

УДК 327(497.1:450)"1936/1939"

32:929 Стојадиновић М.

32:929 Ђано Г.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.31212/tokovi.2019.3.sim.11-36>

Оригинални научни рад

Примљен: 22. 4. 2019.

Прихваћен: 28. 5. 2019.

*Bojan SIMIĆ*

Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade

[smcbjn@yahoo.com](mailto:smcbjn@yahoo.com)

## Milan Stojadinović and Count Ciano – A History of a Friendship\*

**Abstract:** Based on archives, memoirs and relevant literature, this article analyzes the relationship between Milan Stojadinović and Galeazzo Ciano, the foreign ministers of Yugoslavia and Italy, in the period leading up to World War II. This rapport had a considerable impact on relations between the two countries in the years between 1936 and 1939.

**Key words:** Milan Stojadinović, Galeazzo Ciano, diplomacy, propaganda

After a prolonged period of crisis, relations between the Kingdoms of Yugoslavia and Italy started to improve in late 1936.<sup>1</sup> As the drivers of this process we can identify Count Ciano and Milan Stojadinović, who was also prime minister. Although the two politicians answered to Mussolini and Prince Paul, who supported and guided the policy of cooperation, we can say that the two ministers gave the process of rapprochement a personal touch.

---

\* This article has been written within the framework of the scholarly project *Tradition and Transformation – Historical Heritage and National Identity in Serbia in 20th Century* (№ 47019), financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development Republic of Serbia.

1 On this topic, see particularly: Živko Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935–1937*, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1968), 261–317; Bogdan Krizman, "Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918–1941)", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 1/1979, 58–96; Ladislav Deak, "Jugoslovensko-italijanski odnosi 1932–1937", *Istorija 20. veka*, XIV–XV, 1982, 198–214; Massimo Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1922–1939)*, (Bari: B. A. Graphis, 2006), 327–383.

The relationship between Ciano and Stojadinović was somewhat specific, and it should be given special attention. They were both regarded as men who knew how to enjoy life, they loved good wine, dancing, and beautiful women. To this day there is an expression that one lives like Count Ciano. It is used for someone who, in addition to being wealthy, knows how to use their fortune to live a comfortable life, and also has good taste when it comes to expensive and exotic things. During the period in question, Stojadinović and Ciano met several times: in Yugoslavia in 1937 and 1939 and in Italy in 1937 and 1938. Their friendly and cordial relationship can be seen in numerous photographs, as well as in archival video footage recorded by the Italian Film Institute known as *Luce*, as well as in a number of photographs in the contemporary press.<sup>2</sup> Vladislav Stakić, Prince Paul's special emissary for dialogues with Italy, noted: *The closeness in the Ciano-Stojadinović relationship was obvious. It was no longer a rapport between the ministers of two neighboring and friendly countries; it was an intimacy between partners on the same job.*<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian Foreign Minister Kánya said: *it is unfortunate for Hungary that Ciano and Göring are charmed with Stojadinović.*<sup>4</sup>

Miloš Crnjanski, who was then press attaché at the Legation in Rome, noted: *Regardless of how much friendships in that world – the world of diplomats – are false, there can be no doubt that Stojadin and Ciano liked each other. This was obvious to any observer.*<sup>5</sup> Given the photographs, statements and demeanor of the two men, it did not take a man like Crnjanski to reach that conclusion. Historians also agree on the matter. Luciano Monzali concluded that Stojadinović was *the man on whom all hopes were placed*,<sup>6</sup> while Ciano's biographer Guerri wrote about the Yugoslav prime minister as Ciano's only friend in the world of international politics.<sup>7</sup>

Even today, eighty years after his departure from government, Serbian and Yugoslav politician and statesman Milan Stojadinović is a figure who provokes controversy and is both celebrated and condemned. We can say that judgments about him go from one extreme to the other. Different opinions exist among historians as well. He was finance minister

2 A large number of recordings and photographs can be seen on the website: <http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/>

3 Vladislav D. Stakić, *Moji razgovori sa Musolinijem*, (Minhen, 1967), 53.

4 Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2010), 159.

5 Miloš Crnjanski, *Politički portreti*, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1990).

6 Luciano Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia. L'Italia, la questione Jugoslava e L'Europa Centrale (1918-1941)*, (Firenze: La Lettere, 2010), 74.

7 Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Galeazzo Ciano*, (Milano: Bompiani, 2011), 409.

three times (1922–1926, 1934–1935), as well as prime minister and foreign minister (1935–1939). A comprehensive scholarly work on his life and work does not exist, but there is already an extensive body of literature which has been growing for several decades.<sup>8</sup> A lucky circumstance is that Stojadinović himself left behind his memories, which have been published in two editions: memoirs which cover the period until 1941 and diary entries from Mauritius, which end with the year 1948, when he moved to Argentina.<sup>9</sup> The only part missing from his pen is the final period of his life, that is, the thirteen years he spent in South America. Even though these works were written from a personal angle, they are of immeasurable importance for understanding Serbian and Yugoslav history, as well as the history of inter-war Europe.

The other participant, Galeazzo Ciano, was born in Livorno in 1903, the son of Count Costanzo Ciano, who was considered a Fascist hero. After a brief career in journalism, Galeazzo went into diplomatic service. He served in Brazil and China before becoming minister of press and propaganda in 1935. Five years earlier, he married Mussolini's daughter Edda. The two had an "open marriage," from which they had three children. Ciano left behind his diary entries, as well as his diplomatic writings, which were published posthumously.<sup>10</sup> These represent absolutely essential reading for anyone concerned with the political and diplomatic history of Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>11</sup>

After serving as minister of propaganda, Ciano was named foreign minister in June 1936. Until then, the position had been held by Mussolini

---

8 Milan Stojadinović, *Politika u vreme globalnih lomova*, ed. Miša Đurković, (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike – Centar za konzervativne studije, 2013), 283–290, contains at the end an ample list of monographs and articles which focus on him to a greater or lesser degree.

9 Milan Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, (Buenos Aires: El Economista, 1963); Milan Stojadinović, *Zatočenik njegovog britanskog visočanstva*, (Melburn: Srpska misao, 1976).

10 Two biographies on the life of Ciano have been published recently: Eugenio di Renzo, *Ciano*, (Roma: Salerno editrice, 2018); Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Galeazzo Ciano*, (Milano: Bompiani, 2001).

