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**SPANISH-ITALIAN RELATIONS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
(Summary of PhD Dissertation)**

The history of the relationship of Spain and Italy, these two Mediterranean countries, of course, dates further back than the Second World War. During the course of their history, these Latin countries had been in close connection (dynastic, political, cultural, economic and strategic), the present study, however, investigates only the period between 1939 and 1945.

There had been many studies dealing with the era of the Second World War. Despite of the fact that this dissertation also concentrates on these years, my aim was to reveal some relatively unknown aspects of the Second World War with the emphasis on presenting the diplomatic relationship that existed between Spain and Italy.

The choice of topic is justified by the fact that this specific period and field of study have rarely been examined in the literature of the Second World War. Secondly, my other motive can be found in imbalance that I have found during my studies in the proportion of literature regarding Italy and Spain. While Italy has been discussed in many studies concerning the Second World War, Spain, in fact, remains in the background in this respect. This fact can obviously be explained by the different behavior of the two countries during the war. The attention of historians has turned towards the belligerent parties, while "small neutrals" have only remained to be of secondary importance both during the war and in historical studies as well. Spain, however, because of its political and historical heritage preceding the Second World War (Spanish Civil War), its complex relationship with the belligerent parties and its geostrategic position, deserves a far greater attention.

The improporionate nature of the literature can also be explained with the duration of the Mussolini and of the Franco régimes. After the death of Mussolini (1945), in the freshly democratic Italy it was not a taboo to deal with the events of the recent past. Although the national archives could not be accessed immediately, people could "talk" about the past years and politics. To the contrary, in Spain in the regime surviving the Second World War, there were certain topics that either could not be accessed and discussed until the death of Franco, 1975, or the tone of the historical studies related to them were mainly "apologetic". Therefore, studies on the Spanish side were beginning to accumulate only in the 1980's. These studies concentrated on the three years of Civil War preceding the Franco régime, the historical description of the dictatorship, which had existed for almost 40 years, the problems of continuity, the form of state and other questions regarding the democratic transition. Understandably, the topic of the Second World War, the Spanish behavior during the war, and the Italian and Spanish connections during the war gained insignificant attention. This latter field of study which is also the subject of the present dissertation historians – especially in studies related to the foreign affairs of the Franco régime – although inevitably presented these issues in their studies, mostly reduced it to subsections. Similarly, in the case of Italy, literature from the time related to the foreign affairs of the Mussolini régime only presents the Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War in detail when discussing the relationship between the two countries. The relationship during the world war is hardly ever mentioned, the only exception being the meeting between Franco and Mussolini in Bordighera and get insignificant attention in studies.

In-depth studies concerning the two countries' relationship during the Second World War were conducted by Spanish historians in the 80's, since then however, the national archives' documents were disclosed and our knowledge of the subject has widened. Although research is still going on and has successfully been carried out in the near past, the studies describing the two countries' relationship and the period's vital issue in the periods, often

present them through the figures of the two dictators, Franco and Mussolini, which also appears in the title of the given study. For this reason I avoided to use the two dictators' name, because I believe that the Second World War as a historical background deserves priority when studying the two countries' relationship. This does not mean that I question Mussolini's and Franco's leading role in the Italian and Spanish political period between 1939 and 1945, but it is not my aim to describe or compare the dictators from a biographical point of view. I intend to approach the topic of the research from a diplomatic and political perspective.

Another common characteristic feature of the previous historiographical works is that the *key role* is played by the Second World War, and the two Mediterranean countries only appear as separate participants in the conflict and Spain, however, only appears as a *crowd artist* because of its neutral position in the war. In the dissertation I attempt to change this *cast*, and focus on the two countries' relationship instead, for which the Second World War only creates the *background*.

