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The Second Eastern Crisis (1875–1878): Echoes, Volunteers and Italian Interests

Abstract: The actions of Balkan insurgents during Eastern Crisis of 1875–1878 were closely followed by Giuseppe Garibaldi and his supporters as well as by the Italian politicians and writers that were a part Mazzini's school of thought. Garibaldi actively sustained the insurgents and his *red shirts* went to fight in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first year of the Crisis. When the uprising evolved into a war of Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottomans the involvement of *red shirts* as well as the one of volunteers in general was considerable reduced, with the exception of the Russian contingent under the commandment of the Russian general Mikhail Chernyaev. However, the interest for the ongoing developments in the Bosnia and Herzegovina only changed the form, since Italian politicians and journalists made several projects trying to mobilize Italian general public to support South Slav cause. The Venetian writer Marco Antonio Canini even imagined a confederal solution for the nations in the Danube basin thus trying to overcome the conflicts between the nascent nationalisms that could dispute among them the territorial heritage of the Austria-Hungary after its projected demise. None of the projects were put in practice, but they remain as testimony of Italian interest and involvement into the Great Eastern Crisis and its consequences.

Keyword: Eastern Crisis (1875–1878), Giuseppe Garibaldi, volunteers, insurrection

In a recent essay, Armando Pitassio asked why the Italian military formations that joined the Yugoslav Liberation Army in the autumn of 1943 ended up being included in a Division named Garibaldi. At the time this was not the only case that this name was used for formations that defected to the resistance side against the Germans. In spite of the fact that the Italian Communist Party, based on Gramsci's writings, had previously expressed serious doubts about the validity of the Italian Risorgimento movement and its leaders, they came to use the name of perhaps the best known of the Risorgimento's protagonists. The communists had criticized Garibaldi for what they perceived as his pro-royalist

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sentiments, but, above all, after the famous 7th congress (1935) of the Communist International, the Italian communists were called on not to despise potential allies, whether they be social democrats (until then social-traitors) or more generically democrats, the successors of the Risorgimento Left. Therefore, the Italian communists, those closest to Tito and the resistance movement he led, no longer opposed the use of the figure of the Duce dei Mille to indicate the Italian resistance formations, and this also happened - as is well known - in the resistance movement in Italy.¹

If, however, a Garibaldi Division operated in Yugoslavia, this was not only due to the 'clearance' of the figure of Garibaldi by the Communist Party, but also because among the South Slavs the myth, the legend or, more simply, the memory of the Hero of the Two Worlds persisted. It is known that, in the 19th century, the myth of Garibaldi spread from one end of Europe, if not the globe, to the other, but it found particularly fertile soil among the South Slavs. Men from the Balkan Peninsula served in the ranks of The Thousand, and this already had significance, as Georgi Neshev points out in his book *Volontirite za Džuseppe* (Giuseppe's Volunteers),² but above all, it was the events commonly referred to in historiography as the Second Eastern Crisis that strengthened the memory of the *Red shirts* and their leader.³

It began with the uprising of the rural populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina for both economic and national reasons. According to the French consul in Sarajevo, Patin, the inhabitants of Bosnia were predominantly in favour of autonomy, while the party that wished for a union with Serbia was not the most numerous, nor were those who wanted annexation to Austria-Hungary.⁴ The national undertones soon became apparent when the governments of the two

¹ A. Pitassio, "Una questione marginale, ma non troppo. La denominazione delle formazioni militari italiane a fianco della Resistenza jugoslava." In *Caro nemico. Soldati pistoiesi e toscani nella Resistenza in Albania e in Montenegro. 1943-1945*, ed. Lia Tosi, (Pisa, Publisher ETS: 2018), 185-197.

² G. Neshev, *Volontirite za Džuseppe. Bălgari v otrjadite na Garibaldi - Giuseppe's volunteers. Bulgarians in Garibaldi's detachments* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Otechestvo, 1988).

³ M. Priante, "Giuseppe Garibaldi: Hero in the Piedmont of the Balkans. The reception of a narrative of the Italian Risorgimento in the Serbian press." In *Italy's Balkan Strategies*, ed. Vojislav Pavlovic, (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2014). This author deals with a detailed analysis of the creation of the Garibaldi myth, primarily at the beginning of the 1860s, but does not deal with the reasons for strengthening his positions during the 1870s.

