. All of this is dealt with extensively by Hacke (2004), Bettzuege (1995), Brey (1979), Fink & Schaefer (2009), etc. What is important from the perspective of our analysis are the achievements of the German *Ostpolitik* between Yugoslavia and the BRD (cf. Nećak, 2013a; 2013b; 2017; Kosanović, 2009, 232–244). The first one is the speed of (re)opening embassies and appointing ambassadors on both sides. An important piece of information confirming the thesis of the BRD's significance for Slovenia and the historical attachment of Slovenia to the BRD is that the first Yugoslav ambassador there after the re-establishment of relations was again a Slovene, Rudi Čačinovič. He submitted his credentials on 4 September 1968 (Nećak, 2017, 118).¹³ In just over a month, several agreements on *Gastarbeiters*

9 Walter Ulbricht was the head of the DDR Communist Party and after 1960 also DDR Chairman of the Council of State (prime minister).

10 On the importance of symbolism in diplomatic relations, cf. Arbeiter & Udovič (2017) and Arbeiter (2019).

11 According to Article 14 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961/1964), the heads of diplomatic missions in the rank of ambassadors submit their credentials to the head of state. In this specific case, this meant that Yugoslavia recognised the DDR's internal and external sovereignty.

12 It was clear to anyone who followed political developments at the time that normalisation of relations between the BRD and Yugoslavia would cause waves in the DDR. Nećak (2013a, 177–205) gives a detailed account of the activities of the DDR embassy in Belgrade and the numerous accusations going back and forth.

13 On the work of Yugoslav and Slovenian diplomacy between 1945 in 1991, cf. Ajlec (2017); Bajc (2014); Bogetić (2014); Bondžić (2014); Cvetković (2014); Čavoški (2014); Gonzáles-Villa (2017); Jenuš & Friš (2017); Petrović (2014); Pirjevec (2014; 2016); Radić (2014); Radojević (2014); Rahten (2013; 2014); Ramšak (2014; 2015; 2017; 2022); Repe (2017); Režek (2014a; 2017); Rupel (2013); Ruzicic-Kessler (2018); Selinić (2014); Stamoja (2014); Udovič (2016; 2017; 2022); Udovič & Vojinović Jaćimović (2019); Zupančič (2016); Životić (2014).

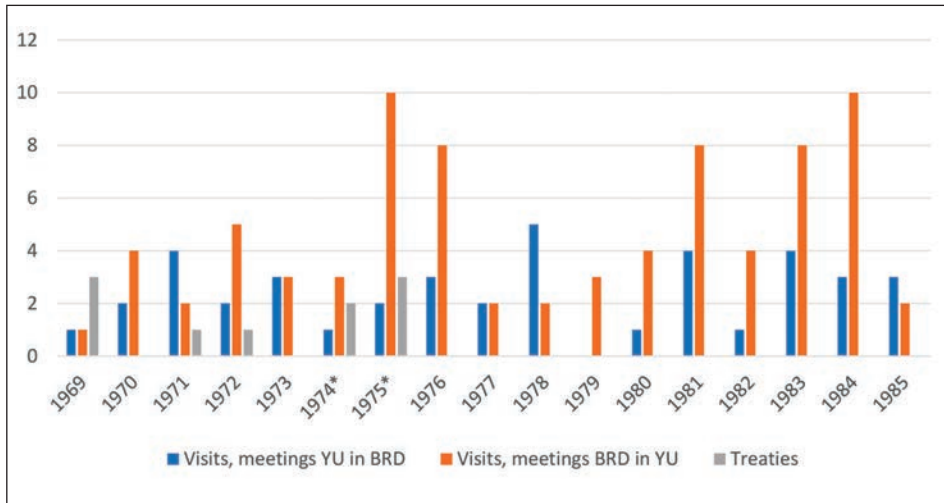


Fig. 1: Number of meetings and signed agreements between the BRD and Yugoslavia (YU) (Calculations based on AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37).

were concluded, legalising and structuring the previous silent practice of foreign workers between Yugoslavia and the BRD (for more on this, cf. Ilić, 2010, and AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37).¹⁴ Of course, these were followed by agreements on economic cooperation, and in the 1970s agreements on cooperation between united labour organisations, and more. We should also highlight the flourishing political relations between Yugoslavia and the BRD. Data kept by the Archives of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37) show that the political ties between Yugoslavia and the BRD became very vibrant after 1967. Representatives of Yugoslav federal and state authorities visited the BRD 41 times between 1969 and 1985, while representatives of West German federal and state authorities visited Yugoslavia 79 times in the same period. In the 17 years covered by the analysis in document AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37, the two countries signed a total of ten agreements on cooperation in different areas (Figure 1).

The years 1974 and 1975 on Figure 1 are marked with asterisks because they are important symbolic milestones. Between 24 and 27 June 1974, Tito made an official visit to the BRD, and between 3 and 5 November 1975, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Miloš

14 Ilić (2010, 21) quotes three agreements between Yugoslavia and Germany relating to foreign workers immediately after the normalisation of relations: (1) the Agreement between the governments of the SFRY and the BRD on the regulation of employment (12 October 1968); (2) the Agreement between the governments of the SFRY and the BRD on unemployment insurance (12 October 1968); (3) the Agreement between the governments of the SFRY and the BRD on abiding by the agreement on social security (9 November 1968). Document AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37 also adds an agreement on visa liberation between the BRD and Yugoslavia signed between 17 and 23 October. For more on agreements on workers, cf. Ivanović (2013); Portmann & Ruzicic-Kessler (2014) and Kapetanović (2022).



Fig. 2: Tito and Willy Brandt during Tito's official visit to Bonn on 11 October 1970 (Wikimedia Commons).