The other aim of the dissertation is to compare, and to complete the available documents, relevant to the chosen topic, of the Spanish (Archivo General del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, *AMAE*) and the Italian (Archivo Storico-Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *ASMAE*) foreign affairs national archives with the Hungarian National Archives (*MOL*). Studying the documents of the latter has, in fact made it possible to examine the two Mediterranean countries' relationship from a distant perspective.

The dissertation is divided into ten chapters which are divided into subsections.

The first chapter and its two subsections examine the Spanish-Italian relationship in the years preceding the Second World War. The circumstances of the Second Spanish Republic and the Spanish Civil War are presented in the dissertation as antecedents.

The second chapter also discusses the events that took place in the months preceding the Second World War. In separate subsections, the Franco régime's international position is examined as well as the international judgment of the Spanish Cabinet that was formed in August 1939. Further two chapters discuss the visits of Ramón Serrano Suñer in Italy and Galeazzo Ciano in Spain, which had significance in the foreign affairs.

The following structural unit examines the period and circumstances that occurred between the outbreak of the Second World War and the Italian intervention in the war. The main question that I concentrate on within this section is the meaning of declaration of the Spanish neutrality and the Italian non belligerency firstly within the two countries' diplomatic relations, and secondly within the attitudes of Franco and Mussolini towards the war. The Italian influence on the Spanish behavior can be clearly traced within this period. One such sign was that Spain, at the same time with Italy's intervention in the war, turned from neutral to a non-belligerent status and made an impression on the Allied Forces that Spain, similarly to Italy was also marching towards war. This question is also examined in a separate subsection.

The following chapter's title is *The Background of the Spanish Non-Belligerent Status*. The Spanish aspect is emphasized more within the two countries' diplomatic relationship which can be strongly felt within this section – the reasons of which we already indicated above -. Following Italy's intervention and the collapse of France, Spain invaded and occupied Tanger arguing with the fact that Italy being belligerent – according to the international charter of the zone – only Spain, being non-belligerent could exercise control over the city. Spain was, however not so much motivated to practice the international law, having its own political motives and aspirations with priorities regarding African territories including Tanger. In 1940 it seemed that Spain could not have found a better time to realize its plans for its African Continent since France was no longer in the position to defend its colonies. Spain had now a chance in French-Morocco that it had been looking for many decades.

Besides examining the circumstances of the Italian intervention to war, I also discuss a domestic Spanish issue, which had a significant effect on the foreign affairs as well. This issue was the "ownership" of the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs: after the dismissal of General Juan Beigbeder, Ramón Serrano Suñer, a man known for his Italophil behavior, became the minister of foreign affairs, whom the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Galeazzo Ciano, also mentioned as „*l'uomo d'Italia*".

In these months, besides the Italian influence, the German influence could also be strongly felt. For Hitler, Spain's geostrategic position and the country's position were valued in the last months of 1940. Hitler's idea regarding the Gibraltar Strait was outlined in the *Felix operations*. To discuss the operation, the two dictators arranged a meeting that was the first and proved to be the last that they ever had as their meeting in Hendaye was unsuccessful, consequently Hitler's operational plan failed because of Spanish behavior. This topic is examined in four subdivisions of the fourth chapter, together with Franco's idea regarding the Strait of Gibraltar. At first sight, the short introduction of the Spanish-German diplomatic relations may seem to be a digression from the subject; however we believe that it is worthwhile to examine Spain's relations with Italy from a broader point of view. The Spanish behavior, none the less was also strongly triggered by the German position. Following Hitler's failure in persuading the Spanish, the Fuehrer wanted to use Mussolini in "convincing" Franco. Examining the Spanish-German diplomatic relationship therefore seems logical and necessary.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation examines the Duce's mediator position in the above mentioned situation. The culmination of this attempt proved to be the meeting between Franco and Mussolini that took place in Bordighera, in February, 1941. The Duce's mission was unsuccessful, though it must be noted that he was not totally committed to this idea either. While Hitler expected from Mussolini that he will convince Spain to enter the war, Franco hoped that the Duce would be his "mouthpiece" towards the Fuehrer, who will mediate Spanish claims that were enumerated as terms of Spain's intervention at the meeting. The meeting of Bordighera was nevertheless an important event within the Spanish-Italian diplomatic history, as it was the only appointment where the two leaders met in person. However, regarding the efficacy of this event, it was not significant. In fact, no change occurred in Spanish position.

