Note by the Foreign Secretary, E. Bevin, to the Cabinet on the possible impact of the Italian elections on the Trieste issue, dated 15 April 1948

TRIESTE - POSSIBLE SITUATIONS RESULTING FOR THE ITALIAN ELECTIONS ON 18TH APRIL 1948

NOTE BY THE SECRETARY

5.

(a) Peaceful take-over of power by the Communists (para 4(a))

On the one hand it is probable that an early agreement on the TRIESTE problem would be concluded between the Governments of ITALY and JUGOSLAVIA [sic].

The sequence of events in the FTT[[1]](#footnote-1) following such a bilateral agreement will depend largely on the attitude taken by the Western Powers; but what this will be does not come within the scope of this paper. Immediately following the announcement of such an agreement it may be anticipated that the political situation with the Zone will be pitched in a very minor key, with the anti-Communist Italian parties completely deflated, while the Slav-controlled elements may well maintain an attitude of restraint and ordered discipline.

It appears likely that the Cominform will direct that no time be lost in endeavouring to make the Anglo-American position in the Zone impossible. For this the elaborate Slav-controlled Communist organisation will be used to the full, probably strengthened by the importation of highly trained leaders from JUGOSLAVIA.

This policy of stirring up disorder in the Zone may well be carried so far as to involve the complete boycott of the Zone by both ITALY and JUGOSLAVIA.

In such an event the situation, both politically and economically, is likely to develop on similar lines to that envisaged in para 7 (c) above; though from the economic standpoint the position may be worsened due to the deliberate closing of the frontiers of the Territory, the repudiation of the existing currency, financial and foreign exchange agreements, and the refusal to supply the Territory with any electricity.

On the other hand it may be anticipated that should there be no ITALO-JUGOSLAV Agreement on TRIESTE the anti-Allied Military Government attitude of the Communist controlled Italian Government will take the form of a gradually hardening policy towards the Zone, beginning with the practical denial of funds and raw material. The effects of such a policy in the last analysis will approximate to an accelerated disturbance of the Zone, already envisaged, the only difference being that there would be more time for the Western Allies to implement plans to meet this situation.

The Economic implications of the foregoing situations are fully outlined in Appendix “A” attached.

[TNA, CAB 121/612/88]

Keywords: Italy, Yugoslavia, great power relations

1. FTT - Free Territory of Trieste. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)