11 We have used the Italian editions of Count Ciano's diaries and documents published under his name: Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943*, (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2010). As has been noted before, the editions published in Yugoslavia immediately after World War II abound in imprecise and loose translations. Commenting on the translation of Ciano's diary, historian Dušan Biber wrote: "it is, as in many other places, mistranslated either out of ignorance or on purpose." Dušan Biber, "O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade", *Istorija XX veka*, (Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka, 1966), 33, fn. 93. Since these documents are available to us in the original, we will keep to archival records, and cite the pages from the Yugoslav edition when necessary for the purpose of alignment.

himself, who did the work with the help of Fulvio Suvich. This event was not received with much enthusiasm by the Belgrade press. *Politika* wrote that the appointment of young Ciano had caused *a great commotion in diplomatic and political circles*.<sup>12</sup> He was 33 at the time, which was not considered mature enough for such a position. *Vreme*, which would later heap praise on Ciano, was not particularly thrilled either, printing the headline that *the Duce's son-in-law* was the new foreign minister.<sup>13</sup>

According to Guido Viola,<sup>14</sup> the Italian envoy in Belgrade, when Ciano took over as foreign minister, Yugoslav-Italian relations had been in *a deadlock*, meaning that *old fears and distrust* of Italy dominated in Belgrade once again. There were several reasons for that: agreements between Italy, Austria, and Hungary, signed in Rome, new agreements between Italy and Albania in March of 1936, the release of Pavelić and Kvaternik that same month, as well as the relatively quick victory in Ethiopia, which the Yugoslav authorities had not seen coming.<sup>15</sup> Viola concluded that all these demonstrations of power by Italy were supposed to persuade Yugoslavia to make an agreement, but the *Yugoslav mentality*, he noted, was responsible for the belief that an alliance between the two countries at that point could not be formed without territorial concessions on the Yugoslav side.<sup>16</sup>

In the fall, things changed. Initiatives were being introduced from several sides. Among those favoring the agreement was Germany, which wanted peace in that part of Europe. On 29 October, Ciano invited the Yugoslav envoy Dučić for a meeting at the Chigi Palace. He told Dučić that he had considered all of the disputable issues between the two countries. Energetically and with theatrics, he showed his readiness to address the problems of Dalmatia and Croatia. He called for economic cooperation and emphasized the complementarity of the two countries' economies. He said that Stojadinović was a realist, like himself, and expected they would un-

12 *Politika*, 10. 6. 1936, 2.

13 *Vreme*, 10. 6. 1936, 1.

14 Guido Viola di Campalto (1883–1947) was an Italian diplomat who held a number of functions; among others, he held the posts of envoy in Copenhagen (1927–1931), Tehran (1932–1934), Belgrade (1935–1936) and Burgos (1937–1939).

15 In relation to that, the British Legation in Belgrade even noted that "the prospect of a prolonged colonial war, which would limit Italy's harmful influence in Europe, provoked a great sense of pleasure in the country." *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, II, ed. Živko Avramovski, (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 331.

16 D. 248, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (DDI), Ottava serie: 1935–1939, Volume IV (10 maggio – 31 agosto 1936), (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1993), 297–299. The complete series is available on the website: <http://www.farnesina.ipzs.it/series/>

derstand each other because of this. In the end, he exclaimed: *All enmity shall collapse like a house of cards, and all unity shall rise... and Italy and Yugoslavia will be made not two friends, but two sisters.*<sup>17</sup> That same day, as a gesture of goodwill, Ciano ordered the radio program in Serbo-Croatian, broadcast from Florence and Bologna and favorably disposed toward the Croats, to be taken off the air.<sup>18</sup> He informed the Yugoslav envoy of this. At the end of the meeting, he asked Dučić not to send his messages to Belgrade in writing, but to go there personally, and bring him Stojadinović's response.

After returning from Belgrade, Dučić brought Stojadinović's reply to Ciano. Ciano agreed that they should *first explore the terrain on which the negotiations would take place*. Through Dučić, Ciano communicated his great respect for Stojadinović, and said that he was an open-minded man who had a special energy and manliness about him, and a great future ahead of him.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that his statement on this occasion had more to do with courtesy and the desire to leave a good impression. At most, it was an *observation from afar* regarding Stojadinović's qualities. Later on in the correspondence, when Stojadinović thanked him for the compliments through Dučić, Ciano was pleased and he repeated his attitude: *Stojadinović knows what he is doing. He is a realist, and that is a rare quality in these evil and deranged times of ours! I am a realist, too... That is why I believe we shall succeed.*<sup>20</sup>

During his third conversation with Dučić, Ciano was perfectly candid, saying that Yugoslavia should be one of the pillars of Italy's policies. He concluded: *There is no point in even talking about trivial matters, but about those things that last not only a year, two or three, even ten... but forever. We need all or nothing!*<sup>21</sup> So, the Italian foreign minister wanted an alliance similar to that of the Rome-Berlin Axis. Such a far-reaching step was not acceptable for Yugoslavia, at least not at that point. Stojadinović later wrote that Ciano did not mention his request about approaching the

17 Jovan Dučić, *Diplomatski spisi*, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1991), 191; Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia*, 329.

18 D. 377, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume V, 425, fn. 4.

19 Dučić, *Diplomatski spisi*, no. 68, Second conversation with Ciano, 194.

20 *Ibid.*, no. 71, A report to Stojadinović on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1936, 199.

21 *Ibid.*, no. 69, Dučić's third conversation with Ciano, 195. - The Italian historian Bucarelli titled one of the subchapters in his book based on this statement. Bucarelli, "Occorre tutto o niente: le aperture italiane dell'autunno 1936", *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia*, 327.

Axis ever again.<sup>22</sup> The British were also informed that Stojadinović would not form the alliance.<sup>23</sup>

Stojadinović spoke frequently with the new Italian envoy, Mario Indelli, as well.<sup>24</sup> Particularly interesting is a conversation they had on 2 February 1937, about which we have information from both participants. The first thing that catches the eye is Stojadinović's conclusion after the meeting, that it was Ciano himself who was the author of Italy's new policy toward Yugoslavia. He noted that the Italian minister was sincere in his wish that the agreement they sign should thrive, rather than remaining *a dead letter*.<sup>25</sup> As for Indelli, he noted that Stojadinović was particularly concerned about the *guarantees for terrorists*, referring to the Ustasas. As expected, he was delighted that Ciano had announced he would come to Belgrade personally for the signing.<sup>26</sup>

The Italian minister came on his first official visit on 25 March. During his stay in Yugoslavia, Ciano visited Oplenac, the Monument to the Unknown Hero on Mt. Avala, the Italian military cemetery in Belgrade, and the airport in Zemun. Together with Stojadinović and his wife, he walked around Belgrade and went sightseeing on the Kalemegdan Fortress. The visit was accompanied by the inevitable toasts and appropriate speeches. Ciano proudly emphasized that he was the first Italian foreign minister to visit Yugoslavia. It is interesting to mention that during the visit, at Mussolini's suggestion, Ciano awarded Stojadinović the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus, first class.<sup>27</sup>

Upon his return, Ciano gave Mussolini a detailed report on his impressions of his stay in Yugoslavia. His feeling was that the agreement they had reached was the first step, albeit the hardest one, on the road toward an alliance between the two countries. Ciano believed that Italy should

22 Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, 417.

23 *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, II, 444.

24 Mario Indelli was born in Florence in 1896, and he graduated from the Faculty of Law in Bologna. He began his diplomatic career in 1911. He held posts in İzmir, Palma de Mallorca, Locarno, Istanbul and Lausanne. Before coming to Belgrade, he was the Italian envoy in Albania for two years (1934–1936). After a number of years of service in the Yugoslav capital, he was appointed envoy in Tokyo.

25 Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), 37–30–28, Conversation with Indelli on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, handwritten.

26 On the negotiations and the agreement, see: Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje*, 267–292; Krizman, *Italija u politici*, 65–77; Jacob B. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934–1941*, (Rijeka: Otakar Keršovani, 1972), 94–116; Enes Milak, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1987), 132–141; Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia*, 327–383.