⁴ P. Gelez, "Les agents consulaires français de Sarajevo vis-à-vis de la Serbie." In *La Serbie et la France: une alliance atypique. Relations politiques, économiques et culturelles 1870-1940*, dir. Dušan Bataković, (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2010), 225. Patten states: « Beaucoup de musulmanes et la presque totalité des catholiques sont autonomistes; les Grecs orthodoxes [Serbes orthodoxes] sont partagés en trois partis: les uns rêvent d'une annexion à l'Autriche, les autres travaillent pour la réunion de la Bosnie et de la Serbie et pour

Slavic Balkan states then in existence, Serbia and Montenegro, decided to launch military interventions in aid of the insurgents, whom they considered brothers in blood and religious faith. The war of the two Principalities still under the high sovereignty of the Sultan against the troops of the Ottoman Empire took a turn for the worse for the former, and particularly for Serbia, so much so that, through the mediation of the Powers, primarily Great Britain, an agreement was sought at the Constantinople Conference. It is well known that all this ended in a deadlock after that, in a coup de théâtre, the Sultan issued a Constitutional decree, which, however, was in force for little more than a year. The Russo-Turkish conflict ensued, with all the consequences that need not be recalled here, including the suspension of the Constitution by Sultan Abdul-Hamid II.⁵

Instead, it should be noted that many volunteers came to the aid of the insurgents in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both from Russia, with the full approval of the St. Petersburg government, and from Western countries. The same cannot be said for the insurgents in Bulgaria in April 1876, to whose aid no one had come. About the Aprilskoto vŕstanie I recall the seminal book *Istorija na Aprilsko tovŕstanie 1876*, (History of the April Uprising 1876) written many years ago by Juno Mitev,⁶ which speaks only of tokens of solidarity and nothing more. Not all, but at least a good proportion of the volunteers who flocked to the Western Balkans, wore red shirts. That can help us better understand why decades later, in 1943, it did not sound strange to form a resistance formation named after Garibaldi. In 1875–76, the old man from Caprera was no longer in a position to lead an expedition, although he had done so a little earlier during the Franco-Prussian war. Nevertheless, he endeavoured to spend a small amount of his own money, name and prestige in favour of that intervention to help the insurgents, inspired by the solidarity between nationalities that had already been experienced so many times during the 19th century.⁷

la formation d'un royaume slave, les derniers, enfin, se rattachent aux catholiques et musulmans et sont partisans de l'autonomie”.

⁵ Classic literature recommendation: A. J. P. Taylor, *L'Europa delle grandi potenze. Da Metternich a Lenin* (Bari: Laterza, 1961), 323–357. And as for Russia, also a classic work: H. S. Watson, *Storia dell'Impero russo. 1801–1917* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), 405–418. In the book G. del Zanna *La fine dell'Impero ottomano*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), the author writes on several occasions about the impact this crisis had on the future of the Ottoman Empire.

⁶ J. Mitev, *Istorija na Aprilskoto vŕstanie, 1876*. (Sofija: Jusautor, 1988).

⁷ A. Tamborra, *Garibaldi e l'Europa. Impegno militare e prospettive politiche* (Roma: Fusa, SME, 1983), 140–150.

An overview of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian uprising can be found in old works by Milorad Ekmečić⁸ and M. Radojčić⁹, supplemented with many shorter writings of a documentary nature. Among the latter, a text by Rade Petrović, dating from 1959 and dedicated to the Insurgent Support Committee set up in Dubrovnik¹⁰, is of some interest here. Ekmečić himself edited a volume¹¹ concerning the resistance of the population to the subsequent occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austro-Hungarian troops, following the decisions passed at the Congress of Berlin. It was almost another war: in 1908, addressing Italian public opinion in particular, Jovan Dučić (later a famous writer and diplomat) spoke¹² of 10,000 soldiers of the Dual Monarchy who had fallen - also due to illness - in the occupation of what others called New Austria¹³; the American scholar Robert Donia calculated the losses at half that figure¹⁴, while Noel Malcolm downplayed the Bosnian resistance and the number of Austro-Hungarian casualties (946 dead and 3,980 wounded).¹⁵ Compared to those scholarly or general publications, Serbian or Bosnian scholars have certainly taken steps forward that we will not illustrate here.¹⁶

⁸ M. Ekmečić, *Ustanak u Bosni, 1875–1878* (Uprising in Bosnia, 1875–1878) (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1973) (reprinted in Belgrade: Službeni list FRY, 1996).