Minić was in Bonn. Document AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37 contains more relevant information for the context of the relationship between Slovenia and the BRD.

At political consultations in Bonn in 1971 (24–25 June), the Yugoslav side was represented by Deputy Foreign Minister Anton Vratuša (a Slovene); at the end of the same year, Bogdan Osolnik (another Slovene) was in the BRD representing the Foreign Policy Committee of the federal parliament. Between 7 and 10 May 1972, Slovenian Executive Council President Stane Kavčič visited Bavaria and Bremen; Bonn got a visit from Boris Šnuderl (also Slovene). The 1970s also saw intensified relations with Bavaria, which is confirmed, among other things, by the Bavarian prime minister's visit to Slovenia and Croatia in late May 1976. President of the Slovenian Executive Council Andrej Marinc returned the visit in 1978. Things were quiet for a few years after that. In mid-August 1983, German federal Transport Minister Werner Dollinger stopped in Ljubljana for a courtesy visit on his way from a holiday. A year later, former Slovenian Executive Council President Janko Smole visited Bonn (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/37).

Already this short outline of activities between the BRD and Yugoslavia (and Slovenian representatives in Yugoslav politics and diplomacy) shows that after diplomatic relations were re-established both countries put in great effort to deepen their bilateral ties, and not only on the federal level, but also on the level of republics (Yugoslavia) and

states (Germany). This was reflected in particular in the strongly increasing economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the BRD, which we could say was the engine of political and diplomatic activity between the two countries.

THE CONTOURS OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA, SLOVENIA AND THE BRD

As already underscored, the BRD was an important trade partner for Yugoslavia. This is also corroborated by an analysis of Yugoslavia's international trade relations conducted by Udovič (2022a), who found that, although fragmented, Yugoslav foreign trade after 1960 remained oriented mainly towards members of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). A study by the Federal Secretariate for Foreign Affairs (Zvezni sekretariat za zunanje zadeve, 1975) dated 18 February 1975 shows that Yugoslavia had a total of 480 business subjects (companies) active in the markets of Western countries at the start of 1975, 118 in the markets of developing countries and 277 in socialist countries, altogether 875. Out of these, most "real companies"—not merely offices of Yugoslav companies but actual foreign direct investments in different forms, as allowed under laws from 1972 and 1973—were in capitalist countries, that is 335. This means outgoing FDI was very important for Yugoslavia, but was (expectedly) oriented mainly towards competitive Western markets. Analysing the data in more detail, we can see that out of the total of 371 companies, 98 (26%) were in the BRD alone, followed by Italy and Austria. In 1975, BRD therefore hosted almost a third of all Yugoslav companies in foreign markets.

Figure 3 shows Slovenian dependence on export to the BRD. While the share of Slovenia's exports at the lowest point in the cooling of relations between Yugoslavia and the BRD and intensified relations with the DDR was roughly the same for the BRD and the DDR, the share of exports from Slovenia to the BRD started increasing dramatically soon after relations with the BRD started thawing. This is confirmed by data of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/39), where analysts say that the BRD was the second biggest foreign trade partner with respect to Slovenian exports (20% of all Slovenian exports went to the BRD), and the biggest when it comes to imports (27% of all imports to Slovenia came from the BRD). The same document states that the top 5 importers from the BRD in 1989 were the companies Gorenje, Iskra, TAM, Kemija and IMV, while the top 5 exporters to the BRD were Iskra, Gorenje, TAM, Slovenijapapir and Tovarna usnja Slovenj Gradec.¹⁵ An interesting observation with respect to the placement of Yugoslav—and therefore also Slovenian—exports on the BRD market was made by the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, which said a big problem in "selling Yugoslav goods are inappropriate organisation of marketing, low persistence in the traditional fight for winning

15 Slovenian exports to the BRD accounted for 36–40% of all Yugoslav exports, and Slovenian imports from the BRD accounted for 24–30% of the Yugoslav total (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/39).

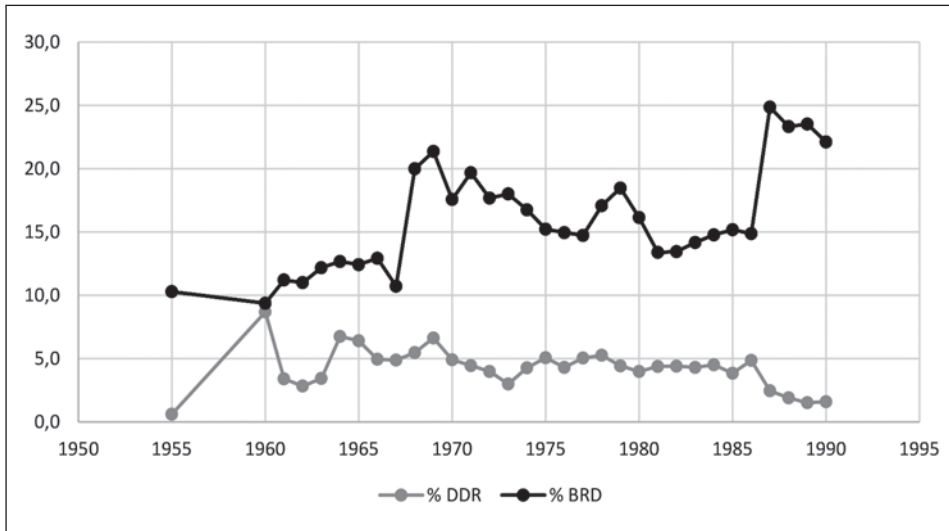


Fig. 3: Exports to the BRD and DDR as % of all exports from Slovenia (Own calculations based on data of the Statistics Office, 1960–1991).

and keeping a market share, design, appropriate adaptations in the equipment and packaging, as well as monitoring the changing tastes of consumers” (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/39). This evaluation shows that even on the BRD market the main problem of Slovenian (and Yugoslav) companies was maintaining a market share—not because of any issues with the quality of Yugoslav products (this analysis even speaks to the contrary), but mainly because Yugoslav companies believed the modern consumer would be persuaded by the products themselves and not so much by the packaging and marketing.