In a subsection, I also refer to the unstable Spanish internal affairs in 1941. The consequence of this was the lasting cabinet crisis which ultimately lead to the dismissal of Serrano Suñer during the fall of 1942. At that time, however, *cuñadísimo*¹ despite the continuous attacks and antipathy against him, still remained in his position.

A slight change in the Spanish position occurred after the opening of the Soviet battle-line in the summer of 1941. Nevertheless Franco emphasized that Spain's involvement in the war is only a moral warfare, declaring that he was only taking action against communism, which does not mean Spain's intervention in the war. This is the point from where the theory of two wars originates, which, after the intervention of the United States was broadened to a three war theory. Spain's moral warfare against the Soviet Union was manifested through the Blue Division's mission at the Eastern Battle-Line.

The sixth chapter examines the problems both in the Spanish internal and foreign affairs. The rise of the Spanish Monarchist Movement and the presentation of the decline of Serrano Suñer's authority are closely connected to the previous topic. Suñer's swan-song proved to be the Ciano-Serrano meeting that took place in Livorno, in the summer of 1942,

¹ Serrano Suñer was a relation to the Caudilló. Being Franco's brother-in-law, the Spanish equivalent of which is *cuñado*, Suñer is often mentioned as *cuñadísimo*, which is the superlative of *cuñado* with a strong pejorative tone.

where the previously mutually sympathetic and friendly Foreign Ministers' backing away could be felt – at least from Ciano's side.

In Spanish internal affairs the bomb – figuratively and literally as well – exploded when the Incident of Begoña took place. Tension between the Falangists and the soldiers had reached a level that Franco could no longer postpone resolving the cabinet crisis. The most important change in the new cabinet was undoubtedly the appointment of General Francisco Gómez-Jordana to the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The change in foreign affairs became obvious after the Allied Forces landed on the Northern-African coast. With the Jordana turn, Spain once again turned from a non-belligerent state towards a neutral state, still, they communicated towards Italy (and the Axis) that no change would eventuate in the foreign affairs. The Allied forces, however, welcomed the appointment of the monarchist and anglophile general Jordana, with renewed hope.

Chapters 7-9 of the dissertation examine the diplomatic circumstances arising after the fall of the Italian fascism. I will discuss the reactions to the fall of Mussolini, the Italian capitulation and the Italian declaration of war against Germans.

The longest section of the dissertation is chapter 8. Italy, after it had been divided into two in 1943, was also partitioned in its international relations. The Southern-, and Middle-Italian territories were occupied by the Allies and were led by the Badoglio Government, and in Northern Italy, occupied by the Germans, Mussolini led the neo-fascist puppet government named the Italian Social Republic (RSI). The title of Chapter 8 includes the expression "egg-dance", suggesting the unique circumstances that evolved during the last two years of the war in the Spanish-Italian diplomacy. Within this peculiar double-diplomatic state, we will discuss the dilemma of recognizing the RSI from the Spanish side, and the two parallel institutions, the Italian Royal Embassy and the illegal activity of the dissident Mussolini-advocacy. The first, lead by Paulucci di Calboli who continuously argued with the British diplomats (Carlton J. H. Hayes, Samuel Hoare) at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the illegitimacy of the non-official Italian institute lead by Eugenio Morreale, but their claim turned to be unsuccessful. This double-institute could uphold its offices in Madrid and many other Spanish cities until April 1945.