27 AJ, 38–112–1410.

take the place that France had had in Yugoslavia until not that long ago. He expressed his desire for all potential problems in the future to be addressed quickly. For that purpose, outside official diplomatic channels, they appointed Stojadinović's brother Dragomir, and Filippo Anfuso, who was an Italian diplomat and Ciano's friend.<sup>28</sup>

Ciano was fascinated by his Yugoslav colleague. As we have seen, he had a favorable opinion of him even before, but he had now become convinced of his qualities firsthand. Stojadinović seemed to Ciano a man of *indomitable will and a bright and open mind*. As noted by the historian Burgwyn, Ciano paid him the ultimate compliment by labeling him as a Fascist, although he was not formally but could be seen as one in terms of his *concept of authority, state and life*.<sup>29</sup> Ciano had received assurances from Prince Paul that he trusted Stojadinović completely, which led him to conclude that Stojadinović would one day hold the position of dictator.<sup>30</sup> Also testifying to Ciano's enchantment was Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, who attended the dinner at the Italian Legation. He wrote in his diary that Ciano *sang odes to our Prime Minister*, lauding his physique, intelligence, spirit, and authority.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Stojadinović brings in his memoirs the more private details of the visit. He wrote, for instance, that, during their first dinner, Ciano drew his attention to *two very beautiful ladies with deep cleavages*, saying that the two of them had a well-known weakness for the fair sex, which Stojadinović confirmed with a smile.<sup>32</sup> Thus began a friendship that would go beyond ordinary diplomatic relations that were mostly courteous and devoid of emotion.<sup>33</sup>

In a conversation with Indelli on 10 April, Stojadinović stressed that, in terms of international relations, he intended to continue working closely with Ciano and confer with him before addressing concrete issues.<sup>34</sup> Upon receiving the report from the meeting of the Little Entente held in

28 D. 345, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VI, 412–418; *Tajni arhivi grofa Ciana*, 111–119.

29 James H. Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period 1918–1940*, (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 156.

30 D. 345, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VI, 417.

31 Milan Jovanović Stoimirović, *Dnevnik 1936–1941*, Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2000, 115.

32 Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, 418.

33 In May, when a representative of the Central Press Bureau (CPB) handed him a photo album which contained photos taken during his visit to Belgrade, Ciano used the opportunity to say that Stojadinović was one of the most industrious and likeable people he had met during his latest political travels. AJ, 38–108, Report of the CPB's language editor to the Italian press on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1937.

34 D. 435, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VI, 551.

Belgrade in early April, Ciano was glad to conclude that everything had gone according to Stojadinović's plan, which he had laid out to him during his stay in Belgrade, and with which he had *agreed completely*.<sup>35</sup> To a greater or lesser extent, from 1937 on, the relationship between Stojadinović and the Italians would be the kind of relationship that Prince Paul had with the English.

It was not only Stojadinović who notified Ciano beforehand of what he would say at his meetings; it was also the other way around. Before a trip to Tirana in late April, for example, the Italian prime minister wrote to his Yugoslav colleague that he would meet with King Zog but that the visit would be devoid of politics or diplomatic negotiations of any sort.<sup>36</sup> Stojadinović was also informed by Indelli about Ciano's statements in Tirana after the visit was over.

When it came to Ustasha emigrants, Ciano endeavored to inform Stojadinović promptly about the enforcement of measures stipulated by the agreement. He emphasized that Pavelić and Kvaternik had been confined and unable to devise any kind of plot. He also mentioned the 20 Ustasas who wished to return to Yugoslavia. Most importantly, as early as 14 April, he called for the effectuation of a provision allowing a police official to come to Italy and oversee the implementation of the agreement.<sup>37</sup> Sava Ćirković arrived in Rome and got to work immediately, so he was able to send a report to the head of the ministry as early as 21 April saying that he had received a list of Ustasas and their whereabouts.<sup>38</sup>

Still, there were some problems in that regard. After Stjepan Marušić was arrested in Paris, having arrived there from Italy, Ciano's excuse was that he had left the country before the signing of the Belgrade Agreement. On the other hand, he said that Marušić's wife and children were still in Italy and that he was *bound because of that*. In the end, he sent an emotional and melodramatic message in which he said that he is *not afraid for himself personally, but that he is prepared to do anything for the safety of his friend, Prime Minister Stojadinović, and that the Prince Regent's peace shall never be disturbed*.<sup>39</sup> Such a pathetic statement was in keeping with his personality.<sup>40</sup>

35 D. 452, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume VI, 568.

36 D. 452, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume VI, 568.

37 D. 459, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume VI, 577.

38 Krizman, *Italija u politici*, 76-77.

39 Dučić, *Diplomatski spisi*, no. 72, 200.

40 Incidentally, Marušić was arrested in Paris on 9<sup>th</sup> May, he was tried and condemned to three months in prison for having falsified documents, and was then exiled from



During the summer of 1937, the friendship between the two Ministers had already reached a high level. In July, Ciano asked the Yugoslav envoy in Rome to communicate to Stojadinović his admiration for the prime minister's *strong character and daring attitude*, and that his friendship was based on *a sort of spiritual affinity*.<sup>41</sup> Soon afterwards, Ciano sent an invitation for a private meeting in Venice, which was to take place as early as August. Stojadinović agreed to meet in November, but they later came up with the idea to organize an official reciprocal visit for the one in March.<sup>42</sup> Given the internal problems regarding the Concordat, it is clear that Stojadinović could not accept the offer to travel to Italy so soon, no matter how much he wanted to. Ciano understood his reasons, but he added that a private visit could nonetheless be organized, independently of the official one, which was provisionally scheduled for November.<sup>43</sup>

An episode in late August 1937 is of special importance for the development of Stojadinović's trust in the Italians and in his colleague Ciano. Namely, Ciano's secretary Filippo Anfuso was sent to Bled in order to present the prime minister with evidence about Franco-Czechoslovak activities against him. It was a British document they had obtained in which Campbell quotes a telegram from the British envoy in Prague indicating a conspiracy to overthrow Stojadinović.<sup>44</sup> When he received the photographed document, the Yugoslav prime minister was expectedly furious. After Anfuso's return, Ciano concluded: *He will go to the meeting of the Little Entente with bloodshot eyes. The blow has been successful*.<sup>45</sup> The Italian prime minister could be pleased with what had been achieved and believe that it would tie Stojadinović even closer to Italy. In a conversation with Indelli, Stojadinović said that he would, either before or after his visit to Rome, go to Paris to formally renew the 1927 Friendship Pact, but that he would not change *a single comma in it*, in spite of French de-

---

France. He later claimed that ministers Delbos and Blum had personally intervened in his favor. Bogdan Krizman, *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1978), 579.

41 AJ, 38–30–122.

42 D. 142, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 176, fn. 1.

43 D. 156, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 197, fn. 2.

44 D. 236, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 284, fn. 2. The text of the telegram read: "In these circumstances, I read with regret the passage in Mr Newton's telegram no. 40, referring to a Franco-Czechoslovak plot to undermine Mr. Stojadinović's position and bring about a change of Government. Nor should I have thought that Mr. Beneš would lend himself to such a manoeuvre, for he told a colleague of mine, who repeated it to me, that the opposition leaders who he met, much to Stojadinović's annoyance, at a reception at the Czechoslovak Legation, had one and all made the worst possible impression on him."