⁹ M. S. Radojčić, *Herzegovina 1875–1878* (Nevesinje: Opštinski odbor Saveza boraca NOR-a, 1961) The most classic source is G. Novak, *Italija prema stvaranju Jugoslavije* (Italy's attitude towards the creation of Yugoslavia), (Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod 1925).

¹⁰ R. Petrović, "Djelovanje dubrovačkog odbora za pomaganje hercegovačkih ustanika 1875–1878 godine" (Activities of the Dubrovnik Committee for Helping the Herzegovinian Insurgents in 1875–1878), *Godišnjak istorijskog društva Bosne i Hercegovina*, X (1959), 221–245.

¹¹ M. Ekmečić, *Otpor Austrougarskoj okupaciji 1878. Godine u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Resistance to the Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1878. Years in Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Sarajevo: Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1979).

¹² J. Dučić, *L'annessione della Bosnia e dell'Erzegovina e la questione serba* (Roma: Tipografia Labicana, 1908).

¹³ G. Marcotti, *La nuova Austria, impressioni di G.M.* (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1885).

¹⁴ R. Donia, "The battle for Bosnia: Habsburg military strategy in 1878". In *Otpor Austrougarskoj okupaciji*, cited p. 120, where he states that Vienna had to bring an occupation contingent of 72,000 to 268,000 people, more than a third of the entire imperial army.

¹⁵ N. Malcolm, *Storia della Bosnia dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Milan: Bompiani, 2000), 191; *Bosnia, a short history* (London: Basingstoke, Papermac), 1996.

¹⁶ According to the opinion of S. K. Pavlowitch, *Serbia, la storia al di là del nome* (Trieste: Beit, 2010), 107, during the resistance against the Austro-Hungarian occupation, "Serbian leaders and instigators fought together with Muslim militants" and not only in Bosnia, but also in Herzegovina. However, "Serbia avoided getting involved in any way because it did not want a direct conflict with Austria-Hungary".

With regard to the Italian volunteers, the greatest contribution is just as old and remains that of Marcella De Ambrosis, which appeared in a Mantua publication.¹⁷ Angelo Tamborra and other scholars¹⁸ revisited the subject several times over the years. A history of Montenegro that has appeared in Italy, thanks to Antun Sbutega, does not mention those volunteers, although it carefully retraces the various phases of the uprising in Herzegovina and the Turkish-Montenegrin war (in two stages, 1876 and 1877)¹⁹; yet the greatest influx of foreign fighters was precisely in Herzegovina, perhaps a more accessible area than Bosnia.

Ultimately, we have a sufficiently clear picture of that movement of solidarity between nations fighting against a power considered foreign, but not by all peoples. This was the prevailing ideological axis (nationalities versus empires) of the time. Of course, the question remains as to what the participation of the Muslim peasant community was in those events, but it has been said above that, for some of them, the preferred route was not secessionist but autonomist. I mention this because, of course, the volunteers could have asked themselves whether they were doing so in aid of a national group without any qualms, or whether they were working against another community. A few decades later, there were volunteers in red shirts (in 1912 above all, but also more tenuously in 1897) who questioned whether it was appropriate and fair to fight for one nationality if one ended up fighting not only against an expansionist Empire but also against another nationality.²⁰ As far as historiography has revealed, doubts about the just cause for which one was going to fight do not seem to have arisen

¹⁷ M. Deambrosis, “La partecipazione dei garibaldini e degli internazionalisti italiani alla insurrezione di Bosnia ed Erzegovina del 1875–76 e alla guerra di Serbia”. In *Studi garibaldini e altri saggi*, a cura di Renato Giusti, (Vicenza: Museo del Risorgimento, 1967), 33–82; Eadem, “Garibaldini e militari italiani nelle guerre ed insurrezioni balcaniche: (1875–1877)”. In *Giuseppe Garibaldi e le origini del movimento operaio italiano (1860–82)*, a cura di Renato Giusti, (Mantova: Tip. Grassi, 1984), 29–51.

