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## The Italian Diplomacy between Russia and the Central Empires during the World Conflict Outbreak

The historiography debate on the entry of Italy in the First World Conflict is more than ever open, a century from that event which marked the destiny of many populations and it traced a clear line between the age of the Empires and that of the nations. Three big geopolitical structures, three macro areas, of which two with Eurasian characteristics competed for most of the European territory, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian and Ottoman ones too<sup>1</sup>. The Italy that participated in the First World War is a nation tied to a double thread with the fates of Austria-Hungary from which it hopes to take back the territories that belong to it by history and culture.

So, when in June 28, 1914, Ferdinando of Habsburg, heir to the throne of Austria, falls victim of an attack in Sarajevo executed by the Serbian Nationalists, the Italian newspapers, such as "l'Avanti" directed by Benito Mussolini, kept speaking for weeks of a "painful but explainable" episode, without giving great prominence to the diplomatic developments of that murder<sup>2</sup>. The Italian government observes what is happening in the Balkans without intervening even knowing that the Russian diplomatic politics of that time were not prone to the double monarchy and evermore close to the claims of the Slavic people submitted to Austrian-Hungarians and Ottomans. Between Italy and Russia is a strong agreement sealed by the "Agreement of Racconigi" in 1909, in which the two countries have found a point of equilibrium within the respective prerogatives about the Balkan area even though, in the moment in which the conflict erupts, seeing the Triple Agreement and the Entente on opposite sides, Italy remains out of all this until August of the following year. A small diplomatic mystery occurred concerning the preliminary contacts that the Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonino di San Giuliano<sup>3</sup> had with German Count Hans von Flotow<sup>4</sup> on August 3, 1914. Simultaneously

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Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sazonov comes to know of these contacts, which explain the initial Russian interest in keeping Italy out of the "Triple Alliance", or at least leave it neutral. How did the Russian politician come into possession of the secret meeting between the two friends remains yet a mystery, even though the system of Russian Intelligence, able to cipher secret messages entering and exiting the embassy, was known for its efficiency<sup>5</sup>. Even if such interest for the intervention of Italy had diminished in the following weeks, it appears indisputable that the descent in field next to the Entente powers could have prevented Turkey from siding with the Central Empires and above all that the Italian fleet could have cut connections between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. But the negotiations could not be conducted only with Russia because Paris and London wanted to define, with the government of Rome, the remunerations of a possible descent in field. Besides, Russia too looked with interest at Romania and Bulgaria and their possible intervention alongside the Entente powers. The concomitant action of Italian Ambassador to Saint Petersburg, Andrea Carlotti, with that of Russian Ambassador to Rome Anatolij Krupenskij, they had, for a certain period, favored relations between Italy and Russia even though many voices, contrary to so much political-diplomatic harmony, grew with time to the point of bringing the removal of the Russian Ambassador from Italy, "recalled and substituted with the Slavophil Baron de Girs... already ambassador to Constantinople... nephew of the old Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolaj Karlovic"<sup>6</sup>. A diplomat who was "proficient and impassive by nature", who, according to Petracchi, with his strong Slavophil tendencies and his ample vision of the Russian interests together with Aleksandr Izvol'skij and Evgenij Trubeckoj he was one of the few diplomats who could give advice to Minister Sazonov.

The truth, according to historian Giorgio Petracchi, is that in all the range of time from the Agreement of Racconigi till the explosion of the First World conflict, the balance of the relations between Saint Petersburg and Rome wasn't in the whole positive: "The Russian defeats from May to October 1915 contradicted the expectations of an effective strategic conditioning of Austria-Hungary in the initial phase of the Italian intervention, nor did the victories of the following year compensate it. The diplomatic consequences of this unsatisfactory military situation resulted still less substantial"<sup>7</sup>. Italy and Russia, according to a known commercial report written by Marquise Pietro Tomasi della Torretta, still continued to remain "unknown to themselves" also due to the poor Italian diplomatic presence in the vast Russian territory, just one embassy (rather isolated) in the capital of Saint Petersburg and three consular representatives; one in Odessa, one in Moscow and one who alternated himself between Batum and Tiflis but nobody in Siberia. Respect to the other delegations, a very scant diplomatic corps, which without pleasure resided in Russia. Just think about Giulio Melegari, Italian Ambassador at Bucharest, who in April 1896, was sent for the first time to Saint Petersburg and wrote to Honorable Minister Caetani of Sermoneta the following