Document AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-6/39 offers a few more insights pointing to the importance and success of Slovenian–BRD cooperation, which surely contributed to Slovenia becoming somewhat asymmetrically dependant on the BRD (in all senses):

In 1989, the BRD remained the most important country of origin in Yugoslav tourism. German tourists created 44% of Yugoslav tourism turnover. Analysts added in the document that “tourists continue to complain in great numbers about the quality of services, littered environment, stability of entertainment options, poor roads and telephone lines, etc. These shortcomings must be rectified, especially this year [1990] when new tourism routes are opening towards the DDR, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary”.

Joint ventures from Yugoslavia and the BRD increased in 1989; by October 1989, 114 contracts on joint ventures were signed in Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia had a current account balance surplus, which can be attributed mainly to remittances by Yugoslav workers in Germany.

Table 1: Cooperation of cities/towns in Slovenia with cities/towns in the BRD in 1989 (Presentation based on AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-8/61).

BRD state	City/Town in BRD	City/Town in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia
Bavaria	Ingolstadt	Murska Sobota (patronage for the Slovenian cultural and sports association Lastovka)
	München	Trbovlje (patronage for the Slovenian association Triglav)
	Wolfsegg	Podsreda
	Erlangen	Gornja Radgona (patronage for the Slovenian sports association)
	Augsburg	Piran
	Geisenfeld	Žalec
Baden-Württemberg	Mannheim	Maribor
	Nagold	Jesenice
	Singen	Celje
	Stuttgart	Kranj (patronage for the Slovenian cultural association Triglav)
	Obrigheim	Krško
	Konstanz	Nova Gorica
Hesse	Marburg	Maribor
	Wiesbaden	Ljubljana
North Rhine-Westphalia	Leverkusen	Ljubljana
	Grevenbroich	Celje
	Burscheid	Ormož
Lower Saxony	Langenhagen	Novo mesto

The spilling over of the economy into other spheres of cooperation between the BRD and Slovenia is corroborated by a note of the state Committee on International Cooperation (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-1/2), in which the author admits Slovenia actively worked on boosting relations with the BRD, and especially its individual states

(Bavaria,¹⁶ Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia¹⁷ and Hesse), although different states had a different impact on cooperation with Slovenia. The author of the note points out that Bavaria backed an extraordinary loan of the European Investment Bank¹⁸ for the construction of the Karavanke Tunnel, which was supposed to “connect [the BDR] and northwestern states of the European Community [...] with Greece, Turkey and the Middle East”. The document also says Slovenia backed the membership of Bavaria in the Alps–Adriatic working group, as both states “cooperate very actively in solving issues of preserving and protecting the environment”. With respect to the economy and free flow of workers, it is also worth noting the observations that “President Šinigoj¹⁹ has consistently supported the Slovenian economy towards greater efficacy and competitiveness in penetrating and performing on the demanding market of the Federal Republic of Germany, and constantly striven to improve the legal conditions for investments of foreign capital in our economy,” and that he “has consistently stood up for the rights of our workers [...] in the BRD and against the planned introduction of entry visas by the BRD for the SFRY”.

SLOVENIAN INDEPENDENCE AND THE BRD’S ROLE IN IT²⁰

Spirit of the time

The Slovenian road to independence is usually viewed in Slovenia from the perspective of the Slovenian state and the Slovenian people (cf. Bajc et al., 2019), and is therefore perceived as unique. But from the broader diplomatic and international perspective, it should be observed in the context of what went on in the world at the time. This includes the crumbling of the bipolar system, Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and *glasnost*, geopolitical tendencies towards a structural change on the European continent, the Washington Consensus policies in support of liberal economy, and much more. This is why the relations between the BRD and Slovenia—at least in the first stage—also need to be observed in this context.

In these new geopolitical circumstances, the BRD found itself in a system it could not handle alone. The fall of the Berlin Wall was already a remarkable achievement, but the work had only begun. Tens of millions of DDR citizens had to be integrated, provided with the standard of the BRD, and above all two relatively separate units had to be merged into one unified and strong country. And interestingly, this unified country raised eyebrows particularly in Europe, not outside it. In

16 The high significance of Bavaria as a partner for Slovenia is evident from the information in documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-67/274, AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-1/1 and AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-8/61.

17 Although omitted in this particular note, North Rhine-Westphalia can be found in other related documents.

18 It would probably be fairer to say it helped convince the European Investment Bank to grant the loan.

19 Dušan Šinigoj, President of the Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia between 1984 and 1990.

20 From here on, we use the term Germany as a generic name for the country created with the merger of the BRD and DDR.

this context it may be a bit surprising that the “new” Germany thought primarily of its own benefits in these geopolitical changes. This is confirmed by Sedmak (2022), saying that the political turmoil in Slovenia was seen as part of the broader political turmoil, but in German eyes not every turmoil was perceived the same as the “German turmoil”. He adds that “Chancellor [Helmut] Kohl liked to invoke the right of nations to self-determination”, but once Sedmak asked him whether that meant just the German nation or all nations, including smaller ones (referring to Slovenes), he “replied in an annoyed tone that it meant everyone”. Naturally, the chancellor’s words need to be taken in context, but they are very significant when discussing German–Slovenian relations after 1990. Along with the frame of how they were uttered.