¹⁸ J. Pirjevec, “Italijanska Levica in vstaja v Bosni i Hercegovini 1875–76. In 100-godišnjice ustanaka u Bosni i Hercegovini, drugim balkanskim zemljama i istočnoj krizi 1875–1878 godine (Hundredth anniversary of the uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina, other Balkan countries and the Eastern crisis of 1875–1878) ed. Rade Petrović, I, (Sarajevo: Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1977); E. R. Terzuolo, “The Garibaldini in the Balkans, 1875–1876”, *The International History Review*, IV 1 (1982), 113–126; A. Pitassio, “L’Estrema Sinistra e il movimento garibaldino di fronte alla crisi d’Oriente del 1875–1878”, *Europa Orientalis*, II (1983), 107–121; A. Tamborra, *Garibaldi e l’Europa, impegno militare e prospettive politiche*, 136–147.

¹⁹ A. Sbutega, *Storia del Montenegro dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Rubbettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2006), 290–294.

²⁰ F. Guida, “Ettore Ferrari e il volontarismo garibaldino nel Sud-est europeo”. In *Ettore Ferrari’s Liberal Democratic Project*, ed. A.M. Isastia, (Milan: Franco Angeli 1997), 61–72; Idem,

on a massive scale. However, if episodes such as that of 1912 did not occur, it is known that, in the anarchist camp, Errico Malatesta opted to personally come to the insurgents' aid, against Bakunin's judgment. The latter believed that going to fight in the Balkans was like 'those good people in England who made socks for the faraway Negroes and forgot the poor of their country'. Malatesta, however, believed that 'wherever Carthage is fought, Rome is defended'.²¹ For his part, an old Garibaldian from Iași, Teodor Dunca, who in 1866 had fought in Trentino and had claimed to have 1,500 men ready to fight against Austria in Bukovina and Transylvania, but in 1876 only spoke of 'a handful' of his followers, asked Garibaldi for advice on how to proceed, stating 'we never want to make a mistake in choosing the flag to follow'.²² Perhaps there real difference was between those who looked mainly to Montenegro as opposed to those that looked to Belgrade, and those who followed the local leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was no full awareness of marked ethnic and national diversity.

The influx of volunteers had taken place quite early. As is known, the insurrection had begun in Herzegovina near Nevesinje on 9 July 1875 and soon the insurgents reached a considerable size: 25,000–30,000 men, roughly equal to the forces that the Sublime Porte could deploy. In Herzegovina, a real war was waged from the very beginning, to which the Montenegrin troops under the command of Petar Vuković, father-in-law of Prince Nikola Petrović-Njegoš, and General Peko Pavlović made a large contribution. That same summer, the first Garibaldini (Count Carlo Faella, Captain Firmino Nerini and Federico Violante) and volunteers from other countries arrived through Dalmatia. Only in part did the Austro-Hungarian police succeed in preventing this transit. In the end, there were 390 Redshirts, 284 French and a few dozen from other countries. The number of French volunteers was striking in a country where « la France n'a pratiquement aucun intérêt commercial à défendre à Sarajevo » and where « de 1853 à 1878, il n'y a eu pour ainsi dire qu'un seul citoyen français en Bosnie, d'origine algérienne ». ²³

Garibaldi's leading representatives made contact with the *voivode* Miho Ljubibratić; the most notable among them were Count Vivaldi Pasqua, Garibaldi's representative, and Ljubibratić's aide-de-camp, Celso Ceretti, who operated at the mouth of the Neretva with one of his regiments. Prince Petrović Njegoš

"L'ultima spedizione garibaldina in Grecia (1912)". In *National Unity and Independence in Italy and Greece* (Firenze: Olschki 1987), 191–220.

²¹ A. Tamborra, *Garibaldi e l'Europa, impegno militare e prospettive politiche*, 139.

²² Idem, 148.