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words: "I surrender to your advice and accept the position in Saint Petersburg, with the same hopes to obtain, in a not too far future, another and for me more suitable destination" not knowing that place would sign, in the near future, an important step, last and decisive, in his diplomatic career. Saint Petersburg represented for every diplomatic in career a "punitive" place to which one was assigned more for demerits than for merits. If to this you add that for years the location had been held up by simple business employees, such as Count Francesco Bottaro Costa and Giuseppe Silvestrelli, then the reasons result clear as for why the old Ambassador Costantino Nigra, who had opposed a clear refusal to return in the Russian capital, following also the refusal by Count Luigi Tornielli and of the sudden death of Francesco Curtopassi, during the trip from Vienna to Saint Petersburg. But, as Giorgio Petracchi underlines, in his volume on the Italian diplomacy in Russia, at the base of the resistances by various men assigned to the post, aside from economic reasons, from the moment that the Russian post was held as the most expensive in Europe because of the numerous parties of representation, there were exquisitely political reasons, seen the difficulties "to interpret and reconstruct the decisional process of the Czarist policy, both internal and external" this discouraged many ambassadors to venture themselves with any kind of study on Russia of that epoch. The image that Italy offers to Russia from the unity to the eruption of the First World War, strongly oscillates between a tendency of certain press and conservative diplomacy apt to outline the unity of Italy with many reserves, for example the Ambassador Lev Urusov affirmations, who at the end of the 1800's sustained that at the base of the unification were revolutionary origins and those who freed the way to King Vittorio Emanuele II "were conspirators from clandestine associations, rebels, regicides and adventurers. All it takes is mentioning the names of Mazzini, Saffi, Garibaldi and others"<sup>8</sup> and the tendency of certain exponents of the Russian socialism to interpret in a positive manner the Italian bravery, a valid model against Austrian tyranny according to socialists in Russia and around the world. On the wake of these opposite reflections, other judgments and prejudices will follow by diplomats like Dolgorukij, Aleksandr Nelidov, Nikolaj Murav'ëv, Anatolij Krupenskij (this one particularly fascinated by Giolitti's abilities which were countertrend to that of many Italian critics) who will paint the Italian society of the epoch with its contradictions ("Italy is the heaven of Europe populated by people in decline"), with its political dramas ("the cynicism of the sudden transformations", "the bureaucrat's despotic nature"). As Kolomiez widely clarifies, "the analysis of the pro-government sources was dictated by the comprehensible worries of the Russian authority in front of the strong liberal-revolutionary unrest of the western like Russian Intelligencija, an intransigent enemy of the autocratic regime, which looked upon the parliamentary democracies of western Europe as an experience to imitate or furthermore to express it in extreme projects of social transformations"<sup>9</sup>. At the beginning of the conflict the Russian diplomacy had already interweaved her plot in the Balkan theatre, putting Romania in condition to