Although oriented very much towards itself, Germany started using the moment in which all this was happening. It started increasing its activity also in central Europe, aiming at attaining additional benefits, but above all spreading its influence policies. Even if Slovenia was outside the key spheres of influence in terms of German interests, since the “new” Germany initially wanted to preserve Yugoslavia in its integral form (cf. Griesser Pečar, 2012, 355–378), Slovenia did the opposite. Its strong attachment to Germany had created a historical sense that these ties could be further deepened—both symbolically and in practice. This is evident from the telegram sent by Borut Miklavčič²¹ to Cvetka Selšek²² on 16 February 1990 (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-2/8) saying:

Distinguished comrade president!

Today I had a visit from the former consul of the BRD, Mr Marte. [...] Due to the changes in eastern European countries, the BRD will open a few new consulates general and consulates. [...] Clearly Foreign Minister Genscher will have the first and decisive word. I am convinced that an initiative in his direction with respect to this would be opportune at this moment [...]. Considering that we have Boris Frlec in Bonn, I think that gives Ljubljana a greater chance.

The telegram confirms the proverbial commitment of the Slovenian foreign policy leadership to use the available opportunities to connect even more with Germany. Establishing a consulate general or at least a consulate in Ljubljana would have practical as well as symbolic significance, so Ljubljana made great efforts to

21 Borut Miklavčič was consul general in Klagenfurt until autumn 1990, when he was replaced by Marijan Majcen (1933–2014). On 25 June 1991, Milan Jazbec came to Klagenfurt as consul to replace Franc Mikša, who switched from the Yugoslav to the Slovenian diplomatic service (Jazbec, 2022). More about the work of the consul in Klagenfurt can be found in Jazbec (2006) and Mikša (2014).

22 Between 1986 and 1990, Cvetka Selšek was president of the State Committee on International Cooperation, where she focused mainly on foreign trade and the foreign currency system.

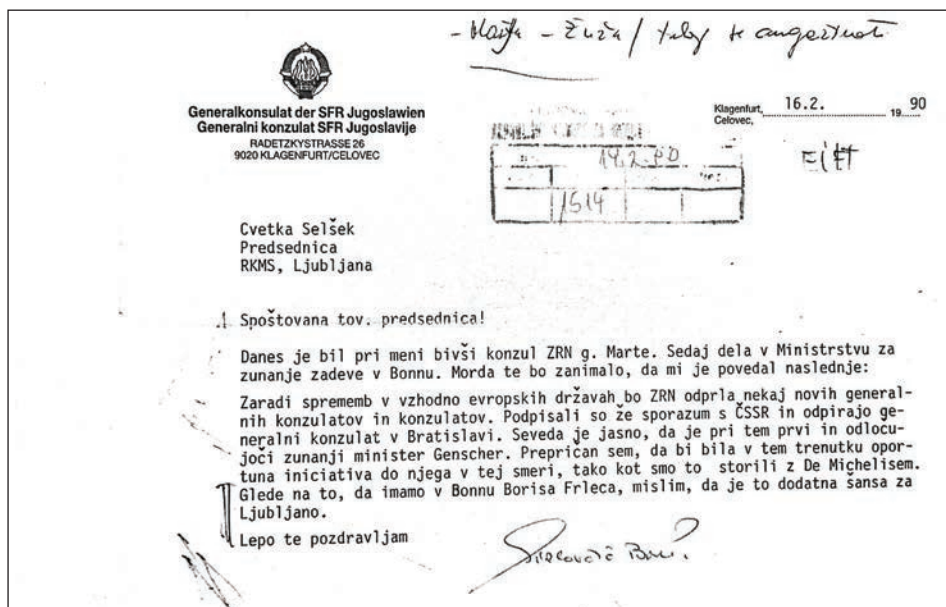


Fig. 4: The original text of the telegram (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-2/8).

achieve it. This is evident from a handwritten comment on the telegram²³ saying: “Engage immediately.” But unfortunately, the efforts did not work out. For another year and a half, the (only) German consulate general remained in Zagreb.

In May 1990, Horst Rudolf, economic advisor at the German embassy in Belgrade visited Ljubljana, where he met with representatives of Ljubljanska banka, Tehnounion and Iskratel, as well as state officials Nevenka Jeglič (State Committee on International Cooperation) and Jože Škoberne (Slovenian Chamber of Commerce). Rudolf repeated the visit half a year later (11–12 October 1990). This time he met with Jurij Detiček (Ljubljanska banka) and Peter Marter (Autocommerce), while the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce reportedly organises a special meeting with interested Slovenian companies (AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-2/8). It was clear that Germany intensified its activities in mid-1990 to help resolve the Yugoslav crisis. An article by Marjan Sedmak (in the daily *Delo* on 5 October 1990; in AMZZ-ZE-ZRN-2/8) alludes to this when reporting that “the German press is no longer convinced Yugoslavia can be saved from dissolution at all” and adding (citing the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*—FAZ) that “Slovenia now expects the international community not to hinder it in the

23 The author of the comment is unknown, since it also says “Vlasta – Žuža” on top (Vlasta is presumably Vlasta Valenčič Pelikan, later a high official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and consul, while it is unclear who Žuža is). We can speculate that the instruction was written by Cvetka Selšek herself.

moment when it establishes its statehood, where the [FAZ] quotes Kučan that Slovenia does not intend to 'break away' from Yugoslavia but will be an equal heir to the dissolved state".