²³ P. Gelez, "Les agents consulaires français de Sarajevo vis-à-vis de la Serbie". In *La Serbie et la France, une alliance atypique. Relations politiques, économiques et culturelles 1870–1940*, ed. Dušan T. Baraković, (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2010), 218.

asked if Garibaldi's sons would personally come to Montenegro if he officially declared war. For the prince, having the Garibaldis at his side meant assuming a privileged position even in the face of Serbia. In fact, even when, in July 1876, the insurrection turned into open war against Turkey on the part of Montenegro and Serbia, there were still western volunteers in the field, to which were added the (very numerous) Russian volunteers led by General Mikhail Grigoryevich Chernyaev, to whom the Serbian government entrusted the command of its army. The publicist and jurist Giuseppe Barbanti Brodano, from Modena but serving as a provincial councillor in Bologna, who participated in the Serbo-Turkish war in 1876, left a diary entitled *In Serbia. Ricordi e studi slavi*.²⁴

That enthusiastic rush of volunteers naturally had more political and symbolic than military significance. It was, however, part of a twofold context. On the one hand, there was the initiative of the two Principalities, Serbia and Montenegro, which had certainly supported and even incited the uprising from the beginning, and then went to war against the sovereign rule of the Ottomans. The other factor was the diplomatic action of the Great Powers, primarily Russia and Austria-Hungary. It is well known that, while in Constantinople three sultans (Abdülaziz I, Murad V, and finally Abdul-Hamid II, destined to remain on the throne until 1909) replaced each other in quick succession over a few bloody and tumultuous months²⁵, international diplomacy dictated the pace of the ongoing crisis. Indeed, the Serbian troops were overpowered by the Turks at the Battle of Krevet, and thus the idea that the Balkan peoples could free themselves from Ottoman rule was not realised, despite the successes of the Montenegrins. The Serbian-Turkish conflict was temporarily put to rest due to an intervention of the Great Powers, but the disagreements over the future of the Balkan peoples remained and were not resolved at the Constantinople Conference in December 1876. The international tensions led to an open conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the consequences of which are well known. In this second phase of the Eastern crisis, the volunteers no longer had a role, except for the Bulgarian volunteers organised by the Russian General Staff (the city of Samara donated a flag to them). The core of the Bulgarian Legion consisted of Bulgarians who had fought as volunteers alongside the Serbs in 1876 in the regiment led by Russian General Chernyaev. In this respect, some westerners (Canini, Cazzavillan) were not supported by the Romanian govern-

²⁴ G. Barbanti Brodano, *In Serbia. Ricordi e studi slavi* (Bologna: Società editrice delle Pagine sparse, 1877). The second edition bears a different title: *Sulla Drina. Ricordi e studi slavi*, (Milano: Bignami, 1878). There is an edition in the Serbian language: *Гарибалдинци на Дрини 1876*, превод Миодраг Ристић. Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1958.

²⁵ S. J. Shaw, E. Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: the Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 164–175. This monograph is highly debatable.

ment, which had remained prudently on the sidelines until then, only to become involved in the Russian-led war.²⁶

While the situation across the Adriatic continued to be heated, an event of considerable political and historical importance took place in Italy in March 1876: the coming to power of the first left-wing government, headed by Agostino Depretis. Perhaps this news served to encourage initiatives in favour of the southern Slavic populations in revolt. In that year, the political propaganda activities of the League for the Liberation and Fraternisation of the Slavic-Hellenic Peninsula, set up at that time by the Venetian Marco Antonio Canini, a good connoisseur of the Balkans, stood out. Nikša Stipčević wrote about him in the 1970s in a number of essays that were later included in the volume *Dva preporoda* (*Two revivals*).²⁷ As far as I have been able to ascertain, Canini was not able to actually send a formation of volunteers to Bosnia or Herzegovina, but only a few individual volunteers, and yet his propaganda activities had a discrete echo.²⁸ Support for the insurgents had hitherto been of a very varied nature as it was provided by people who sometimes differed in their political views: Garibaldians, Mazzinians, anarchists and other democrats. Canini wanted to add something to that generous but generic impetus: a political project and interlocution with those in charge in both Rome and Belgrade. The political project was a variation of an earlier and already known one. It was a matter of applying the principle of the collaboration of peoples within the framework of a future confederal polity. Here we must remember that even a champion of the national idea such as Mazzini, faced with the composite ethno-national reality of the Danube valley, admitted an exception to the formula of the unitary national state, imagining and proposing a different model, the confederation, which would allow, at the same time, respect for individual national identities, but also the formation of a state of respectable size and strength, removing the burning problem of the dispute between different nations over the same territory.²⁹

²⁶ F. Guida, *La Bulgaria dalla Guerra di liberazione alla pace di Neuilly. Testimonianze italiane* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984), 16–17.

²⁷ N. Stipčević, *Dva preporoda. Studje o italijansko-srpskim kulturnim i političkim sezama u XIX veku* (*Two revivals. Studies on Italian-Serbian cultural and political relations in the 19th century*) (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1979).