45 Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943*, 29.

mands. Likely referring to the content of the document he had seen, he also added that France's recent attitude toward Yugoslav internal affairs had made him quite unenthusiastic about the trip.<sup>46</sup>

Ciano's message immediately before the celebration of Independence Day in Albania (28 November) speaks to the fact that the Italians cared very much about not offending Stojadinović in any way. He explained to Stojadinović that Italy's financial aid and its involvement in the celebration were in accordance with the spirit of the notes exchanged in March regarding Albania. *Nothing has been done, nor will it be done, if it is not in harmony with the friendly relations between Italy and Yugoslavia.*<sup>47</sup>

It seems that both sides were impatiently waiting for Stojadinović's official visit to Italy in December of 1937. Ciano clearly speaks about the importance of his guest and of the visit itself in his diary, when he writes that this was a strong, hot-blooded man, who was rightly full of self-confidence, and had a thunderous laughter and a firm handshake, which inspired confidence. He also noted that, out of all the politicians he had met until then, Stojadinović had left the best impression on him. A telephone conversation between the English press attaché and a journalist revealed that the British Embassy had found out that the Italians wanted to use Stojadinović's weakness for women to lure him to their side as much as possible. Ciano admitted as much himself because he personally organized *several balls with the most beautiful women of Roman society.*<sup>48</sup> It was clear that the Italian side did not leave anything to chance and that the Yugoslav guest held an important place both at that time and in their plans for the future.

At the Termini Railway Station, the prime minister was greeted by Mussolini and Ciano, along with numerous officials. In addition to talks with the Fascist leader and Ciano during his three-day stay in Rome, Stojadinović was received by King Victor Emmanuel III and subsequently by Pope Pius XI. The Yugoslav prime minister and Mussolini then went to see a drill performed by Fascist youth organizations in a forum named after the host. Stojadinović also visited the university campus, the Guidonia Air Base, the newly-founded cities of Littoria, Pontinia, Sabaudia, and Aprilia, as well as the exposition at the Museum of Ancient Rome.<sup>49</sup> Thousands of

46 D. 250, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 305.

47 D. 627, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 735.

48 Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, 65-66.

49 These are four cities in the province of Latina, south of Rome, which were built during the 1930s on terrain that was reclaimed by draining the marshlands.

people were involved in the program, and the guest was showered with attention at every corner.

On the way to Milan, he was accompanied by Ciano and Propaganda Minister Alfieri, who had previously held a reception for a delegation of Serbian journalists. In Milan, Stojadinović visited the *Alfa Romeo* automobile factory, the *Pirelli* tire factory, and La Scala, where he and his wife saw Puccini's opera *La Bohème*. There, he met and spoke with many people, from senior officials to common laborers. He stayed in northern Italy for less than two full days.

Ciano was very pleased with the visit. He concluded that Stojadinović liked the dictatorship and wished to implement that system in his own country. He said that Stojadinović *adopted the Roman salute and wears an antelope-lined coat because it looks more military*.<sup>50</sup> He estimated that Stojadinović would surely remain in power for four more years, until the king came of age, and probably after that as well. In a final recap of the visit, the count maintained that it had set the foundation for a future alliance, which *could operate in various directions. One day, perhaps, even to the north*.<sup>51</sup> By the north, he was clearly referring to Hitler's Germany.<sup>52</sup> Based on Ciano's testimony and the behavior of the Yugoslav prime minister himself, it is clear that Stojadinović reveled in all the attention he was getting. Of course, bearing in mind that this was a man who paid great attention to propaganda, it can also be concluded that Stojadinović was trying to leave exactly the impression that his host was expecting him to leave.

Upon returning to the Yugoslav capital, Stojadinović received telegrams from Mussolini and Ciano. In addition to the usual courtesies, the former remarked that he was uncommonly pleased to have met him and spoken with him and that he would be his advocate to the king and emperor.<sup>53</sup> Ciano, who had already met Mr. and Mrs. Stojadinović, highlighted that he had the *fondlest memories* of their stay in Italy. He addressed his Yugoslav colleague as *dear prime minister and friend*.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Ciano's son Marzio was born a few days after the visit, and Stojadinović immediately congratulated him by telegram.<sup>55</sup>

50 Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943*, 66.

51 *Ibid.*, 67.

52 For more on the visit, see: Bojan Simić, "Poseta Milana Stojadinovića Italiji decembra 1937", *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2017, 71–84.

53 AJ, 37–30–149, Mussolini's telegram to Stojadinović on 12th December 1937.

54 AJ, 37–30–148, Ciano's telegram to Stojadinović on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1937.

55 Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943*, 70.

It seemed that the Italians had once again gotten hold of some document from the British Legation in Belgrade, which they decided to hand to Stojadinović personally. This time, the role of messenger was given to Caracciolo di Melito, an official of the foreign ministry.<sup>56</sup> Upon arriving in the Yugoslav capital, he handed the document to Indelli,<sup>57</sup> at the same time receiving from him a confidential report about the state of affairs in Yugoslavia, which he passed on to Ciano. In that report, Indelli observed a kind of duality in Yugoslav politics, which reflected the personalities of Prince Paul and Stojadinović. Whereas one represented a cautious element tied, above all, to England, the other represented a *new and dynamic* element. He saw in Stojadinović a guarantee of Italo-Yugoslav relations, because any deterioration of the said relations would be seen as a personal failure of the prime minister.<sup>58</sup> It was clear that the document they had obtained was not to their liking, but that Indelli doubted Stojadinović's direct involvement. It is important to mention that even then, in late 1937, it was noted that Prince Paul sided, first and foremost, with England, whereas the Yugoslav prime minister looked to Italy.

During the following year, the collaboration between the two ministers continued with the same intensity. As early as 2 January 1938, Ciano ordered the Italian envoy Indelli to present Stojadinović with a copy of the Greco-Turkish military convention. On 14 January, Indelli announced that he had handed the document to the Yugoslav prime minister, who considered it of great value.<sup>59</sup> This was now the third document that Stojadinović had received from Italian diplomats in a short time span. Mutual trust was clearly on the rise.

In Yugoslavia, criticism of Stojadinović's foreign policy continued in 1938, as it had been during the previous year. This was primarily because of the pact with Italy, so Stojadinović used Indelli to ask for help. He asked the Italian side to issue some appropriate statement, which would give him an argument, at least purely formal, to appease the opposition in parliament. Stojadinović had in mind his regular foreign policy speech before the members of parliament, which took place in early March. The

---

56 Filippo Caracciolo (1903–1965) was an Italian diplomat who came from a respectable noble family. He eventually became an anti-Fascist, so he later on got involved in the politics of the Republic of Italy, worked in Badoglio's government, and was a Representative in the Council of Europe from 1949 until 1954.

57 The document in question has unfortunately not been preserved in the Italian archives. D. 741, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 845–846, fn. 1.