FROM THE PLEBISCITE IN DECEMBER 1990 TO DECLARING INDEPENDENCE IN JUNE 1991

The German leadership was also aware of the pressing crisis in Yugoslavia.²⁴ On the one hand, they could hardly refuse Slovenes the right to independence while they themselves were in the process of reuniting the eastern part of the country with the west. And at the same time, they were aware Yugoslavia could not survive without reform. This swinging attitude was fully displayed in the inability of even the key bodies to agree on what to do with Yugoslavia. The German intelligence service *Bundesnachrichtendienst* anticipated the break-up of Yugoslavia already soon after Tito's death in 1980, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—led by Hans-Dietrich Genscher since 1982—was much more cautious in its policies towards Yugoslavia. Sedmak (2022) even claims the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs "flirted with the idea of democratic reforms that would keep Yugoslavia part of a so-called grey or buffer zone (Finland, Sweden, Austria, Yugoslavia and partly Ceausescu's Romania)". This is reflected in the last attempt by the BRD to preserve Yugoslavia. While everyone remembers US Secretary of State James Baker's *nyet* to the break-up of Yugoslavia (22 June 1991), memory often fails²⁵ when it comes to German efforts to preserve Yugoslavia only two days before Baker's visit to Belgrade (19–20 June 1991).

To save what could be saved, Genscher as the chair of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (CSCE) adopted a *Statement on the situation in Yugoslavia* stating as follows (CSCE Council, 1991, 9):

- *Ministers discussed the situation in Yugoslavia.*
- *They were informed by H.E. the Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, Budimir Lončar, about the latest developments in Yugoslavia.*
- *The Ministers expressed their friendly concern and **their support for democratic development, unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia**, based on economic reforms, full application of human rights in all parts of Yugoslavia, including the rights of minorities, and the peaceful solution of the current crisis in the country. They called for continued progress in these fields.*
- ***Ministers stressed that it is only for the peoples of Yugoslavia themselves to***

24 On different interpretations of Slovenia's efforts for independence among German political parties, cf. Griesser Pečar (2012, 355–378).

25 For more on problems remembering and memory in relation to the Slovenian (political) reality, cf. Klabjan (2012); Širok (2012); Luthar (2013); Režek (2014b); Rožac Darovec (2016); Godeša (2019); Pušnik (2019); Verginella (2019); Zajc (2019); Klabjan (2019); Udovič (2020); Kočan & Udovič (2020); Lampe (2021; 2022).

decide on the country's future. Ministers therefore called for a continued dialogue among all parties concerned and confirmed their view that the possibilities for such a dialogue were not yet exhausted.

- They expressed their belief that the existing constitutional disputes should be remedied, and that the way out of the present difficult impasse should be found without recourse to the use of force and in conformity with legal and constitutional procedures. They urged all parties concerned to redouble their efforts to resolve their differences peacefully through negotiations.

- ***Ministers expressed their confidence that on this basis the international community would stand ready to assist Yugoslavia's efforts to transform itself economically and politically.*** [emphases added]

This Statement is interesting because, on the one hand, it stresses the importance of integrity of Yugoslavia, which is to reform its economy and politics towards greater liberalisation; and at the same time, the ministers at the CSCE meeting pointed out that it was up to the nations of Yugoslavia to decide on the future of their state. A bit of playing pretend about what CSCE members really want can be seen in the last point of the Statement, where the states commit to assist Yugoslavia in its economic and political reforms.

The question that we get to here is why Germany, despite its experience with the DDR, insisted (at least) in principle on saving Yugoslavia as a whole. There is no clear answer: one of the possible answers is that—like other European countries (cf. Bajc et al., 2019; Bajc, 2012; Repe, 2002)—Germany hoped the Yugoslav crisis could be resolved in a peaceful manner, and when it realised this could not be done, it changed its strategy. Another explanation provided by some authors (e.g. Conversi, 1998, 152–153; Lucarelli, 1997, 70–71) is that Germany was afraid of any unilateral action because it was observed with suspicion by other European states—particularly France and the United Kingdom—which did not want Germany to become a “Fourth Reich”. Because a new European treaty was being negotiated, laying the foundations of the European Union (and the outlines for the euro), Germany did not want to risk this experiment with unilateral action of recognising states that had not even declared independence. The war that broke out in Slovenia on 26 June 1991 turned the tables in this area as well.

Activities of Slovenian diplomats and politicians in this period

When discussing the role of Slovenian diplomats in the German–Slovenian relations during Slovenia's struggle for independence, we need to mention Boris Frlec, the last Yugoslav ambassador in Bonn (1989–1991), Branko Zupanc, the Yugoslav embassy's press secretary and later head of the information office in Bonn (1991–1992), Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel (1990–1992), Nevenka Jeglič, advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and long-time *éminence grise*