²⁸ F. Guida, *L'Italia e il Risorgimento balcanico. Marco Antonio Canini* (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1984), 284–290.

²⁹ Idem, "Idea di nazione e questione delle nazionalità nel pensiero di Giuseppe Mazzini", in *Cuadernos de historia contemporánea* (Madrid, 2001), 28, 161–175; Idem, "Mazzini e il problema delle nazionalità con particolare riguardo all'Europa orientale". In *Le lotte secolari di italiani e bulgari per la creazione di uno Stato indipendente*, ed. Nikolai Mandazhiev, (Sofia: Gutenberg 2006), 299–321; Idem, "Giuseppe Mazzini e l'Europa orientale". In *Il mazziniana-*

Canini, while claiming never to have been a Mazzinian³⁰, was of a similar opinion and already in the early 1860s had become an advocate of the confederation project endorsed by Kossuth (although not particularly enthusiastically) and Klapka, as well as a number of eminent Italian figures. At that time, assuming the collapse of the Austrian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, it was a matter of including Hungary, Croatia and the Romanian lands in the project. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, in 1875–76, however, only the Western Balkans were mentioned, primarily Serbia with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Greece. Canini also tried a new approach with Kossuth, who lived in Italy, but it was completely in vain and almost unpleasant³¹, and a more cordial conversation initiated with a Hungarian deputy in the Pest Diet, Babes, elected in Timișoara³², was not followed up. Hence an association or league that looked towards the Slavic-Hellenic area whose president was – it's hard to imagine another name – Giuseppe Garibaldi was established on 8 August 1876. Among the founders were Garibaldi's doctor Timoteo Riboli, two deputies (Giuseppe Bargnani and Achille Maiocchi), some military personnel (Colonel Carlo Mariani, Major Libero Chiesa, Captain Alcibiade Moretti) and finally Giambattista Prandino. News of the formation of the League was delivered by an important Milanese newspaper, *Il Secolo*, and by the Zadar-based *Narodni List* (founded in 1862 and still in print today).³³

The League hoped and pledged to end Ottoman rule in the Balkans and create a Slavic-Hellenic confederation. In it, the individual state entities (which were not clearly defined) would enjoy extensive autonomy. As in all confederation projects, the main problem to be solved was to guarantee the equal dignity of the members of the confederation, especially since they were already consti-

nesimo nel mondo, IV (2011), (Pisa: Istituto Domus mazziniana (supplemento al Bollettino della Domus mazziniana di Pisa), 2012), 121–145.

³⁰ Idem, "Marco Antonio Canini e la Grecia: un mazziniano suo malgrado", *Balkan Studies*, XX I (1979), 343–392.

³¹ In a letter sent to Jovan Ristic on September 26th 1876, Canini described it as follows: "Il y a une semaine je me rendis exprès chez Kossuth dans les environs de Turin; je lui apportais une lettre signée par tous les membres du Comité [...] nous le prions de rompre son silence et dire un mot au meeting ou autrement en faveur de la fraternisation des Madjars et des Serbes...jamais, jamais répondit-il. [...] Je finis par me lever en lui disant: Monsieur, je vois qu'on peut dire des Madjars, du moins de ceux de 1848, ce que l'on a dit des émigrés Français, qu'ils n'ont rien oublié et rien appris". N. Stipčević, "Marko Antonio Kanini i Srbija" (Marco Antonio Kanini and Serbia), *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis* 3–4, (1976), 149–150.

³² See Canini's correspondence in the Neapolitan daily *Il Pungolo* dated September 29th 1877, but also one of his letters addressed to Angelo De Gubernatis, dated April 21st 1877, from Milan (Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Raccolta De Gubernatis, 22, 52).