58 D. 741, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 845–846.

59 D. 702, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VII, 807, fn. 1.

note shows that he expected some additional assurances regarding the minorities in the border regions.<sup>60</sup> Ciano turned down that particular request because there was no minority representative to talk to. An even more important reason was that such talks would resemble democratic and parliamentary practices, which were *absolutely unacceptable*.<sup>61</sup> He nevertheless added that the issue would be examined by the ministry of the interior, in accordance with Stojadinović's wishes. We have therefore seen that, like the Yugoslav prime minister, Ciano too had certain boundaries that he would not cross in their collaboration.

The situation related to the above did not mean that communication stopped. On the contrary, it intensified. As early as late February, during a meeting of the Balkan Entente in Ankara, the Italian side wished to resolve the issue of its members finally recognizing the Empire.<sup>62</sup> Ciano called upon Ambassador Carlo Galli<sup>63</sup> to contact Stojadinović on the matter, which he did promptly after Stojadinović's arrival in the Turkish capital. While working on the declaration, the Yugoslav prime minister regularly conferred with Galli, who passed the information along to Rome. When the document was eventually finalized, Stojadinović handed a copy to the Italian Ambassador. After their meeting, Galli was delighted by Stojadinović. He wrote: *The influence and authority of the president of the Yugoslav Ministerial Council were crucial and decisive in all matters*. In the end, he concluded once more what had already been said, namely that there was *absolute superiority of Yugoslavia and Stojadinović within the Balkan Entente*.<sup>64</sup> In early March, Ciano thanked Stojadinović through Indelli for his friendly deportment in Ankara.<sup>65</sup>

The two sides continued to exchange documents. In early March, Ciano handed Hristić a document about a conversation between Czechoslovak President Beneš and the French envoy. It was allegedly about a statement *that Mussolini should be eliminated*, which dated as far back as

60 D. 185, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VIII, 214–215.

61 D. 220, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VIII, 269.

62 In early 1938, the Empire was officially recognized by only eight countries: Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Albania, Japan, Yemen, and Manchuria, Japan's satellite state on Chinese territory.

63 Carlo Galli (1878–1966) was an Italian diplomat born in Florence. He served as Chief of Fascist Italy's diplomatic missions in: Tehran (1924–1926), Lisbon (1926–1928), Belgrade (1928–1934), and Ankara (1935–1938). He stood up against Mussolini and was appointed Minister of Popular Culture in Marshal Badoglio's government (1943–1944).

64 D. 239, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VIII, 284–285.

65 D. 261, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VIII, 313.

1923.<sup>66</sup> The Italians were convinced of its authenticity despite the denial of the Czechoslovak envoy. Although it was not directly related to Yugoslavia, this document played a double role. First, it was supposed to represent proof of Ciano's trust in Stojadinović, and second, it could be used to increase his already existing distrust of Beneš.

The Anschluss was accepted by both countries as inevitable, long before it actually happened in March 1938. Ciano met with Hristić on 24 March and stated that a thousand reasons had pushed him to make the Belgrade Agreement and that there were now a thousand and one to consolidate it. He expressed his desire to meet with Stojadinović and proposed that this should happen in Venice in July.<sup>67</sup> In Belgrade, Indelli also remarked that, regardless of the good relationship Stojadinović had with Germany, he would need, just to be safe, to stabilize Yugoslav-Italian relations, as well as those with Yugoslavia's Balkan allies.<sup>68</sup>

On the anniversary of the Pact, the statements of Mussolini and Ciano were published on the front page of *Vreme* magazine, and between them was their photograph with Stojadinović, taken during his stay in Rome. Whereas the Duce's statement was rather formal and directed in praising the Agreement and the decision to sign it, Ciano evoked memories of the day of the signing. He mentioned the *earnest friendship* that he shared with Stojadinović, *whose name and work are tied to this jubilant and productive period in Italo-Yugoslav relations*.<sup>69</sup> No matter how much it sounds that this statement was uttered out of courtesy, there were two truths behind it. Ciano thought of Stojadinović as a friend, and he associated the relations between the two countries at the time with him.

In mid-April, Ciano had a conversation with Hristić upon his return from Belgrade. The envoy relayed to him that Stojadinović was calm after the Anschluss, and that he did not expect, at least for the time being, any danger from Germany. He also told him that Stojadinović intended to maintain a policy characterized by exceptional neighborly relations with Germany, and a tight-knit, cordial and profound understanding with Italy. The most important message was that he intended to harmonize completely his policies with those of Italy and follow an identical course of action.<sup>70</sup>

66 AJ, 37-30, The document which represents a transcript of Hristić's letter is dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1937.

67 Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, 116.

68 D. 386, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VIII, 447.

69 *Vreme*, 25. 3. 1938, 1; Zamparelli, *Il controllo sulla stampa*, 91.

70 D. 491, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume VIII, 565-566.

As early as March 1938, after the Anschluss, a worried Ciano told Hristić that he would like to see the Yugoslav prime minister in Venice.<sup>71</sup> In April, Stojadinović sent a letter to Hristić saying he was planning to attend the Venice Biennale in June and wished to see Ciano on that same occasion. He emphasized that the visit would be *purely private in nature and that he would remain incognito as much as possible*.<sup>72</sup> He was mainly worried about how the great powers of England, France and Germany would react to the meeting. Ciano responded by telegraph: *Yes, mid-June, Venice*.<sup>73</sup> After Stojadinović reiterated his wish, a more detailed response arrived on 17 May. At this time, they fixed the dates for the visit as 15 and 16 June. In his telegram, Ciano also underlined that Mussolini had mentioned in a recent speech in Genoa the agreement with Yugoslavia, saying that peace now reigned on the Adriatic coasts.<sup>74</sup>

Shortly before the visit, Ciano sent a message to Indelli, saying that it was impossible to keep the visit secret. He thought it best to leave the impression that this was a tourist trip and a friendly meeting.<sup>75</sup> Immediately after that decision was made, Ciano sent a telegram to Berlin, informing the ambassador that he would meet with Stojadinović but that there would be no political talk and that the meeting would instead be *private and friendly in nature*.<sup>76</sup>

Interestingly, Stojadinović wrote in his memoirs that it was Count Ciano who insisted on him coming to Venice.<sup>77</sup> As we have seen, it was at the very least a mutual desire, but the Yugoslav prime minister seemed far more interested. Stojadinović travelled to Italy with his wife Augusta. Accompanying the married couple was Cabinet Chief Dragan Protić. On his way, Stojadinović paid a brief visit to Trieste, where he was greeted by the Yugoslav envoy in Rome Hristić and the Consul-General in Trieste Životić. However, the fact that they were greeted by Ciano at the railway station in Venice already suggested that the visit was not purely private in nature. All of them stayed at the Grand Hotel together. Purportedly, a twelve-room suite had been prepared for the Yugoslav prime minister.<sup>78</sup> On the following day, 17 June, there followed a visit to the Venice Biennale,

71 Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943*, 116.

72 AJ, 37–30–231. See also: *Aprilski rat 1941*, 31.

73 D. 67, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 104, fn. 3.

74 D. 102, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 145.

75 D. 68, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 104.

76 D. 220, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 300, fn. 2.

77 Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, 449.