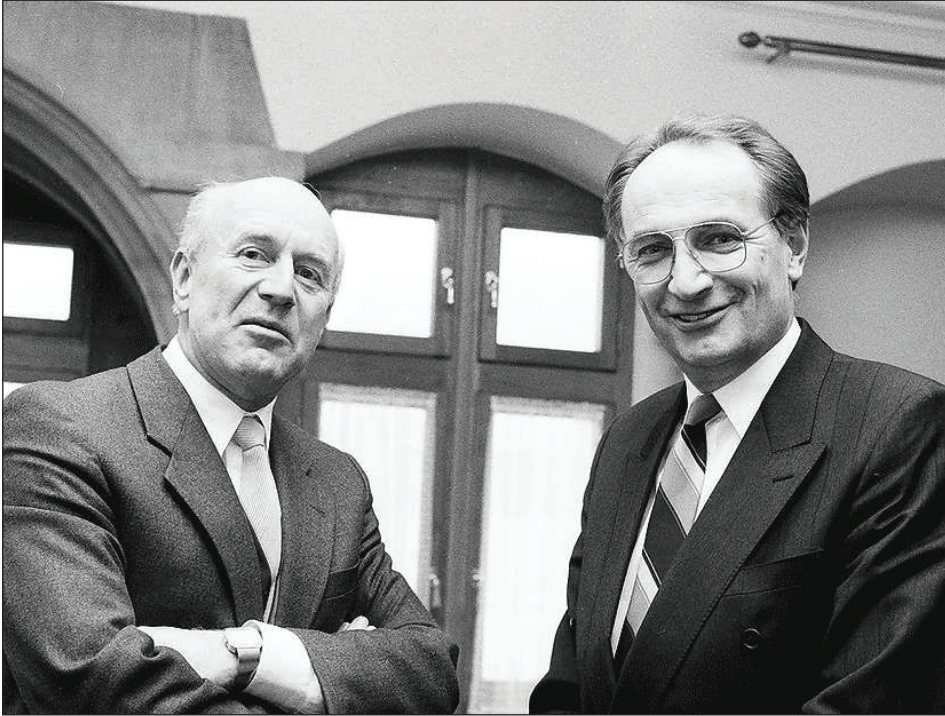


Fig. 5: Boris Frlec and Freiburg District President Norbert Nothhelfer (8 October 1990) (State Archives of Baden-Württemberg, 2022).

of the relations between Slovenia and the BRD, Alojz Peterle, the first Slovenian Prime Minister, and of course the President of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia Milan Kučan.

Over twenty years had passed between Rudi Čačinovič, who reopened the Yugoslav embassy in Bonn in 1968 after the end of the *Hallstein Doctrine*, and Frlec, who became Yugoslavia's ambassador to Bonn in 1989. During all this time, no Slovene was ambassador in the BRD. It is not clear why, but we can speculate that the Bonn post became so prestigious after the thawing of relations that it was appropriated by Serbs (mainly for the prestige) and Croats (mainly for the diaspora). Slovenes thus did not "get their turn" again until just before the country's break-up. And even that was because "Slovenian politicians forced it" (Frlec, 2012). Nevertheless, Frlec took his post in an embassy staffed mainly by Serbs (out of the 22 employees there, two were Slovene, one was a Croat and the rest were Serbs) (Frlec, 2017). In a time of breaking up with Yugoslavia, when Slovenia's side of the story had to be told, Frlec's job was not easy.



Fig. 6: The Office of Yugoslav Ambassador in Bonn (Boris Frlec Personal Archive).

From his memoirs (Frlec, 2012) we can see that Frlec always played some sort of double agent²⁶—he was the official representative of Yugoslavia in Germany, but at the same time he explained the positions of the Slovenian political leadership and reported to Ljubljana.²⁷ He says: “Germans actually knew for whom I was really working. And they later told me when I returned [as Slovenian ambassador]” (Udovič, 2017). But Frlec had a particularly tough job because the dispatches coming from Belgrade painted a completely different picture than his explanations to his German collocutors. The competence of the Yugoslav and Serbian diplomacy, and particularly their hospitality, grew strongly on German ambassador to Belgrade Hansjörg von Eiff. The situation in Bonn was getting complicated, and got as far as Frlec receiving phone calls in the evening with death threats and similar. Throughout his career and all the way to Slovenian independence, Frlec did his duties exemplary, sometimes even with diplomatic innovation. Frlec (2017) and Sedmak (2022) remember that Frlec would send certain faxes to Ljubljana from Sedmak’s apartment, and after leaving Bonn (temporarily), he left part of the diplomatic archive with Sedmak.²⁸ But while

²⁶ Although he claims he never felt like one.

²⁷ Peterle (2022) points out that Frlec sent very important and reliable information and assessments to Ljubljana.

²⁸ Sedmak (2022) claims he left it in the apartment of his wife.

Frlec and Zupanc worked *in the field*, Rupel, Peterle and Kučan worked *at home*.

Peterle met Helmut Kohl as the most important German politician for the first time at a meeting of the Christian Democrat International in Budapest on 1 July 1990, soon after he became Slovenian Prime Minister. They met informally²⁹ and Peterle explained to him the desire of the Slovene nation for independence, to which Kohl replied: "If Germans used their right to self-determination, then they cannot refuse Slovenes this same right" (Peterle, 2022). Naturally, Kohl also wanted to know how to do it in a way that the break-up of Yugoslavia would not end up in flames, to which Peterle replied that the Slovenian "right to self-determination and desire for democracy are not a threat to anyone" (Peterle, 2022). Kohl appointed Dr Hans-Peter Repnik as his liaison³⁰ who would report to Peterle about what went on in German politics. Of course, Kohl's statement cannot be taken out of the context of the changes in the international order taking place at the time, where Germany was primarily interested in consent of both superpowers and less in the Yugoslav crisis (Griesser Pečar, 2012, 363). Therefore, we should also read in this same context Kohl's letter to Yugoslav prime minister Ante Marković (of 19 February 1991), assuring him that Germany stood "firmly on the line assumed by the European Community", supporting Yugoslavia's integrity (Griesser Pečar, 2012, 362). Rupel, as Slovenian foreign minister, had more contact with Frlec and Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Both he and Peterle sensed some reservation in Genscher towards Slovenian independence and the preference for preserving Yugoslavia in one form or another. Rupel corroborates this in his book *Skrivnost države* (1992, 102):

*19 March was an important day for Slovenian foreign policy. The man of the hour this time was Milan Kučan, who—through a whole series of people (Dragan, Kolšek)³¹—made acquaintances in the German FDP, and through it received an invitation to hold a lecture for the German Foreign Policy Association. On this occasion, I visited Hans-Dietrich Genscher in the company of the President. [...] At that time Genscher still considered Lončar as his point of reference, so we were not expecting much more than a reassuring answer. Well, Genscher, [...] nevertheless said that **Germany respected the right to self-determination**.³² [emphasis added]*

29 Peterle was not prime minister of an internationally recognised state yet, so a formal meeting could not have taken place.