³³ F. Guida, *L'Italia e il Risorgimento balcanico. Marco Antonio Canini*, 285.

tuted states and it mattered little that, according to international law, the sultan still exercised his high sovereignty (*suzeraineté*) over some of them. On 3 September, Canini led a crowded rally in Milan. Two weeks later, on 17 September 1876, a meeting was held in Turin chaired by Senator Giovanni Siotto Pintor. Canini took the floor, and, in the southern Slavic world, attributed to Serbia and Montenegro the role that Piedmont and Lombardy had played in Italy. At the same time, the Standing Committee for the Relief of the Slavic Cause, in which Garibaldi and an important politician, Benedetto Cairoli, were active, met in Rome.³⁴

Canini's relations at the time were mainly with Matija Ban, a prominent intellectual but also a collaborator of Jovan Ristić, then Minister of Foreign Affairs and leader of the Liberal Party. It was, indeed, a political collaboration or conversation, but it also concerned the literary and editorial field. Canini sent some of his writings to Ban and tried to have the play *The Fall of Novgorod* that the Dubrovnik writer had written performed in two important theatres in Milan, with the help of the man of letters Cleto Arrighi (real name Carlo Righetti).³⁵

The ambitious projects of Canini and the League soon proved impossible to realise. On the one hand, it was difficult to raise funds for the insurgents, especially among the wealthier classes. On the other, Depretis gave only general consent to a document supporting the struggle of Serbia and the peoples of the East, which was delivered to him by Canini, Siotto Pintor, Luigi D'Ancona, Count Tommaso Dell'Isola, and the member of the Parliament Leopoldo Colombini. Depretis' moderate sympathy, however, clashed with the cautious approach of Foreign Minister Luigi Amedeo Melegari, a former Mazzinian. The

³⁴ Ibidem. Of course, the Italian police and the government from Rome closely monitored such initiatives. Among the many dispatches that talk about it, those preserved in the Historical-Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are most important. These outbound dispatches contain information on the relations between the Slavic Committee in Rome chaired by Professor Placidi and various agitators in the Ottoman provinces, such as Mateo Orzionovich, aka Mateowitch, who was suspected of having sold the same information to the Ottoman authorities. Registro Copialettere II, Greece, no. 14/13, April 19th 1877; 15, MAE to Cestara, consul in Corfu, April 29th 1877; 16, MAE to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, April 29th; 18, MAE to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Italian administration followed the tracks of various internationalists who were known to reside in several cities abroad, primarily Italians who were ready to go as volunteers to Serbia and Greece.

³⁵ N. Stipčević, *Marko Antonio Kanini i Srbija, 152–159* (with the contents of Ban's and Canini's letters). Seven years earlier, in 1869, the National Theater was opened in Belgrade, as proof of the progress of Serbian society in the theater field as well. This theater was opened after the Carina theater (1842) and the theater in the Hotel Jelen (1847). Source: K. Mitrović, "Europeizzazione e identità: cultura visiva e vita quotidiana a Belgrado nel XIX secolo". In *Citta dei Balcani, città d'Europa. Studi sullo sviluppo urbano delle capitali post-ottomane 1830–1923*, a cura di Marco Dogo e Armando Pitassio, (Lecce: Argo, 2008), 97.

Italian government did not want to get involved in the incipient crisis. In vain, Canini speculated that a large Italian contingent, together with Romanian and possibly Spanish troops, would be in charge of pushing the Ottoman army to the south of the Balkans when it was decided to grant autonomy to Bosnia, Herzegovina and possibly Bulgaria. If in Dalmatia one of his envoys was badly received as he was suspected of wanting to support the pro-Italian autonomist party against the Croatian (and Serbian) national party, in Italy the objection were voiced that Russian support for Serbia was dangerous and self-interested, so some protested: "Shall we help Russia make new conquests?"³⁶

In contrast, a well-known intellectual of the time, Angelo De Gubernatis (married to Bakunin's cousin Sophia Bezobrazova) who was about to go to Russia for a conference of orientologists, did not go out of his way to set up a committee of the League in Florence and popularise it in Russian circles, but its programme was nonetheless taken up in a couple of newspapers in St. Petersburg and Odessa.³⁷ Finally, Canini went to Serbia more or less during the Constantinople Conference, i.e. towards the end of 1876, when the armistice had been in place for months. He later wrote that he had worked to put together a new corps of volunteers of various nationalities and that he had spoken on the banks of the Sava to a group of young people from Livorno, alongside Serbs and Croats. The latter, hearing a translation of his speech, applauded, shouting 'živio Talija'.³⁸ Basically, Ristić dropped any real collaboration with that ephemeral Italian organisation.