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accept the tempting proposals of Sazonov, who with the Conference of Constance of July 14, 1914, had given a strong impulse to the hopes and aspirations of the Romanians of Transylvania. At the same time our ambassador in Russia Carlotti, worked to make the entry in war of Romania and Italy coincide: "but the Romanians temporized: attending that the war horizon was cleared and they characterized their conduct along the lines as that of Italy and negotiated with both the central powers and Russia. Romania, as Bulgaria will later do also, looked at Italy as the leading country in the group of states which were about to change the original choice of field<sup>10</sup>. All this took place while Tittoni from Paris and Imperials from London pressed the government of Rome so that according to allied requests, Italy would put aside its own territorial interests and would become an active participant in the political-diplomatic game. It was clear that for Russia the entrance of either Romania or Italy in the war would have meant a considerable change of attitude towards either power, while France and Great Britain had no intention in making any commitment that would bind them to an Italian political alliance in the Balkans. In Maurice Paléologue, French ambassador in Saint Petersburg recollects in his memoirs a certain negotiation between Russia and Italy: "I've some serious matters I want to talk to you about. It's not the Grand Duke Nicholas talking to Monsieur Paléologue: it's the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies speaking officially to the French Ambassador. In that capacity it's my duty to tell you that the immediate co-operation of Italy and Rumania is a matter of the greatest urgency. But please don't interpret these words as a cry of distress. I still think that with God's help the victory will be ours. At the same time, without the immediate co-operation of France and Italy the war will be prolonged for many months more and we shall run terrible risks. I replied that the French Government had never ceased to intensify its efforts to gain allies: "Japan, Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania, Italy-Monsieur Delcassé has knocked at all their doors. At this very moment he is racking his brains as to how to get the Rumanian and Italian Governments into line"<sup>11</sup>. After long months of waiting and a wide spectrum of diplomatic negotiations, Italy signed the London Treaty on April 26, 1915. By this treaty the Italian government declared alliance to Russia, France and England against the central powers of the Triple Alliance and Ottoman Empire. In accords with London<sup>12</sup>, which foresaw the entry into war within a month of the treaty's stipulation, Italy declared war to Austria on May 23, 1915 but not to Germany, even though the agreement called for it. Italy had given weight to its war abilities of which the allies started doubting of from the first months into the war, moreover, when the repeated Italian offensive didn't have positive effects on the general outcome of the conflict between the two sides. The lack of military coordination, General Cadorna's cockiness, the considered "embarrassing" presence of King Vittorio Emanuele on the front, as well as the lack of appropriate trench warfare training made, 1915, a particularly disastrous year for the Italian army<sup>13</sup>. Russia and Italy were busy with the "Bulgarian question" during this period. If for Italy Bulgaria, pulled by both

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sides, entered the Entente and in exchange would obtain southern territories, on the Dardanelles front, in order to avoid that Serbia's expansionistic objective could reach further towards the Adriatic, Russia saw the Bulgarian acquisition as being subordinate to the Serb growth. According to Petracchi, since the situation in the Adriatic had changed after April 26, Sazonov had to sustain the Serb demands against Italy but he indirectly encouraged the Serbs to resist the Bulgarian demand until the Serb program was fully accepted<sup>14</sup>. The inflexibility with which the Russian Foreign Ministry was conducting the negotiations for the Bulgarian agreement had Italy on the ropes which couldn't wait until the next autumn events, when the Bulgarians decided to follow the central empires. Italy seemed to have come out victorious from the Russian diplomatic conflict but in reality what happened was the complete alienation of our Ambassador Carlotti in Saint Petersburg. Petracchi affirms that "Carlotti was not able to interpret any role as *ring of conjunction* and not even to exercise an effective mediation with the official government environments..." It was clear that Russia didn't view Italy as being equal to the other allies and the non-belligerency of Italy and Romania showed the "mercenary" degree of the respective governments that would have wanted to exploit, all the way, the chance offered them by their history, in order to grab advantageous conditions. Before recognizing Italy a status of allied at par "Russia expected that the government of Rome would fulfill all obligations derived from the Treaty of London. Among these took place, in fact, the adhesion to the Pact of September 5th that would have equalized Italy to the three of the Entente and the declaration of war to Germany"<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, in the summer of 1916 the Allied operations were concentrated mainly in the European Balkan area. After an unsuccessful military operation in Gallipoli and Kut el Amara they tried to surprise the Bulgarians through a strong offensive from Salonicco. Many hopes were put into the Italian intervention and the entry into war of the "stalling" Romania. In Cardona's mind this should have happened as "simple representation of our flag and not with intention to lend the allied offensive an actual strong cooperation"<sup>16</sup>.