30 Dr Hans-Peter Repnik (whose father was Slovene) was member of the German Bundestag between 1990 and 1991.

31 Zvone Dragan and Danilo Kolšek.

32 Rupel goes on to explain how he attended the meeting of the CSCE in Bonn on 19 June 1991 (mentioned above), for which he received the invitation from the Federal Secretariate for Foreign Affairs to attend as part of the Yugoslav delegation only a day before the meeting. So instead, Rupel was there as a guest of the Austrian delegation, which meant he did not get to sit at the table and could only observe (Rupel, 1992, 130).



**PREDSEDSTVO
REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE**

Kabinet predsednika

Ljubljana, 22.3.1991

Z A B E L E Ž K A

**RAZGOVORA PREDSEDNIKA PREDSEDSTVA REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE
MILANA KUČANA Z ZUNANJIM MINISTROM NEMČIJE G. HANSOM
DIETRICHOM GENSCHERJEM, BONN, 20. MAREC 1991**

V razgovoru sta sodelovala še dr. Dimitrij Rupel, republiški sekretar za mednarodno sodelovanje in dr. Boris Frlec, veleposlanik SFRJ v Nemčiji.

Minister Genscher je takoj uvodoma vprašal goste, kaj lahko Nemčija stori za nas. Predsednik Kučan mu je na kratko, v bistvenih potezah orisal sedanje razmere oziroma najnovejša dogajanja v Jugoslaviji in slovenske ocene teh razmer ter slovenske osamosvojitvene težnje.

Minister Genscher je poudaril, da je Nemčija za stabilno Jugoslavijo, ni pa več prepričan, ali lahko ostaja stališče o ohranjanju integritete sednaje Jugoslavije tudi vnaprej edino stališče evropske oziroma mednarodne skupnosti do Jugoslavije. Po njegovem mnenju bi sicer morali upoštevati tudi drugo rešitev, za katero se zavzema tudi Slovenija, ni pa prepričan, da bi lahko ta imela uspeh. Večkrat v toku razgovora je poudaril, da so proti uporabi sile v razreševanju jugoslovanske krize. Zavzel se je za spoštovanje pravic nacij (izrecno je govoril o nacijah) v Jugoslaviji. Zanimalo ga je, ali so republike sposobne preživeti v primeru razdružitve. Tudi po njegovem mnenju morajo ostati meje znotraj Jugoslavije nespremenjene, šele s procesom eventualnega razdruževanja se bi zastavljalo vprašanje eventualnega njihovega spreminjanja. Poudaril je, da se seveda Nemčija ne želi vmešavati v notranje zadeve Jugoslavije. Dezintegracije Jugoslavije ne želijo pospeševati,

Fig. 7: Note by Marjan Šiftar on Milan Kučan's visit to Bonn (19–20 March 1991) (Šiftar, 1991).

Rupel underscores here Genscher's lack of resolve in recognition of Slovenia and his attachment to Belgrade. We can probably interpret this position on three levels: Firstly, on the level of resolving the situation in Germany as mentioned with Kohl. Then on the level of Germany's lack of interest in Yugoslavia and desire for no real change in the international order apart from Germany's reunification. The third level is that of federal authorities—Germany received completely different information from Belgrade than from Ljubljana. And formally, Belgrade was still the main official interlocutor then. Everyone else was unofficial.

Rupel and Peterle's understanding of Genscher's policy is partly confirmed by the note by Marjan Šiftar (1991, 1–2) on Milan Kučan's visit to Genscher (20 March 1991), stating that the latter said:

Germany wants a stable Yugoslavia, but he is no longer certain whether the position on preserving the integrity of current Yugoslavia could remain the only position of the European and international community with respect to Yugoslavia. [...] Germans do not wish to further a disintegration of Yugoslavia, but they would accept a democratic and consensual decision. If Slovenia were to break away, they would acknowledge this. [emphasis added]

The note continues with an account of Kučan's warning that some messages from the Twelve³³ could be interpreted as support for preserving Yugoslavia as is, which Genscher confirmed, adding that

in these positions, the stresses should be changed, putting first the right to self-determination and preservation of current internal borders, and treating both possible options equally or in a balanced manner (preserving integrity or disintegration).

Such a *diplomatic* position was, of course, not really what the Slovenian authorities wanted, but was still better than a clear stance that Yugoslavia must be preserved at all costs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thirty years after the Republic of Slovenia declared independence is certainly an apt moment to re-evaluate the views, positions and activities of different countries of the international community in this process—from the plebiscite in December 1990 to the declaration of independence in June 1991. It is not only a matter of historiographical necessity and preventing reality being replaced by ideology, but also of critically evaluating the time the idea and then reality of Slovenia's independence took place.

33 Common name for the twelve members of the European Communities.

This article aimed to establish how much the political, economic and cultural relations Slovenia had built with the BRD already as part of Yugoslavia impacted the German position on Slovenia's struggle for independence. The findings paint a different picture from the one generally accepted in Slovenia.

The first finding is that, all the way until 25 June 1991, German politicians leaned more towards preserving Yugoslavia and did not regard Slovenian independence as a realistic and optimal option. There are three reasons for this: Firstly, Germany had to take care of its own reunification process first (with all the issues that came along). Secondly, Germany did not wish a reshuffling of the entire international structure, nor was it ready for that. Thirdly, Germany did not really wish Yugoslavia to fall apart (cf. DW, 2022), and would have preferred its reform and restructuring. On the one hand, Germany thought Yugoslavia could reform into a democratic country with a market economy—a process that had just begun in former East Germany. At the same time, they were aware that a break-up of Yugoslavia would end up in bloodshed. All this deterred Germany from supporting the emancipatory desires for independent Slovenia and Croatia. These desires were acknowledged at most.

