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Federico Tenca Montini: LA JUGOSLAVIA E LA QUESTIONE DI TRIESTE, 1945-1954.
Bologna, il Mulino, 2020, 315 strani.

*Federico Tenca Montini: ... TRST NE DAMO! JUGOSLAVIJA I TRŠČANSKO
PITANJE 1945-1954.* Zagreb, Srednja Europa, 2021, 209 strani.

Over the past decades, the Slovenian-Italian borderland has witnessed numerous academic and less academic studies related to the history of the area. Undoubtedly, the most prevalent are those relating to the issue of demarcation, the Peace Agreement and the related affiliation of Trieste (referred to as the Trieste question), as well as the post-war extrajudicial killings – the so-called *foibe*; thus, studies relating to the first decade after the Second World War. The reader and researcher can already choose from a large number of works that address these issues, as well as Yugoslav-Italian (diplomatic) relations in this period, in various ways and from different angles. It is therefore reasonable to ask what else Italian publishing has to offer us in this respect?

The *il Mulino* publishing house is considered to be one of the most prestigious publishers of scientific monographs in Italy and has taken an important step in this direction by recognising the quality and added value of the study by the young sociologist and historian Federico Tenca Montini. His updated and slightly revised doctoral thesis was published in 2020 under the title »La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste, 1945-1954« (*Yugoslavia and the Trieste question, 1945-1954*). The publication of this work was supported by other prominent research and academic institutions in the region, including the *Friulian Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement* (*Istituto Friulano per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione*), the *Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia* (*Regione autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia*), the *Slovene Research Institute – SLORI*, the *Faculty of Arts of the University of Zagreb* and the *University of Udine*. The name of the University of Zagreb cannot be overlooked by an attentive reader, and it appears here for a special reason – the doctoral thesis out of which this study is drawn is the result of a joint doctoral dissertation project (*cotutelle de thèse*) between the University of Teramo and the University of Zagreb.

In addition to numerous reprints in Italian, the work was translated into Croatian a year later by the author himself. Under the title »...Trst ne damo! Jugoslavija i Trščansko pitanje 1945-1954.« (...*We will not give Trieste! Yugoslavia and the Trieste question 1945-1954*) an equivalent translation was published in 2021 by the *Srednja Europa* publishing house and with the support of the *Istrian Region* (*Istarska županija / Regione Istriana*), which has also been reprinted. Both monographs will thus be the subject of this review.

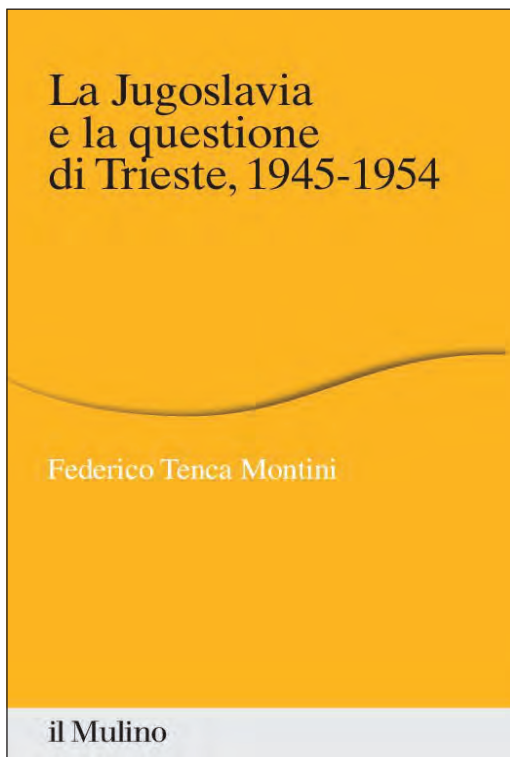
In the preface to the Italian version, the great contribution of the study to the existing works was highlighted by Jože Pirjevec, who is known not only as one of the most important historians of the area, but also as the author of an important work – one could say a precursor to the study by Tenca Montini, *Trieste is Ours! The*

struggle of Slovenians for the sea (1848-1954) (Trst je naš! Boj Slovencev za morje (1848–1954), Ljubljana, Nova revija, 2007). Pirjevec rightfully explained one of the main reasons why this study can offer something new to the field; Federico Tenca Montini is one of the few Italian historians who has also mastered the Croatian and Serbian languages, which broadened the horizons of his research to that half of the archives which, due to unfamiliarity with the language, is »irrelevant« for other Italian historians. A comparative analysis and cross-review of Italian, Slovenian, Serbian and Croatian (archival) sources can thus (finally) offer Italian readers a comprehensive picture of the key turning points in Italo-Yugoslav diplomacy in the period between 1945 and 1954.

Tvrtko Jakovina, a prominent Croatian historian, an expert of Yugoslav diplomacy and foreign policy in the post-Second world war period, wrote the introduction to the Croatian edition of the monograph in similarly selected words. He stressed that the study is exactly what »our historiographies« (i.e. Slovenian, Croatian and Italian) need – »an honest, brave and multidisciplinary interpretation of what happened, which cannot be reduced to a single experience or a single national narrative«.