It is really on this front, or rather, on the Balkan diplomacy, that even if Italy had complied with the declaration of war to Germany, the Czarist government changed its attitude towards the Italian ambassador, who was expelled from the daily reunions held with the English and French diplomats. This because in the reunions they spoke of matters regarding the Slavs in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula and such a thing could have put in embarrassment the Italian interests and slowed down or diverted a solution.

We must not hide the fact that London and Paris placed great expectations on Italy. The pressure exercised on the Italian government on behalf of the French and Russian mission leaders in the high command, in agreement with the British chief of staff, were aimed to obtain the dispatchment of an entire Italian division on the site of the only brigade. Italy was told that their allied offensive against the Bulgarians would have brought down the last Romanian

hesitations. The act of persuasion lasted long but at the end the allies obtained what they hoped for. Cadorna retraced his steps and adhered to the request with the idea that the result obtained by a joined effort in the Balkans could have been well compensated and worth pulling out the forces from our theatre<sup>17</sup>. Luca Riccardi in his volume *Alleati non Amici* well reconstructs the diplomatic role in dealing with the Entente delegation<sup>18</sup>. The Italian war was, and wanted to remain, a national war, our war: Continuation of the anciently shared Risorgimental ambitions animated by strong idealistic motivations with irredentistic flairs. The interpretation of this tendency into a coherent and effective diplomatic line was definitely not easy<sup>19</sup>. For sure, it wasn't easy to adopt an attitude towards those states which initially chose to remain neutral, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, even if with different reasons. Due to historic events and geographical position Bulgaria found itself in a particular situation, as such, incurred intense political relations with Turkey and, with the Peace Treaty of Bucharest in 1913, saw itself subtracted under its nose, in favor of the Serbs and Greeks, some Turkish property in the Balkans. Contrary, Romania, besides the already mentioned rivalry against the Habsburg Empire, seemed to more easily adhere to the Entente's program of which it embraced numerous causes. The Italian attitude towards the Romanian neutrality was profoundly different from that of the allies. The Romanian government request to obtain territorial acquisition at the expense of Russia and Serbia put the Paris-London-Moscow axis in great difficulty. Despite some constraints put on Bucharest's demands, Romania's entry became essential for the Entente due to the Czarist army's failure: "this contingency made the contractual position of Bratianu much stronger since he perfectly realized the difficulty in which the troops of the Entente laid in. Not for nothing his attitude was of persistent intransigence"<sup>20</sup>. The Italian government, in turn, saw with the Romanian entry in war an ulterior motive of satisfaction since that attack would be mainly aimed against Austria-Hungary, loosening therefore the enormous Austrian pressure on the Italian front. Consequently even Italy undertook the endeavor, initiated by Entente to convince Saint Petersburg to make concessions to Romania in Bukovina. The difference between the Italian attitude and that of the rest of the Entente was concentrated on the role Serbia had to assume in the future European structure and the matter was tied to the Romanian revendication in regards to certain Balkan territories: "According to Rome, without doubt, it was necessary to allow concessions to Romania without searching desperately the Serbian consent. For this reason the Italian government pressed Saint Petersburg so it would accept the Romanian requests: such pacification would have forced Serbia to give up"<sup>21</sup>. The tensions followed by the Romanian resistance, on which London and Paris harbored serious doubts on its loyalty, pushed the allies to find an alternative solution. Italy remained alone in its attempt to sustain that the only way out of *impasse* was in Russian hands, only one capable to find an agreement between Romanians and Serbs in regards to Banato, offering Bessarabia as territory for exchange. Nothing came of it. The English and French projects, one after the other, failed in the negotiations with Serbia for

