The question of the Italo-Yugoslav borders was tied to the territorial settlements which resulted from World War I and which had since that time continually been a source of conflict between the two nations. The primary reason for the antagonism was the conflict between the two ethnic elements, Italian and Slav, living together in the same area. They were distributed so unequally that in many cases, particularly in the rural areas, claims as to the numerical prevalence of one over the other led to continual disputes. In addition, the policy of suppression of ethnic minority groups pursued by the Fascist Government during the twenty years of its rule transformed the ethnic character of the area, and rendered a just decision even more difficult.

The center of the area under discussion was the city of Trieste, predominantly Italian with a very fine natural harbor, which from the end of the 18th century had been one of the most important outlets of the Austrian Empire and, after its dismemberment, for the Central European states. The economic value of Trieste remained very great, justifying the demands of the young Yugoslav state which wanted to turn it into a base for its commercial operations with Central and Eastern Europe.

For Italy Trieste was of sentimental and historical as well as economic interest. The annexation of Trieste after the end of World War I had in fact concluded the movement for Italian national unity. The claims on Trento and Trieste and the surrounding areas with their partially Italian populations had represented since 1870 the leit motif of the Italian irredentist movement and the main formal justification for Italy's entrance into World War I on the side of the Allied nations. The secret Treaty of London of 1915 established the territorial compensation that Italy was to receive at the end of a victorious war, which among other areas included Venezia-Giulia with Trento, Trieste, Gorizia and the whole Istrian Peninsula, with the exception of the city of Fiume and the Dalmatian Coast. These were later

claimed by the Italian Government. At the end of the war, notwithstanding the opposition of President Wilson who, disregarding the London agreements, favored regulating the problem of the Italo-Yugoslav borders on an ethnic basis in accordance with one of the principles expressed in his Fourteen Points, Italy received partial satisfaction. The Treaty of St. Germain (September 10, 1919) ceded to Italy almost all the territories promised in the Treaty of London, while the decision on the problem of Fiume and Dalmatia was left to future negotiations.

In September 1919 Fiume was occupied in a local uprising led by the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio and nationalist elements from the army. Although the action was disapproved by the Rome Government, the latter waited complacently for fifteen months before deciding to put an end to the rebellion. The Treaty of Rapallo, in November 1920, settled the question of Dalmatia. By it the Italian Government renounced its claim to that region in exchange for the cession of Zara and several coastal islands. In 1924, with the Treaty of Rome, the question of Fiume was finally resolved by its cession to Italy.

At the end of World War II Yugoslavia, on the strength of its rights as a nation that had been invaded and occupied by Italo-German troops and had then emerged victorious, claimed from Italy, Zara, the Istrian peninsula, Fiume and Trieste with the entire Venezia-Giulia region. If these demands had been fully satisfied, Italy would have returned in practice to its 1915 borders in this region.

The position of Yugoslavia was especially strong, not only because of its war effort, which had been sustained for over three years by Tito's partisan army, but also because at the time of the surrender of the German troops, the Yugoslavs had succeeded in occupying all of Istria, reaching Trieste which they held for forty-five days. Later on, following an agreement for the delimitation of the occupation zone made with the command of the Anglo-American troops who had reached Trieste from the West, the Yugoslav troops were forced to retreat, leaving the city under the

control of an Allied military government. All of Istria, with the exception of the city of Pola and a good part of Venezia-Giulia, were assigned to Yugoslavia as its occupation zone. The solution was temporary, awaiting a decision by the peace treaty, but it clearly constituted an advantageous position for Yugoslavia.

If one compares this with the Italian position, it is easy to see how wide the differences were between the two parties. The Italian thesis was set forth by De Gasperi in a letter dated August 22nd to James Byrnes, American Secretary of State. In it he also presented the Italian position with regard to all other problems dealt with in the peace treaty. The letter proposed as a basis for the delimitation of the Italo-Yugoslav border that the line drawn by Wilson should be applied, that is, the proposal which the American President had made in 1919 as an alternative to the borders attributed to Italy by the Treaty of London. This line took into particular consideration the ethnic factor, although it would have left 80,000 Italians in Yugoslavia. De Gasperi asked for ample guarantees for linguistic and cultural safeguards. From a territorial point of view the line was advantageous to Italy. Italy would have kept a major part of Istria, including the rich bauxite mines. In Venezia-Giulia minor rectifications would have been granted in favor of Yugoslavia. The same letter affirmed the necessity for an autonomous statute for the cities of Fiume and Zara, considering their predominantly Italian character.

The negotiations to find a solution to this controversy, deeply felt by both peoples, were long and difficult. Because of its status as a country *sub judice*, Italy did not participate directly, but the Italian Government tried every means of influencing the final decisions, starting with direct negotiations with Yugoslavia, which brought no results whatsoever, and leading to energetic requests to the Allied governments, especially the United States which more than the others favored the Italian position. In September 1946 the Rome Government finally advanced a proposal to hold a plebiscite; this, however, was rejected.