Unlike the Croatian edition, the Italian edition is enriched with a linguistic note (*Nota linguistica*), through which the author attempts to inform the Italian reader about the correct pronunciation of the Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian terms that appear in the text. This is a useful addition that goes beyond the limits of the study itself and, above all, seeks to provoke the Italian reader to pay more attention to the apparently marginal aspects of the problem addressed by the study; while over the years the Italian public has produced many variations of names and italianised their pronunciation, Tenca Montini seeks to discourage the reader from doing so. Correct pronunciation is, above all, a sign of respect for another culture and another language, thereby giving equal status to the other side of the same coin. Thus, acknowledging the equal status of what cannot be reduced to a single (national) narrative.

The study is divided chronologically into three chapters: *Exchange of coins (1945-1948) (Scambi di*



monete (1945-1948) / Monete za podmičivanje), Socialism with American wheat (1948-1953) (Socialismo con grano americano (1948-1953) / Socijalizam na Američkoj pšenici) and We will never trust anyone again (1953-1954) (Non ci fideremo più di nessuno (1953-1954) / Više nikada nećemo nikome vjerovati). In addition to a rich set of hitherto unknown sources of Yugoslav provenance which the author has thoroughly researched, his work is distinguished by his knowledge of all the most important studies on the Trieste question to date. A good historian knows it is not enough to be able to collect sources, he must also be able to place and interpret them correctly, which Tenca Montini has undoubtedly done impeccably. What particularly stands out is his precision, accuracy and thoroughness in interpreting the sources and, above all, his broader view of the Trieste question, which is not only that of a historian but also that of someone who, through an in-depth study of the problem, has managed to understand the world that shaped the destiny of Trieste.

Throughout the chapters, the author skilfully interprets a number of sources and in particular highlights the Yugoslav perspective on the Trieste question, which has been lacking in previous studies. By examining the archives of the most important Yugoslav diplomats of the time (in addition to a thorough analysis of the archives of Josip Broz-Tito's cabinet, also the archives of the most important Slovenian diplomat

at the time, Edvard Kardelj, and his Croatian colleague, Vladimir Bakarić), the monograph gives us a new, more accurate picture of key moments and turning points. Nor does it ignore the view from the »outside«, especially the British, American and Soviet points of view, since it was already clear before the liberation of Trieste that the future of the city would not depend only on the interests of Yugoslavia and Italy.

The sub-chapters are sensibly divided and distinguish the author's carefully prepared work designed for the reader, as he recounts, without unnecessary embellishments and kitchy titles, the defining moments, events, agreements and important meetings that took place during this period. The reader can open the monograph and easily find what is of most interest to them – whether



it is the liberation of Trieste, the Belgrade and Duino Agreements, the Peace Conference or the meeting between Tito and Togliatti. In this way, the study has certainly become the most important reference work on the Trieste question thus far.

Tenca Montini has also paid special homage to both Pirjevac and Jakovina, which is particularly notable in the Croatian version, by borrowing or alluding to the titles of their previous studies. To Jakovina's work, *Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici* (Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 2002), in the second chapter with the same title (*Socialismo con grano americano / Socijalizam na Američkoj pšenici*), and to Pirjevec's monograph *Trst je naš! Boj Slovencev za morje (1848–1954)* in the Croatian edition of the title ... *We will not give Trieste! (...Trst ne damo!)*. The last, of course, also implies one of the main messages of his work; between 1945 and 1954, Yugoslav diplomacy fought to »not give up Trieste«, because it had failed from the very beginning to prove that »Trieste is ours«. The idea that »Trieste is ours« had to be abandoned by the Yugoslav leadership practically as soon as it withdrew from the city after the Duino Agreement (June 10, 1945), which resulted in the fighting over the following years to ensure that Trieste would not be handed over to Italy.

The Croatian cover is also worthy of special attention, featuring an illustration from 1947 by Pavle Jovanović entitled *Marshal Tito*, which portrays the Yugoslav President in a determined posture with his clenched fist resting on a map. Yugoslav leadership were extremely reluctant to let Trieste go, but at the same time it was quite clear that at some point they would have to. If they did not obtain Trieste during this struggle, at least Yugoslavia realised that it had no real ally either in the West or in the East. As a result, it created a new foreign policy strategy – the Non-Aligned Movement – which, as Tenca Montini rightly notes, allowed the country to remain »effectively torn between East and West« even afterwards.

The study by Tenca Montini is certainly one of those works that will become a historiographic classic of this border region and beyond. Not only because it offers for the first time a comprehensive view of Yugoslav-Italian diplomacy in the period 1945–1954. But also, and above all, because it offers researchers an interdisciplinary model for addressing the complex issues of a shared history that aims to build bridges rather than tear them down. In a space of many conflicting and contested narratives, such studies are indispensable for overcoming these conflicts and for understanding what this space *is*; that is, a space of many memories that should not compete with each other but should rather coexist side by side.

Urška Lampe