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the concessions to Bulgaria in Macedonia; Soon Bulgaria joined forces with the central Empire and the government of Bucharest reinforced its position until the summer of 1916. Thus certain mechanisms were being consolidated which would have their weight in the course of the war. England displayed no interest for the Balkan region if not strictly tied to the favorable evolution of the war; Russia showed itself very careful in "handling" the Adriatic policies of Serbia going inevitably in contrast with the Italian hegemony demands even in the Mediterranean area of interest. Paris also aligned itself to this policy reprimanding Rome for not respecting fully the Treaty of London. All this brought on a progressive political-diplomatic isolation of the Italian government, already seen under a bad light due to the missed declaration of war to Germany. From that isolation Italy seemed to come out of in July 1916, from Rome the decision was made to send an Italian military contingent as support to the allied expedition in Salonico. It was a demanding decision that however gave back a new image to the Italian politics after months of difficulties and international tensions. The allies were as a matter of fact convinced that the military offensive in Macedonia besides instilling fear to the Bulgarian troops it would have dissolved the last resistances of intervention by Romania on the allies' side, even though they harbored serious doubts on Bucharest's preparation for the conflict. A telegram sent on August 3, 1916 signed by lieutenant Colonel Luciano Ferigo<sup>22</sup>, Italian military attaché in Bucharest, confirmed the perplexities displayed by his French, English and Russian colleagues on the solidity of the Romanian army and on the contrary the real efficiency of the Bulgarian army and its advantageous situation. According to the Italian officer, one of the greatest risks Romania faced was that of recruiting military in Dobrugia, there being many Bulgarian and Turkish citizens in the region: "It results to me that Romania wants to operate in Transylvania with the largest and best part of its army, my colleagues appreciation corresponds to truth, all the more that the formation of the fourth battalion in every regiment of infantry and that of other battalions in reserve, if they augmented the number of bayonets to one hundred thousand, they have certainly not raised the army's efficiency"<sup>23</sup>.

In syntheses we can sustain that in the diplomatic relations between Italy and Russia, at the eve and in the first years of the war, the Balkan world was in the midst of it with its complexities and its unsolved problems, which will return and explode again seventy years later with the fall of the Berlin wall. This complexity which invested all aspects of civil life, from politics to the national ideology, showed how the two countries had been for various centuries fount of inspiration for each other. In Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia was a "formidable unknown", Italy for Russia was that "young damsel" who had reached the age of consent (the national unity) but whose flirtatious attitudes (the free Risorgimento thought) created not few problems in order to maintain the monarchic institute. The terrorist attacks in Italy and Russia in the beginning 1900's, the regicides, scared the courts more than wars since it dealt with an inside enemy, a subject, a citizen of the state. It is on this base that the two

countries will build a weak but strategic alliance, overlooking and sometimes ignoring that long range lasting solutions were necessary. A pact with the people needed to be established even before finding it between governments. The military defeats and the losses in terms of human lives had thrown Russia in the arms of the revolution and delivered the “victorious” Italy to Fascism. A new age is open, a new chapter of history destined to conduct to the Second World War, not less harsh and absurd than the first.

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<sup>1</sup> The vast bibliography about the pogroms of the First World War cannot be brought entirely in this brief essay, reason for which the need to recall great works such as the dateless study by L. Albertini's studies: *Le origini della guerra del 1914*, in 3 vol. of 1942; *Melograni P. Storia politica della grande guerra 1915–1918*. Bari, Laterza, 1971; *Hobsbawm E. J. L'età degli imperi 1875–1914*. Milano, Mondadori, 1996; and the most recent: *Remarque E. M. Niente di nuovo sul fronte occidentale*. Milano, Mondadori, 2011; *MacMillan M. 1914: Come la luce si spense sul mondo di ieri*. Milano, Rizzoli, 2013; *Clark C. I sonnambuli. Come l'Europa arrivò alla grande guerra*. Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2013; *Gibelli A. La grande guerra degli italiani 1915–1918*. Milano, BUR-Rizzoli, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Montanelli I., Cervi M. L'Italia del Novecento*. Rizzoli, Milano, 1998. P. 57.