While he might not have proposed an equally ambitious political project, Ljudevit or Ludovico Vuličević, editor of the Trieste-based newspaper *Il Cittadino*, who also worked for other newspapers, supported the insurgents' cause, too. As Petrović reported to Tamborra in his letter from Sarajevo, dated 28 July 1879³⁹, Vuličević in Trieste had a role in the recruitment and organizing of volunteers to be sent to Herzegovina through the Ragusa / Dubrovnik Committee headed by the lawyer Pero Čingrija, destined for an important political future. This was the Dubrovnik Committee for Aid to Insurgents in Herzegovina (Dubrovački odbor za pomoć hercegovačkim ustanicima).⁴⁰ In 1875, however, Vuličević was also taken by the specific events in Dalmatia: that year

³⁶ N. Stipčević, *Marko Antonio Kanini i Srbija*, 156.

³⁷ Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Raccolta De Gubernatis, 22, 52, Canini a De Gubernatis, 25 luglio e 3 agosto 1876.

³⁸ *Il Pungolo*, May 4th 1877.

³⁹ The letter is in the possession of the author.

⁴⁰ R. Petrović, "Djelovanje dubrovačkog odbora za pomaganje hercegovačkih ustanika. 1875–876 godine", cit., 236–237; A. Tamborra, *Ljudevit Vuličević tra Slavia e Italia* (Roma: Institute for the Study of the Italian Risorgimento, 1986), 59–63.

he published the volume *Partiti e lotte in Dalmazia*⁴¹, as Luciano Monzali⁴² also recalled a few years ago. As Tamborra illustrates in his biography of Vuličević, a tormented figure torn between religion and social-political commitment, the Trieste Committee split amidst considerable controversy. While the latter was all in favour of Ljubibratić, Eugenio Popovich from Trieste, of Montenegrin origin, supported instead the aspirations of Prince Nikola Petrović Njegoš. The president of that committee, Velimir Lombardić, struggled somewhat to hold the two factions together. As a result, Vuličević took a strong Serbophile stance, for some time distancing himself from the Croatian world with which he had closer ties. He described the events in the Balkan peninsula as a 'Yugoslav war'. This was soon followed by his conversion to the Waldensian Church.⁴³

Among those who took advantage of the organisational help of the Trieste centre were some men close to Garibaldi such as Luciano Montalti, Giuseppe Gomberti and Federico Volante. The centre, moreover, had relations with another hub created in Venice around Roberto Galli, editor of *Il Tempo*, a man who in the following decades was still known for his interest in Balkan affairs and in particular those of Greece, so much so that today there is a street named after him not far from the Acropolis and next to the one dedicated to Garibaldi. It was precisely by *Il Tempo* that Agostino Zanusso, who also wrote for the well-known Milanese newspaper *Il secolo*, was sent to Herzegovina as a reporter. It should be remembered that *Il Corriere della sera*, which eventually replaced *Il secolo* as the leading paper, was founded in Milan in 1876. With Zanusso was another war correspondent, Oreste Corsi, editor of *La Nuova Torino*. The latter sent a series of reports between August and October 1875 that perhaps deserve to be studied in more depth. Both of these journalists, as well as those who had encouraged or helped them to travel across the Adriatic, from a personal point of view, were strongly involved in the on-going struggle.⁴⁴

These are some particular examples of the presence of Italians or persons active in Italian circles among those who tried to intervene in the events that determined the fate of the southern Slavic peoples in the mid-1870s. Those initiatives did not lead to concrete results and lagged far behind the actions of the governments. It was the latter that caused Bosnia-Herzegovina to ultimately be entrusted to the administration of Austria-Hungary, while Serbia and Montenegro continued on their historical trajectory, now as independent states, vacillating between close relations with Vienna, at least for a few years, and Pan-

⁴¹ L. Vuličević, *Partiti e lotte in Dalmazia* (Trieste: Tergesteo, 1875).

⁴² L. Monzali, *Italiani di Dalmazia. Dal Risorgimento alla Grande guerra* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2004), 55.

⁴³ A. Tamborra, *Ljudevit Vuličević tra Slavia e Italia*, 60–76.

⁴⁴ Idem, 62–63.

Slavic and Russophile sympathies. Italy, whose rulers did not always look sympathetically on projects like Canini's or volunteer expeditions, did not gain much from this. However, the extensive agitation described here retained a symbolic significance that was not entirely negligible in the expectation that the policies of individuals and associations would dovetail with those of governments.

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