78 *Stampa Sera*, 16–17. 6. 1938, 1.

where Yugoslavia was participating for the first time. The ministers, both in white dress suits, and Mrs. Stojadinović, showed up around 11 o'clock (the Italian press says around 11:30). They first visited the Italian pavilion: the fresco room, the exhibition dedicated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Italian artists' room, after which they proceeded to the Yugoslav pavilion.

Testifying to the topics, course and seriousness of the conversation in Venice is an official foreign ministry note composed by Ciano himself.<sup>79</sup> The first sentence of that report already points to the real nature of the visit clearly and unambiguously, and completely contradicts the official version. The note states: *Prime Minister Stojadinović has said that the main goal of his trip to Italy was to observe the general situation in order to familiarize himself with our policy in a detailed way, to inform us of his intentions, and to fully synchronize his international activities with ours* (underlined in the original, author's comment). Various topics were discussed at the meeting, including: 1) the situation surrounding Czechoslovakia; 2) relations with Germany; 3) relations with England; 4) relations with France, and 5) the issue of Albania. Stojadinović emphasized that the issue of Czechoslovakia was the most important one for him at the time. He said that he had no intention of dragging his country into a conflict with Germany in order to attempt to save *the artificial and unfriendly Czechoslovakia*. So as to formally evade responsibility, he asked Italy to persuade Hungary not to be the one to initiate a future attack on Czechoslovakia, because Yugoslavia would then be obliged to act under the treaty it had signed as a member of the Little Entente. If Hungary used the crisis provoked by Germany to its benefit, *then Yugoslavia would remain completely indifferent to the fate of Czechoslovakia*.<sup>80</sup> Ciano assured him that Hungary had no intention of provoking a conflict with Prague.

In the final part of the conversation, Stojadinović entreated Ciano to tell Mussolini that he could consider Yugoslavia *a country bound to Italy by stronger ties than those that could result from a written alliance, which could, if circumstances required, be reached in a few hours anyway*.<sup>81</sup> It is difficult to judge how much truth there really was in these words, but it is clear that Stojadinović was far closer to Italy than he had been only a year before.<sup>82</sup> The Italian press wrote very favorably about the Yugoslav prime

79 D. 237, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 318–321; Also: *Tajni arhivi grofa Ciana*, 225–229.

80 D. 237, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 318.

81 D. 237, DDI, Ottava serie, Volume IX, 320.

82 For more on the visit, see: Bojan Simić, "Susret Čano–Stojadinović na Bijenalu u Veneciji 1938. godine", *Arhiv* 1–2/2016, 124–136.



minister. Crnjanski concluded that Ciano had told the press that everything released about Stojadinović had to be written in a positive light.<sup>83</sup>

Before departing, Stojadinović expressed his desire for an even more intense and frequent personal contact with Ciano. He proposed that they meet at the Belje hunting estate in Baranja. Ciano distanced himself by saying he would accept the invitation if Mussolini agreed. The meeting would take place in January 1939 and could be seen as a continuation of what had been started in Venice, particularly regarding the issue of Albania. From the note of the Italian Foreign Ministry, which definitely contains some exaggerations but also facts that have been confirmed by the passage of time, we can generally conclude that Stojadinović made a tremendous effort to indulge his hosts and even make them believe that things were going more favorably for them than was actually the case. All of that was not unusual at all, since both foreign ministries were counting on the other side's cooperation in their future plans. However, facts would show that the two countries were not nearly as close as their ministers were. It is also interesting that Stojadinović did not leave any concrete information about this meeting in his memoirs.

Ciano stayed in Yugoslavia from 18 through 23 January 1939.<sup>84</sup> On this occasion, Stojadinović invited his Italian colleague to the Belje state-owned property located in Baranja. During the hunt, the Yugoslav foreign minister did everything he could to leave the best possible impression on his colleague.<sup>85</sup> When they received favorable news for the fascist forces in Spain, for instance, he exclaimed: *Corsica, Tunisia, Nice*, which were Italy's targets at the time.<sup>86</sup>

A reception was also held for Ciano at the ruling party's headquarters in Belgrade. The assembled members of the *Slovenski jug*, the Yugoslav Workers' Association (*Jugoras*), and the Yugoslav Radical Union Youth (Omladina JRZ) chanted the names of Mussolini, Ciano and Stojadinović, and the guests were greeted by the former minister and the prime minis-

83 Crnjanski, *Politički portreti*, 293–294.

84 On Ciano's visit, see: Živko Avramovski, "Italijanska okupacija Albanije i držanje jugoslovenske vlade", *Istorijski glasnik*, 1963, 10–12; Biber, "O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade", 18–23; Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi*, 147–149; Bojan Simić, "Poseta grofa Čana Jugoslaviji u januaru 1939. i pad Milana Stojadinovića", *Arhiv* 1–2/2018, 67–78.

85 In his notes, Milan Jovanović Stoimirović repeatedly refers to Ciano as a lecherous man. Also interesting is an alleged affair during his 1939 visit, which involved a daughter of "a respectable soldier and a worthy combatant." Stojadinović allegedly covered up the affair. Matica srpska, Manuscript Department, document marked M 13.407.

86 Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943*, 242.

ter's confidant, Đura Janković.<sup>87</sup> In the main room, the only picture aside from Stojadinović's was that of Mussolini. It was a photograph taken during their 1937 meeting in Rome. During the reception, everything suggested that Italy was Yugoslavia's main partner. The reception itself served to show that many members of the JRZ shared the prime minister's affinity for Fascist ideology. At any rate, Ciano was very pleased with the reception and the attention he received during his stay in Yugoslavia. In an official ministry note, he wrote: *First and foremost, I want to emphasize the exceptionally warm reception in Yugoslavia, not just by the government, but also by the popular masses.*<sup>88</sup>

Ciano concluded that Yugoslavia's territorial claims would not be significant, particularly after Prince Paul stated that Yugoslavia already had within its borders so many Albanians who were causing problems that it had *no desire to increase that number.*<sup>89</sup> Stojadinović, on the other hand, had his sights set above all on Shkodra and the Port of Shëngjin on the Adriatic. After the meeting, Stojadinović instructed Ciano to address Prince Paul on that matter. In reality, the Yugoslav prime minister was already aware that Paul had a negative opinion regarding the partition of Albania,<sup>90</sup> so he did not want to make any promises, instead making excuses about having to confer with the military leadership.<sup>91</sup> It is evident that Prince Paul also avoided giving Ciano a definitive answer. In any case, Ciano left with the impression that both Yugoslav statesmen had a favorable opinion about his proposal, which he noted in an official foreign ministry report.<sup>92</sup> Ciano had once again arrived with English documents. This time, they were photocopies of two messages sent to Lord Halifax by the British envoy Campbell. Stojadinović later showed them to Prince Paul, but he kept them for himself. As expected, Paul immediately informed the British Legation about everything.<sup>93</sup>

87 *Vreme*, 23. 1. 1939, 3.

88 D. 90, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume XI, 126. - In terms of this comment of Ciano's, the editors of the Yugoslav translation remarked that he was exaggerating in order to present the situation as more favorable than it actually was. *Tajni arhivi grofa Ciana*, 279.

89 *Ibid.*

90 English sources reveal that Stojadinović had even before the visit spoken with Paul about a possible partition of Albania and got a negative response. *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, III, ed. Živko Avramovski, (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1996), 52.

