**To the kind attention of the**

**Yasin Conference Board Members.**

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**From the effects of the Russo-Japanese War in Europe to the bargain of Racconigi, 1905-1909.**

**The Italian-Russian diplomatic rapprochement in Italian diplomatic documents.**

Before talking about the specific object of the intervention, it is necessary to briefly recall what Racconigi's bargain was. It was an exchange of letters which officially took place on 24 October 1909 in the royal castle of Racconigi (northern Italy) in which the Tsar of Russia Nicholas II and the King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele III exchanged mutual, vague reassurances on the Balkans, the Dardanelles and northern Africa. In a nutshell, Russia and Italy undertook to maintain the status quo in the Balkans and to inform each other of any treaties with other countries for that region; Russia also pledged to support Italy in North Africa (in the future colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica) and Rome for its part to support St. Petersburg in a possible Russian expansion towards Dardanelles and Constantinople.

As mentioned above, it is reiterated that the agreement was very vague and while some scholars agree in defining it as a very important diplomatic moment for the whole of Europe [[1]](#footnote-1), others greatly reduce its importance[[2]](#footnote-2). What emerges clearly from the Italian diplomatic documents, however, is that it was an extremely important moment for Italian diplomacy. In the early years of the twentieth century, Rome was in fact returning from a hard defeat against Ethiopia (1896), from a serious political and social crisis that had risked altering its institutional balance (in Italian known as the crisis of the end of the century, i.e. end of the century), from the killing of King Umberto I and also the renewal of the Treaty of the Triple Alliance seemed to be anything but favorable to Italy [[3]](#footnote-3). In this situation, the Italian economic expansion in the Balkans and North Africa represented not only an act that today we would define as imperialist (which it was anyway) but also a real necessity for the economy and social stability of the country. The Italian economy was growing, it is true, but the living conditions of the inhabitants were still very harsh even for the parameters of the time [[4]](#footnote-4) emigration to Europe and America not only deprived Italy of millions of potential workers but represented a real tragedy for those who lived there, directly or even more indirectly, seeing their loved ones leave; it was by no means taken for granted that this state of affairs would still be endured for a long time by large sections of the population.

In this context, the expansion in North Africa seemed necessary to try to direct immigration to a land closer and under direct Italian control and the expansion in the Balkans was just as necessary to try to create new export markets for the economy. Italian, and consequently strengthen the entrepreneurial class and improve the general conditions of the population. The disastrous Ethiopian experience, however, had shown that in Italy the diplomatic preparation of any expansion attempt was very necessary and Russia, in both of them was perceived by Italian diplomacy as a potential supporter in its expansion policy in the Balkans and in the North. Africa.

As also emerges from the Italian diplomatic documents, however, until 1905-06 Russia did not see Italy as a necessary or useful partner, given the effective position of weakness - almost of apparent irrelevance - of Rome in the international arena. According to the Italian diplomatic documents of that period, however, the situation changed very quickly starting from the Russo-Japanese war due to its direct effects (the displacement and loss of materials and resources from West to East [[5]](#footnote-5)) and indirect (the revolution of 1905, the enlargement of the German and Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence at the expense of Russia in the Balkans). During the speech, it will therefore be the Italian diplomatic work to bring Russia closer, analyzing immediate and less intuitive causes, strategies, aspirations and Italian successes and failures. The time limits were 1905, the year of the first Russian Revolution and the defeat against Japan, and 1909, the year in which the treaty was signed.

My speech will be based on the Italian diplomatic documents preserved in the historical-diplomatic archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, concerning communications between Rome and its envoys to the major European powers and in the Balkan states from the year 1905 to 1909. The perspective will be mainly the Italian one but, obviously, there will also be references to the point of view of the other European powers.

Respecting the timing given by the organizers, the intervention, if accepted, will be structured in five parts of different lengths:

- A brief explanation of Racconigi's treatise.

- A brief analysis of the international situation of the time and the importance for Italy of a partner like Russia, outside the Triple Alliance.

- The reconstruction, based on the previously mentioned documents, of the Italian diplomatic efforts to reach the bargain, starting from 1905 and arriving at 1908, the year of the Bosnian crisis

- From the Bosnian crisis to the months immediately following the bargain.

- Final considerations.

1. See among others: Romano S., *Riflessioni Moscovite di un Ambasciatore*, in *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali* *Vol. 55, No. 4 (220) (Ottobre-Dicembre 1988)*; Zaizev V. V., *П. А. Столыпин и А. П. Извольский в конце своей* правительственной *карьеры*. in *Russian History Vol. 31, No. 3 (FALL 2004 / AUTOMNE 2004)*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See among others: Clark C., The Sleepwalker. How Europe Went to War in 1914, London, 2012; Giordano G., Tra Marsine e stiffelius. Venticinque anni di politica estera italiana. 1900-1925, Rome, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On this topic: De Grand A. J., *Hunchback's Tailor : Giovanni Giolitti and Liberal Italy From the Challenge of Mass Politics to the Rise of Fascism, 1882-1922*, Westport, 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On this topic see: Harrison, M., *The Economics of World War One*, Cambridge UK, 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Amont others, see: Charques R., *The Twilight of the Imperial Russia*, London, 1958, pp. 97-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)