An important step toward the resolution of the controversy was made in March 1946 with the dispatch of a quadripartite commission into the territories that were concerned. Its task was to trace a frontier line which would take into account the opposing demands and would be acceptable to the four major powers. As was to be foreseen, the commission did not succeed in formulating a common proposal; each of the representatives of the four powers came up with a different border line.

The Soviet line penetrated more deeply into the Giulian territory of Venezia-Giulia, in almost exact agreement with the Yugoslav request. The English and American lines differed little, but the latter was more advantageous to Italy. The fourth proposal, presented by France, was a compromise which took special cognizance of the ethnic factor. It was on this basis in fact that the final accord was reached later on, after repeated wrangles between the Russians, who for political and ideological motives took up the defense of Slav interests, and the Anglo-Americans who were closer to the Italian point of view. The fate of Trieste remained to be solved, a question which for practical reasons it was decided to set apart from the border question.

The proposal to turn the city and its surrounding area into a free territory under UN administration encountered the hostility of both the Italian and the Yugoslav Governments, but at the time it seemed the only possible solution. In expectation of the choice of a governor and considering the difficulties of drafting the final statute, in view of the reserves of the four powers to the agreement, a temporary statute was adopted. The entire territory of Trieste was subdivided into two zones: Zone A and Zone B. The former included the city of Trieste and remained under an Anglo-American military government; the latter included all of Istria and was turned over to Yugoslav military administration. This temporary solution was destined to remain in effect for seven years, until October 1954. Consequently, the peace treaty only partly solved the problem of the borders between Italy and Yugoslavia, leaving the fate of

the Free Territory of Trieste undecided. The future of the controversy, which was directly tied to the evolution of the international situation and internal developments in Italy, poisoned the relations between the two bordering nations which in the fall of 1953 reached a point of explosive tension.

All the clauses of the peace treaty concerning the eastern borders appeared to the Italian people, and especially to the generations that during World War I had fought bitterly for these territories, as the hardest part of the treaty. They now saw their efforts nullified and their sacrifices rendered vain. The hope for the restitution of Trieste remained and was in the years to come exploited by groups and parties in a demagogic way, especially in electoral campaigns, thus constituting for the country, whose development toward democracy was beset with difficulties and incertitudes, an experience which was in direct opposition to the development of a genuine democratic consciousness.

SOUTH TYROL (ALTO ADIGE)

Among the requests for territorial revisions with regard to the Italian borders, one was made by Austria concerning the province of Bolzano. This zone, which in Italy is known as the Alto Adige and in Austria as the South Tyrol, came to Italy at the end of World War I, although more than two-thirds of its population was of German language and culture. A large-scale immigration of Italians into the area and massive investments for the exploitation of electric power resources between the two wars transformed the Alto Adige into a region in which Italian economic interests became more and more important.

The problem of the German community had been partly solved by the Hitler-Mussolini agreement of 1939, which established a nationality option for the German-speaking element. As a result of this agreement 185,365 inhabitants (out of 266,885) chose German citizenship, and a good

part of them (about 70,000) moved within the borders of the Third Reich. After September 8, 1943, Germany incorporated this zone militarily and politically, but the necessities of war slowed down the implementation of a policy of outright annexation to the German Reich. In 1945, when its independence was reestablished, Austria asked for the annexation of the South Tyrol and justified the request because of the German-speaking ethnic group, which after the end of the war had grown again with the return from Germany of most of those who had chosen to leave after the option in 1939. The Austrian request received backing by France and by conservative political circles in Great Britain who favored reinforcing the small and weak Austrian state in line with a policy of restoring the power equilibrium in Central Europe.

Italy rejected the request, giving its reasons in the letter already cited from De Gasperi to Secretary Byrnes. The Italian position was that it was a manifest injustice to favor a country which after the *Anschluss*[1] had accepted the objectives and methods of Nazi policies and had fought the war against the democracies to the end, while Italy had redeemed itself by its contribution to the anti-Fascist struggle with its military and partisan action after September 8th. The injustice appeared even more brazen if one considered the openly pro-German and pro-Nazi attitude that had always been manifest among the German element in the Alto Adige. De Gasperi pointed to the investments made by Italy that had benefited the region, in particular the construction of power plants (which furnished 13 per cent of the national production of electricity) and the mechanical industries in the Bolzano area. The Rome Government's vigorous defense of its position in the area and the better bargaining position of Italy *vis-à-vis* Austria, which had been part of the German Reich and as such had participated in the war against the Allied powers until 1945, eventually won out.

[1] That is, the integration with Nazi Germany which occurred following the occupation of Austria by German troops in March 1938.

Revised, and partly translated,
by Elizabeth and Victor Velen

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FOREWORD

The history of Italy after the fall o
the history of the efforts made to cha
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chronological account of the political e
1943-1963, with an indispensable re
periods, but also to clarify the basic is
the political debate has developed and to
apparently doctrinaire questions were clo
practical problems and real situations.

Born out of lectures given in my
politics at Stanford-in-Italy, this history
reshaped. I owe my students a debt of
comments, questions and discussions. I a
Betty and Victor Velen for their most
in revising the English manuscript and
suggestions.

Stanford University
Florence, December 1963.