91 According to French sources, Stojadinović had been ordered by the Prince not to make any deals with the Italians. Biber, *O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade*, 26.

92 D. 90, *DDI*, Ottava serie, Volume XI, 129-130.

93 Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi*, 147, fn. 41.

During his visit to Belgrade, Ciano also had an important meeting with the Italian envoy Indelli and the Italian press. It was at this time that Indelli warned his boss that Stojadinović's position *did not seem safe*. He pointed to the fact that Prince Paul wanted to come to an agreement with the Croats, and that Maček had refused to cooperate in any way with the then Yugoslav prime minister, who wanted an *authoritarian regime*. To all that, Indelli added the democratic tradition of most parties, as well as the election results which gave Stojadinović only a slight advantage over the opposition. Ciano replied that he would go back to supporting Croatian separatism in the case of Stojadinović's fall. In the end he concluded: *I implement policies with Stojadinović, I do not intend to pursue them with others.*<sup>94</sup>

Stojadinović's fall caused surprise and negative reactions among the top figures in the Fascist government. They were very keen on determining its cause. As early as 6 February, Mussolini told Ciano that the elimination of Stojadinović was a true coup carried out by the Prince Regent who wanted to prevent the *stabilization of a fascist dictatorship in Yugoslavia*.<sup>95</sup> Based on the information they had received from Indelli, they could conclude that Paul really was at the heart of the conspiracy against Stojadinović. Although Ciano had believed that Stojadinović's position was getting stronger, he realized that it was not solid enough to confront the coalition that had been created against him with the help of the Prince. A decision was made to speed up the operations in Albania, which would take place as early as early April. In terms of the *Yugoslav card*, it was concluded that it had lost 90% of its value with the departure of Stojadinović.<sup>96</sup> As noted by Guerri, Italy's attitude had changed in only three weeks from the attitude that they would not do anything in Albania without Yugoslavia's consent, to them being prepared to go in unbeknownst to Yugoslavia, and even against it.<sup>97</sup>

Incidentally, Stojadinović sent Ciano an album with photographs of his visit to Yugoslavia as early as the beginning of March, less than a month after his fall from power. In the accompanying letter, he stated that he did not look back on any other official visit with such fond memories. He began with *my dear minister and friend*.<sup>98</sup> In addition to serving as ev-

94 Russo, *Rivoluzione in Jugoslavia*, 76–77.

95 Ciano, *Diario 1937–1941*, 249.

96 *Ibid.*

97 Guerri, *Galeazzo Ciano*, 528.

98 Biber, *O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade*, 37, fn. 107.

idence of their friendship, this was clearly Stojadinović's attempt to let the Italians know that he was still active, and that nothing had changed.

During Stojadinović's internment, which began with his arrest in the spring of 1940, and after receiving from his representatives the news that his friend's life was in grave danger, Ciano reacted by immediately contacting the German representatives. They acted promptly with the aim to *save Stojadinović's life*.<sup>99</sup> Russo wrote that Italy was prepared to sever diplomatic ties when the news appeared, and that, for them, Stojadinović's murder would be a *casus belli*!<sup>100</sup> Both Axis envoys in Belgrade reacted to the rumors about the possible murder of Stojadinović. Prince Paul allegedly responded that he was not a murderer and that not a single hair would go missing from Stojadinović's head. In his report, von Heeren concluded that the Prince would do whatever it took to keep the former prime minister safe, but that he would keep refusing to collaborate with him in the future.<sup>101</sup>

In late 1940 and early 1941, Prince Paul sent the lawyer Vladislav Stakić to Italy as his emissary on various occasions. He spoke with Ciano several times and with Mussolini two times a while later. These conversations revealed the attitudes of the leading Fascist figures toward the former prime minister of Yugoslavia. On 11 November 1940, during his first meeting with Stakić at the Chigi Palace, Ciano could not but touch upon Stojadinović. Despite claiming that what mattered was the kind of policies that would be pursued and not who would pursue them, Ciano could not help re-emphasizing his shock at Stojadinović's removal and saying that his personal friendship with Stojadinović was great, and that he *enjoyed endless friendship and trust*, both from him, *and from the top figure of the Reich*.<sup>102</sup> That friendship was one thing and politics was another, as Ciano had pointed out, was not at issue, but these policies were now nonetheless being implemented differently. Whilst, as Crnjanski wrote, in Venice, Ciano had conversed with Stojadinović *behind closed doors during a bath*, with his successor Cincar-Marković he spoke *formally, in a drawing room on the first floor, where no one was allowed to pass, but the stairway was besieged by journalists all day*.<sup>103</sup>

In the official documents regarding the attack on Yugoslavia in April of 1941, Count Ciano mentions Stojadinović. In an attempt to justi-

99 Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, 446.

100 Russo, *Rivoluzione in Jugoslavia*, 77.

101 Biber, *O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade*, 56, fn. 190.

102 Stakić, *Moji razgovori sa Musolinijem*, 85-86.

103 Crnjanski, *Politički portreti*, 332.

fy the aggression, he claims that Italy had remained faithful to the 1937 agreement even after *Stojadinović's removal from power*, and *despite the tendency for the reappearance of hostile policies towards the government in Rome*, concluding that the blame for the war was on the Yugoslav side.<sup>104</sup> In this case, it is, of course, clear that the statement of the Italian Foreign Minister did not conform to the truth. The only thing that can be considered genuine is the repeatedly expressed grief over Stojadinović's fall.

The two friends were separated forever, and they also suffered similar fates. They were both removed by the people who had brought them to power. Ciano was executed by firing squad after standing up against Mussolini in January of 1944, and Stojadinović was interned and exiled. The policy of rapprochement that they had pursued between 1936 and 1939 practically disappeared with Stojadinović's departure from the post of prime minister and foreign minister.

It can be concluded that the relationship between Milan Stojadinović and Count Ciano was much closer than has been assumed before. Despite the 15-year age difference between them, they had a similar mindset and outlook on the world. The relationship between them was a friendly one, and it evolved both through direct contact and through intermediaries, primarily the diplomatic representatives of the two countries. They frequently exchanged opinions, and even documents, on topics of mutual interest, but there were also direct requests to work in accordance with Italian interests, as well as the interests of Yugoslavia. These requests were mainly related to Stojadinović's actions within the Little and Balkan Ententes on the one hand, and to Italy's influence on revisionist countries on the other.

### Summary

Milan Stojadinović and Galeazzo Ciano were the foreign ministers of Yugoslavia and Italy in the years preceding World War II. The two countries, which in earlier periods had frequently taken conflicting positions, began to cooperate during this time. The policies guided by heads of state Mussolini and Prince Paul were implemented by the two ministers, who gave them their own personal touch. In that period they met several times: in Yugoslavia in 1937 and 1939 and in Italy in 1937 and 1938. These were two men who had a similar outlook on the world, hedonists who enjoyed life and loved dancing and beautiful women. Despite the fif-

---

104 Quoted from: Monzali, *Il sogno dell'egemonia*, 85.

teen-year age difference between them, they had a similar spirit and outlook on the world.