The second finding, deriving in part from the first, is that there was another reason behind Germany's support for the integrity (and perhaps democratisation) of Yugoslavia—German economic interests. The latter had grown, particularly after the end of the *Hallstein Doctrine* and start of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, to a level that we could say Yugoslavia was almost somewhat of a German economic colony. This is confirmed by the staggering growth in bilateral trade in the early 1970s, and the systemic regulation and selection of workers "sent" from Yugoslavia to Germany. Yet, this semi-colonial status of Yugoslavia came more or less on a voluntary basis. While Germany was interested in cheap but quality labour force, Yugoslavia wanted an influx of foreign currency. Consequently, both countries did nothing more than pursue their national interests. And both were happy with it. Taking this aspect into account, it is clear why Germany wanted to keep Yugoslavia alive. And where was the place of Slovenia and its economic and cultural ties with Germany? Above all in a strong connection with Bavaria, while "Slovenian power" did not reach much further. Although Bavaria was ruled by the CDU's sister party CSU, federal-level coalitions with the liberals were always a matter of compromise, both in domestic and foreign policy. We can, therefore, conclude that the Slovenian economic and cultural ties with Bavaria did not have much of an impact on Germany's views on the Slovenian question.

What changed the Germany's position on Slovenian independence? The war in Slovenia. This was the first war on European soil after 1945, and images from 1941–1945 emerged from the memories of German politicians. And this could not be allowed, which led to a position shift and a swift reaction. On 2 July 1991, Genscher met with the Slovenian leadership in Celovec (Klagenfurt), and Germany soon started putting pressure on other European countries to take the new situation in the Balkans into consideration and respond the new geopolitical situation. Here Germans differed from Italians and others, who continued to insist for a long time that Yugoslavia should be preserved in one piece. Some say the German position was partly due to frequent

Austrian calls to Bonn out of fear that the fighting might cross the Yugoslav borders; others claim that the main reason for the later German affection was more party-related, since particularly the German conservatives looked at the newly arisen situation in Yugoslavia with sympathy and understanding. It is too early for such judgements, since archives have only been opened recently. But one thing remains certain: despite its initial reservation and preference for preserving Yugoslavia, Germany caught the historical moment to further strengthen Slovenian trust.

Thirty years on, the relations on the German–Slovenian line are excellent; it could be said that for some more excellent than for others. Who is which is left to readers to judge.

»DANKE DEUTSCHLAND!«: POLITIČNO-DIPLOMATSKI PRISPEVEK ZVEZNE REPUBLIKE NEMČIJE K NASTANKU SLOVENSKE DRŽAVE

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POVZETEK

Članek raziskuje slovensko-nemške odnose, pri čemer se osredinja na odnose med Zvezno republiko Nemčijo in Republiko Slovenijo v času od decembra 1990 do junija 1991. Gre za čas, ko je Slovenija izrazila svoj emancipacijski potencial in se odločila za razglasitev samostojnosti, pri tem pa iskala mednarodno podporo, predvsem pri Zvezni republici Nemčiji, ki jo je zaradi zgodovinskih, političnih in gospodarskih vezi razumela kot prijateljsko državo. Zgodovina slovensko-nemških odnosov je pestra, sploh če jo analiziramo skozi dolgo 19. stoletje, začetke 20. stoletja ter drugo svetovno vojno. Kljub nastanku slovenskega naroda kot antipoda nemškemu se vezi, ki so bile med dvema narodnostnima skupnostma vzpostavljene v Avstro-Ogrski, niso nikoli zares pretrgale, le spremenile so se – iz političnih in ideoloških so postajale vse bolj gospodarske. In takšne so v veliki meri ostale vse do danes. A prav gospodarsko-kulturne vezi (brez ideoloških primesi) ter navezanost slovenskega gospodarstva v Jugoslaviji na Zvezno republiko Nemčijo so pri Slovencih vzpostavile občutek, da je Nemčija izjemno prijateljska država, ki bo razumela slovenske emancipacijske težnje ter hitro priznala slovensko samostojnost. Na drugi strani v takratnem Bonnu razpadu Jugoslavije niso bili preveč naklonjeni. Bali so se, kaj bi to prineslo, a hkrati tudi preračunljivo vedeli, da razpad Jugoslavije ne bi bil slaba novica samo za varnost v regiji, ampak tudi za nemško gospodarstvo. Zato so bili zelo previdni, ko so jih slovenski politiki in diplomati znotraj svojih aktivnosti prepričevali, da je treba Slovenijo čimprej priznati. A kot vedno je zgodovina šla svojo pot. Če so v Bonnu še junija 1991 upali, da se Jugoslavijo morda da rešiti, jim je z napadom Jugoslovanske ljudske armade na Slovenijo hitro postalo jasno, da »Jugoslavije ni več« ter da je mednarodnopolitična stvarnost drugačna, kot so si jo sami želeli. Zato so svojo politiko do novonastalih držav kmalu po izbruhu vojne spremenili in iz »ohranjevalca Jugoslavije« postali »sponzor samostojne Slovenije« ter si s tem nakopali kar nekaj dvignjenih obrvi pri drugih članicah Evropskih skupnosti.

Ključne besede: Slovenija, Zvezna republika Nemčija, slovensko-nemški odnosi, diplomacija, osamosvojitev Slovenije

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