Similarly, in Italy the structure of this double-institute of Spanish diplomacy was also established. In this respect, I examine the opportunities of the embassy led by Garcia Comín who became "chargé d'affaires" after the departure of Fernández Cuesta, Spanish Ambassador in Rome. Garcia Comín tried to follow the instructions received from Domingo de las Bárcenas, Spain's Ambassador in the Vatican. Paralelly, Northern-Italy was also provided with Spanish representation: the Spanish Consul in Milan, Fernando Chantal undertook the duty of diplomatic coordination between the two countries.

An important question of this double-sided diplomacy was the case of the Italian trading vessels and battleships which stayed in Spanish harbors, after the Italian armistice. This issue arose to be a diplomatic and legal debate for the Spanish, after the division of Italy to two parts. The question of which Italy would have the right to reclaim the ships was a primary subject of discussion within the two countries' relationship until January, 1945.

Since the double-diplomacy between 1943 and 1945 left its mark on the Spanish-Italian diplomacy, the dissertation will examine the question in two separate chapters. This was justified by both the complexity of the problem and the sudden death of Jordana in 1944. The successor of Gómez-Jordana was the former Spanish Ambassador of Vichy, José Félix de Lequerica, who inherited the problem of arranging the awkward issue of the Italian ships anchoring in Spain. During Lequerica's embassy, the Morreale agency could continue its activity in Spain; the dissident agent only announced the dissolve of the fascist representation after Mussolini's death. Therewith, we will present the role of the Spanish consul in Milan

during the agony of *RSI* in the last days of Mussolini who could clearly perceive the circumstances.

The closing subdivision of Chapter 9 examines the relation of the Spanish government to the Jewish question, of course from the perspective of the Spanish-Italian diplomacy. The Spanish activity in rescuing Jewish people by now is a well-known and investigated topic in historians' studies. Thanks to the activity of self-devoted Spanish diplomats many thousand Jews could escape from the horror and certain death of the Nazi concentration camps. Although the Italian-Spanish diplomacy – as it reveals from the documents of the national archives – was less concerned with this question, we also mention their participation and behaviour related to this topic.

Chapters 3 to 9 concentrate on the Spanish-Italian relations by following the chronology of the World War. In some subdivisions, I shortly discuss the events of the Second World War, this is, however, necessary in order to understand Spain's and Italy's behavior towards the conflict. Similarly, as part of some chapters, internal affairs are also outlined – in the case of Spain the problematics of restoration or the Incident of Begona, in Italian case the detailed introduction of the Fascist Grand Council's meeting -, these however have direct connection and interaction with questions of foreign affairs, therefore, dismissing these would make the dissertation incomplete.

The closing chapter of the dissertation examines the diplomatic relationship of the period at the end of the war and the peacetime that followed. The activity of two diplomats, Tommaso Gallarati Scotti and José Antonio de Sangróniz is outlined in the subsections of this chapter. Besides the cultural activity of Gallarati Scotti, I also discuss the commercial agreement between England and Italy, which was the outcome of the two diplomats' efforts. The effectuation of this agreement, however, faced several obstacles.

As it is well-known, sanctions applied by the United Nations Organization on Spain were also adopted by Italy, therefore, by remanding Gallarati Scotti, the diplomatic relations discontinued between the two countries after December 1946. Italy, after choosing the route of democracy, and Spain being, "expelled" from international politics for some time, began their development on receding paths, and only in 1951, after filling the position of the Italian Ambassador in Madrid (Francesco Maria Taliani De Marchio) did the countries began to approach each other once again. This period, however, opened a new chapter in the diplomatic relations.

In the conclusion, at the end of the dissertation, instead of revising the ideas of the dissertation I am looking for answers for two questions. The first question: What was the real background of the Spanish-Italian diplomatic relationship? Or in other words: What did Mussolini expect from Spain, and, inversely, what did Franco need Italy for?

The second question raised in the dissertation is whether Spain was really neutral? Historians' opinions diverge in this issue, however, we assume in the conclusion that Spain in fact was not neutral. A short reasoning for this can also be found in the conclusion of the dissertation.