The relationship between Milan Stojadinović and Count Ciano was much closer than had been assumed. It was a friendly relationship, which evolved both through direct contacts and through intermediaries, primarily the diplomatic representatives of the two countries. They exchanged opinions frequently and even documents, on topics of mutual interest, but there were also direct requests to work in accordance with Italian interests, as well as the interests of Yugoslavia. These requests mainly pertained to Stojadinović's actions within the Little and Balkan Ententes on the one hand, and to Italy's influence on revisionist countries on the other. The initiatives were at times successful, at other times only partly so, but there were also times when Stojadinović could not and did not want to meet the requests in question. He did not turn them down directly, of course, employing all sorts of excuses instead.

### Sources and Literature

- Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd: Zbirka Milana Stojadinovića; Fond Centralni Pres-biro.
- Matica srpska, Novi Sad. Manuscript section, Zaostavština Milana Jovanovića Stoimirovića.
- *Aprilski rat 1941*, I. Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1969.
- *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, II, pr. Živko Avramovski. Zagreb: Globus, 1986.
- *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, III, pr. Živko Avramovski. Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1996.
- Dučić, Jovan. *Diplomatski spisi*. Beograd: Prosveta, 1991. (cyrillic)
- *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI)*, Ottava serie: 1935–1939, Volumi I–XI. Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1991–2007.
- *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI)*, Nona serie: 1939–1943, Volumi I–VI. Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1954–1986.
- *Tajni arhivi grofa Ciana*. Zagreb: Državno izdavačko poduzeće Hrvatske, 1952.
- Jovanović Stoimirović, Milan. *Dnevnik 1936–1941*. Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2000. (cyrillic)
- Russo, Alfio. *Rivoluzione in Jugoslavia*. Roma: Donatello de Luigi, 1944.
- Stakić, Vladislav. *Moji razgovori sa Musolinijem*, Minhen: Iskra, 1967.
- Stojadinović, Milan. *Ni rat ni pakt*. Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1970.
- Stojadinović, Milan. *Zatočenik njegovog Britanskog veličanstva*. Melburn: Srpska misao, 1976. (cyrillic)

- Ciano, Galeazzo. *Diario 1937–1943*. Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2010.
- Crnjanski, Miloš. *Politički portreti*. Beograd: Beletra, 1990.
- Avramovski, Živko. *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935–1937*. Beograd: Prosveta, 1968.
- Avramovski, Živko. „Problem Albanije u jugoslovensko-italijanskom sporazumu od 25. III 1937. god.“ *Istoriski pregled*, god. 9, br. 1, 1963, 19–31.
- Biber, Dušan. „O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade“. *Istorija XX veka VIII*, 1966, 5–67.
- Breccia, Alfredo. *Jugoslavia 1939–1941: diplomazia della neutralità*. Milano: Giuffrè editore, 1978.
- Burgwyn, James H. *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period 1918–1940*. Westport–London: Prager, 1997.
- Milan Stojadinović. *Politika u vreme globalnih lomova*, zbornik radova, ur. Miša Đurković. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike – Centar za konzervativne studije, 2013. (cyrillic)
- Bucarelli, Massimo. *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia 1922–1939*. Bari: Edizioni B.A. Graphis, 2006.
- Guerri, Giordano Bruno. *Galeazzo Ciano*. Milano, Bompiani, 2011.
- Deak, Ladislav. „Jugoslovensko-italijanski odnosi 1932–1937“. *Istorija 20. veka XIV–XV*, 1982, 173–214.
- Di Renzo, Eugenio. *Ciano. Vita pubblica e private del genero regime nell’Italia del Ventennio nero*. Salerno: Salerno editrice, 2018.
- Krizman, Bogdan. *Ante Pavelić i ustaše*. Zagreb: Globus, 1978.
- Krizman, Bogdan. „Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918–1941)“. *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 1/1979, 33–97.
- Milak, Enes. *Italija i Jugoslavija 1931–1937*. Beograd: Institut za suvremenu istoriju, 1987.
- Monzali, Luciano. *Il sogno dell’egemonia. L’Italia, la questione Jugoslava e L’Europa Centrale (1918–1941)*. Firenze: La Lettere, 2010.
- Simić, Bojan. „Poseta grofa Čana Jugoslaviji u januaru 1939. i pad Milana Stojadinovića“. *Arhiv* 1/2 (2018), 67–78. (cyrillic)
- Simić, Bojan. „Poseta Milana Stojadinovića Italiji decembra 1937“. *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2017, 71–83. DOI: 10.29362/ist20veka.2017.2.sim.71-84
- Simić, Bojan. „Susret Čano–Stojadinović na Bijenalu u Veneciji 1938. godine“. *Arhiv: časopis Arhiva Jugoslavije* 1/2 (2016), 124–136. (cyrillic)
- Stojkov, Todor. „Čehoslovačko-francuska aktivnost protiv M. Stojadinovića (1936–1938)“. *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 1/1979, 41–66.
- Hoptner, Jacob B. *Jugoslavija u krizi 1934–1941*. Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1972.
- Zamparelli, Loris. *Il controllo sulla stampa e la propaganda del fascismo in Jugoslavia (1933–1937)*. Cosenza: Talos edizioni, 2015.

- *Vreme* (cyrillic)
- *La Stampa*
- *Politika* (cyrillic)
  
- <http://www.archivioluce.com>
- <http://www.digitalna.nb.rs/>
- <http://www.farnesina.ipzs.it/series/>



## Резиме

Бојан Симић

### Милан Стојадиновић и гроф Ћано – историја једног пријатељства

**Апстракт:** На основу архивске грађе, мемоарских списа и релевантне литературе анализира се однос између министара иностраних послова Југославије и Италије Милана Стојадиновића и Галеаца Ћано, у времену пред Други светски рат. Овај однос имао је велики утицај и на односе две земље у периоду између 1936. и 1939. године.

**Кључне речи:** Милан Стојадиновић, Галеацо Ћано, дипломатија, пропаганда

Милан Стојадиновић и Галеацо Ћано су били министри иностраних послова, први Југославије, други Италије, у годинама непосредно пред избијање Другог светског рата. Ове две државе, које су у ранијим периодима често имале супротстављене позиције, тада су почеле да сарађују. Политику, којој су смернице давали шефови држава Мусолини и кнез Павле, два министра су спроводила и притом јој давала свој лични печат. Ових година састајали су се више пута: у Југославији 1937. и 1939. и у Италији 1937. и 1938. Радило се о двојици сличних људи, хедониста, који су уживали у животу, волели плес и лепе жене. Иако је један био старији од другог петнаест година, били су сличног духа и погледа на свет.

Однос Милана Стојадиновића и грофа Ћано био је много блискији него што се раније претпостављало. Одликовало га је пријатељство, које се развило што у директном контакту што преко посредника, пре свега дипломатских представника двеју земаља. Било је ту честих размена мишљења о темама од заједничког интереса, па и размене докумената, али и директних молби за рад у складу са италијанским интересом, као и интересом Југославије. То се пре свега односило на Стојадиновићево деловање унутар Мале и Балканске антанте, односно италијански утицај на ревизионистичке земље.

Те иницијативе су биле понекад успешне, понекад само делимично, а било је случајева када Стојадиновић није могао а ни желео да тим молбама изађе у сусрет. Он их наравно није одбијао директно, већ се служио разноразним изговорима.