<sup>3</sup> For Antonino Di San Giuliano's politics see the vast bibliography: *Ferraioli G. Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852–1914)*. Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Von Flotow had been nominated German Ambassador in Italy in February 1913, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Gottlieb von Jagow, who had preceded him in the task and preserved the office till the breaking of the diplomatic relations between the two countries, which occurred on May 23, 1915.

<sup>5</sup> Petracchi sustains different theses of which the most accredited, even by cross reference, is the one that sees Italian Ambassador in Saint Petersburg, Carlotti, the direct responsible of the confession made to the Russian Minister in regards to the secret meeting, happened in Rome between Di San Giuliano and his German friend. *Petracchi G. Da San Pietroburgo a Mosca, la diplomazia italiana in Russia 1861/1941*. Roma, Bonacci, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* P. 146.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>8</sup> *Kolomiez V. Il Bel Paese visto da lontano. Immagini politiche dell'Italia in Russia da fine Ottocento ai giorni nostri*. Piero Lacaita Editore, Manduria-Bari-Roma, 2007. P. 62. — See inside authors rich and selected bibliography, which draws information from Russian sources even from archives, a substantial exposition of unpublished documents which shed light on the political and cultural relations between Russia and Italy and they help understand better that psychological line on which a certain part of the international bibliography will act on.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* P. 73. — Also compare: *Wollemborg L. Politica estera italiana (1882–1917)*. Roma, Edizioni Roma, 1938. P. 102–136.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* P. 147.

<sup>11</sup> *Paléologue M. An ambassador's memoirs / translated by F. A. Holt*. New York, G. H. Doran Company, 1925. P. 170–171.

<sup>12</sup> The Italian government, guided by Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino, had brought forth negotiations simultaneously with the Triple Alliance and secretly also with those from the Entente which wanted to open a new front in southern Europe. On February 16, 1915 a memorandum was sent to London with the conditions for Italy's descent

into the field next to the countries of the Entente. In the following weeks the Italian ambassador in Great Britain, Marquise Guglielmo Imperiali, communicated to the English Foreign Minister Edward Grey the 16 points of the memorandum, recommending absolute discretion, In exchange for its intervention, Italy, would have obtained South Tyrol, Trentino, Gorizia, Gradisca, territory of Trieste, the whole Istrian peninsula all the way to the Gulf of Quarnaro with the Isles of Cherso and Lussino, the Isles of Dalmatia, the city of Zara, Sebenico and Trau, the city of Valona and Isles of Seseno, sovereignty over Dodecanese, recognition of influential areas in Asia Minor and the rectification of certain boundary limits in the Italian Africa. Cfr.: *Mack Smith D.* I Savoia re d'Italia. Milano, BUR. 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Mack Smith, according to a well consolidated historiography, affirmed that wanting to proceed, on behalf of the Italian command, on the lines of a parallel war, without constituting a unified command and not getting informed on the allied war methods used during the preceding 9 months on the French-Serbian front, represented one of the causes that brought forth the first military failures on the front.

<sup>14</sup> *Petracchi G.* Da San Pietroburgo a Mosca. Op. cit. P. 159.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* P. 161–162.

<sup>16</sup> *Montanari M.* Politica e strategia in cento anni di guerre italiane. Vol. 2. T. II: La Grande guerra. AUSSME, Roma, 2000. P. 332.

<sup>17</sup> As of 27 July, l'Armée d'Orient counted: 112 thousand French, 115 thousand English, 118 thousand Serbs and 10 thousand Russians. The first convoy of the 35<sup>th</sup> division (General Petitti of Roreto) set sail from Taranto on August 8.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr.: *Riccardi L.* Alleati non amici. Le relazioni politiche tra l'Italia e l'Intesa durante la prima guerra mondiale. Brescia, Morcelliana, 1992. — The author, on the basis of an ample Italian diplomatic documentation, retraces the events of Italy's entrance into war, analyzing furthermore, the reasons that induced our nation to delay our declaration of war to Germany. Of great relevance was the agreement stipulated between Italy and Russia on May 21, 1915, which called for a bilateral simultaneous intervention against Austria-Hungary. Having encountered great difficulty on the frontline, in May 1915, the Czarist army had to soon retreat. The Triple Alliances strengths was based on the first results of the conflict in order to formulate a new strategy which called for containment on the Italian front and advance of numerous units on the Russian end. Therefor here's one of the reasons found in the book to justify the Italian political delay in the first war, in other words the non-declaration of war also to Germany: The missing declaration of war to Germany as the origin of disagreements between Italy and the other allies is an analysis that must be confirmed to the war's first year or little more. The disapproval amongst the allies was much deeper, strategic and, I must say, of a political perspective. The following events of August 1916 were a clear demonstration of this reality. Germany's declaration situation served, probably, to polarize all the existing tensions within the alliance to the extent of making it become the decisive point for the members relations inside the Entente.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* P. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* P. 137. — The allies couldn't see other solutions to place forth before Romania's entry in war and therefore, they mobilized, also, through their ambassadors as happened with the French case in London, Paul Camion which pressed the Russians to allow small concessions to Romania.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* P. 139.

<sup>22</sup> Luciano Ferigo, General (Udine 1870 – Bucharest 1921) Debuted in the military carrier in 1890 as second lieutenant of artillery. In 1895–1896 he participated in the Eritrea champagne. Was commander of the Sassari brigade between 1917 and 1918. Retired for length of service in 1920 and settled in Bucharest and S. M. the king nominated him his field assistant, honorary general.

<sup>23</sup> AUSSME. Rome, Fondo G. 29, envelope 76, military assigned in Romania August-September 1916, f. 6.

## **Randazzo F. The Italian Diplomacy between Russia and the Central Empires during the World Conflict Outbreak**

**ABSTRACT:** The paper is devoted to the Italian-Russian diplomacy before the beginning of the First World War. The historiography debate on the entry of Italy in the conflict is more than ever open. The truth, according to historian Giorgio Petracchi, is that in all the range of time from the Agreement of Raconigi (1909) till the explosion of the First World conflict, the balance of the relations between Saint Petersburg and Rome wasn't in the whole positive. One of the reasons of this is that Italy and Russia still continued to remain "unknown to themselves" also due to the poor Italian diplomatic presence in the vast Russian territory, just one embassy (rather isolated) in Saint Petersburg and three consular representatives. In addition Italy remained alone in its attempt to sustain that the only way out of impasse was in Russian hands, only one capable to find an agreement between Romanians and Serbs. Thus certain mechanisms were being consolidated which would have their weight in the course of the war. England displayed no interest for the Balkan region if not strictly tied to the favorable evolution of the war; Russia showed itself very careful in "handling" the Adriatic policies of Serbia going inevitably in contrast with the Italian hegemony demands even in the Mediterranean area of interest. Paris also aligned itself to this policy reprimanding Rome for not respecting fully the Treaty of London. All this brought on a progressive political-diplomatic isolation of the Italian government. In syntheses we can sustain that in the diplomatic relations between Italy and Russia, at the eve and in the first years of the war, the Balkan world was in the midst of it with its complexities and its unsolved problems, which will return and explode again seventy years later with the fall of the Berlin wall.

**KEYWORDS:** Italian-Russian diplomacy, First World War, Balkans.

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- <sup>9</sup> Petracchi G. *Da San Pietroburgo a Mosca, la diplomazia italiana in Russia 1861/1941* (Rome, 1993).
- <sup>10</sup> Kolomiez V. *Il Bel Paese visto da lontano. Immagini politiche dell'Italia in Russia da fine Ottocento ai giorni nostri* (Manduria - Bari - Roma, 2007).
- <sup>11</sup> Wollemborg L. *Politica estera italiana (1882–1917)* (Rome, 1938).
- <sup>12</sup> Paléologue M. *An ambassador's memoirs*, Transl. by F. A. Holt (New York, 1925).
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